



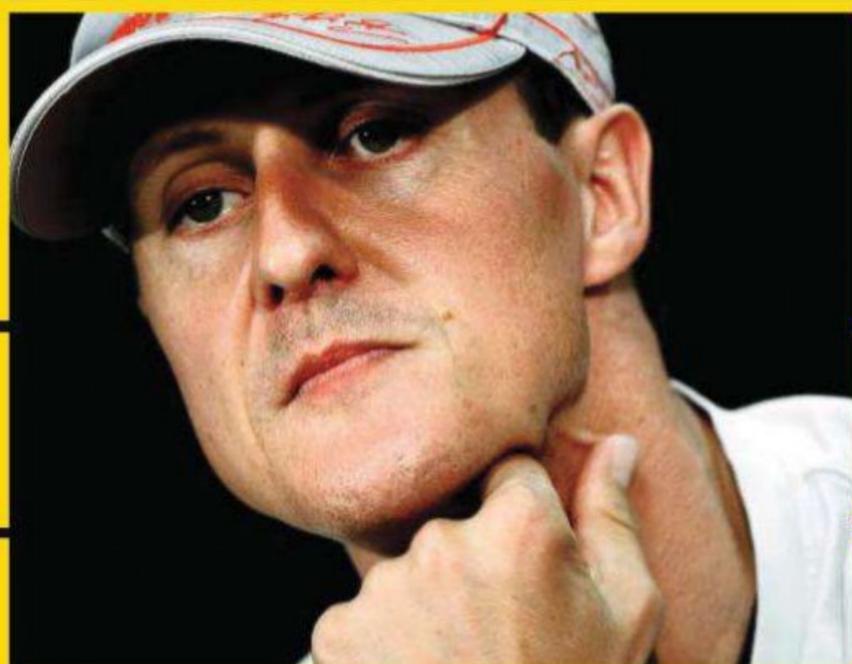
BARRICHELLO INTERVIEW "I'M NOT FINISHED WITH F1"

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MERC: FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION



Schuey's racer breaks cover - but is it good enough?

"We've got to do better than fourth. Third has to be the minimum"
Ross Brawn, p26



PLUS
TOO SENSITIVE TO SURVIVE

Mark Hughes explains why F1 failed Trulli



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2012

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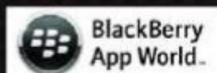
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“As far as I’m aware, we’re definitely going. We rely on the FIA - they’re far better placed to know what the issues are”

RED BULL RACING BOSS CHRISTIAN HORNER THINKS THE SITUATION IN BAHRAIN IS UNDER CONTROL...

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The number of grand prix starts amassed by Rubens Barrichello (352) and Jarno Trulli (252) who find themselves out of an F1 drive in 2012. That's 66.9 per cent of the 858 GPs held since 1950!

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POLE POSITION

Let's see if Mercedes can live up to Brawn's billing



GETTING A FORMULA 1 TEAM

principal to confess his squad's targets for the upcoming season is as rare as hen's teeth. So to hear Ross Brawn give specific targets for Mercedes for 2012 – "third place has got to be the minimum" – is a shock to the system.

To understand why he's being so bullish, you need to acknowledge the revolution that's happened inside his Brackley

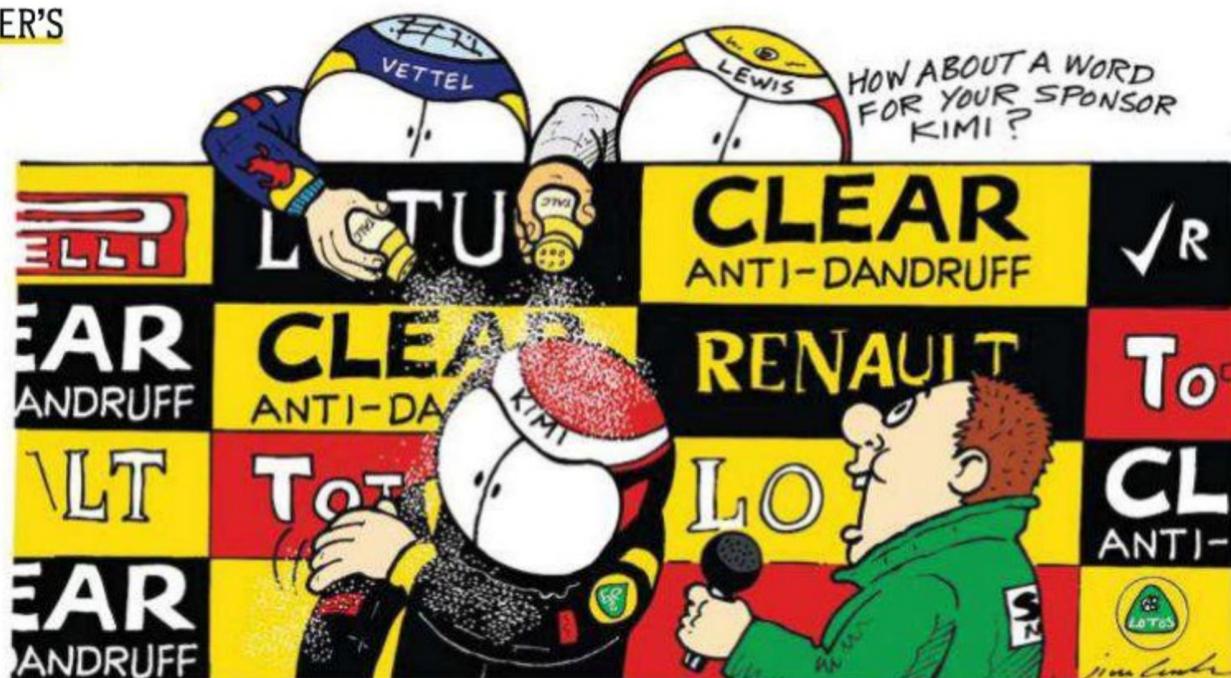
factory. From Honda's exit in 2008, and Brawn's 'phoenix-from-the-flames' title-winning magic act in '09, its staffing levels have fluctuated dramatically. But with the might of Mercedes bankrolling it since '10, this stability has allowed an impressive (and expensive) recruitment drive of talent.

The other reason is that last year's car was a flawed design concept, yet Merc still finished fourth – almost 100 points ahead of its nearest rival. This, coupled with its development strategy, should only get better in 2012.

So, no excuses for Brawn, Michael Schumacher and Nico Rosberg. But with Ferrari, McLaren and Red Bull standing in their way, there's a lot of awfully big reputations on the line.

Charles Bradley, editor

BAMBER'S WEEK



SNOW
THE ICEMAN COMETH!

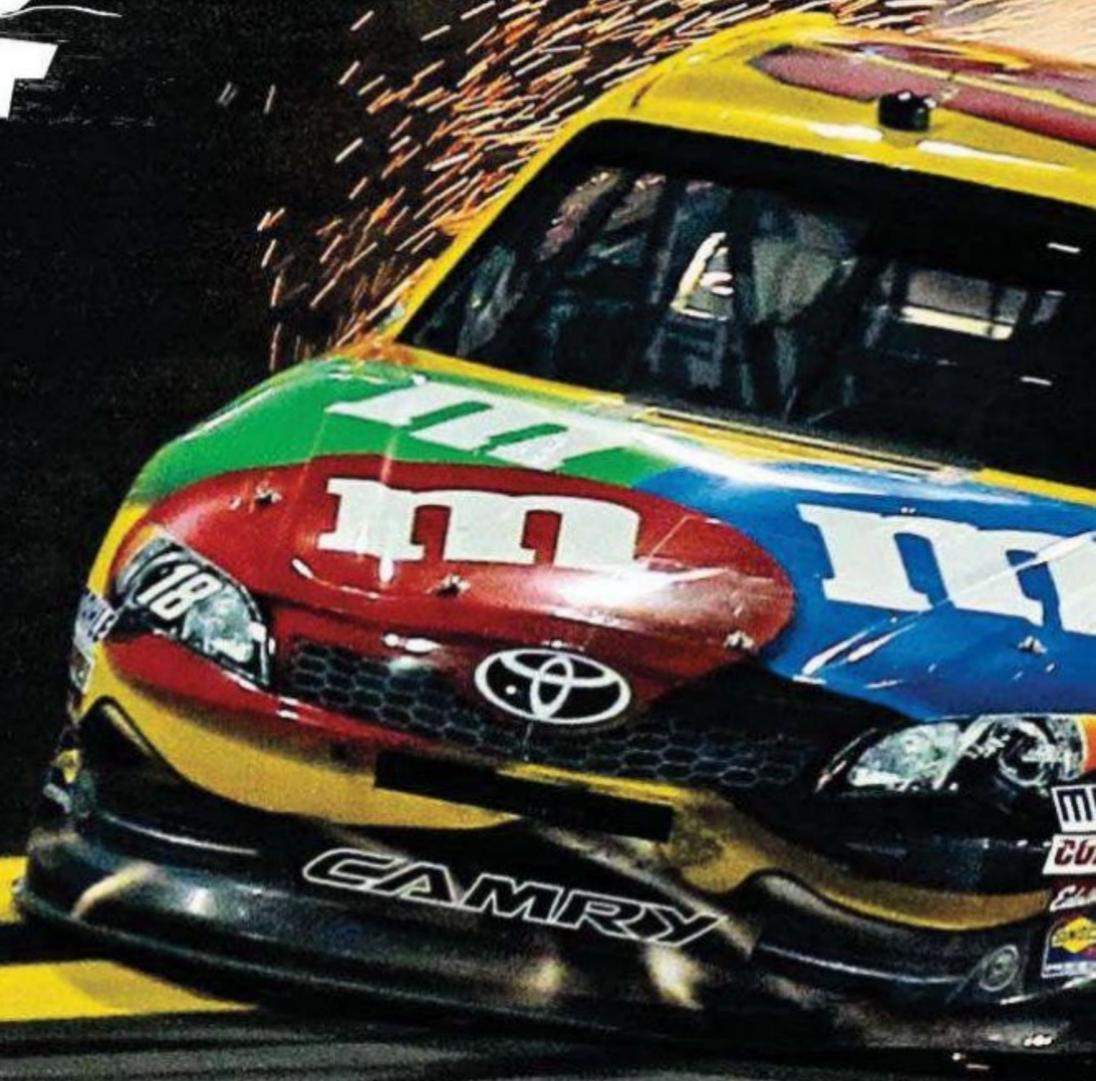


NASCAR

“I was steering, stabbing, braking, gassing, everything in-between”

NASCAR bad boy Kyle Busch was the toast of Daytona for coming back to win after this miracle 180mph save during Saturday night's Budweiser Shootout. Report on [p67](#).

Pic: Matthew Stockman/Getty



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SNAPSHOT
PIT & PADDOCK



Solving the problem of ugly Formula 1 cars

Teams are warming to the idea of taking appearance into account when drafting new design rules. By EDD STRAW



Ferrari F2012: nose is hardly elegant

EXPERT VIEW

GARY ANDERSON
TECHNICAL CONSULTANT



It has to be down to the FIA to take the initiative when it comes to the look of the cars. You can only go so far with technical working groups. Having sat through plenty of those sorts of meetings myself, I know there is inevitably an undercurrent of self-interest.

That's not necessarily a bad thing, because everyone is employed by a team and there to do their best. But when you are talking about nonsensical claims that teams want to carry their chassis over into a new

season, and therefore can't adapt to a rule levelling up the nose and the front section of the chassis, it goes too far.

As far as an engineer is concerned, a quick car is a good-looking car. That means that it has to be down to a third party to draw the line.

