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**McLAREN'S
SHOCK FOR
2007**

ALONSO SPARKS F1 SHAKE-UP

- WILL RENAULT QUIT?
- KIMI TO FERRARI?
- SCHUMACHER TO RED BULL?
- WHAT NEXT FOR MONTOYA?

OUR EXPERTS REPORT p6

PLUS

RED BULL:

WE CAN BEAT FERRARI

WRC IN CRISIS:

MITSUBISHI PULLS OUT



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THE ALONSO EFFECT



THE BEST news stories are the ones that take you completely by surprise. And there wasn't a soul in the office who could have predicted that when we came into work on the last Monday before Christmas, Fernando Alonso was on his way to McLaren.

Such is the way with Formula 1 these days, with multi-year contracts and commercial sensitivities, that the deal is for 2007 and not '06, which is the bad news.

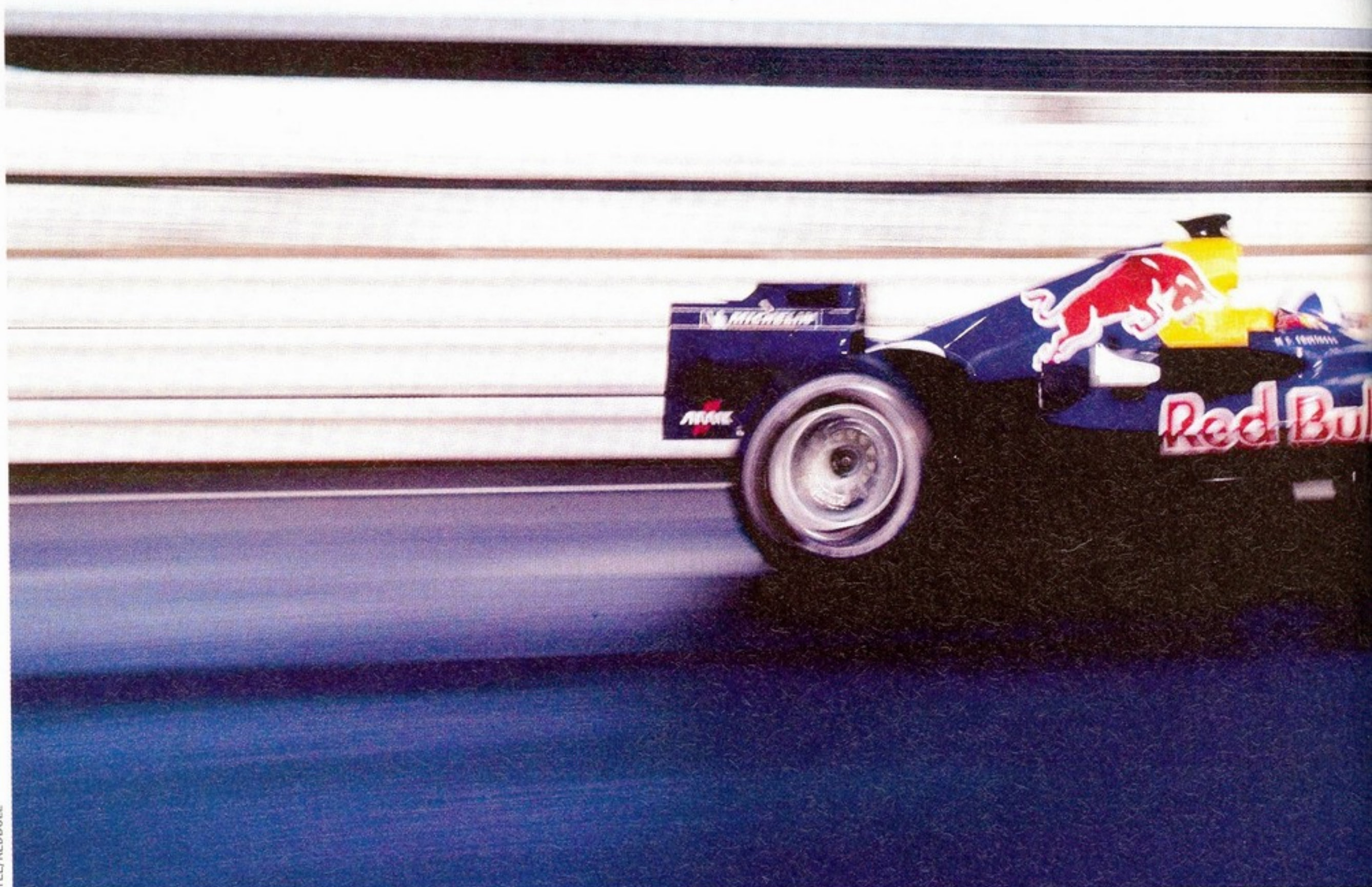
This coming season was shaping up to be a corker – Alonso vs Räikkönen vs a resurgent Ferrari vs big-spending Toyota. These elements are still there of course, but you have to wonder how committed Renault is going to be to Alonso's cause. Will they be willing to push for that final tenth which could allow him to take the coveted number one away with him? And what about Alonso's motivation? Where will his loyalties lie when it comes to wheel-to-wheel dicing with one of Ron's silver arrows? Nerfing one of them off in the heat of battle is hardly going to endear him to his new paymasters.

Of course, they are all total professionals and will maintain it's 2006 that counts and not what comes after it. But F1 is a sport that rewards 100 per cent commitment and when you've handed in your notice, you're not exactly going to be first to volunteer for overtime work... Maybe, just maybe, Giancarlo Fisichella will find he's become the favoured son.

Alonso's move is seismic. The aftershocks will be felt from the top to the bottom of the grid and we can expect a few more surprises over the coming weeks and months.

ANDREW VAN DE BURGT
EDITOR

TEE/REDBULL



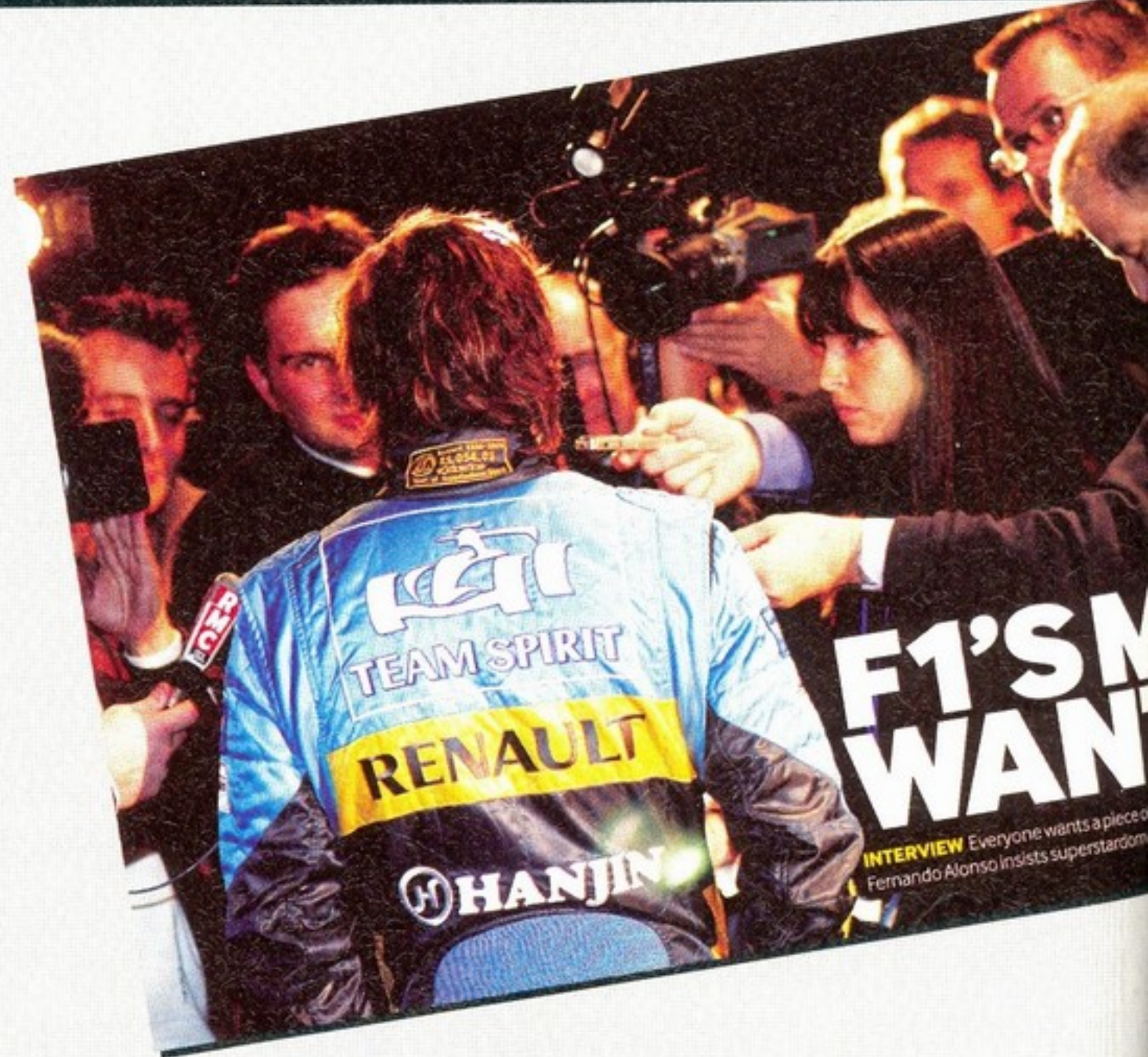
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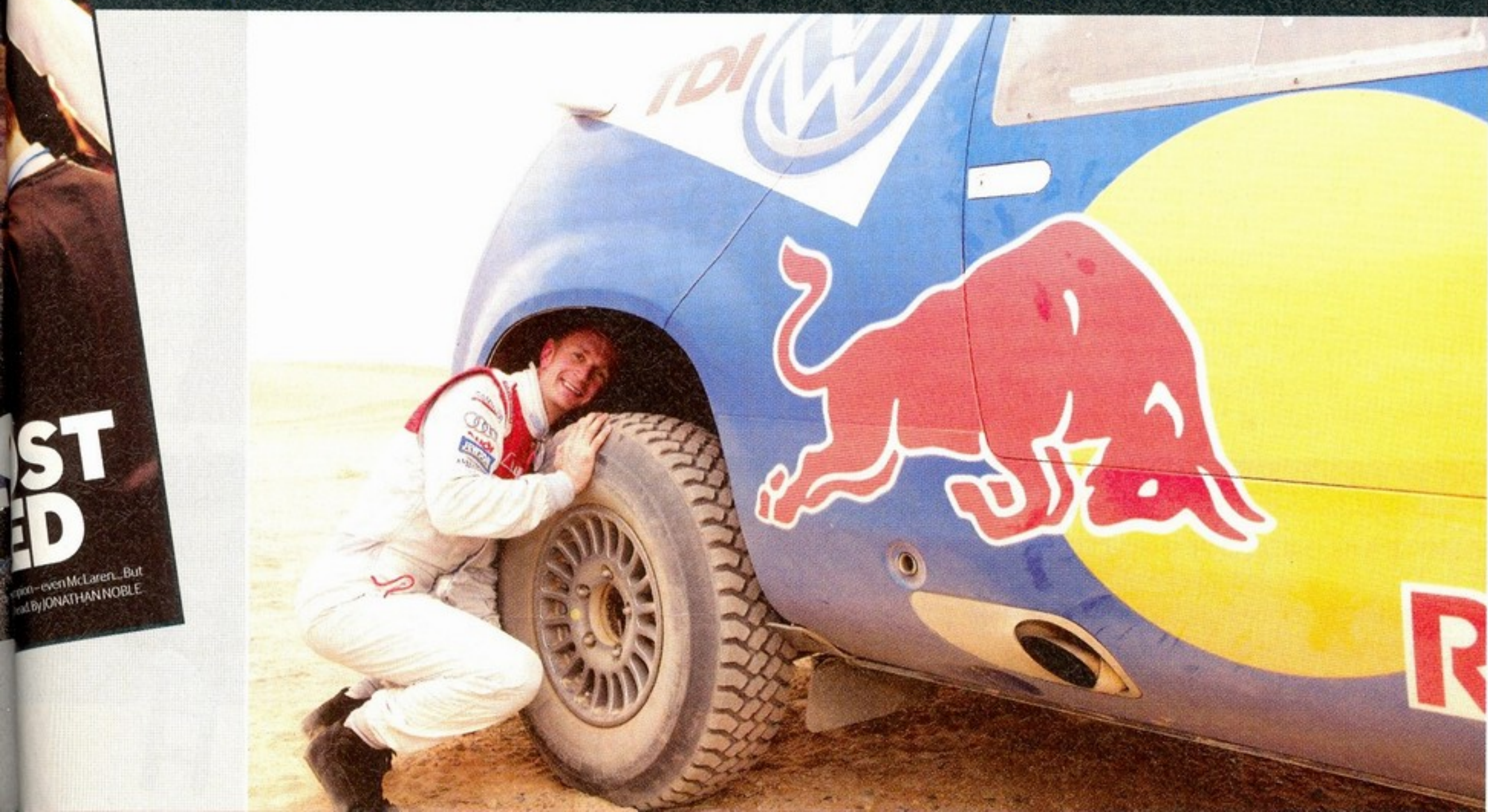


F1'S NEW WANTED
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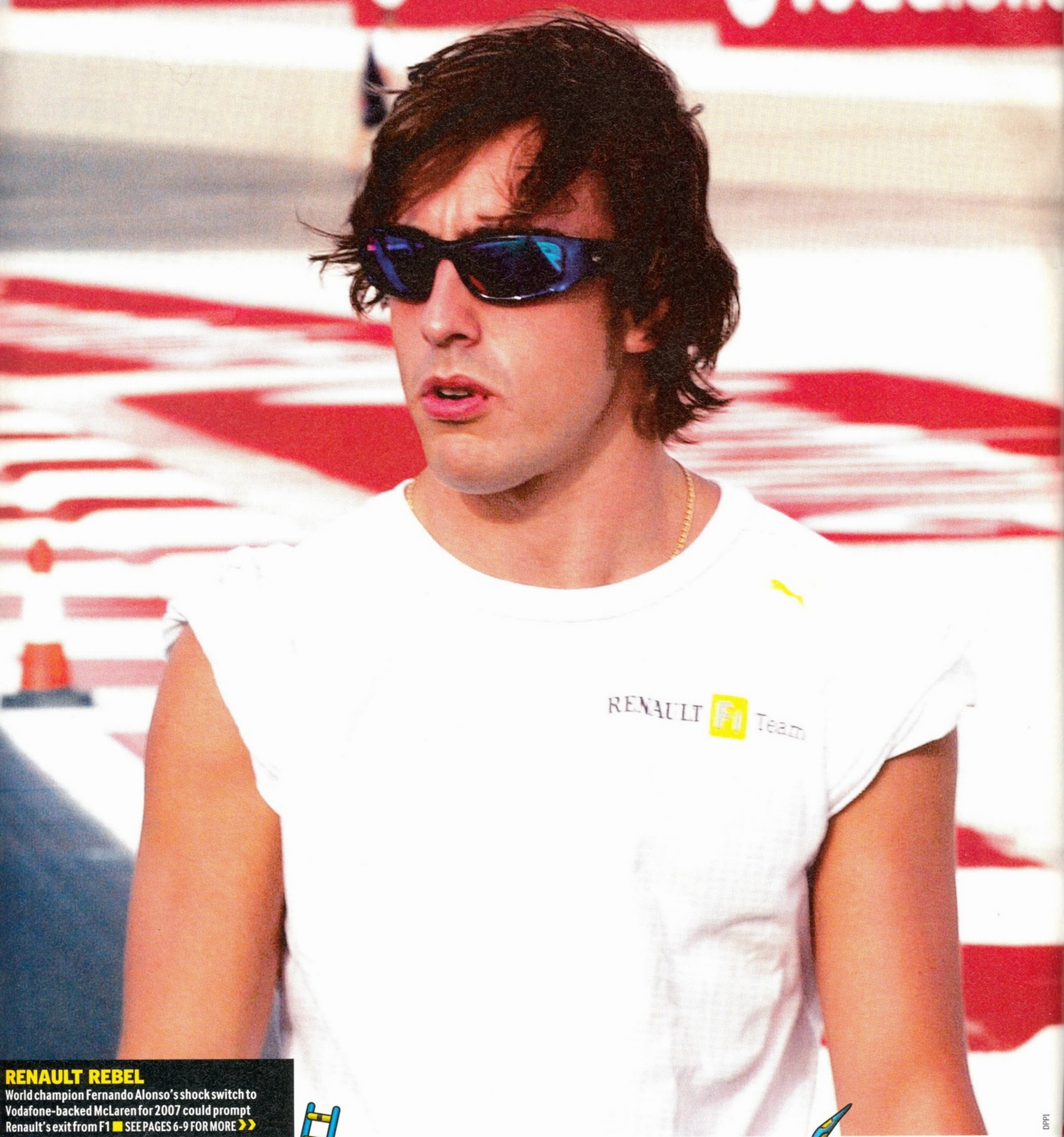
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RENAULT REBEL

World champion Fernando Alonso's shock switch to Vodafone-backed McLaren for 2007 could prompt Renault's exit from F1 ■ SEE PAGES 6-9 FOR MORE >>

RENAULT SNAKES & LADDERS

BUYS BENETTON

2002

French giant Renault enters Formula 1 as a 'whole car' manufacturer for the first time since 1985

PROMOTES ALONSO OVER BUTTON

2003

Despite outcry from British media, Renault boss Flavio Briatore promotes test driver Alonso to race seat, forcing Button to BAR. Alonso wins in Hungary

LOSES GASCOYNE

2003

Highly-rated technical chief Mike Gascoyne accepts big money offer to lead Toyota's F1 engineering team

GHOSN MADE NEW CHIEF EXEC

2005

Non-motorsport fan Carlos 'Le costcutter' Ghosn replaces Louis Schweitzer as chief executive of Renault. Cost cuts feared

RENAULT MAY QUIT AFTER ALONSO MOVE



FERNANDO ALONSO'S shock signing for McLaren in 2007 is almost certain to hasten the exit of Renault from Formula 1 as a 'whole car' manufacturer entrant.

Alonso, 24, the youngest-ever Formula 1 world champion, will leave the team at the end of next year amid continued speculation that Renault plans to downscale its F1 involvement to become an engine supplier only from 2007.

Renault will slash its European motorsport budget next year as it implements a series of cost-cutting measures aimed at tackling falling road car sales. Its western Europe market share fell by 12 per cent in October, but the F1 budget, which was around £160 million in 2005, will not be affected, according to team chairman Patrick Faure.

"Formula 1 doesn't sell cars the next morning – it's for the next 10 to 15 years," he said. "Championship after championship you build a reputation and an image. Being world champion, we have a very good return on what we invest."

He admitted the pressure on the company's motorsport budget was difficult to resist. "I won't be happy if national series are suspended," Faure said, "but if there is a big cost-cutting plan, I don't see why sport should be left out of it."

The company's new chief executive, Carlos 'Le costcutter' Ghosn, who is widely credited with turning around the fortunes of ailing the Renault-owned Nissan brand before being promoted to head up the French parent firm last April, is said to regard F1 as a worthwhile investment only if the company is winning. Ghosn, who cut Nissan's motorsport budget within a year of taking over in 2000, is due to present a three-year plan for Renault in February. The loss of a world champion will prevent Renault justifying its F1 spend by having a hugely promotable talisman to help sell cars.

Alonso, who is believed to have signed a four-year-plus-options deal worth up to £13m per season with McLaren, said: "Obviously I will be sad to leave Renault, where I achieved my lifetime ambition, but sometimes possibilities come along which are just too good to miss. I'm pleased we made the announcement as it will allow me and Renault to focus 100 per cent on defending the world championships next year. I felt that it was time for a new challenge. That will be to try and win with another team."

Were Renault to withdraw, its championship entry would become available to a new team. Ex-BAR boss David Richards, who also ran Renault F1's predecessor Benetton from 1997-98, has frequently been linked with a return to F1 since he left BAR at the end of 2004. He could be ideally placed to re-enter from '08 under FIA rules designed to cut the cost of competing.

"I firmly believe there will be room for small organisations to operate in F1 in the next couple of years," Richards said in the current issue of Autosport's sister magazine, *F1 Racing*.

The announcement of Alonso's departure came only days after McLaren revealed it had signed a 10-year title sponsorship deal with Vodafone (see page 9). McLaren's double poaching of two of its rivals' major assets – Vodafone from Ferrari and Alonso from Renault – has shifted the balance of power dramatically towards the Mercedes-powered team for 2007. Alonso's move also blows open the driver market.

Speaking exclusively to Autosport, McLaren Chief operating officer Martin Whitmarsh said: "Fernando did a good job for Renault this year. We had an opportunity to attract him with a long-term deal and we did not hesitate in signing him."

Alonso earned £5m this year at Renault and is known to have wanted a substantial pay rise commensurate with his status as world champion. Flavio Briatore, Alonso's team boss and manager, is understood to have been unwilling to sign off a pay increase, prompting Alonso to entertain the approach from McLaren. Autosport understands Briatore is unhappy that Alonso has agreed to switch teams, but that a clause in his contract allowed him to exercise veto over Briatore's wishes if approached with a better offer from a rival.

Briatore said: "I was at no time directly or indirectly involved in the conduct of these negotiations. Fernando made a personal decision that his future lies outside Renault when his current contract expires at the end of 2006. He contacted and negotiated with McLaren at his own instigation."

Whitmarsh said the signing of Alonso and Vodafone had given the team substantial long-term stability, adding that either of the team's current drivers, Juan Pablo Montoya and Kimi Räikkönen – both of whose contracts expire at the end of 2006 – could partner Alonso.

"We only have one driver signed for 2007 and that's Fernando Alonso," he said. "We hope that the prospect of re-signing for '07 is attractive to Juan and Kimi, but first we must concentrate on the season ahead."

Alonso's impending arrival at McLaren heightens speculation that Räikkönen is set to leave for Ferrari. Sources suggest a deal with Räikkönen has been done, but if not, McLaren's Alonso contract will greatly weaken the Finn's bargaining position with both teams.

Räikkönen said: "I learned about it [Alonso's deal] from the team a couple of days ago. My own situation is still the same – nothing has been agreed regarding the future. I'm focusing on the new season and will make decisions next year." ■

2007 DRIVER MARKET

KIMI CLOSES ON FERRARI DEAL

SPECULATION THAT Kimi Räikkönen will announce a move to Ferrari for 2007 has increased dramatically in the wake of Fernando Alonso's transfer to McLaren.

Räikkönen has been strongly linked with Ferrari for more than a year and is said by team insiders to have already signed a contract for 2007.

Michael Schumacher's Ferrari deal expires at the end of next year and, with his 37th birthday fast approaching, he may be on the verge of announcing his retirement.

In September this year he said: "I would not have a problem to drive with Kimi at Ferrari, but whether I continue in Formula 1 after '06 I don't know. I don't have an idea when it is time for me to stop, but I don't believe I have many years in front of me."

His manager Willi Weber added at the time that Schumacher was unlikely to make any decision about his future before March 2006.

Should he quit, Ferrari would need another recognised top-line driver to replace him, and with Alonso signed to McLaren, Ferrari's desire to secure Räikkönen will have intensified. The team could replace both its drivers for 2007, as new recruit Felipe Massa only

has a deal for '06. But should Schumacher decide to extend his contract, Massa could find himself forced out of the team.

Despite the speculation surrounding Räikkönen, McLaren insists that he and team-mate Juan Pablo Montoya – both of whose contracts expire at the end of 2006 – are in negotiation with the team for the remaining '07 race drive.

If McLaren were to run Alonso and Räikkönen, Montoya's options would lie either with Renault, if it remains in F1, Ferrari, or BMW, which will almost certainly not renew Jacques Villeneuve's contract next year.

Renault's position adds further uncertainty to the 2007 driver market. If the team withdraws at the end of next year, as has been rumoured, both Giancarlo Fisichella, under contract until the end of '06, and Heikki Kovalainen, who is the team's third driver next year, will be out of a drive.

There may, however, be two British beneficiaries from the McLaren shake-up. Lewis Hamilton and Gary Paffett are ideally placed to capitalise on their long associations with the team and bag third driver, test, or possibly even race drive roles.



RAIKKONEN

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Move to Ferrari
- 2) Mega-buck Toyota deal
- 3) Stay at McLaren



MONTOYA

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Stay at McLaren
- 2) Move to BMW
- 3) Move to Ferrari
- 4) Renault



SCHUMACHER

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Stay at Ferrari
- 2) Move to Red Bull
- 3) Move to McLaren
- 4) Retire



HAMILTON

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) McLaren tester
- 2) Non-top-team F1 race drive



FISICHELLA

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Stay at Renault
- 2) Move to Ferrari
- 3) Retire



KOVALAINEN

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Renault
- 2) BMW



MASSA

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) Stay at Ferrari
- 2) Move to BMW



PAFFETT

■ '07 OPTIONS

- 1) McLaren test or race drive
- 2) Non-top-team F1 race drive

WINS BOTH 2005 CHAMPIONSHIPS

2005

Fernando Alonso beats Kimi Räikkönen to drivers' title as Renault fends off strong McLaren challenge in constructors' championship

LOSES ALONSO

2005

In a shock move, McLaren poaches Alonso from beneath Flavio Briatore's nose in multi-million pound deal

PAFFETT SWAPS DTM FOR F1 ROLE

LEWIS TO FOCUS ON GP2 TITLE

McLAREN PROTEGE Lewis Hamilton is certain to test for the team in 2007 – and it may help him secure an '07 Formula 1 race drive.

Hamilton, 21 next month, who has been backed by McLaren since the age of 12, will race next season for ART Grand Prix in GP2, and his level of success will dictate McLaren's thinking on his future career path.

McLaren's Martin Whitmarsh said: "Lewis is an extraordinarily talented driver and we believe he will become a McLaren driver in the future. It's unlikely that his debut year will be in 2007, but he could well be a test driver for us. Once he has won the [GP2] championship we can ramp up the testing. He will be well ready for that role by then."

Team boss Ron Dennis, whose interest in Hamilton was sparked when a 12-year-old Lewis, then a star karter, approached Dennis at the Autosport Awards ceremony, said: "He shouldn't be obsessed by getting into a Formula 1 car as fast as possible – he should be focused on being as ready as possible. The path he has followed, with our guidance, of dominating every championship he has competed in, will result in him becoming a very competitive grand prix driver, but he has to stay on that path."

Dennis admitted it was "unlikely" Hamilton's first F1 race drive would be in a McLaren but added the team would support him in trying to secure a debut ride with a smaller team. "We are never going to obstruct his career," Dennis added.

Hamilton had been considered extremely strongly by BMW-Sauber for its 2006 third driver role, but he is now set on winning next year's GP2 championship.



GARY PAFFETT and Alex Wurz are set for a Formula 1-DTM 'superswap' as Paffett has been elevated to a full-time McLaren test driving role for 2006.

Reigning DTM champion Paffett, 24, replaces Wurz, who leaves the F1 team after five years. Paffett will drive solely for McLaren alongside fellow tester Pedro de la Rosa, who remains at McLaren in a test and reserve driver role, as he has since 2004.

Paffett's promotion could set him up as Britain's next Formula 1 star, as the team has admitted the testing role could be linked to F1 race opportunities. It also raises the possibility that Wurz could return to racing next season in a DTM Mercedes. Wurz last raced DTM cars for Opel in 1996.

Paffett is rated extremely highly by Mercedes motorsport boss Norbert Haug, who has been instrumental in guiding him to DTM success and bringing him closer to McLaren, which is 40 per cent owned by Mercedes.

He said: "Gary was a very fast learner in the DTM. Last year he was a title contender but he

lost out. This season he was the man of the year, with the most poles and the most race wins. It really wasn't an easy championship for him to win and he absolutely deserves his chance in F1. Our young driver programme has always been about evaluating the best talent and Gary has proved himself."

Paffett had his first ever Formula 1 run in a McLaren in December 2000, as a prize for winning the 1999 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award. In recent testing in Barcelona, driving a V8-powered McLaren MP4-20B, Paffett impressed engineers with his speed, consistency and detailed assessment of the car's behaviour. If he continues to shine in 2006, he will move into contention for an increased testing role at McLaren or a race drive with another team.

Wurz, who tested a DTM Mercedes at Hockenheim at the end of the 2003 season, had been in active talks with BMW for a third driver role, but the team's decision to sign emerging World Series by Renault champion Robert Kubica (see page 11), scuppered his plans to remain in Formula 1.



An artist's impression of how Alonso's Vodafone McLaren-Mercedes might look

Paffett's recent tests paved the way for his move into an F1 role



McLAREN SNAKES & LADDERS

SIGNS MONTOYA TO REPLACE COULTHARD 2003

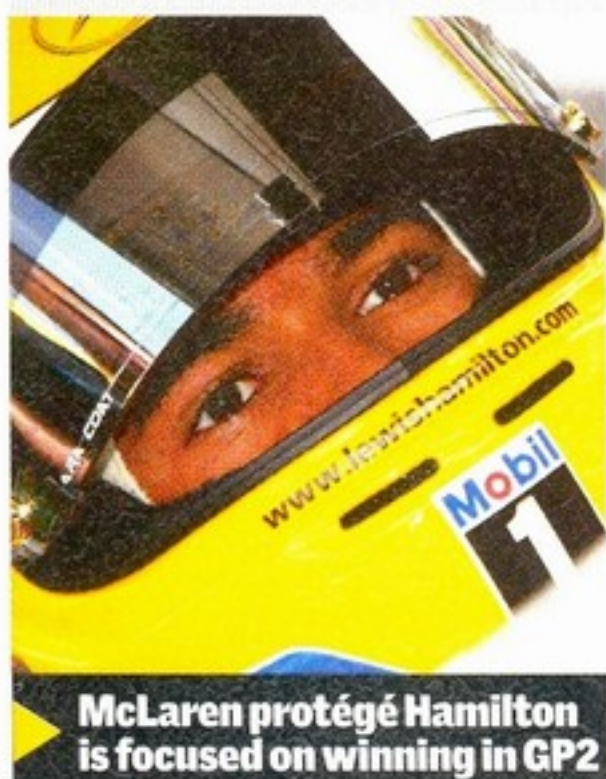
Swoops for Montoya midway through 2003 to create an all-star line-up

MP4-18A AND MP4-19 DEBACLE 2003/2004

Technically sophisticated but on-track performance never lives up to expectations. Fifth in 2004 championship falls well below expectations

LOSE WEST 2005

West ushered in the classic black and silver livery and the post-Marlboro era. Its decision to withdraw during 2005 leaves the team without a title sponsor for '06





EARLY McLAREN VODAFONE DEAL?



MARK HUGHES

EXPERT VIEW

HOW WILL Fernando Alonso attune to McLaren? It's a very different environment to that at Renault. On a racing weekend the chain of command is longer at McLaren. It relies less on the intuition and experience—albeit still backed up by data—of one man (Pat Symonds) and even more on multiple layers of data analysis.

There's a more obvious demarcation between the engine and chassis sides of the team and as such the political undercurrents tend to be stronger. The marketing push of the team is more overt and he'll probably find himself doing more sponsor work. The technical resource at McLaren-Mercedes is immense, almost certainly bigger even than the combination of Enstone and Viry, and he might revel in the speed at which new developments can come on-stream. His biggest challenge will be in taking on an incumbent team-mate—whether that's Kimi Räikkönen or Juan Pablo Montoya—both of whom are good enough to make full use of that advantage. But Alonso will succeed there, that's a given. He's too good, too smart, too driven not to.

ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDRIDGE



VODAFONE'S TITLE sponsorship of McLaren could begin earlier than its scheduled introduction at the start of 2007, Autosport has learned.

McLaren poached the mobile phone giant's backing from Ferrari, where it has shared space with title sponsor Marlboro since 2002, in a 10-year deal worth as much as £400m.

McLaren does not currently have a title sponsor for 2006, following the departure of West in response to the tightening of tobacco advertising legislation in Europe. But the team will have a Vodafone 'livery launch' in February, which could herald the early introduction of next year's MP4-21 cars in new racing colours.

Team COO Martin Whitmarsh said: "It could be before the end of 2006. Ferrari and Vodafone are in divorce proceedings at the moment and it depends how that resolves itself."

Vodafone's decision to switch teams comes after more than three years' wooing by McLaren.

Peter Bamford, Vodafone's chief marketing officer, said the level of

exposure the company was achieving with Ferrari, where it competes for space with Marlboro, was far less than what McLaren was able to offer. It is understood to have wanted title sponsorship space for an annual fee of around £36m. Bamford said value for money and McLaren's F1 record were also important factors.

Vodafone's switch leaves Ferrari with a sponsorship deficit of around £20m per season to fill and reports in the Italian press suggest another mobile phone company may replace Vodafone. The team will not be directly impoverished, however, as Vodafone's sponsorship deal is understood to have taken the form of a 'space buying' arrangement from Marlboro parent company Philip Morris, which owns the rights to all the advertising space on Ferrari F1 cars.

The defection mimics Vodafone's recent termination of the £9m-per-season sponsorship agreement it had with Manchester United. That sponsorship was pulled in the

wake of two seasons of poor performance by United, but Bamford denied Vodafone had left Ferrari because of the team's uncompetitive 2005 performance.

"That wasn't really a factor. We would never make a judgement based on one championship. Ferrari's profile helped us establish our brand, but now we are moving into a new phase."

Honda F1 was extremely close to a deal with Vodafone, but the company was swayed by McLaren's track record in F1. McLaren was also on the verge of signing a sponsorship deal with technology giant Intel, but the Vodafone agreement slowed the negotiations and allowed BMW to reach an agreement with Intel, a former Toyota backer, instead (see page 10).

McLaren boss Ron Dennis said: "We knocked down every door that led to Vodafone. We wanted to catch their wave and be on the same surfboard."

It is unclear what affect the McLaren switch will have on Vodafone's personal deal with Michael Schumacher.

KIMI '05 FASTEST IN MP4-20 2005

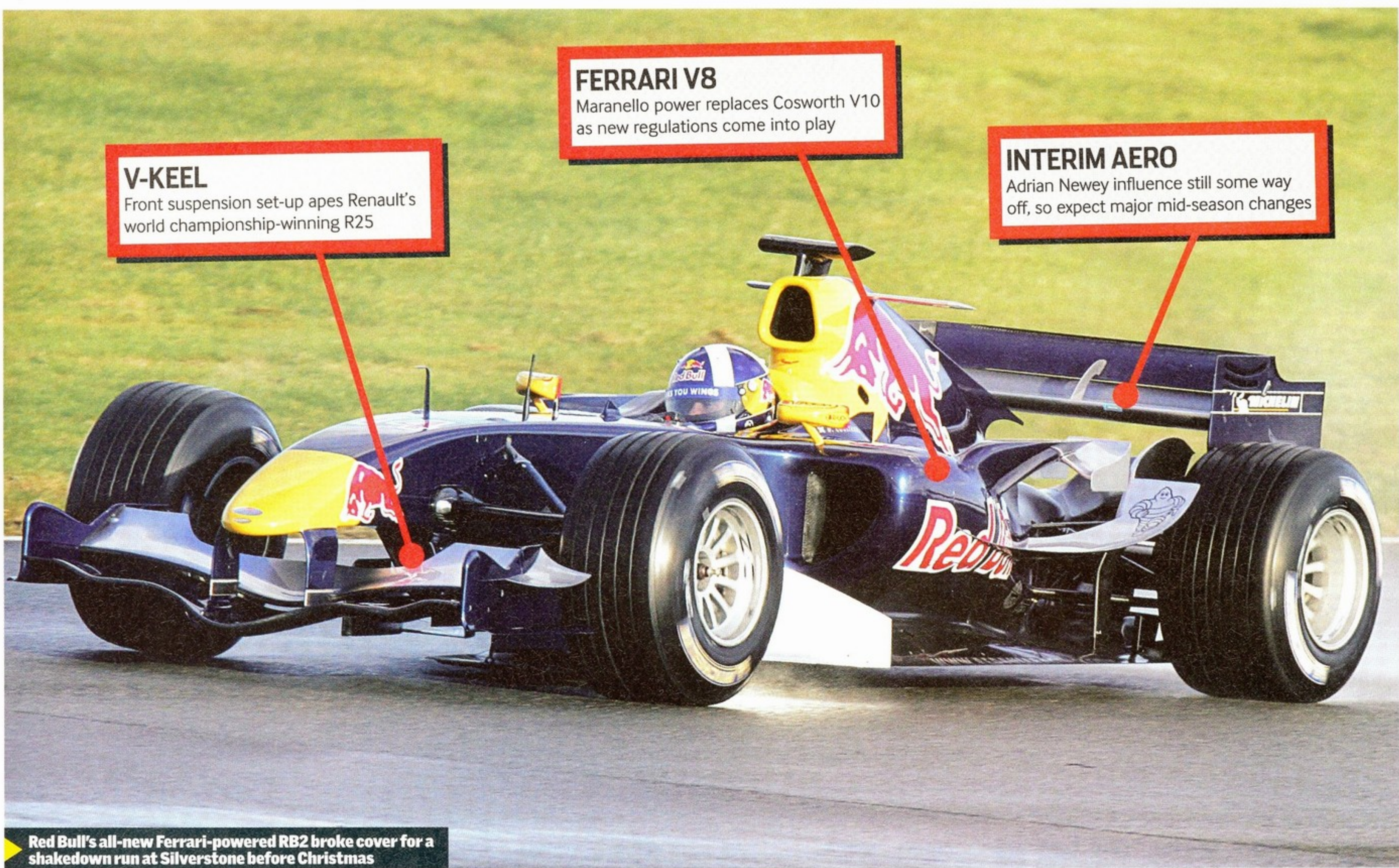
A slow start aside, the MP4-20 proves to be the fastest car on the 2005 grid. Kimi misses the title, but McLaren back as a force

LOSES NEWHEY 2005

After creating the MP4-20, Newey decides to end his eight-year stint with McLaren for a new challenge at Red Bull

POACHES VODAFONE AND ALONSO 2005

Two major coups in the space of a week puts McLaren back in the headlines and alleviates any doubts about the team's future competitiveness in emphatic style



V-KEEL

Front suspension set-up apes Renault's world championship-winning R25

FERRARI V8

Maranello power replaces Cosworth V10 as new regulations come into play

INTERIM AERO

Adrian Newey influence still some way off, so expect major mid-season changes

Red Bull's all-new Ferrari-powered RB2 broke cover for a shakedown run at Silverstone before Christmas

RED BULL: WE CAN BEAT FERRARI IN '06

RED BULL claims it can beat Ferrari in the constructors' world championship with its new RB2 chassis fitted with the Italian manufacturer's engines next year.

Technical director Mark Smith, who has overseen development of the chassis, said the strength of the Red Bull engineering squad, boosted last month by the recruitment of ex-McLaren aerodynamics ace Adrian Newey, gives the team enough technical firepower to take on top-line rivals. Both Ferrari and Red Bull will be powered by identical specification Ferrari V8 engines next year, making the Maranello-based team the benchmark for Red Bull.

Smith said: "We can beat Ferrari. The strength of the engineering group that we have is very high. It's the strongest group I've ever worked in."

The team has also been boosted by the poaching from Renault of Rob Marshall as chief designer, and Jonathan Wheatley as team manager. They will bolster the existing team lead by Ben Agathangelou, head of aerodynamics, and Anton Stipinovich, head of R&D. The team's ex-MoD DERA windtunnel, reckoned to be one of the most accurate in F1, is now fully operational.

Smith said Newey would have little early effect on the RB2, but admitted that his influence would increase as the season progressed. "There will be very little that he can do in terms of the first race, but in terms of how we develop the car, he can

have a considerable input.

"He's aware of how we work. I believe he will bring us things that we will benefit from and likewise I think he will be pleasantly surprised by the strength of our engineering group. In the first month or two we will find our feet, but I can only see positives from his arrival."

The RB2 chassis ran for the first time at

"FERRARI HAS TO BE OUR BENCHMARK NEXT YEAR"

MARK SMITH, RED BULL



Smith (left) and Agathangelou are part of Red Bull's engineering 'superteam' for 2006

Silverstone on December 15-16, becoming the second 2006 car after Toyota to hit the track. Its aerodynamics are not yet definitive '06-specification, but the car has a 'V-keel' front suspension arrangement pioneered in '05 by Renault's R25. It also has an extremely tight rear end 'Coke bottle' aerodynamic treatment, to take advantage of the 100mm shortening of V8 engines compared with V10s.

Smith said he believed the RB2 marked as much of a culture shift for the team as does the switch to Ferrari power from Cosworth, which powered Red Bull last year and the Jaguar Racing and Stewart Grand Prix teams before that.

Smith said: "We have a good open relationship with Ferrari. There are still track operation issues and development issues that we have to resolve, but that's inevitable in any new relationship."

Red Bull will race on Michelin tyres next season while Ferrari will remain with Bridgestone. Sporting director Christian Horner said: "Ferrari have to be our benchmark next year. If they are better than us then we are not doing a good enough job or Bridgestone are doing a better job than Michelin."

Lead driver David Coulthard, who carried out the shakedown test, was encouraged by the RB2. "Testing the car was momentous, as it represents something completely new for the team," he said. "When everything works well, it's very rewarding. It must be a proud moment for the whole team."



GARY ANDERSON

EXPERT VIEW

THE TRICK for Red Bull in 2006 will be ensuring it stays on its feet without tripping over.

The team has recruited heavily on the design side with some big names and it has to be careful that it's not trying to run before it can walk. Last season it seemed to be a well-balanced team and that showed in the consistency of results. But it needs to make sure it keeps all the egos satisfied without there being any internal strife. Ego isn't a bad thing in itself, but it must be used constructively.

Red Bull will have evolved sensibly from last season, and Mark Smith, its technical director, is an extremely nice, organised chap who's not the type to get sucked into internal politics. I know Adrian [Newey] will have his philosophy of what the team needs to do to work more effectively, and he's looking forward to having a more creative role which the team believes it can offer him. It's strong on paper, but making sure the management structure is right will be the key.

BMW SIGNS INTEL AND KUBICA

BMW HAS signed a major sponsorship deal with Intel, and hired rising Polish star Robert Kubica as third driver.

Intel had been close to signing a contract with McLaren worth up to £20 million per season, but Vodafone's decision to leave Ferrari for McLaren scuppered the deal.

Reigning World Series by Renault champion Kubica has been picked less than a month after having his first F1 test, for Renault, at Barcelona. His times almost matched those of regular tester Franck Montagny.

Krakow-born Kubica, 21, said: "The three-car rule is a godsend for me. I'll learn all 19 circuits and the workings of an F1 weekend."

BMW motorsport boss Mario Theissen added: "We have been very impressed by Robert's progress. He has great potential."

Kubica's contract contains options for extension into 2007.

YAMAMOTO IN POLE POSITION FOR AGURI

JAPANESE RACER Sakon Yamamoto is favourite to land the second Super Aguri race seat alongside Takuma Sato, Autosport has learned.

Yamamoto tested earlier this year for Jordan and impressed the team in a Friday driver role at Suzuka. Although his Formula 1 experience is limited, he is rated as one of his country's brightest prospects.

Super Aguri MD Daniel Audetto, who was awaiting confirmation of

the team's re-submitted 2006 entry as Autosport closed for press, said the desire to turn Super Aguri into an 'all-Japanese' entry had moved Yamamoto into a strong position. But he added that the team still had concerns over running an F1 rookie.

He said: "One of the attractions is that Yamamoto would allow us to secure commercial agreements with Japanese backers for the year, but we have to balance that against our need for a driver with some experience. We can't afford to lose

many cars through accidents."

Honda F1 third driver Anthony Davidson could still race for Super Aguri later in the season, when the team is planning to introduce its own chassis to replace the redeveloped Arrows A23 cars with which it will start the year.

Audetto said: "At the start of the year it is not likely we will be fully competitive and it is better for Anthony to carry on with his role developing the Honda F1 car. But that may change when we have our new chassis."



CARROLL'S CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY

BAR tester and GP2 race winner Adam Carroll (pictured using fellow test driver Anthony Davidson's helmet) had his first winter test outing for the Honda team at Jerez in Spain on December 13-14

MICHELIN CONSIDERS COMEBACK

MICHELIN WOULD return to Formula 1 "without hesitation" if the transparency of the sport's rule-making process was improved.

Nick Shorrock, the company's F1 boss, said that Michelin's decision to withdraw from F1 at the end of 2006 was only taken after a great deal of soul-searching "at the highest level".

But he added: "Only idiots don't change their mind. The teams themselves are working hard to get

greater clarity and transparency in the rule-making process. If that is achieved then Michelin would undoubtedly consider a return."

Michelin's withdrawal had been widely expected after the FIA announced that F1 would have a single tyre supplier from 2008.

Shorrock said: "The decision was based on profound differences of opinion

over what we wanted to see promoted in F1 — namely

competition between tyre manufacturers, and teams being able to choose their tyre supplier."

Ongoing ill-feeling between Michelin and the FIA over this year's 'Indy-gate' debacle has also been a factor in the tyre company's withdrawal.

The FIA declared itself happy with Michelin's decision to quit F1. A spokesman said: "Everyone in F1 will be most grateful to Michelin for the efforts they have made and for their courtesy in giving the necessary full year's notice. The competing teams have repeatedly and unanimously requested the FIA impose a single tyre supplier."

"This has been agreed for 2008, but Michelin's announcement makes it probable for '07."



Shorrock

JEREZ TESTING TIMES (DECEMBER 13-17)

POS	DRIVER	CAR	ENGINE	TYRE	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1	Franck Montagny	Renault R25	Renault V10r	M	1m18.804s	1m16.953s	1m18.322s	—	1m31.288s
2	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari F2004M	Ferrari V8	B	1m18.953s	—	1m18.582s	—	—
3	Fernando Alonso	Renault R25	Renault V10r	M	—	—	1m18.739s	—	—
4	Nico Rosberg	Williams FW25C	Cosworth V8	B	—	1m20.597s	1m18.894s	—	—
5	Anthony Davidson	Honda 078	Honda V8	M	1m20.133s	1m19.877s	1m18.953s	—	—
6	Felipe Massa	Ferrari F2004M	Ferrari V8	B	1m19.264s	1m19.060s	—	1m19.070s	—
7	Heikki Kovalainen	Renault R25	Renault C10r	M	1m19.626s	1m19.100s	—	—	—
8	Narain Karthikeyan	Williams FW25C	Cosworth V8	B	1m19.171s	—	1m20.871s	—	—
9	Ricardo Zonta	Toyota TF106	Toyota V8	B	1m19.521s	1m20.035s	—	1m20.061s	—
10	Jenson Button	Honda 078	Honda V8	M	—	—	1m19.651s	—	1m31.288s
11	Mark Webber	Williams FW25C	Cosworth V8	B	1m20.105s	1m21.453s	—	—	—
12	Juan Pablo Montoya	McLaren MP4-20B	Mercedes V8	M	1m20.216s	1m20.168s	—	—	—
13	Adam Carroll	Honda 078	Honda V8	M	1m21.555s	1m20.170s	—	—	—
14	Gary Paffett	McLaren MP4-20B	Mercedes V8	M	—	—	—	1m20.226s	—
15	Pedro de la Rosa	McLaren MP4-20B	Mercedes V8	M	1m20.885s	1m20.492s	—	1m20.318s	—
16	Nick Heidfeld	BMW Sauber C24B	BMW V8	M	1m20.325s	1m20.700s	—	1m20.794s	—
17	Olivier Panis	Toyota TF106	Toyota V8	B	1m21.678s	1m20.342s	—	—	—
18	Franck Perera	Toyota TF106	Toyota V8	B	1m21.556s	—	—	1m21.337s	—

KEY: r—restricted V10 (pseudo V8); M—Michelin; B—Bridgestone. Fastest lap during testing for each driver in bold.

PIT AND PADDOCK

▶ McLAREN COURT ACTION

McLaren is taking its former lawyer to a High Court trial next month over money it expected to receive from the sale of Formula 1's commercial rights-holding company. After a mooted £2 billion float was abandoned, Bernie Ecclestone's family trust sold for more than £1.15bn, but McLaren did not receive any cash. The team claims that its former lawyers, Baker & McKenzie, acted negligently in negotiating and preparing the contracts which promised the share. The case is scheduled to begin on January 16.



▶ NO STR ROLE FOR BRUNNER

Squadra Toro Rosso has ruled out signing refugee Toyota chief designer Gustav Brunner (above). Brunner, 55, was technical director at the Faenza-based team in its Minardi guise before joining Toyota in 2001. A source at STR said: "Gustav has never been in our plans and we have no intention whatsoever to bring him into Toro Rosso or even Red Bull Racing. We are satisfied with the team we have in Faenza." Brunner was released after a reorganisation of Toyota's technical department made his job surplus to requirements.

▶ HOLZER WINS BMW TEST

Marco Holzer will test for the new BMW-Sauber team as part of his prize for winning the Formula BMW World Final last weekend. The 17-year-old German was a surprise winner in Bahrain after finishing a lowly 13th in the German FBMW championship in 2005.

▶ TOMBAZIS STILL AT McLAREN

McLaren head of aerodynamics Nicholas Tombazis has not left the team, despite speculation that he is about to return to former employer Ferrari. Team COO Martin Whitmarsh said: "Nicholas is here and at the moment he is staying here. When an organisation is successful the market value of its people increases, and that's what has happened with some of our engineers. Some of our staff have had offers to double or treble their salaries."

▶ KARTHIKEYAN ON HOLD

Williams has still to decide on its third driver for 2006, despite Narain Karthikeyan setting impressive test times for the team last week (below). Karthikeyan has been strongly tipped for the drive, but Frank Williams is "keeping his options open" according to sources. Autosport understands Alex Wurz, now out of McLaren contract, may be approached by Williams.



▶ KEITH DUCKWORTH 1933-2005

Cosworth co-founder Keith Duckworth has died at the age of 72. Duckworth designed the classic DFV 3-litre F1 engine that won 155 grands prix in various guises between 1967 and '83. Full obituary, page 25.



ROOKIES TRYING TO MAKE THEIR MARK

Giorgio Pantano (main pic) hustles his PKV Racing Champ Car around Sebring in his efforts to nail a full-time seat in America next year. Also taking part in the pre-Christmas run were British F3 race winner Dan Clarke (top left) and Atlantic star Katherine Legge (right)



ROBIN MILLER

EXPERT VIEW

SOMICHAEL Andretti has decided to replace Dan Wheldon with 18-year-old son Marco. Some say it's to save money, others feel it's a ploy to attract sponsorship, but most are in agreement it's a very risky decision given young Andretti's level of experience.

