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Can Lotus do a Jordan and take on the giants?



TWENTY YEARS AGO this week, the Jordan Grand Prix team rolled out its gorgeous green-and-blue 191 for pre-qualifying at Phoenix.

Led by the irrepressible Eddie Jordan, the team would go on to challenge the establishment, winning four grands prix and fighting for the 1999 world drivers' title with Heinz-Harald Frentzen.

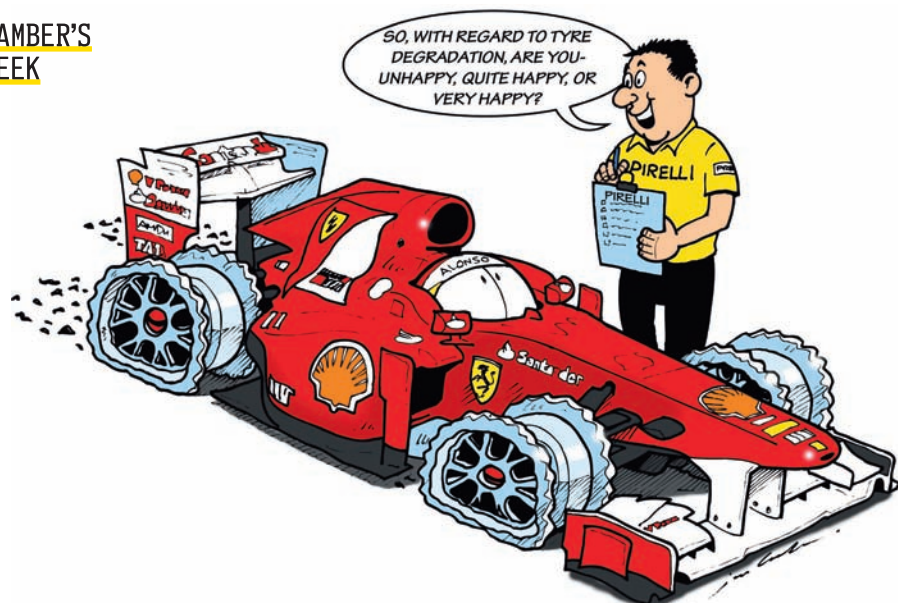
As Adam Cooper recalls in his revealing article (page 36), there was little sign of the greatness that lay ahead back at that US GP, where the team was holed up at a local B&B and survived on Eddie's wife's sandwiches. And the same is true of the teams that joined F1 last year.

Will Lotus, Virgin or HRT match or even surpass Jordan's achievements? Lotus seems best-placed at the moment. As we reveal this week, another top 10 finish in the constructors' championship will earn the team a huge cash boost, which will be a massive help in propelling the squad forward.

● Good news, sticker fans! Thanks to an 11th-hour sponsorship deal with AirAsia, the ever-popular diary stickers will be inserted in next week's bumper F1 season-preview issue. Don't miss it.

Andrew van de Burgt, editor

BAMBER'S WEEK





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WRC

Ken goes round the Block in Mexico

American WRC star Ken Block got to the end of Rally Mexico in 12th place, but it took him a while to get going after electrical trouble before the start in his Monster Ford Fiesta WRC. Rally Mexico report, p58

Picture: McKlein.de



Lotus covets ca\$h bonanza

Team is confident that it can scoop end-of-season top-10 payout despite poor tests. EDD STRAW reports

Team Lotus will net an estimated £16 million cash boost for 2012 if it finishes in the top 10 of the constructors' championship for a second successive season.

Chief technical officer Mike Gascoyne has no doubts that his team will achieve this, despite a troubled pre-season. If so, it will entitle Lotus, which was one of three new teams set up for the

2010 season, to a share in Formula One Management's prize pot. This is split equally between squads that have finished in the top 10 twice in the previous three years (see panel, top right).

"If you look at pre-season testing, it's nothing that we are unduly worried about," said Gascoyne. "But we want to do better than that – we want to beat one or two established teams."

TESTING TRAVAILS

Drivers Jarno Trulli and Heikki Kovalainen have only shown flashes of pace with the new Lotus T128 in testing. But they have easily outpaced 2010 new-team rivals Virgin and HRT, which is the minimum needed to finish 10th in the championship again.

The car has completed fewer than 1500 miles, but Gascoyne insists that fears over fundamental reliability problems are unfounded. Instead, he feels that changes required to accommodate the new Renault engine and Red Bull gearbox are to blame.

"Although the mileage has been limited, the engineering issues are relatively minor," said Gascoyne. "We're the only team to change engine and gearbox this year. The biggest problem we've had is with leaks in the water system and a lot of that is associated with the change of engine and different vibrations. Otherwise, we've had very few problems."

The restricted running has made it impossible for the car to show its true pace, but there is no doubt



Gascoyne is aiming high

that it has slashed the team's four-second deficit to the front from the end of 2010. An upgrade package at this week's Barcelona test, including a new front wing, is set to boost the car's performance.

UPSETTING THE ESTABLISHMENT

If Lotus pockets the extra £16 million for being a top 10 team, this will accelerate the squad's ambitions of getting to the front of the midfield in 2012.

Although Gascoyne admits that it could start this year at the back of that group, he believes that the way the team is set up means it can be putting pressure on the frontrunners within three years.



Mechanics have been busy fixing small issues



Can Trulli squeeze himself into Q2?

How the prize money works

The key to Lotus pocketing the £16 million is it becoming a so-called 'column 1' team. This status is granted only to teams that have finished in the top 10 of the constructors' championship twice during the previous three seasons. Lotus will achieve that if it makes the top 10 this year.

COLUMN 1 HISTORIC

This pot is shared equally between all teams that have finished in the top 10 of the constructors' championship in two out of the previous three seasons. It will be worth an estimated £16 million per team after this season.

COLUMN 2 CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Scaled payments based on finishing position in the constructors' championship. Only the top 10 are rewarded, with 10th place netting an estimated £6 million and seventh place around £11 million.

COLUMN 3 NEW TEAMS

Payment of £6 million made to each of the new-for-2010 teams.



"We are clearly moving forward to be a serious player," he said. "We have a long-term plan not just to join the midfield, but by the start of next year to be at the front of the midfield. Then, in the years after that we want to be looking for fourth or fifth place.

"If we picked off one of the established teams this year, that would be a huge achievement.

Eighth is a big ask, but if you don't aim high you don't get there. We've already made the transition to being an established team; we're set up like the others and we're not just a grown-up GP2 team."

EARLY OPPORTUNITIES

The battle for the minor places in the world championship rankings is likely to be decided

in the early races, with huge potential for surprises as teams get to grips with the new-for-2011 Pirelli tyres.

Although the Lotus T128 has shown poor reliability during the first three tests, Gascoyne is hopeful that the team will be ready to be in the mix for points from the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on March 27.

"You need to be reliable and you need to make the right strategy calls," he said. "The tyres are a huge unknown, but we are going to the first races to pick up some points. If you can get 10 points in the first three or four races, it makes it very difficult for your rivals to catch up once the top five teams are reliable and filling up the points positions." ❧

LOTUS 2011 TESTING DIARY

VALENCIA, FEBRUARY 2-4

Jarno Trulli and Heikki Kovalainen manage only 53 slow laps on the first two days because of power-steering problems. The car completes 93 laps on the final day with a new steering system, lapping 2.5s off the pace.
MILEAGE: 358 (Ferrari, 712 miles)



Trulli: tough first test

Jerez test was hindered



JEREZ, FEBRUARY 10-13

Kovalainen's best time is just 1.8s off the pace, but Lotus again loses track time with various water leaks and radiator problems. A bolt dropped into the gearbox and bodywork being damaged by the exhaust also limit running.

MILEAGE: 544 (Ferrari, 1274 miles)

BARCELONA, FEBRUARY 18-21

Attempts to complete a full race simulation are hampered by several problems, with water leaks again a common issue. A gearbox lubrication problem also costs the team time before the test ends early on the final day when Trulli crashes.

MILEAGE: 590 (Ferrari, 1258 miles)



No race simulation in the third test

Pirelli have added a new challenge to F1

Stop moaning, says Pirelli

Italian tyre company warns drivers to quit complaining, and claims it's built the tyres the teams want

Pirelli has called on Formula 1 drivers not to complain about tyre degradation this season.

The Italian tyre manufacturer is understood to have made it known to teams' body FOTA that it is unhappy with driver criticism of its tyres. The rubber has been designed based on objectives set by the teams and the FIA – to create more-exciting racing by making tyres that deteriorate faster than the Bridgestones used in recent seasons.

McLaren's Lewis Hamilton became the latest driver to express concerns about the Pirellis, which he believes will make the cars slow.

"Last year we had to make tyres last with a heavier fuel load, and now it's even slower," said the 2008 world champion. "I did a run the other day

and it was painfully slow. It's just not exciting, to be honest."

During last month's Barcelona test, where track temperatures were low, the Pirelli tyres suffered from 'chunking', leading to large amounts of marbles offline. Because the tyres did not get up to their ideal temperature, the track did not rubber in, making it more abrasive and contributing to concerns about tyre life. Teams favoured three-stop race simulations as a result.

Pirelli motorsport boss Paul Hembery admits that it is frustrating to be criticised by drivers, as his company is following the brief that it was given.

"The only issue we have is with the drivers," Hembery told AUTOSPORT. "I keep reading some talking about four or five stops, and I guess they're not talking to their strategists in the team, because that's not true when you look at the simulations.

"It's all very well making comments, but if we've been asked to make a change to the tyres and we're working in the direction that we've been asked to, it's a little unfair that people are saying such things. I don't think it's particularly constructive to us or the sport."

Hembery added that the only alternative to the existing high-degradation tyres would be to mandate a minimum number of tyre stops in races, and that the Pirelli rubber currently on the stocks is the best way to create interesting races that are not artificial.

"We were asked to create a strategic show," said Hembery.

"Without obligatory tyre stops, the only way to do that is to have a product that requires changing after a set number of laps. We've had to do something that is very complex and difficult."

Pirelli has allocated soft and hard-compound tyres for the opening races of the season, with two or three-stop races anticipated.

Q&A

PAUL HEMBERY

PIRELLI MOTORSPORT BOSS

What are you expecting strategically this season?

We'll see two stops or even three.

Are you confident that the races will be exciting?

The Barcelona simulation estimated that there could be up to 54 overtaking opportunities because of different cars running at different speeds at different stages of the tyre changes. But we will have to wait and see a race to see the practical impact of the tyres, so it's hard to know if it's what we planned in terms of the show.



Are there any concerns that more will be needed?

We ran a simulation based on the last test at Barcelona and all teams would have run a three-stop strategy. That was in far-from-ideal conditions, so it doesn't appear to be a great issue.



Hamilton is not happy with this year's tyres

Artificial rain idea sparks debate

BERNIE ECCLESTONE'S idea to spice up Formula 1 races with artificial rain has been met with scepticism within the sport.

The F1 commercial boss floated the idea of a 'sprinkler' system, which could be controlled by a computer programme to simulate rain at random moments during races. Their intensity could be controlled either to simulate sustained rain or showers.

It is not unusual for tracks to be artificially soaked for wet testing, most recently during Pirelli's wet test at night in Abu Dhabi, and Ecclestone insists that he's "happy to make it happen".

Red Bull star Mark Webber is among the drivers to have dismissed the idea, saying that "it wouldn't be the most sophisticated way to make the show more entertaining".

AUTOSPORT understands that the idea is being taken seriously in some quarters, but that there is little chance of it being adopted this season. Tyre

Pirelli tested with 'fake rain'



supplier Pirelli supports the idea.

Pirelli motorsport boss Paul Hembery said: "I think it has merit – why not? It would bring into play strategy and using different tyres. You wouldn't want to do it at every race, but I see no reason why not. We have artificial races at night, so why not bring in a weather variable?"

Were F1 to go ahead with the plan,

it would be the most extreme measure ever taken to spice up the show. This season, the adjustable rear wing is an artifice specifically targeted at boosting overtaking, a measure Ecclestone himself is against.

➔ **P23 AUTOSPORT POLL**

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

EDD STRAW
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Some people have suggested that specifying tyres that force multi-stop races is contrived. They are flat wrong, and Pirelli's rubber is one of the best things to happen to grand prix racing in a long time. That's why AUTOSPORT has been wary of offering a platform for drivers and teams to whinge incessantly about rubber.

Strategic variation was close to non-existent last year, but now teams and drivers will have to think on their feet. As exciting as that is, the big news is that a driver's ability to deal with rapidly-degrading tyres is once again a key weapon in his armoury.

Fans bang on about wanting to uninvent aerodynamics to improve racing, yet when tyres are regressed (Pirelli has removed elements of the construction designed to lower degradation and wear), some whine that they aren't good enough for F1. Well, make up your minds.

The tyres are safe and there's no question they will spice up the show in the best way possible: a pure way. The best drivers will have to preserve the rubber and deal with an oversteery car – and the way to do that is not simply to "drive slowly" as some detractors claim. There's far more to it than that, and these are skills that Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart had in spades.

Drivers must thrive outside of their comfort zone to succeed in 2011, and anyone who thinks that's a bad thing should think again.



Hamilton and Stewart swap



Stewart will swap with Hamilton

TWO-TIME NASCAR champion Tony Stewart will test a McLaren Formula 1 car later this year.

The 39-year-old, who raced single-seaters in Indycars from 1996-99 before switching to NASCAR full-time, will drive last year's McLaren MP4-25 at Watkins Glen during the road course's Sprint Cup weekend in August. McLaren's Lewis Hamilton will be the other half of the driver swap, getting behind the wheel of a Stewart Haas NASCAR Chevrolet.

"It's the same as running the winged sprint car – they pull on your neck muscles a lot harder too," said Stewart, who has not raced a single-seater since 2001. "I'll just keep running enough winged sprint car races and I'll get in shape that way."

"It's the chance of a lifetime to drive something that is probably the most sophisticated car on the planet. I'm really excited."

May deadline for Bahrain GP 2011

THE FIA has given organisers of the Bahrain Grand Prix a deadline of May 1 to decide whether the race can go ahead in 2011.

The race was originally scheduled to be held this weekend, but was called off against a backdrop of civil unrest in the country. F1 commercial boss Bernie Ecclestone has been in talks with Bahrain's crown prince over the possible rescheduling of the race.

A slot during the August three-week break has been ruled out. That means that the most likely alternative slot would be for Bahrain to run back-to-back with the Abu Dhabi GP at the end of the year. To achieve this, the Brazilian GP could be switched from its season-ending slot to run before the Middle East races.

Team sources indicate that there is scepticism over whether it would be the right decision to cram an extra race into the end of the season. The fact that the FIA has put the ball firmly in the court of the Bahrain organisers suggests that there is a willingness to fit the event in.

Bahrain D-Day is on May 1



REMEMBER WHEN...

OCTOBER 5 1980



...Watkins Glen last hosted F1? Tony Stewart's run in a McLaren at Watkins Glen later this year evokes memories of grands prix run at the New York track. The last of its races, won by Alan Jones, was in 1980

TEST SHOWDOWN

The final pre-season Formula 1 test kicked off at Barcelona on Tuesday, with Renault among the teams trying their Australian GP-spec upgrade package for the first time



Webber: Red Bull still top

As pre-season testing resumes in Barcelona this week, the Australian has warned rivals over delayed-start hopes

Mark Webber has warned Red Bull's title rivals that the delayed start to the season will not result in any significant shake-up of the competitive order.

The Red Bull RB7 has impressed during pre-season testing, with most team sources suggesting that the Milton Keynes squad and Ferrari are the teams to beat. Despite it being difficult to read into test performances because of the unfamiliar Pirelli tyres and

variable fuel loads, Red Bull looks the strongest on one-lap pace.

"We were ready to go to Bahrain and have a very good chance of fighting for top results on both pace and reliability," Webber told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"We've got a bit more time now, but I don't think it's going to change much. Some teams think it's going to change the world, but in terms of performance and in terms of where everyone is going to stand,

the guys that would have been quick in Bahrain are going to be in the same position in Melbourne."

RED BULL READY

Webber's confidence is particularly worrying for Red Bull's rivals, given that the team has traditionally started the season slowly.

Last year, it was only fifth in the championship after the opening two races. It has yet to make a better start than it did during its first season in 2005, when David Coulthard and Christian Klien put it third overall after two races, but it is well-placed to end the trend for bad starts in 2011.

Webber admitted that "normally, we miss the first test and have been a bit undercooked going into the first phase". His team-mate, world champion Sebastian Vettel, called earlier this year for Red Bull to ensure it is strong from the off, reminding the team that "the championship starts from the first race" and that the team "dropped many points in 2010 and would have been more comfortable if we had not done that".

FERRARI CHALLENGE

Ferrari appears the most likely to be able to topple Red Bull as pre-season favourites.

The Italian car's long-run pace has been impressive and Fernando Alonso is bullish about the team's chances, saying that "if all goes to plan, we will be in the group of teams fighting for the title".

The 150° appeared at Barcelona testing on Tuesday with a raft of updates both to the aerodynamic package and exhausts, with the team hopeful of building on the solid foundations created in the first three tests.

Much will depend on the relative performance gain of both Red Bull and Ferrari, with the RB7 also set to benefit from a series of upgrades throughout the test.

"We seem to have a good car, but it's still early," said Vettel. "We're all trying to get the best possible packaging together."

With McLaren and Mercedes still struggling, the best-placed challengers heading into the current test at Barcelona were Williams and Renault.



The Red Bull RB7 has set the pace so far



Nico Hulkenberg got Force India mileage



Sauber introduced a tweaked aero set-up

McLaren drivers looking for big gains

McLAREN MUST make a big downforce gain with the upgrade package introduced at this week's final pre-season test at Barcelona, according to Lewis Hamilton.

The team struggled with its MP4-26 during early tests, switching exhaust configuration several times. The 2008 world champion is impressed with the balance of the car, but he wants more grip and believes that aerodynamic improvements are the key to being in a position to fight for race wins early in the season.

"It handles really nicely, better than last year's car," admitted Hamilton. "But it just doesn't have as much downforce. That's where



McLaren needs a good test this week

it feels weak."

After completing only eight days of running, having not introduced the new car until the second pre-season test, McLaren is also yet to make major inroads on set-up.

Jenson Button said: "There's a lot still to extract from this car that we haven't because we just haven't had time to do it."

The team also battled overheating bodywork in recent testing.

Toro Rosso ready for strong start

SCUDERIA TORO Rosso is set for its most competitive season since finishing a shock sixth in the constructors' title in 2008.

The STR6 has shown good pace in testing and has impressed over long runs in particular, suggesting that it could be a points contender at the start of the season. Sébastien Buemi

believes that this season should be regarded as the team's first as a full constructor after running a car heavily based on its 2009 machine last season.

"This year is going to be different," Buemi told AUTOSPORT. "This is the first proper Toro Rosso. We are aiming to be fighting for regular points."



STR6: points hopes

THIS WEEK IN F1



RED BULL Sebastian Vettel doesn't believe that starting the 2011 season as world champion will make any difference to him. "I don't have any advantage by having the number one on the car," he said. "It's a nice feeling."



McLAREN Former world champion Jenson Button has ruled out having children while he is racing in F1. "It's not worth the risk," he said. "Also, you don't get enough time to spend with them."



FERRARI The Scuderia conducted straightline test at Italian track Vairano last weekend. Davide Rigon drove and was charged with evaluating a raft of upgrades for this week's Barcelona test.



MERCEDES Team principal Ross Brawn has admitted that his team needs to find one second per lap with its Barcelona test upgrade. "I think we're about a second off where we want to be and we want to be mixing it at the front," said Brawn.



RENAULT Vitaly Petrov and test driver Bruno Senna attended last week's Geneva Motor Show. The pair appeared on the stand of team sponsor Lotus Cars to promote the brand's road-car range.



WILLIAMS Williams made its debut on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange last week. The team raised €60 million through the sale of 2,409,383 shares priced at €25 each.



FORCE INDIA The court case between Force India, Aerolab and Team Lotus will be heard on January 16 next year. The case surrounds the possible use of Force India intellectual property by the Norfolk team.



SAUBER Kamui Kobayashi is adamant that KERS will not be an advantage when it comes to overtaking this season. "I don't believe the KERS will help because almost everybody has it," the Japanese driver said.



TORO ROSSO Sébastien Buemi has admitted that he needs to raise his game this season to ensure that he has a future in F1. "I want to be successful – the future depends on this season," said the Swiss.



LOTUS Chief technical officer Mike Gascoyne has not ruled out adopting KERS during the season. "If we were racing in the midfield but losing places on the run to the first corner, we're going to have to do something about it," he said.



HRT Christian Klien, who started three races for Hispania last season, remains in contention for the final seat on the F1 grid. Former Red Bull stablemate Vitantonio Liuzzi is still an option.



VIRGIN Timo Glock was released from hospital last week after his appendix was successfully removed by surgery. He will miss this week's test, but will return for the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

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MPH Mark Hughes

AUTOSPORT grand prix editor

In the cockpit and on the pitwall, whoever is most canny at managing tyre wear could hold a crucial advantage in F1's new era of fading-grip Pirellis

Ten laps to go, Fernando Alonso passes his pitboard: P1 +10s. Good, all is under control. His tyre grip is beginning to fade now, but then so will be everyone else's. That's what these new rear Pirellis are like. From the very beginning of Saturday morning, you are working to make optimum use of your limited allocation, such is the high wear.

But no problem. The car has been quick, he fought for pole with the Red Bulls, positioned himself perfectly at the start, played a game of cat and mouse with Vettel and Webber, made the right calls and now the game is effectively won. Just those last few laps to go.

But what's this? P1 +9s next time around. That doesn't tally. 'Who's in second now?' he radios in. He cannot believe it when they tell him. 'What? We almost lapped him at half-distance.'

'Yes, Fernando, we know. Please just concentrate.'

He doesn't need to be told, but this new information is a concern. That guy didn't even make it into Q3; his car isn't quick. Just stay smooth, early off the gas, late back on it, stay off the KERS and kerbs, keep up plenty of momentum, nice one-arc steering movements. Don't ask too much of that rubber, just another eight laps now. P1 +7.5s. Shit.

It may not happen like this. This isn't a prediction, just a line of thought. It's based on the patterns we've seen from the Pirelli-dominated F1 testing so far, where the differences between cars are being dwarfed by differences between the performance of the tyres.

The fast cars will still be the fast cars, those with more downforce will still get more out of the rubber, but the full extent of any raw performance superiority may not be able to be used. It might just be that this season won't be about outright pace and more a combination of tactical savvy and acumen, of keeping up with a constantly evolving picture and making the right calls, understanding what is happening before anyone else and taking appropriate action. It might just be all about going into the last dozen laps with your rubber in better shape than anyone else's as the field is reduced to desperately trying to eke out the very dregs of life from their final sets.

So, ideally you'd need a very smart tactical brain directing things from the pitlane, a team that last year consistently recorded the fastest stops and a driver with

many years of experience of differing demands. It might not be all that important if the car isn't quite on the cutting edge of pace. It might not even matter if he is no longer as fast as he was. So long as he can feel the grip changing, can judge finely how much of the grip to use at which part of the race, understand which are the critical moments of the race – and have total faith in the guy directing him from the pits.

He would need the car not to be too far off, of course. He needs to be able to keep the quick guys in sight, but the piece of elastic to which he's tied to them might turn out to be longer than anyone has expected.

The guy in second's feeling good about this. He'd been dubious on Thursday when the boss had first outlined the plan: let's deliberately not get through to Q3. The driver had been appalled. The car might not be good enough yet for the first two rows, he'd said, but row three or four was feasible. Why settle for midfield? Tyre allocation, came the reply, and suddenly it began to make sense. Just get through Q1, then do a reasonable lap on an old set. That way we'll save two sets of new tyres. Those committing to Q3 will have been forced to put on a new set at the end of Q2 and at least one more in Q3.

Alonso looks in his mirrors, just to see for himself, because he still can't quite believe it. But there's the visual confirmation: silver car/red helmet... ☒



➔ **P26 PIRELLI'S EFFECT**

“2011 might just be more about tactical savvy than outright pace”



INDYCAR

Villeneuve in Indy talks for Las Vegas

Former champion and Indy 500 winner weighs up return, as series boss vows to help guest drivers

Former Indycar champion Jacques Villeneuve is in talks that could lead to a return to US single-seater racing for this year's Las Vegas season finale.

AUTOSPORT understands that discussions between the 1995 Indianapolis 500 winner and current series bosses are under way for the race, where \$5 million is on offer for any 'wild-card' driver who can take victory.

Villeneuve has not raced in

Indy-style racing since September 1995, when he bowed out as Indycar champion and headed to Formula 1 with Williams. He has always ruled out returning to that form of racing, and declined to comment on the Las Vegas race earlier this week. But a spokesperson for the 1997 world champion confirmed that discussions were ongoing.

Breaking into NASCAR remains Villeneuve's top priority for 2011. So far he has made 15 starts across

the top three tiers of stock car racing over the past four years.

IndyCar boss Randy Bernard will not divulge details of who is in the running for one of the five guest-driver slots on the Las Vegas grid. But he said he was pleased with the initial reaction to his idea.

"It's been fun to see," said Bernard. "I've had enquiries from some pretty big drivers, which is pretty exciting. The five guys that we choose will be five guys that help our sport. I'm trying to build the credibility of our sport — just as hard as it is for Juan Pablo Montoya and Sam Hornish to go to NASCAR, it's the same for other drivers to come to our sport. If another driver comes over here and beats us, it means there are some great drivers out there."

Bernard also played down suggestions from NASCAR drivers

that it would be too difficult to combine the Las Vegas race with the Sprint Cup event at Charlotte on the same weekend.

"It's very do-able," he said. "If the race ends at Charlotte at 11pm and you are on a plane from there at midnight, you will land at 1am in Vegas. That gives you 10 hours. We will provide practice time for these guys in the late summer, so I think it can be done."

Bernard is also confident that teams will be prepared to run extra cars for the event, and said he has already had a call from top team boss Chip Ganassi backing his idea.

"That means a lot, because Chip never calls and offers a compliment," he said.

IndyCar will accept applications from any interested drivers, and a committee will then decide which five it will invite to the race.

INDYCAR

Solberg eyes oval bow

FORMER WORLD Rally champion Petter Solberg has expressed an interest in entering the IndyCar season finale for a chance to win \$5 million.

Series boss Randy Bernard has hinted that he wants drivers from a wide variety of motorsport disciplines. He is thought to be interested in getting a rally driver to compete, and Solberg told AUTOSPORT

last weekend on Rally Mexico that he would love to have a go.

"I always wanted to try something like this," said the Norwegian. "Competing at an event like this would be good fun. I have tested a Le Mans car and a Formula 1 car, so I don't think the driving challenge would be a problem for me."

Solberg, 36, added that he would

take the event very seriously if he was invited to take one of the five guest-driver spots in the field.

"If we did it, we would have to do it properly, with proper testing and a proper team," he said. "I don't have a clue whether I could win it or not, but it looks like it could be good."

Seven-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb said he was "not sure" about the idea, while popular US rally contender Ken Block has ruled himself out due to his busy schedule.



INDYCAR

Kanaan expected to find race seat

INDYCAR SERIES boss Randy Bernard is confident that 2004 champion Tony Kanaan will find a drive this season after his deal with Gil de Ferran collapsed.

The Brazilian was set for a full-time drive this year with De Ferran Dragon Racing, but he is now back on the driver market after the squad closed its doors

due to a lack of sponsorship.

Bernard admitted his disappointment at seeing deserving drivers struggling to get onto the grid.

"It's very, very unfortunate that Tony will not be racing at De Ferran Dragon Racing," said Bernard. "This is a major step back. But I think he will end up

with a ride. I will do everything I can to help him because he is a huge asset to our sport as well as Paul Tracy, Dan Wheldon [see below] and Townsend Bell. I'm not giving up on them."

Several deals are likely to be signed before next week's official pre-season group test at Barber Motorsports Park.



Kanaan is out of work at present

INDYCAR

Wheldon sure of getting drive for 2011

BRITISH INDYCAR star Dan Wheldon is positive that he will be on the grid this year.

The 2005 champion has been without a drive since parting company with Panther Racing at the end of last season. He has been



Will Wheldon be smiling again?

linked to several of the midfield teams over the winter, but has remained quiet on his future.