I'd like to see the FIA more willing to do this and act in a way that we've seen in Indycar racing, where certain things have been thrown out despite being within the letter of the law.



A third party needs to be consulted

Mercedes GP team chief Ross Brawn has warned that Formula 1 must consider the visual impact of rule changes on cars in the wake of this year's spate of stepped noses.

Nine of the 10 designs launched so far for 2012 feature the stepped nose. This has been caused by a rule change lowering the height of the nose for safety reasons, combined with teams wanting to ensure maximum airflow under the front of the chassis for aerodynamic benefits.

Only McLaren has bucked the trend. The team has an orthodox-looking nose due to its chassis being lower at the front, a design that featured on its 2011 machine.

Brawn blames the wording of the rules on claims from some teams that they planned to continue using the same chassis as in 2011.

This is historically an argument used by those unwilling to see changes in monocoque regulations. Although every team has built new chassis for 2012, the bluffing meant the new rules did not cover the front of the chassis itself.

While the nose height was reduced for safety reasons, there is no compelling explanation for why

the rules should not have mandated a lower height of the chassis to even-up the shape of the cars.

"Engineers, and I include myself, have a responsibility to make the car look nice," Brawn told AUTOSPORT. "There is no doubt that we should try to make the cars look attractive, racey and appealing."

"The feature we've all ended up with for the nose is going the wrong way. It was a bit unfortunate. There was an identified need to lower the nose, and of course if you lower the nose you've got to join it up to the chassis. A few teams sat there and said, 'We want to be able to carry our chassis over', which we know is nonsense."

The fear is that the unsightly front ends on the latest breed of F1 cars could damage the image of a



Teams will always go for speed over looks



AUTOSPORT on Facebook



What our readers think of the 2012 F1 cars

Alex Wong

We're all kids at heart and want to see cool-looking cars going quickly. The cars need to look cool, not like a three-year-old made them out of Lego.

Rob Higham

Aesthetics should never overrule safety and whether you say these cars are ugly or not the truth is by the time we get to the fourth or fifth race this season no-one will notice.

Jean-Francois Avenier

To me, unfortunately it is proof that the FIA is disconnected from daily reality and does not give a damn to what fans want. Nobody cares about F1 cars able to run down the pitlane on batteries, but everybody wants powerful, vocal and beautiful single-seaters.

Liam O'Rourke

Safety has to come first and as McLaren has shown the new rules do not have to mean ugly. Whatever happens we will all get used to the new look just like we did in 2009.

Brian Graves

Safety and parity should be the only considerations when it comes to the regs. There have been many cars that people have labelled ugly or monstrous, but I feel that has added to the rich tapestry of design & innovation through the years.



McLaren doesn't have stepped nose

"You perhaps need a checklist for every new rule: objective; racing benefit; and aesthetic benefit"

Ross Brawn

effective if refereed by the FIA and taken out of the hands of the teams.

"You perhaps need to have a checklist for every new regulation you bring in," said Brawn. "You could ask what the objective is, whether it has a racing benefit and whether it has an aesthetic benefit.

"Some of the aesthetics you get used to, so we shouldn't get overzealous. But some of them, like the nose, we have to fix. McLaren has done a car to that spec so we could follow their dimensions."

It is expected that the rules will be changed for next season to lower the height of the front of the chassis to eliminate the step. But F1's priority needs to be that unsightly rule changes are eliminated in the future unless absolutely unavoidable for safety reasons.

DO LOOKS MATTER?

Formula 1 cars have always had the ability to excite and repulse with their looks. AUTOSPORT looks at three of the best and worst-looking machines to have hit the track over the years.

THE GOOD

Jordan 191 (1991)

Gary Anderson's first F1 car combined sleek lines, a fantastic livery and a handy turn of speed.



Brabham BT52B (1983)

The most attractive of all Brabhams was an incisive arrow shape, thanks to its distinctive swept-back sidepods.



Lotus 79 (1978)

The car that popularised ground effect in F1 was the most stunning ever to wear John Player Special colours.

THE BAD

March 711 (1971)

The second March F1 car featured the teatray nose as well as some bizarrely-proportioned styling at the rear.



Wolf WR5 (1978)

The ground-effect Wolf featured an unsightly radiator mounted on the nose, with not a curved line on display.

Ferrari 310 (1996)

The Ferrari was as ungainly as it looked and it took the talent of Schumacher to haul it to three victories.



sport that depends on the strength of its high-technology, high-speed brand to lure sponsors. While regular followers of F1 will quickly become accustomed to the look of the cars, outsiders could struggle to embrace the new angular look.

Pirelli F1 tyre chief Paul Hembery has already publicly questioned the look of the new cars and called into question the effect on sponsors. One commercial source working for an F1 team told AUTOSPORT that "it's not making our lives any easier at a time when partners are hard enough to come by".

Lotus technical director James Allison suggested last year that an aesthetics working group be created to discuss such problems. But Toro Rosso technical chief Giorgio Ascanelli explained that the FIA has not been keen on such an idea so far.

"They are not nice," said the Italian of the 2012 cars. "Lotus wanted a rule to avoid them looking so ugly. But Charlie Whiting [FIA technical delegate] said it would be the first time we made a rule to avoid cars being ugly."

Brawn suggests that a simple checklist against which any change should be measured could do the job. This would be particularly



Schu closes on fourth year

Mercedes keen to extend seven-time champion's comeback beyond his initial three-year deal



Schumacher got a taste of 2012 Mercedes this week



Brawn wants to bring back the glory days

Michael Schumacher could continue his Formula 1 'comeback' for a fourth season in 2013 even though his current Mercedes contract is due to expire at the end of this year.

When Schumacher returned to F1, he framed it as a three-year plan covering 2010-2012. But Mercedes team principal Ross Brawn has confirmed that Schumacher's future is "a totally open point" for next season. This is because the prospect of the seven-time world champion returning to the top step of the podium in Mercedes machinery is too good to pass up.

"We've not made any decisions," Brawn told AUTOSPORT. "We all know Michael succeeding again would be sensational for F1, for Mercedes, for everyone, and if we can make that happen we are not going to let go of it."

"He has got to feel it's the right thing to do and we have to feel it's the right thing to do but there is no reason why we shouldn't. He is

still incredibly fit, still incredibly motivated, still busting my balls about making things better, which is always a good sign!"

Schumacher has regularly insisted that he has yet to make a decision about his future. AUTOSPORT understands that he does not want to leave F1 before he's had a car capable of challenging for the title. Provided he performs this year, he is likely to be given that opportunity to continue given his commercial value to Mercedes. However, it's unclear when a final decision will be made.

When asked about his future at the end of last season, Schumacher said: "Honestly, I don't know as I have not made any plans. The focus is on 2012 first and only sometime during the year will I know."

Brawn is correct when he highlights the potential benefit of Schumacher not only to Mercedes, but also to the sport. When the German climbed to second in last year's rain-hit Canadian Grand Prix, it was a big story and there is little

ROSBERG v SCHUMACHER



2010		
19	STARTS	19
✓ 3RD	BEST FINISH	4TH
✓ 2ND	BEST QUALIFYING	5TH
✓ 7.4	AVERAGE QUALIFYING	9.9
✓ 142	POINTS	72
✓ 66%	POINTS RATIO	34%
✓ 7TH	CHAMPIONSHIP	9TH
2011		
19	STARTS	19
5TH	BEST FINISH	4TH ✓
✓ 3RD	BEST QUALIFYING	5TH
✓ 7.53	AVERAGE QUALIFYING	10.32
✓ 89	POINTS	76
✓ 54%	POINTS RATIO	46%
✓ 7TH	CHAMPIONSHIP	8TH

“Perspectives on Michael have changed. There’s now a willingness to want him to succeed again”

Ross Brawn

Damon Hill told AUTOSPORT: “Logic and experience tell us that you don’t keep on getting better and better as you get older – at certain things. So he is defying all of that, but then he’s always done that. Who is to say whether or not another little fire has lit inside of him and he gets the opportunity?”

“I watched the Canadian GP and said to my wife and [son] Josh, ‘He is going to win this!’ because we know the nature of the guy. He suddenly got a little window and it was like he was saying, ‘I’m back!’ You can never discount him completely.

“He is an amazingly resilient competitor. To be able to withstand the constant grinding down and deflation every time he’s outqualified by Nico - but he still keeps going. Absolutely incredible.”

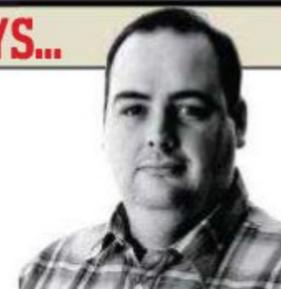
If Schumacher can build on what he did last season, the chances are he will still be at Mercedes for 2013.

➔ P26 MERCEDES LAUNCH

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

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Michael Schumacher’s charge in last year’s Canadian Grand Prix was one of the standout memories of last season. Although he faded from second to fourth by the flag as the track dried up, it did offer a glimpse of how a 92nd victory for the German would be received, and how dramatic a contrast it would be in a world that once became weary by his run of success.

The question is: can Schumacher deliver?

There were a number of races last year when, on Sunday certainly, he delivered top-quality drives that might have merited victory in stronger cars. There were also less spectacular races. It’s certainly not inconceivable, and perhaps even likely, that Schumacher could win on his day in a top car. But there is one clear weakness in his armoury to overcome: qualifying.

As Sebastian Vettel showed last season, qualifying is a big part of the battle. If you can get the best out of a car on Saturday afternoon and start out front, you can control the race. No question, Schumacher has the ability to control a race from the front in the right car. Whether he can get there is a question he has to answer.

This season should tell us a lot. Last year was a vast improvement over 2010 and Schumacher has proved that even after three years away he has at least returned as a good grand prix driver. Let’s hope Mercedes gives him a car in which to show us what he can do.



Canada 2011: familiar feeling

RECORD BREAKER



If Michael Schumacher does sign up for another season with Mercedes in 2013, he is due to pass Rubens Barrichello’s record for F1 starts in the 17th round of that campaign.

doubt that a 92nd career victory would be a major boost for F1.

“Perspectives on Michael have changed,” added Brawn. “There’s now a willingness to want him to succeed. There was a time when people didn’t want to see him winning races but it was interesting in Montreal to see the positive feeling there was from people.”

Much will depend on the on-track performance in deciding if Schumacher is to stay on. If Mercedes slips down the pecking order, he might think twice before committing to staying with a team that is not heading in the right direction. If the car is improved, Schumacher will need at least to match team-mate Nico Rosberg to stay on. Despite lagging behind his countryman in qualifying, he came close to matching Rosberg on results last year (see sidebar), while his Montreal charge in the wet proved that the 43-year-old still has a fierce racing instinct. Schumacher’s old title rival

Vitaly Petrov: more than just a pay driver

Russian star dismisses claims that money has kept him in F1 and feels his record shows he is worthy of a place on the grid with Caterham

Vitaly Petrov has hit out at accusations that his late deal to remain in Formula 1 with Caterham was dependant upon the financial backing that he brings to the British squad.

The team confirmed last week that it had signed the Russian to complete its driver sign-up alongside Heikki Kovalainen, leaving veteran Jarno Trulli without a drive. Petrov had lost his Renault drive this winter to Romain Grosjean, with Renault chief Eric Boullier saying that teams could not “take the financial backing of a driver into account if you have real ambition”. But while Petrov’s switch to Caterham has been facilitated by

sponsorship from Russian companies such as petrochemical firm SIBUR, the 27-year-old insists that he was chosen for his speed rather than his budget.