A handful of IPS starts, a season of Star Mazda and a couple years of Skip Barber Pro Series is hardly preparation for going side-by-side at 210mph.

The logic escapes Mario Andretti, who was very vocal about moving his grandson to Europe to further his racing education. Poor Marco is caught in the middle—he wants to please both dad and grandpa.

Obviously, Michael didn't learn anything by watching another famous US racing family's mistake. Anthony Foyt IV had no business in an Indy car with his limited seat time and everybody knew it but AJ.

Marco has a better chance because he's got more experience, a much better team and support group. But he'll still be in the deep end of the pool without a lifeguard.

ANDRETTI NAME RETURNS TO INDY

➔ **ONE OF** the most famous names in Indianapolis racing history will take on the challenge of next year's Indy 500 when Michael

Andretti comes out of retirement at the age of 43 to join 18-year-old son Marco in America's greatest single-seater race.

Michael, who co-owns the Andretti Green Racing team, will return to racing for the first time since the 2003 Indy 500 for a one-off outing, while Marco will run a full IRL IndyCar season, effectively replacing reigning champion and Indy 500 winner Dan Wheldon, who has moved to Chip Ganassi Racing for 2006.

The move means that AGR will run five cars at Indy.

Michael said of the deal: "I'm really looking forward to returning to Indy and I'm excited about the chance I'll have to run with Marco. As a driver, he has developed much quicker than I think anybody expected and that is what really made this possible."

"I think I'll have as good a shot as I've ever had to win the Indianapolis 500 and I think I can also be a big help to Marco as he gets ready to make his first 500 start."

He will drive a Jim Beam/Vonage-

sponsored Dallara-Honda, while his son will take over the ArcaEx package run by Dario Franchitti in recent years, as he is too young to represent an alcohol brand.

Marco said: "Obviously, I'm excited about having the opportunity to drive for Andretti Green Racing. Over the past couple of years, I've had the opportunity to spend time in the paddock with the ArcaEx team, as well as my three team-mates, so that is a plus."

"I know that I have a lot of work ahead of me and a pretty steep learning curve, but I also know that I have one of the best teams in motorsport working with me."

The team has also confirmed that Franchitti has re-signed, and will take his regular number 27 to the Klein Tools/Jim Beam-backed car that Wheldon drove in 2005.

"I'm very excited to be driving the car that has won the IndyCar Series championship," the Scot said. "I'm looking forward to working with my new and old team-mates, challenging them for the championship."

Bryan Herta has also renewed his contract for 2006, while Tony Kanaan is on a long-term deal with the Indianapolis-based team.



Marco Andretti

AGR FORCED TO CUT HONDA PERKS

IRL INDYCAR Series 'superteam' Andretti Green Racing has lost its exclusive chassis development deal with engine supplier Honda with immediate effect, following Toyota's withdrawal from next year's championship.

Honda will supply the entire IRL field in 2006 so its single-supplier status has negated AGR's 'factory' deal. Andretti Green, which has won the past two IRL titles with Tony Kanaan and Dan Wheldon, is believed to have received substantial funding for chassis development and windtunnel work, as well as free engines, since its creation in 2003.

Honda's Robert Clarke said: "The chassis development programme that we had through AGR has been terminated. Every team will get exactly the same

product and support and service from Honda. We can guarantee that."

To allow for the increased demand, Honda will service engines from its HPD and Ilmor facilities. The IRL will select engines at random from the 'pool' and supply them to the teams.

Clarke added: "There's no chance of any impartial treatment. Actual delivery will be through Honda, but the selection of the engine, based on a serial number, will be through the IRL."

Honda has pledged to reduce the cost of its engine leases in the next two years: "Our target, and I think we'll be able to get close, is \$1.3million [£738,000] in '06 and under \$1million [£568,000] in '07," said Clarke.

YOUNG GUNS STAKE CLAIM TO PKV SEAT

FORMER GANASSI Racing IRL drivers Ryan Briscoe and Giorgio Pantano, along with Scotsman Ryan Dalziel, staked their claim to a seat with Champ Car World Series squad PKV Racing in testing at Sebring before Christmas.

Although Bruno Junqueira set the fastest time during the three days of testing for Newman/Haas, Pantano matched his time on the final day and Briscoe — who broke both collarbones in a fiery crash at Chicago a few months ago — was just a tenth of a second slower.

Pantano, who raced in GP2 this year and contested two IRL road

course races, said: "I think I did enough and showed what I can do, not just in terms of speed but in fixing the problems with the car. It was a good test. I hope to be there next season and we should know more in the next couple of weeks."

All my focus is on racing in the US. I think that PKV is the best option for me to be doing that."

Briscoe said: "It was a really good test, and I know a few drivers are trying for a seat with PKV. I know I'm getting a fair shot and I think things are looking good."

Dalziel also tested for PKV, and topped the times on the second day of running at the Florida track.

PKV engineer Steve Krisloff said: "All three of them were good, they really were. Dalziel didn't get to run the third day when there was more rubber on the track so that makes a difference."

Cristiano da Matta, who won at Portland for the team this year, seems certain not to return for 2006, while Jimmy Vasser has yet to make up his mind about whether or not he will retire.

"There are a couple more guys Kevin [Kalkhoven, PKV's owner] wants us to look at so we'll probably have another test in mid-January," said Jim McGee, PKV's veteran team manager. "We're a work in progress and need to win more races next year but there's no sense in making any rushed decisions."



Briscoe

PANTHER DEAL UNRESOLVED

VETERAN US team owner Pat Patrick has decided against purchasing two-time IRL champion team Panther Racing, but hasn't ruled out trying to field a car for the Indianapolis 500 next year.

"I decided not to proceed

with it because we just got started too late," said Patrick.

"It's a shame because we had funding available and it was [with] excellent people and excellent equipment."

Panther is auctioning off many of its assets next month,

including four Dallara race cars. Earlier this month, it sold its two-time championship-winning chassis on eBay.

Despite this, however, team co-owner John Barnes insists that Panther is working on a 2006 IRL programme.

GOOD FOR ANOTHER 27 YEARS?

One of the toughest tracks on the NASCAR calendar, the fearsome 2.66-mile Talladega Superspeedway is to be resurfaced for the first time since 1979 following next April's Nextel Cup race



VISO'S ISPORT MOVE

ISPORT INTERNATIONAL has signed up Ernesto Viso to lead its GP2 challenge in 2006.

The 20-year-old Venezuelan ended 2005 strongly, with second place in the finale in Bahrain his best result of the year, and iSport boss Paul Jackson believes he can make the breakthrough into the winners' circle next year.

"He's been interested in joining us for a while," he said. "I think we started to see at the end of the season what he is capable of. We gave him a test just to see how he fitted in with the team."

"It would have been nice to judge him on a dry session, but that didn't happen. I'd like to think that if we can get another driver of similar quality next to him, we'll be in a strong position next season."

Viso, who raced for BCN Competición in 2005, added: "I know Paul, and I know we will get on very well. I will be putting in 100 per cent effort on and off the track and I know the team will do the same."

Alvaro Parente and Clivio Piccione head the list of candidates to partner Viso, but no deal has yet been struck.

Andreas Zuber will definitely be on the 2006 GP2 grid. Nico Rosberg's former Formula 3 team-mate has signed up with series newcomers Trident Racing, where he will partner Gianmaria Bruni.

Team boss Mauricio Salvadori said: "We think Andreas is a talented and fast driver. On top of this he perfectly shares our team spirit and we are sure we will reach excellent results together."

Campos Racing is "95 per cent" certain that Adrian Valles will join Felix Porteiro in 2006, according to team boss Adrian Campos.

LLOYD AIMS TO CROSS ATLANTIC

FORMER McLAREN Autosport BRDC award winner Alex Lloyd has set his sights on the revamped Champ Car Atlantic series next year.

The 20-year-old completed a two-day test with the Jensen Motorsport team at the Savannah circuit in Georgia before Christmas and sees America as his best chance of affording to complete a first full season since finishing second in Formula Renault UK in 2003.

Lloyd, who has raced sporadically in Italian-based Formula 3000 categories for the past two years, said: "I've been wanting to come out to America for the past year. Atlantic is going to be a lot more competitive next year, and there is a clear opportunity to move into Champ Cars. That's where I want to be."

Lloyd will continue in his role as A1 Team Great Britain's second driver, although is unlikely to claim Robbie Kerr's race seat in the near future.

British F3 racer Tim Bridgman also tested for Jensen before Christmas.

MENU ON VERGE OF CLOSURE

BRITISH FORMULA 3 outfit Menu Motorsport is facing closure if it proves unable to find a funded driver in the coming weeks.

Autosport understands that the team, which ran Stephen Jelley in 2005, has informed its staff they are free to seek alternative employment.

However, Menu boss Mike Baker says he is still talking to drivers in an attempt to ensure the team continues.

Baker said: "There is still a car sitting in the workshop and one call can change everything. The hope is still that we can be there next April. We've had a poor year, and finding a driver who is going to believe in us will be hard."

The team was keen on running National Class graduate Ben Clucas, but he has proved unable to raise the required funding.

Clucas said: "I rate the team very highly, but, as always in this game, it's a case of trying to get the money together."

PIT AND PADDOCK

JUNQUEIRA'S NO QUITTER

Champ Car star Bruno Junqueira claims he never considered quitting the sport during his six-month rehabilitation from his appalling crash in the Indianapolis 500 last May. Junqueira, who set the pace on his return to Champ Car testing at Sebring prior to Christmas, said: "This is what I love to do and this is where I belong. I had some pain but what really hurt was sitting and watching everybody else get to race all summer." The 27-year-old Brazilian has a pair of eight-inch rods in his back and several screws.

ATLANTIC STARS STEP UP

Toyota Atlantic frontrunners Charles Zwolsman and Tonis Kasemets tested for Conquest Racing's Champ Car team before Christmas at Sebring. Kasemets' running was limited when the Estonian spun into the wall in the opening hour of his test. Zwolsman lapped just under a second off Bruno Junqueira's pace.

GIAFFONE JOINS FOYT SQUAD

IRL IndyCar race winner Felipe Giaffone will return to the series next year driving for AJ Foyt's team. Giaffone drove for Foyt in this year's Indy 500, finishing 15th and replaces AJ's grandson Anthony IV, who will race in NASCAR instead.

JONES JOINS TASMAN TEAM

Tasman Motorsport has signed Andrew Jones (right) to replace Jamie Whincup for the 2006 Australian V8 Supercar Series. Jones, dumped by Garry Rogers Motorsport after Bathurst this year, beat Nathan Pretty and Luke Youlden to the drive after a test at Winton.



PERKINS SWAPS LUBRICANT

After losing Castrol as his title sponsor, Aussie V8 legend Larry Perkins has signed Jack Daniel's whiskey to back his two-car Holden team for 2006. The three-year deal, for the cars of Steven Richards and Paul Dumbrell, is the first time a spirit distiller has sponsored a team in the series.

OZ A1 STAR FOR DJR V8 TEAM

A1 Team Australia driver Will Davison will replace Glenn Seton in one of Dick Johnson Racing's Ford Falcons in 2006. Davison will drive for Australia in the Sentul and Durban A1 Grand Prix events before focusing on his V8 Supercar commitments.

HOLZER KEEPS OPEL FAITH

Team Holzer has tested the new generation of Opel Formula 3 engine in Spain before Christmas, in the hands of Thomas Holzer and Tim Sandtler, and has pledged to run two Dallara F306 cars in next year's Euroseries. It is planning further test runs with new drivers in January, and will use the facilities at the Opel Performance Centre in Bobingen, Germany, to test the torsional rigidity of its car in the meantime.

HBR PLANS FOUR-CAR SQUAD

Austrian outfit HBR Motorsport plans to run four cars in next year's Formula 3 Euroseries, running two Dallara-Opels in the Euroseries Trophy class for under 22-year-olds. It will field a brace of Dallara-Mercedes in the top class, with Alejandro Nuñez likely to continue with the team. Team manager Siggi Müller said: "We think he's got more potential."

COURAGE SHOWS NEW DESIGN

Courage Compétition has offered a preview of its new LC75 LMP2 contender, which is expected to run for the first time early in the new year. The LC nomenclature stands for Lilian Courage, team founder Yves' wife, who died two years ago.





Audi's three-year commitment to the DTM has helped safeguard the future of the series



CHARLES BRADLEY

EXPERT VIEW

UNTIL 16.30 on Thursday, December 15, there wasn't going to be a DTM next year. Germany's governing body, the DMSB, required two manufacturers and 16 cars to give the green light. It had Mercedes and 10 cars.

With hopes fading before the deadline, Audi came through—the DTM was saved. Not only that, it committed until the end of 2008, pledged 10 cars, commended the 2007 tech rules and even had a dig at the WTCC's viewing figures in its announcement. Talk about coming out fighting!

All we need now is to find a more descriptive name outside of Germany—"DTM V8 Supercars" would do—and build the same sort of international profile it has so carefully crafted at home.

The door is wide open for new manufacturers to take on these German giants at their own game in 2007, now more than ever.

Audi and Mer have committed much to this field of dreams—the question is, will 'they' come?

DTM SAVED BY AUDI DECISION

AUDI'S DECISION to pledge a three-year commitment to the DTM has secured the immediate future of the German-based pan-European touring car series—and it now believes that revised technical rules will attract new manufacturers beyond next year.

The manufacturer confirmed its participation to Germany's motorsport body, the DMSB, before a self-imposed deadline following the launch of its R10 sportscar.

Audi's head of motorsport, Wolfgang Ullrich, said: "With us and Mercedes committing to DTM on a long-term basis, it gives the series security for all interested parties and other manufacturers."

Opel's withdrawal, and subsequent barring of private teams from using its cars, had thrown the championship into turmoil, but Audi's commitment has given much-needed stability.

Audi board chairman Martin Winterkorn said: "Together with Mercedes-Benz, we are going to continue to work on strengthening the



Ullrich

DTM's role as the most attractive racing series outside of Formula 1. With a long-term commitment to DTM, which is planned for at least three years, we are adding our part to that."

DTM chief Hans Werner Aufrecht said: "Audi's scheduled long-term involvement and the planned regulations for 2007, making it

even cheaper to enter cars, represent a positive signal for other manufacturers that are thinking about joining DTM."

Revisions to the DTM's technical rules in 2007, which will mandate more common components, were key to Audi's continued long-term commitment.

The DMSB's technical expert Christian Schacht said of the new rules: "Every area where high-level engineering is not really required will be considered [for common components] like the safety cell, fuel cell or even the general layout of the rollcage. The cars will continue to be just as spectacular, but they will cost less in places where nobody can have any advantage."

For 2006, Audi has already begun

a major development phase with its current 'R12' chassis. Many areas have been frozen for this year, but some aerodynamic and suspension revisions are allowed, and a new generation of its V8 engine has been bench testing on the dyno since October.

No decisions have yet been made about Audi's teams or drivers, but Abt Sportsline is expected to run at least four new cars, with Team Rosberg and Team Phoenix also linked to entries.

PROVISIONAL DTM CALENDAR

April 9	Hockenheim (D)
April 16	Lausitz (D)
April 30	Spa-Francorchamps (B)
May 21	Oschersleben (D)
June 4	Istanbul (TR) or Mugello (I)
July 2	Brands Hatch (GB)
July 23	Norising (D)
August 20	Nürburgring (D)
September 3	Zandvoort (NL)
September 24	Barcelona (E)
October 15	Le Mans (F)
October 29	Hockenheim (D)

BRANDS CONFIRMS INDY DATE

BRANDS HATCH'S 1.2-mile Indy Circuit will next year host the first DTM race to be run in the UK since 2003.

The deal was confirmed for the German-based touring cars just before Christmas and the race will take place at the Kent venue on July 2, 2006. Donington Park had previously hosted DTM events in 2002 and '03.

Former grand prix racer Jonathan Palmer, chief executive of Brands owner MotorSport Vision, visited the Zandvoort DTM round this year.

He said: "I was extremely impressed with the quality of the cars and the show. I knew that we really must have these awesome cars at Brands Hatch."

The DTM will not confirm its calendar until next month, as negotiations are ongoing about replacing Istanbul with a round at Mugello in Italy in June. Barcelona and Le Mans are the other new venues.

Q&A JONATHAN PALMER

How do you feel about adding a DTM date to your A1 Grand Prix and WTCC events next year?

"I'm absolutely thrilled. I went across to Zandvoort and met [DTM chief] Mr Aufrecht and the board members for initial discussions. The set-up is mighty impressive and I hadn't realised how sophisticated the cars actually are. They are another scale up on any other touring car."

Why the Indy circuit?

"I think it's going to be great. It's going to be an all-action arena that will reflect the nature of the DTM. I'm really pleased they chose the Indy circuit, because the WTCC is on the Grand Prix circuit and they will both have a different appeal."

Qualifying will be held on a World Cup quarter final day. What if England or Germany are playing on that day?

"We'll just have to show it on the big screen, won't we?"

AUDI AIMS FOR 2006 GLORY WITH NEW R10

AUDI BELIEVES its new diesel-powered R10 prototype can win the Le Mans 24 Hours first time out. Marque motorsport boss Wolfgang Ullrich said: "Our aim is to have a car that is at a level of competitiveness where it is able to win [in 2006]. We wouldn't try if we didn't think it was attainable. We are going flat out for that."

Ullrich said a better picture of the R10's potential would emerge in the run up to its race debut in the Sebring 12 Hours on March 18.

"We need now to run the car and with that we will learn where we have to make improvements," he explained. "After that we will do some endurance runs, like we did with the R8."

Ullrich believes the R10's new

5.5-litre V12 turbo-diesel engine could be reliable over 24 hours.

"It looks convincing on the engine dyno, but it is one thing to be reliable on the dyno and quite another on the track. The real stresses of racing are not something you can reproduce on the dyno."

Full details of the R10's

programme were not revealed at its launch earlier this month. Audi expects to run two cars at both Sebring and Le Mans, the only confirmed appearances for the car, and maintains that its plans for the American Le Mans Series are not fixed. The only driver confirmed for the R10 so far is Tom Kristensen.

Veteran Audi ace Emanuele Pirro continued the new R10's major test programme before Christmas



CRAWFORD'S ACES TEAM UP

THE WORKS Crawford squad is putting its top two drivers together in one car for its 2006 Grand-Am assault.

Andy Wallace and Butch Leitzinger, both race winners this year, will share the solo Pontiac-powered DP03 that

Crawford will run in the full 15-round series.

NASCAR superstar Tony Stewart will join the Anglo-American pairing for next month's series opener, the Daytona 24 Hours.

Team boss Max Crawford

said: "We're down to one car for the coming season, as 2005 showed us that you need two very strong drivers if you want a shot at the championship. It was obvious to put Andy and Butch together. I think we can have a good season."



TOYOTA'S NEW SUPER GT CHALLENGER BREAKS COVER

The replacement for the Toyota Supra GT500 has begun testing ahead of its debut in next year's Super GT Series. The new V8-powered contender follows the silhouette of the Lexus SC430 sports car

VASSER FOR DAYTONA

FORMER CHAMP Car title winner Jimmy Vasser is returning to the Daytona 24 Hours after an absence of six years.

Vasser, whose previous Daytona start came in 1999, has landed a drive with the Blackhawk Racing team in the Grand American Sportscar Series opener on January 28-29. The 1996 Champ Car winner will share the team's Riley-Pontiac MkXI Daytona Prototype with Alex Gurney, son of US racing legend Dan, another second-generation driver, Toyota Atlantic frontrunner

Rocky Moran Jr, and car owner Bob Stallings.

Vasser said: "I am proud to be part of an all-American line-up with talented young drivers like Alex and Rocky. It will be exciting to race with them and Bob as well, who proved that he's got what it takes in his rookie year last season."

"I am excited that the team invited me to be part of this and I'm really looking forward to getting in the car. I can't think of a better way to kick off 2006."

"Blackhawk has put together a

fantastic effort and achieved a lot as a team last year, and I am confident that we have got a good shot at victory as anyone."

Stallings, who will contest the full Grand-Am season sharing with Gurney, said: "I'm thrilled that we've been able to assemble a great group of talented drivers."

The Blackhawk deal reunites the Gurney and Moran names at Daytona. Rocky Moran Sr won the 1993 24 Hours sharing one of Dan Gurney's Eagle-Toyota Mk3s with PJ Jones and Mark Dismore.

HUISMANS PAIR WITH FRISSELLES

PATRICK AND Duncan Huisman could team up in next month's Daytona 24 Hours with another set of brothers.

Four-time Porsche Supercup champion Patrick has landed a drive for the Grand-Am opener with the Synergy team and has suggested younger brother Duncan as a fourth driver. The elder Huisman is joining the Frisselle brothers, Brian and Burt, who will drive Synergy's Doran-Porsche Daytona Prototype over the full season.

Patrick, who tried the Doran at Homestead earlier this month, said: "I've put forward Duncan's name. He's driven for the team before, so I hope it can happen."

Daytona will be Patrick Huisman's second race start in a Daytona Prototype. He drove a Picchio-BMW for Synergy, then known as G&W, at Virginia in 2003.

"The car was falling apart, it was a bit of a disaster," he said. "The organisation has changed a lot since then and the Doran-Porsche is a good package."

DYSON GETS BRITISH STAR DUO

BRITISH SPORTSCAR stars Oliver Gavin and Guy Smith are teaming up for next month's Daytona 24 Hours.

Gavin and Smith will race a works-run Crawford-Pontiac DP03 entered under the Dyson Racing banner in the Grand-Am opener on January 28-29 together with team bosses Rob and Chris Dyson. The deal marks a return to Dyson for the two Britons.

American Le Mans Series GT1 champion Gavin, who raced a Riley & Scott for Dyson at Daytona in 2002, said: "I've kept in contact with the Dysons since then and they are a fun team to be around, so I'm happy to be going back."

"We have a potential winning line-up. Guy is a proven winner at this level. Chris has really come on as a sportscar driver in the past year and Rob has a lot of experience at Daytona."

Smith, who did two ALMS races in one of Dyson's Lola-AERs this year, said: "The Crawford seems to be the right car for Daytona."

PIT AND PADDOCK



IT'S THE JAPANESE MASERATI

Maserati handed over the MC12 that Team Goh will race in the Japanese-based Super GT Series next year at Adria in Italy earlier this month. Factory driver Andrea Bertolini and Goh's Seiji Ara drove the MC12 (above), which ran on Bridgestone tyres. The car ran in long-nose 2004 specification, which should be allowed under Super GT rules.

BARBOSA'S NEW BRUMOS

Portuguese sportscar regular João Barbosa has joined the Brumos FABCAR-Porsche line-up for the Daytona 24 Hours Grand-Am opener next month. The Rollcentre Racing Le Mans Endurance Series regular will share the team's second car with Hurley Haywood, JC France and NASCAR Modified driver Ted Christopher

DAYTON BUYS DYSON MG

The second of the ex-Dyson Racing Lola-AER B01/60s will be raced in next year's American Le Mans Series by Duncan Dayton. The car will be run by Dayton's Highcroft Racing team for the series regular and an unspecified team-mate. Sportscar veteran Rick Knoop will join the team for Sebring in March.

TRACY SETS SIGHTS ON BUSCH

Champ Car star Paul Tracy has outlined further plans for his transition to NASCAR next year. Tracy took part in a three-day ARCA RE/MAX Series test session at Daytona before Christmas, and he could drive in as many as 11 races with the Biagi Bros Busch team in 2006.

O'BRIEN LINES UP WTCC DEAL

Irishman Emmet O'Brien, who raced in last year's Alfa 147 Challenge, tested for the Weichers-Sport BMW WTCC squad prior to Christmas and has admitted he is in negotiations with this year's Independents' title winner.

Autosport INTERNATIONAL
THE RACING CAR SHOW
12-15 JANUARY 2006
NEC, BIRMINGHAM

British Touring Car Champion Matt Neal will be at Autosport International throughout the show. As well as appearing on the Autosport Stage, he will be on the Rimstock stand on Thursday and Friday alongside fellow Team Dynamics driver Gareth Howell.

The new-for-2006 Porsche Carrera Cup one-make 997 will be on display at the show. Eighteen of the new cars have been sold for the BTCC-supporting championship.

The ever-spectacular Terry Grant will perform in the Live Action Arena, and will try for a new world record of four cars performing donuts simultaneously. He also promises a spectacular finale...

The 200mph Supercar Paddock will feature six of Europe's most remarkable sportscars. The Ford GT, BMW M6, Mercedes SL55 AMG, Ascari KZ1, Bentley Continental Flying Spur and the centrepiece—the 217mph Ferrari Enzo—will make up the spectacular display.

New for the 2006 show is an exclusive paddock pass priced at £31. This special pass gives holders access to the new paddock area being constructed backstage in the Live Action Arena.

To avoid the queues at Autosport International book online at www.autosport-international.com or call the hotline on 0870 380 2244. Tickets are £25 for adults and £17.50 for children.

Q&A

ISAO TORII



■ After you finished second in Australia things looked good...
 "Yes. I was quite happy with the result we got on that rally and from the UAE with the Dakar team. I thought things were good, so I was surprised when I found out what the decision was."

■ What does this mean for the Dakar programme?
 "The executive decision is that we want to consolidate our motorsport activities from two into one. We will not do WRC next year, but we will carry on with Dakar."

■ Did the executive group think it got value for money?
 "I'm not sure. We spent the money and we got the return from spending that money. Some people didn't understand completely, they could see something in return but not always completely clearly."

■ Are you confident of coming back to the WRC in 2008?
 "That's what I'm working on right now, but first we have to put together a privateer programme for next season."

WWW.MCKLEINDE

MITSUBISHI PULLS THE PLUG ON WRC

The Japanese firm has followed Skoda's example by announcing that it will not run works cars in next year's WRC, leaving the number of official manufacturer entries at just two. However, the rally team is already planning a return in 2008



M1/M2 EXPLAINED

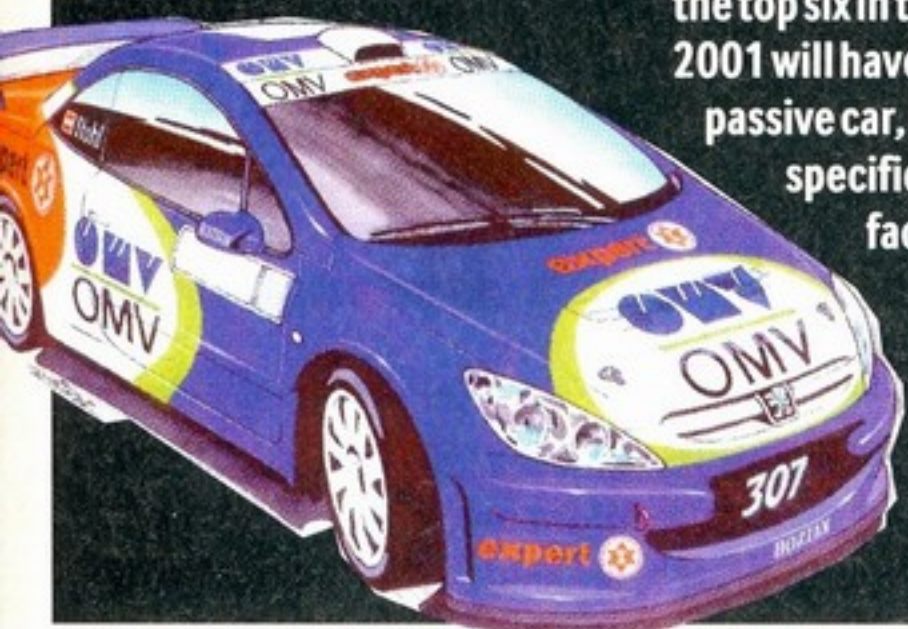
OUTSIDE THE two official teams (Ford and Subaru), only one driver will contest all 16 rounds of next year's World Rally Championship: Sébastien Loeb in his Kronos-run Citroën Xsara WRC. Because it is running a complete programme as well as the world champion, Citroën is listed as a

Manufacturer One competitor. The Manufacturer Two teams include Ford Stobart, Peugeot OMV and Skoda Red Bull.

Each of these teams must field a car on at least 10 events. They don't have to use the same driver, but their drivers must be nominated five weeks in advance.

M2 drivers who have made the top six in the WRC since 2001 will have to drive a passive car, in the same specification as the factory cars.

Next year's manufacturers' title can be won by either M1 or M2 teams.



MITSUBISHI:



MITSUBISHI RALLY bosses are fighting for the team's survival in the World Rally Championship with a plan to keep the firm's Rugby base open and return to the sport in 2008.

Shortly before Christmas, Mitsubishi announced it would be suspending its WRC programme from next season. Team principal Isao Torii admitted he was surprised by the decision, which came following a two-day meeting at the firm's Tokyo headquarters. He added, however, that his immediate concern was to save jobs and the team's Warwickshire facility.

"My next job is to make a business plan to get Mitsubishi back in 2008," said Torii. "I then have to ask the executive group to approve this revival plan. Of course, we will have to scale down our involvement in the championship, but the important thing is to get some private programmes running from Rugby and keep people employed."

Torii said that he hoped to retain Italian Gigi Galli, the team's proposed lead driver for 2006, in a privately-run Lancer RSWR05.

Mitsubishi Motors Motor Sport insiders said the decision had come as no surprise to them, following the poor financial performance of the team's parent company. One source said: "How can people say they are surprised when you look at how bad things were in Japan? It's incredible. We get a couple of half-decent results and everybody thinks everything's going to be great. It's not. It's just really unfortunate that it's come at a time when the team is on the up and could have been winning rallies next season."

Torii refused to go into specifics about the budget proposals put to the board, but there is talk of requests for €50 million, twice what Ford and Subaru is running on next season. Mitsubishi's decision to walk away from the world championship comes on the back of Skoda Auto's



DAVID EVANS

EXPERT VIEW

AND THEN there were two. Manufacturers, that is. That equates to four cars doing every round of the championship. Well, five including Loeb's Xsara WRC...

The core question is: does the man in the street know the difference between teams and manufacturers? No. Will he know the difference between Skoda Auto and Red Bull Skoda? No.

It is of concern that manufacturers are departing the WRC. The level of official entries is always a solid gauge of a series' general health. But a quick glance at the stories behind those departures reveals decisions which... well, let's just say the 'shocking' decisions weren't that shocking. The WRC is in the mire, but if anybody can change that it's ISC boss David Richards, the man currently limbering up for his next scrap.



Mitsubishi, Skoda, Harri Rovanperä and former champ Colin McRae - all will be missing from next year's World Rally Championship

WE'LL BE BACK

announcement that it will support two private teams rather than running its own Fabia WRCs in 2006.

WRC Commission president Jacques Regis refused to be downbeat about the series, despite the number of official manufacturers falling from six to two, although Citroën has paid the full manufacturers' entry fee on behalf of Kronos Racing which will run Xsara WRCs for Sébastien Loeb and Xavier Pons.

"When you understand how the term 'manufacturer' is defined in the WRC regulations, you will find that six manufacturers have entered a team in the 2006 championship," said Regis.

Regis is referring to the difference between Manufacturer One and Manufacturer Two entries (see left).

The sport's commercial boss David Richards said: "The same three drivers who fought for the title this year will do so next year. Are you telling me that Loeb's Xsara is not going to

be competitive because it's run by Kronos? It will be competitive. Kronos is doing what Prodrive does for Subaru and M-Sport for Ford. This is the way ahead for car firms competing in the WRC. They are coming to realise that it makes better economic sense to get a private team to run a WRC programme. I know what I'm talking about, I did the figures with the RED team to try and keep Skoda in the sport.

"Each of the manufacturers who have pulled out have a different reason: for PSA it never made sense to have both Peugeot and Citroën in the WRC, with Mitsubishi there are financial reasons and with Skoda it's down to a lack of results at the highest level. We've seen this coming for some time. When we raised the number of rallies two years ago, we should have allied that to cost-cutting regulations such as pairing events. Now, though, thanks to the pairing of rallies, we could bring in a rally like Norway a week after Sweden and do a great deal to raise the value of the championship."

NEWS IN BRIEF

GARDEMEISTER GETS 307

Toni Gardemeister will be reunited with the Astra team he drove for in 1998 when he takes the wheel of a privately-run Peugeot 307 WRC in next year's world championship. The former Ford driver has been unable to secure a full-time berth for next season, but is believed to be putting together an eight-round deal with the 307. Peugeot is also represented by Team OMV, which will run Manfred Stohl in 12 rounds in an 307 WRC and Henning Solberg in a sister car. Britain's Matt Wilson will form part of a Stobart Motorsport Ford team, while Junior WRC champion Dani Sordo is expected to tackle selected rounds in a private Citroën.

FIESTA SERIES CONFIRMED

M-Sport, the team which runs Ford's official World Rally Championship programme, has confirmed a six-round WRC support series for its Group N Fiesta ST. Round one will take place on the Catalunya Rally in late March, with the rest of the calendar including the Tour de Corse, Rally Deutschland, Rally Italia, Rally Finland and finally Wales Rally GB. Private competitors can buy a kit, which includes everything required for transforming a road ST into a rally car, for £9100 (plus VAT) from M-Sport. There will be no minimum age limit and a fixed championship entry fee includes entries for each round, catering, medical support, and a fixed service park slot. M-Sport will also provide parts support, meaning each team can service its car without having to carry extensive spares. Further details are available from www.fiestasportingtrophy.com

ASPHALT TESTING IS GO

After prolonged snow testing in Scandinavia, the WRC's two manufacturer teams headed to the south of France for pre-Monte Carlo Rally asphalt running last week. Heavy snowfall looked likely to cause problems for the teams, but warmer weather meant they were able to move into the Gap area of the southern Alps. Ford drivers Marcus Grönholm (below middle) and Mikko Hirvonen were joined by 2005 Focus driver Roman Kresta, who has returned to the team for next season as official test driver. They all had trouble-free runs. Petter Solberg (bottom) and Stéphane Sarrazin also completed the mileage in Impreza WRC2006s without any problems. Two-time Peugeot factory driver Nicolas Bernardi (below top) was in action, working on the 307 WRC. The Sospel driver is expected to take the wheel of a Bozian Racing-run Peugeot for his home round of the championship.



PARK INQUEST HEARD

THE SOUTH Wales police force has reported a verdict of accidental death in the September 18 Wales Rally GB crash in which co-driver Michael 'Beef' Park was killed.

Park's Peugeot driver Markko Märtin and his manager Paul Turner were both present when the verdict was returned on the crash which occurred after Märtin and Park went off the road in the Margam Park stage.



Märtin

Martin said: "I still don't understand the accident, we can't change that. We have to take the memories with us, there's nothing else we can do. "The inquest was never going to change that—if it was or wasn't somebody's fault, the result was the same. I still don't know why it happened. It wasn't a massive mistake. I would like to know exactly why it happened, but it's one of those things we will never know."

RALLY ELITE ON TEST

MSA RALLY Elite members Stuart Jones, Philip Morrow, Matt Wilson, James Wozencroft, Daniel Barritt and Scott Martin have undergone a six-month appraisal by performance director Robert Reid.

Reid joined the young drivers and co-drivers at Edinburgh University where they were working with a sports psychologist earlier this month. They then visited Subaru's World Rally Team partner Prodrive in Banbury just before Christmas for a chance to meet the team behind former world

champion Petter Solberg. Reid said: "It's a good chance for the guys to sit down with people like David Lapworth and Paul Howarth and listen to what they have to say. We're looking at where we are and what we've achieved in the first six months. This is a key part to preparing the syllabus for the next six months. It's also good for people like David [Lapworth] to see them again."

"I'm happy with what I've seen from the guys so far and we're all looking forward to starting the new season ahead."

LOEB SETS SIGHTS ON FERRARI F1 TEST

DOUBLE WORLD champion Sébastien Loeb is hoping to test a Formula 1 car next season, with an outing for Ferrari looking most likely for the Frenchman.

Loeb has already experienced high-powered race cars, having contested this season's Le Mans 24 Hours in a Pescarolo-Judd. This would, however, be his first drive in F1. Loeb, who will rally a privately-run Citroën Xsara WRC in next year's world championship, admitted 2006 would be his best chance to sample F1 power.

"I've been interested in driving an F1 car for a while now," said Loeb, "but this year maybe it would be easier to do it when there is no clash with a manufacturer. It's not like I'm going to set any records in F1—I'm a rally driver not a racing driver—but



Rally ace Loeb raced at Le Mans with Henri Pescarolo in 2005

it would be interesting to see the performance."

Loeb admitted he had been in touch with Ferrari concerning a test, but no date or venue had been agreed for the 31-year-old who won a record 10 rounds

of the WRC during 2005.

"I've spoken to [Ferrari team boss] Jean Todt about driving the car," said Loeb, "but I was too busy before, so we will look again soon."

Loeb admitted he would also like to return to La Sarthe

for the French sportscar classic next season.

"If there is time then sure, it would be good to go back," he said. "Henri [Pescarolo] is quite keen and is trying to find some money to make it happen."

McRAE: SAINZ CAN WIN DAKAR



Mitsubishi will be aiming to see off the threat from VW on the Dakar

COLIN McRAE has tipped his former team-mate Carlos Sainz for victory on the Dakar Rally, which starts on New Year's Eve.

Despite never having contested the marathon event, McRae says the man he drove alongside at Subaru, Ford and Citroën will have the pace to end Mitsubishi's five-year Dakar domination.

"Carlos can definitely win Dakar at his first attempt—it's been done before and he has the right approach," said the 1995 World Rally Champion. "He's the type of driver who will learn very quickly how to approach Dakar. We saw how he could do that in the World Rally Championship—finding exactly the right pace for an event was never a problem for him. And as for the outright speed, he'll have that over and above anybody else."

"A driver like Carlos, still fresh

from the world championship, will be plenty quick enough."

But Sainz has doubts about his chances of becoming the second rally driver to win Dakar at his first attempt, following fellow rally ace Juha Kankkunen's victory for Peugeot in 1988.

"I don't think winning is possible," he said. "I don't have enough experience yet. It will be tough to beat Mitsubishi not just for me—I mean for my Volkswagen team-mates as well."

McRae, who contested the 2003 and '04 events, admitted he is frustrated not to be driving this year. "I would love to have gone back and done it again if I'd had the chance," said McRae. "But as with everything these days, everybody wants money."

SAINZ TALKS p56 →

DAKAR TIMETABLE

THE DAKAR Rally starts from Lisbon on December 31 and finishes on January 15. The 5619-mile route includes 2990 miles of competitive action. The route includes two sections in Portugal, three in Morocco, four in Mauritania, two in Mali, one in Guinea and three in Senegal. The cars head into Africa on January 1,

crossing from Malaga in Spain to Nador in Morocco.

The longest section, from Nouakchott to Kiffa, is 543 miles, of which 372 are competitive. The event concludes with a 19-mile section just outside Dakar, before finishing on the Atlantic beach on the afternoon of January 15.

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LETTERS AND OPINION

YOU SAY

"The mass walkouts represent a serious hammer blow to world rallying"

LETTER OF THE WEEK STOP THE ROT

I'M SADDENED and baffled by the current state of affairs in the World Rally Championship. The recent announcement by Mitsubishi to can its WRC effort comes so soon after Skoda's pull-out and the disastrous PSA Group decision to withdraw sister companies Peugeot and Citroën. The mass walk outs represent a serious hammer blow to world rallying – arguably the most spectacular form of motorsport.

What's gone wrong? Are the 'escaping' manufacturers spending too much on razzmatazz, PR glitz and glamour and not enough on sorting their cars with the effect that the bean counters cry 'enough'? In Mitsubishi's and Skoda's case it rather smacks of throwing in the towel. At least the French squads were winning rallies, not scraping around for the odd championship point when the mood took them. Thank God it's only a sabbatical for Citroën! I mean, fancy Skoda passing up the opportunity to have Colin McRae develop the Fabia WRC and help to banish age-old prejudices about the Czech manufacturer once and for all.

I hope WRC ringmaster David Richards can work some magic on his impoverished championship. It seems unthinkable to me that the WRC might become extinct...

Andrew Steer, via email

AUTOSPORT SAYS: Not sure spending money on 'razzmatazz' was a reason for pulling out, but we share your concerns.

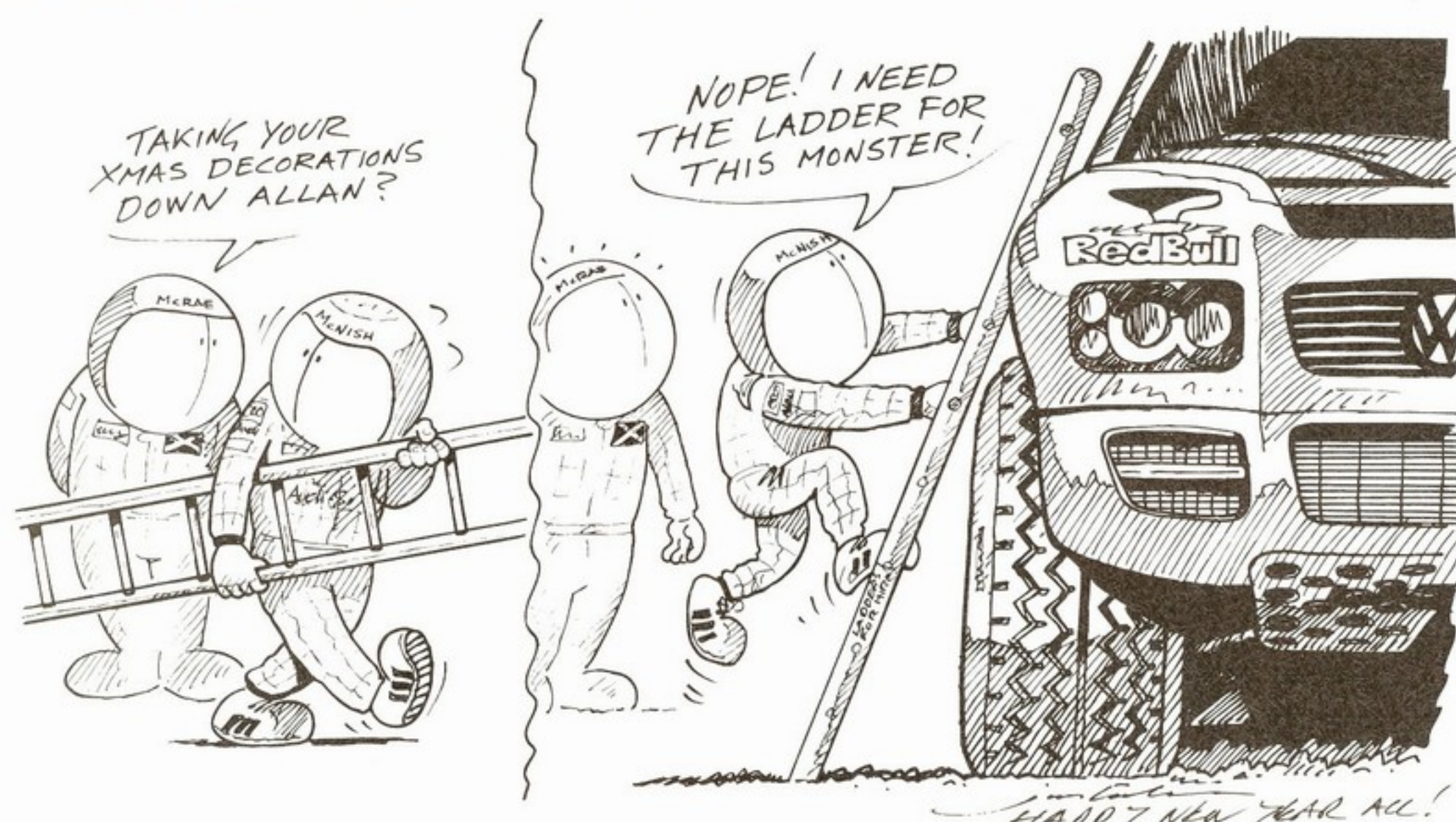
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BAMBER'S VIEW



BMW BLAST

Having just come back from the Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain, I'd just like to say what a farce the whole event was.

It was obvious from the start that the Germans were going to be at an advantage, but the way BMW seemed to make up the rules for certain drivers was appalling.

The driving standards during the heats were terrible. Yet despite it stating in the rules that drivers would be punished, all they got were slapped wrists!

Nicolas Hülkenberg should have been black-flagged at a restart when he caused an accident behind him, but according to a BMW official he

of the World Rally Championship. I recall towards the end of last year Duval being interviewed on TV and being asked about his future, and he looked and sounded in a complete quandary as to what to do.

After a difficult early time at Ford, he had seemed to have settled into the team, and I believe he had the offer of a three-year deal to stay with the squad (Ford having committed the funding to the WRC for a three-year programme). Citroën was also offering him a two-year deal, but by then PSA had already canned Peugeot's effort for 2006 and Citroën was looking like taking a sabbatical too.

So what does he do? Turns down the team that offers him a solid three-year deal as team leader and moves to a new squad, with all the risks that entails. I didn't understand the decision at the time, and looking at his season with Citroën, I still don't.

I've nothing against Duval. Yes, he won a round of the WRC, but he has binned it on a number of occasions on the way, incurred the wrath of his boss – losing his drive for two events – and had his co-driver walk out on him. This is hardly going to get team

managers rushing to sign him up, is it, particularly in the current wave of team cutbacks etc?

I have the feeling that while in the process of making his decision at the end of last season, Duval was being swayed by other forces and, looking at the expression on his face, the decision wasn't entirely his.
Andy Maclean, Charlbury

DIESEL FIRST

I read with interest your article on the new Audi R10 Le Mans

SOUND BITES

After seeing the super start to A1 GP, next year us fans should be involved *X Factor*-style! We could vote for drivers to make Team GB by text or phone call, giving financial support as well as choosing the underfunded drivers we would like to see relaunch their careers. Maybe in the future we could even vote for which drivers we want to race in each round...
A Bevan, by email

A Swiss mountain rescue helicopter in use at a Middle East motorsport event to recover A1 GP cars (Autosport, Dec 15/22)?! Short of local aircraft were they? Well done Autosport – keep the weird and wonderful coming in 2006!
Rupert Sexton, Salisbury

contender and felt rather saddened by it, as I was one of the group of 10 people who, in 2004, built and raced the Lola Caterpillar Diesel prototype at Le Mans. Okay, it suffered a component failure after four hours due to a supply error, but it did race and raced again in the Silverstone Six Hours, and it was only the politics of the day that put a halt to the project.

What I cannot understand is that we were a small British team taking on the world with a ground-breaking project, and yet Autosport virtually ignored it, giving it the odd inch in the news section. If the second diesel prototype is worth four pages in 2005 then the first one should have been worth as much, if not more. After all it was a British car even though the engine was a VW Touareg 5-litre V10.

We spent less than £1 million on that project – I wonder what Audi will spend. We all know that a diesel car will win Le Mans. In 2003 we said within five years, so I guess now we can say within three years. I hope so, as then I'll feel that my work was not wasted.

David J Coles, by email

AUTOSPORT SAYS: Check your facts. We broke the story (March 25 2004) and then ran a two-page feature (June 10 2004) on the project before Le Mans. Just two weeks ago we ran an update...

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Crossword answers (p146, 15/12/05)

ACROSS

11 South Korea
12 Dirani
13 Italia
15 McKellar
16 Carroll
17 Leinders
18 Coca
20 Paddock
22 A ban
27 Max Papis
29 Oulton
30 Chicane
32 Five Hundred
34 One point
35 Kiti
36 Magny
37 Senna
39 Works
40 French
44 Fassler
45 Xsara
46 Onol
47 Fermé
50 Brno
51 Di Grassi
52 Woodham Hill
55 McLaren
57 Kubica
58 Boullion
61 Skoda
62 Parente
63 Parc
69 Front row
71 Toronto
73 Position
75 Toyota
76 Servia
77 Telefonica

DOWN

1 Supercup
2 Phil
3 Cours
4 Beach
5 Viso
6 Wallace
7 Mills
8 Kimi
9 Sardinia
10 Pirro
11 Seca
14 Priault
19 Cyprus
21 Doornbos
23 Briatore
24 Danica Patrick
25 Pole
26 Lewis Hamilton
28 Sydney
30 Clio
31 Spyker
33 Ernesto
35 Kenseth
38 Nissan
41 Heidfeld
42 Pressure
43 Cordoba
48 MG ZS
49 Laguna
53 Oval
54 Pitting
56 Atkinson
59 Lacetti
60 Masters
64 Erdo
65 Swiss
66 Power
67 Speed
68 Cola
70 Road
72 Reid
74 Snow

WE SAY

"To car and bike racing fans, the fact that John Surtees isn't a knight stinks, quite frankly"

DAVID MALSHER – FEATURES EDITOR



BBC RADIO 4 show *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, the Royal Air Force, Jimmy Clark, The Kinks, Lotus, De Havilland, *Have I Got News For You*, Sir Stirling Moss, *Blackadder*, Aston Martin DB5, Stephen Fry, *Private Eye*, Avro, John Braine, The Jam, Williams F1 team, The Two Ronnies, Cornwall, St Paul's Cathedral, John Humphrys, Jaguar XK120 FHC, Donington Park, Tony Brooks, The Beatles, Duxford's Imperial War Museum.

These, in no particular order, are my favourite British things, past and present. Now I'm fervently non-patriotic – I'm sure I must have been infused with a blend of American and Italian blood at some time when I was a nipper – but the people that made/make up the aforementioned institutions are some of my heroes, and just happen to be uniquely British. None would have its established character if it had originated in the US, Italy, Germany or France.