"I'm very confident I'll be out in a car this year," said Wheldon. "If the situation comes off that we are working on then I'll be incredibly excited. But until the deal is done I'm not one that's going to start shouting about it. I've been around long enough to know that talk is cheap."

Wheldon spent most of his two years at Panther as a single entry, and he says the experience taught him the value of driving for a multi-car team.

"I probably underestimated how hard it was in a one-car team,"

he said. "I've always thrived on having the best team-mates possible, so that's what I would love. In this day and age, with so little track time, I think it's really important to work well with a strong team-mate."

The 32-year-old added that he is determined to add another Indianapolis 500 victory to his name before he stops racing – he won the showcase race in his title-winning season of 2005.

"I love the Indy 500 and the joy that race can bring to your life," he said. "I'm desperate to have that again. I've been so close to winning a second one, and I'm not going to stop until I have."

GANASSI'S SATELLITE INSTALLATION

IndyCar rookie Charlie Kimball revealed the colours he will race with in Chip Ganassi's satellite team this year in testing at Barber Motorsports Park last week



AUTOSPORT SAYS...

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Two weeks have passed since the IndyCar Series revealed its \$5 million guest-driver prize pot for its Las Vegas season finale. Aside from the new-chassis decision last summer, it has to be one of the biggest talking points – for positive reasons – that US single-seater racing has generated for many years.

Series boss Randy Bernard is keeping his cards close to his chest on the subject of who is likely to enter. That's partly because he doesn't want to put other drivers off, but also because he must love the number of column inches being filled by this topic.

The idea itself, and the way it has been handled so far, equates to an absolute masterstroke. People are excited about IndyCar racing again, but the real challenge is making sure there is a line-up of guest drivers who will get these people to tune in.

Bernard detests the CART/IRL split, and he is convinced that it cost the sport 20 million fans. Getting Jacques Villeneuve – the last man to win a unified Indy crown prior to 2008 – would spark a lot of interest. The likes of Michael Andretti and Al Unser Jr would turn heads in the US but, of the likely candidates, Villeneuve's mass appeal may only be second to that of Juan Pablo Montoya. Over to you, Randy. Best of luck.



Who will dare join this lot?

MILESTONES



Danica Patrick's fourth-place finish in the NASCAR Nationwide Series race at Las Vegas on Saturday was the best-ever result in a NASCAR-sanctioned event by a female racer

IN BRIEF

**PANIS WITH ORECA AGAIN**

Former grand prix driver Olivier Panis will remain with the French ORECA team to drive its first-generation Peugeot 908 HDi alongside Nicolas Lapierre and Loic Duval this year. The 44-year-old will race the car at Sebring, Le Mans and Petit Le Mans.

MOWLEM AT SEBRING

Sportscar stalwart Johnny Mowlem will return to the Sebring 12 Hours in the LMPC Formula Le Mans one-make class with the British WRO team. The Briton will share with Luca Moro and Olivier Lombard.

JELLEY SET FOR LMS PORSCHE...

Former British Touring Car Championship race winner Stephen Jelley will contest the Le Mans Series with the Team Parker-run GruppeM Porsche team. Team-mates for the 28-year-old in the squad's ex-Trackspeed 911 GT3-RSR have yet to be nominated.

...AND CHRISTO IN A FERRARI

Sportscar convert Adam Christodoulou will contest the Le Mans Series with CRS Racing, the team he won the Formula Renault UK title with in 2008. The 21-year-old will share a Ferrari 430 GT in the GTE-Am class with Phil Quaife and Klaas Hummel.

ZANARDI EYES CAR RETURN

Former CART champion Alex Zanardi has revealed that he could return to motorsport after the London 2012 Paralympics. "I miss cars a bit," he said. "Too old? I am an optimist and I believe I can do it."

DILLMANN GETS CARLIN RIDE

German F3 champion Tom Dillmann will race for Carlin in GP3 this year. The French former Red Bull junior driver got his first taste of action with the team in testing at Paul Ricard last week.

MULLER PIPS SIMS IN GP3

Swiss Nico Muller (below) narrowly topped a two-day GP3 test at Paul Ricard last week. The Jenzer Motorsport man edged F3 convert Alexander Sims by 0.002s.



SPORTSCARS

New Aston to skip Sebring

Brits opt for caution and set sights on Le Mans Series opener at Paul Ricard

Aston Martin has scratched from the Sebring 12 Hours later this month and will instead give its all-new AMR-One a race debut at Paul Ricard at the beginning of April.

Aston Martin Racing team principal George Howard-Chappell had always insisted that racing at Sebring on March 19, the opening round of the Intercontinental Le Mans

Cup, was no more than a "possibility". The decision to miss the US event was taken in the middle of last week after the shakedown of the open-top LMP1 design had to be put back.

Howard-Chappell explained that "a couple of last minute setbacks on the engine side were the last straw". He would "not go into detail" on the problems with the new straight-six turbo AMR engine.

The decision to miss Sebring has resulted in AMR adding the Paul Ricard 6 Hours, the opening round of the Le Mans Series, to its schedule. It wants to blood the AMR-One in competition ahead of the Le Mans Test Day on April 24 and the next round of the ILMC at Spa in May.

"I don't see any reason as we stand here today that we can't do Ricard," Howard-Chappell



SPORTSCARS

Peugeot eyes hybrid Le Mans run



This could run in April test

PEUGEOT COULD give the energy-retrieval technology it plans to race next season a try-out at next month's Le Mans Test Day.

The French manufacturer described a first public run for 908 HYbrid4 at the Le Mans test on April 24 as the "ambitious objective" for the car, which was unveiled

at the Geneva Motor Show last week. It expects to begin testing with the hybrid at the end of this month.

Peugeot stated that a decision on whether to run the HYbrid4 at the test will depend on initial running and how the team's preparations with the conventional

908 HDi turbodiesel are proceeding.

A competitive debut for the HYbrid4 in 2011 has not been ruled out, but the car will not race at Le Mans. The decision to contest the 24 Hours with the new 908 in non-hybrid form was taken after Audi locked out the top three positions last year.

BTCC

\$2000 OK, says Chevy



Plato's Cruze should be quick

THE RML Chevrolet team is confident there will be parity between old and new-generation engines in this year's British Touring Car Championship.

RML has no plans to develop a turbocharged engine to the Next Generation Touring Car rules for this year and will run normally-aspirated Super 2000 powerplants in its Chevy Cruzes. But team boss Ray Mallock explained that he has no doubts that the BTCC organisers will ensure S2000 cars are not off the pace.

"We haven't seen the exact level of performance of an NGTC engine yet," he said, "but with a turbo there's the possibility to get more power low down on acceleration."

"I am confident in the job that the series does in balancing different types of engine. There is no one better than Alan [Gow, BTCC boss] and Peter [Riches, technical director] at doing that."

There is no provision in the BTCC rules for the new World Touring Car 1.6-litre turbo engines.

WORLD GT1

World GT filling up

THE FIA GT1 World Championship is almost certain to begin its second season with 19 cars, according to series boss Stephane Ratel.

Ratel has stated that Selleslagh Racing Team and DKR Engineering, which ran together as Mad-Croc Racing in 2010, will both field a pair of Chevrolet Corvette C6.Rs this season. But he said that problems sourcing an extra car for DKR would mean that it was almost certain to run just one car in the series opener at Abu Dhabi on March 26.

"It is coming together," said Ratel on Monday. "Twenty cars is a long shot for Abu Dhabi, but 19 is the minimum number of cars we will have."

Ratel explained that SRT would field the car it used last year and lease the C6.R run by the German Phoenix team in 2010 back from its new owner. Ratel believed he had a second vehicle for DKR, an unraced chassis still at car-builder Pratt & Miller in the US, but he explained that a deal to purchase this car had fallen out of bed.

British touring car squad Bamboo Engineering dropped out of contention for one of the Chevrolet slots last week.

Ratel said that he expected drivers to be announced for the Chevrolets soon. The official launch of this year's world championship took place in Paris yesterday (Wednesday) evening.

Abu Dhabi will host 19 cars



Howard-Chappell set for Ricard debut

said on Monday.

The AMR-One was fired up for the first time on Saturday. It was due to receive its maiden run on Wednesday at the Warwick proving ground owned by AMR parent company Prodrive.

"We have some basic running to do before we go sweeping around a circuit," Howard-Chappell explained. "Warwick is the ideal place for that kind of testing."

AMR is only planning to run one car at Ricard on April 3. It is on schedule to have two cars ready for the Le Mans Test Day and plans to run both at Spa on May 7.



Superleague aims to be one step ahead of F1

SUPERLEAGUE

Superleague eyeing Russia

Football-themed international single-seater series targets Russian event in September to get one over F1

Superleague Formula has set its sights on a race in Russia this year as it attempts to break new ground for an international racing series.

Russia is set to join the Formula 1 schedule in 2014, on a new track in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi that has yet to be constructed. But Superleague plans to beat F1 into

Russia by racing at an unspecified circuit, most likely the Smolensk Ring, on September 10-11. The only international racing events to have been held in the country occurred in pre-Soviet Russia in 1913 and '14, and all modern-day racing within its borders have been at national level.

Superleague's competitions director Robin Webb said: "We haven't signed it, but we have exchanged all our letters of intent and everything. There's some work to do there in terms of upgrading the licence [Smolensk Ring is FIA Grade 3], but it's under snow at the moment so those changes can't happen yet. We'll probably mesh in a Russian club this year to fit in too."

The series, which is entering its

fourth year, plans to split its season into two halves in 2011, starting with six European events before taking in another six flyaway races at venues around the world. Previously-announced events at Monza (April 16-17) and Algarve (May 7-8) have been discarded from the European leg, replaced by a season opener at Estoril on May 28-29. AUTOSPORT understands this was due to an issue with promoter SRO, whose British Formula 3 and World GT1 events it had planned to double-up with, although Webb refused to comment on the subject. Superleague will still race with World GT1 at Navarra in July, however.

As well as the planned Russian race, Superleague aims to return

to China in the second half of the season, having christened the new Ordos track and Beijing street circuit in 2010. On the remainder of the dates, Webb added: "We've also got South America, the Middle East and the Southern Hemisphere."

Superleague has predicted an 18-car grid for this season, with the capacity to run a further two cars. Webb aims to retain most of its leading drivers for 2011, although two-time series champion Davide Rigon tested for Formula Renault 3.5 team BVM Target at Motorland Aragon this week. Webb confirmed: "Yelmer Buurman will be back, so too Craig Dolby and John Martin. And there's talk of [Antonio] Pizzonia returning too."



Webb is making big plans

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FORMULA 3

Twin-series F3 plan for Blomqvist

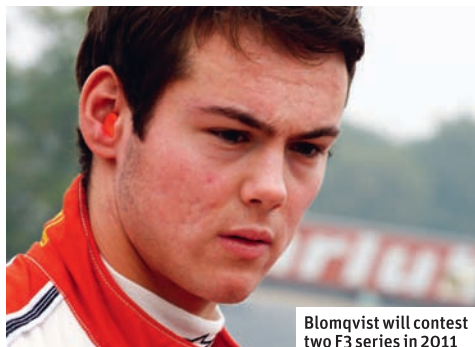
FORMULA RENAULT UK champion Tom Blomqvist will attack a dual-pronged Formula 3 programme this season.

The 17-year-old Anglo-Swede will contest the FIA F3 International Trophy with Performance Racing and race in the German F3 Cup for older-spec cars with the same team.

Blomqvist, whose father Stig won the 1984 World Rally Championship with Audi, will be powered by engines from

Audi sister marque VW. Silverstone-based Performance, founded by naturalised Swede Bobby Issazadhe, has yet to establish itself in current-spec F3. But it is understood that Blomqvist's International Trophy car will benefit from the development aero parts produced by VW powerhouse team Signature.

"This season will give me the opportunity to get a massive amount of miles under my belt," said Blomqvist, a 2010 McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award finalist. "I'm confident that with Performance Racing we make an



Blomqvist will contest two F3 series in 2011

excellent team."

The partnership renews a tie-up between the Blomqvist family and Performance, which operated a Blomqvist Junior Team in Swedish Formula Ford a decade ago.

BRITISH F3

Double R backs rookies to shine

DOUBLE R Racing boss Anthony Hieatt believes his outfit can have a strong season in British F3 despite a lack of experience in its driver line-up.



Rookie Pye joins Double R

Double R confirmed last week that reigning British Formula Ford champion Scott Pye would partner Brazilian Pipo Derani for 2011.

Pye is an F3 rookie, while Derani brings one season of German F3 experience to Britain. When the team last ran two series rookies in 2009, it used Swedish ace Marcus Ericsson, then competing in Japanese F3 with TOM's, to help bring Carlos Huertas and Daisuke Nakajima up to speed.

Although 2007 champion Marko Asmer has tested for Double R recently and is close to a deal to race in the new FIA International Trophy, Hieatt said his rookies would likely go it alone in the British championship.

"It would have to be Asmer if we do it," said Hieatt. "The difference we've got between Scott and the other drivers [we've run] is he knows the [British] circuits – it won't take him long to get up to speed."

NASCAR

NASCAR tweaks rules to prevent 'start & park' cars

NASCAR HAS changed its rules in a bid to prevent teams from deliberately retiring from races early to collect prize money for starting the race.

'Start & park' entries, where a driver

enters the race with no intention of trying to make the finish, have been a problem in the top-tier Sprint Cup in recent years as teams at the back of the grid scramble for funding to complete race distances.

The issue was brought to light again two weeks ago at Phoenix, when Tommy Baldwin Racing announced pre-race that it would 'start & park' after David Blaney crashed in practice. The team re-appeared at Las Vegas last weekend, but claimed it could not have done that had it raced the full distance at Phoenix.

NASCAR has tried to get around the issue in the past by inspecting the first car to retire to see if it has a genuine problem. But that has led to teams parking their cars claiming they are working on them, and then rejoining the race for a handful of laps once someone else has retired. That rule has changed now, with NASCAR deciding to select a random car from outside the top 35 in owner points to inspect after each race.

"There will still be a random inspection, but we're going to make it more random," said Cup series director John Darby. "Now, nobody knows who it is going to be."



TRG has already 'started & parked' this season



P65 NASCAR LAS VEGAS

IN BRIEF

FIRESTONE OUT OF INDYCAR

Firestone has confirmed that it will pull out of the IndyCar Series at the end of this year. Indy bosses have held talks with Goodyear, Hoosier, Michelin and Avon regarding potential replacements.

GANASSI BOYS FOR SWAP

Ganassi IndyCar and NASCAR drivers Scott Dixon and Jamie McMurray will swap cars next week. McMurray will drive Dixon's Dallara-Honda at Barber Motorsports Park on Wednesday, while Dixon will drive the American's Chevrolet stock car at nearby Talladega Superspeedway.

VERNAY DOUBTFUL FOR INDY

Reigning Indy Lights champion Jean-Karl Vernay is struggling to find a drive in the IndyCar Series after losing his main backer. "For a long time I believed in my chances in IndyCar," he said. "Now I'm free of all contracts."

SCHMIDT ACQUIRES FAZZT

Top Indy Lights team Sam Schmidt Motorsports has taken over the FAZZT IndyCar team. FAZZT stakeholder Alex Tagliani will be retained as the driver of the team's sole entry. Schmidt has also signed Esteban Guerrieri for Lights.

BEATRIZ LANDS D&R SEAT

Dreyer & Reinbold Racing has signed Ana Beatriz to replace Mike Conway for the 2011 IndyCar season. The Brazilian made four starts for the team last year, taking a best finish of 13th in the season opener.

GORDON PUNISHED BY NASCAR

Robby Gordon has been placed on probation by NASCAR following an off-track altercation with his former driver Kevin Conway at Las Vegas last weekend. The dispute centred around money, as both claim they are owed by the other.

CONWAY BACK IN ACTION

Mike Conway had his first taste of IndyCar action this week since his season-ending shunt in last year's Indianapolis 500. The Briton drove for new team Andretti Autosport at Homestead on Monday.

WEBB TOPS FR3.5 TESTING

Oliver Webb set the fastest time in Tuesday morning's Formula Renault 3.5 collective test at Motorland Aragon, ahead of Brendon Hartley (below).





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4-5 June	TBA	
18-19 June	Brno	(CZ)

16-17 July	Donington	(UK)
30-31 July	Oschersleben	(D)
20-21 August	Bucharest	(RO)
3-4 September	Valencia	(E)

THIS WEEK...

Flashback

June 11 2003

Jeff Gordon and Juan Pablo Montoya swap cars

In June 2003, four-time NASCAR champion Gordon drove a Williams FW24 on the Indianapolis road course. He lapped 1.3 off the Colombian's shakedown time and described it as "like a slot car". Lewis Hamilton and Tony Stewart will perform a similar swap later this year.



TOP FIVE

Indycar comebacks

1 DARIO FRANCHITTI

After a disastrous NASCAR foray, he returned to IndyCar in 2009 and won two drivers' titles.

2 MICHAEL ANDRETTI

After three years on the sidelines, he returned to the Indy 500 in 2006, and nearly won.

3 DANNY ONGAIS

Stepped in after Scott Brayton was killed in 1996, finishing seventh.

4 DAVEY HAMILTON

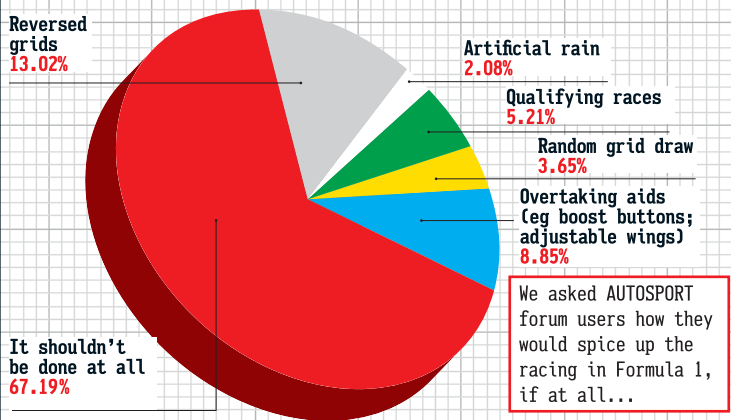
Six years after nearly losing his legs, he took ninth in the 2007 500.

5 TONY STEWART

The 1997 IRL champion was a full-time NASCAR driver when he took sixth in the 2001 Indy 500.



Weekly poll: adding spice



top tweets



@12WillPower

Just finished a long day of filming for @VerizonWireless... man acting is tough! No wonder @charliesheen has lost it...



@scottspeed

I need to put out a disclaimer. If u think I am SERIOUS, or MAD.. Stop.. Think.. And realize it's Scott Speed, and I was probably kiddin lol



@karunchandhok

Was educated on the concept of Pancake day last weekend – loving the idea of planned Pancake party tonight !!



@Tiagosworld18

Anyone knows how to recover a deleted file from notes on iPad??



@TownsendBell99

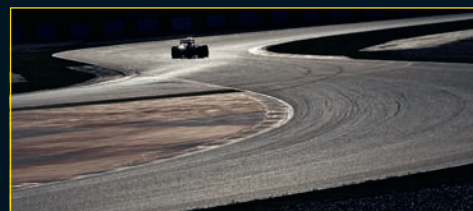
Kids stole my underwear and went to town with the iron on kit.



@KevinHarvick

Story of the last 2 week is the press arguing among each other as to whether cheering in the press box is ok...WHO CARES!

NEXT WEEK...



F1 SEASON PREVIEW

F1 2011 finally starts on March 27 – promise! – in Australia. Don't miss our detailed, 55-page guide

David Coulthard's predictions

The GP winner and BBC commentator reveals what he thinks will happen



PLUS

How the adjustable wings work, tyre analysis, Paul di Resta interview, full team by team and circuit guide

ON SALE MAR 17

WRC

LOEB WINS IN NEW DS3

Sebastien Loeb captured the first win for the Citroen DS3 WRC on Rally Mexico last weekend. The Frenchman is the only driver to have won in all three of Citroen's World Rally Cars.



P58 RALLY MEXICO

WRC

Rally GB thrown a 2012 lifeline

With Britain's round of the WRC given a provisional slot on the calendar for 2012, the race is on to find a host venue

Rally GB has three months to secure its long-term future in the World Rally Championship after being given a provisional place on next year's calendar.

There were fears that Britain would lose its WRC slot in 2012 due to the lack of a host venue beyond this year's Cardiff-based November event. But the rally remains on the proposed schedule – albeit on the understanding that a firm plan is in place in time for the World Motor Sport Council meeting in June.

Next year's calendar was circulated around the WRC Commission last week for a fax vote. The events were expected

to be ratified – without dates – at the World Motor Sport Council earlier this week. The dated calendar is expected in June.

Rally GB chief executive Andrew Coe admitted there was relief among the organisers that the event has been provisionally included, but added that the next three months would be vital.

"Before this people were reluctant to commit to an event that might not be on the calendar," said Coe. "If we hadn't been there, it would certainly have been detrimental to our efforts regarding an agreement for 2012 and we could very seriously have been looking at this year being the final Rally GB

for the foreseeable future. But now we have these three months we'll be doing everything we can to get the host venue and sponsorship sorted."

Ford of Europe Motorsport chief Gerard Quinn implored the organisers to find a solution.

"How many get-out-of-jail cards do they need?" said Quinn. "GB always runs to the wire: is it in or is it out? They've got to get their backing in place to run a world-class event, it's as simple as that. If they don't, shame on them."

Citroen's Olivier Quesnel said he thought the series would be weaker without the British qualifier.

"GB is good because it's a big [car] market and a historic rally,"

said Quesnel. "There is a good culture of rallying and I hope they get it right. In the years past, it has been bad."

AUTOSPORT understands that, should the Rally GB organisers be unable to secure a long-term host venue, they will withdraw the event from the 2012 calendar.



Rally GB's status needs a turnaround

WRC

Big guns critical of 2012 calendar

CITROEN AND FORD have both rejected the proposed 13-round World Rally Championship calendar for next season on cost grounds.

The proposed schedule includes Catalunya, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, plus multi-country events in Sweden/Norway and Argentina/Uruguay.

Great Britain and Abu Dhabi are conditional inclusions on the calendar.

As outlined in AUTOSPORT last week (March 3), the FIA is keen to feature endurance rallies in the WRC, and South America and possibly Scandinavia could run to this format. The current political situation in the Middle East has put plans to run an Abu Dhabi-Oman-Dubai event on the backburner.

Citroen's Olivier Quesnel said: "We don't agree with this calendar, there are 13 events and five overseas. Last year it

was impossible for Abu Dhabi because there had been no pre-event [candidate event], but this time it's possible?

"Logistically, the new calendar it will cost €1.5m, for nothing. We don't sell any cars in Abu Dhabi, Japan or New Zealand."

Seven-time world champion Sebastien Loeb said he could see the cost argument against longer rallies.

"I like it like it is now," said Loeb. "For sure it's more expensive. I did do one Safari in my career and I enjoyed it. I have incredible memories from that event."



Loeb enjoyed his sole Safari outing in 2002

WRC

VW to confirm programme in Portugal



Al-Attiyah would relish a VW drive in the WRC

VOLKSWAGEN WILL reveal its World Rally Championship programme on Rally Portugal later this month – with Petter Solberg and Nasser Al-Attiyah lined up to drive the car.

Further details of the German firm's WRC plans were leaked during last week's Rally Mexico – including speculation of a £80m budget and a big-money bid for seven-time world champion Sebastien

Loeb. Loeb denied there had been any contact from VW and added that it was too early in the season to talk about his plans for next year.

Solberg also declined to discuss a move back into a factory team, saying: "I drive with Citroen this year and that's all I'm going to talk about."

Al-Attiyah, who won this year's Dakar with VW, said: "I think VW will say something in Portugal about if we do cross-country or a different programme."

The former Production Car world champion said he had talked about the

WRC with VW, adding: "Of course, I would love to do WRC. It is my dream to be in the official team with Volkswagen if they are coming to WRC. From my side, VW are happy with me and I think the team want to keep me for testing and a lot of the programme we can do. I have a lot of experience."

Former Peugeot and Citroen engineer Francois-Xavier Demaison is believed to have started work for VW, with the Frenchman thought to be running the development of the Polo WRC.

IN BRIEF



HIRVONEN'S POWERSTAGE

Mikko Hirvonen collected Ford's maiden Powerstage victory on Rally Mexico last weekend. The Finn (above) was second on the event, but saved his only stage-winning performance for the test that mattered most – collecting three extra points at the same time.

MORE OUTINGS FOR NOVIKOV

Evgeny Novikov is hoping to add the WRC rounds in France and Germany to his schedule to boost a six-round programme up to eight this season. The Russian returned to the series in Mexico last weekend after a break of a year, but retired from fifth place with a damaged sump on day two.

TANAK CRASHES TO THIRD

Markko Martin's protege Ott Tanak didn't make the best of starts to his five-year programme with M-Sport on last week's Rally Mexico. The Estonian dropped his Ford off the road and down a ravine on Saturday morning. The car was recovered and he finished third in the S2000 class.

WILSON AIMS AT PODIUM

Matthew Wilson has targeted a podium finish in the first half of the season as he aims to secure funding

to complete the second half of the campaign. "If we can get in around the fourth-fifth battle then a podium is possible and that would really help later in the year," admitted Wilson, who retired from fourth place with electrical problems in Mexico last weekend.

HANKOOK FOR GARDEMEISTER

Toni Gardemeister will contest a further eight IRC rounds this season in a Hankook-backed Skoda Fabia S2000. The tyre firm backed Andreas Mikkelsen last season and has switched to the Finn for 2011, starting with next month's Canaries Rally. Gardemeister's Skoda, which will be prepared by his own motorsport firm, will conclude its schedule of events with the Rally of Scotland in October.

MIKKELSEN WINS GIRAGLIA

Skoda UK driver Andreas Mikkelsen (below) sealed his first victory in the Fabia S2000 on last weekend's Ronde De La Giraglia Rally in Corsica. The Norwegian's two-minute win came despite changeable conditions in the north of the island. The event was a test for next month's Canaries Rally.



WRC

Ford fixes electrical problems



Ken Block's Fiesta died before the start in Mexico

M-SPORT MANAGING director Malcolm Wilson is confident his team is on top of the electrical issues that blighted the Ford Fiesta WRCs in Mexico last week.

The factory cars ran without any problems, but Ken Block and Matthew Wilson both suffered repeated issues with the electrics shorting on their Fiestas. Block's car failed to make it as far as the first stage before stopping. The American then suffered further failures on Friday and Sunday. Wilson's Fiesta was the only car to retire due to the problem.

"We know what caused this," said Wilson Sr. "And we're pretty confident we've already got it sorted. The problem centred on the auto-reset for the fans, which kept coming on and overheating and then melting some of the wires. We have altered the fan strategy here in Mexico, but we will have the wiring looms plugged in back at the factory to diagnose exactly what was going on."

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

DAVID EVANS
RALLIES EDITOR

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Well done to the stewards of Rally Mexico for delivering a common-sense decision that kept the battle between Sebastien Loeb and Ogier alive into the final day.

Ogier had been before the stewards for an honest mistake. He went into service instead of the regroup and, yes, the team did touch the car, but that was all they did. To hit the Frenchman with a penalty would have been tough on him after he had driven an exceptional event. It would also have short-changed the fans, who were all eagerly anticipating what's certain to be the first of many final-day fights between the two Citroens. Unfortunately the battle never really got going after Ogier went off on the first Sunday stage.

While I applaud the stewards for the sporting decision on Saturday night, what we absolutely need is a continuation of that common-sense approach. For example, Ken Block elected not to hop his Ford Fiesta up onto the pavement to scatter pedestrians, avoid the traffic and get to SS16 on time. Instead, he did the sensible, law-abiding thing, waited his turn at the lights... and then got hit by a 40-second penalty for being late at the next control.

What message does that convey? Common sense must be applied.

And finally, congratulations to the organisers of Rally Mexico for another stunning event. Look, listen and learn quickly Rally GB...

Ogier avoided penalty for tiny Mexican gaffe



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Really? €15m! Give them my telephone number!”