“If I was just a pay driver I would never have taken my first podium [at last year’s Australian Grand Prix], or I would never have taken as many points as I did last year,” Petrov told AUTOSPORT. “I would never have beaten [Nick] Heidfeld and Bruno [Senna]. So I have shown that I can be quick enough to be a good driver.

“Formula 1 is political, and it is a question of big money. [Teams] are never looking for talent and things like that. But Caterham believes in us; they were watching our results last year, and together we can achieve good results this year.”

Petrov endured a difficult second season with Renault, which started the year grappling with the sudden loss of Robert Kubica to a long-term injury, and then found itself hamstrung by a car with limited potential after opting for a radical, forward-exiting exhaust system.

“I bring positive things to this team, and I feel like I am at home”

Vitaly Petrov

There was also tension between the team and Petrov himself, with Boullier becoming increasingly ambiguous about his commitment to the 27-year-old, and Petrov lashing out the team’s lack of progress on Russian TV after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

“It was not easy for me because the car was not fantastic, but also for Renault because they wanted more, but with what they designed, they could not improve,” Petrov said.

“That’s why they started to complain about the drivers and about me. But I don’t want to talk about Boullier and that team anymore, because I don’t think it is right. We know what was right and what was wrong.

“I know myself. I think this team just needs to forget what happened

last year. I bring positive things to [Caterham], and I feel much better because I have spoken already with a lot of people here, and I know what they want from me, and what I want from them. I feel like I am at home here, and I like that we can sit down and talk without any problems.”

Petrov believes that he has still not had an opportunity to show his full potential in Formula 1, and is confident that if he can establish himself at Caterham over the long-term, it could become a perfect environment for him to flourish.

“I’m not starting from zero, because I learned quite a lot last year,” he said. “But I can develop together with this team, because it has a lot of potential for the future. People who understand why it was difficult for me last year understand that I can do much better.

“We don’t need the target to be a top-10 team at the end of the year, or to take one point. Every person needs to focus on their job inside the team, and this way we will bring a fantastic result at the end of the year.”



Renault stint had good and bad days



Petrov has refuted pay-driver claims

60 SECONDS WITH

JARNO TRULLI

On the sidelines



If this is the end for you in F1, is it disappointing not to have been able to bow out properly?

There are plenty of ways of leaving F1. These days it's dominated by money and sponsors. I'd have wanted to finish in a different way, but sometimes you cannot decide your future.

Are you proud of what you have achieved in F1?

Yes. For an Italian, it's a great achievement. I have no regrets and I'm proud of the fact that I always had good relationships and respect from everyone in the paddock – from the mechanics to the team principals to the media. It would have been nice to have had the chance to fight for the championship with a better car, but I was never in the right place at the right time.

You drove the 2012 Caterham last week. Had you raced this year, do you think you could have shown your best form?

I just wanted to bounce back after the past two years, which were the worst of my life. I knew why, so I really wanted to show my potential.

You thought you might lose the seat to a driver with backing, but after getting so close to the start of the season were you surprised that it finally happened?

Yes. I was prepared so I wasn't disappointed because I have no hard feelings with the team. Before they announced it they called me and explained the situation.

Are you happy with how the team dealt with it?

In some ways yes, in some ways not just because of the timing. I'd have preferred to get this sorted out earlier, but obviously they were not ready. It's clear what happened.

Are you confident of racing somewhere in 2012?

I've already had offers, but I don't want to commit to anything until I'm sure about it.



Jarno Trulli was talking to AUTOSPORT F1 editor **EDD STRAW**

Jerez test appears to be Trulli's final F1 running



Experience makes way

Jarno Trulli's exit means that the Formula 1 grid which will line up for the Australian Grand Prix on March 18 will have almost 25 per cent less combined experience than that which started the Brazilian GP at the end of 2011.

The Italian is the fourth most-prolific race starter in world championship history with 252 starts, but he joins record-holder Rubens Barrichello – who started 322 races – on the sidelines.

This, along with the departure of Adrian Sutil, Vitantonio Liuzzi and Sebastien Buemi, who have all started over 50 races, has slashed the overall experience of the grid.

Collectively, the 24 drivers expected to line up in Melbourne next month are 23.3 per cent less experienced than the line-up that concluded the season at Interlagos last November.

2011 GRID EXPERIENCE: 1901 RACES

- OUT**
- Rubens Barrichello (322)
 - Jarno Trulli (252)
 - Adrian Sutil (90)
 - Vitantonio Liuzzi (80)
 - Sebastien Buemi (55)
 - Jaime Alguersuari (46)
 - Jerome d'Ambrosio (19)

2012 GRID EXPERIENCE: 2480 RACES

- IN**
- Kimi Raikkonen (155)
 - Pedro de la Rosa (85)
 - Narain Karthikeyan (27)
 - Nico Hulkenberg (19)
 - Romain Grosjean (7)
 - Charles Pic (0)
 - Jean-Eric Vergne (0)

TRULLI IN NUMBERS

252 STARTS

1 WIN

163 LAPS LED

11 PODIUMS

246.5 POINTS

12368 LAPS RACED

6 TEAMS

1 FASTEST LAP

16 SEASONS IN F1

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BMW Motorsport 

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 **DUNLOP**
DRIVE WITH CONFIDENCE

THIS WEEK IN F1

MAGNUSSEN JR GETS McLAREN TEST



Magnussen Sr made one-off McLaren start

Kevin Magnussen, son of one-time McLaren Formula 1 driver Jan, will drive for the team in the Abu Dhabi rookie test in November. The 19-year-old, a race winner in British and Euro Series Formula 3, is part of

McLaren's junior programme. His father was McLaren's test driver and finished 10th in the 1995 Pacific Grand Prix, standing in for the ill Mika Hakkinen. Magnussen Sr went on to race for Stewart in 1997 and '98.

Vettel is a modern Fangio in Formula 1. I can't see, other than his natural ability, how he can be that good. Vettel is quite outstanding, but then he has got the best car, which is fair enough because normally the best driver gets the best car. Fangio went around and took what he wanted and one took whatever was left



Stirling Moss compares Sebastian Vettel to Juan Manuel Fangio

BOTTAS TAKES BOW IN LATEST WILLIAMS

Williams reserve Valtteri Bottas was due to have his first day of running in the new FW34 at Barcelona yesterday (Wednesday). The Finn is due to drive in 15 Friday practice sessions for the team in 2012.



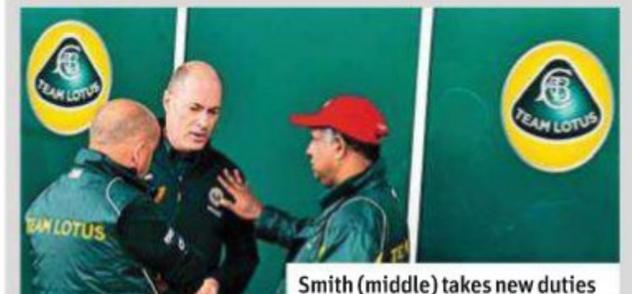
First FW34 run for Bottas

NOT AN ITALIAN IN SIGHT

Jarno Trulli's axing from Caterham means that the Australian Grand Prix will be the first world championship F1 race without any Italian drivers entered since the 1973 German GP (below). The last race for which no Italians qualified was Japan '96 - Giovanni Lavaggi missed the cut.



DID YOU KNOW?



Smith (middle) takes new duties

CATERHAM MAKES TECH RESHUFFLE

Technical director Mark Smith has taken day-to-day control of the technical side of the Caterham F1 team. This follows Mike Gascoyne's promotion to chief technical officer of the entire Caterham Group. AUTOSPORT understands that Gascoyne will no longer be a regular at grands prix.

HRT CRASH-TEST BATTLE THIS WEEK

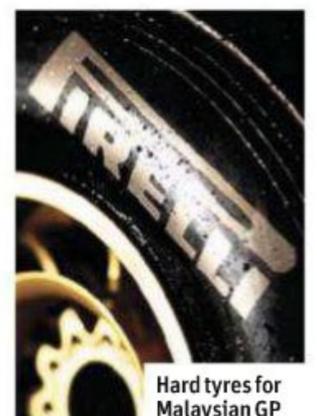
Formula 1 backmarker HRT hopes to complete its three outstanding mandatory crash tests this week. It was expected to take the two nose tests on Tuesday, with the rollhoop test likely to be completed at the end of the week. The team has already passed 14 of the 17 tests, but could miss the third pre-season test at Barcelona on March 1-4 if it is unsuccessful this week.



HRT only has old car running

PIRELLI COMPOUNDS REVEALED

Control-tyre supplier Pirelli has allocated its compounds for the first three grands prix of the season. Soft and medium will be used for the Australian opener and race three in China, with medium and hard allocated for Malaysia.



Hard tyres for Malaysian GP

MONACO GP



3 Night Grand Prix Break

Booking Includes;

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- Friday Night Welcome Drinks Reception
- Event Pack including earplugs and ticket lanyard
- Return Rail travel provided for those in Nice**



From £819 per person*



Optional Extras (at a supplement)



- Race Tickets
- Hospitality
- Helicopter Transfers



ABU DHABI GP



4 Night Grand Prix Break

- Return flight from London or Manchester to Dubai or Abu Dhabi
- 4 nights hotel in Dubai or Abu Dhabi with breakfast
- Airport & Sunday Circuit transfers by coach
- Friday Night Welcome Drinks Reception
- Event Pack including earplugs and ticket Lanyard

From £769 per person***



Optional Extras (at a supplement)

- 2 Day or 3 Day Grandstand ticket
- Hospitality
- Saturday return circuit transfers by coach



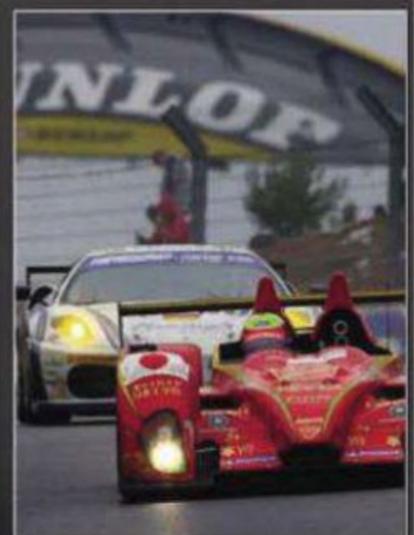
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Optional Extras (at a supplement)

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- On site meals
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MPH Mark Hughes

AUTOSPORT grand prix editor

The end of Jarno Trulli's Formula 1 career didn't come about because he lost any of his speed. It was the singularity of his talent that was to prove his downfall

PIC: ETHERINGTON/LAT

Jarno Trulli's F1 journey appears finally to have reached the end of the line after 15 seasons, with just that solitary victory at Monaco 2004 to show for a talent that promised so much more.

A serious under-performance for the last two years – invariably qualifying behind Team Lotus team-mate Heikki Kovalainen – makes it tempting to surmise that Jarno was simply past his sell-by date. But that really doesn't tally. Towards the end of 2009 he drove what was arguably his finest race, defeating Lewis Hamilton's McLaren to take second place at Suzuka after a race-long fight. It was 53 laps of on-the-limit driving, letting not a chink of

struggles began immediately in 2010 and were sustained for the next two seasons. His performance therefore suffered a huge step change some time between the end of 2009 and the start of 2010. That is not the pattern you'd expect of someone simply past his best, not the gentle downward fall into mediocrity's grip that the years eventually play upon everything.