By contrast, my Room 101 is the size of the Royal Albert Hall, packed from floor to ceiling and wall to wall with things I despise about this country. And at this time of year, one of the ghastly items that surfaces and triggers my ranting is the nonsense surrounding the New Year's Honours List, and in particular, knighthoods. If it ceased to exist, if the Queen announced in her Christmas television message that she couldn't be bothered with it this year, and instead had spent her time reading *AutoTrader* looking for a cheap Daimler limo, I'd raise a glass to her. If she added that all previously declared honorary titles were now invalid, I'd send her a bottle of port. Really, what difference does the appendage 'Sir' or 'Dame' make to anyone other than those who receive

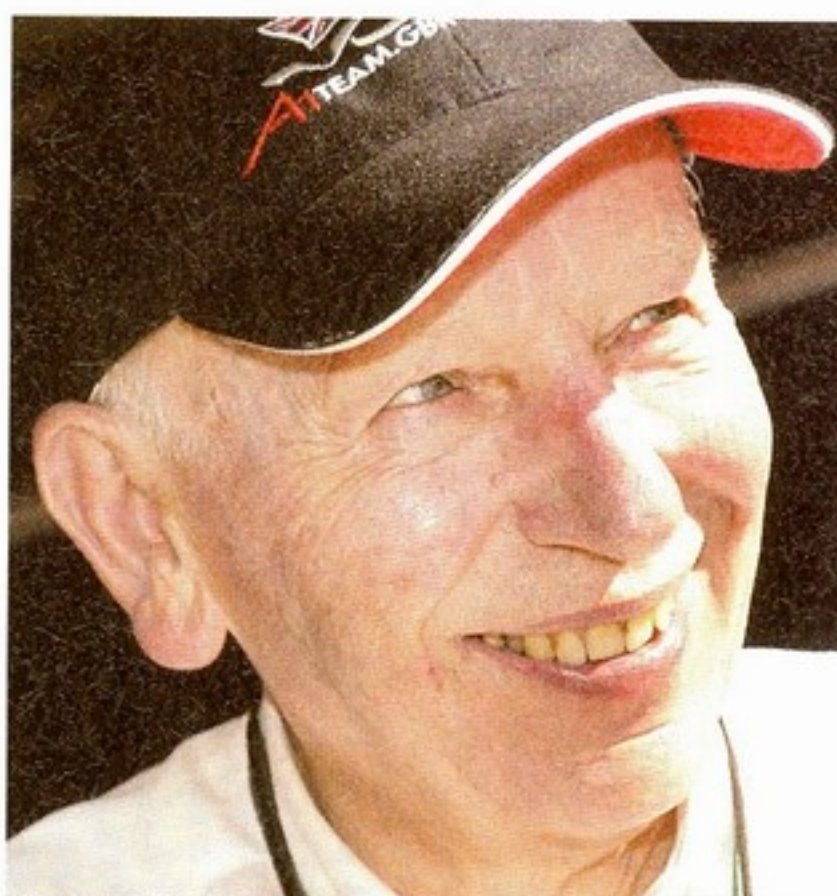
it? Why the media frenzy?

However, the fact that knighthoods and the like *do* exist means they have to make sense. And to me and countless other car and bike racing fans, the fact that John Surtees is not yet a knight stinks, quite frankly. Here is a man who uniquely won world championships on two wheels and four, won the Can-Am championship, whose Formula 2 team won the European championship, and who has never stopped promoting the sport and, in particular, promoting the British arm of the sport. From the lowest echelons to the highest, he is a fervent motorsport supporter who has been involved in karting at Buckmore Park and now runs the British team in A1 GP.

Surtees will be 72 in February, yet rarely relaxes even now, because he's all about the present and future, and simply won't dwell on the past. Given the huge part he has played in the sport's heritage, you might expect him to wax lyrical about the good old days, yet you really need to cajole such information and memories out of him. He is more likely to talk about Alonso and Briatore than Clark and Chapman.

In 105 years, no British motorcycle racer has been knighted, despite amassing a total of 15 world titles between them. In car racing, only Stirling Moss, Jack Brabham and Jackie Stewart have been so honoured.

Maybe, just maybe, the words 'Arise Sir John Surtees' are in the offing. If they aren't, I can only assume that modestly promoting his causes rather than his own name has counted against him.



John Surtees deserves a tap on the shoulder from Her Majesty's sword

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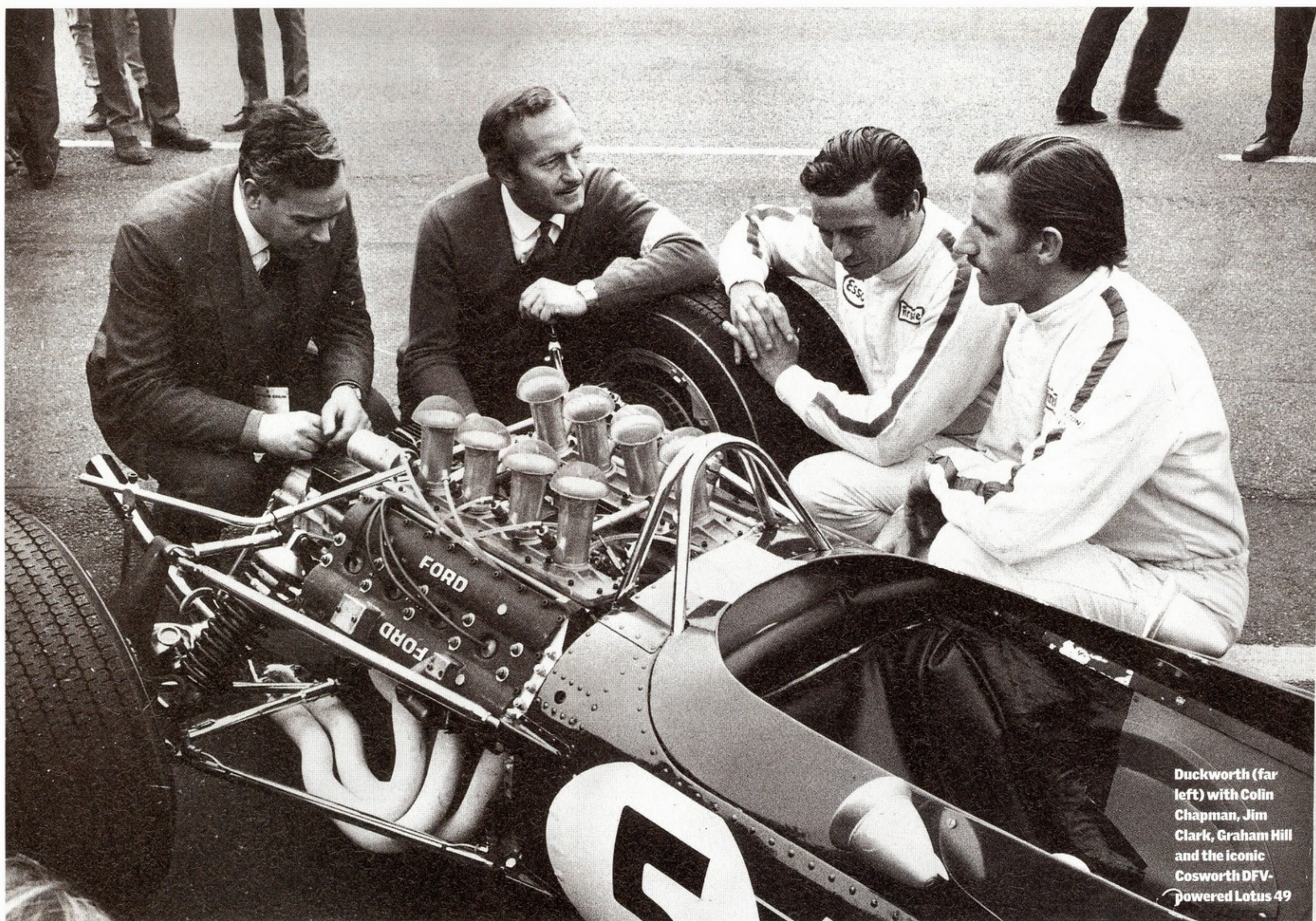
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Duckworth (far left) with Colin Chapman, Jim Clark, Graham Hill and the iconic Cosworth DFV-powered Lotus 49

KEITH DUCKWORTH

1933-2005

The Cosworth co-founder and father of the DFV died before Christmas. PAUL FEARNLEY recalls an engineering genius

SCA. FVA. DFV. Keith Duckworth's enginetic code shaped motorsport's form and function for over 30 years. Argumentative, stubborn, brilliant and inspirational, he mixed an otherworldly grasp of engineering with down-to-earth common sense to become the greatest designer of racing engines the world has ever reverberated to.

Born in Blackburn in August 1933, the second son of a weaving shed owner, he attended Giggleswick School in Yorkshire and Imperial College London. He was clearly bright yet only just "scraped through" his degree course and flunked an RAF pilot's licence during his National Service.

An interest in motor racing led him to buy a Lotus MkVI in kit form. Having built it, he raced it on a number of occasions, but soon came to the wise conclusion that he was no budding world champion. He did, however, join Lotus in the autumn of 1957 – as its gearbox development engineer.

It was never going to last. He and Colin Chapman were too alike – and too different – to work together, in the same building at least. Chapman was brilliant conceptually, but Duckworth disliked his dismissal of detail. So in the summer of 1958 – and despite the fact that business partner Mike Costin would be tied to his Lotus service contract until 1962 – he created Cosworth Engineering Ltd. It should be noted that Duckworth had, at this point, not so much as tuned a racing engine let alone designed one. He was never short of self-confidence.

With a few miles of North London safely between them – Cosworth eventually moved to Northampton in 1964 – Duckworth and Chapman now became inextricably linked and mutually successful and profitable. Formula Junior arrived at just the right time: Duckworth's reworking, tuning and marketing of Ford's short-stroke 105E motor put his company on a secure financial footing. From the moment Jim Clark's Cosworth-motivated Lotus 18 won at Goodwood on May 19, 1960, it was obvious that the sport had a new powerhouse.

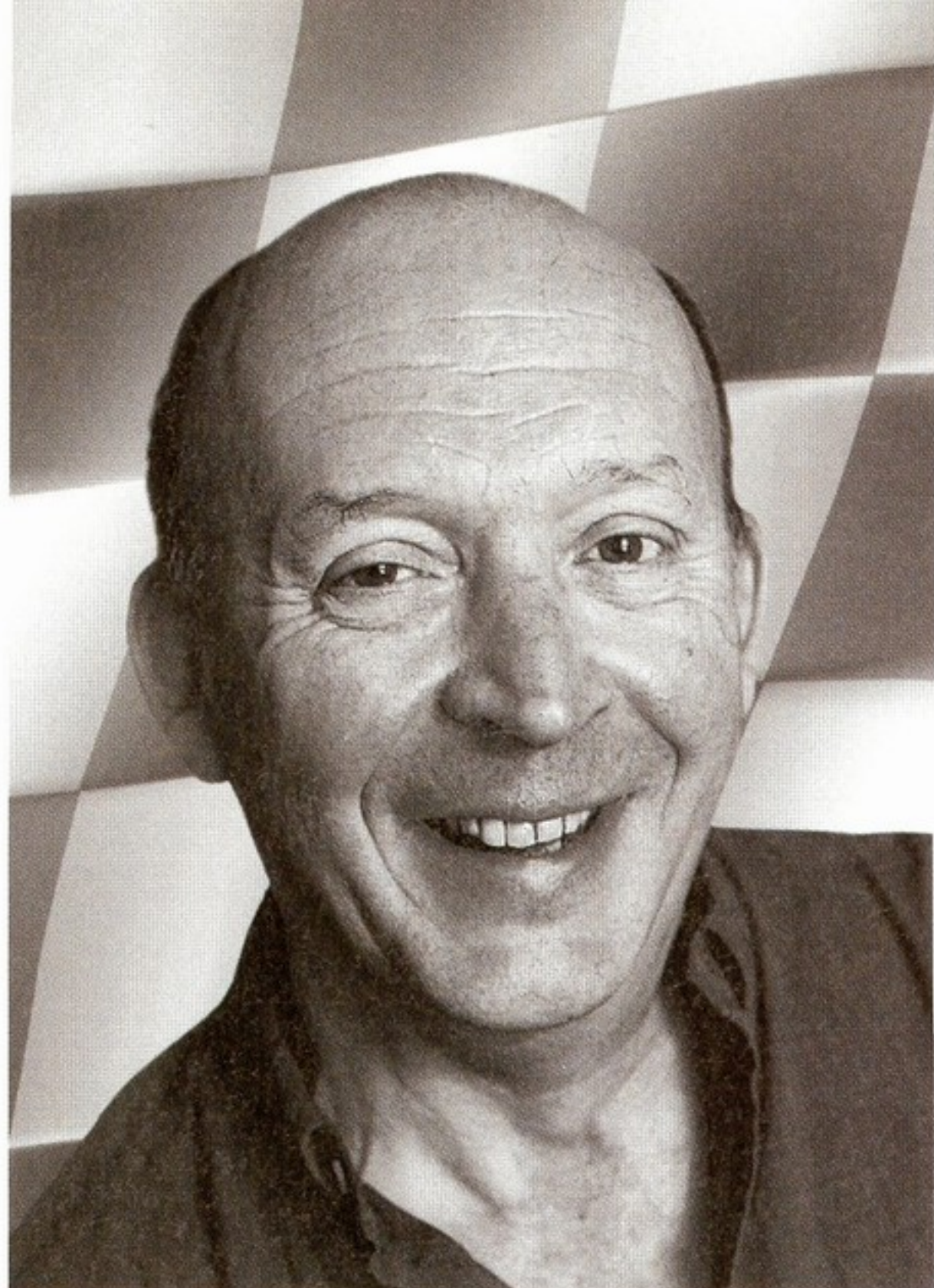
Seven years later, Duckworth, Chapman, Clark and Lotus opened a new chapter in Formula 1. On lap 16 of the Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort, the Scot took the lead. Colin Chapman's brand new Lotus 49 was untouchable thereafter – its bark and bite provided by Duckworth's brand new engine: DFV. It was powerful – it hit Duckworth's predicted 400bhp target at its first dyno test – but there was much more to it than that: DFV was compact, frugal and sturdy enough to be part of the car's structure. Packaging had hit F1 thanks to its two most outside-the-box thinkers. Duckworth prided himself on never having copied anyone's ideas. He questioned everything, backed himself, went his own way – and clearly got it right: DFV's 155 GP victories can't all be wrong. He reckoned he could tell how an engine would 'flow' just by running his finger around its ports. Yet he shed 40lb during the nine months he spent agonising – "thinking with a pencil" – over DFV's design. Clearly, there were two types of gut instinct involved.

By 1973, a year in which the DFV won all 15 grands prix, Cosworth was turning over £1.5 million, GM had come a-calling – and Duckworth had suffered his first heart attack. He – and ground effect's need for uncluttered sidepods – kept the DFV competitive during the early years of the turbo era, but even when the wins eventually dried up, his company continued to boom thanks to the patronage of GM, Ford and Mercedes-Benz; Cosworth's road car projects proliferated.

Duckworth was still very much at the helm. He secured Cosworth's future by selling out to United Engineering Industries in 1980. He was even persuaded to oversee the design of a turbocharged F1 engine (ever the purist, he considered them crude and had lobbied vehemently for them to be banned). There was, though, a major stumbling block: Duckworth loved being hands on. He could do everything – from concept to layout to design details to making the prototype bits to assembling the finished product – but with almost 600 staff, such an approach was no longer practicable.

Two heart attacks and one by-pass operation later, he decided to stand down as chairman, a position he'd held for 30 years, in August 1988. He always said that the only two men who really understood where he was coming from were Costin and Ben Rood, one of his earliest employees. That Costin succeeded him as chairman, and Rood was still happily running the machine shops, speaks volumes for Duckworth's talent, charisma and the thrilling working environment he created.

Motorsport has lost one of its few geniuses. ☐



FIFTH COLUMN

NIGEL ROEBUCK

ALL CHANGE AT McLAREN



"LONG AGO RON DENNIS REALISED THAT THE THINGS THAT COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT ARE THE THINGS LEFT BY THOSE WHO GOT IN FIRST"



IT'S SAFE days before Christmas as I write, and usually the problem at this time of the year is to come up with a subject for the column. If there's a still time for Formula 1, this is generally it.

Or not. In the last week there has been the announcement of Michelin's withdrawal from F1 12 months hence, and the news that, for 2007, Vodafone will quit Ferrari to become McLaren's primary sponsor. Then, if that were not enough, there arrived another fax from McLaren to say that, oh by the way, Fernando Alonso will be arriving at the same time as Vodafone.

Dealing with the last first, what are the implications of the world champion's move? One's initial thought is that it adds weight to the rumours that Renault's withdrawal may not be far away. Flavio Briatore is not only Alonso's manager, but also team principal of Renault, and if the team were in this for the long haul, one cannot imagine that Flav would have wished Fernando to depart.

So why, with Kimi Räikkönen and Juan Montoya on board, have Ron Dennis and Martin Whitmarsh committed themselves to Alonso, and put themselves – not for the first time – into a 'three into two won't go' situation?

Long ago RD realised that the things that come to those who wait are the things left by those who got in first. Whomever else he had on the books, he would have been nuts to pass up the opportunity of snaring Fernando. McLaren had the fastest car this year, and the only driver they didn't beat they have now signed: whatever else, Alonso will not be competing against them from '07 on. Team and driver look like a perfect fit to me.

So whose place will Alonso take? When McLaren signed Montoya – more than a year ahead of time – there was never any doubt that David Coulthard, rather than Räikkönen, would be shown the door, and now, based on their results as team-mates to date, you'd have to assume that Juan Pablo, rather than Kimi, would be the one to go.

Maybe it's not quite as simple as that, though. For some time there have been suggestions that Michael Schumacher will retire at the end of 2006, and that Räikkönen will move to Maranello in his stead. A friend confides that Kimi remains quietly incensed by the contents of a letter from the McLaren management, following his well publicised 'difficulties' in a club before the start of this season: "I wouldn't bet much against him going to Ferrari..."

On the face of it, Alonso and Räikkönen in the same team seems like a stretch, but one characteristic – as well as sublime ability – shared by these two is implacability: neither, I think, would be fazed by the idea of the other as team-mate.

If Schumacher does indeed retire, though, it makes sense for Ferrari to go for either Alonso or Räikkönen, and Fernando, we know, is already spoken for. Whatever else, the thought of a driver wages bill that encompassed *both* of them is almost too terrifying to contemplate, Vodafone largesse or not.

For quite a while the murmur had been that Vodafone were less than happy with their involvement

with Scuderia Ferrari Marlboro, first because there was no possibility of being the primary sponsor, second because there was unease about the continuing association with a tobacco company. From my understanding, the new long-term deal with McLaren is for approximately the same money – but now as title sponsor.

From Vodafone's point of view, this has to be a better bargain. If it's a fact that the profile of Ferrari is unequalled, so it is also true that, to some degree, a sponsor can get 'lost' there, particularly beneath the crushing weight of Marlboro, now long synonymous with the red cars. I'll warrant that Vodafone's exposure will be far greater after the switch to McLaren.

Whether Räikkönen stays on with Alonso, or moves to Ferrari, he will be on the same tyres, of course, for by 2007 Michelin will be gone. Although it had been clear for a long time that the FIA was hell-bent on the notion of a single tyre supplier, personally I am saddened by the impending departure of a company which has always behaved honourably and not always been rewarded for doing so.

It's a fact that the relationship between Michelin and the FIA has long been a testy one, not least because Edouard Michelin is unusually courageous in his willingness to criticise the governing body if he feels it justified. In this day and age – as we know from our own dear government – criticism is not readily tolerated, and while nothing can excuse the Michelin debacle at Indianapolis, I thought the response of the FIA leaden-handed and frankly cheap.

Once it had become clear that a 'one tyre' F1 was imminent, Michelin showed little interest in bidding for the contract, feeling that it made no sense to pay for the privilege of getting less out of the sport than they had. How much value, after all, was there in 'winning' races and championships, when you had no competition?

As well as that, Michelin has been maddened by the FIA's decision, after but a single season, to go back on the 'no tyre change' rule introduced for 2005. It was a new challenge for the tyre companies, to which Michelin rose (winning 18 of the 19 races), and Bridgestone emphatically did not. By common consent, the rule improved the quality of the racing and contributed greatly to the most exciting season in recent memory. Now it has gone, sadly – and soon the same will be true of Michelin.

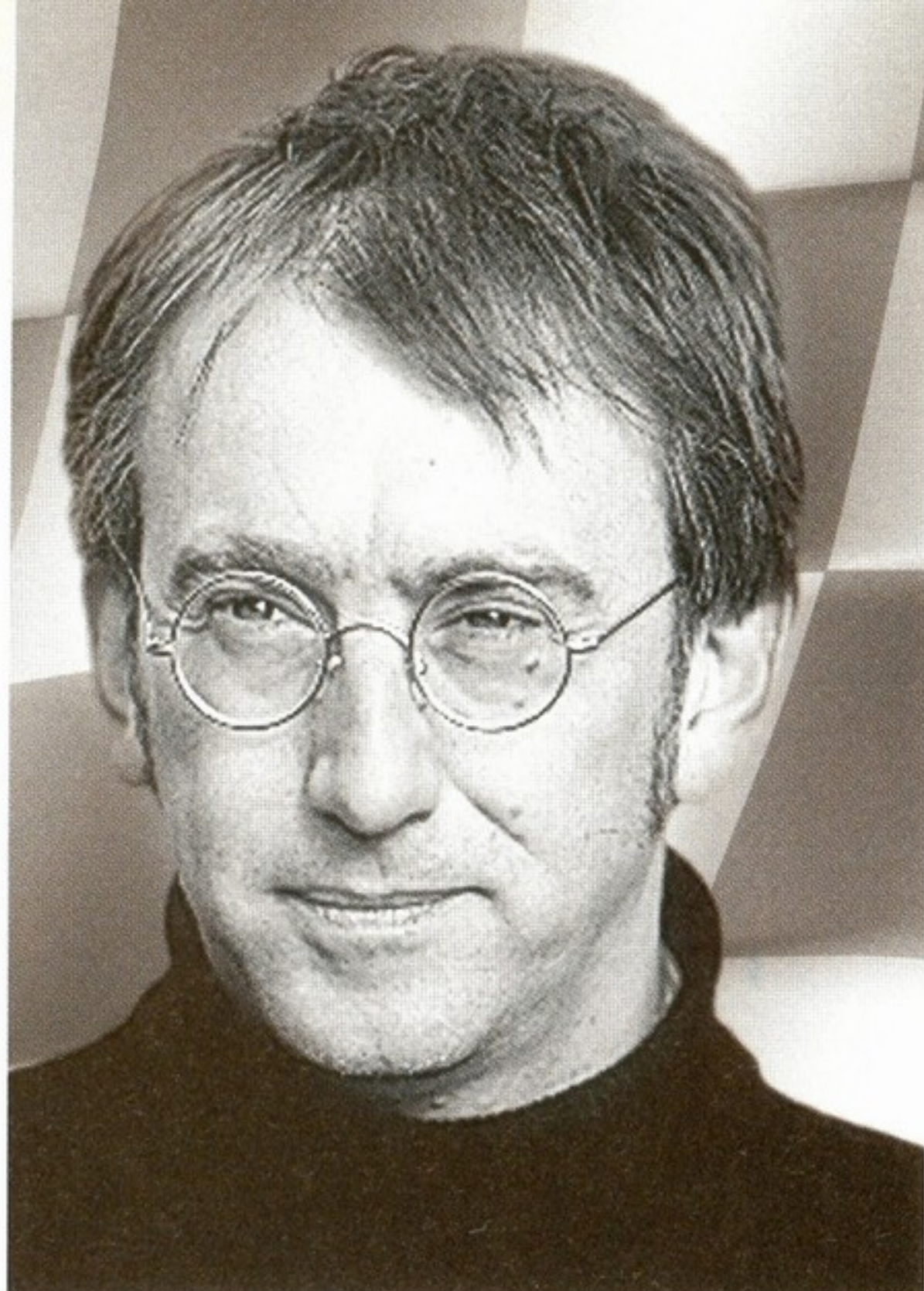
In the end, though, one appreciates the need for a 'one tyre' formula, not least on the pragmatic grounds of cost. "If we don't do it," Bernie Ecclestone said to me, "we're going to be in plenty of trouble. Testing takes a huge chunk out of the teams' budgets – and two-thirds of all that testing is tyres..."

Perhaps, given the need to develop tyres with both 200-mile longevity and huge grip, a disaster such as Indianapolis was always on the cards. Next season we revert to tyre changes in the races and presumably therefore to the sprint-stop-sprint format which made F1 so predictable for so many years. Given that the FIA has now got its way, with everyone supplied by one manufacturer (Bridgestone) in '07, one trusts that the 'no tyre change' rule will be resurrected at the same time. ☐

NIGEL ROEBUCK answers your questions in his Ask Nigel column exclusively on

www.autosport.com





F1'S INSIDE LINE

MARK HUGHES

DRIVER-MARKET FORCES



FERNANDO ALONSO?

At McLaren? It's difficult to get your head to generate the image of it, isn't it? Particularly after the season we've just had where the two parties were directly opposed in a close battle for the world title. Fernando's helmet belongs in that turquoise car, relentlessly banging out the laps, fast and aggressive steering inputs overcoming a reluctant front end. Maybe that's partly why of all the speculated moves in the driver market in recent months, that one – to take effect from 2007 – wasn't on the radar. But actually, this phase-shifts the entire market just as surely as Michael Schumacher's long term plans. It also brings up questions that stretch beyond just the driver market.

But the most obvious question is: who's name tag gets peeled off to make way for Alonso's – Kimi Räikkönen's or Juan Pablo Montoya's? The current contracts of both McLaren drivers expire at the end of 2006. Has Ron Dennis swooped to sign Alonso because he knows that Kimi's headed to a post-Schumacher Ferrari? In which case, has the timing of the Alonso deal been triggered by Michael informing Ferrari that he's not renewing beyond '06?

I wouldn't mind betting that neither Ferrari nor McLaren yet know of Schumacher or Räikkönen's intentions and that Ron has signed Alonso simply because he knew the opportunity of doing so wouldn't be there for long. If Kimi decides to stay, then Dennis replicates his Senna/Prost dream-team line up of 1988-89. If Kimi goes, McLaren's hardly got too shabby an alternative in Montoya. And in the meantime, it would dramatically shift the dynamics of any contract negotiations between Kimi's management and Ron...

So where does this leave Montoya? With just the hope of a default drive should Kimi decide to leave? Well, maybe not. Maybe nothing's decided at all yet. Everyone's assuming that Kimi would be the preferred choice over Juan. Will he still be by this time next year? Montoya's going into his second year with the team in a much stronger position than his first. He knows now how the team operates, knows the engineers, the shoulder injury is history – and he has a massive point to prove. In several races in the second half of '05 he had the legs of Räikkönen but had to play the team game for the sake of the championship. That all goes by the wayside now. Far from being a snub to Montoya, the Alonso signing could be a fantastic opportunity for him. If he stays, he'd be the two-year incumbent at McLaren against a new-to-the-team Alonso with a big reputation. Just the situation Räikkönen was in at the beginning of '05, in fact.

The Alonso announcement could just be the perfect backdrop for a scintillating in-team McLaren battle in 2006. With the promise of another one with Alonso in '07 and beyond.

Now switch scenarios: Let's assume Räikkönen has already decided to move to Ferrari. That surely would mean Michael was leaving. To retire, yes? Are we sure about that? What about if his playful, competitive little

"WHAT IF MICHAEL WENT TO RED BULL IN '07? YOU REALISE WHAT WE'D HAVE, DON'T YOU? A SCHUEY/NEWEY SUPERTeam!"



Will it be Kimi who's Fernando's team-mate at McLaren in 2007, or will the world champion be partnering JPM? Either way, it's a prospect to relish

soul fancied a giant-killing flourish to his career? What about if he switched to Red Bull from '07? You do realise what we'd have then don't you? A Schuey/Newey superteam!

From 1994 until 2001, F1 was simply a battle between these two giants. They encapsulated the argument of which was more important in F1, the car or the driver? Encapsulated it but didn't answer it, so close was the call. F1 shuddered at the thought of them ever joining forces. Well, maybe that's about to happen. Fanciful, I know. But can't you just imagine that appealing to Michael in the autumn of his career, but with another five years left in him if he wants it? He could after all have stayed at Benetton after his double titles of 1994-95 but preferred the challenge of resurrecting the dilapidated old shell of Ferrari. Joining an independent in the era of the factories, with all the pressure of achievement off – but a real chance of upsetting the odds – would be a similar challenge but immensely enjoyable. What's more, he might be able to persuade Ross Brawn to go with him! An Adrian Newey car driven by Michael Schumacher directed by Ross Brawn... Would probably do okay.

Then there's the implications for Renault Sport. Flavio Briatore is Alonso's manager as well as Renault team principal. Is the move indicative of Renault planning to get out of F1 some time beyond '06? Or could the move trigger it? If Renault plans to stay around, how is Briatore's position tenable, having been the agent in the loss of the team's prized asset? It presents a great opportunity for Giancarlo Fisichella, assuming he's retained into '07, and explains why Briatore was so adamant that there'd be a place for Heikki Kovalainen in the team from '07.

So, a sensational piece of news. It was a similar story two years ago when McLaren confirmed that Montoya would be joining them, the announcement coming before his final season with Williams had even begun. But with Alonso as the reigning world champion, this is even bigger news. What's more, it's maybe just the beginning of a sequence of sensational news stories. ☑



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HANJIN



F1'S MOST WANTED

INTERVIEW Everyone wants a piece of the world champion — even McLaren... But Fernando Alonso insists superstardom won't go to his head. By JONATHAN NOBLE



Main: Alonso's trophy cabinet is full after 2005, but success hasn't changed him

Right: Football legend Zinedine Zidane sent Alonso a signed shirt to honour his title win



It's a cold winter's day in 2002. Renault has just launched its new Formula 1 team at the Guyancourt technocentre on the outskirts of Paris. Journalists are running around, rushing from room to room to catch a few words with the team's big players.

Flavio Briatore, Patrick Faure, Jenson Button and Jarno Trulli find themselves crammed at the centre of huddles of microphones, television cameras, and notepads. The last slot of the day is reserved for the team's test driver.

The allotted time for his interview comes and in the function room it is just, er, him and me. No other journalists deem Fernando Alonso important enough to speak to. We chat politely about his forthcoming year on the sidelines after an impressive debut campaign for Minardi and his then-dream of landing a full-time drive in 2003.

Now let's move the story 20 miles down the road, still on the outskirts of Paris, to Renault's Square Com marketing headquarters near the Pont de Sevres overlooking the Seine.

It's a cold winter's night in 2005. Renault is holding a celebration event for team partners, media and French staff after its double title success. The interest in Briatore and Faure is exactly the same as three years ago, but this time Alonso is no longer the man no-one wants to speak to. He is *the* man everyone wants to grab a word with. Heck, even Zinedine Zidane has sent a signed football shirt as a way of offering his congratulations.

The journey from Guyancourt to the Pont de Sevres may have been little more than a taxi ride for some of Renault's personnel, but for Alonso it's been a long, spectacular and fantastic voyage.

It has taken in that debut win at the Hungaroring in 2003, the three consecutive victories at the start of '05, the final laps of Imola, that glorious return to parc fermé in Interlagos and, of course, 130R at Suzuka. He has gone from dreaming about racing a Formula 1 car at the front to becoming the man that every young racer wants to be.

The world has changed for Alonso in the past 12 months, and will do so again when he joins McLaren in 2007. But the man in the eye of the storm insists *he* hasn't changed.

"I am just trying to prepare for the next championship in the most professional way possible," he says about his life as world champion. "Everything is the same for me."

"I still think in the same way. I want to beat the other competitors. I will have the same motivation in anything I do, so next year is a new challenge for me and I haven't changed anything in my life."

It's a great soundbite, but you could hardly expect him to say anything else. Imagine Alonso had turned around and said: 'Oh yeah, winning the title has made me wealthy beyond my wildest dreams. I've spent loads of money on flash cars and holidays and the world has to revolve around me now...'

We all like to think that if our numbers came up in the lottery then the millions would not change us. The mansions, yachts, Ferraris and mega holidays would not affect our character at all. Yeah right.

Yet there is a very real sense from Alonso that what he says

is true. There has been no material change in his life. He remains as shy in public as when he first walked into the sport. He still lives in Oxford, his family remains close and he tries to stay true to his friends from his home town of Oviedo.

Not for him a huge end-of-season blow-out holiday, hugging dolphins in Gran Canaria or whatever frontrunning F1 drivers do nowadays to get their kicks. Instead it was a few days in Oviedo, which included a reception in the city square in front of 30,000 fans, before flying back with his family and 20 close friends to spend November in Oxford.

"They have been good weeks since the championship," he admits. "I've had fun with my friends and family, watched some of the races, and remembered the good times we have had this year, to slowly realise what the team and I have achieved."

"The same question people ask me is always what did I buy after the championship to celebrate my win? I didn't buy anything because I come from a modest family. I don't like the life of rich people so I don't need to buy anything, because I don't know how to use it."

"I am trying to have fun now, because it is a good moment to enjoy the success. Maybe the future won't bring so much success, so I am trying to enjoy it now."

The men who work close to Alonso – for now – support his claims that he remains true to his roots. Renault's director of engineer Pat Symonds has stood alongside Alonso from test driver to world champion and he is impressed by how external pressures have not buckled the Spaniard's psychological make-up.

"Very often you see guys go through this stage of their lives and you see their whole personality change," says Symonds. "One of the things I have really enjoyed in working with Fernando is that the only sign of change is in his confidence."

"His confidence has built and built through the years and this year particularly. All the human aspects that you so often see these guys lose, he hasn't lost them. He is still a relatively shy, young guy who happens to drive racing cars and that is refreshing to see. I really hope for his sake we continue to see it."

But how can a man go from this shy young Spanish kid to becoming a champion without it altering him?

Part of the answer comes from a humbleness that Alonso has had since the day he walked into the F1 paddock. He has always treated life as an F1 driver as a fairly unreal world. Unlike some of his rivals, there is no taking for granted the money, the private jets and the attention.

His humility in still believing that one day all his fame and fortune could go has also served to keep his feet on the ground. He often compares himself to a bright star in the sky, shining while it can, but also well aware that tomorrow it could fall down and extinguish itself in the sea.

Clear, determined focus is the key to staving off decline. The events of the past couple of weeks are hard proof that he is not sentimental when it comes to winning. These words

"THE ONLY SIGN OF CHANGE IN FERNANDO HAS BEEN IN HIS CONFIDENCE"

PAT SYMONDS



of Renault F1 chairman Faure have taken on greater weight since Alonso's announced defection to McLaren for '07: "Fernando is someone who has only one goal, which is to win as many races and titles as possible. When I look at him and listen to him, it reminds me sometimes of Ayrton [Senna] who just wanted to win races. The rest was secondary."

Despite his ambition, Alonso's modest upbringing has helped him keep perspective. Although he had a comfortable childhood, his family was no by means wealthy. But there were no complaints and no desire for anything more. Alonso had his kart (originally intended for his sister), he went racing and that was all he wanted.

He remains gracious to journalists even when they ask the most leftfield of questions (at the Renault celebrations, one television interviewer inquired, "So Fernando, what challenges are left in your life now you have won the championship?" – wonder if the word 'McLaren' flashed through his mind!) and he deals with the team in exactly the same way as the day he joined.

He accepts that it is impossible for people to approach 'Fernando Alonso, world champion' in the same way they approached 'Fernando Alonso, test driver', but that does not stop him from responding in exactly the same way.

"Well, there is a little bit more respect towards me now," he admits. "From the team, from the people on the street as well, and I think this is normal. But when you have bad times this changes completely to the opposite, that no one respects you any more. I know that this is maybe not real, what I am living now, so I try to enjoy it and have fun – but to be ready also for hard times."

Another thing that has definitely not changed is his steely determination. There is a great video of Alonso walking around the Renault factory in 2002, looking at the pictures of all the team's previous drivers and cheekily crossing out the one of Michael Schumacher.

His focus is always on believing he is the best – but he does not yet allow himself to sit back and accept that as fact.

"Yeah, it will be good in 40 years' time to look at the history books and remember what happened in 2005, but for now there is a job to do," he says.

"Day by day you receive more from the people and I know I won the championship this year, I was the youngest ever in the history of F1, and so I am proud of this, but I keep going.

Next year is a new motivation and new challenge and will probably be more difficult than this year."

Thankfully for Symonds, Alonso has wiped away one of the main weaknesses that used to drive some sections of the team mad – notably his lack of effort off the track. Symonds famously spoke out about the Spaniard's poor work ethic in 2003. "I admit I made those comments," Symonds confesses, "and I am really happy to say that I don't need to make them any more.

"He works bloody hard and his understanding is amazing, because he's such a laid-back character. You almost think he is not paying attention sometimes when you're talking to him, then he will come back with a comment or you will ask him a question and he has such a perceptive answer that you realise he was right on top of everything all the time.

"That is something I admire. Of course I admire people who can drive cars fast, but I admire intelligent people an awful lot more."

All this is not to say that Alonso doesn't need to make some changes to his armoury. Symonds hopes the conservatism that typified Alonso's season, when he chose not to take risks and go for wins with such a comfortable title

lead over Kimi Räikkönen, will be dropped in favour of a more attacking approach in 2006.

"What we saw leading up to Brazil was the conservatism that would ensure his championship," says Symonds, recalling the middle part of the season when McLaren had a faster (not better) car.

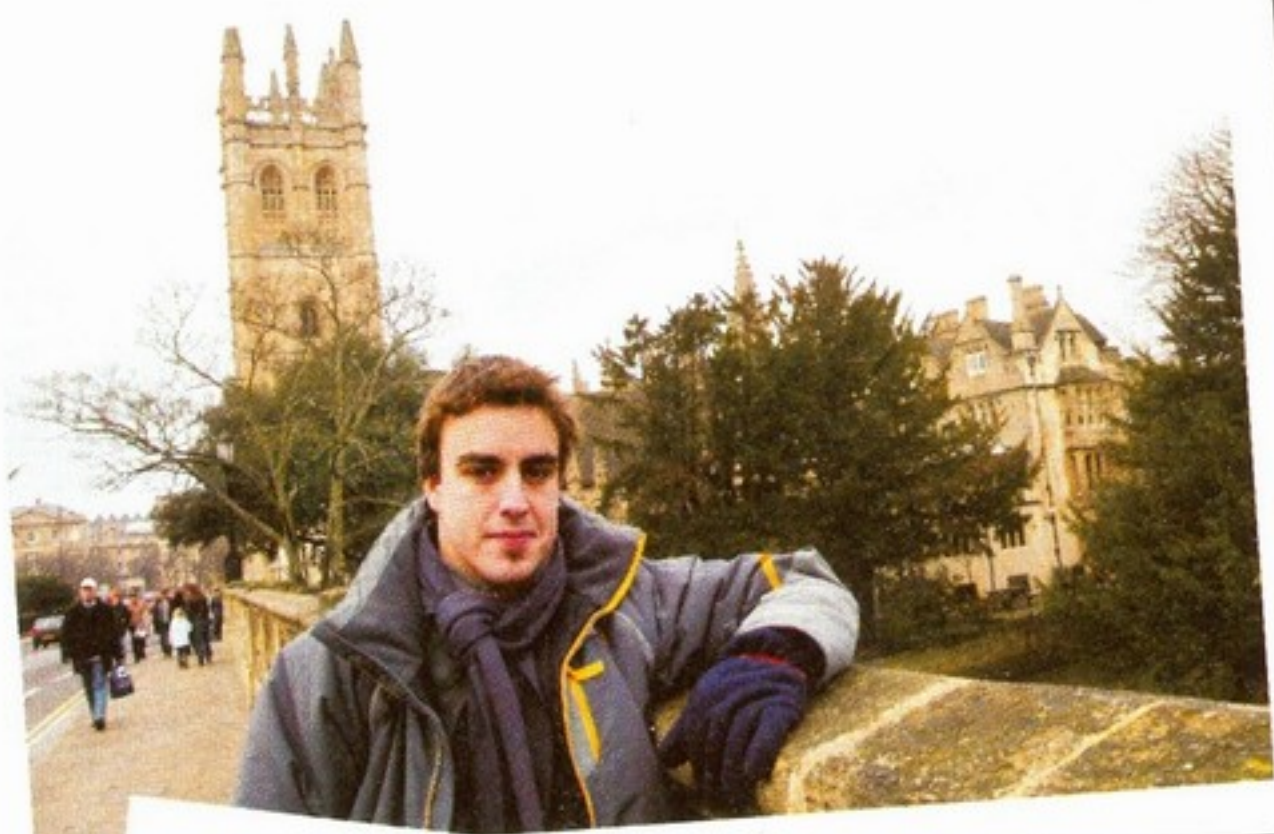
"What we saw after Brazil was the real Fernando, and what I want to see next year is the real Fernando throughout the season, irrespective of championship positions. That is something I hope he has learned.

"Now I am not implying that he did anything wrong – he did exactly what was required – but sometimes to defend you need to attack. That's the one lesson I hope we have all learned from this season and irrespective of championship positions, we just keep going for the wins."

Little did Symonds know when he set this marker down that he has just one more season with the boy wonder. Yes, Alonso's focused on 2006. But his ambition has already driven him beyond next year – and his current team. ☐

"I KNOW THIS IS NOT REAL, WHAT I AM LIVING NOW, SO I TRY TO ENJOY IT"

FERNANDO ALONSO



Main: Symonds wants to see Alonso go all out for wins in 2006

Top: In '02 Trulli and Button were Renault's stars, and Alonso test driver

Middle: No swish Monaco pad for Fernando – he still lives in Oxford

Above: The prize for winning? Renault gave Alonso his R25

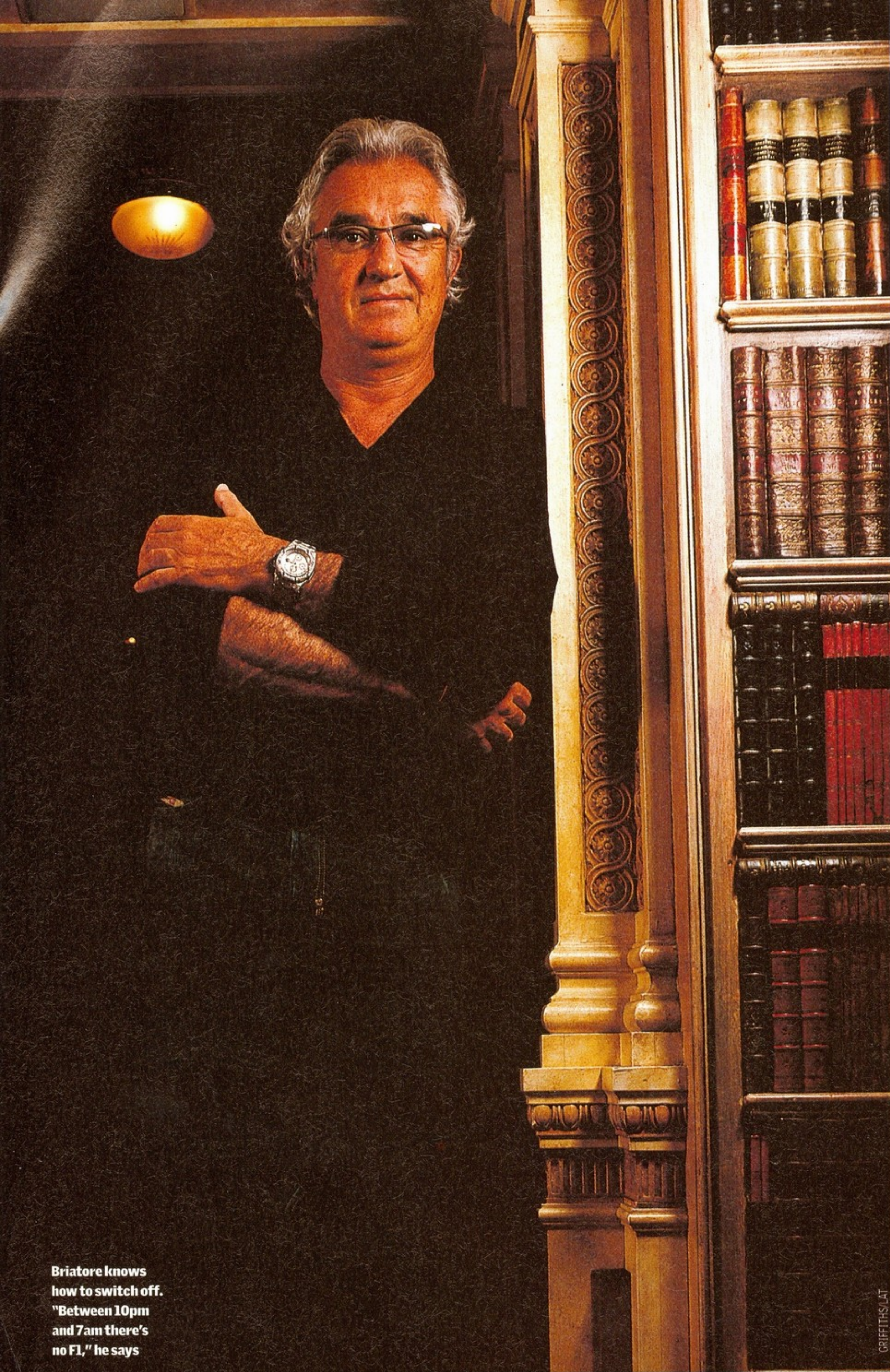


PLAYBOY MANSION

INTERVIEW Beneath the glitzy lifestyle and opulent surroundings, Renault boss Flavio Briatore works hard to be the best in the business. By ANTHONY ROWLINSON

A FLAVOUR OF FLAV





Briatore knows how to switch off. "Between 10pm and 7am there's no F1," he says

Autosport's estimable grand prix editor Nigel Roebuck mentioned recently that when he last visited Flavio Briatore at his London home, none other than Uma Thurman opened the door. Yep, it was living, breathing, walking, talking Hollywood siren Uma who pulled on the handle that allowed entry

to Briatore's fantasy world – one where movie icons, sports stars, billionaires and industry moguls rub shoulders happily in the sunshine of Flav's beatific smile.

It's somehow no surprise that Flavio should have been able to call upon a Hollywood A-lister to act as door attendant, but Uma's presence is no less impressive for that. What other team principal would be able to pull off a similar stunt – and with such insouciance? Can't imagine it happening at Frank Williams's country mansion – although if visitors were to be greeted by Margaret Thatcher, or maybe even the Queen, that would be altogether more plausible. Ron Dennis, meanwhile, would no doubt be pleased for the lovely Lisa (that's Mrs Dennis to you) to do the honours.

(Eddie Jordan, incidentally, once welcomed me into his own London pad dressed only in his birthday suit – but that's a memory probably best left undisturbed.)

So it's with no small degree of excitement, laced with trepidation, that Autosport approaches the portal of Mr Briatore's riverside Chelsea apartment, overlooking Albert Bridge. How best to make small talk with Uma Thurman, if she's on duty again tonight? "Er, really liked *Be Cool*, Uma. But isn't Travolta a bit of a porker these days?"

Sad to report that today chez Flav door duties are performed only by a member of his retained staff. But, lest we feel cheated, the opulence of the domestic scene that awaits is (almost) sufficient recompense.

The Briatore reception room is a symphony of red velvet, false bookcases, hidden doorways, lush carpet, a model Learjet, marble this, onyx that, gold leaf everything. Restrained it is not. Expensive, in a determinedly gaudy fashion, it most certainly is. A guest unused to such extreme opulence can only be disconcerted by the effect of the whole. It's the kind of place that makes you realise even subjective notions such as taste have absolutes.

The room, and what else can be seen of the apartment, has a not-quite-real, movie-set quality, entirely in keeping with the nature of Flavio himself. He has never been – will never be – a racer's racer in the manner of a Frank or a Ron (or before him a Ken Tyrrell, a Colin Chapman or an Enzo Ferrari). Instead he offers theatre in answer to their petrol heads and an unwavering focus on Formula 1 as a business and entertainment as much as sport.

And lo, after five minutes' wait and a too-friendly greeting from a coiffured Yorkshire terrier called 'Dolce' (Gabbana never shows up), he appears.

For tonight's performance Flav appears as the epitome of monied Euro cool: designer jeans, blue velvet slipper-shoes (I've been told to check for an 'FB' monogram, but there is none), a V-neck woollen sweater draped over a T-shirt, in the Italian male birthright manner; and, of course, shades (indoors, remember, at night) – with just a hint of blue tint. There's a monstrous diamond-encrusted watch on his left wrist, so big it looks weighty enough to work out with, and that characteristic silver-grey mane is swept back in curvy

FOLLOW MY LEAD

FLAVIO BRIATORE – THE F1 CV

■ **1988** Briatore invited to first grand prix, in Australia, as a guest of Luciano Benetton

■ **1989** Briatore appointed commercial director at Benetton Formula 1 team. Team wins first race under Flavio in Japan, with Alessandro Nannini.

■ **1991** Briatore poaches

Michael Schumacher from Eddie Jordan. Also hires Ross Brawn from TWR.

■ **1994** Briatore-led Benetton takes Schumacher to drivers' title. Buys Ligier team.

■ **1995** Schumacher wins second consecutive drivers' title; Benetton, now with Renault engines, wins constructors' title.

■ **1996** Schumacher leaves Benetton for Ferrari. Tech aces Ross Brawn and Rory Byrne follow him.

■ **1997** Briatore sells Ligier to Alain Prost. Is then sacked by Luciano Benetton before selling his stake in the team. Buys Renault Sport factory and rebrands it 'Supertec'. Sets up his own driver management company.

■ **2000** Renault buys Benetton team and places Briatore in charge. The Italian then signs Mike Gascoyne as technical director for 2001. Hires Jenson Button for '01 and '02. Signs up Fernando Alonso on management contract.

■ **2002** Renault F1 replaces Benetton-Renault as F1 entrant.

Dumps Button in favour of Alonso for '03.

■ **2003** Briatore placed in overall charge of all Renault's F1 activities – engine and chassis. Alonso wins first GP in Hungary, making him the youngest-ever F1 winner. Gascoyne quits for Toyota.

■ **2004** Engine chief Rob White poached from

Cosworth. Jarno Trulli wins Monaco GP but falls out with Briatore, resulting in his early departure from team. Jacques Villeneuve subs for Trulli for final three races of '04.

■ **2005** Briatore watches Alonso become the youngest-ever F1 world champion. Renault takes its first title as a manufacturer entrant.

swooshes – perhaps after a quick session with Renault F1's head of aero Dino Toso. This man is larger-than-life like ships are heavy: he's the product, surely, of the painting-by-numbers 'international playboy' kit.

Call from the subconscious: he's a Formula 1 team principal, dummy! Oh yes, of course. The reason we're here? To talk about the secret of his, and Renault's, success. Thing is, Flav is such a one-off, such a peacock among (racing) pigeons, it's sometimes near-impossible to get beyond the image and remember he's the head of the team that won both 2005 F1 World Championships; the same guy who achieved an identical feat in 1995 and who also oversaw Michael Schumacher's '94 drivers' title success.

He's proud of these milestones, reckoning himself to be the first team principal to have won a title double with two different teams – Benetton-Renault in '95 and Renault F1 this time around.

That's a little disingenuous, for the guts of the 2005 operation, while now wholly Renault-owned, is the same Enstone- and Viry-Chatillon-based team. But guys like Briatore are far too cute to let the chance for a spot of self-mythologising pass by.

"It's true," he asserts. "In 1995 we were a much smaller team, we were all a little bit younger and the success came quite quickly for us. We won a lot in a short time."

That much is undeniable. After the tragedy and high drama of 1994, Benetton did a pretty good job of cleaning up in '95, but for the past decade the constructors' championship trophy it won that year has sat alone in an unremarkable corridor at Enstone HQ. Now, of course, it has a partner.