Sebastien Loeb laughs off talk of a big-money move to Volkswagen



Power is nothing without control

Black, round and boring? No way. Pirelli's return to F1 will change its face, says MARK HUGHES

Pirelli's deal to replace Bridgestone as the control-tyre supplier for Formula 1 means that the driving and strategic demands have been radically changed. As promised, Pirelli has delivered tyres that wear out quickly, just as the Bridgestones did at last year's Canadian Grand Prix, which was hugely entertaining as a result. The whole approach to how you run a race has changed radically.

For one, there are going to be many more pitstops, but that isn't even the half of it. The performance of the cars is going to drop off very quickly as those rear tyres rapidly wear down. No longer will races be split into two or three flat-out sprints; instead there will be four or five stints of tyre management, where the driver is deliberately going slower than he could do for much of the time – especially at the beginning of those stints. On his fresh tyres he will not initially go anything like as fast as the car is capable of going. Do that and the rears go off spectacularly, after just four or five laps.

It's not just going to be about who can minimise their tyre wear – it's ►

◀ more sophisticated than that. Go very slowly and you can make your tyres last quite a long time, but then you're so slow that those guys who pushed harder than you and had to pit earlier will still be ahead. No, the key is going to be finding the optimum initial pace to give the fastest stint time. It's going to be about having a feel for just how hard you can get away with pushing – and from the evidence of testing that varies enormously from car to car.

Indications from most of the long runs in Spain was that drivers were beginning the stints lapping up to five seconds slower than they were capable of going in order to keep the tyres alive for a 16/17-lap stint that a three-stop strategy would entail – and it will be at least three stops at most tracks, four at some. The rears simply do not last long enough for even a two-stop, let alone a one-stop.

"It's not racing," complained Lewis Hamilton. "It's just driving around."

"Don't watch me, mate," said Mark Webber to a spectating Martin Brundle. "I'm only doing long runs this afternoon. It's going to be painfully slow."

This pretty much summarises how the drivers feel about the latest set of demands. They have spent their entire careers up to this point pushing as hard as they could, maximising the speed of the car at all times, fighting for every

split-second of lap time. Suddenly, that's only a very small part of the game. Balancing the car front to rear in terms of both set-up and driving – and then hanging on to an oversteering bronco late in the stint – is what it's all going to be about. Using the car's oversteer early in a stint to minimise the direction change will be a no-no, as that will only wear through those fragile rear tyres even quicker. Keeping as much strain off the rears as possible, while still maintaining a reasonable momentum – and having a feel for how much you can get away with pushing in those early laps of a stint – will be the key endeavour.

But much as the drivers might dislike it, spectators will probably enjoy it. As the cars are moving around a lot more, the car control of the drivers will be much more visible. Controlling low-grip oversteer is just a tiresome, easy bore for them. But from the outside it looks great. It has long been one of the ironies of modern racing cars that the faster and better behaved they can be made to corner, the bigger the challenge for the drivers, the more sorting there is of the men from the boys – but the duller it looks to the casual spectator.

It isn't really going to be a case of which drivers this may or may not suit. It will actually be a lot less demanding than before purely from a driving-skill perspective. Wear rate is going to



Pirelli's finest get ready for abuse

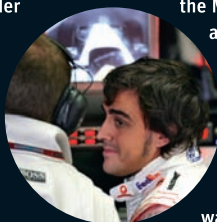


➔ TYRE CASE STUDY



During the last tyre war, Renault went further than anyone else in adapting the design of its car around the characteristics of the Michelin tyre, which gained most of its advantage over the Bridgestone through superior longitudinal grip – ie under braking and traction. In order to take fuller advantage of this trait, Renault configured its car with a more rearward-biased weight distribution than anyone else, and as a consequence it accessed more of the Michelin's huge capacity in traction.

The unusual concept of the car meant it responded best to a very unusual driving style – and Fernando Alonso was able to adapt to it very effectively. With not much weight over them, the front tyres would not initially



generate much cornering force, and into a slow corner Alonso would simply aggressively wind on a lot of lock (above) when still braking. This would give a lot of understeer, but he'd have the car stable to get hard and early upon the power, using the Michels to do what they did best, and more than overcoming the limitation on corner entry.

Upon moving to the more conventional McLaren (left) in 2007 he was quickly able to rewire his brain and drive in a more conventional manner. But it was noteworthy that when he first tested the car, it was still on Michelins and he was significantly quicker than rookie Lewis Hamilton. It was only when the 2007 control Bridgestones were fitted that suddenly Hamilton was able to lap as quickly.



Will Vettel be doing this four times a race?



Alonso looked good on a one-off long run



Maldonado: oi! Look after that rubber

dominate everything – and, other than choosing the appropriate pace for any given moment, there's little a driver will be able to do about it. It will be about getting as much downforce on the car as possible, particularly at the rear, and driving to a pre-determined pace some way off your potential at the beginning of the stint – then adapting to the increasing oversteer. But it's not as if it's high-grip, demanding oversteer. They will all be able to do it just fine, though Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg, Michael Schumacher or Adrian Sutil – drivers who naturally seem to prefer the rear moving around them – may just be able to hang on a little better.

What may well be of more significance is how the cars will be set up for qualifying. Because of the parc ferme rules, there can be no set-up changes between qualifying and race – and you probably want the car to begin the race with a measure of understeer in order to protect the fragile rear tyres for as long as possible. So could that offer a qualifying advantage for those drivers – Jenson Button, Fernando Alonso, Nick Heidfeld, for example – more at ease with that?

However this conflict of demands pans out, the significant thing is that the effect either way will be dwarfed by the variations in drop-off of the tyres. The driving-style issues may be worth a couple of tenths, but differences in wear rates will account for whole chunks of seconds.

It's not as if the silky skills of a Jenson Button – the man who got a set of super-softs to last a stunning 39 laps in Abu Dhabi last year, or who eked out seven more laps on them at Hockenheim than those around him – will be of much use either. That was when tyre preservation was about not getting the rubber too hot, not overstressing it. Heat degradation does not look like it's going to be the issue with the Pirellis – far from it. Their stiff construction and soft compounds means very little movement in the carcass, the tread running cooler than ideal and simply stripping itself away from the tyre. That has got next to nothing to do with the driver. This will be more like Montreal last year.

Another possibly welcome outcome for the fans is that there is going to be so much variation in the pace of the cars at any given time that the order is probably going to be scrambled regularly, and there may well be more surprise results than in recent seasons.

The demands made of the race strategists are going to be greater – and there are sure to be more reactive changes. Push too hard too early on

those tyres, for example, and the drop-off is so spectacular it will actually be better to add an unplanned stop than to struggle on. This much was illustrated dramatically in the Barcelona test: Sebastian Vettel was doing long runs in his Red Bull, followed a little distance back by Paul di Resta. The Force India then pitted for fresh tyres, and within five laps was back on the tail of Vettel and looking for a way past, having made up all the 25s penalty of the stop itself in that short time. Even having enough tyres left to not be down to the canvas by the end of a race may prove difficult on occasion.

Another key strategic decision will be how to use the tyre allocation – which has not changed from last year, despite massively greater wear rates. You still get three sets each of prime and option (softer) to carry you through both qualifying and race. A three-stop race – which is what testing indicated Barcelona will be – requires four of your six sets of tyres. If you have made it to Q3 you will have used at least four sets

in qualifying, so at best you're going to have only two fresh sets available for your four stints. A fresh set of options would be good for startline and

“It's not as if the silky skills of a Jenson Button will be of much use either”

first-lap performance, and would get their troublesome characteristics thereafter out of the way – but that would likely drop you into traffic because the field would not have spread much by the time the tyres are finished. Unless, of course, everyone has done the same! Which brings us into game-theory territory – how what others have decided changes your optimum strategy.

But would you even want to use fresh tyres? Could pre-used ones actually be better? This, in fact, may be key to understanding three anomalously sensational runs in testing last week, two from Alonso, one from Rubens Barrichello. With everyone else beginning their long runs lapping 5s or more off their real potential, Alonso and Barrichello each did runs on day two where they were hard on it immediately. In terms of tyre-wear prospects it looked suicidal – and yet the stint averages in each case were fantastically good. Alonso did two runs of 17 laps each where his average lap was in the mid-1m26s, a full 1s per lap better than the best of the rest over a comparable distance. Barrichello did an 11-lap run where he averaged a stunning 1m 25.6s – again after setting a very hard pace from the off, 4s per lap or more faster than on other comparable runs he did.

This has all the hallmarks of tyres that have been fully cured by some previous running. Doing some gentle ►



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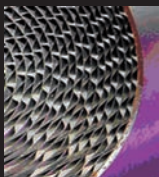
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Renault: ahead of Merc over one lap, but not on long run

◀ running, then removing them and letting them 'cure' over a period of hours, can often give tyres far more resilience. Is this what Ferrari and Williams tried? It was noticeable that neither team did any similar runs in the remaining two days, as if they wanted not to show their hands any further.

But curing the tyres in this way would be quite tricky under the current supply regulations. All of your Friday tyres have to be returned at the end of that day, and then you're issued with eight fresh sets on Saturday morning, with one of each compound then having to be returned at the end of Saturday morning's free practice. So you couldn't cure a set on Friday. You would therefore have to devote free practice on Saturday morning to the gentle laps of tyre preparation. But a pre-used set, as well as being more durable, would also lose the instant first-lap performance needed for qualifying...

What we look certain to see is a well-spread-out field, as different cars will allow their drivers to push harder early in the stint than others – and then a big period of overlap around the stops where the tyres are wearing out a few laps apart. Repeat three times, sometimes four, and it's going to be very difficult to keep

up with what's happened.

Further complicating matters, the evidence from testing is that the competitive order over one lap of qualifying is slightly different to over a stint. Over one lap of Barcelona qualifying it would appear the order was:

Ferrari/Red Bull	Potential 1m22.0s
Renault/Williams	High 1m22s
Toro Rosso/Mercedes	Low 1m23s
McLaren	Mid 1m23s
Sauber/Force India	Low 1m24s
Lotus	Low 1m25s
Virgin	Low 1m26s
HRT	High 1m26s

But on long runs it looks more like:

Ferrari
Red Bull/Williams (if that run can be repeated)
Sauber/Mercedes
Renault
Toro Rosso
McLaren
Force India
Lotus
Virgin
HRT

The Sauber, for example, looks better over a stint than over one lap. The Renault appears less competitive

They've been absent from F1 since 1991



“What we look certain to see is a spread-out field, and then a big period of overlap”

over a stint than on a flying lap. This order will certainly be jumbled further by the time of the first race as everyone brings their latest updates, but if there remains variation in competitiveness between cars between qualifying and race, the picture becomes yet more apparently randomised.

This new era is definitely going to be different. It remains to be seen if it's better. ☒

⚡ BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

The circumstances of the 2010 Canadian GP – a track that had been resurfaced in key parts with very fine asphalt, to prevent it being churned up by the F1 tyres, and a heavy storm washing the track clean of rubber build-up after Friday – created a random, unpredictable race. It was a curveball that gave a refreshing

change from the competitive norm, with the race ebbing and flowing in different directions according to the tyres' behaviour.

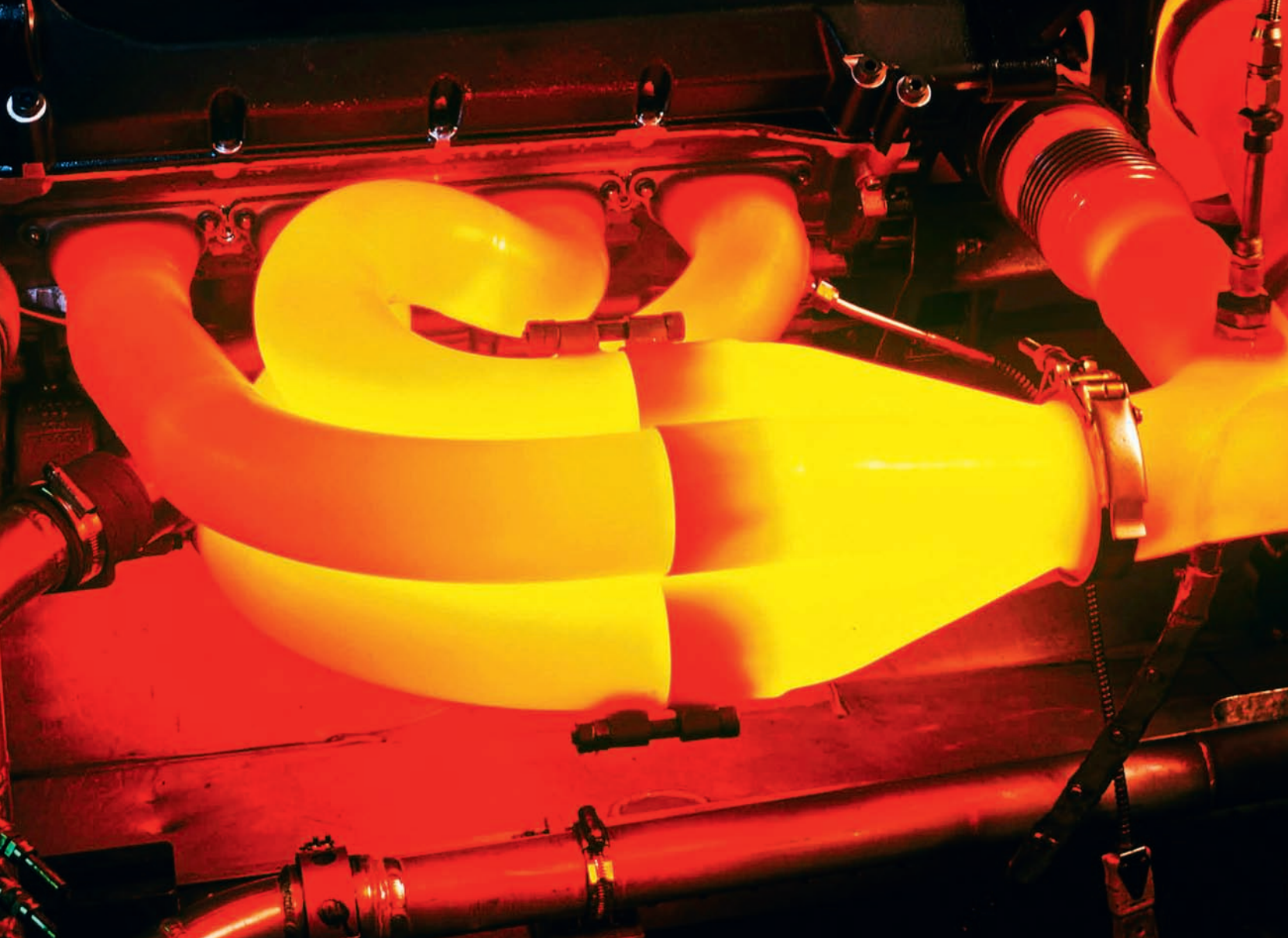
This was then seized upon as a template for how racing should be, and Pirelli was directed to come up with something similar for 2011. This seems to have been achieved. But

might the novelty not wear as quickly as the Pirelli rears? And what happens when the teams have learned exactly how to optimise the characteristics?

F1 has always been about excellence. There seems something not quite right about deliberately engineering something with not quite enough performance.

Barrichello has Canada dust-up with Rosberg





IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...

...you're probably not made of fine particulate ceramic. *EDD STRAW* looks at how modern advances in technology have aided the return to F1 of the exhaust-blown diffuser

Such is the nature of Formula 1 that there always seems to be one breakthrough design concept that becomes the focus of almost obsessive attention. Two years ago it was the double diffuser. Last year it was the f-duct. Now? It's all about the exhaust-blown diffuser.

But it's far from a new idea. In fact, the exhaust-blown diffuser first appeared in F1 28 years ago. Over the ensuing decade many ran the concept, which was first conceived by Renault's Jean-Claude Migeot (see panel, p35), but when Red Bull unleashed its system on the final day of pre-season testing last year it marked the idea's F1 resurrection. As the season went on most adopted the system, and the exhaust war escalated last month when Renault unveiled its unique pipes, which exit at the front of the sidepods. With regulations ever-more restrictive, exhausts have moved from the realm of engines into the realm of aerodynamics, as Renault engine technical director Rob White explains.

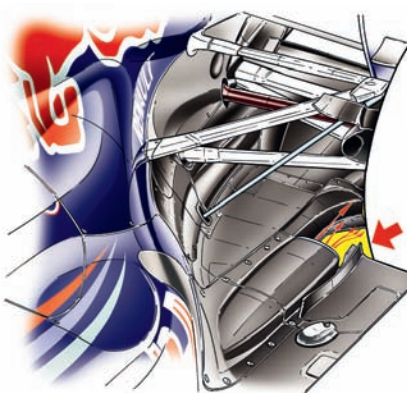
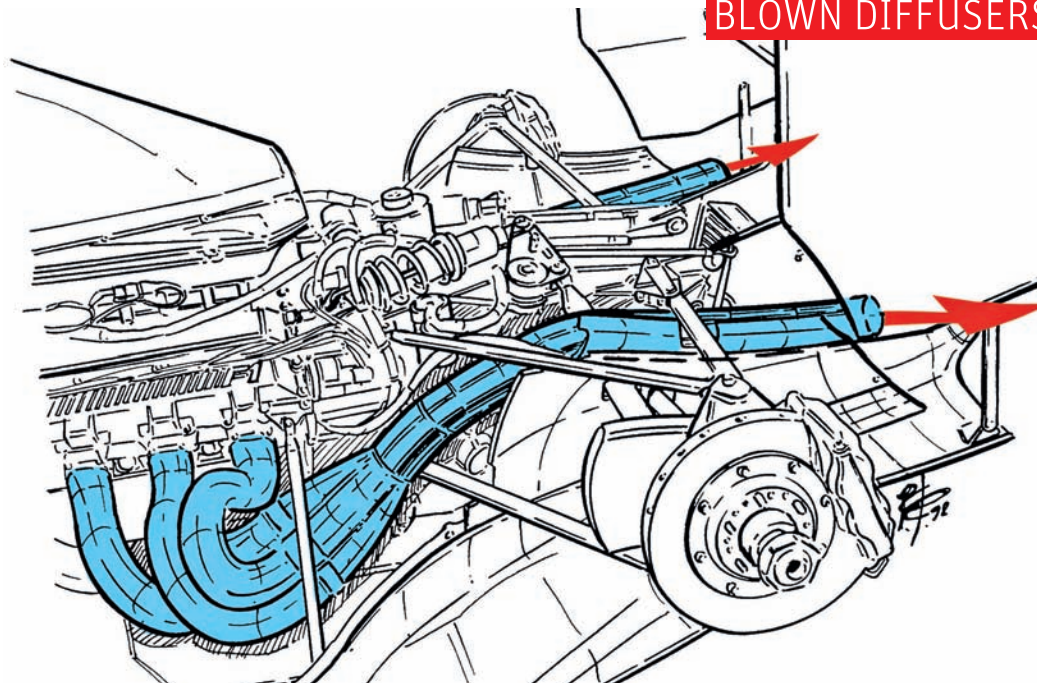
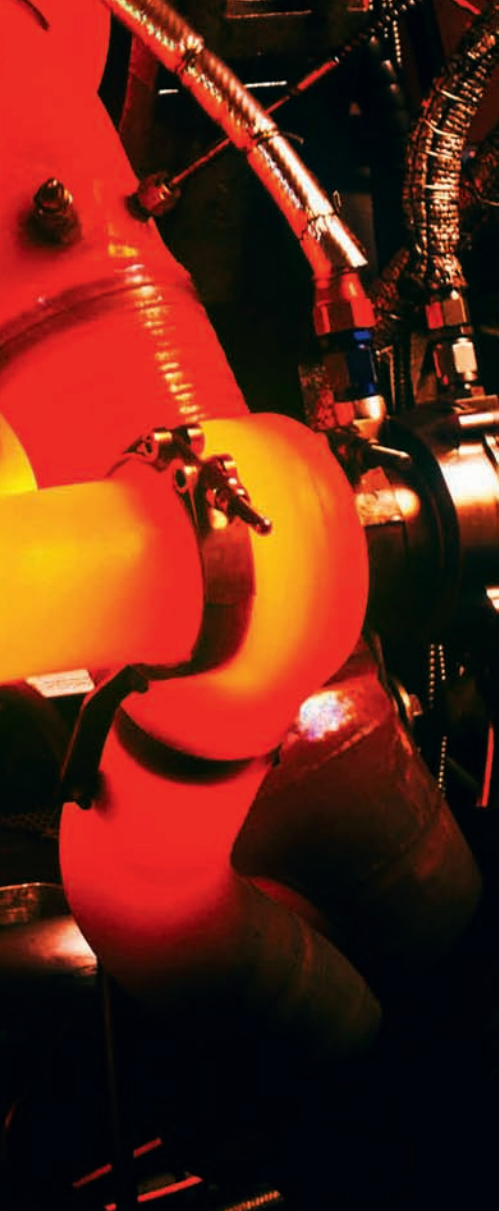
"One of the hot subjects to emerge last year was blown floors, and our chassis partners became very interested in making use of the exhaust energy to make the best aerodynamically-

performing racing car," says White. "This moves the authority of the exhaust effect into a different league, whereas historically the system was optimised for the engines within car-packaging constraints."

But that doesn't answer why exhaust-blown diffusers faded out first time around. By the early 1990s they were pretty standard on F1 cars, before the raft of rule changes that followed the deaths of Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger at Imola in 1994.

"In the early 1990s the diffusers were powerful," explains AUTOSPORT's Gary Anderson, who was technical director of Jordan during that period. "Because of that there were huge benefits to using the exhaust gases. Then, after Ayrton was killed, the diffusers got a big chop and were brought back to the line of the rear axle. That made exhaust gases less of a requirement."

That's not to say that they vanished completely. Red Bull technical chief Adrian Newey was always a fan of the blown diffuser, and it's no surprise that he was the man responsible for bringing them back into fashion. His 2001 McLaren featured one, as did 2003's infamous, unraced MP4-18, but demands from engine suppliers generally precluded its use. Until now.



“Red Bull technical chief Adrian Newey was always a fan of the blown diffuser. It’s no surprise that he was the man responsible for bringing them back into fashion”

“The regulations don’t allow you to blow directly into the diffuser, because the surface has to be solid,” says Anderson. “But people found a way of doing it, which wasn’t to blow the diffuser as we used to know it, where you’re putting the gases onto the surface of the diffuser, but instead you blow at it from a distance and aim to keep the airflow attached, and work with the low-pressure area around the rear tyre. In a way it’s misleading to call it an exhaust-blown diffuser.”

This year Newey has again upped the ante. The exhausts blow from the outermost 50mm of each side of the diffuser, in response to the rules being changed to ensure a continuous surface in the rest of the floor. It’s just one of a number of applications of the concept, with Mercedes promising the debut of

its own distinct system in Barcelona testing this week.

But these aren’t the only reasons why blown bodywork is so popular. Ever-improving technology makes the heat shielding of composite components far easier today than in the past. In the past, heat shielding might have required the addition of serious weight, but now companies such as Oxfordshire-based Zircotec can supply lightweight ceramic-based coatings that protect components, using technology adapted from the nuclear industry.

“We’ve adapted the technology to attach it to carbon composites,” explains Terry Graham, managing director of Zircotec, which supplies the vast majority of the F1 grid. “We apply it using plasma spray processing, so we are melting fine particulate ceramic in a plasma flame at more than 10,000 degrees C. We then fire it at the carbon composite at about twice the speed of sound and we can get the ThermoHold material to weld onto the surface of the carbon composite without damaging the substrate material.”

Even though it deals with temperatures upwards of 700C, the thickness of the coating is negligible – you’re talking microns thick rather than millimetres (from 20 microns

Clockwise from top: 1992 Benetton was one of many in the early ’90s to feature a blown diffuser; the unraced McLaren MP4-18 featured a blown exhaust, but the team then dropped the concept; Red Bull blows exhaust gas into the diffuser inside the rear wheels from the side

upwards), although just how much must be applied depends on how high the temperature is. And it’s not just about how light it is – Zircotec launched a new aerodynamically-profiled coating at this year’s AUTOSPORT International.

“Our coating was smooth to the touch, but from an airflow viewpoint was still quite rough,” says Graham. “Recognising that, we’ve improved the coating to offer a very smooth surface.”

Such coatings are now applied all over cars – with some teams opting to coat their entire undertrays for heat-shielding reasons. Zircotec has seen a whole raft of new components being submitted for coating from teams for this season, demonstrating just how far and wide teams are casting the net in the use of exhaust gases.

The other key question is over how challenging it is to manufacture exhausts routed primarily for aerodynamic benefit. Teams and engine manufacturers work closely together to come up with designs that fit in with the resonances of the engine, and small miscalculations can have a serious consequence on power and back pressure. It’s up to companies such as Primary Designs, another company based in the UK’s ►

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“Expect the exhaust manufacturers to be further challenged as teams try more ways to convert high-velocity waste gases into an aerodynamic weapon”

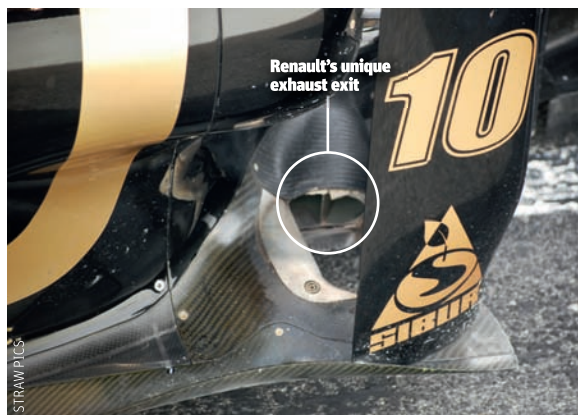
◀ ‘motorsport valley’, to make these elaborate exhausts (hand-made from Incanel, a Nikel alloy) a reality.

“You often find different shapes involved in the exhaust now,” explains Pat Barrett of PD. “People are expecting high quality in a very short space of time. We’re working with very thin materials that are generically difficult to work with. We work with tight-radius bends, which is difficult because you get a lot of thickness on the outside of the bend and compressions and thickening of the wall on the inside of the radius. Incanel is very thin and bends that to be perfect. Sometimes, the centreline of the bend is less than the diameter of the tube, which it would have been said years ago was impossible!”

Expect the exhaust manufacturers to be further challenged this season as teams try more weird and wonderful ways to convert high-velocity waste gases into an aerodynamic weapon. Estimates suggest that the downforce benefit is not huge – perhaps as little as 15kg. But with margins so tight in modern F1, that could still make the difference between winning and losing. ❧



Application of heat-shield treatment

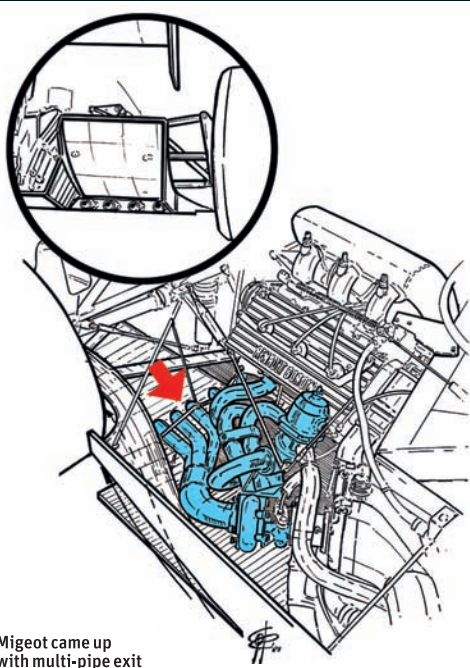


Renault's unique exhaust exit



This is Zircotec's ThermoHold coating

➔ FIRST TIME AROUND



Migeot came up with multi-pipe exit

JEAN-CLAUDE MIGEOT was a 29-year-old Renault aerodynamicist when he conceived the exhaust-blown diffuser in 1982. The system made its debut on the Renault RE40 at the Monaco Grand Prix a year later.

“We knew that skirts were going to be banned and flat bottoms were coming for 1983, and our tests showed that we would be left with perhaps one third of the downforce that we had,” says Migeot. “So we were looking for ideas to generate downforce. The idea of blowing wings was not new in aircraft history, but I don’t remember it being done on a car before. We also thought about trying to use exhaust gases to simulate skirts, which was tested on track with absolutely disastrous results!”