Dr Riccardo Ceccarelli – whose work has been discussed in this column before – was at the time of that wondrous '09 Suzuka drive retained by Toyota. Central to his work of over 20 years has been correlating driver heartbeat to performance. At F1 levels of fitness the heartbeat increases only from the greater mental stress of finding the very last gramme of performance, of sitting the car on the absolute edge. Typically the heartbeat increases as the driver does his 'qualifying laps' around the pitstops and Ceccarelli's work has established that there is a direct link between heartbeat and performance.

It is generally unfeasible to drive a complete race at qualifying level of effort; the mental strain is simply too much. Yet Trulli's trace from Suzuka showed an astonishing evenness, with the peaks hardly any higher than the average. Either he was performing at a low level – or an amazingly high one. They are the only two explanations for the consistency of the heartbeat readings, and it's pretty clear which it was. In all of the doctor's thousands upon thousands of driver race traces, this one stands head and shoulders above them all.

Trulli simply *cannot* have fallen from this level to mediocrity in the space of a few months, and as such we have surely to take seriously his claim that he has not been able to properly drive the cars of the last two years because of the feel of their power steering. Yes, the other driver has had no problems dealing with it and on that level, sure, it's a failing of Trulli's that he wasn't able to drive around the trait. But at a deeper level, it's totally consistent with how he has always derived his speed. As he said in a recent interview on AUTOSPORT.com: "It's been like that ever since karting." If we go back to his 2006 season at Toyota, we find that his previous year's stark qualifying superiority over Ralf Schumacher had evaporated. The reason? The '06 Toyota's power steering did not allow him the super-fast steering movements upon corner entry that were his key to keeping momentum between turn-in and apex. Each driver has his own way of doing this, but Trulli's was singularly different; he relied upon a combination of very rapid steering corrections and his acute sensitivity to the car's yaw to commit to high entry speeds.

It's easy to increase the assistance of a steering system, making it lighter, but fiendishly difficult to do this while retaining the same level of feel. On a couple of occasions last year Lotus was able to give Trulli a system that had the required level of feel, but this was on tracks that did not generate huge cornering and steering loads – and at those places he was instantly quick again. Ultimately, his great talent was simply too specific. ❄



Trulli takes a bow after sensational Suzuka drive

daylight in his defence, driving the in- and out-laps aggressively fast and faultless so as not to be leapfrogged by the faster car. It was a performance that completely transcended the car's level, the sort of drive that had it been produced by Hamilton, Fernando Alonso or Sebastian Vettel, would have been raved about. Yet Trulli's qualifying

“Trulli's heartbeat trace from Suzuka '09 was astonishing”



Super Nova bowed out with Carroll (front) and Fauzy

GP2 SERIES

GP2 bullish about its future

Bianchi leaves, Super Nova is gone, but series boss won't bow to economic pressure. By MARK GLENDENNING

GP2 Series boss Bruno Michel has ruled out taking steps to reduce the cost of competing in his series, despite an ongoing economic squeeze and increasing competition from rival categories.

The series is still working to complete its grid for the upcoming season. While it has enjoyed a high ratio of 'carryover' drivers who have remained in the championship for successive years in the past, it is having a harder time retaining them this time around.

Ferrari protege Jules Bianchi has confirmed a switch to the Formula Renault 3.5 Series after two years in GP2, while his former team-mate

Sam Bird is also understood to be considering a move to FR3.5.

But Michel told AUTOSPORT that he was confident he can maintain the quality of the GP2 grid without reducing the budgets.

"Bianchi is going to be the third driver on a Formula 1 team [Force India], and obviously he has not got the budget to do a GP2 season [as well]," said Michel. "So after that, if [his management] think that he needs to race and it's much cheaper to go into other categories, I'd say that's life. We are not going to diminish the cost of GP2 to get drivers who do not want to pay the cost."

Bianchi, who will drive in Friday practice sessions for Force India, said that there were multiple reasons behind his switch.

"Staying in GP2 would have been too complicated with the Friday morning tests," he said. "I think the [FR3.5] made a good step forward so it's going to be a really nice season. The new car will be interesting: new tyres, new engine and the DRS."

The economic pressures have also had an effect on GP2's teams, with long-time entrant Super Nova losing its entry to Lazarus Racing last week. Michel admitted that British squad Super Nova's exit was significant in light of the team's

history, but is confident that Italian operation Lazarus — a leading runner in Auto GP — will be a positive addition.

"Super Nova had a difficult financial situation last year, so what happened over the winter was not a big surprise," he said. "But it is a big loss, because Super Nova has been racing for years, and has been in GP2 since the beginning."

"We immediately had some requests from teams that were interested in the spot, and we were quite careful about both the technical ability of the team and its financial strength. Lazarus was solid on both fronts."

GP3 SERIES

Mucke pull-out prompts legal threats

GERMAN TEAM MUCKE MOTORSPORT is facing the possibility of legal action from the GP3 Series over its apparent intention to abandon its programme in the series one year early.

The Berlin squad signed a three-year contract with the series prior to the inaugural season in 2010, but AUTOSPORT understands that it has now informed series organisers that it does not intend to take part this season. It is absent from the entry list for this week's pre-season test at Estoril.

Series CEO Bruno Michel told AUTOSPORT that he was evaluating his options. "Mucke had, like every team, an agreement with us that they signed for the seasons 2010, 2011 and 2012," he said.

"Mucke has decided that it doesn't want to do the last season [of the deal], so it is in breach of the agreement that it has with us, which of course is a big issue, and we are considering all the options we have."

"It's a legal proceeding. There are contracts, and contracts are supposed

to be respected. If they are not respected they are in breach of this contract, and that is something our lawyers are looking into now."

Mucke finished fourth in the teams' championship last year, with Nigel Melker the best-placed of its drivers in third.

The team is expected to continue with its other racing activities, and announced last month that it would run in the Formula 3 Euro Series with Masters of F3 winner Felix Rosenqvist and reigning Formel Masters champion Pascal Wehrlein.



Mucke leaving GP3, but series boss is unhappy

INDYCAR

Indy boss hits back at doubters

INDYCAR CEO RANDY BERNARD has lashed out at critics of the series and declared that continued predictions of strife have not been borne out by the recent progress that it has made.

Speaking in Indianapolis last week, Bernard said that the continued portrayals of a championship in crisis had been proven to be wide of the mark.

"I'd like to take a moment to address the many critics the series has faced," Bernard said. "I read and hear the same things that all of you

do – that IndyCar is headed for Doomsday. That it will be out of business in two years – I heard that two years ago. I counter that with the fact that IndyCar just had one of its best financial years in history.

"We've heard that the Hulman-George Family was selling IndyCar, but I can promise you one of the first things that Mrs Mari Hulman George told me was her unwavering commitment to the Speedway and the series. We heard some snickering when the ICONIC advisory committee introduced the new car

and [that] we would never introduce new engine manufacturers. Wrong again. We are very proud to have Honda, Chevrolet and Lotus with us."

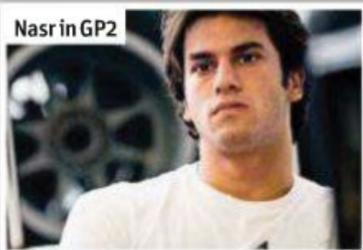
Bernard said that he was optimistic that the new DW12 chassis, the reintroduction of an engine rivalry and the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of the teams and grid would enable IndyCar to take another step in 2012.

"This year promises to showcase fierce competition on the track," he said. "It's time for everyone to put their faith back in IndyCar."

IndyCar grids growing for 2012



IN BRIEF



NASR MOVES TO DAMS

Reigning British Formula 3 champion Felipe Nasr will step up to the GP2 Series with DAMS for 2012. The Brazilian joins Davide Valsecchi at the French team, which won last year's title with Romain Grosjean.

VISO STAYING WITH KV

Venezuelan IndyCar regular EJ Viso will remain with KV Racing after securing backing from Citgo. He finished 18th in the 2011 standings.

HEAT RACES FOR IOWA

IndyCar will introduce heat races to determine the grid for its race at Iowa Speedway in June, with a view to possibly expanding the system to other ovals in 2013. The three 30-lap races will determine the top 10, then the odd and even sides of the remainder of the grid.

NEW ROLE FOR LUYENDYK

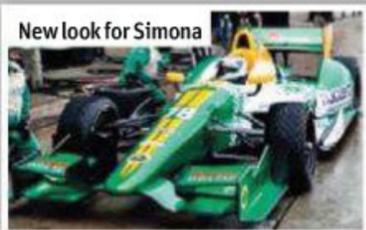
Two-time Indy 500 winner Arie Luyendyk has been named as part of IndyCar's new race control team. The Dutch-born ex-racer will be joined by Johnny Unser and Gary Barnard, all reporting to race director Beaux Barfield.

BALTIMORE BOOST

Baltimore city officials have introduced a new promoter for this year's IndyCar race. Downforce Racing will replace the previous organisation after its contract was cancelled due to huge debts.

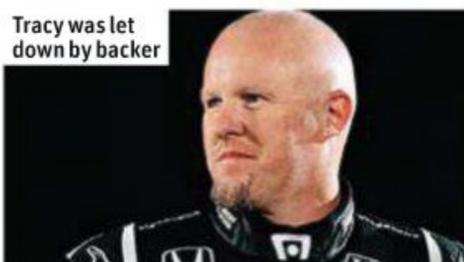
HVM REVEALS WARPAIN

IndyCar team HVM Racing unveiled its 2012 livery last week. Simona de Silvestro's car will be the only Lotus-supported entry to not carry the full company colours.



New look for Simona

INDYCAR



Tracy was let down by backer

Late scramble for Tracy deal

INDYCAR VETERAN PAUL TRACY'S

hopes of a farewell season with Michael Shank Racing have been dealt a blow with the late withdrawal of a major sponsor.

The 43-year-old Canadian is now scrambling to fill the shortfall in time to make it onto the grid for next month's season opener in St Petersburg.

Meanwhile, at least two teams also face missing St Pete due to a lack of engines.

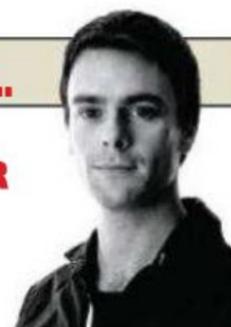
Chevrolet and Honda recently committed to take up some of the slack caused by Lotus falling behind schedule, but Sarah Fisher Racing and Conquest remain without an engine partner.

Fisher has a chassis and Indy Lights champion Josef Newgarden as driver, but Conquest is still in flux and is unlikely to race before the Indianapolis 500.

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

MARK GLENDENNING
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

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The number in the box below proves that, at the very least, Bruno Michel has history on his side. The GP2 Series has positioned itself as 'F1's premier feeder series' right from the start, priced itself accordingly and, despite perennial complaints about how it stacks up against other series in terms of budgets, has largely succeeded in attracting the pick of each year's young single-seater talent.

Budgets are high again this year, not least because of an expanded calendar that now takes in a bunch of flyaways. Michel will still get his full grid but, against competition such as a resurgent Formula Renault 3.5 Series, he may struggle for depth of quality. Addax – a team that has regularly fought for the championship – quit GP3 at the end of last year to concentrate on restoring its GP2 credentials. But with the greatest will in the world, is a line-up of Johnny Cecotto Jr and Josef Kral really going to be able to do what Vitaly Petrov and Romain Grosjean couldn't?

James Calado, Esteban Gutierrez, Felipe Nasr and Fabio Leimer will provide some interest this year; the problem is that it's not clear where their threats will come from. Put the current FR3.5

line-up alongside it, and it's plain to see which championship looks the more open.

It's still the pre-season, and there are plenty of signings to come, but this year could be the greatest test of Michel's 'premium' approach.

Addax line-up was stronger in 2011



BIG NUMBER

51

Number of GP2 drivers to have raced or tested an F1 car since the series was launched in 2005

IN BRIEF



Looks better than S2000 C30...