"Mean," says Flav (his amusing verbal shorthand for 'I mean'), "it was much more difficult this year. We had competition from McLaren all year and Toyota and Ferrari were also strong. BAR and Williams, too, at some races, so it was never easy. The manufacturers make it bigger for everybody and the budgets keep going up because they all want to win. Our budget wasn't the biggest, but it's perfect for doing the job."

Here's Briatore the businessman talking – the man one of his rivals reckons would earn a million in a year if stripped of all worldly goods and dropped tomorrow onto a New York street corner. Renault is reckoned to operate on an annual budget of around £160m – relative peanuts compared with the £220-230m spent by the likes of Ferrari and Toyota. But as the manner of Renault's title victories showed this year, in beating a McLaren team that often had a quicker car, it's not always what you've got but what you do with it that counts.

Business Flav again: "Mean, it's all about management. Between Enstone and Viry we have 800 people and you have to run it like any company. Everyone has to know what their job is and the management structures have to be transparent. When you have that, things start to work."

Makes it all sounds remarkably easy, does Flavio. But that's part of the trick. He's not a strung-out, fast-moving stress-head, forever bustling up and down the F1 paddock in search of the latest battle to fight. Rarely does he immerse himself in the type of spats with the FIA that so often consume his competitors. Indeed, on most grand prix weekends, Flav's usually to be found strolling languidly around the environs of the team motorhome, detached from the fray, making time for the people who really matter.

It's a deceptively simple leadership technique – one that relies heavily on picking the right lieutenants and delegating everything possible. When it works, it means Toleman-Benetton-Renault stalwarts such as Pat Symonds, a 20-years-plus veteran of the team, are both empowered and inspired to fierce loyalty. Symonds has one of the most finely tuned 'bullshit radars' in the F1 paddock and is a far from obvious match for one so extrovert as Briatore. Yet without fail he speaks highly of his boss in a manner that goes beyond professional respect. Mark Webber, another straight-talker, who happens to be managed by Briatore, is also quick to praise Flavio's no-nonsense business dealings.

The flip of this is that when it goes wrong, it goes badly wrong: just ask Jarno Trulli, an ex-Flav driver whose golden, Alonso-pummelling first half-2004 season at Renault turned to dust when driver and manager stopped seeing eye to eye halfway through the season. Without the welcoming embrace of Toyota, whose tech director, Mike Gascoyne, is chairman of the Trulli fan club, Jarno's F1 career could have been toast.

A year earlier, when Jenson Button was teamed with Trulli, Flav rubbished both drivers, declaring that neither would ever be capable of winning a world championship. Tough words,

but two years later, Briatore can preen his feathers as the man who shaped Fernando Alonso into the youngest-ever F1 world champion. "I am very proud of what we have achieved with Fernando," he says. "We don't have the money to buy superstars, so we grow our own. It was the same with Schumi."

When times are good, as they are now, the darker side of Briatore experienced by Trulli and Button, among others, is kept well in check, as he employs instead his easy, mannered charm. He has a knack of making those within his radar-sweep feel they're the only people who matter, and that quality, combined with powerful, humour-laced charisma, makes him a beguiling figure. It's shown, most obviously, in his polished camera manner ("You want more pictures? Sure, no problem. Where do you want me?") and in the casual way he talks about his life outside F1: "My day finishes at 10pm and after that I decide either to go out or go to bed. Between 10pm and 7am there's no F1. Everybody has their own way to relax."

This last line is delivered with a twinkle that should be bottled – 'Essence of Rogue'. What he's not telling (we find out later, in the lift) is that his companion for the evening will be Bernard Charles Ecclestone. Flav's fast, slightly slurred, Italian-flavoured pitter-patter has been entirely convincing until a pause for thought. He's out on the town with Bernie... Okay, so his 'down-time' from running the 2005 world-championship-winning F1 team is spent with the single most important, influential and powerful figure in the sport. Is it more likely they'll be talking about the current value of Flavio's flat (which he bought from Ecclestone a number of years ago) or the current value of the deal Bernie is about to pitch to the manufacturer teams (of which Renault is one) not yet signed up to the post-2008 extension to the Concorde Agreement?

These throwaway insights into Flav-world reinforce the belief that he's one of the three or four very biggest players at the F1 poker table. He gives little away directly, but evidence of his connections and of his proximity to the seat of power are enough to convince he's not likely ever to be out of favour while Mr E is in charge.

But more remarkably, and uniquely in F1, Briatore has also succeeded in pleasing his major-manufacturer paymasters (the huge Renault-Nissan multi-national, headed by

aggressive cost-cutter Carlos Ghosn) while still keeping Bernie sweet. No other team principal succeeds in hunting with the hounds and running with the foxes quite so well. Frank Williams tried it – attempting to maintain his team's independence and the Ecclestone hotline at the same time as buttering up BMW: then Williams found it actually hated its partners and wanted no part of BM's attempt to launch a 'breakaway' F1 series. Ron Dennis manages to ensure in his ever-pragmatic, always disciplined manner that McLaren's interests are looked after by keeping pro-GPMA Mercedes happy, while also burning no bridges with Bernie. Only Flav, however, truly sups at both tables, able to advise both his immediate boss, Renault president Patrick Faure, and the little big boss – Ecclestone.

That ability to run a successful team yet still keep enough spare brain capacity to think about the bigger picture is reminiscent of the now-dominant figure who, 20 years ago,

was the owner of the Brabham F1 team and about to become the only shark in the piranha club. Ecclestone is now 75 and even one whose mental faculties remain so acute must eventually fade. Could Briatore be the one to succeed Ecclestone? He's one of the few figures in F1 who are *of* the sport, yet still sufficiently detached from it to be able one day to levitate above and direct the show. Flav scoffs: "Hah! Bernie has at least three or four years left. Mean, maybe now he doesn't have the German banks pushing him he will think about

staying even longer. People have been saying this since I arrived in Formula 1 back in 1988. They were saying 'we really have to think about someone else apart from Bernie' and that was 15 years ago – more! My focus is on 2006. I don't want to know about the future."

That, from a consummate talent spotter, people manager, deal maker, paddock hustler and all-round F1 player, is as credulity-stretching a comment as Flav is ever likely to offer. But this arch-enigma isn't likely to change his ways now.

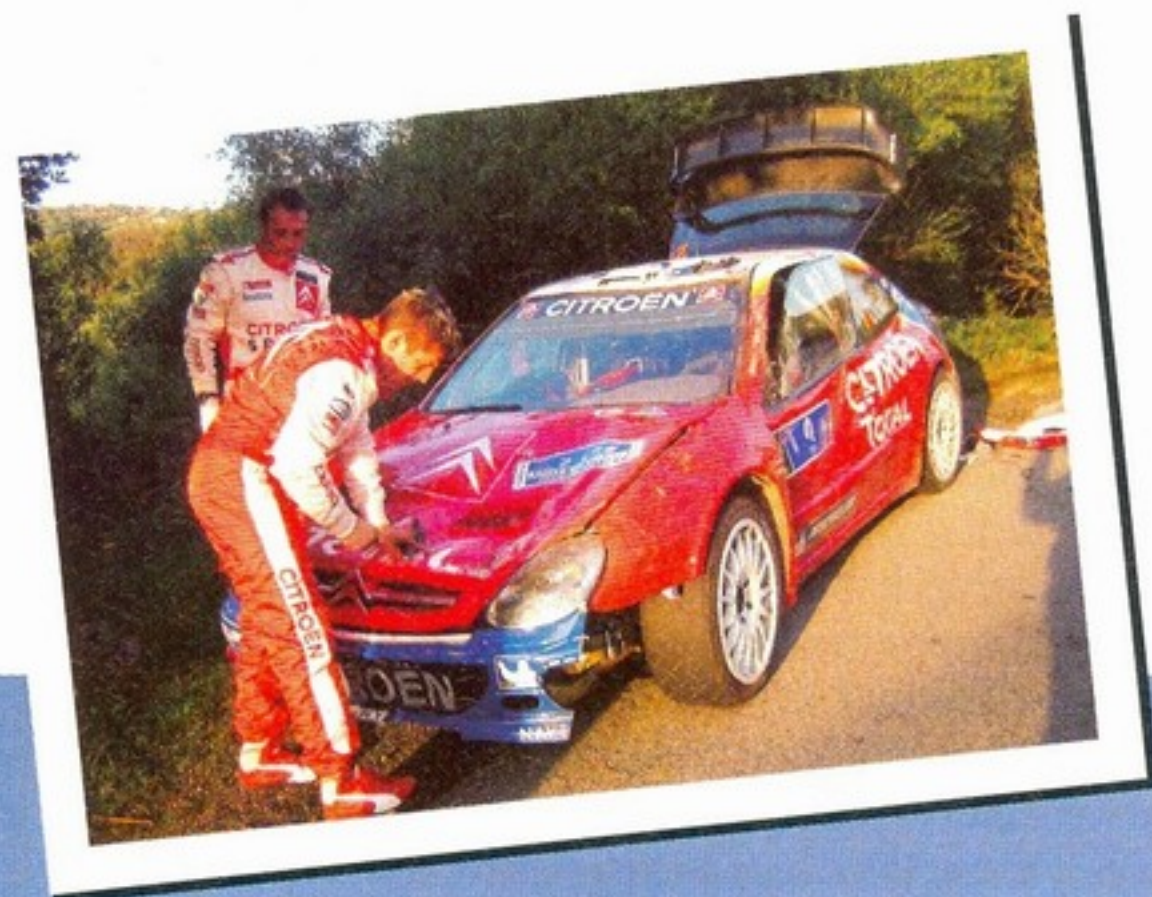
"Mean," he says, "I came to F1 as an outsider, but I loved the competition and having fun. That was true more this year than ever – it was our magic year. Mean, you only have one life. I want to wake up each morning and be happy about what I have done."

You suspect Flavio Briatore usually is. ☒

"I WANT TO WAKE UP EACH MORNING AND BE HAPPY WITH WHAT I'VE DONE"
FLAVIO BRIATORE



IT'S GOODBYE FR



OM THEM

ANALYSIS Citroën and Peugeot have left the WRC in very different circumstances. By DAVID EVANS



They came, saw and truly conquered. Recent history in the World Rally Championship has been almost entirely about French domination, save for two drivers' championships snaffled by Subaru. Now, though, the French are gone, having painted the WRC red, white and blue.

But are the French really gone? Actually, no. The taxi for two brought on by the PSA Group announcement – at the end of last season – of a complete withdrawal following 2005 was reversed in Citroën's case. The C4 WRC will arrive in '07, but the chevrons won't be far away next year. As for Peugeot, the exit has been shown. The highlights are a fading memory already.

As with all commanding performances, controversy was never far behind the headlines. Peugeot and Citroën arrived at the pinnacle of the sport after running two-litre kit car machinery (the 307 for Peugeot the Xsara kit car for Citroën), whose asphalt performances had left World Rally Car drivers such as Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz up in arms. The kit cars weighed next to nothing and churned out almost the same grunt, albeit solely through the front wheels. The likes of McRae and Sainz demanded rule changes to ban these cars, which left their heavily-restricted turbocharged rivals wheezing in their wake. In the end, Peugeot, and subsequently Citroën, did the decent thing and made their own WRCs.

Those protestors probably wished they'd kept quiet now. At least the kit cars were left trailing in their wake on anything other than a sealed surface. The same would certainly not be said for the total traction machinery which followed.

Peugeot's 206 WRC arrived in time for Corsica in 1999, and went quickest on its first ever stage in the championship. Teething troubles through the remainder of that year's outings kept its drivers off the top step of the podium. But not for long.

Monte Carlo in 2000 marked the start of The Lion's first full WRC campaign since the 205T16 of 1986, but it was a disaster. All three official cars failed to fire up from a chilly parc fermé in the Alps. On France's blue riband rally, the French had singularly failed to deliver.

Round two and Sweden was a very different story. It was win number one for Marcus Grönholm. That was followed by title number one. The next season there would be more success and yet more controversy. Peugeot's budget allowed it to employ the best drivers for each surface – a policy which paid handsome dividends given the FIA's rule that teams could nominate three drivers per rally. It backfired in Sanremo, however, when two of France's fastest and most fiery asphalt drivers – François Delecour and Gilles Panizzi – went head-to-head in the hills off the Italian coast. Delecour accused Panizzi of cheating in full view of the world's media in service. After being restrained, his tirade of verbal abuse ceased – only long enough for him to spit in Panizzi's direction. There was never a dull moment.

The following year was dogged with retirements, often caused by headgasket-related engine problems. The 2001 season would also be remembered for the arrival of Sébastien Loeb. And it was some arrival. On his first ever outing in a Xsara WRC, Loeb hassled Panizzi's 206 WRC all the way on a wet Sanremo. Loeb lost in the end, but the signals were coming loud and clear from the other side of Paris.

Having conquered Peugeot's reliability problems, Grönholm gave the rest of the world a driving lesson in 2002, when he was at the height of his power. Utterly dominant, the Finn won five times and was by now considering retirement.

Three years later and he's got a two-year deal with Ford, so what was going through the then 33-year-old Finn's mind?

"At that time I was tired with all the testing and the rallies and the travelling," recalls Grönholm. "Everything was a little bit too much – and it was coming quite easy then. Sébastien [Loeb] wasn't around, so we didn't have to try like hell so much. Things were all going my way."

Grönholm and Peugeot sensed the power shifting in 2002, but he wasn't going to go down without a fight. His victory in

Main: Au revoir! A Peugeot Sport mechanic waves goodbye to six years of 206/307 WRC action

Inset from left: Loeb celebrated his third Monte win in 2005 – a rally Peugeot has never won; the 206 was one of the sport's most successful cars; Duval's crash-strewn '05 season stood in sharp contrast to Loeb's; Grönholm had his world turned upside down by Peugeot's decision to pull out

Argentina in '03 was one of the all-time greats. He led, lost two minutes with a suspension problem, then fought back and won the rally all over again. It was immense. It was also the end. Grönholm wouldn't win again for 18 rallies. Between those victories was Cyprus. For a few hours, at least, the island event marked the debut win for the 307 WRC, until scrutineers found irregularities with the water pump.

While Peugeot peaked and began its decline, Citroën started winning. Loeb missed the championship by one point in 2003. He wouldn't be so careless for the next two years. The manufacturers' crown remained in France, but Peugeot's three-year reign had come to an end and it was the start of Citroën's three years at the top. Only Subaru – with Petter Solberg – stood in the way of a 2003 French clean sweep.

To make matters worse for Peugeot, this was meant to be the time for the new car: the 307 WRC. But it would never be the car the 206 was. Twelve months down the line and a switch from Michelin to Pirelli – for what would be the team's final WRC season – would bring more problems.

"The switch of tyres made things a little more difficult," admits Grönholm. "That was not a good idea. We did a lot of work with the 307, a lot of testing. We made the car more reliable, but, for me, it wasn't fast enough. It wasn't as fast as the 206. I said this many times and Jean-Pierre [Nicolas, team boss] knew how many wins I had in the 206."

In the heat of competition, nobody likes losing, but for Peugeot, it didn't get any worse than losing to Citroën. Every rally brought another local derby. It was never worse than in Monte Carlo; Peugeot had failed miserably every time it turned up in the Alps, but Citroën won three on the bounce. As the performance levels of the two teams drifted further apart, Peugeot threw more and more money at the WRC.

One leading team principal says: "When Citroën arrived and started to beat them, those budgets went up and up. I'd say Peugeot had roughly three times the budget that most of the teams were working on. The rest of us did our best, but to compete against that sort of cash is incredibly difficult. Don't get me wrong, the sport will miss giants like Peugeot, but, at the same time, it will be nice to compete on a level playing field."

Best not to think too much about the last three years, but look back to the first three when everybody was smiling. Peugeot's finale – last month's Rally Australia – summed up the whole thing, as Nicolas admits.

"Our participation in the championship ends the way it began – with all of our cars retiring; do you remember that Monte Carlo Rally in 2000? For me, though, finishing in the World Rally Championship is just disappointing."

In performance terms, this season has been a toughie for Peugeot but, in human terms, it's been like no other.

"This is why I say just disappointing," continues Nicolas. "What happened in September [with Michael Park's death on Rally GB] is what makes me sad. Retiring from the sport is nothing compared with what happened to Michael and his family. In Australia, we had one car out with suspension and one car burned, so what?"

These are not the memories Nicolas will take with him, though. "No, no, no," he replies immediately. "In six years we have so many beautiful times with Marcus Grönholm. Can you remember the times we had? They were all so fantastic with Harri Rovanperä, Didier Auriol and Gilles Panizzi winning rallies for us, and we had Richard Burns – we cannot forget him. They all gave us so many beautiful memories."

"The 27 rally victories are the best memories. They are good souvenirs for us to take away from the sport. I will never forget them. It's so hard to describe what the feeling is like."

And with that, Peugeot is gone. There will be less foie gras and Beaujolais in the service park next season. People said Peugeot would not be the same without ebullient boss Corrado Provera who retired in February, but the cigar-chomping Italian was soon forgotten. It remains to be seen if the same will be said about the marque. ■



KARTING WITH THE MANSELLS

A LESSON IN LATE BRAKING

THE MANSELLS decided to announce Leo and Greg's foray into motorsport with a kart race, where Nigel and the boys would take on any members of the press who fancied a go.

It's not every day you get to race against one Mansell, let alone three, and the feeling of being completely unprepared made me sympathise with what Leo and Greg will face in April when they'll enter their first ever car race.

You could count the number of times I'd been karting before on the fingers of one hand and the number of times I'd been any good at it on none. But even so, and even though this was just a bit of fun, I caught myself believing the same excuses that you roll your eyes at every weekend in the

paddock – 'Couldn't get a clear lap in practice', 'Punted off in the race when it wasn't my fault' – and when I started on some line about my fastest lap showing I actually belonged in the top five, I had a little more sympathy for those drivers with their reasons as to why they deserve better.

So I was never going to win, but I did pass a Mansell! I wasn't sure whether Leo was lapping me or dithering in the pack, but I semi-accidentally barged him out of the way at a hairpin and managed to stay in front almost until the next corner! The family took revenge, though: while I was trying to find my braking point at the end of the back straight, a thump in the back told me that Nigel Mansell would brake later than that!

Greg (right) won the Mansells versus journo kart race



The Mansell name returns (above) – Nigel tries a Formula BMW for size. Sons Greg and Leo will race in the series in 2006 (right and centre)

Despite once having misgivings about them following in his footsteps, former world champion Nigel is a source of invaluable advice and support for his sons (far right)

SPINNEY/LAT

DRIVING OFF THE TEE

INTERVIEW They were being lined up for careers as pro golfers, but now Greg and Leo Mansell have persuaded dad to let them on to the track. By STEVEN ENGLISH

After a decade out of the spotlight the name Mansell is well and truly back at the centre of motorsport's attention. Following Nigel's high-profile return to the cockpit in the Grand Prix Masters at Kyalami last month, the recent announcement that both his sons, Leo and Greg, are to begin their own motorsport careers in 2006 confirmed that one of British racing's favourite names is back for good.

But, in contrast to the likes of the Piquets and Rosbergs, this was not planned for the Mansell boys from the start. It looked as though both 20-year-old Leo and 18-year-old Greg would indulge themselves in the family's other passion, golf, at a professional level.

Nigel explains how they got from golf to Formula BMW in six months: "We didn't appreciate their true passion for driving until recently. Greg had wanted to go karting many times, but we'd never taken it too seriously. I honestly thought it had gone away because he put more effort into his golf and we were mapping out plans for the PGA.

"But we've had a health scare with [my wife] Roseanne in the last year where we nearly lost her, and that made us all look at things differently. Things that mattered before are not so important now, and there are things that weren't at the front of our minds that are mightily important now. One of those things for me is making sure you really listen to your kids and pay attention to what makes them happy.

"It made us all reassess our lives, and Greg didn't want to lose the opportunity to go racing. He poured his heart out one day and explained how seriously he felt in such a way that it made me feel dreadful, so I immediately said, 'Okay, let's go karting'. It made him so happy, and of course if Greg was doing it then Leo wanted to do it too.

"Once racing in BMW became an option, I said, 'Okay, but you've got to make it happen yourselves', not for one moment thinking they'd actually find their own sponsorship and make it a reality. It's gone a bit quickly from there and

suddenly we're in Formula BMW for 2006."

The announcement was made, fittingly, at a karting track with the trio taking on all comers in a 20-minute race. After coming out on top, Greg says: "If we didn't get started now it would be too late. I've always dreamed of going racing, but I never seriously thought it would become a reality. I found it was more enjoyable than I thought it would be, then I found I was a bit better than I thought I'd be as well."

Leo adds: "We've always had the desire, but we'd accepted that actually doing it was never going to be a possibility because we knew our parents were against it.

"Our dad had been through the pain of big crashes and seen the political side and all the other negatives of the sport, and he didn't want us to go through that, or be trying to follow in his footsteps. Until a few months ago there was no more to it than that – we were pursuing other sports and concentrating on other things. When it came to a head with Greg being allowed to go karting, I just jumped on the bandwagon, so I have him to thank really."

The pair will have to deal with the pressure and expectations that come with being the son of a world champion, but Leo believes it won't have a significant affect on their racing. "There are positives, of course, and the name has been a big help with sponsorship," he says. "There are negatives, but I just accept the bad bits because they've been there all our lives. Whether it's being a racing driver or just an 11-year-old kid at school with a famous dad, there are people who don't like you, or only like you because of that. We've learned to deal with it – we'll take what we get from carrying that name, we'll enjoy the positives and take the negatives on the chin and endure them because that's all part of it.

"We may be new to racing but we've been Mansells since we were born. I was at school when the attention on my dad was at its height; it was much bigger then than it is on us now.

"The name is going to put us in the spotlight, but I want to earn that spotlight for myself. I want to be known as Leo Mansell, just as Greg, and every other driver out there, wants to be known as individuals as well."

With a growing trend of second-generation drivers succeeding in international motorsport, there will be pressure on Greg and Leo to live up to those expectations. "When you're brought up in an environment and you're comfortable with it, it does come more naturally to you," says Leo. "But our expectations for this season are realistic, of course. Maybe as the year goes on they will increase, but whether that's to be aiming for 15th, 10th or fifth, we don't know. We have to see where we're at and build our expectations from there, rather than do it the other way round.

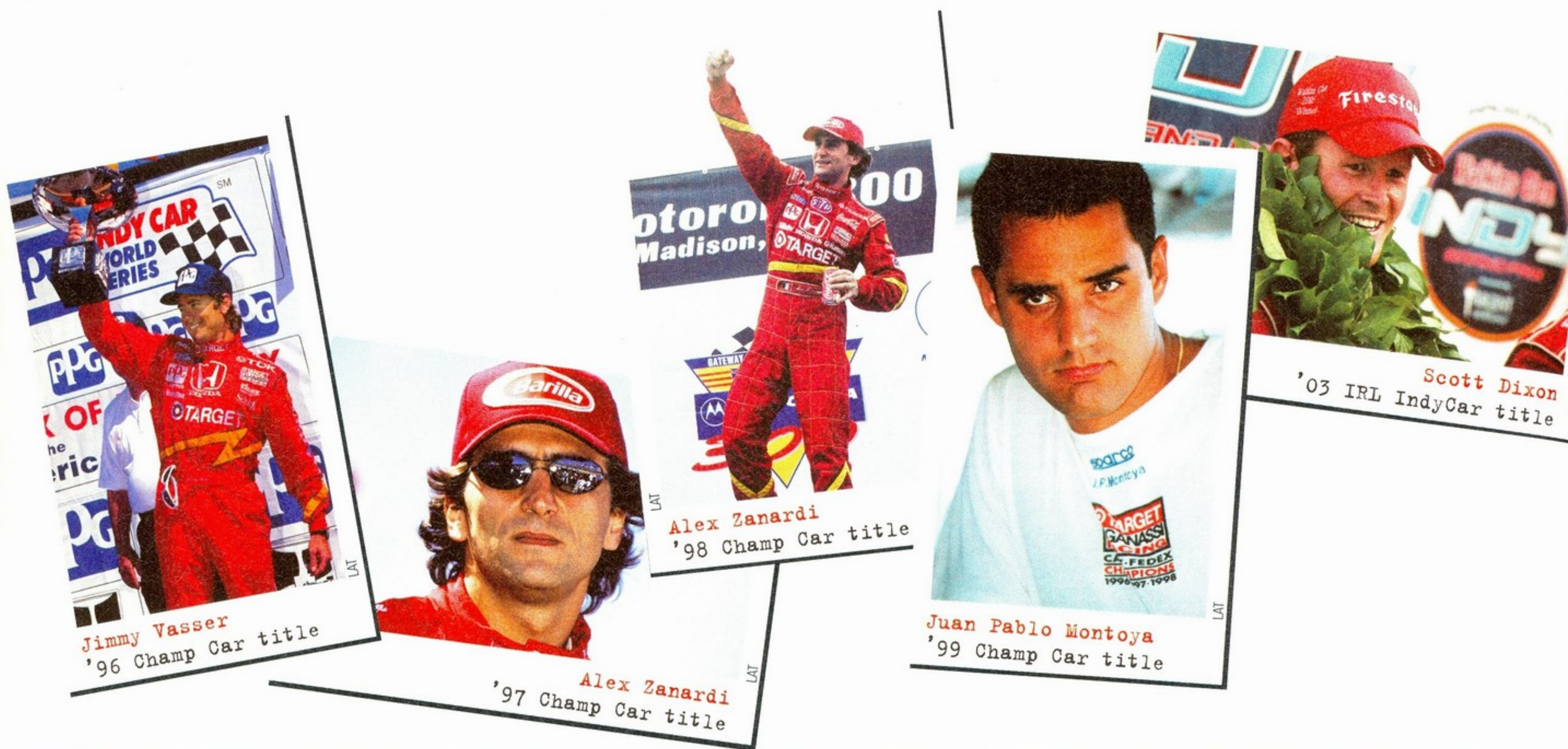
"We are prepared for the unrealistic expectations that some people will have for us. Because we have the name we do, people have had different expectations of us all our lives, whether it be misbehaving in school, or playing other sports, so we're used to that. If we win, some people might say, 'Of course they won, they're Mansells', while others might downplay it. If we come last, spin off, or cause an accident, they may add more positives or negatives than if we were just any other driver and we accept that. If you're not ready to accept criticism, to listen to it and take it in your stride, then you shouldn't be a sportsman.

"But when things do get hard, we've got a pretty good coach – and we don't have to pay for him! He's been involved in motorsport through the years and seen the ups and downs, so we couldn't learn from anyone better."

Looking ahead to 2006, Nigel says: "Whether they're ready or not, they've arrived. They've handled it superbly so far and I'm very proud of them. Do I think they'll be sensationally quick straight out of the blocks? No. Do I think they've got a lot of talent? Yes, I certainly do otherwise I wouldn't be supporting them. And do I think over all the races in 2006 they will have some races where they're ultra competitive? Yes, I really think they will."

Greg concludes: "If I said I was going out there just to have fun, I'd be lying. I want to be competitive. But at the same time I'm just happy to be in Formula BMW, or even karting, because two or three years ago I never thought I'd sit in a racing car!"





GANASSI'S SIXTH SENSATION

INTERVIEW Dan Wheldon has the chance to continue Chip Ganassi's title-winning tradition and send his own reputation into the stratosphere. By DAVID MALSHER

Motorsport got a new hero in 2005. He's British but has made his home – three of them, actually – in the USA. He's won the biggest race in the world and the IndyCar title, he's earned millions of dollars this year, and he's been connected to Formula 1 and NASCAR drives. As Honda's dream boy, he's been able to switch from Andretti Green Racing to Target Chip Ganassi Racing for a purportedly huge wage increase. If he could change it all, one suspects he wouldn't.

This is Dan Wheldon, superstar. He isn't driven by the desire for competition. He's driven by the desire to succeed. And now with this momentum behind him, you get the feeling he'd be a success at anything he tried – tennis, soccer, kickboxing, whatever.

For now though, he is remaining in motorsport, and Indycars to be precise. Despite much speculation since August that he was on his way to F1 – he was linked with Honda, BMW-Sauber and Williams – he's decided to stick with what he knows.

"I had agreed with Julian [Jakobi, his manager] that we'd only go to Formula 1 if we were completely comfortable with the deal, and we weren't," says Wheldon simply. "There was a test drive offered for 2006, and there was the potential of a race drive, but it wasn't... [His voice trails off and he pauses, wanting to get this right]. I didn't want a guarantee. I don't

expect guarantees of race drives. But the way I am, I'd like to have some agreement in place whereby if I'm attaining certain goals, I'm gonna get rewarded. But there's no way of distinguishing whether I was gonna get the race drive or not, so it could come down to politics, which nine times out of 10 it does. I wanted some kind of gauge where I could see if I was achieving what I needed to in an F1 car or not, and I couldn't get that.

"In July or August I got approached by a Formula 1 team, and mixing the two things – Indycar racing and F1 testing – was talked about but it was not viable. It really interested me, but the only way would be to do a deal with Honda, so at this time of year, when IndyCar has a test-freeze, until the middle of January you'd test a Honda F1, do the IRL season, then go back to F1 testing.

"To be honest, I enjoy America too much to just pick up and leave. I wouldn't want to be a test driver for three or four years, because I just love competition. I enjoy the Indianapolis 500 and I wouldn't want to be giving that up, I love the whole American way of racing. As long as you're doing well out there, you're always going to be looked at by Formula 1 teams. The deal has to be right to do F1. It doesn't grab me so much that I'd just give up everything in America. I respect what people have done for me in America. In 1999, there was not a place for me in Europe any more, and there was in America, so to turn round and say, 'Stick it to you guys, I'm gonna bail at the first offer I get in Formula 1' seems kinda shallow. I've



always been taken care of in America, so that would certainly be a factor in any decision. I wouldn't say Indycars is an end in itself, but it's somewhere I would say right now that I'm happy."

And no-one should doubt him. In 1999, Wheldon found that no-one in Britain or Europe wanted him, despite an excellent Formula Ford campaign racing the likes of Jenson Button, Marcos Ambrose and Nicolas Kiesa. Then he had the world on his shoulders; now he has it at his feet. That's why a lot of people are surprised that he's not heading to F1. So what about the possibility of switching to NASCAR, America's most popular form of motorsport? Jakobi has more than hinted at that recently, and Ganassi of course has his fingers in both IndyCar and NASCAR pies...

"Right now, I'm just going to do the IndyCar thing," says Wheldon "but of course Chip's operation has the potential to do NASCAR. To have the possibility to move down to Charlotte and try it is interesting. I'm definitely going to push him to have a go in a NASCAR, for sure, and I told Chip when I signed that I definitely want to do more than just IndyCar next year because our season is only 14 races long."

He certainly seems undaunted by the prospect of going into uncharted territory, where no-one from outside the US has succeeded.

"No-one has ever really committed to it before, or done the right programme leading into it," he points out. "I know Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson, Greg Biffle, Brian Vickers and Kevin Harvick and I've spoken to them a lot about it because we've become friends. It's a different style of racing and requires a different feel. You don't drive to your potential, you drive to the potential of the tyres and the car. If you overstep that, it kills your speed over the whole stint. So there's a way and a method to drive them, and you've got to do the Busch series in order to learn that. I wouldn't have a problem with doing 36 races a year or whatever: that would be mega. The more racing you can do the better."

He's not just blowing hot air: this is a man deeply

enthusiastic about his racing, and his standing within the motorsport world. Rumour has it that Ganassi and/or Honda and/or Target have quadrupled his basic salary from what was offered by Andretti Green Racing. But he says money wasn't a motivational factor. ("If you can win as many races as I have done, you can make up for it in prize money!")

The message that comes through loud and clear is that Wheldon has moved to Chip Ganassi because it will improve still further his standing within the IndyCar community and around the world. Should he considerably improve the fortunes of the 2003 championship-winning team which has scored just one win in the past two seasons, some of that will be put down to the team's switch to a Dallara-Honda package. But a lot of credit will also be sent the way of DWheldon Esq. And he knows it.

"My motivation now is to win in a different team. I'm still young, and it would be unbelievable to win the 500 in a different team. That would raise my profile as well, so that's a big deal. The reason I'm going to Chip is because I feel I can win races with Chip and win the 500 in his car; it's not because I don't think I can with Andretti Green. I believe I can with them too, but I'd like to try doing it with a different team. It would help my career and my profile, so now was the right time to do it. I feel I'm going from a winning operation to a winning operation."

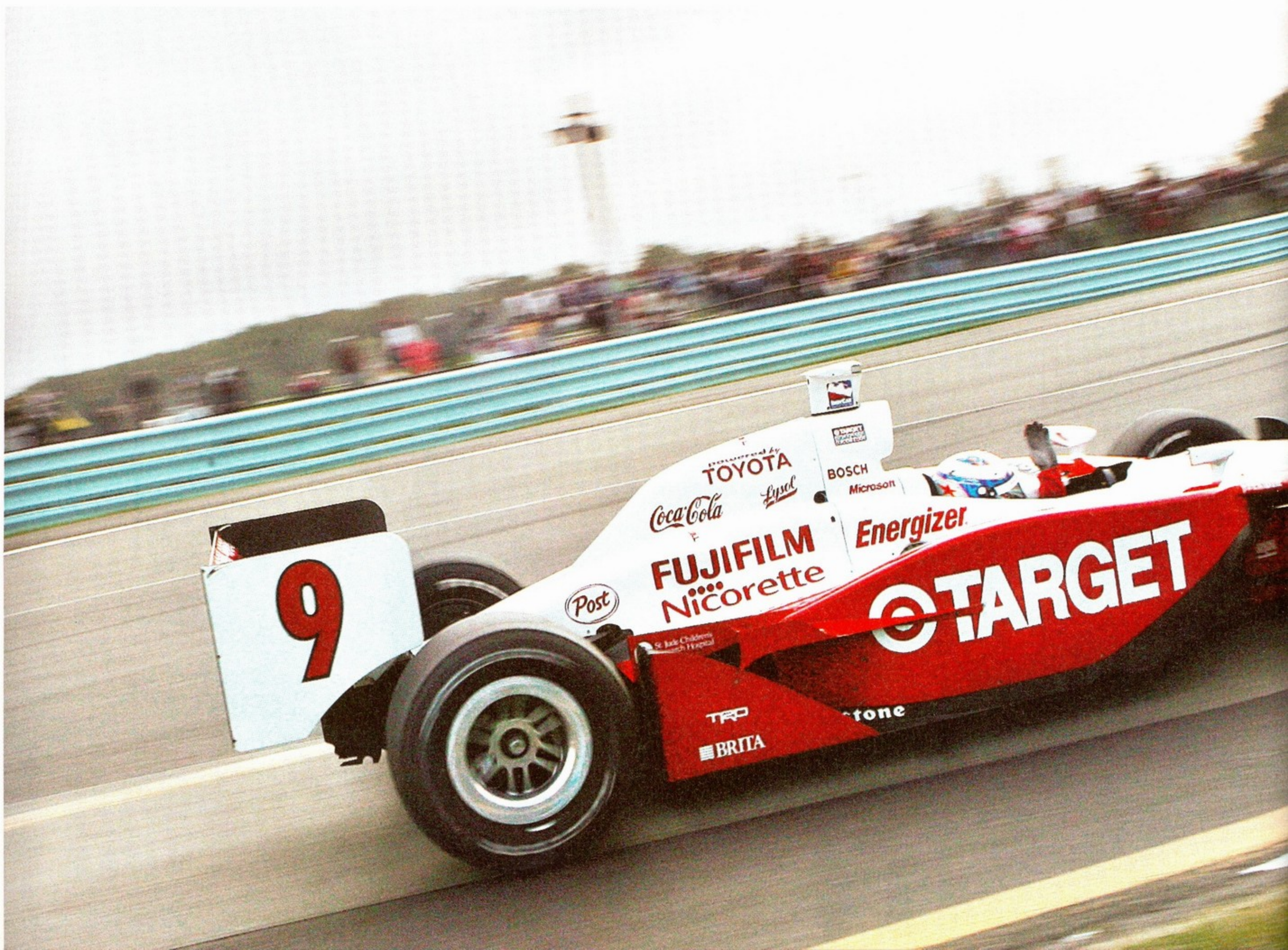
Undoubtedly, but Chip Ganassi is not known for allowing anything he perceives as underperformance. Not a worry for Wheldon.

"The way he talks is he's really motivated to win. He's a real straight-shooter. The relationship will be simple: if we're doing real well, we're gonna have a great relationship; if we're not, we're not going to have one! He hasn't said that, but that's a feeling I got, and that's perfect for me. I'm only interested in doing well. I've shown I can win races in a good car - I've won nine, I've won Indy, and I've won the championship, so that has taken the pressure off me."

You've got to credit his self-confidence. He's surely never

Right: Don't be taken in by the smile. Ganassi is a hard task master!

Below: Dixon's only win in the last two seasons came at Watkins Glen. Now, out go Toyota engines and Panoz chassis, in come Honda, Dallara and Wheldon





going to find as cosy a relationship as he had at AGR. His team-mates Tony Kanaan, Dario Franchitti and Bryan Herta were all supportive, something which Dan's happy to acknowledge.

"Before I started with AGR, if you'd asked me whether there was any chance that four team-mates as competitive as we all are would get along, I'd have said there was no chance. But it worked so well because there was a lot of respect there. I was always the baby of the family, so that helped. All of them helped me throughout. When I first went to short ovals I struggled. In particular, at Nazareth I was *terrible*, absolutely terrible in testing. It requires a technique that I wasn't particularly comfortable with, but Dario sat with me all day saying try this, try that, do this, do that. It was ten to five in the afternoon, and I'd used every set of new tyres, so I'd already screwed my chances of doing a good lap time and then we made a few last-minute changes, nothing to lose, just try it. And suddenly, despite old tyres, I went four tenths quicker with these changes than my best all day. And then I went and won the race!

"Another example was Japan in 2004. In Europe I was always a right-foot braker, but you tend to switch to left for ovals and I wasn't comfortable with it, but I went along with it because it had the potential to be significantly quicker. In the first session at Motegi, the car felt pretty quick, but I wasn't getting my timing right in Turns 3 and 4. Turns 1 and 2 are comfortably flat, but 3 and 4 are really difficult: you enter real fast, you brake at the last moment, you downshift two gears and then you're straight back on the power. The way I was doing it was upsetting the balance of the car, so I was braking earlier than I needed to, and then picking up the power earlier too, so that was making the exit difficult as well. I ended up something like 12th or 15th quickest after the first day. The moment testing's finished, you normally go right back to the

LEVITT/LAT

"MY MOTIVATION NOW IS TO WIN IN A DIFFERENT TEAM. THAT WOULD HELP MY CAREER AND MY PROFILE"
DAN WHELDON

hotel because there's nothing to do there. But I said to Tony, 'You've gotta stay with me and help me: it's there but I'm just not doing it quite right'. So we sat down with the data, and he wanted to go after 20 minutes, and I said, 'No, you've gotta sit right here and help. I know it can work'.

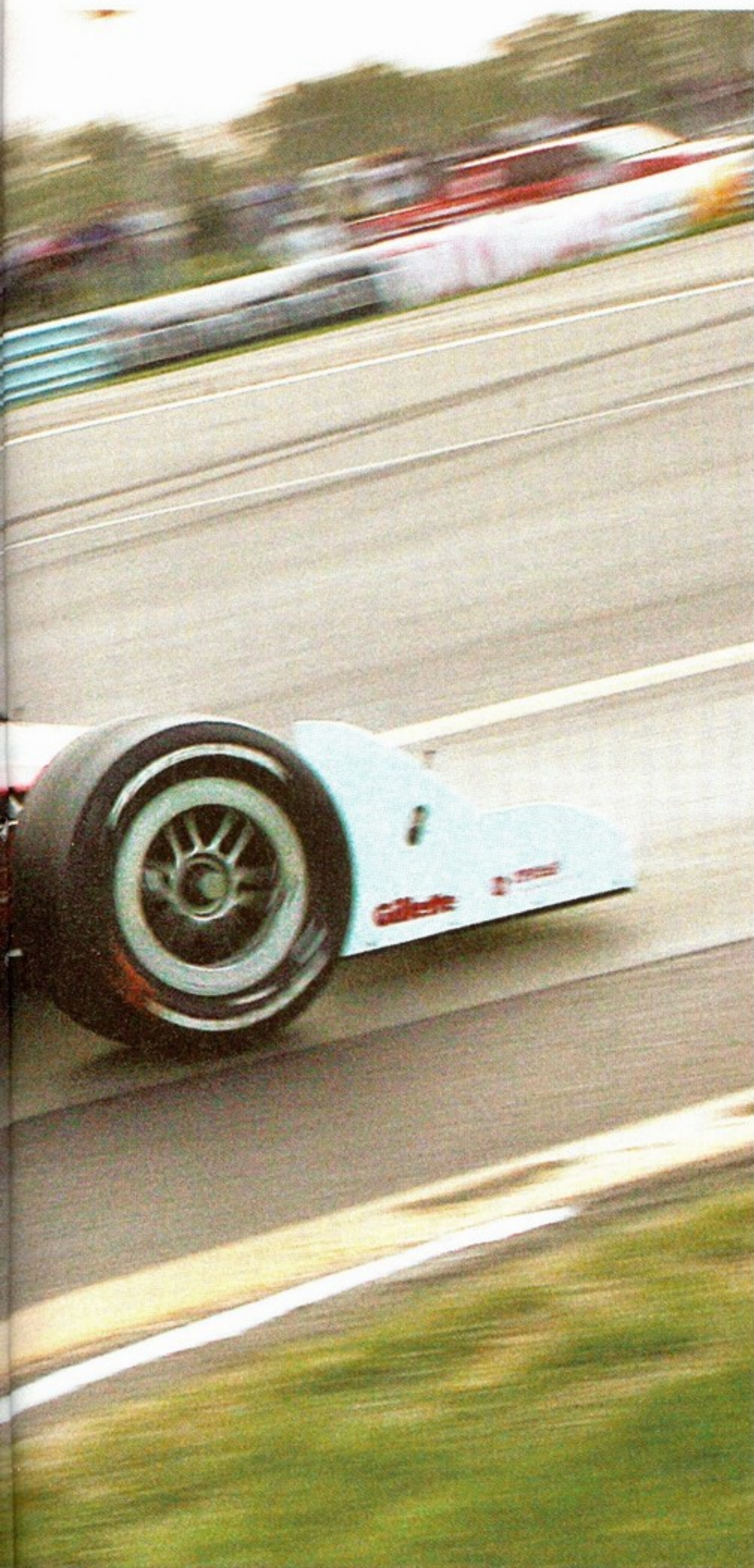
"In the end he went over everything, and he sat there for an hour and a half with me. The next morning, we went out for the morning practice and he was first and I was second. In qualifying, I got the pole, then I won the race and he was second. It was classic, but he took it really well: none of them have problems with that."

Being the self-confessed 'baby of the family', Dan was probably cut more slack than anyone else. But no-one can deny he picked up this loose end and turned an inch into a mile. And there was the bonus of being the least experienced member of a four-driver team, and therefore not feeling compelled to reciprocate his team-mates' help. The fact that Kanaan, Franchitti and Herta were prepared to help him suggests either they're team

players above and beyond the call of duty, or that Wheldon is a compelling character who is damn near impossible to refuse.

There'll be none of that next year. Scott Dixon is a very different character, keeps himself to himself, but Wheldon doesn't foresee potential problems.

"Scott's different from the three team-mates I've had," says Wheldon. "They were all high-profile, whereas although Scott's been champion, he stays below the radar. He's a good guy and he's highly motivated. But everything will be fine. All the teams encourage you to crossflow data and information on set-ups. I know him pretty well, he was in the PacWest Champ Car team when I was in the Indy Lights team, so I've seen him about for a while. He's very motivated too: he now feels he has top equipment with the Dallara-Honda. I



KIM/LAT

RISKY BUSINESS

BRYAN HERTA ON WHELDON'S FORMULA 1 CHANCES

"I THINK Dan's good enough to make it to Formula 1, but I don't pretend to know the political situation there — how much chance there is of him getting in with a good team. I get the impression there's a lot of cynicism in F1 for anything that isn't F1, so I don't really know how his success in Indycars has been viewed. That's a pity, because he's had the greatest season anyone's ever had in the 10-year history of this series, and that doesn't happen by accident.

"One of the things that impressed me — continues to impress me — with Dan is how he identifies weaknesses in himself and works to improve them. For example, when he first came to the series in 2003, he really struggled on the short ovals, and I mean *really* struggled: he didn't know how to drive them or even what he wanted from the car to make himself fast there. But he looked at the data from my car and from Tony's and Dario's cars, and he went through it with his engineer, learned what he

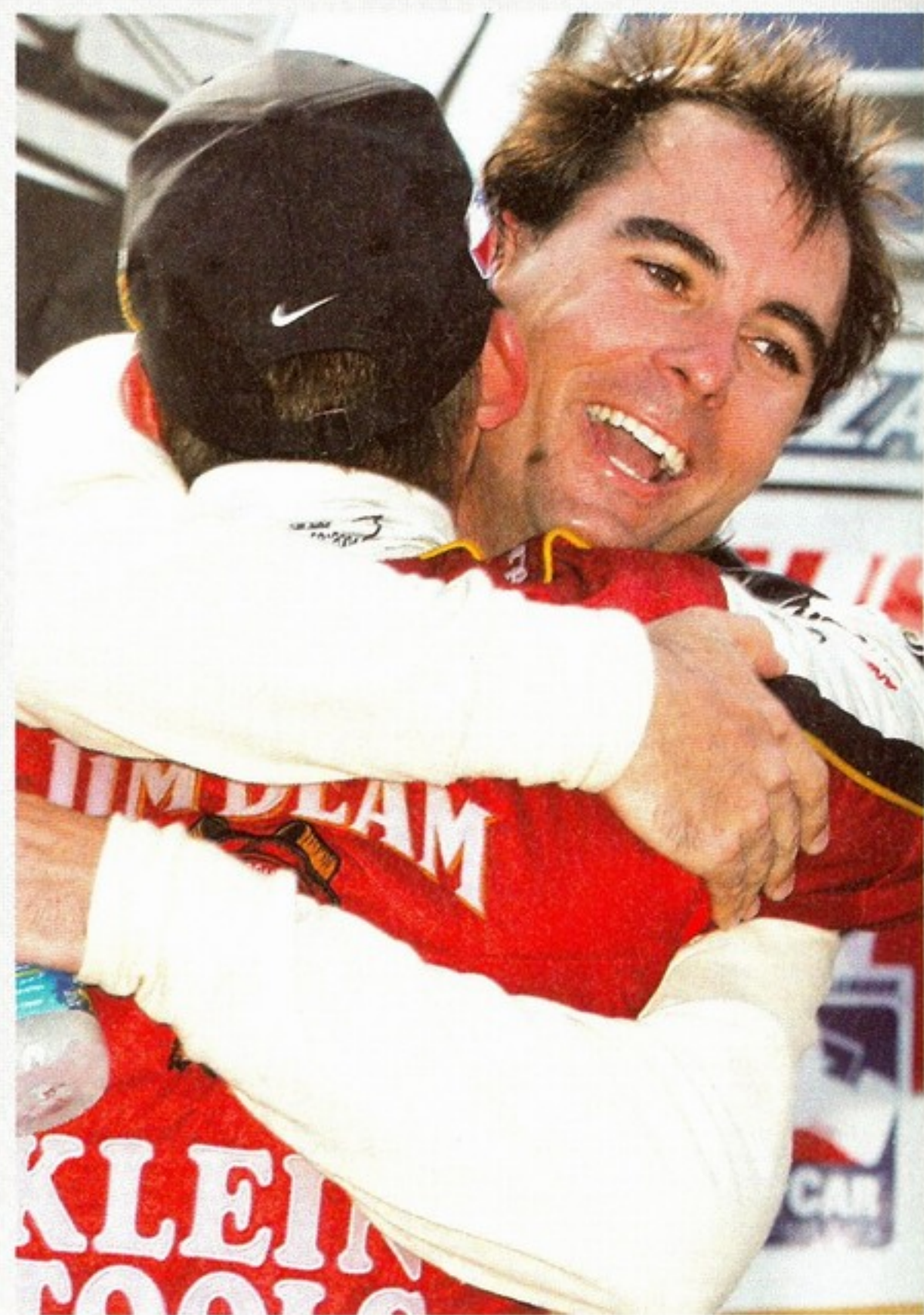
should be doing, learned what the car should be doing to get the optimum performance, and he became one of the toughest guys out there on short ovals. He just kept learning, and I think he would apply that methodology to F1 and make it work for him.

"Dan's got a great talent, and he proved on the street and road courses that his talent for those hasn't gone away. He won at St Petersburg [street] and was leading at Sears Point [road course] when he ran out of gas. He wins because he's good. Sure, he was with a great team, but why the need to knock someone because they're successful? Fernando Alonso's with a great team too: he couldn't have driven to the world title with a Minardi, could he?

"It would be the easiest thing in the world for Dan to stay in Indycars where he's comfortable and not lay his reputation on the line in F1. But I like people who are up for a challenge. I told him if he had a shot to do F1 with a good team, he should

"IF HE HAD A SHOT WITH A GOOD TEAM, HE SHOULD DO IT"
BRYAN HERTA

take the risk. He's made such a name for himself in the US that if it didn't work out for whatever reason in F1, like it didn't for Cristiano da Matta, he would always find a seat back here. So yeah, he should go for it."





For now, Wheldon is concentrating on Indycars - but admits his new boss's NASCAR team has appeal...

Bottom left: 'baby' Dan with old teammates Franchitti, Kanaan and Herta. Was their help to Wheldon beyond the call of duty?

“I know I’d be pissed off and more motivated than ever if I’d had the last two years he’s had.”

Rest assured though, if Dixon initially proves quicker than Wheldon, it won’t be for long. Dan will analyse all his data, and act on it: that’s the way he is. He will work on it until he has the edge: that’s how *good* he is. Among successful drivers in top-line championships, determination and an ability to channel that as a positive force are two of their strongest features. What makes Wheldon’s character fascinating is that determination is so near the surface. Sure, there’s a façade of being laid-back, but the words and the piercing stare are giveaways that any other aspect of life will be consumed by the desire to succeed in motorsport. Is it so near the surface because he isn’t smart enough to hide it? No, this man is seriously canny. It’s so near the surface because (a) he can’t cover it up, and (b) because it’s psychologically to his advantage that everyone – in particular his rivals – know just how powerful is his will to win.

Put it to Wheldon that he doesn’t really give a damn if

people like him or not, that he’s 100 per cent focused on success, and he doesn’t agree as such. He laughs, pretends to be thrown by the question and turns to one of his management team Mickey Ryan: “Hey, do I care if people like me?”