Migeot settled on a multi-pipe design that fed air directly to the diffuser and also drew air from both the turbo and the wastegate of the 1.5-litre powerplant. A titanium plate was used for heat shielding.

“It was obvious that it was very good for traction out of the slow corners,” says Migeot. “It was worth something like 80kg of downforce, which was huge, and there was no way you could do that with conventional bodywork. But it was



Prost gives exhaust-blown diffuser its debut in 1983

very throttle-dependent and on tracks with long corners the car could be so throttle-sensitive that it was slower, despite having more downforce.”

With Alain Prost and Derek Warwick (the Brit nicknamed the system ‘the blowjob’) not always happy with the performance of the exhaust-blown-diffuser-equipped Renaults, Migeot found himself increasingly sceptical of its merits, although he tried the philosophy again when he went to Ferrari in 1986.

“It made my name known in F1 for the first time, and not necessarily in the most brilliant way,” says Migeot. “It worked, but it was not all good. Now, with not so many long, fast corners and the ability to use the ECU to manage the throttle, it is maybe easier. But today, the effect of the exhaust-blown diffuser is perhaps not proportional to its visibility, and it’s just one of the cocktail of 10 things that make a good car.”

FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

ADAM COOPER recounts the tale of how Jordan made it onto the grand prix grid

If you're reading this on Thursday, it's 20 years ago to the day since a Jordan appeared on a Formula 1 grid for the first time, when Bertrand Gachot started the United States Grand Prix in Phoenix – on March 10 1991. The name may have changed a few times, but two decades on the team that Eddie Jordan founded at Silverstone is still going strong. And some of those who were involved in its birth are still busy with Force India.

The Jordan Grand Prix adventure began in 1990. Having found success in F3000, Eddie saw F1 as the only logical step, and engaged Reynard F3000 man Gary Anderson to design a car. The Ulsterman set up an office with just two colleagues – Andy Green and Mark Smith – while the irrepressible Jordan went to work on finding a budget.

He managed to get an engine supply from Ford, but suffered a blow when he lost Camel cigarettes, the F3000 sponsor that he'd banked on keeping.

"When I found out that the Camel sponsorship was going to Benetton it was a big lesson for me," EJ recalls. "In Formula Ford, F3 and F3000 it was kind of gentlemanly, whereas F1 was a very serious business. It was every man for himself. Naively, I was trying to figure out why would Flavio Briatore take my sponsor? Obviously I learned very quickly!"

He then pulled off a coup by capturing Pepsi-owned 7UP as title sponsor, and thus stumbled onto the green theme that was to make the 1991 so distinctive. Suddenly other deals fell into place. The Irish government offered support, and then – after Kodak rejected the idea of being on a green car – EJ convinced main rival Fuji Film to back the team.

In November 1990 Jordan signed up Gachot, who had endured two mixed years with Onyx and Coloni. Just a few weeks before the start of the season he agreed terms with Andrea de Cesaris.

"We were very lucky – we had two outstanding drivers for a fledgling team, and they brought money as well," he adds. "Camel was gone, so I went for Marlboro drivers, coupled to the sponsors that we had.

"Of course you never really have a clue what it's going to be like. Having said that I felt that we had a very lovely little car, and I had just got the 7UP sponsorship, so commercially I felt we had a cracking package."

Funding was in the pipeline, but things were still extremely tight. The team travelled to the US with the bare minimum of staff and equipment.

"Nowadays people talk about putting on a new package for the first race," says Anderson. "We weren't able to – as a small team we were just fighting to make enough bits. I think 27 of us went to Phoenix. Mark Smith stayed at home; he put the lights on and off just to make the workshop look busy!"

"We took a toolbox for each car, and had to make them even smaller because Eddie wouldn't pay the shipping costs. They were tiny little boxes. The spares for the car were the important thing, but they were limited. A GP3 team is enormous compared with what we had at that time."

The team stayed not at a Hilton or Sheraton, but a modest bed and breakfast, while at the track there was a tiny rented motorhome.

"I remember Marie [Eddie's wife] came to the race and made sandwiches for the team, just like the early days of Formula Ford," says Jordan. "That was quite nice in a way, because it was so

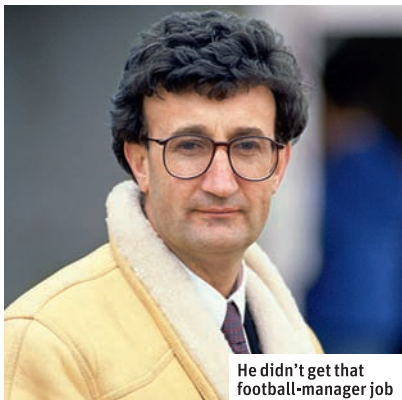




EJ went from Phoenix Park to Phoenix, Arizona



191 featured 'green' 7UP/Ireland backers



He didn't get that football-manager job

basic. I promise you it was just a step up from F3000, and we carried a lot of the stuff on the plane with us so we didn't have to pay the freight. We were absolute pikeys, no mistake – we were pikeys on tour. “Psychologically, coming from Ireland, there was an inferiority complex, although you were always trying to hide it. There were the great names of Tyrrell and Brabham and this and that, and then you had us upstarts, as we used to be called by many people. I presume they were all thinking about how many races is this guy going to get

through before he stumbles.”

It was a big weekend too for Anderson: “It was the first time you were going to get judged as to whether you'd done a decent job or not, as a car, as a team, as everything. Eddie was very vocal leading up to it, so it was a hard task to keep your head down!”

The first test was pre-qualifying on Friday morning, when eight cars were vying for four places. It was sink-or-swim time – if you didn't get a car through, you literally had to go home, because there would be no passes.

“We didn't get a garage,” says Jordan. ►

Gachot leads Tyrrell of Satoru Nakajima



THEN & NOW

JORDAN GP had just 41 employees by the end of 1991, a figure that contrasts with the 280 or so that Force India - as one of the smallest teams on the grid - has today.

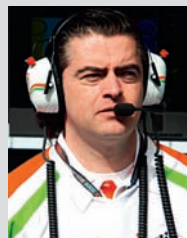
Five of the original team members have stayed the course over the past two decades, while three others have recently returned to the team after spells elsewhere.

Of those who never left, the only team member still travelling to races is Andy Stevenson. A veteran of the Jordan F3000 team, he was Bertrand Gachot's number-two mechanic, and is now Force

India's sporting director.

"The whole first weekend was a blur," he recalls, "from the moment we left Heathrow, when the first plane we were on went technical! The weekend had been very busy as most of us had never been involved in F1 before. The pace of the whole event took us by surprise. I remember standing on the grid before the race not knowing how we got there!"

Gachot's number-one mechanic Nick Burrows is now car-assembly manager, while de Cesaris's number two Phil Howell is a car-build mechanic. Currently Force India's R&D supervisor,



Stevenson: 20 years on



Green: tech director

back in 1991 Paul Thompson had a wide ranging brief and was involved in the windtunnel model, as well as being the damper technician and the travelling composites specialist and fabricator. Tony Merry was the team's buyer in 1991, and continues in that department today.

Of those who have been elsewhere and returned, Bob Halliwell was production manager in 1991, and came back as production director in 2009. Last year featured the return of Steve May, then a T-car mechanic and now in composite design, and Gary Anderson's former number two, Andy Green. Now Force India's technical director, he's responsible for the new VJM04.

Leading the Modena Lambo of Nicola Larini



◀ “You were on the side of the street until you made it through. It was tough. People will tell you how difficult motor racing is, but nothing in this life could ever prepare you for pre-qualifying. It was a shocker!”

Unfortunately de Cesaris stopped on track with an engine issue halfway through the session. The history books say that he missed a gear, although Anderson insists that he suffered a technical gremlin.

“Andrea had a camshaft sensor fall off the back of the engine right at the other end of the circuit – basically a bolt fell out – that’s why we didn’t pre-qualify. We knew that we had to



Marie Jordan was on sandwich-making duty

“We were absolute pikeys, no mistake – we were pikeys on tour”

Eddie Jordan

do the lap in the last five minutes.”

In the end the Italian was bumped down to fifth by Gachot. One car had made it, but there wasn’t much time for celebration.

“Getting through pre-qualifying was step one, and I was very pleased with that,” says Anderson. “It was the first time I realised that EJ was worn out a little, because he just went and laid down in the motorhome and fell asleep! He was mentally knackered with it all.”

Jordan admits: “The first couple of races I was so busy; my head was in a spin. My thought was, ‘How am I going to get this whole thing afloat?’ You realise what the costs are. There were endless amounts of tyres flying about the place, and endless amounts of engines and gearboxes. I didn’t know if we’d have enough bits to finish a race.”

In fact, getting just one car through made it a lot easier for the team to pace itself over the course of its first race weekend, as Anderson concedes: “It let us go through the routines and the systems and recognise the shortfalls and so on. We had a few extra people to help out because of that.”

The pressure wasn’t off yet, because there were now 30 cars going for 26 grid places, and thus no margin for error. Gachot was an encouraging 19th in Friday qualifying, before moving up to 14th in the final session on Saturday. Meanwhile, cars from Ligier, Footwork and Lotus failed to make the cut. It was a perfect 40th birthday present for Anderson.

“They had a party for me in the motorhome,” he recalls. “There was a cake with a Jordan 191 on it! I was proud about what the drivers said about the car – they were pretty pleased with everything. We were definitely on the way to doing

something decent if we just got our act together. Bertrand was excellent with his experience and motivation, and Andrea was fantastic too. People complain about him, but he came with so much knowledge. It was ideal: not too much was expected of them, and we could just get on with our job.”

Even with just one car, there was still room for drama. Gachot’s then-mechanic Andy Stevenson explains: “About one hour before the pitlane opened for the race we were completing our final checks when one of the bolts broke on the rear-suspension mount. We had to remove the differential cover, and come up with a quick fix.

“This normally would have taken a couple of hours. However, with adrenalin and a lot of passion we completed the job before the pitlane opened. Our fabricator Paul Thompson saved the day, and without his skill and experience we would not have made it. I guarantee you, without him Phoenix would not have been our first race – the guy is a legend!”

Gachot repaid the team’s hard work. He climbed as high as seventh before pitting, and was set to finish eighth when the engine failed five laps from home. He was still classified 10th.

Jordan GP was on its way. At the fifth race, in Montreal, de Cesaris and Gachot finished fourth and fifth, and at Spa in August – where the team gave Michael Schumacher his debut – another engine failure robbed de Cesaris of a possible victory. Jordan still finished an amazing fifth in the constructors’ world championship.

“Sometimes when I look at Hispania or Virgin or Team Lotus I think to myself, ‘How did I get through all that?’” says the former boss. “It was like I was under an anaesthetic for the first five years.

“I’m so proud of what we did with the people and the resources we had. More especially we did it with flair, and that was the important thing to me. The biggest achievement was survival. And I’m really proud that the team is still there.”



Anderson, EJ and Gachot are centre of attention



De Cesaris was unlucky in pre-qualifying



Pitstop practice for the F1 new boys



When new cars go bad

What happens when your new car hits the track for its first test and is a bit of a dog? Former Jordan and Jaguar technical chief **GARY ANDERSON** knows all about it...

Sometimes it goes perfectly. You roll the car onto the track and everything works as you expect. It was just like that at Jordan in 1997, when Ralf Schumacher jumped out of the old car into the new one and lapped Jerez 1.8 seconds faster, exactly as predicted. Other times, however, it can be a very different story.

Things all start to take shape in the middle of the previous season. By that time, you should have a reasonable understanding of your car's good and bad points, so for the specification of the new car you try to improve the weaknesses and carry over the strengths. You will have a reference-set of numbers to make comparisons and a good idea of the potential for improvement, but if at the first test the car isn't behaving as you expect, you have a problem.

You'll have an idea pretty early on – you only really need one decent run

of five or so laps when the driver can push and he'll either return to the pits with a sly grin or a sour expression.

So, if you go to the first test and work through all the set-up changes and are *still* struggling, it's time to go back to doing some very detailed research. You will have to change how you go about your testing programme to understand what's happening. I'm a firm believer that no team understands 100 per cent what makes its car quick; even Red Bull might understand only 80 per cent at best. So you aim to improve that 80 per cent, but every now and again you change something in that unknown 20 per cent and the car doesn't work. It's a bit like trying to understand the unknown.

The problem-solving is not just about adding downforce, because if you have a fundamental design problem, that will just exacerbate it. If you have inconsistent downforce,

you can only drive to the troughs, rather than the peaks. In recent years, McLaren, for example, seems to have suffered from that. It's usually about making the car work in a transient state when in corners, which is difficult to simulate. A good team – one with a decent budget and top people – should be able to get a handle on the problem. That's unless the problem is something vastly expensive relating to the chassis.

This is where it really tests the team. There were times at Jordan when we were struggling, but I always made the effort – in the good times and the bad – to get everyone together in the factory the Tuesday after the race to explain what had happened.

Going the wrong way with a car's design creates big intra-team pressure. It can take only a few laps to realise you have a problem, but months to solve it. That's a process some teams might only be embarking on now.

➔ CASE STUDY 1: JORDAN 198 (1998)



AFTER SCORING NO POINTS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1998, JORDAN WON IN BELGIUM AND WAS THE THIRD-BEST TEAM IN THE SECOND HALF.

The 198 was better than the 1997 car. It had the downforce, but the drivers found it horrible to drive. We had to run for a while to realise that it wasn't a set-up problem or a lack of downforce, but a characteristic problem. The problem started on corner entry, which became apparent because we were least competitive on tracks that required the most steering input. When you turned the

steering wheel, the centre of pressure rushed rearwards and made the car understeer. If you put on more front wing, it made it very pointy and it still understeered mid-corner. We produced an upgrade package with new endplates and bargeboards that solved the problem. It allowed us to run the correct amount of front wing and maintain the balance throughout the corner. At the beginning of the year, Ralf Schumacher could get a decent laptime on brand new tyres, which threw us a little, but it wasn't until the mid-season upgrade that we started getting results.



“The drivers found the 198 horrible to drive. When you turned the wheel, the centre of pressure rushed rearwards and made the car understeer”

Gary Anderson

➔ CASE STUDY 2: JAGUAR R1 (2000)



THE FIRST JAGUAR SHOWED WELL PRE-SEASON, BUT SLIPPED INTO THE LOWER MIDFIELD. A DIFFUSER CHANGE MEANT IT SHOT UP THE GRID TO SNAP AT THE HEELS OF THE BIG GUNS.

The first Jaguar was an ambitious, complicated car with a few things that were over-complicated, but it was okay. Ford's takeover of Stewart made the situation very difficult. At the first test, Johnny Herbert and Eddie Irvine talked about being able to win races because it was going so well. In the winter the car was good – the underbody was more

stable when it was cool – but as track temperatures increased it wasn't so good. The windtunnel was in California so not being able to get over there often enough meant it took us a while. I was frustrated because they wanted me to be pushing paper rather than solving the car problems. If I had been allowed to do so we'd have turned it around mid-season. All it needed was some diffuser changes, which we tested using filler inserts! We'd fixed the problem by Suzuka and Eddie said it was better than the '99 Ferrari and he was closer to Michael Schumacher in the Jaguar than he was the previous year.



“We'd fixed the problem by Suzuka and Eddie Irvine said it was better than the '99 Ferrari. He was closer to Michael Schumacher in the Jaguar than in '99”

Gary Anderson

10 REASONS TO WATCH THE INTERCONTINENTAL LE MANS CUP

The world's clumsiest-acronymed series should provide some of the planet's greatest racing in 2011.

GARY WATKINS tells us why

1 IT'S A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN ALL BUT NAME

A cliché but true, though don't just take our word for it. "If you were putting together some kind of world championship," reckons Audi driver Allan McNish, "you'd have all the races that are on the ILMC. That's Sebring, Road Atlanta, Spa, Silverstone and, of course, Le Mans." The two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner does, however, add his weight to the major gripe with the ILMC, apart from that tongue-twisting acronym. "It's odd that there's no drivers' title," he says. "Manufacturers win championships, but so do drivers. We should have something to shoot for."



2 A 'REAL' ASTON IS GOING FOR VICTORY



That's what Prodrive-run Aston Martin Racing has set out to achieve with the ground-up AMR-One design that replaces its Lola-based predecessor. This car is an attempt to fulfil Aston chairman and Prodrive boss David Richards's dream

of repeating the marque's 1959 Le Mans victory. He describes it as "another step in the right direction". A late go-ahead means the first AMR-One won't be at Sebring, a decision that will probably pay dividends in the long run.



3 AT A TRACK NEAR YOU

If you're not planning to brave the campsite toilets at Le Mans, you can still witness everything that is good about the ILMC, and (probably) sleep in your own bed. Silverstone's September sportscar fixture is a round of the new series as well as the Le Mans Series. So be there for the 6 Hours on September 11.



CALENDAR

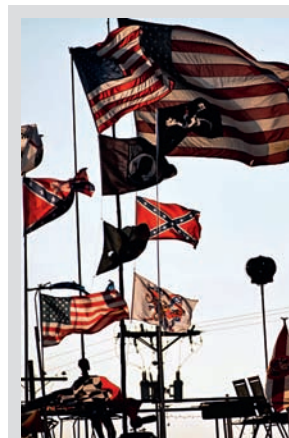
The Intercontinental Le Mans Cup incorporates the key races that run to the regulations of the Le Mans around the world, including the 24 Hours itself.



March 19
Sebring 12 Hours*
May 7
Spa 6 Hours+
June 11/12
Le Mans 24 Hours
July 3
Imola 6 Hours+
September 11
Silverstone 6 Hours+
October 1
Petit Le Mans (Road Atlanta)*
November 12
China 6 Hours
(Shanghai or Zhuhai)
* also an ALMS round
+ also an LMS round

4 THUMPS OVER THE BUMPS

The spectacle of nearly 60 cars doing battle around the teeth-rattling Sebring International Raceway will be a sight to behold, or rather the efforts of the top prototype drivers to get around the slower cars unscathed will be. "It could be a chaotic race," says Peugeot driver Anthony Davidson. "It's going to come down to who manages to avoid tripping over slower cars."



5 PEUGEOT VERSUS AUDI, ROUND FIVE

The latest instalment of the Peugeot v Audi battle has to be the most intriguing yet. Both manufacturers are arriving with new cars at the same time courtesy of new regulations, adding an extra frisson of excitement to the

fight. "We were the ones with the experience initially, then they had the proven car when we brought out the R15," says McNish. "Now we are both starting from a clean sheet of paper. There's nowhere to hide."



P44 THE TOP TEAMS

6 TOYOTA'S TOEHOLD

Officially, the Anglo-Swiss Rebellion's team use of Toyota's Super GT-based LMP1 V8 is "a commercial arrangement". That may be so, but it gives it an 'in' should it decide to take on Peugeot, Audi and Aston Martin. Rumours that Toyota wants to showcase its hybrid technology in Le Mans competition just won't die down.



7 REPOSITIONING AT LOTUS

The Lotus name appears to be everywhere these days, including front-line sportscar after a 14-year absence. Lotus Motorsport is developing its Toyota-engined Evora, which has already raced in GT4 spec, in conjunction with Dallara for the renamed GT Endurance category. Two cars have been entered in the ILMC class by the Austrian Jetalliance squad, though it isn't due to run until early April ahead of its public debut at the Le Mans Test Day later in the month. And don't forget this is a precursor to a new LMP2 racer.



8 WATCH FISI FIZZ

Superannuated grand prix star Giancarlo Fisichella took a while to get to grips with GT racing, but by the end of last season he was right there on outright pace and consistency with the AF Corse Ferrari team. Now he's back with AF, the new 458 Italia GTE contender and Gianmaria Bruni as team-mate. Using last year's 430 for Sebring could pay off as Fisichella bids for his first title since Italian F3 in 1994.



9 AN EARLY GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

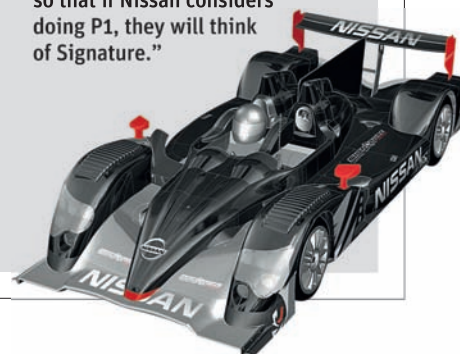
A year or so down the line, the prototype grid could well be packed with hybrids – Peugeot, Audi and Aston Martin all have projects on the go. This year's ILMC offers the chance to see a KERS-equipped car racing a year early in the shape of the Swiss Hope Racing team's grandly-named ORECA-SwissHyTech Hybrid. This ambitious project, which isn't up and running in time for Sebring, is based around the

British Flybrid company's technology. It's a fully mechanical system: a flywheel situated in the bellhousing that spins at 60,000rpm has a mechanical link to the gearbox. That means no electric motors à la the Williams-developed system in Porsche's 911 GT3-R Hybrid. The 40kg system offers 100kW or 134bhp which, according to Flybrid boss Jon Hilton, makes it the most efficient system around.

10 A GIANT RETURNS

Nissan is back for its first full-season prototype campaign since the 1990s. It is ostensibly an engine supplier, but there's much more to the French Signature team's tie-up with the Japanese manufacturer. It is putting in dosh, in the shape of sponsorship via the Nissan Playstation GT Academy for Lucas Ordóñez to drive the team's ORECA LMP2. Signature boss Philippe Sinault leaves no doubts

where he hopes the deal will go: "Our strategy is to do a good job so that if Nissan considers doing P1, they will think of Signature."



TEAM *BY* TEAM

It's Audi versus Peugeot again, but who'll challenge?
By GARY WATKINS

THE FACTORIES

1 & 2 AUDI SPORT TEAM JOEST – AUDI R18 TDI/R15+ TDI

New rules mean a new look for Audi: it has gone for a coupe, partly for aerodynamic efficiency (less power under the new regulations) and partly for sporting reasons (pitstop rules that favoured open cars are long gone). Audi decided early not to blood the new R18 turbodiesel at Sebring and relies on a restricted version of last year's R15+. That's going to put the German manufacturer "a yard behind on pace", according to Allan McNish, though he's not conceding defeat. "Once the race starts, the gloves will

come off," he says. Sebring will offer little insight into where Audi and Peugeot stand against each other, although the German manufacturer will have some idea: it tested with both the 2011-spec R15 and R18 there in January. McNish and Tom Kristensen spearhead the American Le Mans Series attack in one car (which they share with Rinaldo Capello at Sebring), Timo Bernhard and Marcel Fassler in the other, though Bernhard is paired with Le Mans team-mates Romain Dumas and Mike Rockenfeller in the 12 Hours.



7 & 8 PEUGEOT SPORT TOTAL – PEUGEOT 908 HDI

Peugeot has confused the world by retaining the 908 name for a contender that bears a strong family resemblance to the original. The '908 2' is actually all-new, but it builds on the experience of its predecessor, which goes some way to explaining why the Peugeot hit the track four months before the more radical-looking Audi. Not that Peugeot is placing too much emphasis on that. "We haven't been looking at what the opposition is doing, just

going about our programme in our own methodical way," says Anthony Davidson. "We have confidence that that will be enough. I'm not expecting anything other than a close-fought championship." Davidson is at the core of Peugeot's ILMC line-up, as are Stephane Sarrazin and Franck Montagny. But for Sebring the Brit is joined by his Le Mans team-mates Alex Wurz and Marc Gene, with Nicolas Minassian in the other car.



007 ASTON MARTIN RACING – ASTON MARTIN AMR-ONE

AMR caused a stir when it went public with the new AMR-One, its first ground-up LMP1 prototype design. The straight-six configuration of its two-litre petrol turbo engine came as a surprise, while the aerodynamics clearly buck recent trends. The route is all-the-more surprising given the short timescale involved: work didn't start in earnest until September. That explains why the car won't be at Sebring and its debut set back to the opening round of the Le Mans Series at Paul Ricard in April.

"It was better to use the time testing," reckons Darren Turner. "We could have gone and ended up on the back foot in the run-up to Le Mans. Turner says he has "an open mind" on where AMR will end up against the turbodiesels. "This car is designed to take the fight to the diesels, not just to be where we were before as best petrol." Turner and Stefan Mücke lead the driver line-up in the solo AMR-One confirmed for the Intercontinental Le Mans Cup, although a second car is expected at some races.



THE CHASING PACK

10 TEAM MATMUT ORECA – PEUGEOT 908 HDI

The French ORECA squad, last year's Le Mans Series champion, is back with its first-generation 908, pegged back to compete with the new breed of down-sized prototypes, and an all-French driver line-up made up of Nicolas Lapierre, Loic Duval and, for Sebring and Le Mans, Olivier Panis. "We are here to back up the factory," says ORECA boss Hugues de Chaunac. "Reliability is our big weapon and that could give us a chance first time out at Sebring and at Le Mans."



12 REBELLION RACING – LOLA-TOYOTA B10/60

The underachievers of the 2010 LMS take on the big guns with a new engine from Toyota and a beefed-up engineering structure including ex-Formula 1 man James Robinson. Neel Jani, who anchors the Rebellion ILMC entry with Nicolas Prost, isn't sure of what to expect of the new package, but says the aim has to be "to finish right behind the diesels". Jeroen Bleekemolen joins Jani and Prost for the long races and will drive at Petit with Jean-Christophe Boullion and Andrea Belicchi.



15 & 24 OAK RACING – OAK-PESCAROLO-JUDD 01

OAK heads back to LMP1 with a reworked version of the Pescarolo chassis, to which it holds the design rights, and big aspirations. For 2011 the aim is to "build something for the future" and "be first behind the factories", according to team boss Francois Sicard. Guillaume Moreau, Matthieu Lahaye and Pierre Ragues lead the OAK charge in the lead car, while team owner Jacques Nicolet shares the second entry with Richard Hein and, in the enduros, Jean-Francois Yvon.



THE CLASSES

LMP2

Three cars vie for honours over the full season in LMP2. Signature runs a Nissan-engined ORECA chassis under the SignaTech banner for Franck Mailleux, Lucas Ordóñez and, at Sebring and Le Mans, Soheil Ayari. The US Level 5 squad has graduated to P2 in the ALMS and has also earmarked one of its trio of HPD-engined Lolas for the ILMC, a campaign that puts former Le Mans winner Christophe Bouchut back behind the wheel of a prototype in Europe. OAK fields a solo Pescarolo with the Judd-developed BMW engine.

GTE-PRO

BMW and Ferrari go head to head in the pukka GT Endurance class with the latest version of the V8-powered M3 and the all-new 458 Italia respectively. The Rahal squad represents BMW in the American races, while Schnitzer takes over the baton in Europe and the Chinese round. The Ferrari challenge is led by AF Corse, the closest thing the Italian manufacturer has to a factory team, while Luxury Racing moves up from French GTs with a pair of 458s and a line-up that includes Stephane Ortelli and Frederic Makowiecki.

GTE-AM

The Le Mans organisers gave something back to the privateers who are so important in GT racing when it created the new GTE-Am class. Only year-old cars are allowed and each entry must have at least one amateur driver. It has attracted some decent squads, including Proton Competition (the team that won last year's GT2 title in the LMS) with Porsche, the AF, CRS and Krohn Ferrari squads, and multiple sportscar champion Larbre Competition, which flies the flag for Chevrolet in the ILMC.

 **P46 ALMS GT BATTLE**

GRAN TURISMO FIVE

A quintet of manufacturers is set to slug it out for the American Le Mans Series' GT Endurance class. *GARY WATKINS* weighs up their strengths

FERRARI

“The 458 should be quicker than the 430, and the direct-injection engine makes it better on fuel economy too”

Dave Sims, team manager at the Risi Competizione Ferrari squad, lets on the bad news to those looking to catch the fastest combination in class last year.

Ferrari stalwart Risi again leads the Italian manufacturer's ALMS assault, this time with the new 458 Italia and Toni Vilander alongside team regular Jaime Melo. The good news for its rivals is that Risi won't test the car until the weekend before Sebring. Risi is again backed up by Scott Sharp's two-car Extreme Speed squad.