VOLVO'S NEW TTA RACER

Volvo has unveiled the S60 that it will race in the inaugural season of the TTA, the breakaway series from the Scandinavian Touring Car Championship.

CYPRriot ACE MOVES TO GP3

Cypriot Tio Ellinas, a race winner in Formula Renault UK last season, will graduate to the GP3 Series with British team Manor this year.

EURO F3 RACE CALLED OFF

The European F3 Open Winter Series race scheduled for Algarve last Friday was cancelled due to a mix-up on availability of officials. It will be rescheduled for the Paul Ricard round, with Noel Jammal on the pole he set in Portugal. Briton Alex Lynn was fastest in the first test.

ALEX JOB/LOTUS ALLIANCE

Former Porsche factory squad Alex Job Racing will team up with Lotus for an assault on this year's American Le Mans Series and, most likely, the Le Mans 24 Hours. Lotus AJR will run a solo GTE-class Evra, starting at round two at Long Beach, with a roster of drivers including Indy 500 regular Townsend Bell.

MICHAEL GREENHALGH 1981-2012

GT racer Michael Greenhalgh has died in a house fire at the age of 31. Greenhalgh, who was an irregular in British, European and Spanish GT series over the past seven years, was an instructor at the Guadix circuit run by his father Clive, who will rename the venue in his honour.

FIRST RUN FOR STRAKKA HPD

Strakka Racing's Honda Performance Development ARX-03a LMP1 ran for the first time at Snetterton last week ahead of its debut in the FIA World Endurance Championship opener at Sebring next month. All three drivers – Danny Watts, Jonny Kane and Nick Leventis – tried the car.



Leventis at the wheel

PICS: GARY HAWKINS, BLOXHAM/ISHIHARA/LAT



BTCC

CIVIC IN FIRST RUN

Reigning British Touring Car champion Matt Neal and team-mate Gordon Shedden gave the new Dynamics-run Honda Racing NGTC Civic its first public outing at Brands Hatch on Tuesday. The car was shaken down at MIRA last week.

BRITISH F3

Nissan breaks into British F3

Japanese engines to make series debut this season with T-Sport squad

Nissan power will feature in British Formula 3 in 2012 – for the first time in series history.

AUTOSPORT has learned that long-time BF3 entrant T-Sport will run a brand-new Dallara F312 powered by the Nissan SR20VE unit that was developed for the Japanese championship by Three Bond Racing and engine specialist Tomei.

T-Sport principal Russell Eacott would not comment, but sources indicate that an announcement is expected within the next fortnight, with Australian Formula Ford ace Nick McBride confirmed as the driver.

McBride, 21, began his racing career in his home country, but moved to the British Formula Ford

Championship last season and took third place in the standings with one race win.

Three Bond first combined with Tomei to produce a Nissan F3 engine for the 2000 season. Although the combination has never managed to win the Japanese championship, it has taken numerous wins and pole positions.

Among those to have raced Three Bond Dallara-Nissans in Japan are 2007 British F3 champion Marko Asmer, '03 Masters of F3 victor Fabio Carbone, Italian ex-F3 stalwart Paolo Montin and Super Aguri Formula 1 driver Yuji Ide.

The Nissan engine is not expected to be ready in time for the first official test days at Snetterton on

March 6/7, but T-Sport will most likely be able to run McBride in one of its older National Class cars.

T-Sport's National Class line-up already includes McBride's compatriot Richard 'Spike' Goddard, and the team is negotiating with additional drivers.



Yasuda won with Nissan in 2012

ELMS

Peugeot stars join Loeb

FORMER PEUGEOT DRIVERS STEPHANE

Sarrazin and Nicolas Minassian are set to join the new sportscar team run by rally legend Sebastien Loeb.

The two Frenchmen, who drove with Peugeot for the full duration of its LMP1 programme in 2007-11, are in the final stages of negotiation to race Sebastien Loeb Racing's new ORECA-Nissan O3 LMP2 in the European Le Mans Series. The

move is understood to hang on a sponsorship deal, which could be concluded as early as this week.

A spokesman for Loeb's team said: "There have been discussions with Stephane and Nicolas and there is a strong possibility that they will be with the team, but for the moment we have only one confirmed driver."

Loeb's only signing so far is Nicolas

Marroc. The 25-year-old Frenchman, who raced in the Formula Le Mans (LMPC) one-make prototype division in last year's Le Mans Series, will be the team's silver-rated or amateur driver.

Minassian, who left Peugeot shortly before it announced its withdrawal from sportscar racing in January, and Sarrazin already have drives for the Le Mans 24 Hours. Minassian will drive the Pescarolo Team's Dome S101.5 LMP1, while Sarrazin will contest the full World Endurance Championship in an LMP2 HPD ARX-03b with the US Starworks team.



➔ P58 SHEDDEN INTERVIEW

F3 EURO SERIES

Signature fights to avoid F3 signing-off

FORMULA 3 EURO SERIES

frontrunner Signature is fighting to stay in the championship for 2012.

The French team, which won the title with Edoardo Mortara in 2010, has yet to sign any drivers for the coming season. Team boss Philippe Sinault explained that he was struggling to find funded drivers of the level demanded by long-term engine supplier Volkswagen.

"The team and VW are trying to stay," he said. "The problem is finding drivers, good drivers of the level expected by VW. F3, and especially the Euro Series, has lost a lot of potential drivers."

"We are in touch with two or three good drivers without any positive

answers. If we could have two cars [in comparison to last year's four], that would be good."

Sinault blamed the economic downturn and the proliferation of single-seater categories in Europe.

"There is the financial crisis, but our problem is part of the troubled picture for single-seaters in Europe," he said.

A switch to British F3 by Signature, first mooted last autumn, was ruled out by Sinault. He said he would continue to fight to be on the grid for the Euro Series opener at Hockenheim on April 28/29 with a pair of Dallara-VWs until the last possible moment.

Euro Series is facing grids of between

10 and 12 cars without Signature.

Confirmed entries so far include four from reigning champion Prema Powerteam, which completed its line-up last week with Ferrari Driver Academy member Raffaele Marciello.



Signature future in F3 on the brink

WORLD ENDURANCE

Lotterer, Treluyer in WEC Audi

LE MANS 24 HOURS WINNERS Andre Lotterer and Benoit Treluyer will race full time for Audi in the new-for-2012 FIA World Endurance Championship.

The pair, who anchored Audi's 2011 Le Mans victory with the R18 TDI, are both understood to have demanded a regular seat in the WEC as a pre-condition of remaining with the manufacturer. Treluyer, who will not be staying with Nissan in Super GT, is known to have agreed terms with Audi for a full season, while Lotterer's absence from Toyota's Super GT roster provides confirmation of his deal.

Audi is not commenting on its driver line-up ahead of the official launch of its 2012 sportscar programme in Germany next week.

Lotterer's place at the TOM'S squad in Super GT has been taken by Loic Duval, who swapped camps from Honda. The move puts the Frenchman, who raced for Toyota partner team ORECA at Le Mans in 2008 and 2010-11, in line for a seat with Toyota's LMP1 squad next season.

Duo won at Le Mans last year



Toyota is racking up the miles

LE MANS

Toyota passes its first enduro test at Ricard

THE NEW TOYOTA TS030 HYBRID has completed a Le Mans 24 Hours distance without major problems at its first attempt.

The TS030 petrol-electric undertook a 30-hour test at Paul Ricard over the final two days of a three-day run at the French circuit last week. The Toyota Motorsport GmbH team said there were no major issues with the LMP1 coupe.

A spokesman for Toyota Motorsport GmbH said: "We can't say that we ran continuously for the 30 hours, but we did more than a Le Mans distance. There were little things that needed addressing, but nothing serious that will be causing us sleepless nights."

Alex Wurz, who was one of the five Toyota drivers present at Ricard last week, said: "The test has been interesting and we have gained

valuable experience. During our endurance test we did encounter some issues, but that is why we are testing."

The Toyota undertook the test with its hybrid systems running on the rear axle. It has yet to commit to using energy-retrieval systems on the front or the rear as demanded by the LMP1 rulebook.

Ex-Formula 1 racer Sebastien Buemi, who was given a handful of laps in the TS030 last month prior to his announcement as a Toyota driver, had his first prolonged running in the car, undertaking two stints during the simulation.

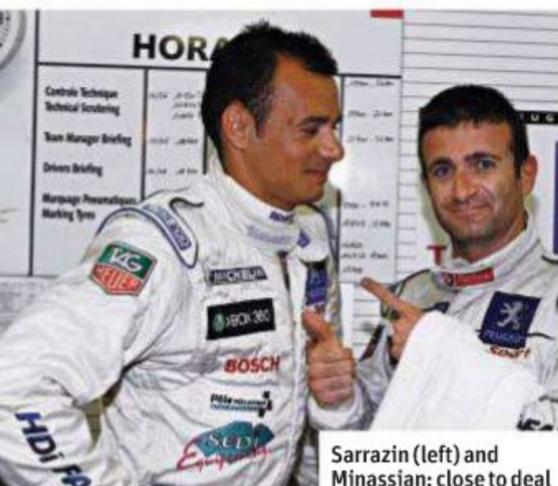
The next of four simulations Toyota has planned ahead of the Le Mans 24 Hours in June is scheduled to take place at the start of April. Anthony Davidson will get his first taste of the car at that test.