“Yeah, I think so, but it’s an individual sport so you gotta look out for number one...” Ryan replies. Silence.

“Yeah, I wanna be liked...” ventures Wheldon.

Silence, this time broken by Autosport. But that’s a bonus isn’t it? That’s not the main goal: the main goal is success, right?

“Oh no, that makes me sound like a real motherf***er!” says Dan with a tragi-comic expression on his face. “Look, I think the thing I’ve learned in motor racing is that if you’re winning, you’ll have as many friends

as you need. If you aren’t, no-one gives a shit about you. There are too many other drivers in this sport that you can be replaced with. And I think there’s also not many who are focused enough to win championships. There are a lot of drivers who can win races out there, but I don’t think there’s a ton who can win titles. Maybe as you get a bit more focused you become a bit more tough. That’s the truth.

“For example, in 2003 I was a rookie and I crashed cars: it’s a difficult environment. And at that point it amazed me that people were so quick to say, ‘Oh, let’s give up on him’. And then you’ve gotta think of them as your friends when you’ve made it? Come on! But if I’m friendly with someone, it’s genuine. I like to think I’m a very genuine person. Mickey will tell you, if I’m mad at him, I’ll tell him, ‘I think you f***ed up, you were completely out of order’. But that’s it, that’s where it stops and two minutes later, we’re fine: I’m not going to not be his friend just because of one incident!”

Out on track though, Wheldon is a different man, and apparently fearless. “IndyCar has the potential to be dangerous: there’s a lot of times in traffic with less downforce when a car will shoot up the track, and you learn whose does that. It’s always a concern because you see the big accidents, but to be fair, the Indy Racing League is always thinking of

ways to improve the car and in particular the cockpit. But really, you’re talking to a guy who’s not the best at judging what’s safe and what isn’t. I try not to think about any of that stuff. Dario is very good at that: he analyses it, he even puts carbonfibre on his raceboot where he thinks it can protect him. But I just worry about the other stuff: I try not to drive dangerous, and I try to make sure I’m at the front, because that way you’re giving yourself the best chance of being fine.”

The day he meets someone with a similar mentality, there will be a hell of a confrontation. But for now, I doubt there is anyone in IndyCar with the game so completely sussed. New team or not, it would be a considerable surprise if someone other than Dan Wheldon won the 2006 title.

From there, who knows? But wherever he goes, he’ll make it work. He’s that kind of hero.

FROM BAD TO GOOD

DIXON ON GANASSI CRASHES AND WHELDON’S ARRIVAL

“THE TOYOTA Panoz was very sensitive to rear ride height on the ovals. You’d have good grip at the rear, but then suddenly you’d have none, and it’s quite difficult to get around that.

In 2003 [when Dixon won the title] and ‘04 the car felt very numb to that, so you had control through a wide range, but in ‘05 we weren’t really sure of it... which meant we crashed a lot. We also didn’t have the power of the others, so we were always trying to trim out

more, leaving us even less downforce. It was a difficult situation.

Now I’ve driven the Dallara a couple of times and it’s definitely a very different car. The fact that Dan’s coming from using a package [Dallara-Honda] that we are moving to will help us big time. He will bring knowledge and we can all learn off that. Dan did a superb job this year, so it’s going to be great to work with him next season. I’m looking forward to it.”



GETTY IMAGES

Autosport

TRACK TEST

VOLKSWAGEN TOUAREG

DRIVEN BY **ALLAN McNISH**
VENUE **ERFOUD, MOROCCO**
DATE **OCTOBER 6**





JUST DESERTS

How rally raiders fly over the toughest terrain in motorsport. By ALLAN McNISH



Do you like sand?' said the cryptic text message on my mobile phone. It was from the editor of Autosport, so my suspicions were aroused yet further. 'Yes,' I typed in response, 'as long as there is a nice ocean attached to it'. Another mysterious message came back: 'How would you like to go on a little adventure?'

A couple of weeks later and my initial fears that I'd be driving one of those sand yacht contraptions on a wet and windy British beach have been dispelled. Instead, I'm in Erfoud in Morocco. I arrive under the cover of darkness, so it's only the next morning, the day of the track test, that I appreciate that I have spent the night in an amazing hotel that is, quite literally, in the middle of nowhere. I was excited about the prospect of driving a rally raid car anyway, but the chance to do it in its true habitat, rather than around some damp and dreary airfield in Bedfordshire, was impossible to turn down.

There is nothing, zip, nada to see all around. Just sand, sand and more sand. Except for a couple of Red Bull-branded quad bikes in the courtyard and the order of 'follow me' from Volkswagen motorsport chief Kris Nissen before we blast off into the featureless beyond. We arrive at the start of a test stage that VW has carved out of this northerly fringe of the Sahara desert. Two shiny Red Bull Volkswagen Race Touaregs are here: one is the 2006 'Race 2' version that is undergoing reliability testing and suspension development, the other is an '05-spec car that's seen plenty of active service, and would be at my disposal for the entire afternoon.

The cars look fantastic. For a start, they're taller than I am and I can even fit my head inside the wheel arch. If there was a DTM for SUVs, then this is it.

My introduction to the discipline would be alongside

Bruno Saby, Volkswagen's reigning cross-country rally raid World Cup champion. I'm not a particularly good passenger, but sitting next to a world champion gives you a fuzzy feeling of security. It means he's the best there is at this game – he's not going to do anything stupid, is he?

Off we go, and when we come to the first serious jump, I think he's going to brake. He's got to. But no, he keeps the throttle nailed and changes up. This guy's a madman! As we fly into the air, I'm thinking there is no way we're getting out of this; we're going to be splattered across the desert. This is it. I want to phone my mum and say goodbye. I am going to die.

Then, and only then, do you realise this car spends most of its life in the air, on this sort of terrain at least. This car is A-M-A-Z-I-N-G. It can drive over almost anything you can see in the desert and at speeds of up to 100mph. And I'm not going to die after all. Good news all round.

Having said that, my stomach feels like it's a kilometre behind me to start with, but it's just about caught up by the end. Now it's my turn. Oh boy, I'm going to enjoy this. Then Nissen ruins it all by turning to me as I'm strapping myself in and saying: "Allan, you know, these cars can roll really easily." Just what I needed to hear...

In the cockpit, you feel quite enclosed, which is strange because it's a wide old cabin – I could stretch my right arm out and only just be able to touch the co-driver. The layout is well thought out, as you'd expect. The gearlever is an automatic 'grab' away from the steering wheel. The clutch, throttle and brake are in a nice position, so you could heel and toe if you really wanted to, not that you have to. The clutch is nice and gentle, and getting started is just like you'd do in a road car.

You have to shift up early because the rev range is restricted, with it being diesel, but once you're away there's no need to touch the clutch, up or down. The gearshift itself is very precise whether the car is in the air, on the

ground or going sideways.

The last thing I thought I'd say about driving a car on sand is that it has a lot of grip. But it has! I was a little apprehensive on my first lap, but by my second I had a bit of confidence and, by my third tour, I was enjoying every moment. When you understand it's all under control – even though you realise your inputs are not 100 per cent because you're still learning – the capability to recover the car if you get out of shape is there.

Approaching a bump that looks like it's going to really jolt the car, you assume you'd take it easy, but you don't, you take it flat. Saby's co-driver, Michel Périn, is my guide and he's shouting 'Stay! Stay!' meaning keep my right foot buried to the bulkhead, so that's what I do. On a circuit you know what's coming next 99 per cent of the time. In this environment, you only know five per cent of what's over the next jump or around the corner, so any input from the co-driver is invaluable.

In fact, keeping the car flat out over the bumps made it more settled. Bizarrely, and I know this is going to sound weird, it was much like an IRL IndyCar on an oval in that respect. When I tested at Fontana for Penske, I was lapping initially at 205mph and it felt really nervous, especially when I was lifting off to turn in. I was thinking, 'I'm not sure how the heck I'm going to average 225mph when it handles like this', but once you kept your toe in, it seemed to squat down and was much calmer. It seemed like the dampers needed to be working harder to be more effective.

The most impressive aspect of the vehicle's dynamics is under braking. It is tremendously efficient, which was another massive surprise in the sand. In some cars, like the Audi R8, I right-foot brake. In others, like a Formula 1 car, I left-foot brake. It depends what feels more natural to me. In this, I felt I had to left-foot brake. Without even thinking about it, when I came to the first corner on the first lap, my left foot shot across to the pedal.

Left: Nishy straps into the co-driver's seat for his wild run with Saby

Below: The powerful Vee Dub floats across the sand with ease

Below right: VW motorsport boss Nissen (left) shares Nishy's enthusiasm for the Touareg

Bottom: The ex-F1 racer and Le Mans winner gets set to have some fun

KRIS NISSEN Q&A

VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT DIRECTOR

■ WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RUN A MAJOR MOTORSPORT PROJECT FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT?

"From one side this is a very professional effort, and we're in it to win up against the likes of Mitsubishi, BMW, Nissan and Schlessler. At the same time we're in the middle of nowhere, and we need to rely on each other. If someone has a problem, we look after them. It's a bit like when I started racing 25 years ago. You don't go and leave someone behind if they are on their roof. It's a big family, but we're racing against each other at a high level every day."

■ WHAT DID YOU FIRST THINK WHEN YOU HAD A RIDE IN ONE OF THESE CARS?

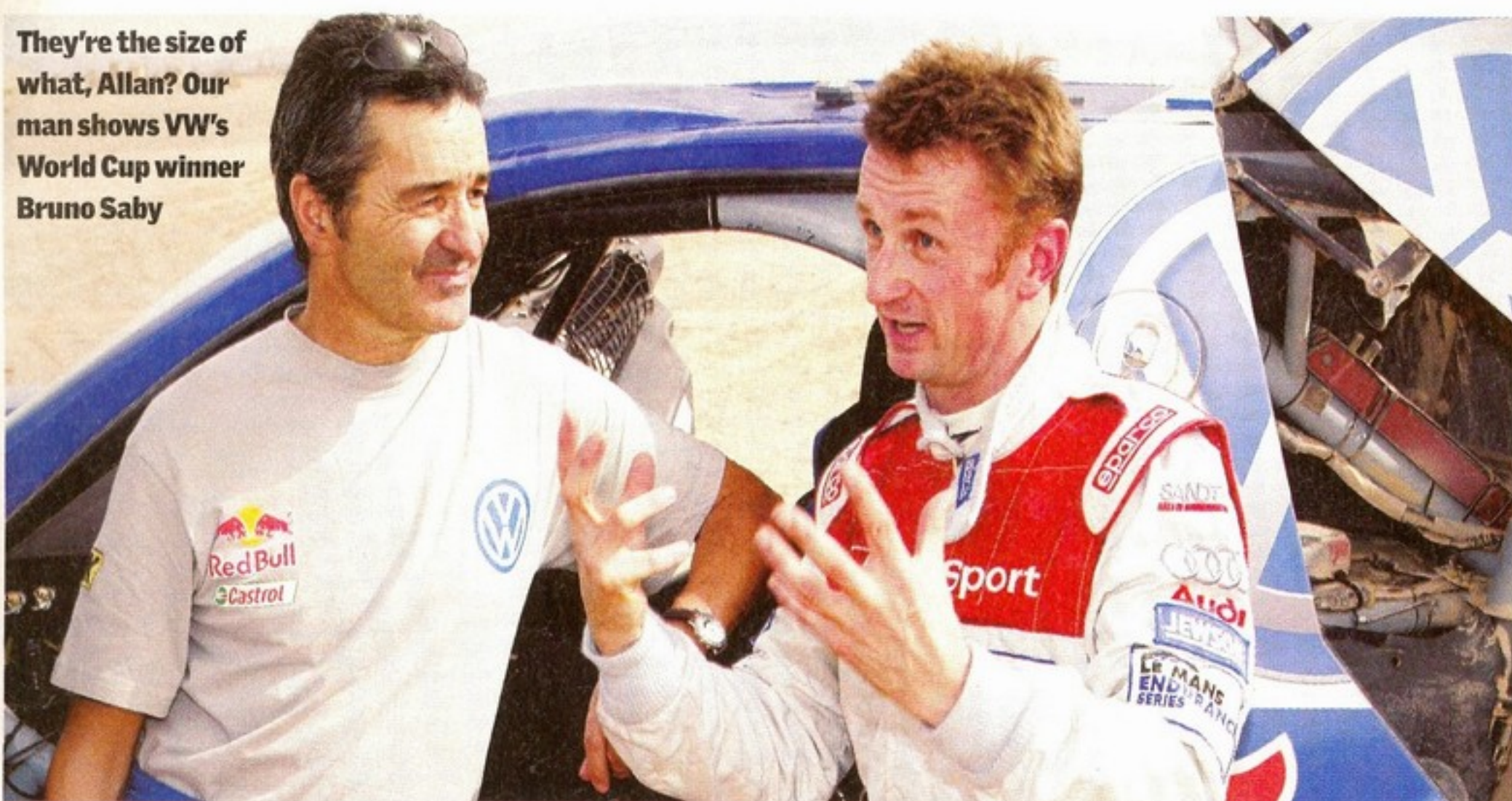
"In the first few metres I thought the driver was trying to impress me and that we were going to crash! I've ridden with all my drivers now, and they are all fantastic. You always wonder, 'how can the car take these bumps at such high speed and how do they climb these hills?' Very impressive."

■ AFTER WINNING THE WORLD CUP IN 2005, CAN VW WIN THE DAKARIN'06?

"It's the first time we have a proper chance to win. The car and the team are very good. The speed is enough, so I think from a technical, driving and team side, we have a fair chance to beat the opposition. In 2004 they were simply playing with us. Last time, we were as quick as them. This time it's going to be great."



They're the size of what, Allan? Our man shows VW's World Cup winner Bruno Saby



McNish shows off for the camera. He wanted to stay in the car all day



REAR OF THE YEAR

Punctures are inevitable on the Dakar, so a new hatch has been built into the bodywork to allow easier access to the four spares it carries at the rear. New hydraulic jacks have been designed to automatically extend at the flick of a switch

GOOD-LOOKING BODY

Carbonfibre composite body panels only make up 2.8 per cent of the new Race Touareg 2's overall weight. Cooling has been optimised with larger air intakes, but CFD calculations show the drag coefficient has been lowered

FOXY SUSPENDERS

Suspension arms have been designed so they are diagonally interchangeable, so a front-right can be used on a rear-left corner. This not only saves manufacturing costs, but also aids logistics in the middle of the desert



TECH SPEC

"IF THERE WAS A DTM FOR SUVs, THEN THIS IS IT" **ALLAN McNISH**

ENGINE	2.5-litre, five-cylinder in-line TDI diesel engine with two-stage turbochargers	GEARBOX	Longitudinally-mounted six-speed sequential
ECU	Bosch	CLUTCH	Hydraulically-operated three-plate (ceramic)
RESTRICTOR	39mm	BRAKES	Front and rear vented discs 320mm; aluminium brake calipers (six-piston front and four-piston rear)
POWER	275bhp	WHEELS	7in x 16in
TORQUE	More than 400lb ft	SUSPENSION	Double wishbone, two spring/damper units per wheel
TOP SPEED	115mph	WHEELBASE	2820mm
LUBRICATION	Dry sump	WIDTH	1750mm
TYRES	BF Goodrich 235-85/16	LENGTH	4171mm
DRIVELINE	Four-wheel drive, three mechanical differentials with viscous locking	TRACK	1750mm
CHASSIS	Steel spaceframe	HEIGHT	1762mm
BODYWORK	Carbonfibre composite		
STEERING	Servo assisted rack and pinion		

McNish leaves his mark on the Touareg. Subtlety was never his strong point...





Despite the Race Touareg's overall size, the cockpit area is compact

FORCING THE ISSUE

TWIN TURBOS GIVE THE DIESEL-ENGINED TOUAREG ITS HUGE GRUNT

ONE OF the most remarkable aspects of this monstrous machine is its power delivery, even if the statistics appear underwhelming on paper.

The 2.5-litre, twin-turbocharged, in-line five cylinder diesel motor produces just 275bhp, 100 of which are provided by the turbos. However, in the cockpit, the torque is mind-blowing and it feels like the power delivery will go on forever as you pull through the gears.

The turbo system works in two stages with a smaller unit producing compression at lower revs, giving the response required to get you out of deep sand, while a larger, low pressure charger generates boost pressures required for the higher-speed sections of the Dakar. A load-dependent exhaust valve regulates the stepped charging by continuously diverting the exhaust gas flow between 1800 and 3000rpm.

Engine development chief Donatus Wichelhaus explains: "This system pays dividends, especially with diesel engines which run permanently unrestricted and operate with maximum airflow. With this combustion principle, the power is controlled solely by the injection of diesel."

VW motorsport boss Kris Nissen underlines the importance of using oil-burning motors: "VW sells a lot of diesel cars and, of course, it's fantastic to compete in a class where you can use a diesel engine with a fair chance against petrol engines."

"The Dakar regulations allow a lot of freedom, so it's only the size of the air restrictor and the weight and the travel of the suspension that are controlled – the rest is mainly open. It's good for the engineers – they learn a lot, so it's great from a technical point of view."

Charles Bradley

"THIS CAR IS AMAZING. IT CAN DRIVE OVER ANYTHING IN THE DESERT!" **ALLAN McNISH**

G You can balance the Touareg very well coming into the corners and then balance it towards the rear in a controlled, gentle movement. Then you can play with the throttle on the exit. Even from sixth gear, flat out, I was braking only 100 metres before a corner. The front dives, but it is efficient braking, and the rear doesn't move around too much either. All very impressive.

The way the car soaks up individual bumps is also very special. Of course, each wheel is independently sprung, but this feels different, this feels like every wheel is soaking up every nook and cranny that the desert throws at it. If you do hit a rut sideways, the wheel just plops up and down, so what should be a crisis is not even a drama. I only felt a really big kick from the back axle when I landed heavily over a big jump, and it made a clanging noise like a lorry going over a speed bump. But it settled very quickly, so there were no repercussions, which would be crucial at high speed.

The suspension travel is an outrageous 25cm, although they've trimmed that back with the 2006 car. You're on full droop as you're flying and full bump when you're landing back down, but it's also got to be well damped, because you can't have the car rolling too much. Even though the surface is loose, you still have to load the tyres to make them work.

The car inspired confidence much more quickly than I thought it would. The aspect I found most difficult to adapt to was turning in sand that was heavily rutted. If you got into an understeer, you had to carry a lot of throttle in a low gear to stop it from bogging down. I assume it was the sand actually enveloping the wheel, but that was difficult to see from inside the cockpit. It made me aware that I had to get the car going from the rear axle to stop the front from nosing in.

Engine-wise, obviously there was a huge amount of torque, which gets you out of a lot of trouble, I'm sure. You're not always going to be doing the right speed in the appropriate gear when you hit soft sand, so you're going to get in trouble and need all the help you can get. If you get stuck halfway up

a dune, the only way forward, strangely enough, is backwards.

What I found with the dunes was that you didn't have to go straight over them. There was a technique in turning the car onto the top of the dune with two wheels, but the downside of that is you lessen your steering capability, so your angle of attack has to be right. To be fast over the ground when you're faced with dune after dune is technically demanding. Sure, the damping and wheel travel can cope with the ruts and bumps out there, but how to read and negotiate the big dunes is only something you learn from experience. That's not something I can learn in an afternoon, but I can appreciate there is a knack to it.

Even though I was driving on a well-used track, it was still tricky to pick out exactly where the route went. I found myself looking way ahead to pick up the track, quite the opposite to how you'd look at a race track, and how they do that off GPS amazes me. It must be a real suck it and see experience. Again, this is when the experienced co-driver comes in, coupled with knowing when to keep the throttle mashed or not!

There was a precision required to driving this car which, to be honest, I did not expect. You're driving on a moving surface, not asphalt, so I had figured it was going to be hugely unpredictable. But my fears were allayed in a single run, and I went from 'I can feel this' to 'this is actually really good fun' to 'how can I cut the line at this corner and go through it faster?'

You have to have commitment to drive a car like this in the environment in which it operates. You have to have total faith in your co-driver, because he knows what is over that next hill, but it's up to you whether you have the throttle down or not. Michel and I used a 'danger one' and 'danger two' system, with the latter meaning there were two danger areas coming up, one after another. Of course, if you messed up the first one you were in real trouble for the second.

I've never had anyone telling me what to do in a racing car before. I remember Richard Burns telling me it was worth half a second a kilometre, but I always likened it to driving fast

along a country road with your girlfriend or wife chattering away while you're trying to focus – much to their disgust! But I found the information I was being given easy to absorb. The flow of information was timely, not too close to the next corner but not too far away that it might go in one ear and out the other. I presume that's building up the rapport.

Getting out of the car, I had a massive smile on my face. I can see now why Colin McRae immediately said he'd do another Dakar after competing in his first one. Doing the Dakar proper, I would imagine it's like doing the Sebring 12 Hours every day for three weeks. The g-force wouldn't be anything like as severe as driving a sportscar, but the constant steering input and kick-back would be incredibly demanding, as well as the heat inside the cockpit.

This car would drive over just about anything. Driving it in competition is one thing, but imagine having one in your garage on the edge of the desert. It would be the ultimate toy that you could play in wherever the hell you liked.

I've driven some of the best cars in the world in F1, sportscars and the IRL, but this is in its own league. The Dakar effectively exists in its own motorsport continent for a start, which just adds to that unique character. You usually get camels here, not cars! You don't get sandstorms in Spa, but we had one here as soon as we'd finished the test.

Testing this car was an experience I'll never forget – it felt as special as the first time I drove an F1 car when the most powerful thing I'd driven until then was F3. When Nissen asked, "Do you want another run?" it was more a case of "When are you going to tell me to stop?" I would have driven around into the night, given the chance.

I was asked if I fancied a little adventure, well I imagine contesting the Dakar would be a *major* adventure. You'd have so many things thrown at you constantly during the three weeks, it would be fantastic.

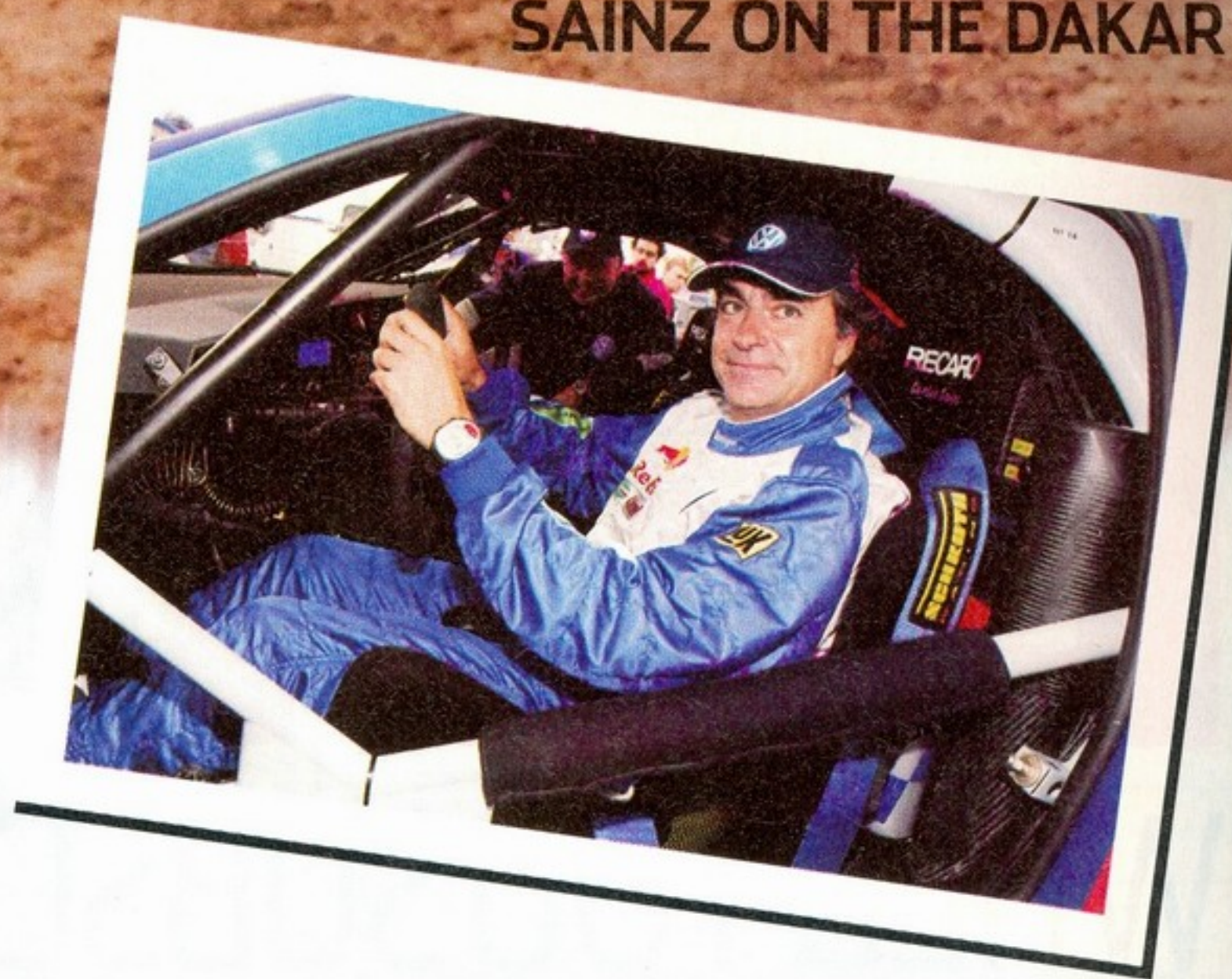
Which reminds me, Kris, isn't it about time we talked about your 2007 Dakar line-up? **■**

Main: Sainz was immediately on the pace in the VW Touareg in a Baja event in Portugal

Inset: The WRC's most successful driver is excited and apprehensive ahead of the Dakar



SAND AND DELIVER



INTERVIEW World rally legend Carlos Sainz tells DAVID EVANS how he's gearing up for his biggest motorsport challenge to date: taming the infamous Dakar Rally

Dakar is a great leveller. No matter how much a driver has seen, done or won, it pales into insignificance when they sign up for arguably the world's hardest, longest, most arduous and probably dangerous event of the year. No wonder Carlos Sainz sounds a little unsure.

After 16 years at the top of world rallying, the most successful driver of all will begin a new adventure in Lisbon on New Year's Eve, when he fires up his Volkswagen Race Touareg for the first of the 5619 miles which lie ahead. Dakar makes the mind boggle, and makes little sense to World Rally Championship regulars.

The details are wild: the opening section is a breeze at 51 miles. On January 3, however, Sainz and the rest of the field will drive flat out for the same distance as a full world rally. After a night's sleep, with just canvas between him and the stars, he'll do the same again – for four days solid, in fact. Then, on reaching the Senegal coast, he'll get a day off.

After 24 hours' rest – and possibly a half-decent shower – he'll be at it again, this time for the 372-mile 'jaunt' from Nouakchott to Kiffa. After signing off from the world championship to spend more time with his family, the obvious question for the 43-year-old is, why?

"Dakar is one of motorsport's biggest challenges," says the double world champion. "It's something I have been thinking about doing for some time, so I was happy when the chance came to do it this year. Now I have to wait and see if I like it..."

Sainz's former team-mate Colin McRae is sure the Spaniard will like it. The Scot has emerged from two Dakars and would have loved to have had a shot at a third this time.

"Carlos will go very well," says McRae. "We saw in the world championship that he was always an adaptable driver and he'll learn quickly how to approach Dakar. And as for the outright speed, he'll have that over and above anybody else in the rally. He's still fresh from the world championship, he'll be plenty quick enough and I don't see why he can't win the event even though it's new to him."

Not everything is completely new to Sainz. He has already contested one Baja event in Portugal, where he set fastest

times in the VW. But that's Europe, not Africa.

"I would have liked to have done an African-type event before Dakar," says the Spaniard. "There are certain things in Dakar you need to know about – like the sand dunes, and I don't have any experience of them."

As previous years have shown, the dunes of the Sahara desert are usually where this event is won or lost. McRae knows full well what a hostile place they can be at the best of times. He was forced to spend the night in the Sahara in 2004 when his Nissan suffered transmission trouble. Earlier this year, his second attempt at Dakar came to a shuddering halt in the dunes after a sandstorm.

McRae explains: "It's all about reading the surface that you're driving on and knowing how hard you *want* to go and how hard you *can* go. That's really not easy. Then you get into the dunes and it can get even harder when you've got to stay on course while picking your way round them. All you can see is sand and you've got to try to keep the speed up and not go off course. This is where you need two sets of eyes. Carlos has a very experienced navigator in Andy Schulz, which will help him a lot. It's an area where experience counts: you need to make sure you can see all the holes in the sand ahead of you."

It was one of those holes which caught McRae out.

"When I crashed, I was caught out by a sandstorm," he says. "The storm had blown the sand across all of the holes and filled them in so you couldn't see where they were at all. That wasn't an experience thing – Grégoire de Mevius was caught out by the same sort of thing, and he's done the event many times. But that is the kind of thing Dakar can do, it's another aspect of the rally. It's another thing that makes this like no other event. If I had been a metre to the left, I would have been fine – as it was we had a big crash."

Crashing is nothing new in rallying; it's part and parcel of the sport. What doesn't go hand-in-hand is the serious threat to personal safety, which is a constant feature of the Dakar. When McRae was stuck in the sand overnight he found himself confronted by some of the more intimidating-looking locals. Locals with guns.

"That is pretty scary," recalls McRae. "At the time we

didn't know if they were bandits or the army..."

The business end of an AK47 is not the prettiest of sights whoever's holding it and that ever-present threat is in the back of every Dakar driver's mind.

"At the moment I'm not thinking about breaking down," says Sainz. "I'm not thinking about the possibility that I might have to stop the car and then sleep through the night in the middle of the desert. If I do have to do that, then okay – I'll get on with it. Of course, I know the stories about the men with guns, but it's best not to think about them – and then hope we don't see any of them."

As much as this is a great challenge and adventure for Sainz, it's also the competitive element which draws him in. It's about driving as fast as you can for 15 days without breaking the car – it's what Sainz is all about. But he's talking down his chances of another big win to add to his record-breaking 26 WRC victories.

"It will be hard to beat Mitsubishi," he says. "And I'm not just talking about myself. This is the same for the other Volkswagen drivers, people like Giniel de Villiers or Jutta [Kleinschmidt] who all have good Dakar experience. The dunes is one area where I will find it hard to start with. This is why I wanted to do an event before – something like the Cross Country event in Dubai would have been good, but it wasn't possible. Okay, I have done some testing in the dunes, but what good is playing in the sand for one or two hours? You need to be going flat out in there and finding out what is happening in an event."

The one thing Sainz has done is train. Physically, the Dakar will be harder than anything he's done before.

"There is no comparison between the rallies, like there is no real comparison between the cars," he points out. "Maybe for the rally you could look back to some of the old five-day Safaris, but this is going to be something different again. This is going to be very, very hard work. I am ready for the hard work. I have been doing more work in the gym, some special preparation and getting myself into good physical form. Part of the problem is that, again, I don't really know what to expect from the event. I'll find out soon enough."

In four days, in fact. ☐



PESCAROLO'S

SEASON REVIEW Zytek, Audi and Pescarolo battled hard for Le Mans Endurance Series honours, the French squad taking the title at the final race. By GARY WATKINS

It was all change at the top of the Le Mans Endurance Series in 2005. The inaugural year of the championship had been about Audi, which took a clean sweep of the races with the British Veloqx squad. This time the German manufacturer's R8 won only once over the course of a much more open contest. So open, in fact, that nine drivers in five different cars went to the series finale in with a chance of taking the overall crown.

The Istanbul 1000km in November looked like it was going to be a classic. Hayanari Shimoda had leapfrogged into the championship lead with an outstanding performance together with Tom Chilton in the works Zytek at the Nürburgring, while Pescarolo Sport drivers Emmanuel Collard and Jean-Christophe Boullion, the erstwhile championship leaders, were just three points behind.

Just to make the battle for the LMP1 prototype title even more intriguing, the ORECA Audi and Creation Autosportif drivers remained within mathematical range. And there were even a couple of other contenders in Martin Short and Vanina Ickx. Their Rollcentre Dallara wasn't competitive, but three thirds and a fourth meant they were only two points behind Pescarolo as the LMES headed for Turkey.

The Istanbul race did turn out to be a thriller, but not as far as the championship went. Shimoda had suffered a frightening 165mph accident while on A1 Grand Prix duty the previous weekend in Australia and was in no fit state

to lead the Zytek challenge.

The team brought in Caspar Elgaard, who had won the Spa opener together with the Japanese and fellow Dane John Nielsen, as back-up and opted for a conservative run in order to secure second in the championship and the automatic entry for the Le Mans 24 Hours that went with it.

Collard and Boullion duly collected the title and did it with their second win of the season. So at least they were crowned in style. The French pair were worthy champions, but doubts will always remain about what would have happened had Shimoda been fully fit.

The Pescarolo-Judd C60 and the Zytek 04S were strong on different types of circuit. The former had a clear horsepower advantage thanks to the larger-diameter air-restrictor afforded to cars running to the latest aerodynamic rules. That explained why it was on top when it could stretch its legs, as at Monza in July. The lightweight 04S — an old-style LMP675 car running a smaller restrictor — was in a class of its own around anything that might be described as a handling circuit, most notably the Nürburgring.

Istanbul's long straights would have suited the Pescarolo, but then the wet conditions on race day would probably have played into Zytek's hands. The car had won in the wet at Spa, although Pescarolo had twice been unlucky behind the safety car. So many questions, but no answers.

What we did get was a thrilling race between the Pescarolo

and the French-run Audi driven by Allan McNish and Stéphane Ortelli. A reduction in power by five per cent and 50kg of ballast imposed on the old-generation of LMP900 prototypes took its toll on the Audi and it wasn't competitive in the dry. Come the wet, however, it was right up there, witness victory in dreadful conditions at Silverstone in August and then the close second place in Turkey.

The German car was also looking set for a strong result at Spa thanks to the weather. Clever tactics by ORECA and Ortelli's wet-weather skills put it on course for second place at the very least. That was until Jean-Marc Gounon got it wrong trying to warm his tyres behind the safety car and speared into the barriers and retirement.

The eight points lost wouldn't quite have been enough to give ORECA the title, but it would almost certainly have changed the course of the season. ORECA skipped the Monza event because it believed it would never make up the lost ground in the five-round championship...

DRIVE OF THE SEASON

Hayanari Shimoda came of age as a sportscar driver in 2005. The speed so evident when he arrived in the long-distance discipline in '03 was still there, but now he was able to harness that pace without throwing it off the track. Nowhere was that more apparent than at the Nürburgring.

Shimoda was the comeback kid in Germany. The



YEAR

21-year-old had to start from the back after a technical infringement in qualifying, fought through the field and then had to do it all over again after a dubious drive-through penalty to overhaul the Audi in the final stages.

A year or so back, you wouldn't have bet on Shimoda doing that without incident. This time he barely put a foot wrong.

UNLUCKIEST TEAM

Bit of an old chestnut this one, but the Creation Autosportif squad has to be the most unfortunate around. Every time it looked as though Nicolas Minassian and Jamie Campbell-Walter were in with a chance of victory, something would go wrong, just like in 2004. This time the British team's lightweight DBA4, now with Judd power and Michelin tyres, was prevented from notching up a first LMES victory by a mixture of technical issues and tactical errors.

Alternator failure (Spa), a cracked water pipe (Monza) and a loose brake disc (Nürburgring) cost the team potential victories. The DBA4 finished only six seconds behind the Audi at Silverstone, despite battling with a race-long gearbox glitch, while a bizarre tyre choice at Istanbul put it out of contention.

DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE SEASON

Tommy Erdos was more than capable of mixing it with the big cars in his LMP2 Lola-based MG EX264, and frequently did. The combined talents of the British-based Brazilian, the

DPPI

TOP SIX DRIVERS

AUTOSPORT'S GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS



NEW ENTRY

EMMANUEL COLLARD

A first major sportscar title has been a long time coming for Collard and claiming LMES honours was the high point of a season in which the

Frenchman finally convinced the world that he is one of the best sportscar drivers around. What price a Peugeot Le Mans contract for 2007?

MAGIC MOMENT Claiming the LMES title in difficult conditions in the Istanbul finale.

TRAGIC MOMENT Struggling home a distant fourth at the Nürburgring with a damaged diffuser.



DOWN TWO

NICOLAS MINASSIAN

No matter how much bad luck was thrown at the Creation Autosportif squad, Minassian still gave it his all every time he climbed aboard the

DBA4. He claimed a pole position, led races and notched up three podiums. The only thing missing from his season was that first LMES victory.

MAGIC MOMENT A stirring drive after a delay at Spa when there was very little to gain.

TRAGIC MOMENT Screaming for new tyres at Istanbul and being sent on his way with old rubber.



DOWN ONE

ALLAN McNISH

Just in case we needed reminding that McNish is one of the world's top sportscar talents, he proved it every time he climbed aboard a car that,

in 2005-specification, had no business being at the sharp end of the LMES grid. Still, it must have been a welcome relief from his DTM chores.

MAGIC MOMENT Returning to the cockpit of an R8 at Silverstone and notching up another victory in the old girl.

TRAGIC MOMENT Being unable to find a time in the restricted Audi that got him within two seconds of the pace at the 'Ring.



NEW ENTRY

HAYANARI SHIMODA

The wayward Shimoda of the past appears to be no more, at least when he's at the wheel of a sportscar. He was quicker than all his team-mates

at Zytec, but he needs to go up against an established top-liner before we know how good he really is.

MAGIC MOMENT The Nürburgring weekend: his pole time was a new sportscar record before it was scratched out.

TRAGIC MOMENT The realisation that he wasn't at full fitness when he first got in the car at Istanbul.



NEW ENTRY

STEPHANE ORTELLI

The French-born Monegasque renewed his partnership with Allan McNish and immediately notched up his first victory in the Audi R8. He was

inevitably, but unfairly, viewed as the junior in the pairing, but his contribution at Silverstone, particularly in the final laps, was vital.

MAGIC MOMENT His sublime four-hour drive in changeable conditions at Spa was a joy to watch.

TRAGIC MOMENT Seeing team-mate Jean-Marc Gounon undo all that good work.



NEW ENTRY

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BOULLION

After a year on the sidelines, the ex-Formula 1 driver got a recall from Pescarolo Sport, the team that had

dropped him after 2003. Boullion was fast and consistent but made an error at Silverstone that put him and Collard out of the race.

MAGIC MOMENT Landing a competitive drive after his reputation took a pounding in '03.

TRAGIC MOMENT Chucking it off on lap five at Silverstone, to the chagrin of his team boss Henri Pescarolo.

Jean-Marc Gounon joined the ORECA Audi squad at Spa and crashed the R8



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

THE FUTURE OF THE RENAMED SERIES ISN'T YET CLEAR

BIGGRIDS and close competition made for a great second season for the Le Mans Endurance Series. Yet where a championship renamed as the Le Mans Series goes from here isn't clear. There's uncertainty about the quality – and quantity – of the entry in the two primary classes for 2006.

Old-style prototypes are finally consigned to museums in Europe. Not only does that mean the disappearance of the Audi R8, but also much of the rest of the field. What will replace it isn't clear, and nor is it certain that we'll see the new turbo-diesel Audi R10 in the LMS.

GT1 could be in even

more trouble. Title winner Scuderia Italia is heading back to the FIA GT Championship as Aston Martin's factory representative, while the British Cirtek squad is also focusing on that series with its pair of DBR9s.

LMP2 should remain numerically strong and there will never be a shortage of people wanting to run Porsche 911 GT3-Rs. So factor in a handful of new Ferrari 430s and there are no worries about GT2.

Everything rests on the health of LMP1 and GT1, however. And that's why doubts remain about the future even after such a strong year.

Scuderia Italia's Ferrari 550 took GT1 honours but will not defend its title



The Shimoda/Nielsen/Elgaard Zytek 04S won the wet Spa season-opener

RML team's skill, improved pace from car owner Mike Newton and Judd engines should have been more than enough to give them the title in the 'baby' prototype class.

It didn't quite work out as planned, however. A series of electrical glitches prevented Erdos and Newton from winning until the Istanbul finale. Although they had notched up a sequence of podiums beforehand, it wasn't quite enough.

The crown instead went to Britain's Gareth Evans and the Chamberlain-Synergy Lola. It was an unlikely victory for a gentleman driver who shared the AER-engined car with fellow amateur Peter Owen and Bob Berridge in four of the five races. Berridge anchored an impressive victory at Spa and Guy Smith did similar on the way to second at Istanbul.

PHILANTHROPIST OF THE YEAR

Hugh Hayden deserves a gong for his services to GT2, though he'd probably be happy with a six-pack of Guinness. The

Sebah team owner clearly got bored of running just one Porsche for a trio of drivers who were never going to set the world on fire, so he dug into his own pocket to bring out a 911 GT3-R of 2000 vintage for Marc Lieb and Xavier Pompidou. It saved the class from almost complete anonymity.

The old warhorse that had given Sebah the teams' title in 2004 was brought out for round two at Monza and Hayden got to celebrate victory with his customary can of Guinness first time out. The car remained unbeaten until it was pushed away after Silverstone, by which time Sebah had retained its crown and won the drivers' division to boot.

Lieb and Pompidou weren't always the quickest, but the combination of two quick drivers, a reliable package and Dunlop's wet-weather tyres made them unbeatable in their three appearances.

The season was bookended by victories for the Team LNT TVRT400R driven by Jonny Kane and Warren Hughes and Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari drivers Andrew Kirkaldy and Nathan Kinch. Disastrous engine reliability blighted the rest of LNT's season, while Ecosse finally salvaged something from a season marked by bad luck and reliability niggles.

CLOSEST BATTLE

The GT1 battle went down to the wire, and beyond. The drivers of four cars, all Prodrive-built Ferraris, went into the Istanbul finale with a chance of taking the title. Even after the soggy Turkish 1000km the two Scuderia Italia 550 Maranellos were equal on points. Christian Pescatori, Michele Bartyan and Toni Seiler only got the nod over Matteo Cressoni by virtue of two victories to one.

It did seem at times that no-one wanted to win the GT1 class. None of the four Ferraris had a top driver line-up. It was no coincidence that when Cirtek had a trouble-free run with its new Aston Martin DBR9 at the Nürburgring Darren Turner and sportscar first-timer Rob Bell took victory, even if it wasn't the fastest car in class.

Three of the Ferraris claimed victories. Cressoni, who looked steady rather than stunning in his first year out of Formula 3, won first time out at Monza with Fabrizio Gollin and Miguel Ramos, while Peter Kox took victory for the Czech Menx team at Silverstone with Jarek Janiš and Robert Pergl.

Christophe Bouchut claimed two pole positions, but shared the Cirtek Ferrari with Russians Alexei Vasiliev and Nikolai Fomenko. Enough said.

BIZARRE HAPPENING

You run out of fuel and get towed back to the paddock via the back gate. You wander around for a bit and then push the car through the scrutineering bay and back to its pit, whereupon it is refuelled and sent on its way to collect a point for eighth place. Sounds a bit fanciful, but that's exactly what happened to Pescarolo at Silverstone. And the team was allowed to keep the point! Good job it wasn't crucial in the title battle. Because then we'd be asking even more unanswerable questions about who deserved to win the 2005 LMES. 🏁

2005 LMES P1

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	Points
1	Emmanuel Collard/Jean-Christophe Boullion	Pescarolo Sport	Pescarolo-Judd C60	2nd	1st	8th	4th	1st	34
2	Hayanari Shimoda	Zytek	Zytek 04S	1st	6th	5th	1st	4th	32
3	Allan McNish/Stéphane Ortelli*	ORECA	Audi R8	R	-	1st	2nd	2nd	26
4	Vanina Ickx/Martin Short	Rollicentre Racing	Dallara-Judd LMP	3rd	3rd	3rd	5th	6th	25
5	Nicolas Minassian/Jamie Campbell-Walter	Creation	DBA4-Judd 03S	R	5th	2nd	3rd	3rd	24
6	Tom Chilton	Zytek	Zytek 04S	-	6th	5th	1st	4th	22

2005 LMES P2

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	Points
1	Gareth Evans	Cham'lain-Synergy	Lola-AER B04/50	1st	2nd	5th	5th	2nd	34
2	Tommy Erdos/Mike Newton	RML	MG EX264 (Lola-Judd)	4th	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	33
3	Vincent Vosse/Claude-Yves Gosselin	Paul Belmondo	Courage-AER C65	6th	1st	1st	7th**	5th	27
4	Peter Owen	Cham'lain-Synergy	Lola-AER B04/50	1st	2nd	-	5th***	2nd	26
5	Bob Berridge	Cham'lain-Synergy	Lola-AER B04/50	1st	2nd	5th	5th	-	26

2005 LMES GT1

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	Points
1	Christian Pescatori/Michele Bartyan/Toni Seiler	Scuderia Italia	Ferrari 550 Maranello	3rd	1st	6th	3rd	1st	35
2	Matteo Cressoni	Scuderia Italia	Ferrari 550 Maranello	1st	4th	5th	2nd	2nd	35
3	Christophe Bouchut/Alexei Vasiliev	Cirtek	Ferrari 550 Maranello	2nd	3rd	2nd	5th	4th	31
4	Miguel Ramos	Scuderia Italia	Ferrari 550 Maranello	1st	4th	4th	2nd	2nd	30
5	Robert Pergl	Menx	Ferrari 550 Maranello	R	2nd	1st	4th	3rd	29
6	Jarek Janiš	Menx	Ferrari 550 Maranello	R	2nd	1st	4th	-	23
7	Peter Kox	Menx	Ferrari 550 Maranello	-	-	1st	4th	3rd	21
8	Darren Turner	Cirtek	Ferrari 550/Aston DBR9****	-	-	4th	1st	4th	20
9	Fabrizio Gollin	Scuderia Italia	Ferrari 550 Maranello	1st	4th	-	-	-	15
10	Robert Bell	Cirtek	Aston Martin DBR9	-	-	-	1st	-	10

2005 LMES GT2

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	Points
1	Marc Lieb/Xavier Pompidou	Sebah	Porsche 911 GT3-RS	-	1st	1st	1st	-	30
2	Andrew Kirkaldy/Nathan Kinch	Scuderia Ecosse	Ferrari 360GTC	NC	2nd	4th	4th	1st	28
3	Luigi Moccia/Franco Groppi	Autorlando	Porsche 911 GT3-RSR	3rd	R	2nd	3rd	R	20

*Drove with Jean-Marc Gounon at round one; **did not score points; ***insufficient time to score points****drove Ferrari in round five. **Key to races:** 1 Spa, April 17; 2 Monza, July 10; 3 Silverstone, August 13; 4 Nürburgring, September 4; 5 Istanbul, November 13; Points system: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 for top eight.



The Biela/Pirro Champion Audi R8 (number 2) got swamped at Laguna, but four wins and three seconds elsewhere secured the title

CHAMPION'S

SEASON REVIEW A mid-season run of success gave Pirro and Biela ALMS title glory over Champion Audi R8 team-mates Lehto and Werner. By JONATHAN INGRAM

Emanuele Pirro and Frank Biela pulled success out of the fire during the hot summer months of the American Le Mans Series season by winning three straight come-from-behind races, which ultimately brought the title back to Champion Racing. Fast but steady, 'Starsky and Hutch', as their crew called them, kept the hotly-contested championship out of the hands of Dyson Racing with their haul of victories.

"After the DTM, we both had reasons to show we can do the job," said Pirro. "At one stage, we started to get it together and I was proud to be sharing the car with this old chap," the Italian said of long-standing team-mate Biela.

In a season short on cars and long on competition, the year-long battle between Champion Racing's two Audi R8s and Dyson Racing's brace of Lola-AER B01/60s kept eight candidates in the title race until the streak of victories by Pirro and Biela finally turned the tide.

The older prototypes ran under the same rules established in the 2003 and '04 seasons, but team owners Dave Maraj and Rob Dyson both made significant changes to their operations. Maraj added a second car, moving his Speed

World Challenge crew up to the big league to support the number two Audi of Pirro and Biela.

"That was a concern at the beginning of the season," admitted Pirro about the new crew. But the line-up proved to be incredibly reliable. "We were more than satisfied," he added after finishing all 10 races on the podium.

For his part, veteran owner Dyson switched to Michelin tyres and continued the intense testing programme (previously paid for by Goodyear) with his 675kg entries. The Lolas proved fast but occasionally fragile, although it wasn't a lack of reliability that ultimately kept Chris Dyson out of contention for the main championship two seasons after he clinched the LMP2 class title. Pirro and Biela had almost made sure of the title by rising to the occasion during July and August.