CALENDAR

March 19
Sebring 12 Hours
April 16
Long Beach
July 9
Lime Rock
July 24
Mosport Park
August 6
Mid-Ohio
August 20
Road America
September 3
Baltimore
September 17
Laguna Seca
October 1
Petit Le Mans
(Road Atlanta)

BMW

“We have been working hard, because we've had to. Ferrari has the new 458 and we know Chevrolet hasn't been idle”

BMW driver Dirk Muller reveals that no stone has been left unturned in BMW's efforts to add the drivers' title to the manufacturers' and teams' crowns it won in 2010.

The Rahal squad pitches up with two revised M3s for Muller and Joey Hand, and Bill Auberlen and Dirk Werner. On the plus side, there's a new aero package, but a minus is provided by new rules that dictate that the ALMS cars have to run the less extreme rear suspension used by Schnitzer in Europe last year.



PORSCHE

“We have a refined package. I'm more confident than this time last year”

Patrick Long remains bullish about the chances of Porsche's ageing 911 GT3-RS being good enough to defend his 2010 title.

Flying Lizards, with which Porsche places Long and Jorg Bergmeister, claimed last year's drivers' title, and will hope its trademark impeccable strategy and teamwork allow it to challenge again. A dark horse could be the Falken Tires Porsche run by ex-Champ Car team Walker Racing.

JAGUAR

“By the end of last season, we were only a second off the qualifying pace and we've moved forward since then”

Team boss Paul Gentilozzi expresses confidence that the factory-backed RSR Jaguar team is ready to put its disappointing 2010 ALMS season well and truly behind it.

The RSR Jaguar squad has produced a new version of the XKR after bolstering its technical set-up, has entered two cars for the full season and swapped tyre supplier from Yokohama to Dunlop. Also new are former Champ Car stars Cristiano da Matta and Bruno Junqueira in the lead car.



CORVETTE

“Every element of the programme, from top to bottom, came under review. There has been no silver bullet: we have made a series of tiny improvements”

Mark Kent, racing director at General Motors, explains how determined Corvette Racing has been to make amends for a 2010 season in which it won only once.

The Chevrolet Corvette C6.R wasn't a match for the Ferrari last year, and it wasn't only a lack of pace. Its winter overhaul was as much about pitwork and strategy as performance. Anything short of a championship challenge from either Oliver Gavin and Jan Magnussen or newcomer Tommy Milner and Olivier Beretta will be deemed a failure.

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INTRODUCING Aaro Vainio

After just a single season in car racing, this young Finn is ready to step up to GP3



"The start of last season was really difficult. The main reason was my inexperience. By the end of the year, I proved that I was really a top-three driver"

Tech 1 GP3 testing led to decision to move up

The western-Finnish town of Kuortane has played host to many a McLaren camp training day. But visitors to the region's frozen lakes this winter may have witnessed the slightly more unorthodox preparations of 17-year-old Aaro Vainio ahead of his maiden season in GP3. While also making use of the town's respected sports institute, Vainio has honed some seriously long powerslides by venturing onto the ice in a short-wheelbase Legends racer.

The intense regime is indicative of how seriously Vainio regards his enviable position under contract to respected driver manager Nicolas Todt.

The Espoo native was brought to Todt's attention following a stellar karting career in which he lifted the KF3 and KF1 European championships. Such credentials have fast tracked a move into GP3 after finishing an uneven, but ultimately promising, debut season in cars as top rookie in

the Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup.

Explaining his decision to forego a second year in FRenault, and a likely title assault, Vainio candidly recalls his progress in 2010.

"I think that the start of last season was really difficult," he says. "I had a few crashes and the first three races were a bit of a mess. The main reason for that was my inexperience. In my first start at Aragon I was completely lost, but I soon got used to it. In Budapest I got two poles and two podiums. That was a really super weekend for me because the start of the season had been so bad. It gave me a lot of confidence, and by the end of the season I proved that I was really a top-three driver."

Four days of GP3 testing at Estoril and Jerez with his regular Eurocup team Tech 1 Racing helped seal the decision to step up – although expectations for this year are modest.

"Nicolas wanted me to test in GP3. We knew that if we stayed in the Eurocup we would fight for the championship, or we could go to GP3 and have one more year of learning. At Jerez I managed to finish fourth-quickest on the first day. My team-mate was [Formula Renault 3.5 racer] Albert Costa so it gave me confidence to be a bit faster than him. In the end we decided that as I have a familiar team from the Eurocup, it

would be easier to move up."

One may have surmised that the exploits of Espoo's famous motoring sons – Keke Rosberg, JJ Lehto and Kimi Raikkonen – would have inspired the budding karter. In fact, the introduction to racing came at just two years of age thanks to a family entwined with the sport. Both Vainio's grandfather and father were national rally drivers. Rivaling his father as a loyal supporter is kart team owner Jani Pirttinen, for whom Aaro drove in 2006. While Pirttinen continues to run a kart team with Heikki Kovalainen, he now acts as Vainio's personal assistant at every race. Two years later, the seeds of the crucial relationship with Nicolas Todt were sown through his involvement with fellow former Maranello team karter Jules Bianchi.

Vainio adds: "Jules also came from the Maranello team, so Armando Filini, who is the owner, started speaking about me. Just before the world championships in Macau my father rang. He started the call with: 'Hey, what do you think about going into Formula racing next year?' I was like, 'Woah, what do you mean?' He then told me that we had been in contact with Nicolas. To get this management deal is awesome. Without it I can't really imagine finding the sponsorship to go racing." ❧

AARO VAINIO



Born 2/10/93
From Espoo, Finland
2010 4th in Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup (two poles, five podiums, two fastest laps); 28th in FRenault UK, (two races)
2009 Winner, CIK FIA European Championship SKF and KF1; 2nd in CIK-FIA World Karting Championship; 6th in World Cup Super KF
2007-08 Finnish and European karting

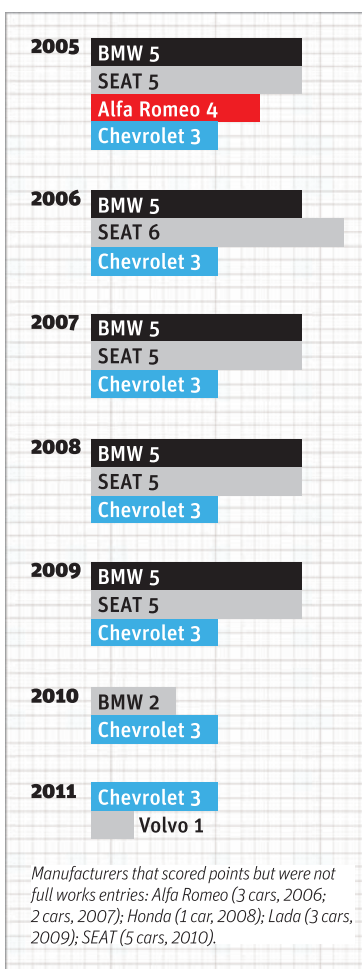
Vainio led in FRenault Eurocup at Barcelona



FACTORY ENTRIES IN THE WTCC



How the works teams have supported the series – or not



Chevrolet resets its reputation

WTCC IN/OUT

Guangdong
Porto
Suzuka
Donington Park
1.6-litre turbos
Volvo (first full season)
Robert Dahlgren
Various privateers

Okayama
Brands Hatch
BMW
Andy Priaulx
Augusto Farfus
Jordi Gene
Various privateers

New motivation for tin-toppers

The biggest change for this year's WTCC season is the introduction of the FIA-mandated 1.6-litre turbocharged engine. Similar powerplants are also appearing in the World Rally Championship for the first time this year, and will form the basis for the engines that will be used in Formula 1 from 2013.

Most WTCC teams are starting the season with the new-specification engines, with the main exceptions being the SUNRED SEAT squad, which will start off with the older engine and roll out the 1.6 during the season. Despite BMW not competing as a works entry this year, virtually all BMW customer teams will start off with the smaller engine; the only link to the past being Proteam's Fabio Fabiani, who will race an older-spec two-litre 320Si.

Despite fielding three works cars, Chevrolet isn't necessarily title favourite, as star driver Rob Huff explains to *MARK GLENDENNING*

The 2011 World Touring Car Championship season could be a bit of a rock/hard-place situation for the RML Chevrolet team.

BMW's withdrawal as a factory entry at the end of 2010 has left Chevy as the only multi-car works squad on the grid (Robert Dahlgren will be flying the flag alone in the manufacturer-backed Polestar Volvo C30). With a proven car in the Cruze and the retaining of Yvan Muller, Rob Huff and Alain Menu to drive the things around, Chevy faces being written off as the sledgehammer that cracked the walnut if it repeats its 2010 success, and a failure if it doesn't.

While Huff is happy with the work done during the pre-season, he believes that those who chalk up the team as runaway favourites have underestimated the impact of the new 1.6-litre turbo, and the changes that need to be made to accommodate it.

"It's along the lines of going from a touring car to a Porsche," he said. "It's massively different. You've got 25 per cent of the power coming from the engine and 75 per cent of the power coming from the turbo. There's so much time spent refining how the turbo is coming in, because you want the power as early as possible, but at the same time, you have to be able to lay the power down without wrecking your tyres."

So if Chevrolet isn't going to leave its rivals with a faceful of dust, then who will be keeping them in check? SUNRED has confirmed that it will be

switching from its successful turbo-diesel to a 1.6 in its SEATs during the season, but Huff doesn't think that implies that there's anything wrong with the TDI.

"The TDI has been a very strong car for a long while," he said. "I still think that TDI has a bit left in it. And SUNRED is a very, very good team. I think it's going to be close between us, them, BMW and also Volvo — they're going to shake things up. At the moment it's massively unknown."

"I don't think anyone can see anyone as the favourites. On paper we've had our car a bit longer than anyone else, but to pick a favourite in the WTCC... where do you start? There will be a lot of unknowns this season in the sense of who has what power and which chassis will handle the power the best, and all the rest of it. I'm happy with what we've got so far, we've got a lot of development left to do throughout the season, and we'll never stop."

That development work is aimed at ensuring Chevrolet has the best chance possible of achieving successes that will probably be immediately marked 'predictable'. Nobody said that ruling the world wasn't sometimes a thankless task — but you can bet that won't make it feel less sweet. ☒

"There are a lot of unknowns this season. Who has what power? Which chassis will handle the power best?"

Rob Huff

Chevy dominance not guaranteed, says Huff



Huff stays at RML team with Muller and Menu



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Swede little mystery

How will Volvo fare on its return to international touring cars?
By CHARLES BRADLEY



The Volvo name has been a mainstay of touring car racing for the past three decades, but not since 1986 has the Swedish marque won an international championship race.

Correcting that statistic, and evoking memories of the fabulous 240 Turbo in which Thomas Lindstrom and Gianfranco Brancatelli became European champions, is the task that the crack Polestar Racing squad has been charged with.

It may just have the know-how and the machinery to do it as well; after all, Robert Dahlgren, who will drive the lone C30 this year, won last year's Scandinavian Touring Car Cup in a similar car. He also took part in selected WTCC events at the tail-end of 2010, although not as a points-registered entrant.

Success at world level is, in the opinion of Volvo motorsport director Derek Crabb, the next logical step.

"We've achieved everything we set out to achieve when we began the Polestar programme," he says. "We won the Swedish [in 2009] and Scandinavian [2010] championships against very tough opposition, and the world championship is where we need to be. Now is the ideal time to make the move as the change in engine regulations means that the playing field has been levelled to an extent."



"This is a development year for us, so we need to maximise my track time as much as possible"

Robert Dahlgren

While a single-car entry makes a title assault all but impossible against the champion RML Chevrolet squad that swept the board last year, Polestar team principal Christian Dahl anticipates that the season ahead represents a data-gathering exercise ahead of an expanded programme in 2012 that will include recent STCC signing James Thompson.

A top-five finish at a soaking-wet Okayama in October last year prompted Dahl to say: "Everyone's worked very hard on this project and we got a good confirmation that we can match the top of WTCC. This gave us a taste for more and a good feeling ahead of the coming season."

Dahlgren, a British Formula 3 race winner in 2003, has been racing in his domestic series for the past seven years, and is raring to be let off the leash on the world stage.

"The racing in Scandinavia has been pretty tough over the past couple of years," says Dahlgren. "We've learnt a lot there to bring to the WTCC, but we know we have a bit of speed to get back on the top cars. The big difference is that we'll be racing on quicker tracks, with longer, sweeping corners."

"Okayama was a confidence boost, so we know we'll be quick when it's wet, but we need to find more in the dry."

Dahlgren's pre-season testing has been limited to a run at Barcelona, as

he waits for the new engine to come on-stream: "It's nice to get back to driving international tracks again. The Scandinavian series is tough, but most of the circuits are like go-kart tracks, so from a driving perspective it's a big difference. I'm so looking forward to it – big tracks suit me better."

He is realistic about Volvo's chances in this first full season, as it lays the ground for a full tilt in 2012, and knows the works Chevys and SUNRED SEATs will be tough to match.

"They're very quick," he admits. "If we get time to prepare we can develop well, but starting in Brazil is going to be very tough. The other teams are well ahead of us in terms of developing their cars to the tracks. This is a development season for us, and a steep learning curve, so we'll need to maximise my track time as much as possible. We need to get on and develop the car, and the engine, as we need to for the future."

What remains to be seen is whether there will even be a WTCC in 2012, as this year's entry list has flagged up a lack of strength in depth below the front three teams. This toe-in-the-water exercise needs to be a success if the series is to move forwards with Volvo as a major force once again. ❧

➔ P56 THE FULL 2011 ENTRY

WTCC 2011 TEAM BY TEAM

CHEVROLET CHEVROLET CRUZE 1.6T

1 Yvan Muller (F) 2 Rob Huff (GB)
6 Caca Bueno (BR) 8 Alain Menu (CH)

The departure of BMW as a works entry leaves RML's Chevrolet squad as the only multi-car factory team in the series. Yvan Muller's arrival last season resulted in Chevy's first world title and the core line-up of the Frenchman, Rob Huff and Alain Menu remains the same, although multiple Brazilian stock car champion Caca Bueno will join for selected events.



Muller took the title in his first year for Chevy

SUNRED ENGINEERING SEAT LEON TDI (1.6T LATER)

Lukoil-Sunred
3 Gabriele Tarquini (I)
4 Aleksei Dudukalo (RUS)
Swiss Racing by SUNRED
7 Fredy Barth (CH)
SUNRED ENGINEERING
17 Michel Nykjaer (DK) 18 Tiago Monteiro (P) 74 Pepe Oriola (E)

The independent Spanish squad will continue to fly the SEAT flag after the marque's departure, and with no factory assistance. Its six-car line-up (under three different banners) has every base covered: from 48-year-old former champion Gabriele Tarquini to 16-year-old Pepe Oriola, who will become the WTCC's youngest-ever driver. Tiago Monteiro, Fredy Barth and Michel Nykjaer all return, while Russian rookie Aleksei Dudukalo steps up from SEAT Leon Eurocup.



Former champ Tarquini leads SUNRED squad

ZENGO-DENSION BMW 320 TC

5 Norbert Michelisz (H)

Highly-rated Hungarian Michelisz returns for a second season, but trades in his SEAT for an ex-Augusto Farfus BMW upgraded for the 1.6 engine. His initial challenge will be to adapt to his first taste of rear-wheel-drive machinery.

BAMBOO-ENGINEERING CHEVROLET LACETTI

9 Darryl O'Young (PRC)
10 Yukinori Taniguchi (J)

The British squad has signed up for its second season in the world championship, retaining Hong Kong driver Darryl O'Young to run alongside computer game magnate and frequent WTCC part-timer Yukinori Taniguchi.

TEAM ENGSTLER BMW 320 TC

11 Kristian Poulsen (DK)
12 Franz Engstler (D)

Team-mates in 2009, Kristian Poulsen and Franz Engstler are reunited for the 2011 season. The experienced pair finished second and third in last year's Independents' Trophy and there's no reason why they can't combine into a solid force this time around.



Engstler will share with Poulsen in his own team

DETEAM KK MOTORSPORT BMW 320 TC

14 Marchy Lee (PRC)

Asian Carrera Cup ace Lee steps up for his first crack at the world championship with the KK Motorsport team after finishing runner-up in the Asian Porsche series in 2010.

ROAL MOTORSPORT BMW 320TC

15 Tom Coronel (NL)

After several seasons as an anchor in SEAT's semi-works/independent efforts, Coronel switches to a BMW with Roberto Ravaglia's seasoned ROAL team. The Dutchman thinks he'll score podiums this season, and there's definitely a case for arguing that Coronel/ROAL represents the strongest BMW package.

Dutchman Tom Coronel swaps SEAT for BMW



PROTEAM RACING BMW 320 TC/BMW 320SI

20 Javier Villa (E)
21 Fabio Fabiani (I)
25 Mehdi Bennani (MA)

Sergio Hernandez and Stefano d'Aste are both gone, replaced by former GP2 Series regular Javier Villa and Moroccan driver Mehdi Bennani in a pair of 1.6-litre BMWs. Fabiani, who made a one-off with the team last year, will drive an older-spec car.

POLESTAR RACING VOLVO C30

30 Robert Dahlgren (S)

After a couple of exploratory outings last year, the Swedish firm returns with a single car for Dahlgren in what is the only factory-supported entry other than Chevrolet. With a parallel effort in the Scandinavian series, it's unknown what will happen for 2012.

WIECHERS-SPORT BMW 320 TC

35 Urs Sonderegger (CH)

BMW indy regular Wiechers-Sport returns with a late, single entry for 46-year-old Sonderegger. The Swiss one-make veteran is only expected to run up until Oschersleben, after which there will be a yet-to-be-confirmed replacement.

WTCC ON TV

All WTCC races and warm-up sessions are broadcast live in the UK on Eurosport, which also screens delayed coverage of qualifying. The total air time from each round is three hours. Non-subscribers can opt for web-only subscriptions at www.eurosportplayer.co.uk

WTCC CALENDAR

March 18-20
Curitiba
April 22-24
Zolder
May 14-15
Monza
June 3-5
Marrakech
June 18-19
Brno
July 1-3
Porto
July 15-17
Donington Park
July 30-31
Oschersleben
September 3-4
Valencia
October 21-23
Suzuka
November 4-6
Guangdong
November 17-20
Macau

PRIAULX'S TIN-TOP TIPS



Tarquini returns to attempt to regain title



The series returns to Marrakech in June



Independent BMWs will be out in force this year



Priaulx won't be on the WTCC grid in 2011

Three-time world touring car champion Andy Priaulx tells us what to expect in 2011, even though he won't be there...

I did a lot of the development work on the BMW 1.6 turbo. The engine has come a long way in a very short space of time, and I am very optimistic about the performance of the car. Engine-wise, we all know that in the last few years BMW had a substantial deficit to the diesel turbo and the Chevy. But I think the way the package is working now is going to make the BMW stronger on the rolling starts, stronger on the standing starts, and the engine has good driveability. I also think the BMW is going to benefit from improved tyre degradation too – I think the front-wheel-drive cars will struggle to keep the tyres in good condition. So someone like Tom Coronel should be quite strong this year. He's the guy I think is most likely to do the business for BMW, and Norbert Michelisz should be very good this year too. I was very impressed with

him last year; his approach, his professionalism. He could be a dark horse.

But I still think Chevy will dominate. I don't know how much they have in their pocket at the moment, but Rob Huff and Yvan Muller will absolutely be fighting for the title. I'm not so sure about the [SEAT] diesel now that everyone has the turbo; I don't think it's going to be as strong.

To be honest, not being in the WTCC this year won't feel strange. I've got a fantastic programme with BMW this year with the ILMC, and the future is looking good – the DTM project looks exciting. I think it was time for me to move from the WTCC. There were two or three hard years for us after the diesel came in, and I didn't feel that they wanted a rear-wheel-drive car. But I will miss guys like [promoter] Marcello Lotti. He really does a fantastic job with the championship.

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RALLY MEXICO

Leon

ROUND 2/13

WINNER

Sebastien Loeb
3h52m27.0s

RALLY RATING

★★★★★

Ogier off on final morning spoiled a thriller of a fight with Loeb

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

Hirvonen	46pts
Loeb	37pts
Latvala	31pts

MILESTONES

First WRC win for the Citroën DS3 WRC

First SWRC win for Nasser Al-Attiyah - until he lost it in scrutineering

DAVID EVANS
reports



Loeb wins after Ogier spins

Citroen's two Sebastiens traded the lead throughout, with world champion Loeb getting the nod after Ogier crashed out

SEBASTIEN LOEB pulled off his balaclava and wiped his head. After a tricky start to his title defence in Sweden last month, he was smiling again. The temperature was 50 degrees hotter than it had been in Karlstad and the action in Central America matched that heat – particularly in the Citroen camp. Since the French firm signed Sebastien Ogier, Loeb had talked of the potential pitfalls of two competitive drivers fronting the team. For two days, the two Sebs engaged in a titanic fight. Then Ogier dropped it on Sunday's opener and Loeb's reign as the king of Leon continued.

LEG ONE (89.62 miles) **SUNNY**
- AMBIENT TEMP RANGE ON STAGES 19-34C
After the scintillating street stage below ground in

Guanajuato on Thursday night, the drivers were well above ground and even further above sea level on Friday's opening Alfaro stage. And, as usual, the power-obsessed drivers were fixated by their asthmatic motors seemingly lumbering their way towards the clouds. Even when he saw he'd taken 15 seconds out of benchmark Mikko Hirvonen, Sebastien Ogier wasn't happy.

"It feels like you're waiting for the car all the time," he said with a grimace. "There's no power."

What power there was, Ogier and his Citroen team-mate Sebastien Loeb made very good use of to dominate the morning's stages. As the DS3 WRCs moved into an early 1-2-3 with Petter Solberg third,

there were flashes of concern at Ford. This time last year, the Focus suffered altitude sickness and came in for a serious shoeing from the C4. Surely it wouldn't be hereditary?

No. The factory Fiestas were suffering from more rudimentary problems: Hirvonen was first on the road after winning Sweden and Jari-Matti Latvala collected a puncture on the fourth stage. The Finn had been just 2.6s down on Solberg going into El Cubilete when he felt the left-rear let go.

"I didn't hit anything," said Latvala at the end of the stage. "I was really surprised. It just went. I drove on it for about a kilometre, but then knew I had to stop and change it. It's disappointing because,

apart from the first 15 kilometres of the first stage, things had gone well for me. I had been trying too hard to relax in the first stage – it wasn't coming naturally."

The deflation cost Latvala more than two minutes, but Hirvonen was battling manfully at the front of the field. He took over his countryman's fourth place.

"The first two stages this morning were quite tough," said Hirvonen, "there was a lot of loose gravel around. I was happy in the third stage, that one went better."

After leading for much of the morning, Ogier was usurped by a super-quick run around the streets of Leon from Loeb. The seven-time champion

Powerstage win gave Hirvonen extra points





Loeb took fifth straight Rally Mexico victory...



...once erstwhile leader Ogier went off

tucked into his lunch with seven tenths on the man opposite him, the man desperate to end his record-breaking run.

There had been a flurry of excitement just as Citroën's chef was putting the finishing touches to the starter when Ogier took a wrong turn and went into service rather than going in to the regroup. Ogier reversed out and righted his wrong slot, but the afternoon was played out with question marks over whether the organisers would penalise him.

Ogier put such speculation behind him to go back into the lead in SS6. This was the stage where this year's Rally Mexico took on the look of a two-horse Citroën race as Solberg's DS3 hit electrical

trouble that would send him sliding down the leaderboard as he watched seven minutes slip by while he fixed a loose connection on the car's throttle.

The afternoon was an absolute classic, with Ogier easing clear to the tune of 2.5s ahead of the all-important last gravel stage of the day – after which the running order for day two would be decided. Running behind Ogier, Loeb appeared to hold all the aces.

Asked whether he thought Loeb would slow through SS8, Ogier's response was deadpan.

"He won't have to slow, my time was fast in there..."

The overtone was as clear as the beautiful blue skies that had settled over central Mexico throughout Friday.

Loeb arrived at the finish,

bang on time – quite literally. The readout on his dash said: "Target 11:33". And Loeb's time for El Cubilete? 11m33.9s.

"It's been a good day today," said Loeb. "I have had to be flat out all day, this is the only way to try to beat Seb [Ogier]. I'm second on the road behind him tomorrow – it's been the perfect day today."

Ogier's day turned out to be a lot brighter than it might when the organisers elected to take no action after his earlier indiscretion. But he was painfully aware that running behind him, Loeb had the power to control proceedings right through until the final day.

"It's definitely more interesting for him than me," said Ogier.

Solberg's problems left

Hirvonen third, his only problem through the afternoon being the decidedly wayward rear of the Fiesta through the final two gravel stages.

His team-mate was back up to fourth by the end of the day, but Latvala's rise through the field came courtesy of a troubled afternoon for some of the other Fords. Matthew Wilson had been enjoying one of his strongest performances to date when his car died after rocks hammered the floor of the Ford and damaged an electrical connection. Rally Sweden superstar Mads Ostberg dropped down the order after being forced to stop and change a puncture and Ken Block's tale of woe was among the more pitiful; the American failed to make the first stage when his Monster Fiesta stopped on the start ramp. Block's Ford started Friday morning with a 10-minute SuperRally penalty and then died for a second time on El Cubilete.

The high rate of attrition, allied to a sensible approach from both, left returning Russian Evgeny Novikov an overnight fifth and Henning Solberg P6 in their Fiestas.

POSITIONS AFTER DAY ONE

1 OGIER/INGRASSIA	1h27m22.3s
2 LOEB/ELENA	+2.3s
3 HIRVONEN/LEHTINEN	+1m22.2s
4 LATVALA/ANTTILA	+2m53.6s
5 NOVIKOV/PREVOT	+3m04.0s
6 SOLBERG/MINOR	+3m16.5s

LEG TWO (98.58 miles) SUNNY
- AMBIENT TEMP RANGE ON STAGES 20-35C

The first and third stages of the day were the ones in which Ogier was going to

have to attack like mad. The roads were faster and wider and would clean less than the super-twisty and hilly run through Duarte. Loeb was quickest and moved back to the front by a handful of seconds. As if that wasn't bad enough, Ogier had to deal with the psychological blow of knowing the #1 DS3 WRC had suffered a slow puncture on the left-rear towards the end of the test.

And then he had to deal with his own car scrabbling out of hairpin after hairpin on the next stage, all the time knowing that he was scattering the stones to uncover a grippier base beneath. Loeb creamed him to the tune of 15 seconds.

The deal looked to be done and the new leader rocked up at service with 18.8s in hand. His plan for the afternoon revolved around building an even bigger lead ahead of the final day. Being the ultimate sportsman, Loeb hates a tactical approach, preferring to go route-one and drive faster than everybody else.

The difference between the two DS3s was marked. Loeb was up, Ogier resigned.

Running first on the road, Ogier arrived at the start of the afternoon's stages, having negotiated the Leon city traffic, and booted his Citroën off the line.

With no idea of the drama unfolding with the sister car behind him.

Slowing down his own car before the arrival control at SS15, Loeb nudged the gearshift forward. Nothing. He tried again, harder this time. Nothing again.