NISSAN/THREE BOND IN JAPANESE F3

12 YEARS
20 WINS
16 POLES

PAOLO MONTIN	2003
YUHI SEKIGUCHI	2010
HIRONOBU YASUDA	2011

BEST **2ND** CHAMPIONSHIP



Sarrazin (left) and Minassian: close to deal

AUTOSPORT.COM

**Who's in your team
for 2012?**



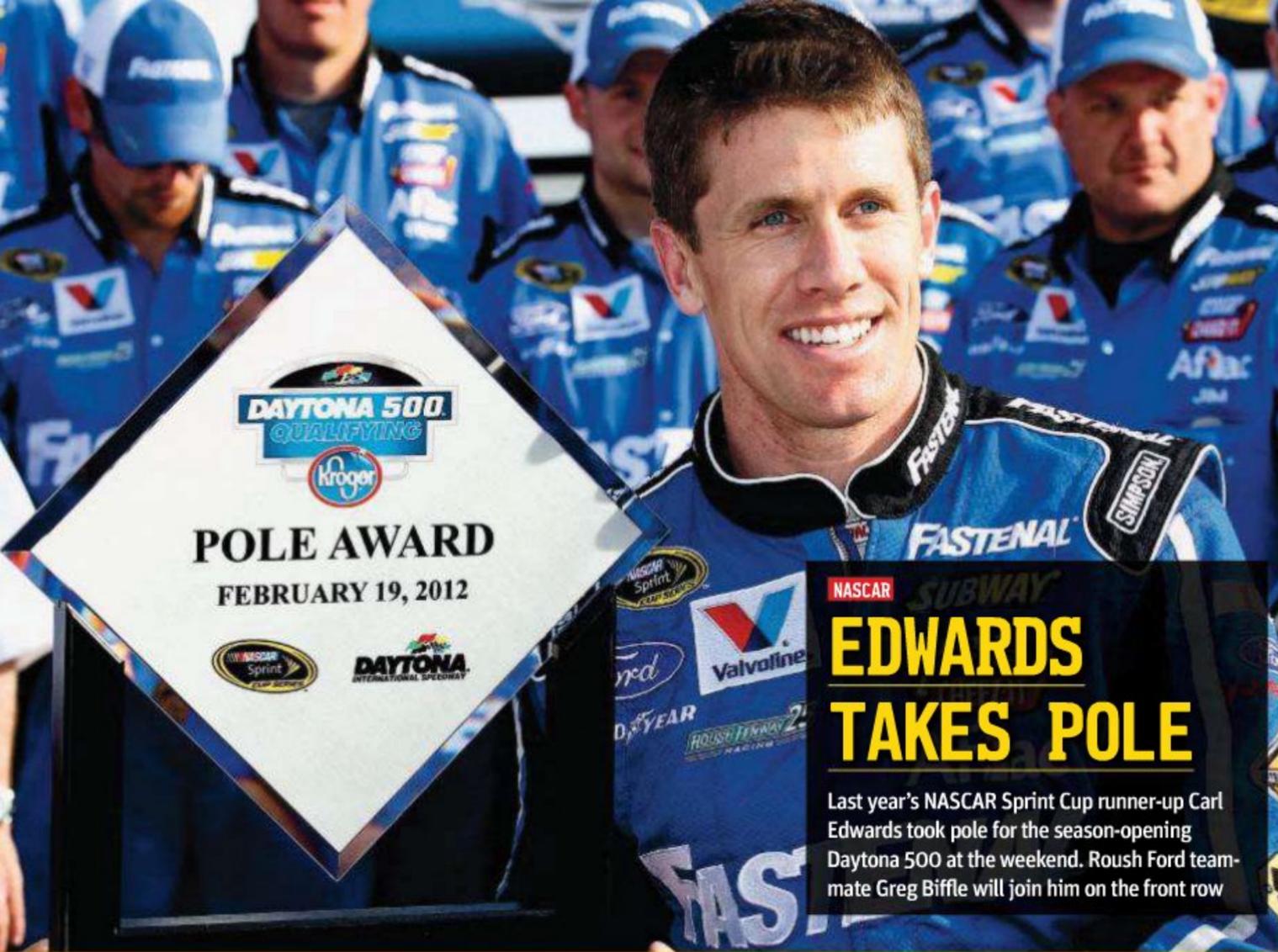
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DAYTONA 500
QUALIFYING
Kroger
POLE AWARD
FEBRUARY 19, 2012

NASCAR
**EDWARDS
TAKES POLE**

Last year's NASCAR Sprint Cup runner-up Carl Edwards took pole for the season-opening Daytona 500 at the weekend. Roush Ford team-mate Greg Biffle will join him on the front row

IN BRIEF



Knaus (l) could be penalised

KNAUS FACING PENALTY

Jimmie Johnson's crew chief Chad Knaus is likely to be penalised after illegal C-posts were found on Johnson's car at Daytona on Friday. Knaus has been suspended for technical infractions twice in the past, most recently in 2007.

MOTORBASE EXPANDS

British Touring Car squad Motorbase will expand to three cars full time in 2012. Regulars Mat Jackson and Liam Griffin will be joined by Aron Smith in the team's trio of turbocharged Ford Focuses.

MOODY REPLACES EDWARDS

Toby Moody has been named as Ben Edwards' replacement as ITV's lead commentator for the BTCC this year. The 39-year-old has spent the past 10 years heading Eurosport's MotoGP coverage, and will dovetail his duties for both championships this year.

D'ASTE GETS WIECHERS DEAL

Former WTCC Independent champion Stefano d'Aste will make a full-time return to the championship with Wiechers-Sport. The Italian only contested three rounds last season.

AUTO GP CALENDAR FINALISED

Auto GP has dropped Donington and Suzuka from its draft calendar, and will race at Marrakech and Brno instead. The newly renamed Auto GP World Series kicks off at Monza on March 11 and finishes at Sears Point in September.



Auto GP gets renamed

NASCAR

Stewart spikes critics

Reigning champion baffled by criticism of return to pack racing at Daytona

Reigning NASCAR Sprint Cup champion Tony Stewart hit out at critics of the wild pack racing that took place in last weekend's Budweiser Shootout.

The sport's technical bosses worked with teams and drivers over the winter to come up with a car configuration that would eliminate the two-car tandem drafting that became common on restrictor-plate tracks during 2011. The non-championship race last Saturday

night was proof that the changes have worked, but the pack racing and the three big accidents in the race were the major talking points afterwards. And Stewart, who was not a fan of the tandem drafting, was disappointed with the reaction of some fans and parts of the media.

"Do you remember what we did here six months ago?" he said in reference to the two-car drafts.

"This is a lot more fun than that was. NASCAR asked the teams and

the drivers what we could do to make it better. Do you have any better ideas? My point is that it is better than having to stare at the back of a spoiler for 500 miles and not be able to see where you're going half the race.

"Everybody complained about the two-car stuff," Stewart added. "Now we've got this, and it's better. We're telling you it's better. And you guys are saying, 'Is it going to be that bad next week?'"

Stewart also dismissed suggestions that the latest rules package would lead to more accidents than usual at restrictor-plate tracks.

"Look at the history of this race," he told the press room. "They always crash here. Go to Talladega, they crash there. It's a yard sale every time we go to a restrictor-plate track. I don't know what you guys want."



Shunts are typical of pack racing

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VW Polo ran on the snow of Norway

WRC

VW denies early-debut WRC plan

German manufacturer scotches rumours that Polo R WRC will compete in 2012 after encouraging snow-stage test

Volkswagen has rejected speculation that the debut of its Polo R WRC could be brought forward to later this year – despite a flying start to the new car’s testing programme in Norway last week.

There had been talk that the all-new World Rally Car could be seen in action ahead of next January’s Monte Carlo Rally, but the German firm’s technical

director Francois-Xavier Demaison has scotched such stories.

The Polo tested for five days on the snow-covered roads close to the scene of the Rally Sweden stages earlier this month. Volkswagen confirmed the goal of 650 miles of testing in the five days was “easily achieved”. VW test driver Dieter Depping was the first man to drive the car in anger, but he was replaced by lead driver Sebastien Ogier for the opening afternoon and the following four days.

The team worked on suspension and damper settings along with a thorough working through of the car’s transmission. Equally, the team was quick to point out that, on this first test, the key was running the car for as long as possible to put

miles on the clock.

Demaison said: “The plan is to compete next year. We can find some short cut and start [competing] earlier, but we have a test plan over the next 12 months. Starting earlier would give us some indication [of the competition] but if we start earlier then I will not consider we are 100 per cent prepared. If you start early, you have to accept some compromise.”

Demaison added that the Polo is in line for a second phase of development in the middle of this year, which would further complicate an early start.

“We plan to test for six months, then do another development loop,” he said. “If we race this year, it will not be the optimum car. I can’t see

any way to rally this year.”

The team will switch its emphasis to gravel next week, when the car runs on the loose in Spain.

VW’s tester, two-time world champion Carlos Sainz, has confirmed he expects to try the Polo in its 2012 specification for the first time, saying: “I will test the car, this will be good for me and I think it will also be good for the team – I have some experience which I can bring. I won’t be in it all of the time, but from time-to-time to see which direction it is going in.”

In the meantime, Volkswagen Motorsport heads to Rally Mexico, where Ogier and team-mate Kevin Abbring (with new co-driver Frederic Miclotte alongside him) will compete in Skoda Fabia S2000s.



Ogier drove for four-plus days

BRITISH RALLY

Sunseeker to kickstart BRC’s two-wheel-drive future

BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

manager Mark Taylor has admitted he expects 2012 to be a tough year as the series adjusts to radically new regulations.

As the series assembles in Bournemouth for this weekend’s Rallye Sunseeker, four-wheel-drive cars can no longer fight for the outright British title. This year’s crown will be won in a two-litre and two-wheel-drive

car for the first time since Tapio Laukkanen’s Renault Maxi Megane in 1999.

And it’s a Finn who leads the season away, with Jarkko Nikara heading a 25-strong international entry in an Asquith-run Citroen DS3 R3.

Talking of the six-round BRC, Taylor said: “We’ve come through the out-year for the old regs and now we have the in-year for the

new ones. It’s going to be tough. But this is the future and I believe it’ll be competitive. If a driver can drive one of these two-wheel-drive cars, they’re 90 per cent there.”

Rallye Sunseeker starts with a ceremonial start in Poole tomorrow (Friday) at 1750, runs through stages around Ringwood and Somerley Park and finishes in Bournemouth at 1815.

BRC: two-wheel-drive future



WRC

Atkinson in long-term WRC bid

AUSTRALIAN STAR CHRIS

Atkinson is hoping his Rally Mexico entry will lead to further World Rally Championship outings with the Monster team this season.

Atkinson returns to the WRC for the first time since finishing fifth in a one-off Citroen drive on Rally Ireland in 2009. He's determined not to let his opportunity alongside Ken Block pass as a one-off.

"We're back in the main game and now we've got to stay there," Atkinson said. "I've made no secret of wanting to come back and I feel more ready than ever for this."

Atkinson has a strong record on Rally Mexico, finishing second there last time out in 2008, when he was



Atkinson gets to Monster a Fiesta

a factory Subaru driver.

"I like Rally Mexico," he said. "Last time we were second, a minute down on [Sebastien] Loeb. I'd go for the same result this time!"

Atkinson's Fiesta RS WRC will run in the livery similar to that on Block's car. The American has announced that he will run a limited WRC programme this year, with just Mexico, New Zealand and Finland

planned – in addition to a full Global RallyCross campaign, selected North American rallies, X Games and his usual Gymkhana commitments.

"I can see why Ken's gone for New Zealand and Finland [as well as Mexico]," said Atkinson. "And they're pretty high on my list too. I've had fastest times on both of those events and I'm going to do all I can to join him on those rallies."

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

DAVID EVANS
RALLIES EDITOR

david.evans
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Without a defending champion in sight, this year's British Rally Championship gets underway on a south-coast Saturday.

The BRC's decision to go two-wheel drive means David Bogie won't be back; he's all about the four-by-four. Which is a shame, because it's always good to have a go at the best of the best from the season before. But Bogie's career progression is not the problem of the BRC organisation.

In a nutshell, the BRC is about delivering entertainment on the stages and future world champions. And it's been a while since we've seen much of either. Well done BRC manager Mark Taylor for taking the bull by the horns and changing this. Right or wrong, only time will tell. But at least he's changed something.

It's inevitable that comparisons are drawn between the mid-1990s when total traction was last ousted from the pinnacle of British rallying. At that time, there were considerably more manufacturers building Formula 2 cars and Group N machinery was still permitted at the front of BRC events. The downside to this was confusion:

David Higgins won the 1999 Rally of Wales in a Subaru while Martin Rowe won the opening BRC round in a Renault – on the same event.

At the moment, there's no hardcore manufacturer backing for the BRC and its new and supposedly cheaper regulations. Renault and Ford are there, with Citroen considering its options. But who's to say this time next year, we won't be back with a bunch of pukka works cars.

Let's give it a go.

Renault won in 1999 BRC



IN BRIEF

McRAE IN HALL OF FAME

Colin McRae was inaugurated into *Motor Sport* magazine's Hall of Fame in London last week. The 1995 World Rally Champion, who was killed in a helicopter crash in 2007, is the first rally driver to achieve the accolade. McRae's award was presented to his father Jimmy and former co-driver Nicky Grist by Sir Jackie Stewart.

PRODRIVE TO SKIP MEXICO

Prodrive's Mini team will miss Rally Mexico, as expected, but Dani Sordo will lead it back into battle on the fourth round of the WRC in Portugal at the end of March. Sordo will be partnered by Patrik Sandell, who marked his Mini WRC debut with eighth place on Rally Sweden earlier this month.