MOMENT OF THE SEASON

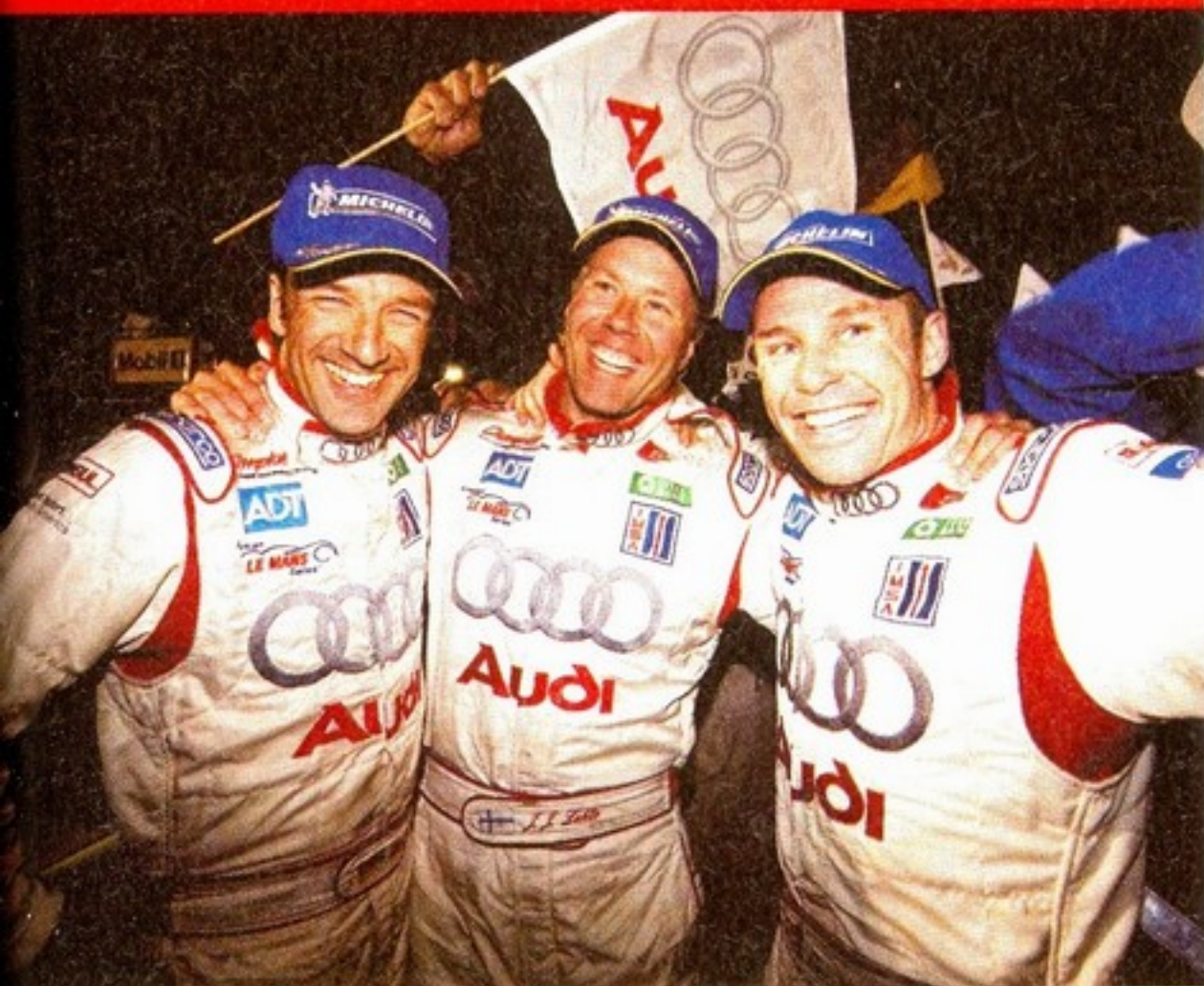
The high point came when Pirro squeezed past Dyson for second place at the Festival Curves in the closing laps at Portland, where both of the Lolas had clearly enjoyed an advantage over the Audis in qualifying. At a corner where Champion's Marco Werner had already come to grief twice,

Pirro bumped past Dyson with utter craftsmanship to take what was apparently second place. When the incredible come-from-behind effort by James Weaver ended due to an unintentional short fuelling of his Lola that left him one lap shy of the finish, Pirro claimed the victory. That would be one of three straight races where the Pirro/Biela Audi finished first and the Lola of Dyson and Andy Wallace followed it home. A flying start by Pirro at Sears Point and Biela's amazing pace prior to his final pitstop at Road America were the other two factors in their victory march.

MOST UNWELCOME FIRST

If Chris Dyson's denouement began at Portland, the last hurrah for Weaver and co-driver Butch Leitzinger came at Road America. Weaver ran out of asphalt in the Carousel while chasing leader JJ Lehto, both aggressive as ever in traffic. Although he rescued the Lola from the tyre wall, it was Weaver's first race crash since arriving in America with Bob Akin's team in 1986. Even worse for veteran Weaver, who would go on to clinch his 100th career victory at Mosport in the following round, was that he had fallen behind after stalling on his way out of the pits. Such stalls were one of

Below: Werner, Lehto and Kristensen won Sebring and Le Mans; bottom: Petersen/White Lightning took GT2 honours; bottom right: Porsche's LMP2 Spyder caused a stir on its debut in the final round



2005 ALMS P1

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Points
1	Frank Biela (D)/Emanuele Pirro (I)	Champion Racing	Audi R8	2nd	3rd	3rd	2nd	1st	1st	1st	3rd	1st	2nd	182
2	Chris Dyson (USA)	Dyson Racing	Lola-AER B01/60	R	2nd	2nd	R	2nd	2nd	2nd	4th	2nd	3rd	154
3	JJ Lehto (FIN)/Marco Werner (D)	Champion Racing	Audi R8	1st	1st	5th	1st	3rd	R	3rd	2nd	3rd	4th	148
4	Andy Wallace (GB)	Dyson Racing	Lola-AER B01/60	3rd	2nd	2nd	R	2nd	2nd	2nd	4th	R	3rd	135
5	J Weaver (GB)/B Leitzinger (USA)	Dyson Racing	Lola-AER B01/60	3rd	R	1st	R	4th	3rd	5th	1st	R	5th	124

2005 ALMS P2

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Points
1	Clint Field (USA)	Intersport Racing	Lola-AER B05/40	R	1st	2nd	DNS	1st	3rd	R	1st	1st	5th	133
2	C M'Murray (USA)/J Bucknum (USA)	Miracle Motorsports	Courage-AER C65	1st	R	3rd	1st	2nd	2nd	1st	2nd	R	2nd	117
3	Guy Cosmo (USA)/Jamie Bach (USA)	B-K Motorsports	Courage-Mazda C65	R	2nd	1st	3rd	3rd	1st	R	3rd	2nd	3rd	116

2005 ALMS GT1

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Points
1	Oliver Gavin (GB)/O Beretta (MC)	Pratt & Miller	Chevrolet Corvette C6.R	3rd	2nd	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	196
2	R Fellows (USA)/J O'Connell (USA)	Pratt & Miller	Chevrolet Corvette C6.R	2nd	1st	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	2nd	2nd	R	2nd	177
3	T Borcheller (USA)/J Mowlem (GB)	ACEMCO Motorsports	Saleen S7R	4th	4th	3rd	3rd	3rd	R	R	3rd	3rd	R	114

2005 ALMS GT2

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Points
1	P Long (USA)/J Bergmeister (D)	Petersen/W'te Lightning	Porsche 911 GT3-RSR	1st	3rd	2nd	2nd	2nd	8th	1st	1st	1st	1st	179
2	T Bernhard (D)/R Dumas (F)	Alex Job Racing	Porsche 911 GT3-RSR	R	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	2nd	6th	4th	5th	145
3	J v Overbeek (USA)/J Fogarty (USA)	Flying Lizard Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3 RSR	3rd	4th	R	3rd	4th	3rd	3rd	R	3rd	4th	114

Key to races: 1 Sebring, March 19; 2 Road Atlanta, April 17; 3 Mid-Ohio, May 22; 4 Lime Rock, July 4; 5 Infineon Raceway, July 17; 6 Portland, July 30; 7 Road America, August 21; 8 Mosport, September 4; 9 Road Atlanta, October 1; 10 Laguna Seca, October 15. Points system: 20-16-13-10-8-6-4-3-2-1 to top 10 in each class. An additional six points for each top-10 finisher at Sebring and Road Atlanta. An additional three points for each top-10 finisher at Laguna Seca.



CHAMPIONS

several hazards faced by the Lola drivers, their cars tricky in comparison with the Audis.

WORST BREAK OF THE YEAR

One of the turning points in the LMP1 championship battle centred on a disastrously bad piece of pitstop luck for the number one Audi of JJ Lehto and Marco Werner at Sears Point. On his way out of the pits after his final stop, leader Werner collided with the Corvette C5-R of Alex Figge halfway up the hill at Turn 1. The fact that the pitwall had been extended several years earlier for NASCAR's 43-car fields meant that each driver was unable to see the other at the pit exit. The ensuing crash knocked the Audi out of the lead. In addition to launching Pirro and Biela to their first victory, the Sears mishap put a strain on the partnership of the defending champions. A disappointed Lehto blamed Werner who, for his part, had followed the standard line at the pit exit before getting hit by the Corvette.

CAR OF THE YEAR - AGAIN

In the long run, the Audi R8 once again proved indomitable in its fifth campaign. In a remarkable season, Maraj and the

Champion team took full advantage by winning the season's three major endurance races at Sebring, Le Mans - where Tom Kristensen joined Lehto and Werner - and Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta, where Pirro and Biela clinched the title with another victory.

GT1: 'VETTE VERSUS ASTON

After some bad luck early in the season, Oliver Gavin and Olivier Beretta sealed the GT1 championship by winning five straight races at season's end in their Corvette C6.R, two of which featured the potent new Aston Martin DBR9s. Gavin's and Beretta's streak began with a remarkable race at Portland, where they won with a deranged suspension after an attack by an errant prototype. In the end, following a stunning upset by the Astons at Sebring, the new Corvettes proved to be better developed. ACEMCO team owner Jeff Giangrande made the right move by upgrading the pace of the ageing Saleen S7R, but mishaps kept Terry Borcheller and Johnny Mowlem off the top step of the podium.

GT2: PORSCHE VS PORSCHE

Porsche has emphasised its across-the-board support for GT2

teams and it showed as Petersen/White Lightning's Patrick Long and Jörg Bergmeister won the big events that bookended the season at Sebring and Petit Le Mans, en route to winning their championship battle with Alex Job Racing's Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas. A couple of early-season wheel problems galvanised the team, which then finished the season with four straight wins, highlighted by Bergmeister's two-hour stint at Road America.

LMP2: PORSCHE ARRIVES

The highlight of the LMP2 season may well have been the arrival of Porsche's new RS Spyder at the season finale at Laguna Seca. The Penske Racing-run machine promises to bring much-needed bling to the smaller prototype category and even mix it with the big boys in LMP1, if its Laguna pace was anything to go by.

Midway through the season Intersport brought in some star power of its own by adding Liz Halliday to its line-up. When the equestrian wasn't saving the team's Lola from fire, she co-drove Clint Field to three victories to help him clinch the title. John Macaluso's squad won three times with its new Courage, courtesy of Jeff Bucknum and Chris McMurphy. ☑



SUNTRUST SHINES

SEASON REVIEW Clever teamwork plus the combined efforts of Wayne Taylor and Max Angelelli gave SunTrust the edge in Grand-Am. By JONATHAN INGRAM

WILLIAMS/LAT

Much like in the rival American Le Mans Series, two teams of veterans squared up for the Daytona Prototype title in the Grand American's Rolex Series. And, much like in the ALMS, strategy and pace proved crucial in the championship won by team architect Wayne Taylor and Max Angelelli.

Taylor had factory backing from both Pontiac and the Riley Technologies team in addition to co-driver Angelelli, who generally jumped in early and ran to the finish in the sprints. After a season-long duel, they beat the Lexus-backed Riley of Chip Ganassi Racing, which paired 2004 champion Scott Pruett with Luis Diaz.

Both teams used the Riley chassis that has proved so aerodynamically efficient, but Taylor's SunTrust team benefited from the V8 Pontiac's torque and fuel mileage over the high-revving Lexus-badged four-valve Toyota V8.

"It was just a great year and a great team effort," said team director Bill Riley. "I can't say enough for how Max and Wayne drove. We completed every lap, which means the drivers did

their jobs by keeping it on track and the crew did their job by prepping a great car. It was pretty much the perfect year."

One of the most impressive jobs by the team came at Mid-Ohio where an electrical fire forced an entire rebuild for the race, in which Taylor and Angelelli finished third.

If there was any great advantage in the different packages, it was hard to pin down. Taylor/Angelelli won five times to the Ganassi duo's four during the 14-race season. But in the closest race in the series' history at California Speedway, Pruett edged Angelelli by 0.096 seconds.

In addition to standard chassis and calibrated engine packages, the close competition often resulted from caution periods and the California race was no different. On the final lap, after the Italian had cleared lapped traffic, both drivers pulled onto the oval portion of the Speedway virtually even. Pruett held the bottom line, a backmarker the middle and Angelelli catapulted around the outside for second.

In similar circumstances, following a late-race caution, Butch Leitzinger caught leader Pruett at Mid-Ohio, then dived inside with seven laps to go. It was one of two victories for the factory Crawford-Pontiac team, where ageless wonder Elliott

Forbes-Robinson continued his winning ways.

The championship turned on pit strategy at the second Watkins Glen round in September, where SunTrust got ahead by pitting only for fuel and tyres, while Ganassi embarked on a driver change.

Unlike in the ALMS, Grand-Am's prototype car count continued to grow with an average of 22 starters, including a record 29 at Daytona, where winners Taylor and Angelelli were joined by Emmanuel Collard. The GT category also expanded to 23 cars per event.

GT had its share of excitement in the fight for the drivers' title. Pontiac GTO.R factory driver Andy Lally and Porsche privateer driver David Murry (Synergy Racing) collided twice on the last lap of the season in Mexico City. Murry's tit-for-tat response sent his Porsche over the kerbs and into the air. Alas, Lally's Pontiac went spinning along with his title hopes. Murry's co-driver, Craig Stanton, therefore won the title by a single point.

Lally and the Kevin Buckler-owned Racer's Group settled for the teams' title after starting the season in Porsches before switching to the Pratt & Miller-built GTO.Rs midway through. The new GTO.R took its first win with Jan Magnussen and Paul Edwards at Watkins Glen in September following its July debut at Daytona. ■

"IT WAS A GREAT YEAR. I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH FOR HOW MAX AND WAYNE DROVE" BILL RILEY

2005 Grand-Am Daytona Prototypes

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
1	Angelelli/Taylor	SunTrust Racing	Riley MkXI-Pontiac	1st	1st	2nd	4th	6th	6th	2nd	1st	1st	3rd	2nd	1st	4th	2nd	439
2	Diaz/Pruett	Ganassi Racing	Riley MkXI-Lexus	7th	5th	1st	1st	3rd	3rd	6th	4th	4th	2nd	16th	2nd	1st	3rd	405
3	Leitzinger/Forbes-Robinson	Crawford	Crawford DP03-Pontiac	2nd	2nd	16th	2nd	11th	7th	1st	11th	11th	1st	3rd	15th	14th	5th	360
4	Bergmeister	The Racers' Group	Riley MkXI-Pontiac	10th	3rd	10th	10th	5th	2nd	3rd	9th	9th	5th	1st	17th	11th	9th	350
5	Johansson/Wagner	Ganassi Racing	Riley MkXI-Lexus	4th	7th	17th	17th	2nd	5th	13th	7th	7th	13th	4th	6th	5th	4th	340
6	Gidley	Ten Motorsports	Riley MkXI-BMW	19th	10th	7th	7th	4th	4th	4th	2nd	2nd	4th	6th	5th	20th	1st	309

2006 Grand-Am GT

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
1	Stanton	Baldwin-Tafel Racing	Porsche 911 GT3	4th	4th	3rd	4th	2nd	6th	6th	2nd	6th	6th	5th	12th	7th	3rd	377
2	Bunting/Lally	The Racers' Group	Porsche/Pontiac	5th	1st	2nd	18th	13th	2nd	20th	4th	4th	2nd	4th	1st	3rd	4th	376
3	Murry	Synergy Racing	Porsche 911 GT3	21st	4th	3rd	4th	2nd	6th	6th	2nd	6th	6th	5th	12th	7th	3rd	359
4	Hand	Prototype Technology Group	BMW M3	30th	7th	1st	3rd	3rd	11th	1st	1st	2nd	16th	3rd	13th	2nd	-	337

Key 1 Daytona, Feb 6; 2 Homestead, March 5; 3 Fontana, April 3; 4 Laguna Seca, May 1; 5 Mont Tremblant, May 21; 6 Watkins Glen, June 12; 7 Daytona, June 30; 8 Birmingham, July 31; 9 Watkins Glen (short), August 12; 10 Mid-Ohio, August 27; 11 Phoenix, September 10; 12 Watkins Glen, September 2; 13 Virginia, October 9; 14 Mexico City, November 5.

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ALL THE NATIONAL & CLUB RACE, RALLY AND HISTORIC NEWS. PLUS FULL RESULTS ROUND-UP

The German series, racing at Oschersleben below, will make up part of the new North European championship in 2006



BRITS SET FOR EURO RENAULT



FORMULARENAULT UK teams unable to find a place on the EuroCup grid could yet have a chance to race on the continent next year, if plans for a North European championship come to fruition.

Discussions to amalgamate the Dutch, German and Nordic series into a North European league have now reached an advanced stage.

With the EuroCup likely to be over-subscribed next year, British-based teams who only want to do one-off races in Europe would be unlikely to gain entries. But the new series would be able to accommodate them.

With a degree of overlap in the fields of the Dutch, German and Nordic championships this year, all of which have struggled for grid sizes, the idea of the unification appears to be the only hope of survival.

UK teams are being encouraged to enter the full series but it is more likely that one-off races would be of interest. Team aka, Fortec

Motorsport and Manor Motorsport have entered the Marlboro Masters support race in recent years, which could be a championship round, as well as a date at Spa and possible World Series support slots.

Dutch championship organiser Mick de Haas, who took over the running of the series from Renault Netherlands this year, has set a mid-January deadline to receive the 25 entries he wants for the series to go ahead.

De Haas said: "There is a condition that we get 25 cars entered by the middle of January – then we can afford to do it. But we've spoken to various teams and everyone seems convinced that we can have more than that."

"We're taking the initiative with this because we all felt the same – we weren't getting value for the money we put in."

"We hope for two races in the Netherlands, four in Germany, one at Spa and one at Mantorp Park in Sweden, which hosted a Dutch championship round earlier this year."

Team aka boss Andrew Kirkaldy said it was

an attractive proposition: "We would have liked to have done some of the EuroCup but they prefer you to be a EuroCup team first and foremost and a national team second and the calendars in the past have clashed too often. We're primarily a UK team and the EuroCup is usually oversubscribed so we can't get entries for one-off races."

"I can't say that we'll definitely do any rounds until we see a calendar but we'd like to, it's all extra running and it keeps the drivers sharp. But it's a costly business so how much we do will probably come down to the drivers' budgets. They won't want to be out every weekend spending money on a different series while they're fighting for the UK championship."

Manor Motorsport FRenault manager Tony Shaw said: "We try to take in a few meetings abroad every season, as much as calendars and budgets will allow, so we'd be interested in doing some rounds. Spa is a fantastic circuit and there aren't many opportunities to go."

PLOWMAN EYES SEAT AT PREMA

ALEX ZANARDI'S karting protégé Martin Plowman (below) will graduate to single seater racing next season and is set to sign up with crack Italian squad Prema Powerteam for a campaign in the Formula Renault EuroCup.

The Briton suffered a serious accident in Italy in March and was out of action for some weeks, but returned for a varied European karting campaign with Team Zanardi, which was set up to run Plowman this year.

The 18-year-old has now undertaken an intense testing programme with Prema, which will run in the Italian and European championships next season. Prema is also an entrant in the Formula 3 Euroseries.

The Prema link comes through Plowman's manager Dino Chiesa, for whom Prema is a local team, while Zanardi is a former Prema driver, finishing seventh in the 1989 Italian Formula 3 Championship with the outfit.

Plowman's father, Mark, told Autosport: "Prema is the only team we have tested with and it's the team we want to go with. The EuroCup is the route we'd like to go down, but it's certain that he will be in cars next year."

Prema boss Angelo Rosin said: "It's more than 95 per cent certain that Martin will race with us. He has improved a lot in testing. He still has to improve some more before the start of the 2006 season but I think the potential is very good."

The BRDC Rising Star, who took victory in the Asia-Pacific kart championship in 2004, said: "Formula Renault seems to be the premier junior class. I am not sure about Formula BMW as it is still quite new. I've always wanted to race in the strongest class, because it's the only way to improve yourself."

Plowman has already tested at Spa, Misano, Vallelunga and Estoril. He was due to drive at Valencia before Christmas. He admitted he is still on a steep learning curve.

"It's been going good. Every time I'm out in the car I've been learning more about it. It's been a big eye-opener coming from karting – the grip in the high-speed corners is something special. But in terms of power it actually feels slower than my kart did!"



IN BRIEF

BRITCAR CHANGE

The 2006 Britcar 24-hour race at Silverstone has moved to September 9/10, one week earlier than originally planned, to avoid a clash with F1 testing.

WORSWICK'S RUN

Former EuroBOSS champion Tony Worswick joined son Ross at Donington before Christmas to shake down their second Formula Renault chassis.

MACOB SEARCH

Alex Morgan's family-run Macob Motorsport team is looking for a second driver to partner the Formula Renault BARC race winner in FRUK next season.

BARC SINGLETON

BRDC Single Seater graduate Richard Singleton is to contest the 2006 Formula Renault BARC series. The 17-year-old had his first test of his brand new FR2.0 at Donington before Christmas.



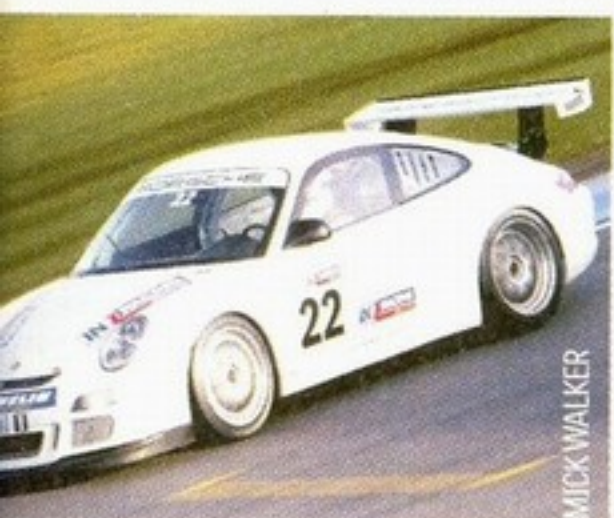
MICK WALKER

MORGAN SWITCH

Radical race winner Henry Morgan is looking to switch to single seaters. He tested a Scorpio Motorsport Formula Renault at Donington before Christmas.

FORD ENGINE CHOICE

Van Diemen, Mygale and Spirit all tested their 2006 UK Formula Ford chassis with both the 1800cc Zetec and new 1600cc Duratec engines at Snetterton before Christmas. The Ford-sponsored test was staged to allow teams to compare the two engine choices for next season.



MICK WALKER

TEMPLEMAN BACK

Jason Templeman became the first established Porsche Carrera Cup name to sample the new 997-model car when he tested for In2 Racing at Donington Park before Christmas (above). He is yet to sign a race deal for 2006.

IN2 DRIVERS NAMED

New Porsche Carrera Cup team In2 Racing has confirmed that former Radical racers Mike Richards and Paul Hogarth will race next season.

NATIONAL NEWS OVALS ONLY FOR STOCK CARS > FBMW WORLD FINAL COULD



The Rockingham oval will once again be the sole host of SCSA racing next season

BARRY AMBROSE

SCSA ABANDONS PLANS FOR MSV ROAD RACES



SCSA HAS denied any crisis after dropping its plans to race on road courses next season.

Its calendar will again be limited to six weekends on the Rockingham oval, with those dates also under review.

The series unveiled a calendar including four events at MotorSport Vision circuits Brands Hatch, Snetterton and Oulton Park in October, but concerns over costs have led to the idea being canned. Many entrants had also been sceptical about the circuit races.

But in response to renewed rumours about the health of the stock car series, spokesman Jeff Carter said: "Contrary to popular belief SCSA isn't dead or dying. And Pickups are still very much alive; they would carry on even if, God forbid, something happened to SCSA."

"The Rockingham dates are being looked at because we want to maximise crowds and avoid any clashes—for example with drag racing at Santa Pod."

MSV boss Jonathan Palmer said: "We did give them some provisional

road course dates, after which they announced a calendar without coming back to us. But when we had to ask for a confirmation and deposit they chose not to take up the dates."

Torquespeed team boss John Mickel was pleased with the news: "It's the most sensible thing that's happened here. These cars are designed for a 160mph oval and road courses are boring. Rockingham has exciting races all day."

Rockingham, which will be closed until April next year for upgrade work (see Autosport, December 15),

will be renamed the Rockingham Performance Park.

Len O'Hagan has been named the new chairman of the company, which is now fully separated from SCSA. Ian Brown remains at the helm of SCSA, and Joe Dickinson continues as Rockingham CEO.

SCSA will now hire the facility for race days, but local regulations mean that racing is limited to six weekends a year. There is provision for a further three events, meaning that with special permission the Rockingham Stages rally could continue.

GERMAN LOSES BMW WIN

GERMAN CHAMPION Nicolas Hülkenberg was stripped of victory in the inaugural Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain on December 16 after being hit with a penalty for dangerous driving.

The German was handed a 10-second penalty for his actions at a safety car restart, dropping him to third overall.



BMW AG

He backed the field up exiting the last corner while leading and braked before the line, causing an accident in the pack.

He said: "I had planned that this was the best strategy but it was a mistake and now I am third instead of first."

Robert Wickens, who had qualified on pole, and Edoardo Piscopo lost their qualifying times after breaching suspension regulations.

Piscopo was allowed to race under appeal, but was excluded after finishing fifth in the final, while Wickens started his three heats from the back, and raced through the field to sixth overall.

Matt Howson also had to start a heat from the back after he was late leaving his garage to form up on the grid.

"It's very frustrating after a

week where I was in with a shout of being the top UK runner," he said. "I've been made to start from the pitlane because I was 10 seconds late, with no warning, and then fined for wearing short sleeves, while disqualified drivers are allowed to race from their grid position and others are going unpunished for causing avoidable accidents."

"The fact that Hülkenberg was allowed to continue, to stand on the podium, and to claim the victory is disgusting. It was clear for everyone to see that he braked and he was lucky not to cause a much more serious accident. The event as a whole was very special, it's just a shame that some things have overshadowed that."

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FINAL SET FOR '06

THE FORMULA BMW World Final, which was held for the first time in Bahrain on December 14-16, will continue next year, although a different venue could be used.

BMW Motorsport boss Mario Theissen said: "We didn't create a World Final to abandon it after the first run. It is not booked for Bahrain next year, so it is a possibility to hold it at different circuits each year."

"You have to take into account the logistics and the effort for the teams for getting to the event," he continued. "It is about the same for the Asian and European teams to get to Bahrain, but there is a certain disadvantage for the American teams."

The inaugural World Final in Bahrain was considered a success

by the teams. Fortec Motorsport boss Richard Dutton said: "It was a great event. I think a lot more people will take part next year. There is a lot of track time, and a lot of racing, we'll certainly come back in future."

Theissen also denied speculation suggesting that there



Theissen

are plans to replace the four national BMW series with a single European-based series for 2007: "It was never considered," he explained. "We have to keep travel time and expenses to a

minimum.

"We have seen that racing Formula 3 at a European level can be difficult and only some teams can afford to do this. For an entry level series, national series make more sense."

JAMUN AND TAPPY IN FRENault MOVE

TITLE-WINNING Formula Ford outfit Jamun Racing will expand into Formula Renault UK with champion Duncan Tappy next season.

The squad has acquired an ex-Team JLR chassis for what is likely to be a one-car FRenault programme, which will run alongside a full UK Formula Ford assault with up to four entries. This will be Jamun's first foray into Formula Renault and the team plans in the long term to move into British Formula 3.

Tappy, who dominated the second half of the season and claimed the Formula Ford Festival crown for the team, will begin serious testing of the car in January next year.

Jamun boss Tony Mundy said: "This is a logical step forward both for the team and for Duncan. We'll have to see what happens but we're fairly confident. It's a good thing for Jamun. We don't have any long-term plans but the dream would be Formula 3.

"It's going to be a new challenge, but if we go about it as we did with Formula Fords, I don't see why we shouldn't be just as successful. I'm sure Duncan is capable of running at the front and I don't see why we can't win the title next year.

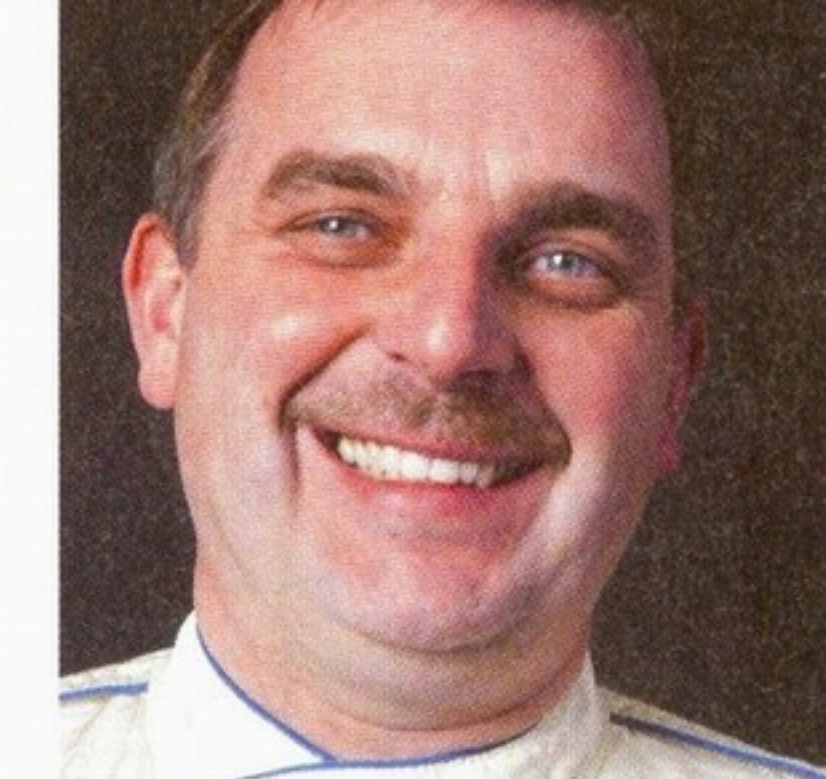
Tappy said: "I'm pretty excited about it. It's all going to be new to us, but if we can get enough testing in then we can get results. Hopefully we'll have a repeat performance of 2005: a few wins would be brilliant."

Charlie Donnelly, who won the UK Formula Ford title for the squad, ruled out joining the campaign.

The Irishman said: "Even if I had an open chequebook I'm not sure what would be right to do next year. But I don't see myself as a Formula Renault driver. It doesn't seem like a good step career-wise."



Tappy celebrates his FFord Festival win, and hopes for more with Jamun in 2006



HUMBLE PYE

MARCUS PYE

"THAT PRIAULX NEVER HAD IT EASY HEIGHTENS HIS APPRECIATION"

FEW PROFESSIONAL racers would have attended a domestic hillclimb while locked in combat for the World Touring Car title. But Andy Priaulx is different. The 1995 British champion at the discipline, the Guernseyman wasn't going to miss the venue's centenary.

Fierce loyalty to his roots is one of many factors which makes Priaulx stand above his rivals. And, as he fired his BMW 320i up the hill, where he tamed the rampant Cosworth DFL-engined Pilbeam MP58 ten years previously, his entire family was amid the cheering throng.

Therein lies another key to his accession to the top flight. Andy—who I've known since his Mallock-piloting youth—has a rare gift for galvanising goodwill, and forging enduring relationships with commercial partners and anybody who shares his infectious enthusiasm for racing and zest for life.

That the new 'Weltmeister' never had it easy heightens his appreciation. Having conquered the Renault Spider and European Touring Car arenas—and won British Formula 3 and Touring Car events en route, the former on half a budget—he's endured some deep lows.

Having sold the house from under wife Jo—the rock on which his success is founded—they abandoned their Channel Island security for a caravan at Silverstone and scratched a living to keep the dream alive. "For the first six months I wanted to eat her, and for the next six I wish I had," he said memorably at a party in Guernsey just before Christmas.

The occasion, which I wouldn't have missed, celebrated Priaulx's greatest achievement, after he turned the tables on works BMW driver Dirk Müller in Macau to wrest global honours at the final hurdle. More than 250 friends packed

St Peter Port's Christies bistro for a wonderful evening with this consummate pro.

That so many were there—from schoolboy motocross rivals to IRL star 'Doreen' Manning—speaks volumes for the man, whose following has buoyed him as much as dedication, self-belief and networking ability on course to becoming a touring car legend.

My belief that Andy is as good out of the car as in it (an uncommon skill even in Formula 1) was underlined by backer SG Hambro, which has been behind him for seven seasons, and helped elevate him to the big league. Yet his gratitude lies equally with individuals who have dipped into their own pockets to make things happen throughout his career.

Whatever he does in 2006, a lot of people ride with Priaulx, now much in demand for F1 testing and BMW corporate duties. Hillclimb champions Chris Cramer (now a great mentor), PR guru Annie Bradshaw, TV commentator Jonathan Green and Silverstone's Gary and Pam Dearn made the effort to attend is a measure of his extended family. One from which he draws constant strength.

"Today, for the first time, at home in Guernsey, surrounded by good friends, I feel like the World Champion. I wanted to thank everybody for their support," he said as the evening began. I speak for many in saying, Andy, you deserve it mate!



CAMERON SWITCHES

PARR MOTORSPORT will no longer prepare Bill Cameron's front-running Porsche next season, with Team Parker Racing taking over the running of his 911 GT3 Cup machine.

Cameron wants to focus on endurance racing in 2006 after a season in Britcar, where he finished third in the Silverstone 24 Hours. Cameron and co-driver Barry Horne plan to enter the Spa and Nürburgring 24 Hours this year, as well as Silverstone. The pair will also run in selected Britcar outings.

Former British GT class champion Marino Franchitti is a strong candidate for the third driver role in the enduro events, having already raced with Cameron at Silverstone.

Cameron said: "Barry knows Stuart, having raced for him before, and the team has an excellent track record in the Carrera Cup.

"Parr is a great group and very professional. It's just one of those things; there are no hard feelings."

PARKER QUILTS SEATS

TEAM PARKER RACING has quit the Seat Cupra Championship after one season in order to concentrate on its Porsche campaigns next season.

The championship-winning Porsche Carrera Cup team plans to defend its title with Damien Faulkner next year and expand the operation to three cars. Boss Stuart Parker said this plan, plus a likely return to British GTs and a move into 24-hour racing (see left), led to his decision to pull the team out of the Seat series.

Parker said: "We very much enjoyed our time in Seats, but basically we want to concentrate on Porsches next year. Seats will still be strong, because there is good prize money and that is always going to attract drivers."

Parker ran Tom Ferrier and Mark Cole in SEATs this year, with Ferrier finishing third in the championship after scoring two victories. 2005 was the first season in which teams were able to prepare and run their own cars in the Cupra Championship.



Team Parker will park its SEATs after a race-winning year in '06

NATIONAL ROUND-UP

C400 BIDS OPEN CATERHAM has revealed the prices for its new C400 racer.

The 220bhp Duratec-powered car is now on sale for £26,995 including VAT. The company is offering a discount of £500 to the first ten customers, provided orders are placed on or before January 16.

There is also an update kit on sale for racers wanting to convert the existing R400, available at £9,350 including the new engine. A reduced price is available for those who trade in their K-Series engine.

MACHALE HAILED DUBLINER Gareth MacHale has been awarded the Billy Coleman Award by Motorsport Ireland.

The 25-year-old earns 32,000 Euros and the title of Young Rally Driver of the Year. The Toyota Corolla WRC driver won the National Forest title as well as placing third on Rally Ireland. He earned a tally of six outright wins during the season.

Kevin Kelleher, 27, was runner-up, receiving 8000 Euros. 24-year-old Ian Barrett wins 4000 Euros for third place in the annual competition.

BMW ROOKIE SIGNS FORMULA BMW UK scholarship contestant Charlie Noble-Mundin has signed with Motaworld Racing for 2006.

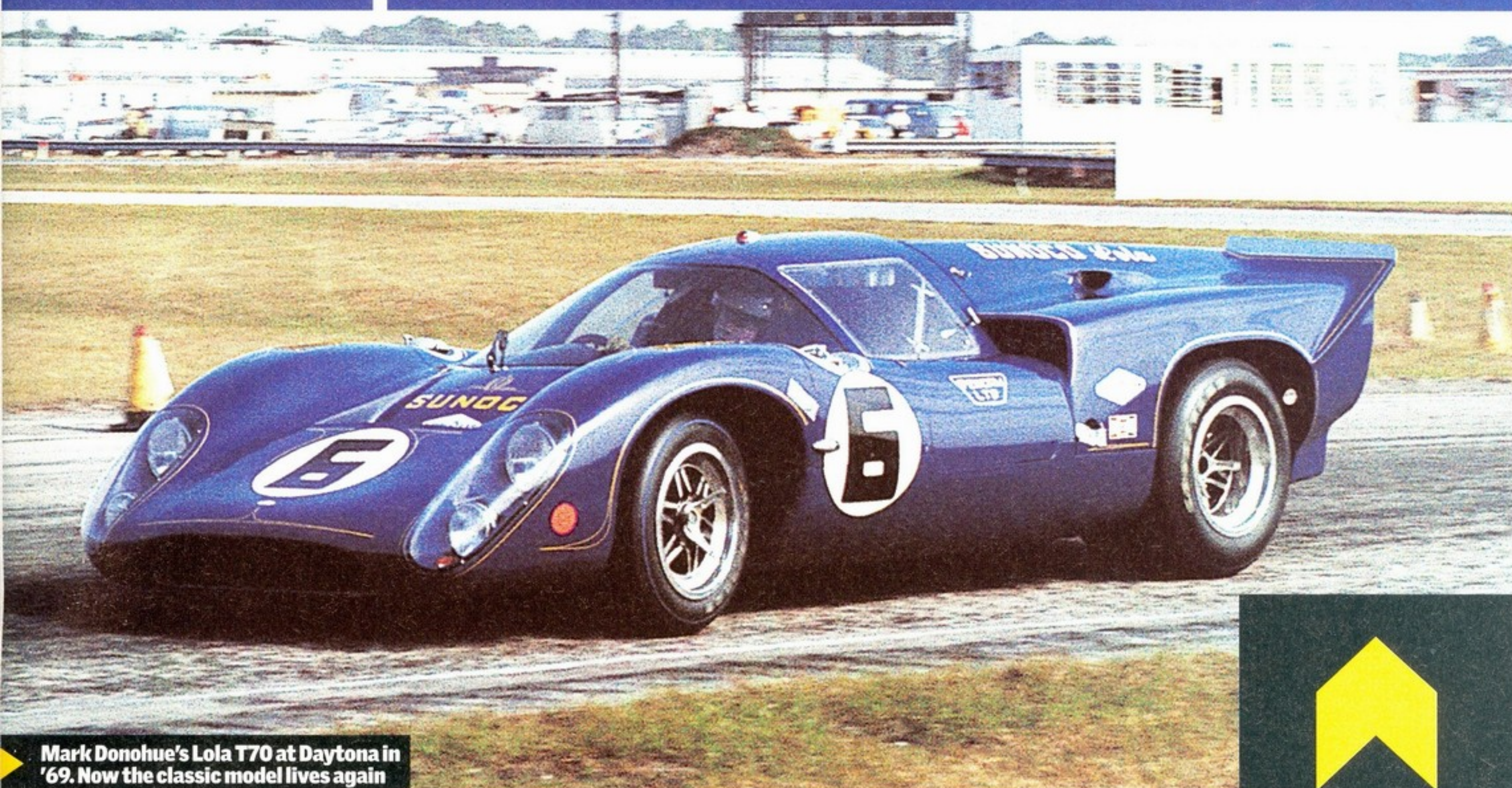
"BMW is the only reasonable first step for me not to be out of my depth," he explained. "Paddock Hill Bend will be my first corner in a race of any kind come the start of the season.

"The aim pre-season is to keep pace with the other new drivers and to go for Rookie Cup wins and top 10 finishes.

The team plans to field two further cars in the series.



Peoples' hero: Priaulx put on a show for his fans at Shelsley earlier this year



Mark Donohue's Lola T70 at Daytona in '69. Now the classic model lives again

750 MC BACK TO THRUXTON IN '06

THE 750 Motor Club will return to Thruxton next season for the first time since 1998.

Club competitions supremo Robin Knight, who has also increased the number of meetings to 18, said: "The decision to run more meetings was taken to cope with SaxMax [the new one-make tin-top series for 14 to 17-year-olds in Citroën Saxos], a 10-race stand-alone programme for Toyota MR2s run on behalf of Steve Vince and double grids for Locosts."

Eleven double-headers are again among a record 27 promoted race days — up by four. The club also has guest slots for Formula Vee and Stock Hatch at

two Castle Combe events.

Stock Hatch, the 1300cc Locost sportscars, Formula Vee, Bike Sports and the 750 Formula have been identified as growth areas among its 14 categories.

By contrast, competitors in the Club 7s and Road Sports championships have been told that their races will be amalgamated if grid sizes do not increase from 2005 levels.

The club will also host five Sports Racing & GT Challenge events, plus Morgan, MGCC, Thoroughbred & Classic and Formula Junior rounds.

● The end-of-season Birkett Relay will take place on October 28 at Silverstone.

CALENDAR

Mallory Park	March 12
Brands Hatch	April 1/2
Snetterton	April 14/15
Cadwell Park	April 30-May 1
Donington Park	May 14/15
Thruxton	May 27
Brands Hatch	June 10/11
Cadwell Park	June 24/25
Pembrey	July 15/16
Lydden	July 29/30
Brands Hatch	August 12/13
Silverstone	August 26/27
Oulton Park	September 9
Donington Park	September 17
Snetterton	Sept 30-Oct 1
Mallory Park	October 22

RALLYCROSS WRC U-TURN

PLAN TO include a class for World Rally Cars within the 2006 MSA British Rallycross Championship have been dropped.

The British Rallycross Drivers' Association had announced plans in August to accommodate the class in 2006 after the cars were dropped from the British Rally Championship, but has now decided against the move following the creation of the Rally Masters series for the WRC models.

BRDA chairman John Horton said: "When it

looked as though there would not be a place for WRCs in the British championship events, offering them a place to come and compete was an obvious move.

"It's also obvious that people who have these cars want to drive in rallies with them, and now the Masters class offers that chance there is little point in us competing for the same entries."

The BRDA may yet include a class for WRC cars at one-off events on a demonstration basis.

2006 TRIPLE ON CARDS FOR EVANS

Rallycross Superprix winner Christopher Evans will contest the British and Irish series next year as well as selected FIA European Championship events



CHEVRONS IN FOR F3

CLASSIC FORMULA 3's 20th anniversary season in 2006 will celebrate the multi-marque glory days of the '70s with the return to the UK of a number of significant cars.

Two Chevron B38s are set to enter the HSCC-run series. Legends proprietor Adrian Rush has acquired Elio de Angelis's '78 Monaco F3 winner from Italy, while Hugh Price has imported the ex-Derek Warwick chassis from Germany.

A brace of Ralt RT1s include Ian Fisher's ex-Luciano Pavesi 1976 model, while Nick Crossley will also run one for his return.

Former TGP Tyrrell racer Max Samuel-Camps has bought the ex-Kenneth Acheson March 793 from Barrie Pusey. Martin Walford is also planning to rebuild his 793 after a decade in storage.

Seventies single-seater starlet Lorina McLaughlin is set for CF3 in the RT1 given its series debut by Ian Rimmer at last season's Silverstone finals, while Formula Fordster Matthew Sturmer is to graduate with one of the very unusual Van Diemen-built GRD 376s.

LEASTONE ON TARGET

LEASTONE ENGINEERING is on course to sign the required 12 competitors for its recently-launched Formula 5 single-seater championship to run as a standalone category in Ireland next season.

Ten drivers have signed up, and there may be at least one woman

JANUARY T70 SALES

LOLA HAS unveiled plans to build a new run of its classic T70 sportscar — and marque boss Martin Birrane plans to race the first of the recreations in the Classic Endurance Series.

Original designer Eric Broadley and former T70 ace John Surtees will be present at the Autosport International show for the launch of the 'new' Mk3B, which is a faithful factory-built reproduction with full FIA papers.

Birrane, who is likely to be partnered by Kevin McGarrity in 2006, said: "The project has come about because of high demand for more T70s. Thirty years after the original unveiling, we're building them again!"

"It will be an evocative build in Huntingdon, with some of the original staff still working for the company."

The car's most famous result was Mark Donohue and Chuck Parsons' victory in the 1969 Daytona 24 Hours.



IN BRIEF

STONELEIGH KARTS

The main rally attraction at February's International Historic Motorsport Show at Stoneleigh Park will be a fleet of ex-works Triumph TR4s. Historic karts will also feature in the live action arena for the first time.

CHAMPS REWARDED

The FIA TGP Champions were in Monaco before Christmas for the annual FIA World Motorsport Awards (below). Christian Glasel, John Delane, John Bosch, Hubertus Bahlsen and Steve Harlley were all on stage to collect their prizes.



LONGER SUPERSTAGE

The 2006 Wydean Forest Rally will once again feature a superspecial stage at Chepstow Racecourse. The stage, which will be used at the start and end of the event, has been lengthened to two miles. The rally takes place on February 11.



MARSHALS DAY OUT

Snetterton hosted its marshals' track day before Christmas, with 26 marshals driving their own cars at the Norfolk circuit (above). Cadwell Park and Brands Hatch will host similar days next year.

PARKER PAIR BACK

Team Parker Racing has confirmed that its successful duo of Jamie Constable and Mike Cantillon will return for a defence of their Caterham Eurocup 1-2 achievement next season.



HADFIELD PURCHASE

Simon Hadfield has bought an ex-Gus Hutchison Lola T300 to contest Formula 5000 and the Derek Bell Trophy next year. He took the car out for the first time at Donington (above).



HOLZER HALTS HÜLKENBERG

BAHRAIN WORLD FINAL

December 13-16

WHOIS Marco Holzer? is the question everyone was asking in Bahrain for much of the inaugural Formula BMW World Final last weekend.

You might expect that the British contingent wouldn't know much about too many of the drivers from the German, Asian or American series, but Holzer is pretty unknown in Germany too.

He came to Bahrain as a driver that had never even won a race and had finished a humble 13th in the German series this year, his second of BMW. But he left the country with five consecutive wins to his name, the World Final winner's trophy, and, most importantly, a Formula 1 test

with the Sauber-BMW squad.

It wasn't until nearly three hours after the conclusion of the final that Holzer was confirmed as the winner, though. Until then German champion Nicolas Hülkenberg had at least one hand on the prize.

Hülkenberg had won the race, and convincingly too—the first time Holzer had been upstaged all week—but his tactics on the restart from the race's first safety car period raised more than a couple of eyebrows.

It was deployed to clear the track after Bahraini Salman Al-Khalifa spun across the road at the last corner and collected the approaching Jack Goldstraw. It somehow managed to take six laps to remove the two stricken cars from harm's way so, by the time the lights on the safety car went out, the pack was itching to get back to racing.

Hülkenberg led the field through the last corner as the safety car headed for the pits. Cars were lined up four and five abreast as the leader crept towards the line at what looked like walking pace. He then guaranteed that he would retain the lead as he braked and immediately jumped on the gas, sending him on his way to turn one with half a dozen car lengths advantage. The rest of the drivers weren't so fortunate as the braking sent a shock wave down the field and, inevitably, there was a shunt. Jonathan Summerton and Stefano Coletti took the brunt of it and both cars were left in the wall opposite the pits.

It took another six laps to clear the circuit again and, perhaps having learned his lesson, Hülkenberg behaved impeccably on the second re-start, flooring it in the last corner. But that wouldn't

save him—a 10-second penalty was later added to his race time, dropping him to third and promoting Holzer back to the front of the field.

Although he initially claimed: "I didn't slow down, I just stayed at the speed of the safety car until I got near the line," Hülkenberg

later accepted that he'd made a mistake and braked.

As many had predicted in the run up to the event, the drivers from the German series had the edge over their British rivals. Despite the gap coming down with every heat, none of the UK runners could get close enough to challenge.

Closest was Sam Bird who was in with a shout of the podium in the final. He'd been battling with Swiss Sebastien Buemi throughout the heats and pre-final, and it looked as though the German and British championship runners up would duel for best of the rest behind the two Germans. But Edoardo Piscopo, racing under appeal after he had his qualifying times removed for suspension irregularities, split the pair and occupied almost all of Bird's race. Bird got ahead on the second lap,



Marco Holzer's win earned the German a BMW Formula 1 test



Main: Holzer hit the front in the first heat and went on to win all of his races

Top: The field spent nearly half the final behind the safety car

Middle: Bird was the best of British series runners in fourth

Bottom: Bahrain's long straights helped the cars slipstream

but Piscopo took the place back during the restart mayhem. Bird pushed again after the second restart and the Italian finally succumbed to the pressure on the penultimate lap.

With 12 of the 25 laps spent behind the safety car there just wasn't time for much more racing, and Bird was left out of touch of Buemi, whose third place later became second.

Bird said: "I'm pleased with fourth. I'd have liked to have had the chance to battle for third but I was held up fighting with Piscopo. It was a good battle but unfortunately it was for fourth. We just didn't have the pace to take it to the front two, but I've had a good week; we've proved our speed again and flown the flag for Britain."

The rest of the Brits were blighted by bad luck as incidents in

the pre-final dropped Ross Curnow and Stian Sorlie to the back end of the grid for the one that mattered. Curnow carved through the field in the final, though, to take seventh from 29th on the grid.

Matt Howson had also shown the pace to haul himself into play up front. Penalised for being late out of his garage for his first heat, though, he also had to come through the pack, and eventually lost out to Curnow and Robert Wickens in the battle of the final.

"We were lacking straightline speed in the final which made us a sitting duck," he said. "We don't know what was wrong with the car yet, possibly a slipping clutch or bent valve. It's a frustrating end to a frustrating week"

Second of the British series runners, to Bird, was Nathan Antunes. He'd qualified well but spun in two of the heats and

started the final from the ninth row. A repeat of his impressive qualifying pace in the final saw him classified fifth after Piscopo was removed from the results.

The drives of the week were from entertaining Canadian Robert Wickens, who had plenty of overtaking to do after he was excluded from pole position in qualifying for a mechanical irregularity. Unlike Piscopo, Wickens accepted the penalty and got on with racing. He came from the back of the grid to sixth, fifth and third in each of his three heats, but still started the final down the back after a puncture in the pre-final. Again, he came through to claim a top six finish.

"I was shocked to be on pole but the car has just been amazing," said Wickens. "I think it's making me look better than I am!"

■ **Steven English**

HEATS & PRE-FINAL

ALTHOUGH THE final was marred by the long safety car periods and restart controversy, the World Final still provided the best of Formula BMW racing in the heats and pre-final.

With the field divided into four groups after qualifying, each racing against the other three in 15-lap heats. Every driver raced in three of the six heats and the points scored decided the grid for the pre-final.

Marco Holzer reigned supreme in the heats, beating Sebastien Buemi, Nicolas Hülkenberg and Sam Bird respectively in each of his races. He didn't have to do much racing, though, scampering away in the opening laps each time while those behind held each other up passing and re-passing each other on the Sakhr circuit's long straights.

Hülkenberg couldn't touch Holzer in their head-to-head heat, but he beat Joao Urbano and Ross Curnow to two heat victories to secure a place on the front row for the pre-final. The other heat victory went to Buemi, ahead of Edoardo Piscopo and Matt Howson.

In the second heat, Stefano Coletti managed to drive into Christian Vietoris on the main straight, spearing the pair into the barrier at around 130mph. The innocent Vietoris' car was destroyed and he played no further part in the event, while Coletti's car was fixed in time to contest the next heat half an hour later, in which he crashed.

That incident aside, drivers were well behaved and the racing was close. The best of it came from the British entrants,

with team-mates Bird and Stian Sorlie reliving their Thruxton memories and drafting each other in a battle for fourth in the third heat. Sorlie then repeated the squabble with Howson in the sixth heat, but the latter secured third position by outbraking the Norwegian on the outside into the first corner.