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Solberg flew after early electric drama



Russian Novikov starred on return

STAGE TIMES

SS1 GUANAJUATO STREET STAGE (0.65 MILES)

Fastest: P Solberg 53.2s
Leader: Solberg

SS2 ALFARO 1 (16.16 MILES)

Fastest: Ogier 15m30.7s
Leader: Ogier

SS3 ORTEGA 1 (14.80 MILES)

Fastest: Ogier 13m58.5s
Leader: Ogier

SS4 EL CUBILETE 1 (11.72 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 11m42.1s
Leader: Ogier

SS5 LEON STREET STAGE (0.82 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 1m17.4s
Leader: Loeb

SS6 ALFARO 2 (16.16 MILES)

Fastest: Ogier 15m16.6s
Leader: Ogier

SS7 ORTEGA 2 (14.80 MILES)

Fastest: Ogier 13m48.0s
Leader: Ogier

SS8 EL CUBILETE 2 (11.72 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 11m33.9s
Leader: Ogier

SS9 SUPERSPECIAL 1 (1.37 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 1m39.7s
Leader: Ogier

SS10 SUPERSPECIAL 2 (1.37 MILES)

Fastest: Ogier 1m37.9s
Leader: Ogier

SS11 IBARRILLA 1 (18.57 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 18m25.8s
Leader: Loeb

SS12 DUARTE 1 (14.45 MILES)

Fastest: P Solberg 17m57.8s
Leader: Loeb

SS13 DERRAMADERO 1 (14.46 MILES)

Fastest: P Solberg 13m58.7s
Leader: Loeb

SS14 LEON STREET STAGE (0.82 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 1m16.9s
Leader: Loeb

SS15 IBARRILLA 2 (18.57 MILES)

Fastest: P Solberg 18m11.8s
Leader: Ogier

SS16 DUARTE 2 (14.45 MILES)

Fastest: P Solberg 17m34.2s
Leader: Ogier

SS17 DERRAMADERO 2 (14.46 MILES)

Fastest: Latvala 13m49.7s
Leader: Ogier

SS18 SUPERSPECIAL 3 (1.37 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 1m38.4s
Leader: Ogier

SS19 SUPERSPECIAL 4 (1.37 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 1m37.0s
Leader: Ogier

SS20 GUANAJUATITO (18.10 MILES)

Fastest: Loeb 20m10.2s
Leader: Loeb

SS21 COMANJILLA (15.28 MILES)

Fastest: Latvala 15m11.3s
Leader: Loeb

SS22 GUANAJUATO POWERSTAGE (5.14 MILES)

Fastest: Hirvonen 4m40.4s
Leader: Loeb

◀ Same result. Clutch in and coast. Loeb was on the radio. Crisis time.

A pin had dropped out of the gear selector and the car was jammed in third. A pin was eventually found in the rear bumper, Loeb fitted it, grabbed first and hit the road. His arrival five minutes late translated to a 50-second penalty and the loss of his lead; he was now at the bottom of a half-minute mountain.

Once again, he got on it. Arriving at the end of the stage, Ogier was informed of the 50-second penalty for Loeb and, for a moment, he couldn't take it in. What was happening? Had the tactics started? Had Loeb pulled a fast one? No, but he did on the next stage...

If the champion's first run through Duarte was good, his second lap was great as he smashed the stage times set by the two-litre cars last season. A stall near the end of the final gravel stage of the day ensured Loeb would go into day three 10 seconds adrift of his countryman.

Composure regained, Ogier was magnanimous in his aversion to moving ahead via the penalty. And anyway, he'd had his own issues to deal with.

"My car went brr, brr, brr, like on three cylinders for the last five kilometres of the last but one stage," said Ogier. "I had the part to fix it afterwards, but it cost maybe five seconds. It's tough for tomorrow, I want

to fight, but it's Seb behind."

Seb behind was smiling now. In service, he could see the funny side — even after stalling and dropping time on the final test.

"I was looking everywhere for a pin or screw to put in the gear linkage," he said. "I couldn't find anything to use, but Daniel [Elena, co-driver] was clever and found the clip we needed inside the back bumper. We took it off and fixed it."

Asked which of the two factory Citroens was in the stronger position, Loeb smiled. "It's like this..." he said, waving his hand in an either-or way.

Behind the two Citroens, Hirvonen drove a sensible day, unwilling to risk all and attack the DS3s. "I'd rather be sure of the points," he said. "And anyway, even when they are running first on the road we don't seem to be able to do anything about them."

The championship leader had softened his Fiesta for day two and felt more comfortable with the revised set-up.

Fellow Fiesta man Latvala was taking a similar approach in fourth place.

"At least the front bumper's still on," he smiled, recalling his destruction of frontal Fiesta bodywork in the snows of Sweden. Latvala was chipper on Saturday night, having tidied up his lines, and found more speed from the Ford — enough, in fact,

to go fastest in SS17

One Ford that wasn't going any further was Novikov's. He'd overshot a junction and whacked a bank on the first run through Derramadero. The impact damaged the car's sump (among other things) and forced him out of fifth.

That position was initially taken by Henning Solberg, until power-steering problems blistered his hands and dropped him down two places. The chief beneficiary was his brother, Petter, who drove a stunning day. Solberg Jr's Citroen might have benefitted from a superior road position, but the '03 champion was on fire, posting four fastest times on his way back up to fifth. Solberg's progress was slowed slightly when his gear lever snapped in SS17. Unfortunately for the Norwegian, it broke on the fast approach to a jump through a gate. He spun in dramatic fashion and his explanation was almost as animated as the event itself.

Ostberg was just under a minute behind in sixth.

POSITIONS AFTER DAY TWO

1 OGIER/INGRASSIA	3h12m52.6s
2 LOEB/ELENA	+10.5s
3 HIRVONEN/LEHTINEN	+1m30.4s
4 LATVALA/ANTTILA	+2m43.8s
5 SOLBERG/PATTERSON	+6m51.8s
6 OSTBERG/ANDERSSON	+8m09.8s

LEG THREE (38.52 miles)

SUNNY — AMBIENT TEMP RANGE 14-27C

After two days of pulsating action and drama, the ►

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Ostberg was superb again. He took fifth

entertainment lasted about nine miles on Sunday morning. It was at that point that Ogier was caught off line on a right-hander. The DS3 slid wide and hit some rocks. The wheel was smashed and he was going no further. One car down, Citroën immediately sent a message to Loeb informing him the fight was over.

At the end of the stage, Loeb wasn't quite as happy as you'd have thought.

"I am sorry for him," said Loeb. "I know it is not nice to end the rally like this, he did not deserve this – he has driven a very good rally. He was very strong and this is not so good for the team, but this can happen when you have two drivers in the fight in the same team."

Once he was over the disappointment, Ogier was remorseful; team principal Olivier Quesnel's words about the finish and two Citroëns were still ringing in his ears.

"I had to stop," said Ogier. "It was impossible to fix. The impact was not big but that's rallying – you have to stay on the road. I was pushing very hard this morning, because I had to clean the road. It was the only way I had to stay in the fight. I played the game and, this time, I lost."

Quesnel was reasonably pragmatic. "It was stupid, but it's done. We move on. I am disappointed for him, it hurts him in the drivers' championship. But, last year we lost a car in Mexico and

still won the manufacturers' title by more than 100 points, so it's not over..."

Citroën's loss was Ford's gain, with Hirvonen and Latvala taking podium slots. Mikko pulled out a cracker of a time on the Powerstage, which ran along his favourite Mexican roads.

Behind the podium dwellers the gaps were big enough to ensure nobody took risks. The next three places were a Norwegian lockout, with the Solbergs sandwiching Ostberg.

Having done the specifics, the snow and the altitude, Portugal beckons for what's reckoned to be the start of the real championship. If it's anything like the precursor, round three is going to be a classic. ☼

RESULTS

Rally Mexico, March 3-6, round 2 of 13

22 SPECIAL STAGES, 226.730 MILES

POS	NO	DRIVER/NAVIGATOR	CAR	TIME
1	1	Sebastien Loeb/Daniel Elena	Citroen DS3 WRC	3h52m27.0s
2	3	Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+1m38.0s
3	4	Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+2m23.9s
4	11	Petter Solberg/Chris Patterson	Citroen DS3 WRC	+7m38.4s
5	6	Mads Ostberg/Jonas Andersson	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+8m43.5s
6	5	Henning Solberg/Ilka Minor	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+11m10.0s
7	21	Martin Prokop/Jan Tomanek	Ford Fiesta S2000	+13m35.0s
8	25	Juho Hanninen/Mikko Markkula	Skoda Fabia S2000	+14m48.7s
9	7	Federico Villagra/Jorge Perez Companc	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+48m17.2s
10	22	Ott Tanak/Kuldar Sikk	Ford Fiesta S2000	+53m42.8s
OTHERS				
R	2	Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia	Citroen DS3 WRC	SS20-crash
R	15	Matthew Wilson/Scott Martin	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS7-elec

CLASS WINNERS A1 Loeb/Elena; SWRC Prokop/Tomanek. Starters/finishers 25/18; Leaders: SS1 Solberg; SS2-4 Ogier; SS5 Loeb; SS6-10 Ogier; SS11-14 Loeb; SS15-19 Ogier; SS20-22 Loeb

RALLY SUMMARY Famed for its ceremonial start in Guanajuato, this year's event included a stage through the streets – taking the WRC underground into the roads accessing the former gold and silver mining shafts. The rest of the route was virtually identical to previous seasons.

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

POS	DRIVER	PTS
1	Mikko Hirvonen	46
2	Sebastien Loeb	37
3	Jari-Matti Latvala	31
4	Mads Ostberg	28
5	Petter Solberg	23
6	Sebastien Ogier	15
7	Henning Solberg	8
8	Martin Prokop	6
8	Matthew Wilson	6
10	Kimi Raikkonen	4
MANUFACTURERS' POINTS		
1	Ford Abu Dhabi WRT	73
2	Citroen Total WRT	47
3	Stobart Ford	36

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REPORT
WRC MEXICO



SWRC

Al-Attiah denial leaves Prokop with a smile

The Americas clearly suit Nasser Al-Attiah. A couple of months after a stunning Dakar win for Volkswagen, the Qatari driver got his Super 2000 WRC campaign off to a similarly successful start with victory in Mexico.

Al-Attiah led from the outset in baking conditions. Raising the ride height of his Ford Fiesta S2000 at lunchtime service on Friday helped him carry more speed through the corners, while a loose steering column and door seal were nothing more than minor irritations.

Going into the final day, Al-Attiah was 38.6s ahead of second-placed Martin Prokop. The leader was confident the gap was enough, but Prokop's battle to defend his position from the ever-closing Juho Hanninen carried the Czech driver closer to the lead – until Hanninen flipped his Fabia mid-way through the event's penultimate test.

Hanninen's roll cost him another minute on what was an event to forget; having damaged his steering on the first stage and his gearbox on the second, the Finn had dropped two minutes on Friday morning.

Prokop was pleased,

Al-Attiah over the moon.

"It's fantastic!" he said. "It's been a really hard rally, but this is a great start to the year."

Prokop rued his decision to run longer gear ratios on the opening day. His Fiesta was quicker down the straights, but he dropped time coming out of the tight corners – and that made the difference.

"The set-up was bad on Friday," he said. "But the weekend was great. Juho [Hanninen] is going to be dangerous this year, so to beat him was really important."

Hanninen was far from pleased, and third place did little to improve his mood.

"You can't win championships with thirds," he said.

And nor can you win them from the bottom of a ravine – where Ott Tanak ended SS11 after he slid his Fiesta off on a tighter-than-expected left-hander. The Estonian returned for the final day with a patched up Ford and collected fourth. Karl Kruda finished fifth, after early fuel-pressure problems in his Skoda.

Al-Attiah was excluded from Rally Mexico at post-event scrutineering, when the fuel ventilation line on his Fiesta was found not to comply with regulations, leaving Prokop as the winner.



Prokop inherited his first SWRC win

P-WRC - Round 1 of 8

POS	DRIVER/NAVIGATOR	CAR	TIME
1	Martin Prokop/Jan Tomanek	Ford Fiesta S2000	4h06m52.0s
2	Juho Hanninen/Mikko Markkula	Skoda Fabia S2000	+1m13.7s
3	Ott Tanak/Kuldar Sikk	Ford Fiesta S2000	+40m07.8s

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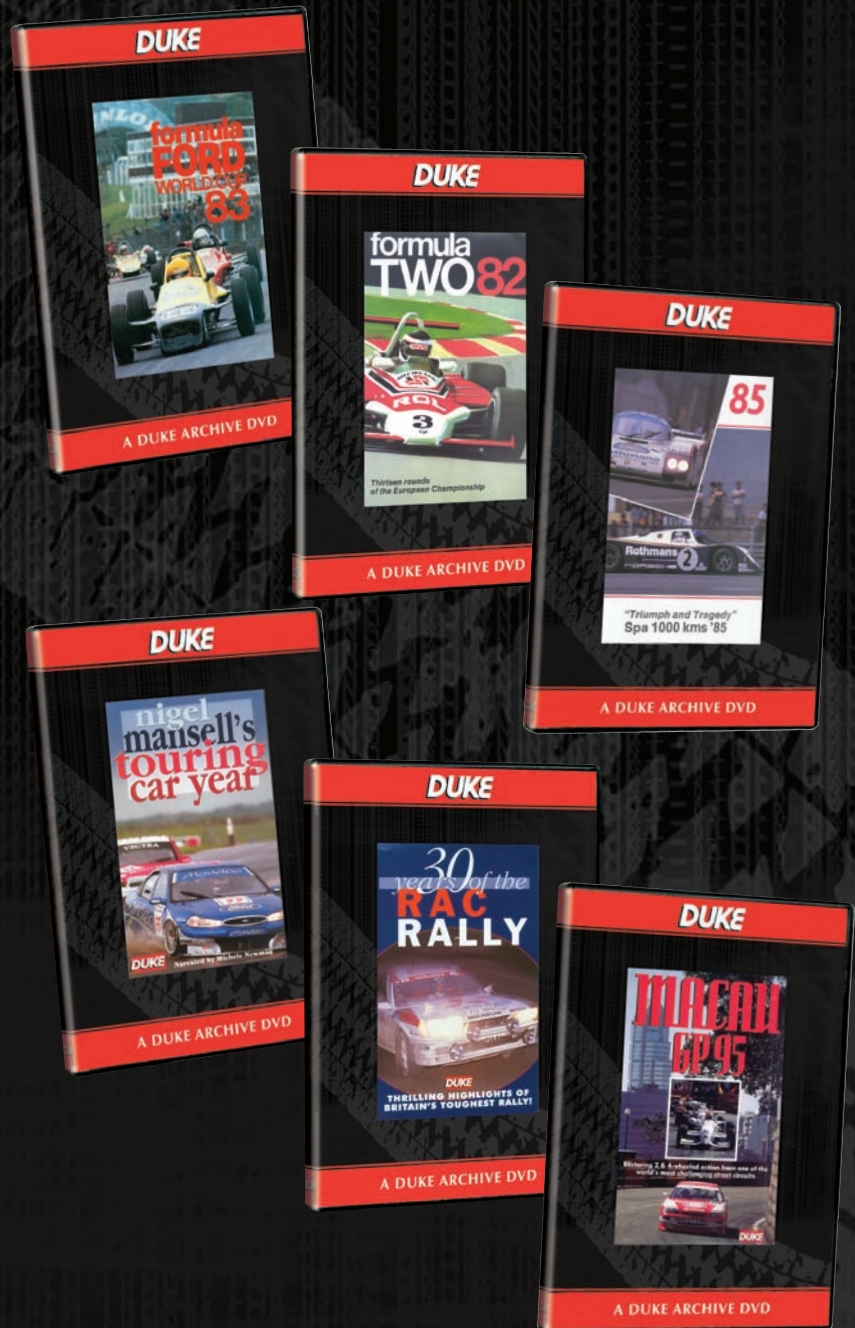
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Las Vegas (USA), Rd 3/36

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- Most laps led **Tony Stewart**

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Edwards got to perform his backflip for first time in '11

NASCAR SPRINT CUP LAS VEGAS (USA), MARCH 6, RD 3/36

Stewart flops in Vegas as Edwards flips to win

"CAN SOMEONE explain to me how we lost this race today?" Tony Stewart asked his team after crossing the line second at the finish of last Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Las Vegas.

His Stewart/Haas Chevy was the fastest car out there — easily leading the most laps — but his failure stemmed from a pitlane penalty picked up mid-race when he left his box with an airhose still attached. The drive-through put him a lap down and, while he soon got back on the lead lap, he was mired in the midfield.

This led to a two-tyre call in his penultimate stop. It moved him to the head of the field, the position where his Impala had been most comfortable all day. But it also meant he'd be forced to take four new Goodyears in his final stop, which would be slower than those around

him, especially the Roush Ford of Carl Edwards, who could get away with two.

Stewart emerged third, behind Edwards and the Ganassi Chevy of Juan Pablo Montoya. He passed the Colombian with a handful of laps to go, but Edwards was out of reach.

"We just gave one away," Stewart lamented. "I don't know what to say. Second sucks."

In contrast, Edwards was delighted. Having been denied last time out in Phoenix when he had the fastest car, and also in the previous day's Nationwide race due to an inferior fuel strategy, this was payback.

"You don't get a race car like that very often — this is a great day," he said.

His team-mate, poleman Matt Kenseth, had a race-winning car but spent much of the race a lap down

after cutting a tyre early on. He eventually fought his way back onto the lead lap, and charged up the order in the closing stages for 11th.

Montoya had a great run to third, but had to fight off an inspired Marcos Ambrose, enjoying his best run to date in his Petty Ford.

It was a race to forget for Vegas locals the Busch brothers. Kyle had a flat and hit the wall before his engine blew in spectacular style. Kurt spun early on, avoided by the entire field, but fought back to ninth.

● Connell Sanders Jr

RESULTS

1 Carl Edwards (Ford Fusion), 267 laps in 2h57m20s; **2 Tony Stewart (Chevrolet Impala)**, +1.246s; **3 Juan Pablo Montoya (Chevy)**; **4 Marcos Ambrose (Ford)**; **5 Ryan Newman (Chevy)**; **6 Martin Truex Jr (Toyota Camry)**; **7 Denny Hamlin (Toyota)**; **8 Dale Earnhardt Jr (Chevy)**; **9 Kurt Busch (Dodge Charger)**; **10 Brian Vickers (Toyota)**. **POINTS** 1 Stewart, 113; 2 Kurt Busch, 113; 3 Edwards, 106; 4 Montoya, 106; 5 Newman, 103; 6 Paul Menard, 96; 7 Truex, 95; 8 Denny Hamlin, 95; 9 AJ Allmendinger, 94; 10 Earnhardt, 91.

GRAND-AM HOMESTEAD (USA), MARCH 5, RD 2/12

Pruett rescued win for Ganassi



Ganassi's star leaves it late

TEAM MANAGER Tim Keene remained calm when Max Angelelli blew past his Ganassi Racing charge, Scott Pruett, for second place soon after a restart with 26 minutes to go in Saturday's event in South Florida. "Be patient," he told Pruett on the radio.

The veteran did exactly that. Pruett realised that tyre wear would be the deciding factor on the abrasive 2.3-mile 'roval', so he settled into a pace, picked off erstwhile leader Michael Valiante, then calmly outbraked Angelelli for the lead with just over six minutes remaining.

Pruett scored a record-extending 20th win for himself with Mexican team-mate Memo Rojas, who had overcome a drive-through penalty after side-swiping Valiante's

co-driver Mark Blundell.

Blundell had run as high as second before handing over to the Canadian, who struggled with worn tyres and slipped to sixth.

Bill Auberlen, in his 100th Grand-Am race, claimed the GT spoils with Paul Dalla Lana aboard Turner Motorsport's BMW M6.

● Jeremy Shaw

RESULTS

1 Memo Rojas/Scott Pruett (Riley-BMW), 116 laps in 2h46m20.783s; **2 David Donohue/Darren Law (Riley-Porsche)**, +4.307s; **3 Ricky Taylor/Max Angelelli (Dallara-Ford)**; **4 Mark Wilkins/Burt Frisselle (Riley-Ford)**; **5 Terry Borcheller/JC France/Joao Barbosa (Riley-Porsche)**; **6 Mark Blundell/Michael Valiante (Riley-Ford)**. **POINTS** 1 Rojas/Pruett, 70; 2= Borcheller/France/Barbosa & Taylor/Angelelli, 56; 4 Donohue/Law, 54; 5 Blundell, 53; 6 Wilkins, 51.

MARTIN LUCKS IN AS KESELOWSKI BLOWS OUT

Mark Martin (32) extended his Nationwide Series record to 49 wins at Las Vegas on Saturday when Brad Keselowski (22) blew a tyre on the last lap. Danica Patrick finished fourth.



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| 3 | Sebastien Loeb | ↔ | 21,108 |
| 4 | Fernando Alonso | ↔ | 20,467 |
| 5 | Lewis Hamilton | ↔ | 19,217 |

Ranking the world's best drivers

WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEK

Carl Edwards moves into 10th place thanks to his NASCAR win at Las Vegas, replacing Kevin Harvick (13) in the top 10. Sebastian Loeb's Rally Mexico win keeps him third, although he lost points as his win was less dominant than in 2010. Grand-Am winners Scott Pruett (60) and Memo Rojas (63) continue to look strong.

To see the full list, visit castrol driverrankings.com

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Senior Composite Design Engineers

_REF: LRGP-DES25

You will be working in our Design Office. Your primary responsibilities will be to undertake the concept scheming, designing and detail specification of various composite components such as Front & Rear Wings, Chassis & Impact Structures, Suspension Members and Bodywork. Your duties will also include specifying and detailing production and assembly tooling, jigs and testing fixtures within the Catia V5 environment. As part of this position you will be involved in the structural sign off and problem solving for those parts.

Whilst being able to work under minimal supervision you also need to be able to lead a group of designers on complex and challenging design tasks.

The ideal candidates will have:

- An Engineering Degree or similar.
- An outstanding level of composite design experience in the aerospace or motorsport industries.
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- Experience in the use of FibreSim or similar laminate software packages.
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Senior Mechanical Design Engineer

_Ref: LRGP-DES26

You will be working in the Mechanical Section of our Design Office. Your primary responsibilities will be to undertake the scheming and detailing of mechanical components such as Suspension Systems, Steering Systems, Hydraulic Systems, Fuel Systems, Engine Installation & Cooling Systems, Driver Controls, Electrical Packaging etc. In addition you should be able to design composite material components such as Oil Tanks, Fuel Collectors, Brake Drums, Cooling Ducts etc. Your duties will also include specifying and detailing production and assembly tooling, jigs and testing fixtures within the Catia V5 environment. As part of this position you will be involved in the structural sign off and problem solving for some of those parts.

Whilst being able to work under minimal supervision you also need to be able to lead a group of designers on complex and challenging design tasks.

The ideal candidate will have:

- A Mechanical Engineering Degree or similar.
- An outstanding level of mechanical design experience in F1 or other high level motorsport categories.
- An outstanding skill level in the use of Catia V5 CAD system and experience of its FEA module.
- Experience in the construction and use of kinematic design models.
- An outstanding knowledge and level of experience of current manufacturing techniques.
- Some project management skills.

Mechanical Design Engineer

_REF: LRGP-DES27

You will be working in the Mechanical Section of our Design Office. Your primary responsibilities will be to undertake the scheming and detailing of mechanical components such as Suspension Systems, Steering Systems, Hydraulic Systems, Fuel Systems, Engine Installation & Cooling Systems, Driver Controls, Electrical Packaging etc. In addition you should be able to design composite material components such as Oil Tanks, Fuel Collectors, Brake Drums, Cooling Ducts etc. Your duties will also include specifying and detailing production and assembly tooling, jigs and testing fixtures within the Catia V5 environment. As part of this position you will be involved in the structural sign off and problem solving for some of those parts.

The ideal candidate will have:

- A Mechanical Engineering Degree or similar.
- A substantial level of mechanical design experience in F1 or other high level motorsport categories.
- Experience in the use of Catia V5 CAD system and its FEA module.
- Knowledge and experience of current manufacturing techniques.

Senior Transmission Design Engineer

_REF: LRGP-DES28

You will be working in the Transmission Section of our Design Office. Your primary duties will be to undertake the scheming, designing and detailing of gearbox and driveline components, such as Maincase, Ratios, Bearings, Hydraulics, Housings and Seals, whilst utilising the latest materials and finishing processes. This will include the design and detailing of all associated manufacturing and test tooling.

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The ideal candidate will have:

- A Mechanical Engineering Degree or similar.
- An outstanding level of high performance transmission design experience.
- An outstanding skill level in the use of Catia V5 CAD system and experience of its FEA module.
- An outstanding knowledge and experience of current manufacturing techniques.

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New GT squad signs Lyons and Bateman for 2011, p80



Can FRenault's UK grid recover to 2010 levels?

Renault UK fights grid crisis

Concerns over cost as only 11 cars test with a month to go before first round

» **FORMULA RENAULT UK'S** new promoter has played down fears over the series' grid size after just 11 cars turned up for last week's first official pre-season test of 2011.

Fortec Motorsport drivers Oliver Rowland and Alex Lynn finished the two days at Brands Hatch first and second, but Fortec has yet to fill its four-car team and several other seats are vacant – less than a month remains before the opening round, at Brands Hatch on April 2-3.

Lisa Crampton of SRO, which was awarded the deal to promote FRUK by Renault Sport Technologies (RST) in the new year, said: "I am quite confident that we'll have 15 full-season entries on the grid. Don't forget we only got given this series eight weeks ago."

But Atech Reid principal David Hayle said: "I'd like to share Lisa's optimism, but we need a 50 per cent increase and all

the teams have been working flat-out for months. I don't know where those extra five or six drivers are going to come from."

Dave Moore, team manager of prospective new team MTECH Lite, added: "We committed to buying a car, and we've tested a lot of good drivers who have been quicker than some of the benchmark drivers for 2011. But when it comes to the budget they just can't afford the season."

EUROCUP STRONG

While FRUK struggles, up to 40 drivers have contested the opening Eurocup tests at Paul Ricard and Aragon. Among these is Fortec pair Will Stevens and Felix Serralles, who are both hoping to contest the opening FRUK round as a warm-up to their Eurocup campaigns.

Crampton hopes that drivers from the North European Cup (NEC) and ALPS

(a merger of the Italian and Swiss series) can be attracted to some FRUK rounds: "We will offer a minimal entry fee. They could get points in a separate class, with the best getting a free entry for British F3 next year. I hope the same deal can be given for any UK teams who want to race there."

'NEW' NEW CAR

AUTOSPORT sources suggest that RST could switch the construction of the Barazi-Epsilon racer, which was introduced for 2010. The chassis is built by Caparo, but the car has been criticised for being too complex and expensive to run.

Tatuus, which built the spec FRenault chassis from 2000-09, is an obvious contender. The company's Gianfranco de Bellis said: "We were disappointed with the [decision on the] new car, but we continue to have a very good relationship with Renault. We are open in case Renault do something, and we are sure we could do a good job."

RST sporting manager Emmanuel Esnault was not available for comment as AUTOSPORT closed for press.

Rowland was fastest in 11-car Brands test



AUTOSPORT SAYS...

MARCUS SIMMONS
CHIEF
SUB-EDITOR

marcus.simmons
@haymarket.com



A TRIP to Brands Hatch for Formula Renault UK testing produced mixed feelings. On the one hand, it appears as though this year's title battle is going to be tough to call: Alex Lynn, Ollie Millroy, Jack Hawksworth, Oliver Rowland and Tio Ellinas all look strong. On the other, they represent almost half the field.

We covered the worrying trend in our 'Sport of Kings' feature a couple of weeks back, and some still harbour hopes that budgets will come down. But we know of one team that is already subsidising its seats through its other businesses, and another top-drawer squad that is operating at a loss, while banking on recouping this in the Winter Cup. Budgets can't come down further...

It's an often-banged drum, but there are too many series diluting the pool of drivers. Formula Renault BARC (for the older Tatuus cars) looks phenomenally strong, but how many of these drivers (and those from InterSteps, for that matter) would compete in FRUK if the cars were cheaper and easier to run?

In a bid to cut costs, SRO's Lisa Crampton hopes to switch from 10 double-header rounds for FRUK to eight triple-headers (including the Spa 24 Hours) in 2012, with just one qualifying run on each race weekend.

But as Tony Shaw, co-owner of teams' champion Manor Competition, points out: "Anything to drive down costs is good, as long as it doesn't destroy the experience for the competitors. But don't forget we have to operate all year anyway and most of the cost is in keeping everything going."

At least the cost-cutting dialogue has started.