ITALY STAYS PUT

This year's Rally d'Italia (October 18-21) will remain on the island of Sardinia, despite a decision to shift it to Sicily taken last year. The Automobile Club Italia confirmed the rally, which has moved from May to October, will be running out of Olbia again in 2012.

CLASSIC STAGE IS BACK

Rally Finland organisers have confirmed the Ouninpohja stage will return for the final day of the August 2-4 event. The test, starting from Hamepohja and running on past the Kakaristo junction, will be included

as the WRC's longest-ever Powerstage at just over 20 miles.

LOCAL LANCIA ON TOP

Saturday's Legend Boucles de Spa boasted 338 entries, with local driver Jean-Pierre van de Wauwer winning in his Lancia Beta Monte Carlo. Bjorn Waldegaard was seventh in a Ferrari 308, one place ahead of last year's Le Mans winner Andre Lotterer (911). Citroen's new star Thierry Neuville retired a Visa Mille Piste early, joining countryman Francois Duval (Escort MkI) and former WRC and BRC stars Didier Auriol (Escort MkII) and Gwyndaf Evans (Mazda RX7) on the sidelines

ROYAL APPROVAL FOR R2R

HRH the Duke of Kent has become the patron of the Race2Recovery team's cross-country rally programme. Race2Recovery is entering a four-car team in next year's Dakar, but will begin its serious preparations with the eight-day Tuareg Rally in Morocco starting on March 18. The team will be running QT Wildcats and will follow up the Tuareg with the Silk Way Rally from Moscow to Sochi in July.



R2R boys will do Dakar

WRC

WRC timing boss: we've got big ideas

S1T timing was back for Sweden



STAGE 1 TECHNOLOGY IS ALREADY looking ahead to the future of timing and tracking in the World Rally Championship following its agreement for the remainder of 2012.

S1T managing director Simon de Banke admitted his team remained fully focused on the rest of this season, but he added that the potential for 2013 onwards is what really excites.

"We've got 11 years' experience and ideas ready to put down on a blank sheet of paper for 2013," said de Banke. "The sky's the limit for the technology in this sport. We've been a little bit restricted in recent years, but not now – we've got some real bells and whistles coming."

After a troubled winter with the loss of former WRC promoter North One Sport, de Banke admitted he was pleased to have agreement with the FIA.

"It's great to be back," he said. "And a massive thanks to all the stakeholders for the overwhelming support for S1T."

IRC PREVIEW

Event	Azores Rally
Round	1/13
Based	Ponta Delgada
Date	February 23-25
Stages	14
Mileage	155
Surface	Gravel
Last year's winner	Juho Hanninen



All-star tech team seems on right track

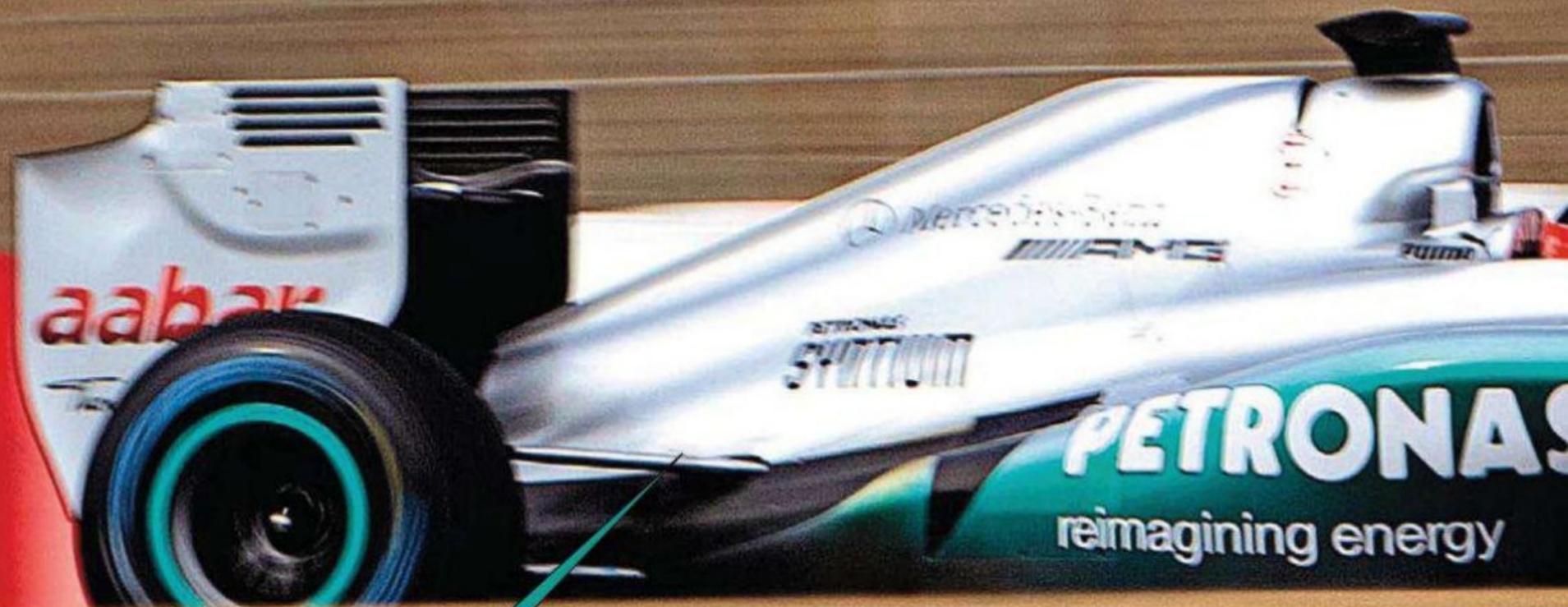
MERCEDES MGP W03



GARY ANDERSON: It's year three of Mercedes' return to Formula 1 and this season needs to count, or questions will be asked in high places. The technical group has been strengthened, with Aldo Costa and Geoff Willis brought in to assist very capable technical director Bob Bell, but with that mix there may just be too many cooks. The priority with this car was to iron out the fundamental problems of last year's machine. This included too short a wheelbase, which meant a higher centre of gravity and therefore increased tyre wear. There were other aerodynamic deficiencies that have been tackled too, and overall the car looks like a step forward.

SIDEPODS

Over the past couple of years, I've commented that the Mercedes sidepods looked 'clunky'. By this, I mean that the radiator exits were ungainly and positioned just where you require as high-speed an airflow as possible. The new package is very neat and tidy; with the now-customary rear exit on the engine cover, it allows them to run the Coke-bottle body profile tight on the gearbox profile where the airflow goes inside the rear tyre. The radiator inlet looks a little larger than average, but Mercedes had cooling problems in the early part of last season, so that's probably caution.



REAR SUSPENSION

The rear suspension is again conventional double wishbone with a pullrod-operated torsion bar and damper. This package is now the norm, and so far only Ferrari has headed off down another route with its pullrod front suspension – no big deal, but I'm not sure there are too many positives.

NOSE

This follows the stepped-nose trend that has prevailed, but either the Mercedes design is neater than the others or I'm getting more used to seeing it! Performance will always win over aesthetics, and this allows the higher chassis and therefore more airflow between the wheels. This opens doors for further development of the turning vanes and bargeboards. This is the 10th new car to appear and McLaren is the only one not to have followed this concept.



FRONT SUSPENSION

The front suspension is a conventional double wishbone with a pushrod-operated torsion bar and damper. As far as the geometry, or at least wishbone angles, is concerned, it's not as dramatic as some others.



FRONT WING

This now consists of a three-element main wing assembly. This is something I've been harping on about in AUTOSPORT for over two years, so I'm pleased to see they read my columns (just joking, Ross!). It will give more consistency from the aerodynamic package and lead to a more robust set-up range in changing conditions. The wing elements also bend down to meet up with the wing endplate to allow the slot gap to continue vertically, reducing the airflow separation in this critical area. Where the inner symmetrical section of wing joins the three-element section, there is a raised curved section. This generates a vortex in this area that improves underflow performance.



Why failure is **not** an option

This will be a crucial season for Mercedes, and team principal Ross Brawn has set some lofty targets. *EDD STRAW* and *GARY ANDERSON* paid Brawn a visit at the team's Brackley HQ to find out how his squad *has* to improve on fourth place



F1 LAUNCH
MERCEDES MGP W03



You can imagine Ross Brawn as a NASA flight director. Implacably calm, collected and measured, not to mention supremely capable, he has a lot in common with the legendary Gene Kranz, who bestrode Mission Control in Houston for the Apollo 11 moon landing and the triumph-in-adversity of the ill-starred Apollo 13.

Of course, that famous "failure-is-not-an-option" quote used in the Apollo 13 movie by director Ron Howard (now working on a film depicting the Niki Lauda-versus-James Hunt rivalry) might not really have been uttered by Kranz at quite such a dramatic moment as it was on screen. But the great man did describe it as a "creed we all lived by". It's a similar

story for Mercedes GP boss Brawn.

The past two years haven't lived up to his hopes or those of Mercedes. Fourth place in the championship is not what either is in grand prix racing to achieve, and a lot depends on the new Mercedes MGP W03, the only car from the top 10 teams of last season to be late in breaking cover.

At this time of year, the talk is all about objectives for the season. When asked to frame his own targets, Brawn is utterly and disarmingly unequivocal. There is no wriggle-room in what he says. Another season of finishing fourth – failure, in other words – is not an option.

"We've obviously got to do better than fourth," says Brawn. "Whether we can be a serious contender this year

we can't say, because we don't know what the others are doing, but if we see a good step forward we will get the ball rolling and move on from there.

"You never know how a season will evolve and how you achieve your objectives. You might just have a very consistent series of results, or have some great races and less consistency. But third has got to be the minimum. Anything less would be a failure."

Given the lock Mercedes seems to have had on fourth place since the German marque bought the world championship-winning Brawn team at the end of 2009, it's fair to ask exactly why we should expect anything different this year.

The Mercedes team as it is now is very different to that of 12 months ago,

"Where we have been the past two years is not where any of us would like and we took steps to improve the situation"



PICT: DUNBAR, FERRARO/LAT, THOMPSON/GETTY

“We don't honestly know where Michael stands compared to where he was, but the drivers are the least of my worries”

in terms both of senior personnel and approach. Much talk has revolved around the squad bringing ex-HRT and Red Bull technical director Geoff Willis and former Ferrari technical director Aldo Costa into the fold. With Brawn already on board and ex-Renault man Bob Bell having joined earlier in 2011, there have been suggestions that this could be a too-many-cooks situation.

As in any organisation, the key is the

structure into which they are slotted. Rather than over-egging things by recruiting Bell, Costa and Willis, if anything Mercedes has put in place the right senior technical management to take on Red Bull, McLaren and Ferrari.

Brawn ties this in with the realisation that the vision of the original Resource Restriction Agreement for small-time F1 hasn't quite come to fruition. He has spoken regularly about Mercedes having to spend a lot of time working on the team structure after taking over Brawn, which had been hastily downsized after Honda's withdrawal, but it seems that there were other forces at work that made the original high-efficiency, medium-cost plan

for the team come up short. So now Mercedes has raised the stakes.

“It's a further evolution of the team,” explains Brawn. “The background to that, and this is not an excuse, is where the RRA was going. At one stage, RRA was pretty draconian; it was [a maximum of] 280 people and something like £20 million when it was first signed. Then along came the Singapore agreement [in 2010], which raised the limits and created a different situation. So last year we took stock and decided that we had to strengthen the team to look at how we can work to the maximum of the RRA.