Holzer won again in the pre-final but this time Hülkenberg was never more than half a second behind, and looking capable of challenging. He didn't though, content to have a good look at his rival in preparation for the big one.

The field strung out behind as Urbano and Buemi, and Bird and Piscopo engaged in their own private battles. But with the finishing order deciding the grid for the final, nobody was risking anything silly and, in the second half of the race, everyone up front held station.

HEAT ONE (12 LAPS) 1 Nicolas Hülkenberg 17m32.344s; 2 Joao Urbano 17m51.2s; 3 Jonathan Summerton; 4 Edoardo Piscopo; 5 Matt Lee; 6 Armaan Ebrahim. **Fastest lap** Hülkenberg 1m27.016s. **HEAT TWO (15 LAPS)** 1 Marco Holzer 21m54.369s; 2 Sebastien Buemi 21m56.626s; 3 Sam Bird; 4 Ross Curnow; 5 Stian Sorlie; 6 Robert Wickens. **FL** Wickens 1m27.200s.

HEAT THREE (15 LAPS) 1 Holzer 21m57.206s; 2 Hülkenberg 21m59.742s; 3 Urbano; 4 Bird; 5 Sorlie; 6 Dominik Wasem. **FL** Bird 1m27.443s. **HEAT FOUR (15 LAPS)** 1 Buemi 22m01.374s; 2 Piscopo 22m03.931s; 3 Matt Howson; 4 Curnow; 5 Wickens; 6 Lee. **FL** Wickens 1m27.377s. **HEAT FIVE (15 LAPS)** 1 Hülkenberg 21m57.943s; 2 Curnow 22m02.624s; 3 Wickens; 4 Buemi; 5 Urbano; 6 Summerton. **FL** Hülkenberg 1m27.320s. **HEAT SIX (15 LAPS)** 1 Holzer 21m49.209s; 2 Bird 21m53.102s; 3 Howson; 4 Sorlie; 5 Ebrahim; 6 Reed Stevens. **FL** Holzer 1m27.507s. **PRE-FINAL (22 LAPS)** 1 Holzer 32m08.495s; 2 Hülkenberg 32m09.014s; 3 Urbano; 4 Buemi; 5 Bird; 6 Piscopo. **FL** Hülkenberg 1m27.180s.

RESULTS December 13-16, Formula BMW World Final

25 LAPS, 56.188 MILES

Pos	Driver (nationality)	Team	Result	Grid
1	Marco Holzer (D)	AM-Holzer Rennsport GmbH	44m06.997s	1
2	Sebastian Buemi (CH)	ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport	44m08.576	4
3	Nicolas Hülkenberg (D)	Josef Kaufmann Racing	44m13.967s	2
4	Sam Bird (GB)	Fortec Motorsport	44m15.878s	5
5	Nathan Antunes (AUS)	Motaworld Racing	44m19.843s	18
6	Robert Wickens (CDN)	Team Autotecnica	44m19.979s	27
7	Ross Curnow (GB)	Nexa Racing	44m20.097s	29
8	Dominik Wasem (D)	AM-Holzer Rennsport GmbH	44m20.509s	9
9	Matt Howson (GB)	Filsell Motorsport	44m20.957s	8
10	James Davison (AUS)	Meritus	44m20.908s	16

11 Andzej Dziakovic (LT), 4speedmedia GmbH, 44m25.728s; 12 Dean Smith (GB), Coles Racing, 44m29.744s; 13 Matt Harris (GB), Team SWR, 44m30.253s; 14 Matt Lee (USA), Team Autotecnica, 44m32.517s; 15 Robert Boughey (T), Meritus, 44m32.978s; 16 Philip Glew (GB), Promatecme/Sport Sport, 44m33.942s; 17 Harald Schlegelmic (LV), 4speedmedia GmbH, 44m35.120s; 18 Hamad Al Fardan (BRN), Meritus, 44m36.210s; 19 Reed Stevens (USA), Meritus 44m36.995s; 20 Stian Sorlie (N), Fortec Motorsport, 44m21.655s; 21 Jonathan Legris (GB), Mark Burdett Motorsport, 44m35.529s; 22 Oliver Turvey (GB), Team SWR, 44m36.256s; R Armaan Ebrahim (IND), Team E-Rain, 19 laps - accident; R Tobias Hegewald (D), ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport, 19 laps - accident; R Stefano Coletti (MC), ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport, 10 laps - accident; R Jonathan Summerton (USA), ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport, 10 laps - accident; R Euan Hankey (GB), Nexa Racing, 10 laps - accident; R Jack Goldstraw (GB), Team SWR, 2 laps - accident; R Salman Al Khalifa (BRN), Team E-Rain, 2 laps - accident; R Joao Urbano (P), ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport, 0 laps - DNS; R Jordan Wise (GB), Motaworld Racing, 0 laps - DNS; R Fabio Onidi (I), ASL Team Mücke-Motorsport, 0 laps - DNS; R Christian Vietoris (D), Josef Kaufmann Racing, 0 laps - DNS; R Race Johnson (USA), Meritus, 0 laps - DNS. **Fastest lap** Hülkenberg, 1m26.997s.

FERRARI FLO THE OPPOSIT

SEASON REVIEW Andrew Kirkaldy, Nathan Kinch and a well-sorted Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari proved to be an unbeatable combination in 2005. By RICHARD ASHER



One for the purists, this one. If you liked watching a well-driven, well-sorted Ferrari 360 GTC walloping the field, it was just right. It never looked like being a great sporting contest though, and it was only two afternoons of mad weather that slowed the Andrew Kirkaldy/Nathan Kinch steamroller this year.

Scuderia Ecosse and its pair of Ferraris took a big step ahead. In 2004 at least one Porsche was able to maintain a points edge on the Italian cars, but they were left gasping this time around. And they could see it coming, too. Even in the early-season tests, Mike Jordan was shaking his head and saying no Porsche would touch the Ferraris at the majority of tracks. So it proved, and that wasn't for a lack of driving talent in the Porsche ranks. Between Embassy Racing and Jordan's

squad Eurotech, we had Jordan, Michael Caine, Neil Cunningham and Ben Collins to squeeze the best out of the German GT2 contenders. But aside from Embassy getting it spot-on with its tyre choice at Knockhill and Silverstone, they were always competing for the scraps.

The Ferraris, with their tight aerodynamics and amazing stability in high-speed corners, were expected to thrive at most tracks. But the Porsches, brimming with traction, were at least going to give them a run at Mondello Park and Knockhill, right? Wrong again. Thrashings all round.

If the Porsches were just plain beaten, it's fair to say that there were some potential Ferrari-beaters out there that didn't make it all that easy for themselves.

There were certainly times when a well-driven Mosler was able to live with the 360s. That much was plain for all to see at Thruxton, Castle Combe and a wet Silverstone in August,

where Phil Keen took the wheel of the Eclipse entry for the first stint. So why didn't a Mosler muster a win all year?

Firstly, there were no well-balanced driving crews in the cars. If you'd combined Keen with Cadena's Gavan Kershaw, that might have produced a winner. But each had a teammate who would bleed too much time in his stint.

Second, both efforts were patchy. Cadena didn't do the whole year; cherry-picking if you like. Fair enough, but not great for momentum or reliability. Eclipse was more ambitious, but had an awful start to the year with a pair of big testing shunts at Donington. It finally settled on Keen and Steve Hyde as drivers, but couldn't make the grid until Thruxton. It ended a luckless season with an enormous engine blow-up in practice at Silverstone, but could rightly hope for more next year.

Then there was TVR. The LNT-run cars had a solid driving force for its pair of T400Rs, and this too was a potentially

ORS ION



Kirkaldy and Kinch almost always led the way, but it was rarely plain sailing for their sister car

TOP 6 DRIVERS

AUTOSPORT'S GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS



UP FIVE

TIM MULLEN

He didn't win a race all year, but then Mullen probably got less reward for his efforts than any driver on earth this year. On race days he could match Kirkaldy, as illustrated by six fastest laps to five. But the broad gulf in ability between Mullen and his co-driver Chris Niarchos sapped an alarming number of wins from Mullen. Tim gets our nod because he kept on putting in 100 per cent effort even when he was unlikely to get a return.



NEW ENTRY

ALLAN SIMONSEN

If the Danish GT3 flyer had partnered Mullen at Ecosse, we might have had at least a two-horse race. But racing economics don't work that way and Simonsen had a similar problem to Mullen. Hector Lester improved a lot this year, but was no match for his partner. But at least he did enough for Simonsen to earn a win at Combe—and post a stirring charge to second at Silverstone.



DOWN TWO

ANDREW KIRKALDY

It was almost a perfect record, apart from a spin at Mondello. Kirkaldy was the clear qualifying master taking eight poles, while Kinch took the remaining five for a clean sweep. But there's just no way of knowing how he'd have fared with a little adversity. With all that experience, a savagely good car, an extremely capable co-driver and Mullen unable to challenge, things were as favourable as they could get. In that sense, at least, he couldn't win.



NEW ENTRY

OLIVER BRYANT

You wouldn't immediately associate Bryant with the Morgan or the various historic monsters he's piloted so well this year. But these cars have given him plenty of chances to show his evident car control. Despite his youth he has his head firmly screwed on, proving more than a match for experienced team boss Keith Ahlers. His last-lap pass on Lester at Mondello (where nobody passed all day) was perfectly calculated and pointed to a very bright future.



UP THREE

NEIL CUNNINGHAM

The Kiwi admits he doesn't have Ben Collins' pace over a single lap, but he was just the complete GT driver that Embassy Racing needed as it switched from Corvette to Porsche. Cunningham's last-lap pass of Kinch at Silverstone was the undisputed season highlight. Both his wins were inspired by spot-on tyre choices in miserable weather, but that rubber needed respect and a cool head. And Collins gets honorary joint fifth place for his contribution.



DOWN TWO

MIKE JORDAN

So at home in a Porsche that he could quite probably live in one, even if rival crew Embassy sometimes got the car working a little better. Eurotech boss Jordan had the better of Michael Caine this year, both in terms of speed and racecraft. Kept up a clever and professional job when, all things being equal, a podium was all he could hope for. But making the right decisions gave Embassy those two extra wins over Jordan's crew.



Embassy Racing won the battle of the Porsches in its first year of running the German car

strong package. But then came an engine crisis at Knockhill, with a double failure in practice. To cut a long story short, it only got one finish from the weekend, and the team had a real rush on to fix everything up for Thruxton a week later. It was a job well done in race one, with both cars on the podium, but race two went astray, with some first-lap barging and a late puncture costing each car a decent result.

On to Castle Combe, where the drama was off track. The noise officials weren't happy with the TVR's ear-wrenching sound during practice. Lawrence Tomlinson was so incensed that the squad packed up there and then. It pulled out of Combe, and the championship, that Saturday evening.

And so it was that the opposition played into Ecosse's hands at quite a few junctures. Perhaps it was hopeless anyway, but things could no doubt have been a little closer.

So just what made the Ferraris so special – or rather, where

did the others lose out? Over to Kinch: "We were very strong on the high-speed tracks, with good downforce that helped the car all round. We were also 100 per cent reliable, which was the most important thing.

"The engine had been improved a lot from 2004 and it gave us a significant advantage. You could feel more torque and the new rollcage design stiffened up the chassis. Perhaps we also got ahead because we were much more used to the car.

"We were surprised that the Porsches seemed to be so off the pace, because in Europe they seemed to have an edge."

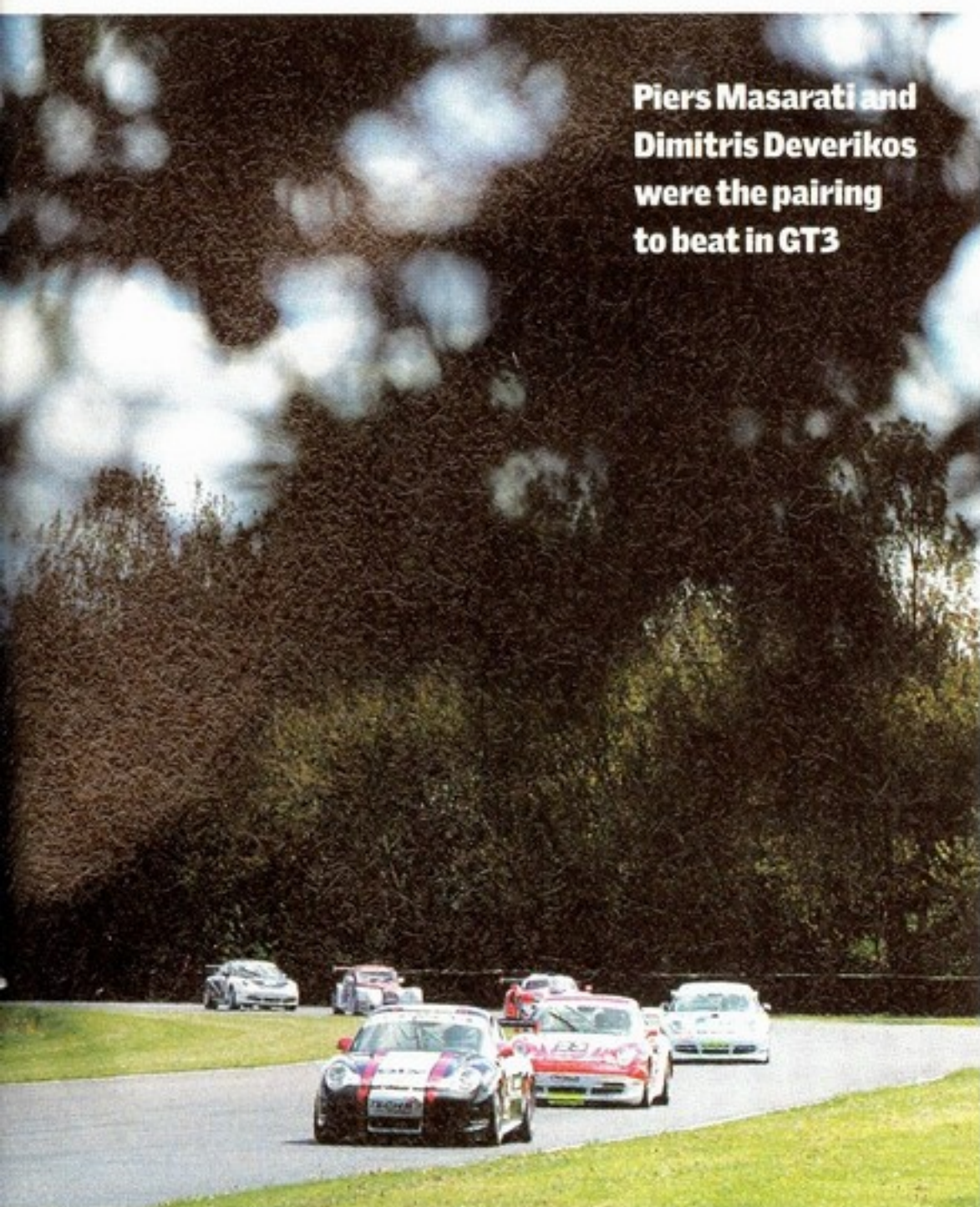
Did the British Porsches do something wrong, then? Even their strong area, slow-corner exits, wasn't enough to earn wins at the slow Scottish and Irish venues. Clearly Ecosse and its Michelotto helpers found more over the winter than Eurotech and Embassy Racing did, but that doesn't mean the Porsche squads were standing still.

Eurotech owner and driver Jordan says: "My qualifying lap at Donington was one of the best I've driven, and 1m08.86s was very good considering it had always been a struggle to get under 1m10s. Then you looked at the times and saw Ferrari were 1.2 seconds ahead. It just wasn't going to happen was it?"

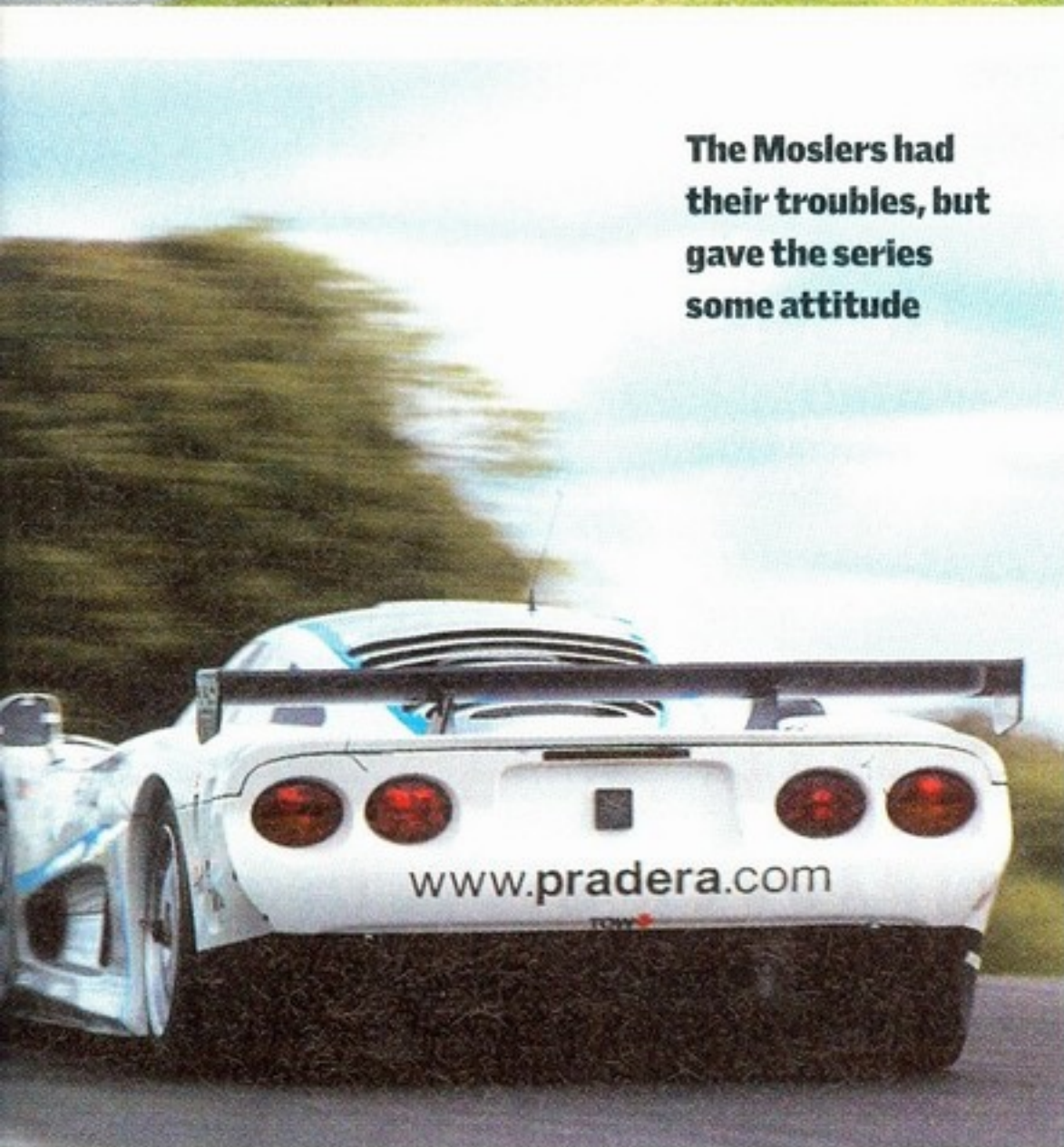
"At the Craners they were barely lifting, whereas in the Porsche it's always a lift or even a little brake. They weren't outrageously far ahead on horsepower, but their advantage was primarily fast-corner entry speed. Their weight distribution was also better because of the car's design.

"With a good budget, a good team and good drivers they just got the job done. There was less moaning and they stopped making tactical errors and screwing up on pitstops."

Aside from all that pace, the killer blow came from Ecosse's reliability. Remember that, contrary to popular belief, it wasn't always the fastest thing out there. Keen, at least, was



Piers Masarati and Dimitris Deverikos were the pairing to beat in GT3



The Moslers had their troubles, but gave the series some attitude

Occasionally able to show them up. But even if the Moslers had had Keen driving in every stint, it's unlikely they could have matched that superb finishing record.

Kinch and Kirkaldy didn't fail to cross the line all year. That's more than can be said for their sister car, which even failed to get off the startline thanks to driveshaft trouble at Thruxton. By the end of the year, there were the inevitable rumours that the championship-winning car was getting a slightly better deal on the technical side.

GT3, formerly known as Cup, was often where the real racing was. It saved one of its best shows for the stand-alone races at Croft in May. Both races were run in tricky weather, which did the action no harm at all.

Piers Masarati and Dimitris Deverikos won the title in the first five races, of which they took four. A mini-spate of punctures made for a hollow mid-season at Thruxton and Castle Combe, and only one more win would follow, but enough damage had been done.

That pair and the Tech 9-prepared Porsche stood out as the most professional and balanced attack in the class. If you glance down the table, almost everyone else had an obvious weakness that held them back.

Andy Britnell finished as runner-up for Motorbase Performance, but wasn't always fully on it and didn't always have the same co-driver. Allan Simonsen worked wonders with little driving back-up, while the Damax Ferraris missed Mondello and lacked a cutting edge of pace.

Then there was the Team Tiger Marcos Mantis, which could fly but seemed to have a craving for accidents and failures when it wasn't recording impressive wins at Thruxton and Combe. The other unique effort was the Team Aero Morgan, which won at Thruxton and Mondello. Keith Ahlers' car didn't perform everywhere, but was always brilliantly driven by rising star Oliver Bryant.

The Tech 9 duo turned out to be an inspired choice, with very little going wrong aside from the punctures and gearbox trouble at Mondello. The title was wrapped up in Ireland and Deverikos missed the finale. When Masarati then turned out for Trackspeed at Silverstone, one wondered if that meant he would nick the title that Deverikos thought they were sharing.

It would've been a good story, but PM was honourable and registered in the Invitation Class, thus ruling himself out of the points at Silverstone. The Invitation Class grew as the year went on, simply because some Porsche GT3 teams found that a certain vintage of ECU didn't get on with the Sunoco control fuel and preferred to run on pump fuel rather than have engines drop power at will. ☐

DIMITRIS WHO?

HOW TECH 9'S MYSTERY RACER TURNED OUT TO BE A GREEK GOD

STILL BEING rather prim and proper, it was a culture shock for British GT to see a mystery Greek turn up for the first race, blitz the GT3 title and disappear once it was settled. Where did Tech 9 find Dimitris Deverikos?

Although on the verge of a hat-trick, Tech 9 wasn't sure if it would be returning to the series. Phil Hindley needed a quick, funded driver to partner the proven Piers Masarati. It was late in the day when the deal was done with the Athens hotelier. But six months on and five class wins later, there were celebrations all round.

The pair won first time out and again in the rain at Croft. Deverikos' mastery of the British tracks and weather was impressive, especially in such a tight series.

It felt like a brave move for the Cheshire team. "It was the first time I'd brought in a foreign driver, so I studied his CV carefully," says Hindley. "He was nervous about the circuits at first, but the guy was awesome!"

If you're a proper anorak, the name might ring a bell. Deverikos has had a varied career, but let it not be said that he never roughed it in the UK. A Jim Russell Graduate, he did some Formula Forward races in 1993.

Deverikos then learned Donington in the pan-European Renault Clio Trophy in 2000-'02. More exotically, he raced in the now-defunct Greek F3 championship and turned up at the Marlboro Masters in 1998. There was a spot of Italian GT with Autorlando in '04, picking up a few Porsche skills on the way.

Deverikos brought other things to the GT3 partnership too: "My engineer Giannoylis Kafetzis came to almost all the races, and he really helped. We've known each other since I started in Greek F3 – it's good for a driver to have someone who speaks his language!

"After looking at Piers' CV I didn't expect to compete with him, but I guess we made a good pair."

Deverikos could now graduate to the international ranks – ideally with Tech 9. He'll surely hold his own at that level, no matter what his disapproving, 93-year-old grandmother (a permanent resident at his hotel) might say about his regular trips away!

2005 British GT2 Championship

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Points
1=	Andrew Kirkaldy/Nathan Kinch	Scuderia Ecosse	Ferrari 360 GTC	1st	1st	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	126
3=	Tim Mullen/Chris Niarchos	Scuderia Ecosse	Ferrari 360 GTC	3rd	2nd	3rd	2nd	DNS	5th	2nd	2nd	8th	2nd	5th	2nd	4th	74
5=	Neil Cunningham/Ben Collins	Embassy Racing	Porsche 911 GT3 RSR	8th	DNS	1st	4th	5th	8th	3rd	4th	1st	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	68
7=	Mike Jordan/Michael Caine	Eurotech	Porsche 911 GT3 RSR	5th	3rd	4th	3rd	DNF	6th	4th	3rd	5th	4th	2nd	5th	3rd	62
9=	Godfrey Jones/David Jones	Eurotech	Porsche 911 GT3 RSR	4th	6th	5th	5th	7th	DNF	DNS	5th	7th	7th	4th	4th	5th	40
11	Michael Bentwood	RJN Motorsport	Nissan 350Z	DNF	DNF	-	-	4th	7th	6th	7th	3rd	5th	DNF	6th	DNF	25
12=	Phil Keen/Steve Hyde	Eclipse Motorsport	Mosler MT900R	-	-	-	-	6th	2nd	5th	6th	6th	-	-	22nd	6th	24
14=	Patrick Pearce/Warren Hughes	LNT	TVR T400R	2nd	5th	6th	DNF	2nd	DNF	W	W	-	-	-	-	-	23
16=	Barrie Whight/Gavan Kershaw	Cadena GTC	Mosler MT900R	-	-	DNS	DNS	DNF	3rd	-	-	4th	6th	6th	-	-	17
18=	Jonny Kane	LNT	TVR T400R	DNF	4th	DNS	DNS	3rd	4th	W	W	-	-	-	-	-	16

19 Ally McKeever, RJN Motorsport Nissan 350Z, 12; 20 Andrew Thompson, LNT TVR T400R, 11; 21 Lawrence Tomlinson, LNT TVR T400R, 5; 22= Ryan Hooker, Chevrolet Corvette C5/Emotional Engineering Vauxhall Monaro 5/Bryce Wilson, RJN Motorsport Nissan 350Z, 5; 24 Matt Griffin, Emotional Engineering Vauxhall Monaro, 4; 25 Ricky Cole, Xero Competition Chevrolet Corvette C5, 3; 26= Piers Johnson/Shawn Balfe, Eclipse Motorsport Mosler MT900R, 2.

Key to races: 1 Donington Park National, April 3; 2 Magny-Cours, May 1; 3/4 Knockhill, May 21/22; 5/6 Thruxton, May 28/29; 7/8 Castle Combe, June 25/26; 9 Silverstone GP, August 14; 10/11 Mondello Park, September 17/18; 12/13 Silverstone International, October 15/16.

Points system: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 for the top eight finishers.

2005 British GT3 Championship

Pos	Driver	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Points
1=	Dimitris Deverikos/Piers Masarati	Tech 9	Porsche 911 GT3 Cup	1st	1st	6th	1st	1st	3rd	4th	8th	3rd	3rd	1st	3rd	-	-	83
3	Andy Britnell	Motorbase Performance	Porsche 911 GT3 Cup	7th	9th	1st	10th	9th	2nd	3rd	6th	DNF	3rd	3rd	6th	3rd	3rd	64
4	Hector Lester	United Christian Broadcasters	Ferrari 360	6th	2nd	12th	11th	6th	-	-	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd	7th	6th	60
5	Oliver Bryant	Team Aero	Morgan Aero 8	10th	6th	2nd	8th	7th	1st	2nd	DNS	7th	7th	4th	1st	6th	5th	59
6	Allan Simonsen	United Christian Broadcasters	Ferrari 360	6th	2nd	12th	11th	6th	-	-	1st	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd	-	-	54
7	Keith Ahlers	Team Aero	Morgan Aero 8	10th	-	-	8th	7th	1st	2nd	DNS	7th	7th	4th	1st	6th	5th	48
8=	Marco Attard/Nick Adams	Damax	Ferrari 360	DNF	3rd	4th	2nd	5th	-	7th	DNF	4th	DNF	-	-	5th	4th	40
10	Chris Stockton	Motorbase Performance	Porsche 911 GT3 Cup	7th	9th	1st	10th	9th	-	-	6th	DNF	1st	2nd	6th	-	-	36
11=	Jon Finnemore/Chris Beighton	Team Tiger	Marcos Mantis	2nd	11th	16th	DNF	DNS	DNF	1st	5th	1st	6th	DNF	DNS	-	-	35
13	Phil Quaife	RPM/Motorbase Performance	Porsche 911 GT3 Cup	3rd	13th	9th	4th	10th	9th	5th	9th	DNF	DNF	-	-	2nd	1st	35

14= David Ashburn/Fred Moss, 33; 16 Phil Burton, 33; 17 Jamie Smythe, 30; 18 Miles Hulford, 24; 19= Martin Rich/Julian Westwood, 23; 21= Stuart Moseley/Adam Wilcox; 23 Steve Wood, 16; 24 Tim Harvey, 14; 25 Ian Flux, 13; 26 Alex Mortimer, 11; 27= Stuart Scott/Stephen Warburton, 10; 29 Peter Morris, 9; 30 Colin Broster, 8; 31 Aaron Scott, 7; 32 Mark Sumpter, 6; 33= Gary Eastwood/Mark Cole/David Pinkney, 4; 36= David Dove/Jim Bickley/Rob Horsfield/Ian Stinton; 40 Stuart Prior, 1.

Key to races: 1 Donington Park National, April 3; 2/3 Croft, May 7/8; 4/5 Knockhill, May 21/22; 6/7 Thruxton, May 28/29; 8/9 Castle Combe, June 25/26; 10 Silverstone GP, August 14; 11/12 Mondello Park, September 17/18; 13/14 Silverstone International, October 15/16.

Points system: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 for the top eight finishers.

DONNELLY UPSTAGED

SEASON REVIEW The main threat to Charlie Donnelly's Formula Ford title charge came from team-mate Duncan Tappy's late winning streak. By STEVEN ENGLISH

A season in which the champion won five times, finished on the podium in 18 of 20 races and wrapped up the title with two races still to go ought to be remembered as a dominant one. But Charlie Donnelly will not be looked back on as the driver who ruled the 2005 UK Formula Ford Championship. Despite achieving all of the above, he was overshadowed by his Jamun Racing team-mate, Duncan Tappy, who stole the show with an unprecedented string of victories in the second half of the year, which culminated with his triumph in the Formula Ford Festival.

It was a well-balanced championship fight until that point, with Joe D'Agostino and Donnelly sharing the first 11 wins between them. It was six-five in the American's favour before a pair of retirements left him with ground to make up.

Once the season reached Castle Combe at the end of June, everything changed. Previously, Tappy had been in touch with the lead duo without managing to head them, but now, settled into his first full year of car racing, he really started to cash in.

He was denied his maiden win in the first race at Combe after clashing with D'Agostino while scrapping for the lead, but didn't have to wait too much longer as the American's engine failed in the second race, handing victory to Tappy.

That may not have been the most convincing of displays, but Tappy's season would only get better from then on. Double wins followed at the next three rounds but it wasn't enough to keep the championship alive and Donnelly was confirmed as the winner at Snetterton. A few weeks of keeping his nose clean and settling for podiums had paid dividends.

The final two rounds at Silverstone were billed as a straight fight between Donnelly and Tappy. With the title won, the Irishman was free to take the fight to the charging newcomer. Almost anti-climactically, Tappy controlled another weekend and posted consecutive wins eight and nine.

D'Agostino's decline coincided with Tappy's rise. Suffering DNFs in three out of five races did enough damage to the scorecard to leave him out of touch and he would soon be passed for second in the standings as Tappy's run continued.

It could have been the American's year, and looked like it might be when he won three of the first four races. But he was let down too many times by the car and often couldn't quite squeeze the pace from his Van Diemen to match Jamun's Mygales. Behind the leading trio, Steve Roberts was usually best of the rest, with only Rob Sunderland and, late in the year, Daniel Roos able to trouble the front of the field. ■

Right: Donnelly leads the pack on his way to a double win at a wintery Croft in May. Three more victories would be enough to seal the title

Below: Tappy charts the growing number of consecutive wins at Silverstone. He'd run out of fingers by the end of the year with 12 in total (nine in the championship and three at the Fford Festival)



TOP 3 DRIVERS

AUTOSPORT'S GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS



NEW ENTRY

DUNCAN TAPPY

Phenomenal success in his first full year of car racing, highlighted by his winning streak from Castle Combe onwards.



UP ONE

CHARLIE DONNELLY

A textbook title year with wins in the first half and podiums in all but two races to bring it home at the end.



NEW ENTRY

JOE D'AGOSTINO

Showed speed from the outset, but suffered a luckless season and lost touch with the Mygale pairing ahead.



ALL PICS: EBREVILAT

2005 UK Formula Ford Championship

Pos	Driver (nationality)	Team	1/2	3/4	5/6	7/8	9/10	11/12	13/14	15/16	17/18	19/20	Points
1	Charlie Donnelly (IRL)	Jamun Racing Mygale SJ04	3rd/1st	2nd/2nd	1st/1st	2nd/1st	3rd/3rd	1st/2nd	3rd/2nd	2nd/7th	4th/3rd	3rd/3rd	536
2	Duncan Tappy (GB)	Jamun Racing Mygale SJ04	2nd/2nd	DNF/DNF	8th/3rd	3rd/3rd	2nd/2nd	DQ/1st	1st/1st	1st/1st	1st/1st	1st/1st	479
3	Joe D'Agostino (USA)	Team JLR Van Diemen RF05	1st/DNF	1st/1st	3rd/2nd	1st/2nd	1st/1st	DNF/DNF	2nd/3rd	DNF/2nd	2nd/2nd	2nd/2nd	462
4	Stephen Roberts (GB)	Kevin Mills Racing VD RF04	5th/4th	5th/DNF	4th/7th	5th/5th	5th/5th	2nd/DNF	4th/4th	3rd/3rd	3rd/4th	5th/DNF	368
5	Jonny Baker (GB)	Team JLR Van Diemen RF04	7th/6th	DNF/5th	6th/6th	6th/6th	7th/8th	4th/3rd	5th/5th	4th/5th	5th/6th	4th/DNF	345
6	Christian Ebbesvik (N)	Team JLR Van Diemen RF04	4th/5th	DNF/4th	5th/5th	DNF/7th	6th/6th	3rd/4th	DNF/6th	6th/4th	6th/5th	-	321
7	Sarah Playfair (GB)	Mackie M'sport Mygale SJ2001	9th/8th	7th/6th	7th/8th	7th/DNF	8th/7th	-	6th/7th	5th/6th	-	-	210
8	Rob Sunderland (GB)	Mackie M'sport Mygale SJ2000	6th/3rd	3rd/3rd	2nd/4th	DNF/DNF	4th/4th	-	-	-	-	-	187
9	Darwin Smith (IRL)	Kartstart Spirit WL05	8th/7th	4th/DNF	DNF/DNF	4th/4th	-	-	-	-	-	-	96
10	Alan Kirkaldy (GB)	Kartstart Van Diemen RF01	DNF/9th	-	-	DNF/DNS	-	-	-	-	-	-	12

Key to races: 1/2 Donington Park National, April 2/3; 3/4 Oulton Park, April 23/24; 5/6 Croft, May 7/8; 7/8 Knockhill, May 21/22; 9/10 Thruxton, May 28/29; 11/12 Castle Combe, June 25/26; 13/14 Brands Hatch Indy, July 30/31; 15/16 Silverstone Grand Prix, August 13/14; 17/18 Snetterton, September 24/25; 19/20 Silverstone International, October 8/9. **Points system:** 30-27-25-22-20-18-16-14-12-10-8-6-4-2-1. Fastest lap - 1. Pole position - 1.

Points table includes registered championship competitors only.

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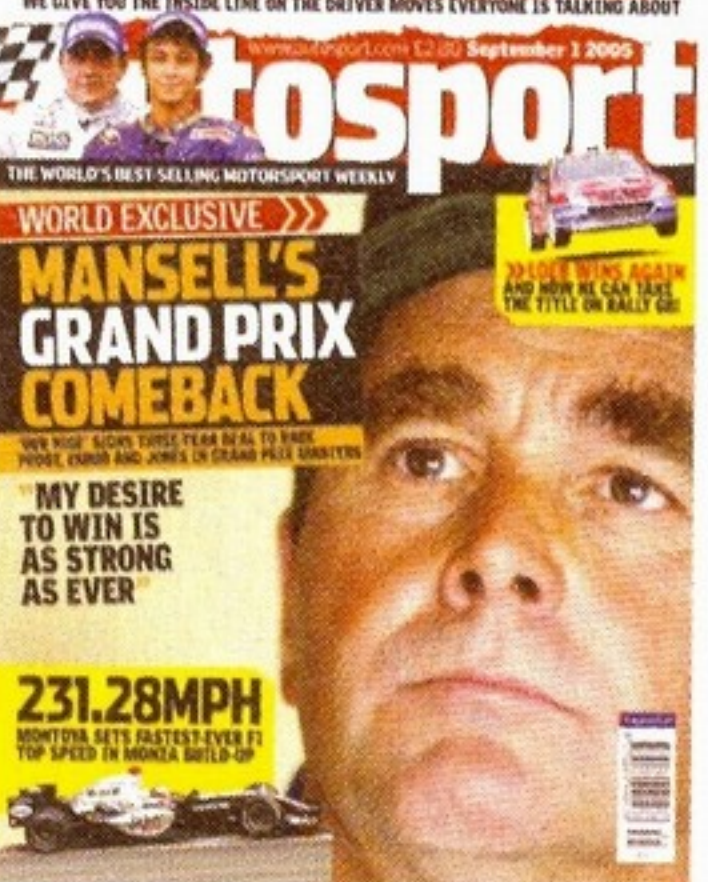


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Jobs for the boys (Aug 25)
Stats the way it is (Sep 1)
Conjuring a solution? (Sep 8)
The safety perspective (Sep 15)
Multi-team swap shop (Sep 22)
Pat's pragmatism (Sep 29)
Working the shift (Oct 6)
Tyres are a-changin' (Oct 13)
In reverse order (Oct 20)
Downforce the issue (Oct 27)
Back to the good old days (Nov 3)
Respect where it's due (Nov 10)
Genius at work (Nov 17)
If it ain't broke... (Nov 24)
Fields of dreams (Dec 1)
The original J Villeneuve (Dec 8)
Only the lonely (Dec 15/22)

Formula 3

British F3 preview (Mar 31 – RA)
Eight-way title fight (Jul 7 – RA)
Formula 3 reports
Donington Park (Apr 7 – RA)
Croft (May 12 – RA)
Knockhill (May 26 – RA)
Thruxton (Jun 2 – RA)
Marlboro Masters (Jun 16 – RA)
Castle Combe (Jun 30 – RA)
Monza (Jul 14 – RA)
Silverstone (Aug 18 – RA)
Nürburgring (Sep 8 – RA)
Mondello Park (Sep 22 – RA)
Silverstone (Oct 13 – RA)
Macau Grand Prix (Nov 24 – RA)



F3 Euroseries

Season preview (Apr 14 – AVDB)
Lewis Hamilton (Sep 29 – JM)
F3 Euroseries reports
Hockenheim (Apr 21 – JM)
Pau (May 12 – JM)
Spa-Francorchamps (May 19 – JM)
Monaco (May 26 – CB)
Oschersleben (Jun 30 – CB)
Norisring (Jul 21 – JN)
Nürburgring (Aug 11 – JM)
Zandvoort (Sep 1 – AVDB)
Lausitz (Sep 22 – JM)
Hockenheim (Oct 27 – JM)

Formula Nippon/Japanese GT

Richard Lyons (Jan 27 – MS)
Japanese racing preview (Mar 24 – CB)
Lyons looking to leave Japan (Nov 17 – CB)

GP2

Giammaria Bruni (Feb 3 – AVDB)
Heikki Kovalainen (Feb 24 – AVDB)
Season preview (Apr 21 – AVDB)
Adam Carroll (Aug 18 – AVDB)



GP2 reports

Imola (Apr 28 – AVDB)
Spain (May 12 – AVDB)
Monaco (May 26 – AVDB)
Nürburgring (Jun 2 – AVDB)
Magny-Cours (Jul 7 – AVDB)
Silverstone (Jul 14 – AVDB)
Hockenheim (Jul 28 – AVDB)
Hungary (Aug 4 – AVDB)
Turkey (Aug 25 – AVDB)
Monza (Sep 8 – AVDB)
Spa (Sep 15 – AVDB)
Bahrain (Oct 6 – AVDB)

Grand Prix 2005

Anthony Davidson (Jan 6 – AR)
Team bosses' signatures analysed (Jan 6)
David Coulthard at Red Bull Racing (Jan 13 – DM/AC/AR)
Toyota TF105 launch (Jan 13 – AR)
BAR007 launch (Jan 20 – AR)
Sauber C24 launch (Jan 20 – MH)
Paul Stoddart (Jan 27 – JH)
French drivers in F1 (Jan 27 – AVDB)
Williams FW27 launch (Feb 3 – AR/TD)
Renault R25 launch (Feb 3 – MH/TD)
Professor Sid Watkins (Feb 10 – NR)
What F1's new rules mean (Feb 24 – AC)
Intra-team battles in 2005 (Feb 24 – TD)
Ferrari F2005 launch (Mar 3 – AR)
Midland F1 (Mar 3 – AVDB)
Ron Dennis (Mar 3 – NR)
Red Bull's dream debut (Mar 17 – AR)
F1: neither slower or safer (Mar 17 – PN)
Ferrari in a fix (Mar 31 – MH)
Minardi turns 20 (Mar 31 – AC)
What's gone wrong at BAR (Apr 14 – MH)
Felipe Massa (Apr 14 – AR)
Toyota 10-page special (Apr 21 – AR/MH)
Jean Todt (May 5 – AR)
Jacques Villeneuve (May 5 – AC)
Monte Carlo – the ultimate driving track (May 19 – DM)
How to be quick at Monte (May 19 – JT)
Fernando Alonso (Jun 9 – AC)
The USA's potential F1 stars (Jun 9 – DM)
Kimi Räikkönen (Jun 30 – MH)
McLaren special (Jul 21):
Juan Pablo Montoya (TD)
Adrian Newey (MH/GP)
Ron Dennis's top six trophies (DM)
Coulthard: still fired up for racing (Aug 11 – AR)

Why Ferrari signed Massa (Aug 11 – AC)
Has Schuey lost it? (Aug 18 – MH)
Istanbul Park (Aug 18 – JH)

Renault special (Sep 1):

Giancarlo Fisichella (AC)
R25 in the making (MH/GA)
Engine secrets (AR)
Heikki Kovalainen (JH)
Williams special (Sep 22):
Sir Frank Williams (JM)



Cosworth engines (TC)

Tech team (AR)
Räikkönen v Alonso (Sep 29 – MH)
F1's youngest champ (Sep 29 – AC)
Button: worth the trouble? (Oct 6 – TD)
Button: the verdict (Oct 6)
Villeneuve's difficult year (Oct 27 – MH)
Peter Sauber (Oct 27 – DT)
Mark Webber's bad year (Nov 3 – MH)
Nico Rosberg at Williams (Nov 3 – AR)
Massa at Ferrari (Nov 3 – AR)
Past Ferrari drivers' advice to Massa



(Nov 3 – AC)
Montoya finding his feet at McLaren (Nov 10 – AR)
McLaren MP4-20 – 2005's fastest car (Nov 10 – MH)
Christian Horner (Nov 17 – AVDB)
Mario Thissen and BMW (Nov 17 – NR)
Nick Heidfeld (Nov 17 – DM)
Todt plans Ferrari revival (Nov 24 – AC)
Goodbye Jordan (Nov 24 – MH)
Colin Kolles (Nov 24 – TD)
Stoddart bows out (Dec 1 – TR)
Katherine Legge's F1 test (Dec 1 – TR)
F1 winter testing (Dec 8 – AR)
F1 today v class of '75 (Dec 15/22 – MH)



Grand Prix previews

Season preview (Feb 10)
Australia (Mar 3)
Malaysia (Mar 17)
Bahrain (Mar 31)
Imola (Apr 21)
Spain (May 5)
Monaco (May 19)
European (May 26)
Canada (Jun 9)
United States (Jun 16)
France (Jun 30)
Germany (Jul 21)
Hungary (Jul 28)
Turkey (Aug 18)
Italy (Sep 1)
Belgium (Sep 8)
Brazil (Sep 22)
Japan (Oct 6)
China (Oct 13)



Grand Prix reports

Australia (Mar 10 – MH)
Malaysia (Mar 24 – MH)
Bahrain (Apr 7 – MH)
Imola (Apr 28 – MH)
Spain (May 12 – MH)
Monaco (May 26 – MH)
Europe (Jun 2 – MH)
Canada (Jun 16 – MH)
United States (Jun 23 – MH)
France (Jul 7 – MH)
Britain (Jul 14 – MH)



Germany (Jul 28 – MH)
Hungary (Aug 4 – MH)
Turkey (Aug 25 – MH)
Italy (Sep 8 – MH)
Belgium (Sep 15 – MH)
Brazil (Sep 29 – MH)
Japan (Oct 13 – MH)
China (Oct 20 – MH)

Grand Prix Masters

Mansell's return to racing (Nov 3 – JH)
Grand Prix Masters reports
Kyalami (Nov 17 – TD)

Historics

Goodwood Festival of Speed preview (Jun 23 – MP)
Goodwood Festival of Speed report (Jun 30 – MP)
Goodwood Revival preview (Sep 15 – PF)
Goodwood Revival report (Sep 22 – MP)

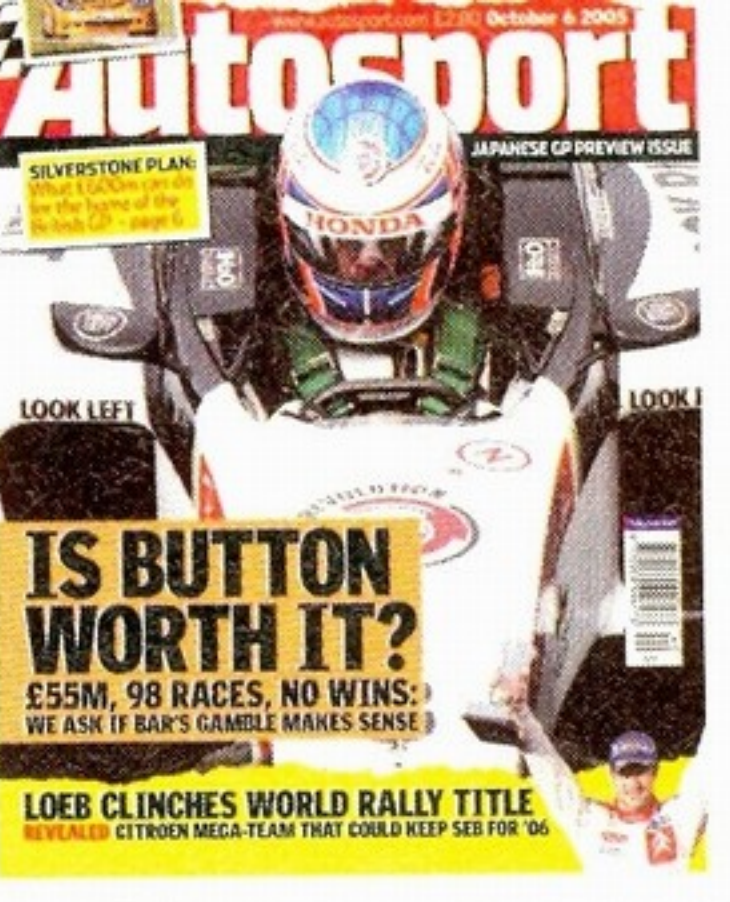
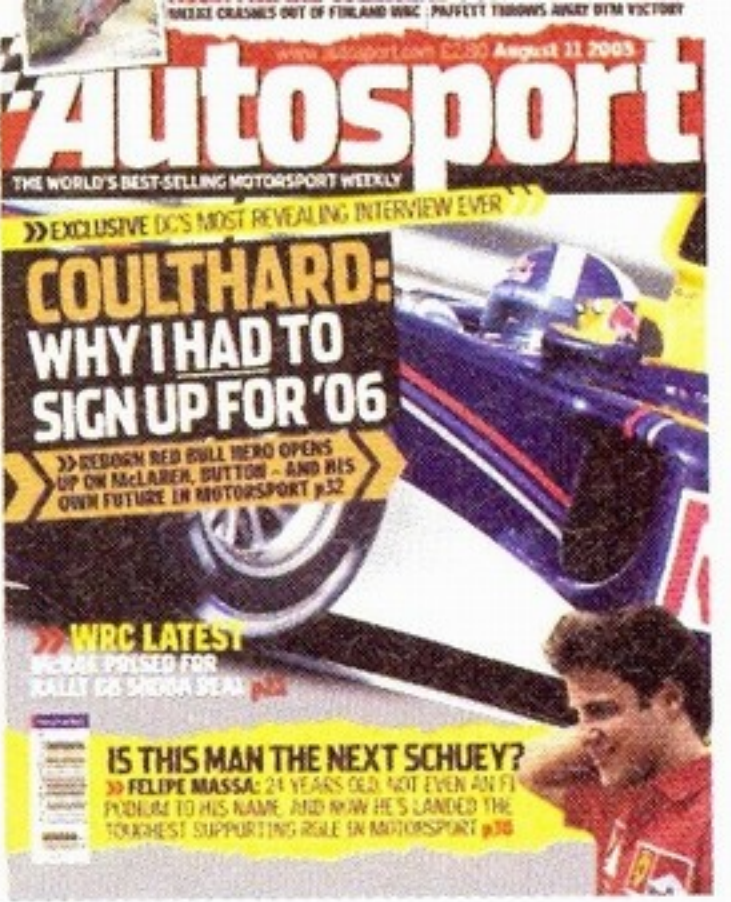
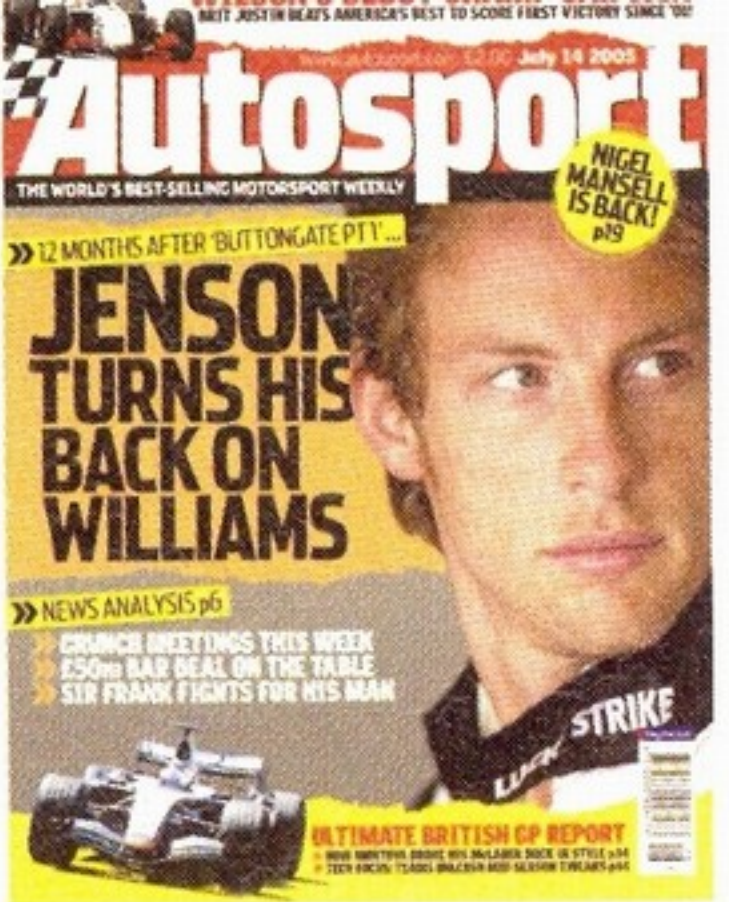
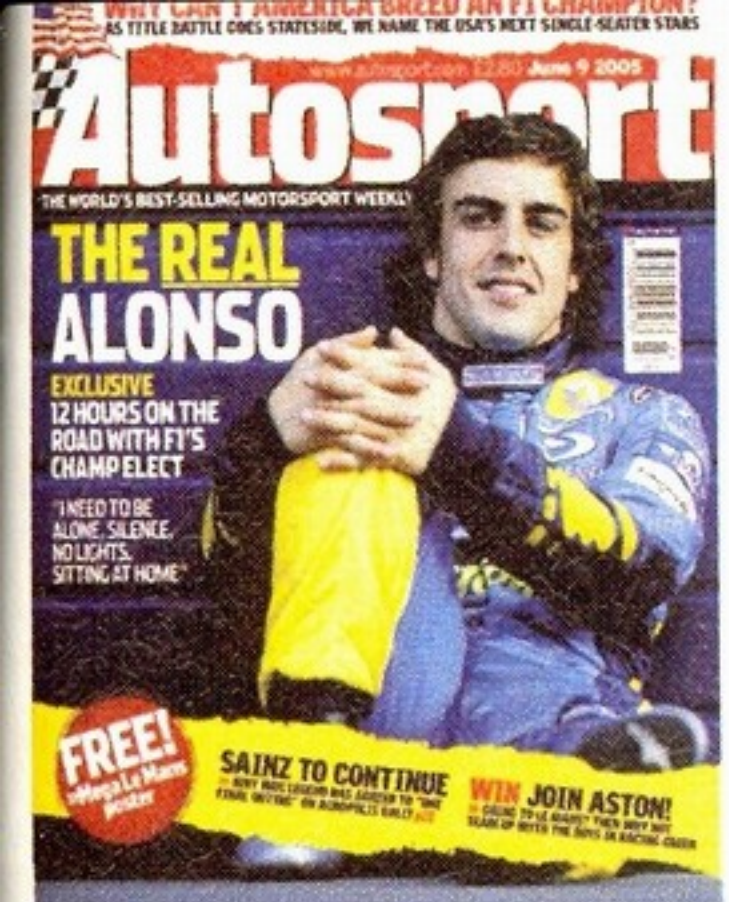
Introducing...