Extra contact details

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Ben Anderson, editorial assistant
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BRANDS HATCH TESTING TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Oliver Rowland (Fortec)	42.921s
2	Alex Lynn (Fortec)	42.928s
3	Ollie Millroy (Manor)	42.974s
4	Tio Ellinas (Atech)	43.006s
5	Jordan King (Manor)	43.127s
6	Alice Powell (Manor)	43.146s

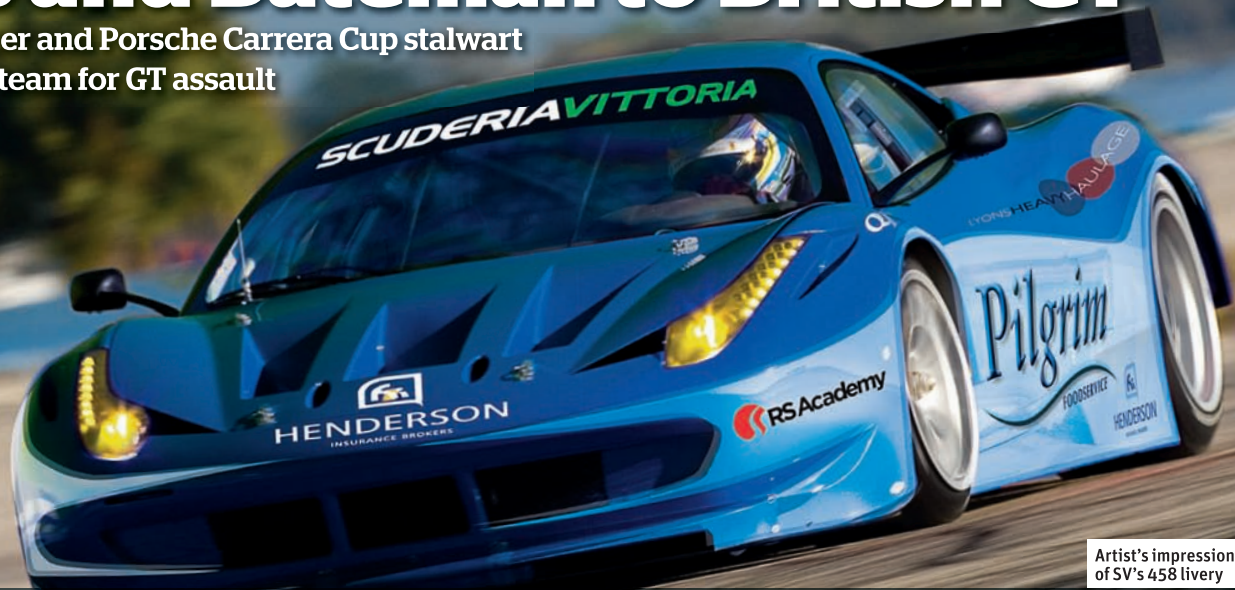
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British GT

Lyons and Bateman to British GT

Single-seater racer and Porsche Carrera Cup stalwart join new Ferrari team for GT assault



Artist's impression of SV's 458 livery



HISTORIC RACING ace Michael Lyons has switched his modern focus from Formula Renault UK to British GT in a Scuderia Vittoria Ferrari 458.

Lyons, 20, finished 12th in Formula Renault UK last year with CRS Racing. He will contest the full season with Charlie Bateman, who moves to GT after four seasons in the Porsche Carrera Cup.

Lyons said: "It's a change in direction to me becoming a professional driver."

Having tested Porsche Carrera Cup, Ginetta G55 and Ferrari 430 machinery, Lyons believes GTs will suit his style.

"I think historics will help me quite a lot," he added. "GTs are a similar weight and have similar power. The thing that is really different is the tyre technology."

"We'll probably be the closest

pairing out there and I think we'll be championship challengers."

Bateman finished seventh in the 2010 Carrera Cup with Motorbase Performance. "I've done enough Carrera Cup," said the 24-year-old. "It was time I moved on and I've always been interested in British GT"

Team boss Piers Masarati, who will run a GT4 Ginetta as well as the GT3

Ferrari 458, said: "Charlie is a very good driver – if you qualify in the top eight in the Carrera Cup you're a good driver."

"I don't think Formula Renault suited Michael. He's used to cars that move around a lot and that's what GTs are like."

"There are no compromises and the car will be competitive."

The team expects to take delivery of its 458 at the start of April.

Formula Renault BARC

New scholarship for Renault BARC

A NEW single-seater scholarship will offer a fully funded drive in the 2012 Formula Renault BARC championship to the winner.

The Single-Seater Star 2012 competition will take drivers through a series of driving evaluations, starting with kart races at Rye House and Three Sisters in August. A fitness test and further driving assessments in a Westfield, skid-car, race-prepped VW Lupo and an Ariel Atom at Bruntingthorpe will be used to determine the winner in late September.

Anyone aged 16 or older will be

eligible to enter the contest, for a one-off fee of £469. AUTOSPORT understands the scheme, run by businessman and lifelong motorsport enthusiast Roger Belcher, needs to attract between 550 and 600 entrants to become viable.

Belcher has already approached experienced Formula Renault drivers to judge the contest and is talking to several existing teams to run the winner. The closing date for entries is July 31.



A spot on the 2012 FR BARC grid is up for grabs

British Formula Ford

Latest Ray hits track at Silverstone

THE NEW Ray British Formula Ford contender had a successful first outing at Silverstone last week in the hands of American Neil Alberico.

The GR11 was run by Cliff Dempsey Racing, which also tested Irish FF1600 champion Jonathan McMullan in an older-spec chassis.

Dempsey, who has already signed Alberico for the season, believes the new car is a step forward over the Ray that Scott Malvern took to second in the title contest last year.

"It ran faultlessly and was competitive so I'm over the moon," said Dempsey. "It puts us closer than



New Ray showed promise at Silverstone test

we were last year – it's 3km/h faster on the straights – so it seems the changes they've made have moved us in the right direction."

Dempsey confirmed he is still hoping to run at least one other Ray alongside Alberico. AUTOSPORT understands McMullan is an option if he can find sufficient funding.

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Rallycross

British drivers eye rallycross as new global series is launched

A GLOBAL Rallycross Championship has been created for 2011, taking in three rounds of the US series and the summer X Games in Los Angeles.

The initiative will be promoted by a new California-based company – Rallycross Management – which has been formed by USRC marketing boss Brian Gale and X Games. It will work in partnership with TV broadcaster ESPN.

The plan is for the GRC to expand outside of the US in 2012, when it

should include at least one international event as well as the winter X Games.

The Global and US championships will share track time at the two-day events that form the first three rounds of the USRC. The national US series will also run standalone rounds in the summer and autumn.

The move comes as interest in the category grows in the US, which held its first rallycross championship last year, won by Tanner Foust. Ex-rally ace

Marcus Dodd is to drive in all events, partnering Rhys Millen in the new two-car Hyundai team.

Former British Rally champion David Higgins is also expected to appear if Subaru Rally Team USA decides to commit to the series.

Hyundai will be part of new global series



Pikes Peak

Doran Sr takes on Pikes Peak hill

MULTIPLE BRITISH

Rallycross champion Pat Doran is to take on the Pikes Peak hillclimb this year.

The reigning BRC champion, who will defend his title in a Ford Focus, is preparing a Ford RS200 for the classic US event.

His 950bhp, 950kg RS200 will be based on a number of donor cars, including his former rallycross racer.

"I needed to rebuild the RS200 anyway and I've always wanted to do the hill," he said. "I want

to do that before they Tarmac it all.

"I don't think we can challenge for the win – 'Monster' [reigning champion Nobuhiro Tajima] knows every inch and his Suzuki is

a special car.

"I'd like to do a bit of learning in the RS200 and, if it goes well, build something for next year."

Doran may run his son, ERC star Liam, at the event in 2012.



Doran is rebuilding RS200 for Pikes Peak

Formula Abarth

Formula Abarth set to expand

THE BURGEONING Formula Abarth category will expand to China and Central America this season – although plans to introduce it to Britain have been delayed until 2012.

The Chinese series – to be known as Formula Pilota China – will run over six double-header rounds. The organisers, who are anticipating European participation, will retain the Tatuus cars in between events but lease them to teams for race

weekends. The series kicks off with an 'away' race at Sepang on June 26.

The Pan-American series will be organised from Mexico, and will be officially announced later this month.

Sources claim that interested parties are working towards introducing Formula Abarth to the UK next year. Tatuus boss Gianfranco de Bellis said: "Britain is one of the most important centres for motorsport and we hope to be there next year."

MARCUS PYE

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club motor racing



Spitfires are a regular sight at Goodwood

The winter wait for a new racing season to begin is almost over and, happily, my enthusiasm for the summer's action is undiminished. Before focusing on the hike north to Oulton Park and Anglesey, however, I managed to take in a little pre-Goodwood Revival fever on Saturday.

The wondrous, unmistakable music of a Rolls-Royce Merlin aero engine has lived with me since I first saw Spitfires aloft during Farnborough Air Shows in the 1960s. Thus when a fly-past to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Supermarine prototype's maiden flight from Eastleigh, on March 5 1936, was flagged up on the radio, the chance of a family outing to Southampton was seized.

Carolyn Grace, who has regularly flown from old RAF Westhampnett (now Goodwood aerodrome/circuit) for 20 years, did the honours in the aircraft her late husband Nick – a 1960s Ginetta G4 racer – rebuilt into two-seater configuration over a five-year period to '85. Just as seeing Spits over Hampshire did more than 40 years ago, the sight and sound of ML407 playing over the water sent shivers down my spine.

Talking of Goodwood, I attended last week's Jaguar E-type test day there for a first sighting of this season's eagerly awaited 50th anniversary series. A dozen cars were there, although not all ran, but

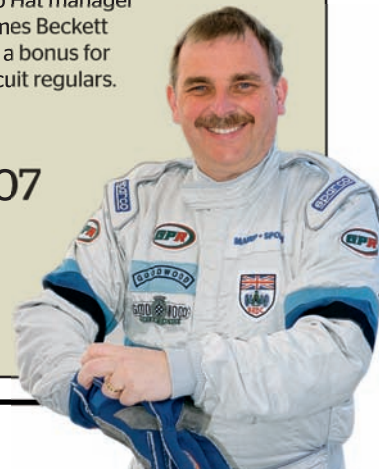
interest is phenomenal. Over 90 competitors have applied for regs.

The 'E50' Challenge, to be run by the HSCC on behalf of Jaguar Heritage, kicks off at Brands Hatch (July 2/3). It will star at the Silverstone Classic (July 22-24), Nurburgring's Oldtimer GP (August 13/14) and Oulton Park (August 28/29), before climaxing in an XK straight-six crescendo – another aural feast – at Goodwood's Revival Meeting on September 15-17.

For aficionados, Oulton will be the most poignant, for Roy Salvadori and Graham Hill gave the model its competition debut there in 1961. Both machines, I'm told, will be present, thus the Gold Cup meeting – perhaps the best-supported on the domestic calendar, with spectators filling the rolling Cheshire parkland with collectors' cars – is a must for 'E-typers'. Hopefully, the bank outside the Fogarty Moss pavilion, affording panoramic views of the circuit, will be full of cats.

This Saturday, Masters Historic Racing makes its first visit to Oulton, one of the finest venues in Britain on which to race period cars, and certainly the best on which to watch them in an authentic setting. The addition of a race for Formula Ford – an abiding passion for MHR's Top Hat manager James Beckett – is a bonus for circuit regulars.

“The sight and sound of ML407 playing over the water sent shivers down my spine”



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IN BRIEF

INAUGURAL SNETTERTON Six Hours polesitter Mike Bell tested his newly-rebuilt Porsche 924 for the first time at the Norfolk circuit last week (left). Bell plans to run the car in this year's edition, which will take place on April 30.

FORMER JORDAN Formula 1 managing director and Team Lotus race director Trevor Foster has joined the United Autosports Audi team as a race engineer. The 59-year-old, who ran Zyteck Motorsport until last year, will work on the UA Audi R8 LMS driven by Matt Bell and Mike Gausch in British GTs, and one of its cars in FIA GT3.

SAM FISH, son of tin-top team boss Mark Fish, plans to race in the VAG Trophy this season in a VW Golf GTI Mk1. Fish Jr tested his car at Brands Hatch last month (right), while Fish Sr is preparing a Golf Mk2 for the Golf GTI Championship.

THE VAG Trophy has achieved provisional MSA championship status for 2011. The series will now also allow engine swaps in its top classes A and B.

FORMULA RENAULT BARC racers will have the chance to race at famed Dutch circuit Zandvoort this season. Organisers have secured space on the Formula Renault North European Cup grid when it supports the F3 Masters in August. FR BARC competitors will race on a non-championship basis.

GINETTA JUNIOR rivals Tom Ingram and Jake Hill have both tested G50s in recent weeks. They hope to graduate to the BTCC-supporting GT Supercup in 2011.

FORMULA VEE squad OSport will run 16-year-old karter Fraser O'Brien (left) in the series this year. Team leader Jake Oliveira also hopes to contest the full season after a sporadic 2010.

CATERHAM HAS already sold 14 of the 25 new Caterham-Lola SP/300.R sports-racers it will build this year.

BRITISH RALLYCROSS venue Blyton will branch out into track days and speed events once new owner Richard Usher completes a £500,000 renovation to the North Lincolnshire site. A programme of reinstatement and resurfacing of roadways at the renamed 'Blyton Park' will produce a 1.7-mile track for track days, training and practice, as well as rallycross events.



Burroughs took Gunn TS11 to S2000 title

SPEED/Sports 2000

Gunn expands 2011 challenge

Sportscar constructor extends Sports 2000 attack and plots SPEED machine

TOP SPORTS 2000 Duratec constructor Loaded Gunn Racing is planning to expand into the European SPEED series.

The Wiltshire-based company has been approached by a potential client interested in fielding an evolution of its 2010 title-winning Gunn TS11 in SPEED.

Designer Gary Gunn said: "The changes to make our chassis comply with the CN-based regulations would be

relatively small, more about tailoring it around the [Honda] engine."

Co-principal Jonathan Loader added: "We are excited by engineering challenges, particularly those that could lead to a series of cars, but because LGR is small and flexible we can handle one-offs too."

LGR will also be represented by a stronger S2000 line-up in 2011 as three chassis are being updated to TS11 spec.

As well as Robert Oldershaw appearing in the car Neil Burroughs used to take the 2010 crown, former race winner Tom Mills – who missed most of last year following spinal surgery – will be back in Historic F1 racer Mark Higson's machine, which started life as a TS8.

The cars of Dave Croft (ex-Mills TS9) and Mike Dodd (TS8) will also benefit from a package of upgrades.

750 Formula

Hegarty back after 32 years

EX-750 FORMULA constructor Trevor Hegarty is building a car to return to the category.

Hegarty, who finished third in the championship in 1964 and was last involved in '79 when he built the final Centaur, has been drawn back by the new regulations encouraging the use of transverse 1108cc Fiat engine/gearbox units.

"The new rules looked attractive, so I decided to go

full circle and design a new car," said Hegarty, who ran the Penistone Hardmetals Formula Ford 2000 team before taking the company over.

Fellow engineering veterans Jim Taylor and Dave Elliott are helping with the build of the car, which will be called the JDT. Hegarty aims to have the car on track by mid-season, with ex-750F champ Bob Simpson likely to do the testing.



Wallace takes another Sebring victory
Several Brits raced in Sebring's historic endurance meeting last weekend. Andy Wallace was part of the Audi R8 line-up that won the GTP/ALMS race

FF1600

Jones joins top Ford squad for Castle Combe attack

Jones will race KMR Spectrum



FORMER PRE-1990 Castle Combe Formula Ford 1600 champion Nick Jones will drive a Kevin Mills Racing-prepared Spectrum this season.

Jones, who took his title in 2004, will race the Spectrum in the top class of Combe's FF1600 championship and in the Old Hall Trophy, the FF1600 race at the Oulton Park Masters Top Hat meeting this weekend. He has already

tested with the squad at Oulton.

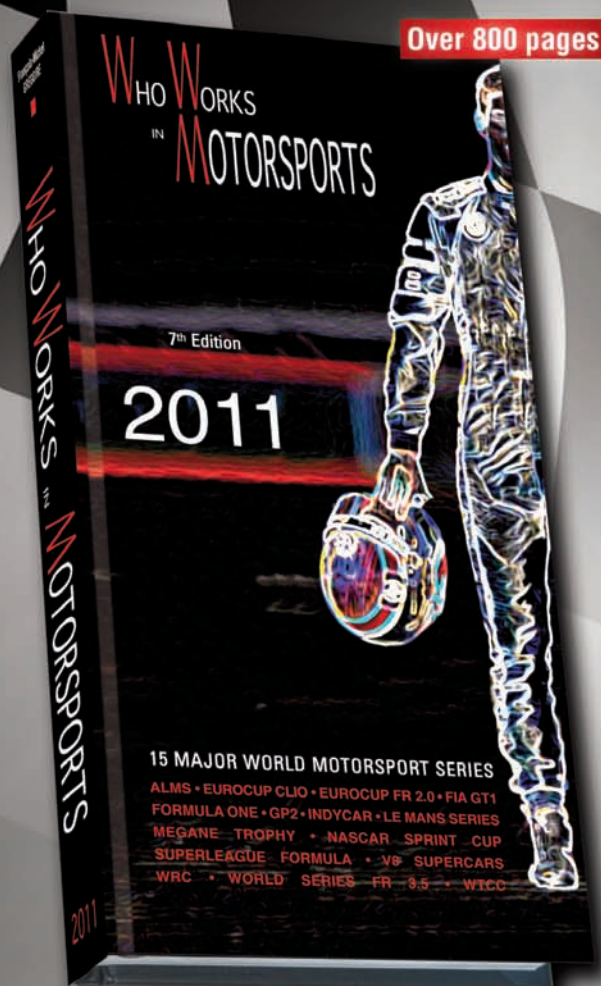
Mills, who confirmed he will also run Steven Jensen (Spectrum), Roger Orgee Jr (Van Diemen) and Graham York (Swift) in Combe FF1600, said: "With a bit of running he'll be in the top 10."

KMR is also hoping to run cars in this season's Champion of Brands FF1600 races and has already confirmed George Salter in its line-up.

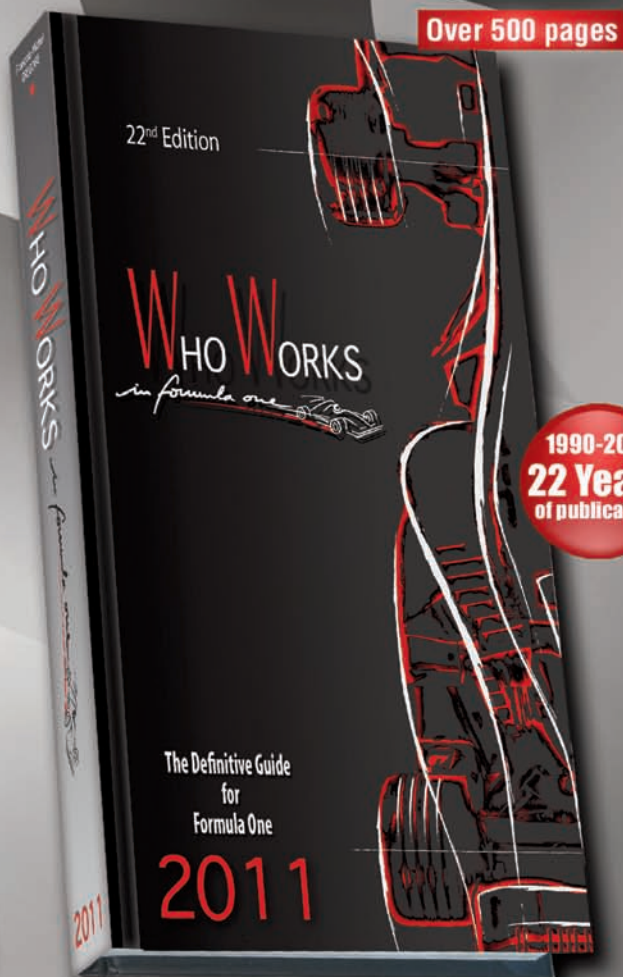
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IN BRIEF

HISTORIC ACE Gary Pearson tested Brandon Wang's ex-works Alfa Romeo

T33/3 at Donington Park last Friday (left). "We gave it a full mechanical rebuild and a cosmetic tidy-up prior to its little run, and are awaiting instructions as to

where it goes from here," said Pearson.

RAY MALLOCK, head of the RML Chevrolet team that ran Jason Plato to last year's BTCC crown, plans to race one of the original U2 Formula Junior cars this season. Built by his father Arthur for fellow army Major John Harwood, the chassis was repatriated from marque guru John Streets in the USA.

FORMER BTCC champion Frank Sytner is returning to the Historic F2 arena having acquired the ex-Jean-Pierre Jarier March-BMW 782 from Sean Walker. Sytner has sold the unique ex-Stirling Moss coil-sprung Cooper Monaco sports car to Carlos Monteverde.

ABARTH-OSELLA PA1 sports car racer Grant Tromans will also contest the Historic F2 series in Europe this year. The Monaco-resident Brit has bought the ex-Giacomo Agostini Chevron-BMW B42 from Robert Shaw, who is switching to an ex-works March 782.

AUTOSPORT THREE Hours victor Alex Ames is planning to test Michael Birch's Elva-BMW GT160 - the ex-Hon Richard Wrottesley/Tony Lanfranchi 1965 Le Mans car - prior to a full programme of HSCC Guards Trophy races. Alex's younger brother, Andrew, is joining Historic FF2000 with a Reynard SF79.

FORMER WORLD Rally Championship co-driver Fred Gallagher made his rally driving debut on Saturday's Tour of Cheshire after more than 40 years of co-driving some of the sport's greatest names.

He drove the oldest car in the rally, a 1939 Lancia Aprilia (above).

THREE-TIME Spa Six Hours winner Jon Minshaw has expanded his Jaguar racing portfolio by adding a Lister sports-racer to his fleet of E-types for the coming season. The Demon Tweaks boss has acquired BHL 128, in which Nick Linney enjoyed considerable success in historic events for several years.

FORMER GROUP C/GTP series race winner David Mercer is trying his hand at Classic FF2000 this season in a Van Diemen RF82. The plan is for son Mark to share the car, and maybe run two in 2012.



Allison was classified fifth in '58 German GP

HGPCA

Ex-Grand Prix Lotus to return

Early Lotus 16 has been restored and is set to make a racing comeback in 2011

THE PROTOTYPE Lotus 16, which was raced by Graham Hill and Cliff Allison in 1958, will return to competition in HGPCA events driven by Eddie McGuire.

Chassis 362, which ran as high as fourth in that year's German GP in Allison's hands, was crashed heavily by him in practice at Oporto in '58. It was subsequently bought by Anthony Brooke, who rebuilt it with a conventional Bristol gearbox rather

than the original Lotus/ZF transaxle.

Fledgling Cooper-Bristol racer McGuire borrowed the car from Chris Drake - its owner for two decades - for the 2008 VSCC Amschel Rothschild Memorial race at Silverstone and, having finished fifth, bought it.

The Lotus has, in the interim, been rebuilt to its original specification - with two-litre Coventry-Climax FPF engine and positive-stop 'queerbox' - by Nick

Finburgh and Bo Hare at Classic Autos.

"Their workmanship is superb and the car is completely back to what it should be," said McGuire following Finburgh's shakedown run at Donington Park last Friday. "I'm absolutely thrilled with it and can't wait to get to grips with it properly."

Another early Lotus 16, part of the Donington Collection for many years, has been acquired by Roger Wills.

Masters

Jordan prepares historic tin-top for 2011

FORMER BRITISH Touring Car race winner and British GT champion Mike Jordan is preparing a Ford Falcon for historic events this season.

Jordan, who heads the Eurotech Racing squad that will run Mike's son Andrew and Jeff Smith in the BTCC this year, has already raced with Philip

Walker in historic events. He plans to continue appearing in Walker's cars, but will also race in selected Masters events once the V8 Falcon is ready in mid-season.

"I'm doing it for fun, but if it goes well you don't know what business you may get," said the 53-year-old, who would also like to race more

in contemporary categories.

"I stopped racing because we only had the budget to do touring cars with Andrew, but I'd love to

be racing something mainstream, like GTs or the Porsche Carrera Cup.

"It's a dream of mine to do Le Mans with Andrew."



Jordan will join the Falcon ranks

Historic Rallying

Reynolds takes season opener after rally battle



Reynolds/Oakey took first BHRC win of 2011

JULIAN REYNOLDS and Ian Oakey scored a dramatic last-stage victory on last Sunday's Mid Wales Stages, the opening round of the 2011 British Historic Rally Championship.

Their Ford Escort Mk2 stormed through the Wales Rally GB stage of Myherin to overtake the similar car of Nick Elliott and Chris Brooks by a single second. Reynolds had dropped 10

seconds on the opening stage and then had to fight hard to catch Elliott.

Defending champions David Stokes and Guy Weaver took Category Two honours in their Escort Mk1.

With Dessie Nutt and Geraldine McBride (Porsche 911) sidelined by transmission failure, Category One laurels went to the Ford Lotus Cortina of Simon Wallis/Graham Wride.



THROWN IN DORAN'S DEEP END

Young rally star John MacCrone samples Pat Doran's British Rallycross title-winning Ford Fiesta. KERRY DUNLOP watches on

For many competition drivers the move from a known car and category to something unfamiliar, much faster and probably quite fearsome, is a quantum leap. So why not put a young, ballsy rally driver who has no experience of a racetrack into the British Rallycross champion's 540bhp rocketship for a few laps on the loose at Lydden?

MSA Rally Elite runner John MacCrone hit the headlines when he won the 2009 Peugeot Challenge. He then graduated from the MSA Academy and, while driving his Ford Fiesta RS for Rally Team Scotland with co-driver Stuart Loudon, he showed sufficient skill and flair

to be selected to represent Rally Team UK for this season.

In much the same way as a semi-sane saloon racer (if there is such a thing) might welcome a few laps in a Formula Renault before venturing out in a F1 car for the first time, so 21-year-old MacCrone was delighted to learn the circuit with a Suzuki Swift Cup car before he was let loose in Pat Doran's all-singing, all-dancing four-wheel-drive Fiesta.

He appears wearing David Brabham's overalls and helmet because he had been attending a performance coaching course with his mentor when he got the call from AUTOSPORT with the invitation to

Lydden. His own racing kit was back home – on the Isle of Mull!

After overnight rain the Lydden track is very greasy – even on the asphalt. Graham, chief techie on the Doran team, had already warmed up the Suzuki and he offered a few words of advice: “Keep the wheel straight when you aim at the chicane – the camber will take you through. As you’re a left-foot braker you can steer the car that way.”

MacCrone sets off very sensibly, but soon begins to kick the tail out on the brakes. Within a couple of laps he looks as respectably quick as one can when driving someone else’s car.

“It’s a real fun car to drive,” he says. “You can kick the tail out easily, which is good thing on this type of track. The acceleration is not startling, but it’s a nice casual pull. I was left-foot braking into the corners, just chucking it in to see how it handled and I found the car was very controllable. It’s the kind of car that anyone could jump into and set respectable times quite quickly.”

Now it’s time for the big one. Doran’s Ford Fiesta Supercar, with which he took last year’s British Rallycross crown.

After a few words from Graham – “Change up at five-and-a-half thousand: there’s no warning light.



"Absolutely unbelievable" was MacCrone's verdict

Pat Doran secured his fourth BRC title in 2010



Godfrey-fettled Fiesta motor kicks out 540bhp

SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT RX CHALLENGE CAR

Chassis Standard, with kit
Layout Front-wheel drive
Engine Standard
Power 1600cc
Torque 150bhp
Brakes 120lb ft
Standard



MacCrone learned Lydden in 'tame' Suzuki Swift

FORD FIESTA ST ERC

Chassis Shell supplied by Ford, modified by MDV
Layout Four-wheel drive
Engine Julian Godfrey-prepared turbocharged two-litre 16v
Power 540bhp
Torque 620lb ft
Brakes Alcon four-pot calipers



Imagine if Ford's WRC-spec Fiestas had this much grunt

It's a five-speed, sequential, flat-shift box with a 50/50 torque split front and rear" – MacCrone gets away with no fuss. He uses the short stretch of straight to test the acceleration, then heads onto the loose section like a bucking bronco – on and off the brakes to explore their characteristics.

First time round the hairpin he wellies it at the exit to slide out with wheelspin and then he surges away down Hairy Hill. Once again he tries the nodding-dog technique on the approach to Paddock Bend to test the brakes. But he flicks through the chicane with ease and then powers through the mud at Chesson's Drift.

"Wow, that is awesome. Absolutely unbelievable!" is MacCrone's first reaction after the parks the Fiesta.

"You're going so fast you're never sure it'll stop, but then whoa! – and you have to get on the power again before you reach the corner. The acceleration is phenomenal; going up the hill it was just bang, bang, bang through the gears as fast as I could move my hand."