Sakon Yamamoto (Oct 13)
Greg Mansell (Oct 20)
Sebastian Vettel (Nov 3)
Franz Tost (Nov 17)
IRL IndyCar Series
Patrick Carpentier (Jan 6 – DM)
Adrián Fernández (Jan 13 – DP)
Dan Wheldon (Feb 3 – JOL)
Rahal-Letterman Racing (Feb 24 – JOL)
Season preview (Mar 3 – JOL)
Panther Racing (Mar 31 – JOL)
Indy 500 dream grid (May 19 – RM)
Wheldon and Patrick – Indy 500 stars (Jun 2 – DP)
IRL's road show (Aug 25 – CB)
Danica Patrick (Dec 15/22 – CB)

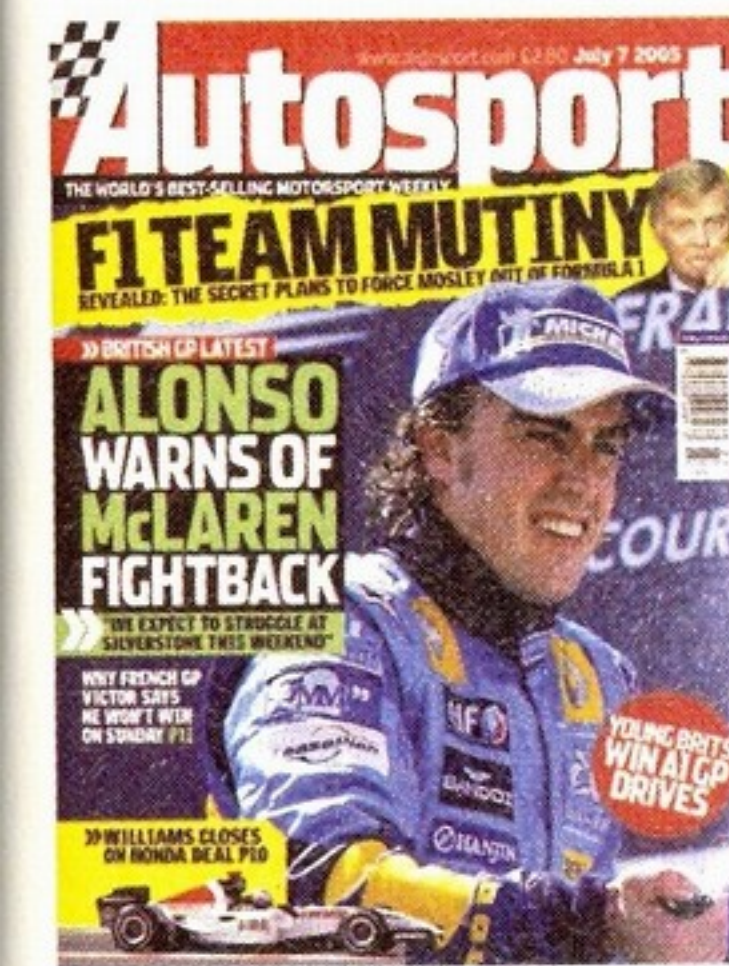


IRL reports

Homestead (Mar 10 – JOL)
Phoenix (Mar 24 – JOL)
St Petersburg (Apr 7 – JOL)
Motegi (May 5 – JOL)
Indianapolis 500 (Jun 2 – JOL)
Texas (Jun 16 – JOL)
Richmond (Jun 30 – JOL)
Kansas (Jul 7 – JOL)
Nashville (Jul 21 – JOL)
Milwaukee (Jul 28 – JOL)
Michigan (Aug 4 – JOL)
Kentucky (Aug 18 – JOL)
Pikes Peak (Aug 25 – JOL)
Sears Point (Sep 1 – JOL)
Chicago (Sep 15 – JOL)
Watkins Glen (Sep 29 – JOL)
Fontana (Oct 20 – JOL)
Le Mans Endurance Series
Season preview (Apr 14 – GW)
Le Mans Endurance Series reports
Spa 1000km (Apr 21 – GW)
Monza (Jul 14 – GW)
Silverstone (Aug 18 – GW)
Nürburgring (Sep 8 – GW)
Istanbul (Nov 17 – GW)
McLaren Autosport BRDC Award
Your chance to vote (Sep 1/8/15)
The nominations (Oct 20)
Race on for finalists (Nov 3 – RA/SE/ES)
Snetterton test (Nov 24 – SE)
NASCAR
Europeans in NASCAR (Jan 6 – JH)
Jeff Gordon (Feb 3 – JH)
Season preview (Feb 10 – BB)
Mark Martin (Mar 17 – BB)
Robin Pemberton (Mar 24 – GK)
Carl Edwards (May 12 – BB)



Jeff Gordon's '05 woes (Aug 25—BB)
NASCAR reports
Daytona 500 (Feb 24—GK)
National Focus
British rallycross challenge (Jan 6—ES)
Ex-Villeneuve Ferrari in TGP (Jan 27—RA)
Cleland boys' differing ambitions (Feb 3—RA)
Soper Sport in Formula BMW (Feb 10—RA)
James Jakes (Feb 17—RA)
Renault Clio Cup v road car (Feb 24—ES)
International Historic Motorsport Show (Mar 3—MP)
Caterham Seven test drive (Mar 10—CH)
Tom Kimber-Smith in Formula Renault (Mar 17—RA)
Formula 1000 rally car build (Mar 24—JH)
British GT and Formula Ford preview (Mar 31—RA)
Formula Renault preview (Apr 7—SE)
Formula Palmer Audi's pros (Apr 21—RA)
Colin White (May 12—RA)
Brian Jones (May 19—RA)
SEAT Cupra Championship (May 26—RA)
Shelsley Walsh's centenary (Aug 18—MP)
Silverstone 24 Hours preview (Sep 8—RA)
Alex Storckenfeldt and Sebastian Hohenthal (Oct 20—SE)
Formula BMW driving school (Nov 3—SE)
National pictures of the year (Dec 15/22)



Obituaries
Mike Bennion (Jan 27)
Nigel Bigwood (Feb 10)
Maurice Trintignant and Richard Simms (Feb 17)
Jim Morgan (Feb 24)
Pauli Toivonen (Mar 3)
Alan Barr (Mar 31)
Cliff Allison (Apr 14)
Prince Rainier of Monaco (Apr 14)
Gerry Marshall (Apr 28)
John Love (Apr 28)
Martin Donnelly (Apr 28)
Rhys Howells (May 5)
Günther Schmid (Jun 9)
Jim Bullough (Jun 9)
Christopher Belton (Jul 21)
John Green (Jul 21)
David Williams (Aug 25)
Michael 'Beef' Park (Sep 22)
Berni Keefe (Sep 22)
Adrian Kidd (Oct 13)
Adrian Yates-Smith (Oct 13)
Gerard 'Jabby' Crombac (Nov 24)
Richard Burns (Dec 1—DE)
Race of Champions
RoC preview (Dec 1—CB)
RoC report (Dec 8—TR)
Reviews 2005
British Touring Car Championship (Oct 13—ES)
GP2 (Oct 20—AVDB)
F3 Euroseries (Nov 3—JM)
British F3 Championship (Nov 3—RA)
DTM (Nov 10—CB)
Formula Renault UK (Nov 10—SE)
SCSA (Nov 10—RA)
IRL IndyCar Series (Nov 17—JOL)
Renault Clio Cup (Nov 17—MO)
SEAT Cupra Cup (Nov 17—MO)
Porsche Carrera Cup (Nov 17—PL)
Champ Car (Nov 24—DM)
Formula BMW (Nov 24—SE)
World Rally Championship (Dec 8—DE)

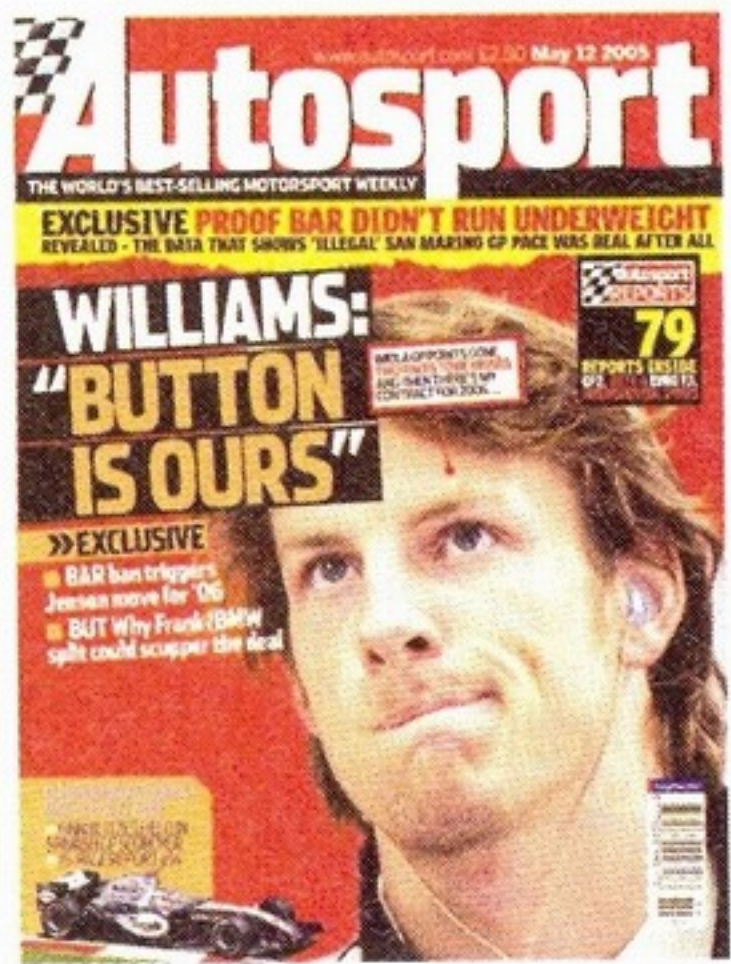
British Hillclimb Championship (Dec 8—JS)
British Rallycross Championship (Dec 8—TW)
Special Features
The UK's best racing hopes (Jan 6)
Pro Performance (Jan 6—AH)
Getting to F1 without karting (Jan 13—AC)
Andy Priaulx's F1 test (Feb 3—AR)
John Edwards, America's next F1 champ? (Feb 10—JH)
Ten greatest GPs (Feb 17)
Gambling on motorsport (Feb 17—ES)
The men who beat Button—where are they now? (Mar 10—ES)
Tony Jardine (Mar 17—JH)
Alain Prost goes GT racing (Mar 31—CB)
Gordon Kirby's fond farewell (Mar 31)
Katherine Legge's Toyota Atlantic win (Apr 28—JS)
Drivers out of work (May 19—CB)
David Richards' book, Driven Man (May 26)
What motorsport's done for us (Jun 2—KH)
Klaas Zwaart's Ascari track (Jun 9—AVDB)
Must-see motorsport (Aug 18)
Drivers getting the boot (Sep 15—ES)
Brits who are big Stateside (Oct 6—ES)
Race of Stars karting event (Nov 10—DM)
Tenth anniversary of McRae's WRC win (Nov 24—DE)
Britain's F1 stars in waiting (Dec 1)
Pictures of the year (Dec 15/22)
Top 50 drivers (Dec 15/22)
Motorsport failures (Dec 15/22—RH)
Drivers in the movies (Dec 15/22—RH)
Sportscars
Daytona 24 Hours preview (Feb 3—GW)
Paul Newman at Daytona (Feb 17—GK)
Max Angelelli (Feb 24—GW)
Maserati MC12 (Mar 3—GW)
ORECA at Le Mans (Mar 24—GW)
Leading Brits at Le Mans (Jun 16—GW)
Sébastien Loeb at Le Mans (Jun 23—DE)
Porsche's new LMP2 car (Jun 30—GW)
Nicolas Minassian (Sep 22—GW)
Audi R10 (Dec 15/22—GW)



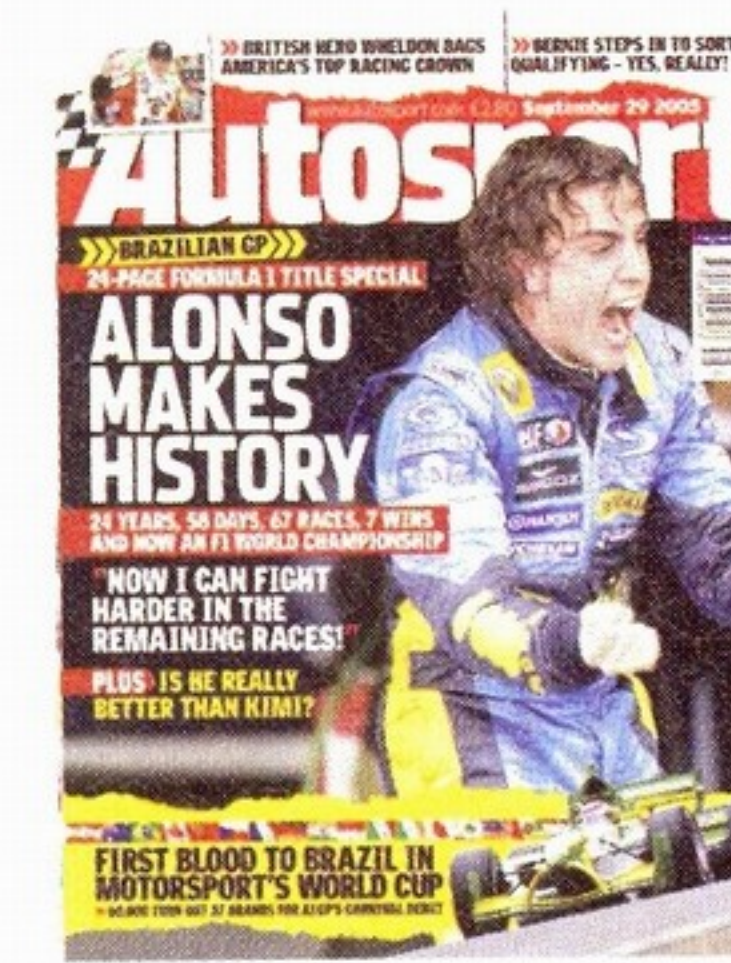
Sportscar reports
Daytona 24 Hours (Feb 10—GW)
Nürburgring 24 Hours (May 12—RDB)
Le Mans 24 Hours (Jun 23—GW/ES)
Staff comment
Single-seater confusion (Jan 6—GW)
F1's tsunami blunder (Jan 13—JH)
The World Cup of Motorsport (Jan 20—CB)
MSA missing young talent (Jan 27—JM)
British F3 in a trough (Feb 3—MS)
Enough of F1 politics! (Feb 10—AVDB)
Sid Watkins and Mika Häkkinen (Feb 17—DM)



MSV delivers on grassroots motorsport (Feb 24—JH)
Audi's Quattro celebration (Mar 3—JM)
Why WRC shouldn't rely on its old stars (Mar 10—DE)
GP2—the tension's building (Mar 17—AVDB)

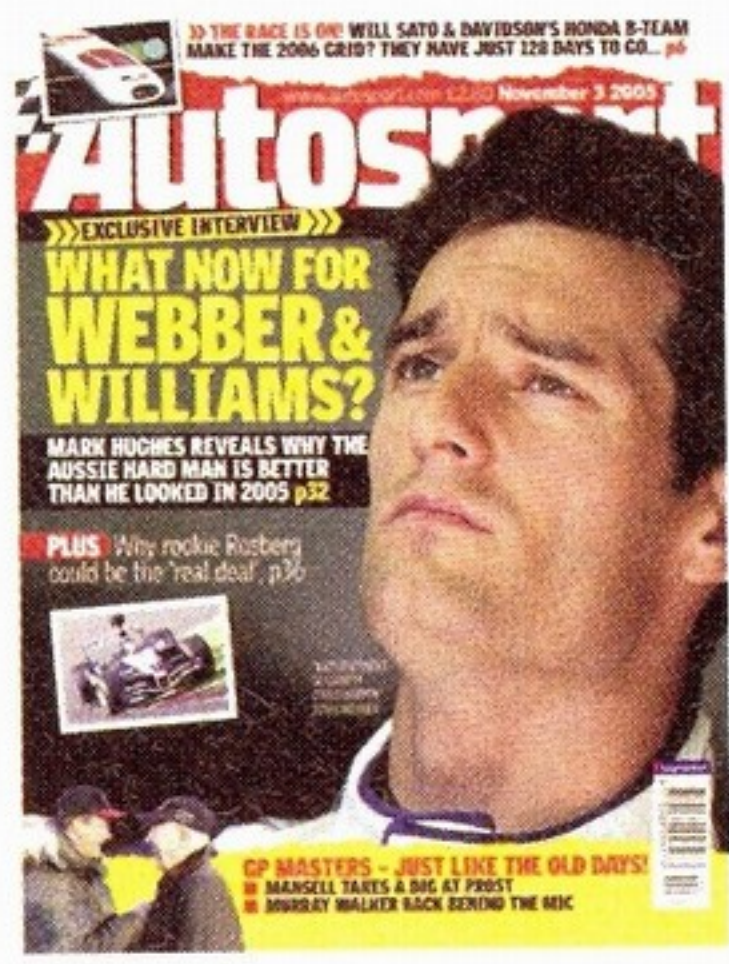


The cost of budget motorsport (Mar 24—ES)
Champ Car in good shape (Mar 31—DM)
Skoda's WRC driver merry-go-round (Apr 7—DE)
NASCAR reaches out to the masses (Apr 14—JM)
Why Imola isn't so great (Apr 21—JH)
Why the DTM needs a new manufacturer (May 5—CB)
Nurturing British rally talent (May 12—DE)
Trouble brewing at the BRDC (May 19—JH)
Where François Duval went wrong (May 26—DE)
Champ Car's underrated drivers (Jun 2—DM)
The trials of the club rally driver (Jun 9—JH)
Why it's wrong to slow down GT1 cars (Jun 16—GW)
Why young British racers are struggling abroad (Jun 23—SE)
Cosworth's awkward link with the IRL (Jun 30—DM)
WRC minus Burns and McRae (Jul 7—DE)
British GP—where's the value for money? (Jul 14—JH)
BTCC: big on promotion (Jul 21—ES)
Twenty years on Autosport (Jul 28—AC)
A lukewarm welcome to motorsport (Aug 4—ES)
Why Champ Car Atlantics is good news (Aug 11—DM)
Why is Colin McRae doing Rally GB? (Aug 18—JM)
Should Firman race for Ireland in A1 GP? (Aug 25—JH)
The BRC had to act (Sep 1—GB)
NASCAR must respect its roots (Sep 8—JM)



BAR's brave bid at Bonneville (Sep 15—AR)
Goodwood's forward thinking (Sep 22—JH)
A1 GP's promising debut (Sep 29—AVDB)
BTCC deserves a boost (Oct 6—ES)
A fitting goodbye to 'Beef' (Oct 13—DE)
Nigel Mansell makes a welcome return (Oct 20—JH)
Nico Rosberg deserves his F1 chance (Oct 27—AVDB)
The Autosport Awards' X-Factor feel (Nov 3—CB)

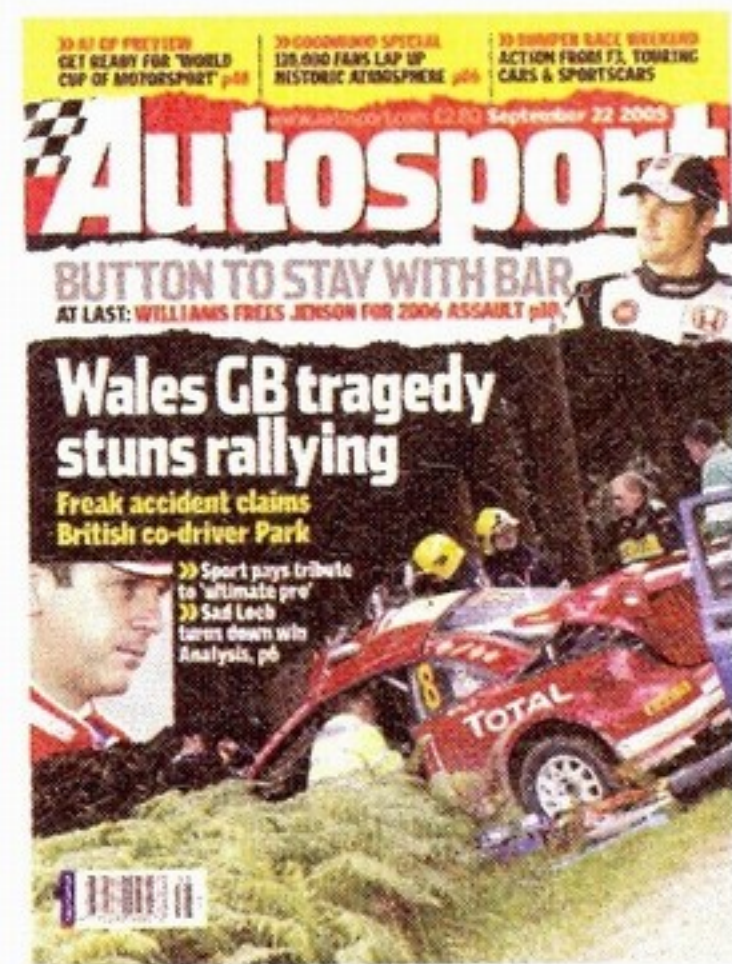
What A1 GP must do to succeed (Nov 10—TR)
The Audi R8's great career (Nov 17—GW)
Why drivers shouldn't miss Macau (Nov 24—CB)
Vauxhall's big-name Muller replacement (Dec 1—ES)
John Force's starturn at the Autosport Awards (Dec 8—JH)
Le Mans as a technology breeding ground (Dec 15/22—DS)
Supplements
Autosport International show guide (Jan 13)
Ultimate Guide to National Racing (Apr 14)
Le Mans 24 Hours (Jun 9)
British Grand Prix (Jul 7)
Wales Rally GB (Sep 15)
Champions 2005 (Dec 1)
Formula 1 2005 (Dec 15/22)



Top Story
Rules shake-up to alter face of F1 (Jan 6—AR)
DC backs Red Bull reshuffle (Jan 13—AR)
BAR adopts 'win or bust' plan for 2005 (Jan 20—AR)
MP4-20 'is a Ferrari-beater' (Jan 27—TD)
Williams: fraught times are ahead (Feb 3—AR)
Red Bull goes radical for '05 (Feb 10—AC/JM)
Keytest for struggling BAR (Feb 17)
Dennis: We can make Montoya a champion (Feb 24—AR)
Ferrari urged to race F2005 early (Mar 3—AR)
How Renault rocked F1 rivals (Mar 10—AR)
Davidson lined up for Villeneuve drive (Mar 17—AR)
Ferrari admits F2005 concern (Mar 24—AR)
New Bridgestones key to fresh Ferrari attack (Mar 31—AR)
Renault: R25 yet to use max power (Apr 7—AR)
De Ferran: my title plan for BAR (Apr 14—AR)
Imola crucial to Ferrari title hopes (Apr 21—AR)
BAR faces ban in Imola GP weight row (Apr 28—AR)
Updated McLaren raises hopes of first '05 victory (May 5—AR)
BAR race ban gives Williams first claim on Button for '06 (May 12—AR)
Wurz's 210mph test crash raises fears (May 19—AR)
Button: ban did us good (May 26—AR)
Wheldon eyes BAR after Indy win



(Jun 2—CB/AR)
Drivers voice tyre fears (Jun 9—AR)
Coulthard starts talks to replace Button at BAR (Jun 16—AR)
Formula 1 in crisis after Indy chaos (Jun 23—AR)
BMW hunts star names for '06 (Jun 30—AR)
F1 teams form plans to oust Mosley from FIA presidency (Jul 7—TD)
Button looking for BAR future (Jul 14—AR)
Newey keeps faith with McLaren (Jul 21—MH/AR)
Button: BAR is my best option (Jul 28—AR)
Barrichello to join BAR for 2006 (Aug 4—AR)
Davidson free to seek '06 race deal (Aug 11—AR)
Williams 'can win' with Cosworth (Aug 18—AR)
Button holds key to '05 title fight (Aug 25—AR)
Mansell in race return (Sep 1—AR)
Alonso set to make history (Sep 8—AR)
Minardi sold to Red Bull (Sep 15—AR)
Martin: "I've lost a friend and brother" (Sep 22—DE)
Alonso title win keeps Renault in F1 (Sep 29—AR)
Davidson and Sato set for new Honda 'junior' F1 team (Oct 6—AR)
Shanghai showdown for teams' title (Oct 13—AR)



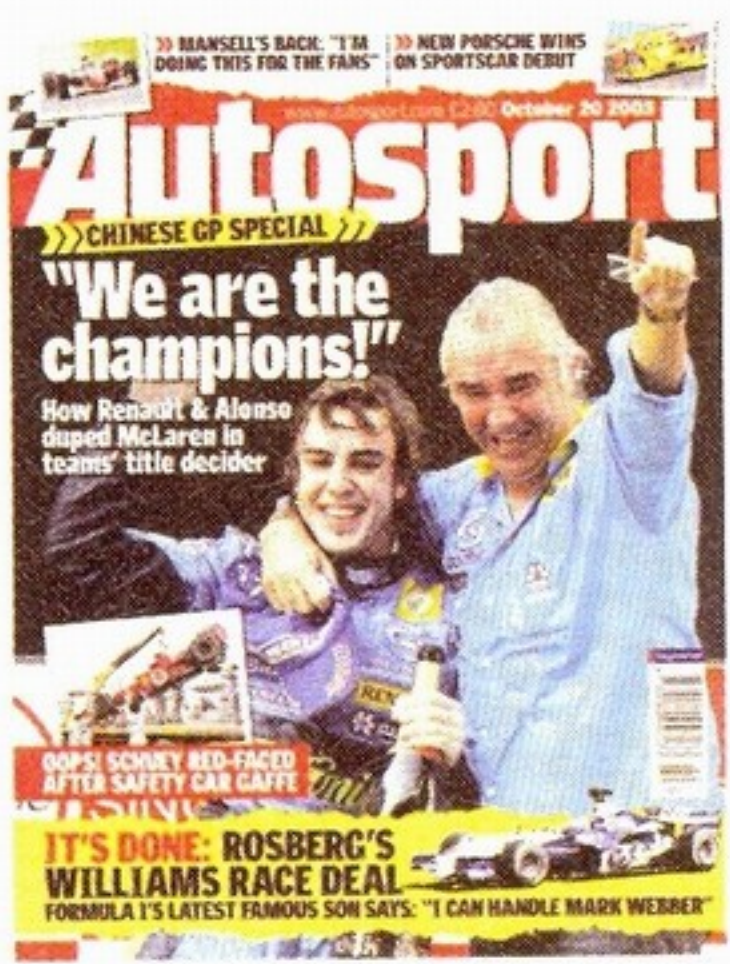
Rosberg to race for Williams (Oct 20—AR)
'Fan-friendly' F1 car for 2007 (Oct 27—AR)
Suzuki has 128 days to get ready for F1 (Nov 3—AR)
Newey quits McLaren for Red Bull (Nov 10—AVDB)
Bigger, better Masters for '06 (Nov 17—AVDB/TD)
Villeneuve fighting for his F1 future (Nov 24—AR)
WRC stars pay tribute to Burns (Dec 1—DE)
Toyota takes early lead in F1 testing (Dec 8—AR)
Rallying debates new global series (Dec 15/22—DE)

Touring Cars
Australian V8 Supercar preview (Mar 3—PB)



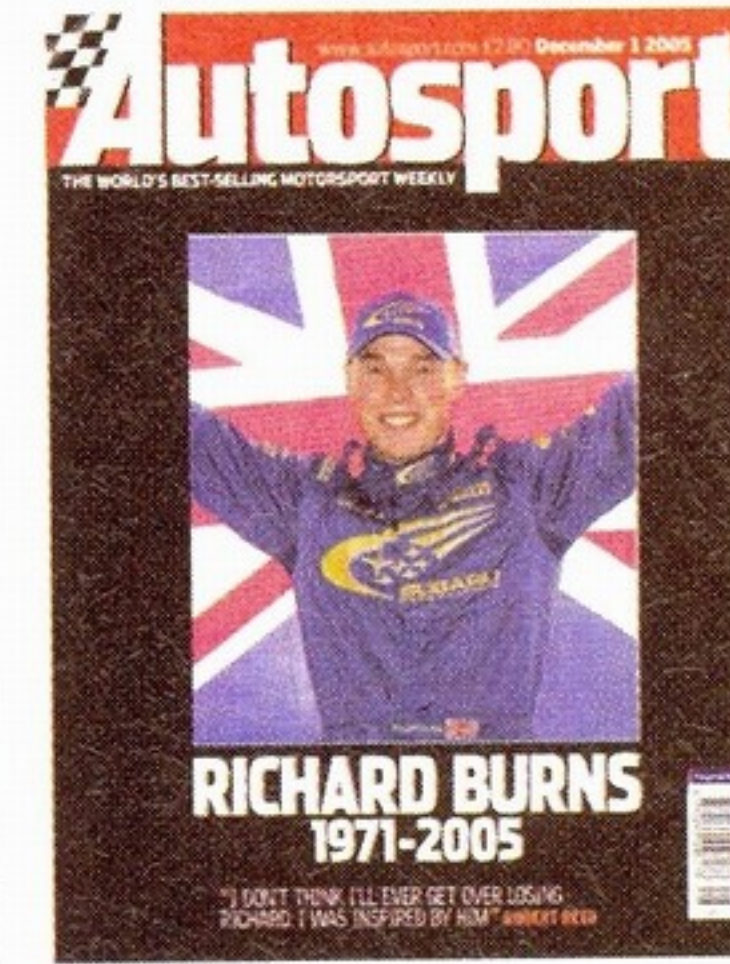
Track Test
Lola A1 GP (Feb 10)
Citroën C2 (Feb 24—JH)
Renault Mégane Trophy and World Series racers (Apr 28—BC)
GP2 (Aug 11—BC)
Porsche 997 GT3 Cup (Sep 8—BC)
Group N Ford Fiesta ST (Sep 15—NMS)

Grand Prix Masters (Nov 10—NM)
Ford Fiesta Supercar (Dec 1—NMS)
WTCC
Rob Huff (Jan 6—MS)
WTCC—will it work (Jan 27—GW)
Alain Menu (Feb 24—CB)
Season preview (Mar 31—GW)
BMW legends (May 12—DM)
WTCC in Britain (May 12—GW)
Alex Zanardi (Sep 8—DM)
Success ballast issues (Sep 29—GW)



WTCC reports
Monza (Apr 14—GW)
Magny-Cours (May 5—GW)
Silverstone (May 19—GW)
Imola (Jun 2—GW)
Mexico (Jun 30—GW)
Spa (Aug 4—GW)
Oschersleben (Sep 1—GW)
Istanbul (Sep 22—GW)
Valencia (Oct 6—GW)
Macau (Nov 24—GW)

World Rally
Niall McShea (Jan 6—DE)
Mattias Ekström (Jan 6—CB)
Chris Atkinson (Jan 13—DE)
Dakar Rally (Jan 13—JH)
Robby Gordon's Dakar (Jan 27—JH)
Kris Meeke (Feb 3—DE)
Audi Quattro celebration (Feb 10—JM)
Corrado Provera (Feb 24—AP)
Daniel Sola (Mar 3—DE)
Subaru WRC2005 (Mar 10—DE)
Rally GB fix (Mar 24—DE)
Citroën fightback (Mar 31—DE)
Ford Focus WRC06 pt1 (Apr 21—JM)
Gigi Galli (Apr 28—AP)
Ford Focus WRC06 pt2 (May 26—JM)
Sébastien Loeb (Jun 16—DE)
Ford Focus WRC06 pt3 (Jul 7—DE)
Marcus Grönholm (Jul 28—AP)
Prodrive's Group N winner (Aug 18—DE)
Ford Focus WRC06 pt3 (Aug 25—JM)
What's gone wrong at Subaru? (Oct 13—DE)
Ford Focus WRC06 goes testing (Oct 27—JM)
Loeb—Autosport's top driver of 2005 (Dec 15/22—DE)



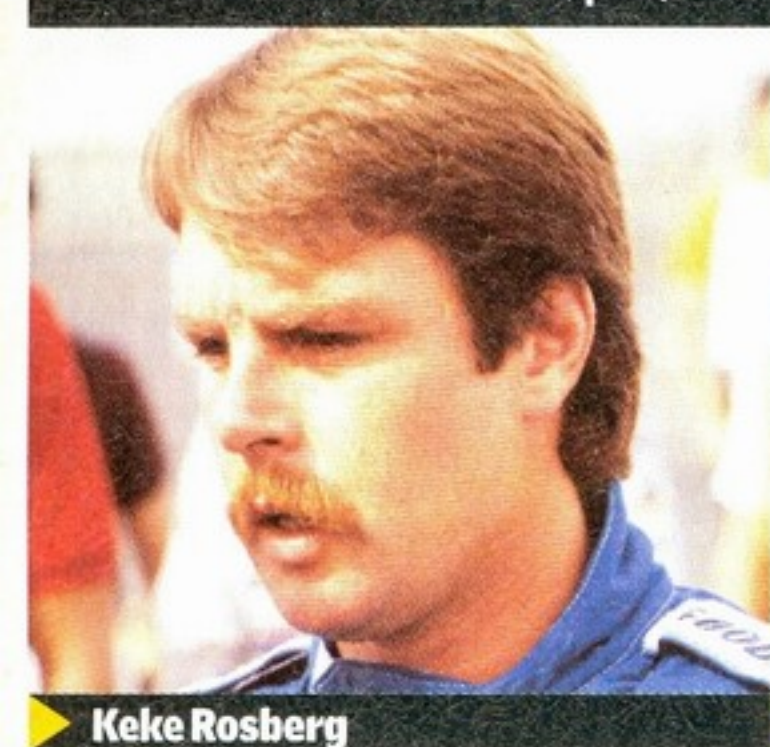
World Rally previews
Season preview (Jan 20—DE/JH)
Sweden (Feb 10—DE)
Mexico (Mar 10—DE)
New Zealand (Apr 7—DE)
Italy (Apr 28—DE)
Cyprus (May 12—DE)
Turkey (Jun 2—DE)
Acropolis (Jun 23—DE)
Argentina (Jul 14—DE)
Finland (Aug 4—DE)

Deutschland (Aug 25—DE)
Japan (Sep 29—DE)
Corsica (Oct 20—DE)
World Rally reports
Monte Carlo (Jan 27—DE)
Sweden (Feb 17—DE)
Mexico (Mar 17—DE)
New Zealand (Apr 14—DE)
Italy (May 5—DE)
Cyprus (May 19—DE)
Turkey (Jun 9—DE)
Acropolis (Jun 30—DE)
Argentina (Jul 21—DE)
Finland (Aug 11—DE)
Deutschland (Sep 1—AP)
Great Britain (Sep 22—DE)
Japan (Oct 6—DE)
Corsica (Oct 27—DE)
Catalunya (Nov 3—JM)
Australia (Nov 17—DE)

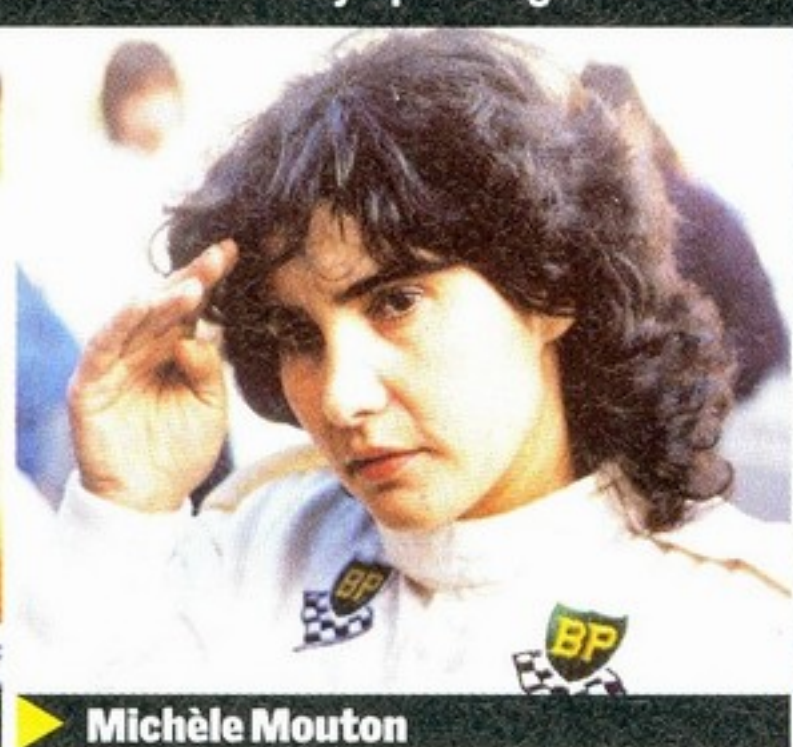
Key
GA—Gary Anderson
RA—Richard Asher
GB—Gillian Bell
BB—Ben Blake
CB—Charles Bradley
PB—Phil Branagan
TC—Tom Clarkson
BC—Ben Collins
AC—Adam Cooper
MC—Mike Cotton
RDB—Rene de Boer
TD—Tony Dodgins
SE—Steven English
DE—David Evans
PF—Paul Fearnley
CH—Chris Harris
AH—Ann Hartland
RH—Richard Heseltine
JH—Jim Holder
KH—Keith Howard
MH—Mark Hughes
JI—Jonathan Ingram
GK—Gordon Kirby
PL—Paul Lawrence
DM—David Malsher
JM—John McLroy
NM—Nigel Mansell
NMS—Niall McShea
DM—Diego Mejia
RM—Robin Miller
JN—Jonathan Noble
PN—Peter Nygaard
JOL—Jeff Olson
MO—Marc Orme
AP—Anthony Peacock
DP—David Phillips
NP—Nick Phillips
GP—Giorgio Piola
MP—Marcus Pye
TR—Timothy Redmayne
NR—Nigel Roebuck
AR—Anthony Rowlinson
JS—Jeremy Shaw
MS—Marcus Simmons
ES—Edd Straw
JS—Jerry Sturman
DT—David Tremayne
JT—Jarno Trulli
AVDB—Andrew van de Burgt
GW—Gary Watkins
TW—Tim Whittington

1982 AUTOSPORT AWARDS

Now a lavish occasion held at London's Grosvenor House Hotel and attended by the cream of international motorsport, the awards weren't always quite so glamorous!



Keke Rosberg



Michèle Mouton



Porsche 956



Audi Quattro



John Watson



Tommy Byrne



Malcolm Patrick



Martin Bolsover

"WORLD CHAMPION Keke Rosberg has been voted by our readers to be the first holder of the annual award, *Autosport International Racing Driver of the Year*.

There was a tremendous response to our Readers' Poll, which we announced in our issue of December 2, with no fewer than 11,944 votes cast before the closing date. Votes were cast for 498 drivers and 70 cars.

The *International Rally Driver of the Year*, by a handsome margin, is Audi's attractive lady driver Michèle Mouton.

The 1982 *Racing Car of the Year* is the Le Mans and World Endurance Championship-winning Rothmans Porsche 956, in a close result with the Formula 1 Ferrari 126 Turbo.

The *Rally Car of the Year*, in the most convincing victory in any of the eight categories, is the Audi Quattro.

One category which stood out as being of great interest was the *British Competition Driver of the Year*. The winner is John Watson, whose driving this season of the Formula 1 McLaren MP4 has obviously caught the imagination of Autosport's readership.

The *National Racing Driver of the Year*, for British-based professionals, was won by British Formula 3 Champion Tommy Byrne.

Fittingly, the new Pace Autosport RAC British National Rally Champion, Malcolm Patrick, is the winner of the award of *National Rally Driver of the Year*.

Finally, the *British Club Driver of the Year* – in which no fewer than 277 drivers from all levels of amateur motorsport received votes. A real eye-opener has been the popularity of hillclimb drivers and of them, Martin Bolsover, is the winner of the award."

Autosport, December 23/30, 1982

RARE VIEW



ROASTIE TOASTIE

NHRA Top Fuel drag racer Doug Herbert's 'rail' lunches its nitro-methane fuelled motor – big time!

ANNIVERSARIES

DECEMBER 29

Andrea Aghini (b 1963)
Helmut Kelleners (b 1938)
Allan McNish (b 1969)

DECEMBER 30

Emmanuel Clerico (b 1969)
Guy Edwards (b 1942)
Mike Spence (b 1936, May 7 '68)

DECEMBER 31

Malcolm Campbell (d 1948)
Tony Kanaan (b 1974)
Danny Watts (b 1979)

JANUARY 1

Mike Blanchet (b 1948)
François Chatriot (b 1952)
Jacky Ickx (b 1945)
Martin Schanche (b 1945)
Hap Sharp (b 1928, d May 7 '93)
Hans-Joachim Stuck (b 1951)

JANUARY 2

Beppe Gabbiani (b 1957)
Robby Gordon (b 1969)
Harry Nuttall (b 1963)

JANUARY 3

Ove Andersson (b 1938)
Fritz Huschke von Hanstein (b 1911, d Mar 5 1996)
Willy T Ribbs (b 1956)
Michael Schumacher (b 1969)
Russell Spence (b 1960)

JANUARY 4

Donald Campbell (d 1967)
Jo Gartner (b 1954, d Jun 1 1986)



Schuey: 37 on Tuesday

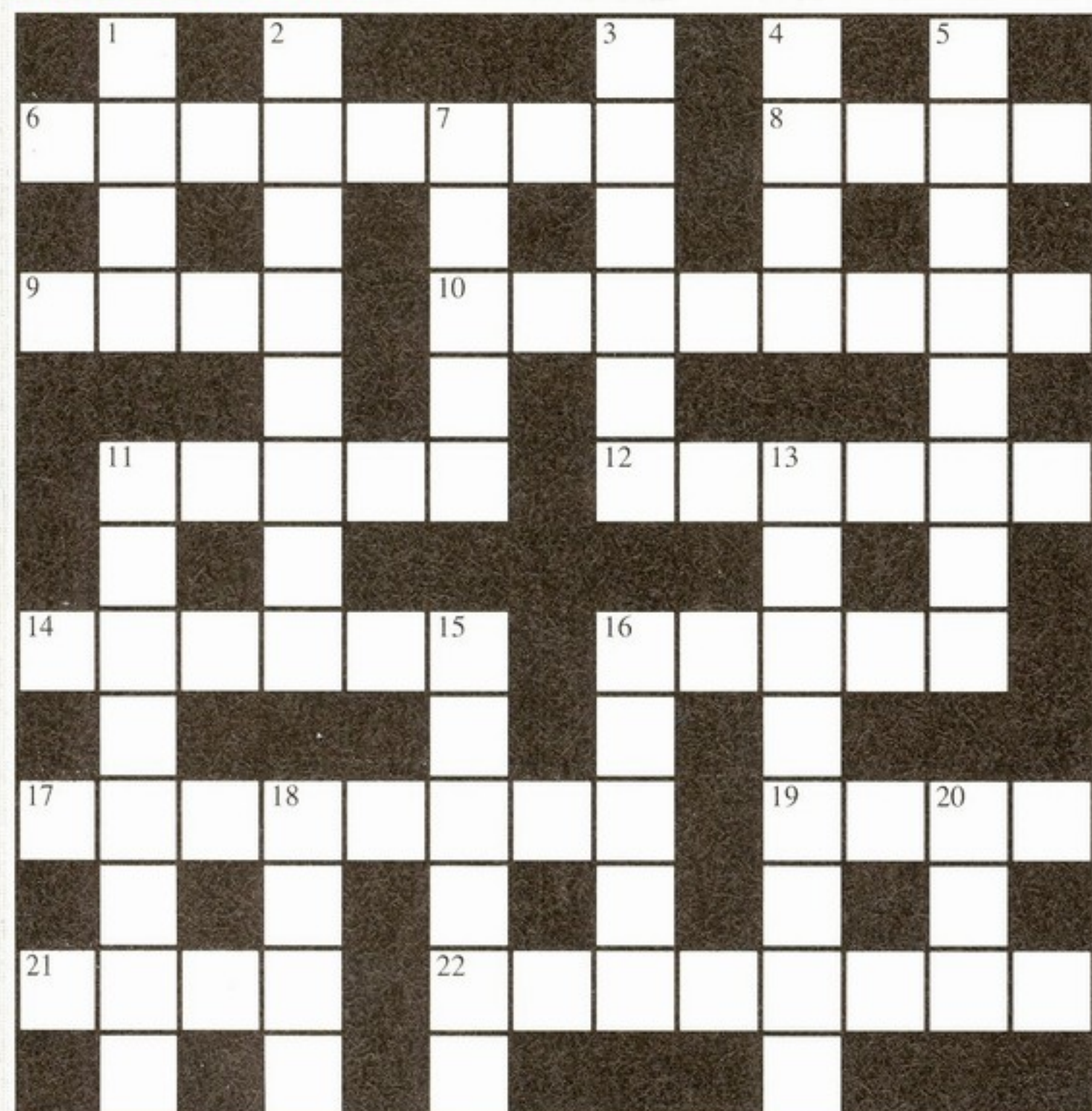
BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS JAMES HUNT

FUTURE WORLD champion James Hunt strikes a nervous pose in his early '70s F3 days. His international playboy lifestyle with Lord Hesketh's crew was just a few years away!



PHOTOS: LAT ARCHIVE

CROSSWORD by Aleric Linden



ACROSS

- 6 Frenchman who scored a WRC victory in Germany for Citroën in 2001 (8)
- 8 See 15 down
- 9 Michael, co-driver who tragically lost his life in Wales Rally GB (4)
- 10 Nationality of Marko Asmer (8)
- 11 British formula in which Charlie Kimball drove in 2005 (5)
- 12 How tyres are often referred to (6)
- 14 Narain Karthikeyan raced for them in 2005 (6)
- 16 Republic, Tomáš Enge's A1GP team (5)
- 17 See 5 down
- 19 Part of the complex at Thruxton together with Campbell and Segrave (4)
- 21 Muller, 2002 and '03 ETCC runner-up (4)

- 22 Stand-in grand prix driver who scored a points finish at Imola in 2005 (4,4)

DOWN

- 1 British F3 team for whom Jamie Spence drove in '01 (4)
- 2 British F3 pilot, Christian (8)
- 3 Cup that Matt Allison clinched this year in a Clio (6)
- 4 Adam, Team Pakistan driver in A1GP (4)
- 5 & 17 across Pennsylvania oval (8,8)
- 7 Mr Soper, who drove for Peugeot in the '01 BTCC (5)
- 11 2004 BTCC champion who won at Monza in April in the WTCC (8)
- 13 Alan, runner-up in the '03 BTCC Production Class (8)
- 15 & 8 across Oriol Servià raced for them in 2005 (6-4)
- 16 Dale Racing, Champ Car team (5)
- 18 Which current IRL driver was stripped of the 2002 F3000 title for failing a drugs test? (4)
- 20 Surprisingly, they scored no points this year in F1 until the French GP (3)



11 Down: British WTCC winner in Monza

Answers in next week's issue