He sits down, visibly shaking, and then adds with a grin: "Talk about being chucked in at the deep end. What an experience!"

A DORAN FAMILY AFFAIR

The Doran family is synonymous with rallycross. Pat is a four-time British champion, son Liam is a rising star in the European series, and daughter Amy is in day-to-day control of the British Rallycross Championship.

Under the auspices of the Lydden Hill Motorsport Club, the Dorans won a three-year contract to run the BRC at the end of 2009. Since then, they have introduced several classes, taken the series to new circuits, and increased TV coverage.

"Our history in rallycross goes a long way and we wanted to do it because of our passion," says Amy. "We could see rallycross wasn't doing that well for itself.

"We tried to bring in new venues. The Blyton night-race idea came after we asked what we could do that's different."

That event attracted around 3600 spectators – Lydden gets 4000-8000, and 15,000 attended its European championship round last year – and was live on Motors TV. It also sparked Channel 4's interest in televising the BRC.

The gradual modernisation of the

support package is also targeted at new racers. The Suzuki Swift series was launched last year and has 15 entries for 2011, while the Junior Swift, Hot Hatch, and BMW Mini championships are new.

But to make space for all these, old stalwarts have been cut back. BTRDA Clubmans competitors, for example, will only appear at four of the eight '11 rounds.

Not everyone is happy, but Doran insists it's the way to go.

"They're a strong enough championship on their own," she says. "They understand the position we're in. It raises the whole level of the sport and that will help them.

"There has to be a distinction between the British Rallycross Championship and clubman



Doran is building BRC

rallycross so people can define which is the prestige championship."

So what about the future?

"By 2013 we want to have more terrestrial TV coverage and more Supercars," says Doran. "It's an extreme sport and we want to get 15-20,000 at every event.

"In the long-term I'd like to think it could be as big as British Touring Cars."

YOUR SAY

What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



Wouldn't it be fun if these were all rookies?

Racing is the real test of new talent

Instead of an end-of-season young drivers' test, wouldn't it be nice to give new talent a chance to shine in a competitive environment and hold a non-championship F1 race in Bahrain? Providing the political climate had settled, a race in early December would be ideal; it would be exciting seeing future stars pitted against each other.

We all know testing is very different from racing, and the benefits to any future champion would be huge. It would also be nice to see real talent given an opportunity to show up any rich pay drivers with the easier money-backed route into F1.

Graham Davis, by email

EDITORIAL CONTACT mail@autosport.com

While I sympathise entirely with the views Jackie Heffer and Steve Faulkner express, (March 3), unfortunately with TV coverage it's not so simple.

Both DTM and NASCAR are essentially domestic series and their sponsors reflect this. They care little about TV exposure outside their respective markets. If the BTCC were to go to a pay channel, however, then I think you might see some concern from sponsors.

John Galpin
Wivenhoe, Essex

I totally agree with your star letter last week that the sport needs more accessibility on TV.

I also pay a lot for a TV licence and Sky Sports/Eurosport/Motors coverage, so why is this year's WRC only to be found 'live' on ESPN?

There have long been complaints that the WRC doesn't get enough premium airtime on TV, so why put it on a pay-per-view channel?

Patrick Wickham
By email

I disagree with last week's star letter. Motorsport is the product of a capitalist society. In order to progress, you need money – lots of it! So it's no surprise that the screening of motorsport is generally not free. You pay your money and you take your choice.

My grandfather loved motorsport, but refused to pay more than the licence fee for his fix and followed it on Teletext for 20 years – waiting for results to come in while the pages slowly loaded didn't do his blood pressure any good...

Peter JB Green
Saffron Walden, Essex

So, Ferrari has changed the name of its car to 150° Italia, which it says "should make it clear even to the thickest of people that the name is a tribute to the anniversary of the unification of our country".

Presumably, anyone who isn't either Italian or well versed in the subject of European typographical symbols is also a bit thick. Let's hope some 'thicky' from another F1 team can knock Ferrari from its pedestal of supreme intelligence by winning this year's championship.

Graham Talbot
Dunmow, Essex

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WIN!



ROAD ANGEL VANTAGE

This week's star letter will receive a Road Angel Vantage – a dedicated safety camera and blackspot locator that displays the legal speed limit of every road you drive, automatically and wirelessly updating its database every few minutes as you drive. For more details on Road Angel visit www.roadangelgroup.com Please ensure that your full address is included on all correspondence.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

- In last week's list of top-five NASCAR winners (p23), Bobby Allison has, in fact, 85 wins, and Darrell Waltrip 84.
- There were five races in Britain for the Intercontinental Formula in 1961, not four as stated last week (p31). Thanks to David Cole for pointing that out.

It is the policy of AUTOSPORT to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please note the issue date and page number when contacting us on autosport.editorial@haynet.com

THE LATEST GEAR

The most desirable new releases for motor racing fans: books, DVDs, models, art and gifts



OFFICIAL McLAREN TEAM SWEATSHIRT

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Breaking cover before F1 2011 gets underway is the new Vodafone McLaren Mercedes official team clothing range.

Pictured are the new sweatshirts for women (left) and men. They come with quarter zips and, as you'd expect, all the right logos are prominent. To help you stand out while cheering for Jenson and Lewis, the sweatshirts feature silver foil darts, too.



SCHEIDER AUDI A4 1:18

£47.99

autosport.com/shop

Norev has released Timo Scheider's 2009 Audi A4 DTM car in 1:18-scale, which the German used to secure a second successive title thanks to two wins and four runner-up spots.

The detail on the model is extremely good – and the Audi continues a bit of a Norev theme: great value for money.



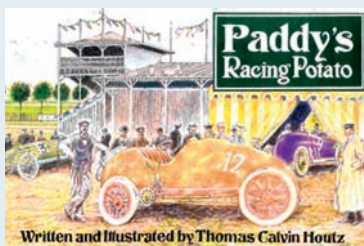
SCHUMACHER OFFICIAL CAP

£24.99

autosport.com/shop

The official Michael Schumacher baseball cap comes in shiny silver – to match the seven-time world champion's F1 Merc – and red piping.

The logos of his long-time sponsor Deutsche Vermögensberatung (a German financial advice firm, if you didn't already know) adorn the front.



PADDY'S RACING POTATO

\$19.95

racemaker.com

Can impoverished Irish farmer Padraig Dolan take on and beat England's Asparagus, the French Tomato and the Canadian Lettuce in the 1907 Grand Prix des Legumes, at the wheel of his trusty potato?

Young race fans will enjoy finding out in this charmingly written and illustrated tale.

HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YOUTUBE: OGIER BLOTS HIS COPYBOOK IN MEXICO



SEARCH FOR: Sebastien Ogier Crash SS20 2011 WRC Rally Mexico (2:36) Sebastien Ogier leads Rally Mexico with just the final day's short stage mileage to tackle after a great battle with illustrious Citroen team-mate Sebastien Loeb. And then an innocuous right-hander spoils it for him.

WHAT'S ON...

Your guide to the best events taking place in the UK and around the world this week – plus TV and online

OULTON PARK

MASTERS

March 12

Admission £12

Tel: 01829 760301

The long winter wait is finally over. The Masters Historic Festival kicks off the national racing season with events for pre-1966 touring cars, Oldies but Goldies, World Sportscar Masters, Gentleman Drivers and – for the first time – FF1600s, as well as a 1970s Celebration. Ex-F1 racer Roberto Moreno should also be making his historic racing debut.



The 2011 national racing season kicks off at Oulton

ANGLESEY

BRSCC

March 13

Admission £10

Tel: 01407 811400

Anglesey replaces its cancelled November meeting with an early 2011 opener. There are races for Caterhams, sportscars, saloons and FF1600s.

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

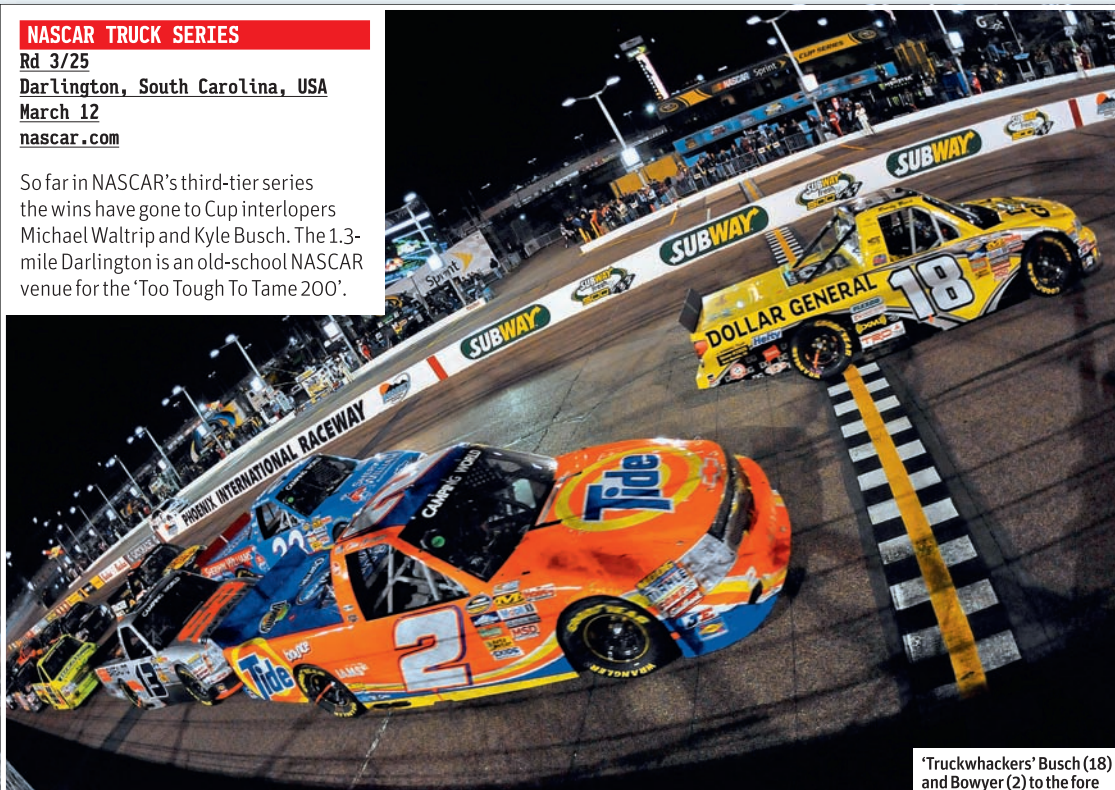
Rd 3/25

Darlington, South Carolina, USA

March 12

nascar.com

So far in NASCAR's third-tier series the wins have gone to Cup interlopers Michael Waltrip and Kyle Busch. The 1.3-mile Darlington is an old-school NASCAR venue for the 'Too Tough To Tame 200'.



'Truckwhackers' Busch (18) and Bowyer (2) to the fore



NEW ZEALAND V8s

Round 6/7

Taupo, New Zealand

March 13

www.nzv8s.co.nz

TC2000

Round 1/12

General Roca, Argentina

March 13

www.tc2000.com.ar

Television

THURSDAY MARCH 10

1005-1035 **Motors TV**

Daytona Challenge

1300-1330 **ESPN**

Planet Speed

1600-1700 **ESPN Classic**

Formula 1 Retro: 1973

Jackie Stewart ends his glittering F1 career with a third world title for Tyrrell.

1750-2000 **Motors TV**

GP2 Asia: Abu Dhabi

2000-2100 **Motors TV**

Andros Trophy

FRIDAY MARCH 11

0000-0100 **Sky Sports 2 & 1000-**

1100,1300-1400 **Sky Sports 3**

Racemax

0115-0315 **Motors TV**

GP2 Asia: Abu Dhabi

0315-0410 **Motors TV**

Andros Trophy

0410-0505,1515-1620 **Motors TV**

AUTOSPORT Charity Karting

0700-0800 **ESPN Classic**

Formula 1 Retro: 1973

1415-1515 **Motors TV**

Andros Trophy

1600-1700 **ESPN Classic**

Formula 1 Retro: 1974

Emerson Fittipaldi takes his second world title in a tense final-round decider.

2100-2205 **Motors TV**

Legend Boucles de Spa

Stefan Stouff defeats a host of former world rally legends in Belgium.

2145-2245 **ESPN**

WRC: Access All Areas

SATURDAY MARCH 12

0000-0115,0445-0600,1505-1625 **ESPN Classic**

Driven – Graham Hill

Another chance to see the documentary film of the life of the only man to win the F1 world title, the Indy 500 and the Le Mans 24 Hours.

0115-0215,1720-1825 **Motors TV**

Andros Trophy

0355-0420 **Five**

Motorsport Mundial

0505-0600 **Motors TV**

Legend Boucles de Spa

0725-0755 **Channel 4**

Mobil 1 – The Grid

Featuring the McLaren F1 team, an interview with Sir Stirling Moss and training with Corvette GT driver Oliver Gavin.

0900-1000 **Dave**

Licence to Le Mans

Dated series following Lord Drayson's journey to compete at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

1825-2130 **Motors TV**

Bathurst 12 Hours

SUNDAY MARCH 13

1210-1415 **Motors TV**

GP2 Asia: Abu Dhabi

1330-1450 **ESPN Classic**

Driven – Graham Hill

1545-1650 **Motors TV**

Andros Trophy

1720-1825 **Motors TV**

Legend Boucles de Spa

2000-2100 **Motors TV**

WRC: World Rally Championship

2100-2130 **Motors TV**

Mobil 1 – The Grid

Online

AUTOSPORT.COM

Coming up on the web this week

FINAL FORMULA 1 TEST

Testing, testing, one, two, three. Formula 1's final pre-season test takes place this week and AUTOSPORT will have Jonathan Noble and Mark Glendenning on the ground in Catalunya to make sure you're kept up to date with everything that happens in this vital dress rehearsal ahead of the season opener in Melbourne. In Losail, MotoGP embarks on its own final pre-season test, while the LMS gets its run out at Paul Ricard.



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REVVED UP OVER WHAT'S ON THE BOX

We cast a critical eye over the best and worst of this week's TV coverage

Mexico: 2011 meets 1986



IF THE INTERNET has taught us anything, it's that people like getting things for free. Spent lots of time and money recording a masterpiece? Tough. If someone uploads it to the net, that means it should be gratis.

Flown across the world to get an exclusive interview? Who cares? Once it's printed, it's free to be reprinted across the world for no cost.

Taken years making a great movie, undertaken enormous expense hiring Hollywood A-listers? So what? I pay a lot of money for unlimited broadband access and if someone's generous enough to put it on a BitTorrent, I'll get it

for nothing. Freetards, these people are called. And there are quite literally millions of them.

Which is why it made sense for ESPN to offer a free weekend pass. And on the schedule, alongside a fine array of live football from across the world, was Rally Mexico and the live final Powerstage.

And it seems Mexico's been caught in a timetrap. Despite a booming economy, the blurry pictures from Guanajuato resembled those from the Mexican Grand Prix of yore, and sound quality was reminiscent of Barry Davies during the 1986 World Cup. Mind you, for people used to stealing

internet feeds it's par for the course.

The addition of a helicopter marked a significant improvement on ESPN's first attempt, although the inability of the commentary team to tell that Federico Villagra's Fiesta hadn't changed gear since it crept off the line was concerning. But credit where it's due, they did correctly surmise that Juho Hanninen had rolled his Skoda on the previous stage by interpreting the battle-scarred bodywork.

For anyone watching

the WRC for the first time, it must've been confusing. Mikko Hirvonen was proclaimed "the winner of Rally Mexico... Powerstage". Oh, so that bloke who finished second was actually the winner?

And there was no talk of overall classification during the coverage, leaving it to the studio team of Jon Desborough and Nicky Grist to cover that off at the end. Surely we needed that at the beginning? Either way, it was free so don't grumble! *Revved Up*

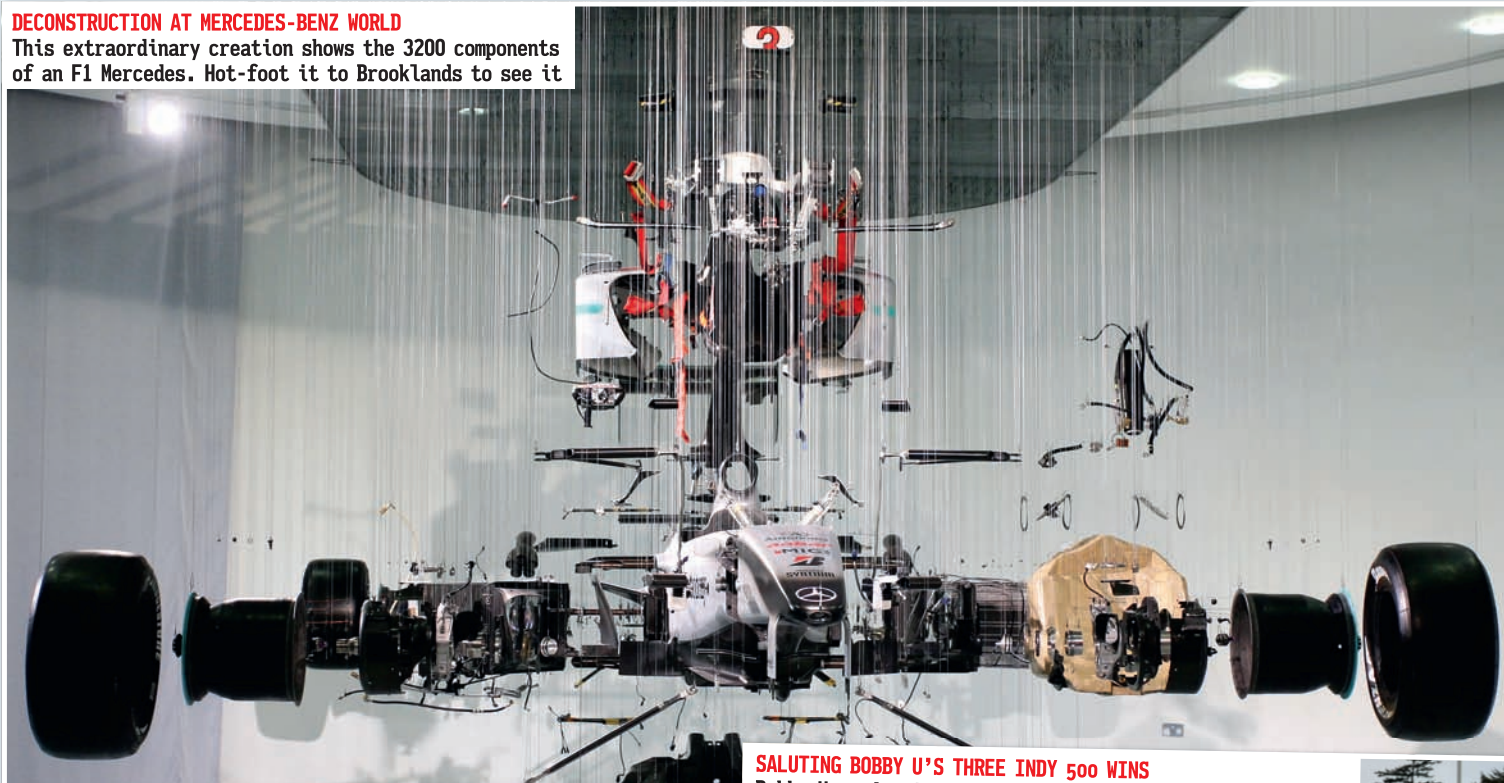
"Mexico has been caught in a timetrap. Despite a booming economy, the picture quality resembled an internet stream"

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

The lensmen pounding the beat, from Las Vegas to Weybridge

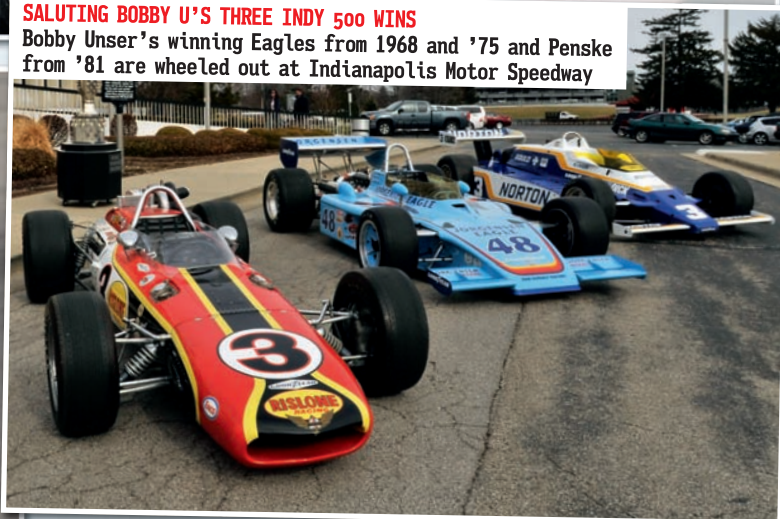
DECONSTRUCTION AT MERCEDES-BENZ WORLD

This extraordinary creation shows the 3200 components of an F1 Mercedes. Hot-foot it to Brooklands to see it



SALUTING BOBBY U'S THREE INDY 500 WINS

Bobby Unser's winning Eagles from 1968 and '75 and Penske from '81 are wheeled out at Indianapolis Motor Speedway

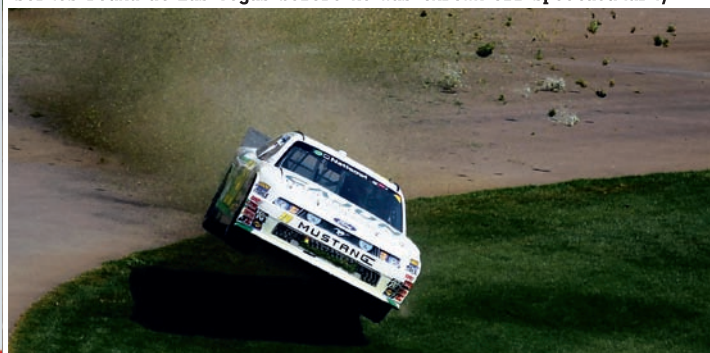


HE DID THIS AFTER 400 MILES OF RACING

That's not four Carl Edwardses you can see... It's just tricky timelapse after his NASCAR win in Vegas

IT'S NOT WISE TO RIDE A BUCKING MUSTANG

NASCAR up-and-comer Josh Wise lasted just 10 laps of the Nationwide Series round at Las Vegas before he was thrown off spectacularly



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Johnny Herbert, International Formula 3000, Jerez, 1988



"Eddie Jordan put Camel stickers on my car and got them to agree to a sponsorship meeting if I won"

Herbert dominated on EJ's F3000 debut

JUST THREE YEARS before Eddie Jordan's eponymous grand prix team made its Formula 1 debut at Phoenix, his squad tasted international success for the first time, courtesy of Johnny Herbert in the 1988 FIA International Formula 3000 Championship.

Essex boy Herbert was already well established within the Eddie Jordan Racing fold, having taken the British F3 crown with the team the previous year. As the squad arrived at Jerez, he was optimistic of a strong result on his F3000 debut in the all-new Reynard-Cosworth 88D.

"I was on a roll after winning in F3, so I was quietly confident of doing well at Jerez," the future grand prix winner recalls. "I'd done a World Sportscar race there a month earlier in an ADA so I knew the circuit, but even so I wasn't really expecting to put the car on pole."

Pole was his though, thanks to a last-gasp effort that knocked Fabien Giroix back into second, and it inspired a bit of creative thinking from team boss Jordan.

"Eddie always had a trick up his sleeve," says Herbert. "He'd been badgering [cigarette maker] RJ Reynolds for sponsorship through Camel, because my budget wasn't

the best. It was okay, but nothing like what my team-mate Thomas Danielsson [who was backed by Q8 Oil] had.

"He went down to one of the teams that had some Camel backing and managed to get some stickers off them. Then he put them on my car, called [marketing executive] W Duncan Lee at Camel to tell him the situation, and got him to agree to have a sponsorship meeting with him on the Tuesday if I won the race. No pressure then."

Whatever pressure there was, Herbert didn't show its effects. He built a three-second lead early on and drove decisively through traffic to keep the works Lola of Mark Blundell at bay. Herbert's victory continued Reynard's record of winning on its debut in single-seater categories, and meant Jordan's team had won its very first race in F3000.

"Everyone was delighted," says Herbert. "Trevor Foster, who was engineering me, Adrian [Reynard] for winning at the first attempt, and especially Eddie. Camel had to give him his meeting after that and he managed to get the sponsorship for the whole season. It was a pretty significant win really." ❧

THIS WEEK IN...



MARCH 16 1978

THE LATE TOM WALKINSHAW

is pictured hurling his BMW CSL through Paddock Hill Bend on our cover (above) on his way to a memorable last-gasp victory in the opening round of the European Touring Car Championship at Brands Hatch.

The car Walkinshaw shared with Umberto Grano trailed the similar BMW of Carlo Facetti/Martino Finotto after the final round of pitstops, but the Scot hunted Facetti down in treacherous conditions and swept into the lead at Surtees two laps from home, before winning a race that lasted three hours and 42 minutes by less than a second.

Chris Witty interviewed Britain's youngest grand prix driver Rupert Keegan about life in Formula 1. "I think there are a lot of young British drivers in the junior formulas

nowadays who are better than me, and who could make it to Formula 1 but won't ever



PICS: LAT



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JOGINDER SINGH

■ Safari Rally ■ April 15-19, 1965 ■ Volvo PV544 ■ First international rally win for an Asian driver



Singh took the high-mile Volvo to an historic victory

THE RALLY that sticks in my memory the most is the 1965 Safari, which I won in the Volvo PV544. I did the rally 22 times between 1959 and 1980 and finished it on 19 occasions, but the first of my three wins was the most special.

And that's because, up to that point, nobody had taken me seriously. They thought I was a 'finisher', not a 'winner'. My best result had been fourth in '63 in the big, heavy Fiat 2300 saloon – after tyre problems spoilt my chance of winning at the fifth attempt.

For 1965 I had no car for the Safari. I wrote to everybody and they all said, 'Sorry, we've got all our drivers.' Undeterred, I chose the Volvo. I was fairly confident that, despite nobody having finished the event in one before, with my own preparation the car would put up a good performance.

I bought a car – KHT 184 – that already had 42,000 miles on the clock from a dealer for £350 on a hire-purchase basis. I persuaded them to agree that if I won the Safari I could keep the car.

We stripped the Volvo down

"I bought a car that already had 42,000 miles on the clock from a dealer for £350 on a hire-purchase basis. I persuaded them to agree that if I won I could keep it"

and rebuilt it, although I didn't feel the need to meddle with the engine – it ran fine!

Our first psychological advantage came when my co-driving brother Jaswant and I pulled number one out of the hat at the start. It was a real boost for us up against factory

opposition from Citroen, Datsun, Ford, Mercedes, Peugeot and Saab.

Once we got underway, facing 3100 miles of tough roads, we quickly opened up a lead, although Pat Moss's Saab closed up by the end of the very wet first leg.

The car ran faultlessly, although

we did have a bit of trouble with the tyres – I changed 11 wheels during the event!

The run along the coast to Mombasa was a worry, for we got stuck in a mud-hole with wet electrics. The starter motor had packed up hours before, but miraculously worked once in the bog – and then failed again. Lucky!

To this today I don't know how we stayed in front. I just kept pushing and the car kept on going. We arrived back in Nairobi 100 minutes ahead of the next car. If I'd known we were so far ahead I'd have slowed down.

Volvo was astonished by the improvements I'd made to the car – they'd always had problems. *Joginder Singh was talking to Henry Hope-Frost*

IN PROFILE



JOGINDER SINGH was a late starter in rallying, despite working in his car-mad father's garage. He first competed in 1958 at the wheel of a Morris Minor 1000. His love affair with the Safari began in 1959, in a VW Beetle, and he tackled the East African marathon a further 21 times, after which he retired from driving. He won it for the first time in 1965 in the Volvo PV544 and then twice more – in 1974 and '76 – for Mitsubishi when it was a fully-fledged WRC qualifier. Singh, now 79, also won three East African titles and six Kenyan rally championships.

NEXT WEEK

Martin DONNELLY





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