“Where we have been the past two years is not where any of us would like to be and we took the necessary steps to improve the situation. I was trying ▶

**BAR/HONDA/
BRAWN/MERCEDES
STATS 1999-2011**

Starts: 223
Wins: 9
Poles: 3
Podiums: 37
Drivers' championships: 1 (2009)
Constructors' championships: 1 (2009)

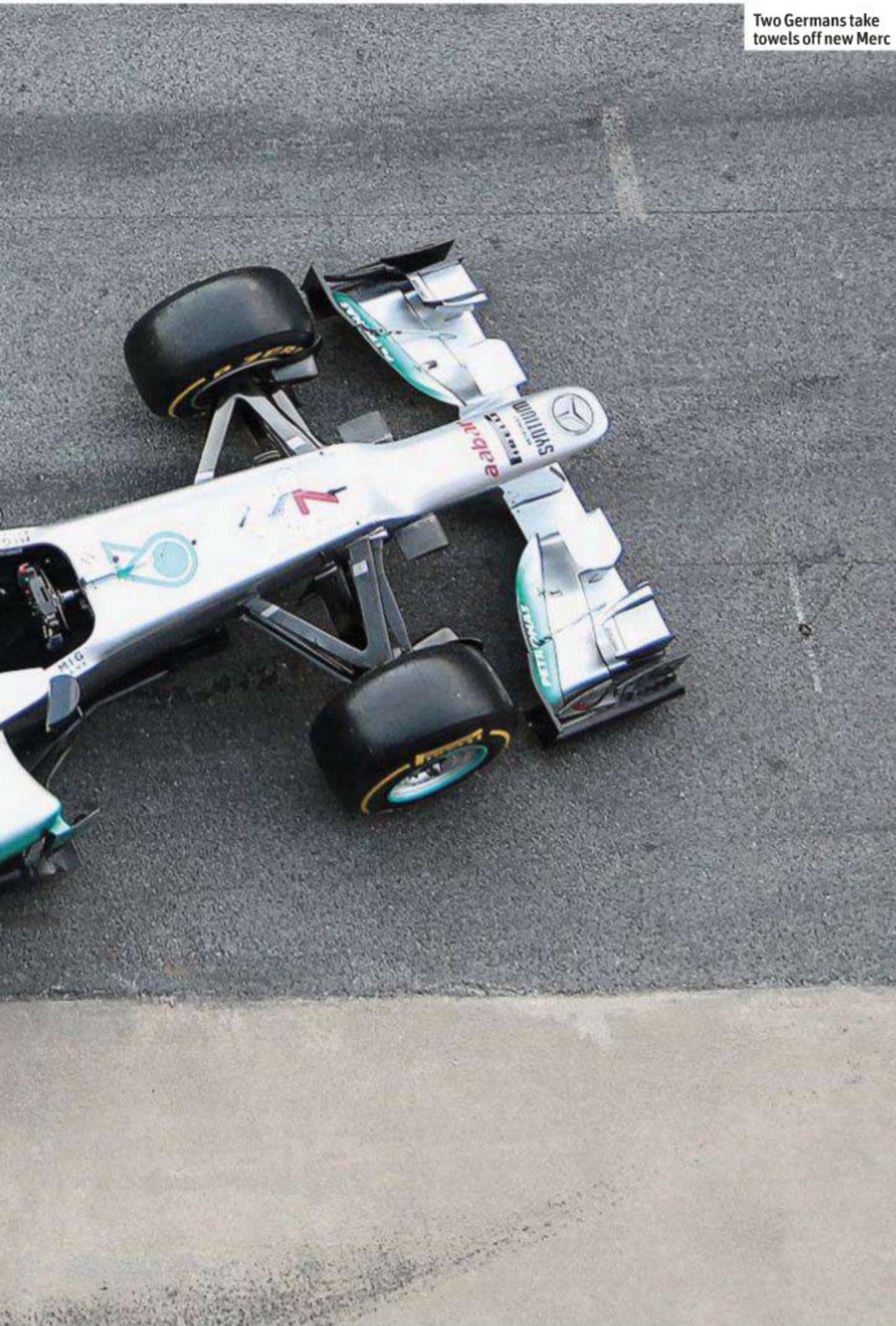
CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON-BY-SEASON

As BAR
1999 11th
2000 5th
2001 6th
2002 8th
2003 5th
2004 2nd
2005 6th

As Honda
2006 4th
2007 9th
2008 9th

As Brawn
2009 1st

As Mercedes
2010 4th
2011 4th



Two Germans take towels off new Merc



Schuey is 43 but fit as ever



First test for W03 kicks off



Rosberg had mid-pack drama, Italy '11



A lot of people have put in...



...a lot of work at Brackley base

to carry too much as team principal and technical director. Maybe in the RRA vision for the future it could have worked. But then Bob Bell became available and that was a godsend, because top-class people like him don't become available very often. It was the same with Aldo and Geoff. I felt that with all of them, they would enhance what we are doing, not try to tear it all apart and build it up again. We have a lot of very bright people here and we wanted to add some experience, some strength and perhaps some maturity to the engineering operation.

"Maybe I waited too long before I reacted, but in the background was always what was going to happen with the RRA. One thing I would say is that, OK, we finished fourth in the world championship – that's not where we wanted to be, but it's still not easy. It's bloody tough, and a lot of people have been doing a great job even to achieve that. Last year's was the first car that John Owen [chief designer] had ever designed, so it wasn't a bad effort. John has carried on as chief designer and has learned an awful lot from last year, as well as having Aldo and Geoff supporting him."

With such a solid technical structure, that will allow Brawn, who will continue to attend all the races, to act more as a team principal.

Considering he has held the position

"Fourth is still not easy. It's bloody tough, and a lot of people have been doing a great job even to achieve that"

at this team since joining it in its Honda guise before the 2008 campaign, he's spent a lot of that time either firefighting, restructuring, scaling up or scaling down during a turbulent time at the Brackley base. Now, with Bell occupying what you might call the classic Ross Brawn role from Ferrari days, the team principal is free to be exactly that.

"I've had to learn to withdraw a little bit and that's why Bob was so important," says Brawn. "He's a great guy, very determined but very balanced and not emotional. Those are the sort of people I like to work with. I used to chair all the technical meetings; now I don't do that anymore. I've got to look at where I can use my efforts in the best place. Nick Fry takes care of the commercial side of the company, so I don't have a big role in that. I'm looking now at the structure of the company and how I can improve that."

"I'll get more active on the F1 side because we've got a new Concorde Agreement coming up and the sport is facing massive challenges to be as

cost-effective as it can be. Bob is very good at keeping me informed and I do still sit in on a number of the key meetings. But he has taken the reins in a lot of areas. It has been good and has reduced the stress levels!"

Below Bell come the heads of two key departments: Costa is engineering director; Willis is technology director. But what does that mean in real terms? Brawn harnesses an academic metaphor, describing Costa as 'science' and Willis as 'arts'. Certainly, the delineation in responsibility appears very coherent.

"Aldo is looking at the mechanical stuff, chassis composites and making sure everything works well," says Brawn. "Geoff is responsible for vehicle dynamics and aerodynamics. Both have backgrounds oriented in those directions. They complement each other very well and Bob will shepherd them where necessary. John Owen has new-found freedom because he doesn't have to worry about the nuts and bolts of the car – Aldo will take care of that. I'm very encouraged. Inevitably, we have different opinions, but Bob is good at bringing that together and getting a resolution."

And that last sentence is the crux of the matter. In other words, producing a coherent car concept will be crucial. It's fair to say that this hasn't been a particular strength of Mercedes GP's over the past couple of years. Last

IT'S ABOUT THE CAR, NOT THE DRIVERS

The driver remains the beating heart of a Formula 1 car, the confluence of the efforts of hundreds of people and millions of pounds of investment. For decades now, conventional wisdom has it that the driver no longer matters, that only the car decides the result. But while a brilliant driver cannot make a dog of a car win, nor can a winning car fulfil its potential without a winning driver.

There remain question marks over the Mercedes driver line-up. Nico Rosberg and 43-year-old Michael Schumacher are both good grand prix drivers but it's difficult to make a compelling argument that either,

right now, is in the class of Sebastian Vettel or Fernando Alonso. If not necessarily a weakness, surely this is not the team's greatest strength...

"We've got two drivers who are more than capable of winning races if we get the technical side right," says Brawn. "Are they the best in F1? I don't know. But they are both incredibly good, certainly good enough not to let us down if we give them the car."

While it's difficult to make a case that Mercedes would have won any races during the past two years with a different driver line-up, it's hard to be sure if Rosberg or Schumacher is extracting the absolute

maximum from their machinery. If the MGP W03 is as good as Brawn hopes, we should get a clearer picture. Not that he's too worried.

"There are drivers in F1 who can win races in cars they shouldn't win with," he says. "Michael, certainly, has during his career been in that category. We don't honestly know where he stands compared to where he was, but his approach is as strong as ever, his fitness is impeccable and he still doesn't suffer any fatigue."

"The drivers are the least of my worries. We'll see when we improve the technical package their role and where we stand."



PIC: FERRARO/LAT

F1 LAUNCH MERCEDES MGP W03



Brawn with his drivers at launch



Gary ANDERSON:

Mercedes has set its sights high this year, but when Ross Brawn said that finishing fourth in the world

championship is not easy in itself, he was absolutely right. Although the MGP W03 is clearly the most refined car concept that the team has produced since it became Mercedes, I fear it would still be relying on one of the top three dropping the ball to achieve its objective.

Getting into that leading trio and holding off teams such as Lotus and Force India will be no mean feat. The key will be how the new technical structure works, and I have to say I have some doubts about it. Ross is determined to focus on being team principal, rather than a technical director, and perhaps that is to the detriment of the team. He was always one of the keenest interpreters of the regulations and I've not seen much evidence that the team can match up to the standards he has set in that regard.

That said, Bob Bell is extremely capable. I'd describe him more as a technical manager and his job will be to act as referee to the ideas of Aldo Costa, Geoff Willis and John Owen. It's not a position I envy one bit. If you look at Red Bull, its success in recent years has been built upon the fact that Adrian Newey is responsible for the vision of the car. I'm sceptical as to whether it's possible to achieve such clear direction with as many people involved as Mercedes have.

This has been the problem Mercedes has had for the past couple of years since winning the championship as Brawn, based largely upon seizing the concept and with shortcomings that it has taken a long time to address. The new car is a step in the right direction, but whether it's big enough to be in the top three and fighting for race wins, only time will tell.

year's MGP W02 had a wheelbase that was 30mm shorter than some of its rivals. This inevitably raised the centre of gravity and, thanks to a relatively short rear end, left less space to optimise the exhaust-blown diffuser. The previous year's car had a similar problem, with an early-season update package lengthening the wheelbase by changing the angle of the suspension.

With this new technical structure, how will the fundamental car concept be arrived at? Brawn is determined that it will be a genuinely collaborative effort for the long term. It may be a couple of years before we can assess

how well this has worked, but if it pays off and promotes Mercedes to the top, then the team should be in a position to stay there. That's despite the kneejerk tendency to assume that a car designed by what some may characterise as a committee will be full of compromises.

"The current car was born with John and Bob," says Brawn. "Aldo and Geoff joined once the fundamentals had already been established. What we are doing is splitting up the programmes over the next couple of years because we want to carry on with this programme: we want to have a 2013 car and we've got the big step with

the new regulations in 2014.

"We are sub-dividing the management of each of these projects between Geoff, Aldo and John, but they're closely linked. What I don't want to see is that each year we get a different car – that's where I play a role and where Bob plays a role. We have got to recognise the strength of us all finding the solution together as a group, not having everyone ploughing their own furrow. If you want to have those resources, that strength, that manpower, you've got to find a way of managing it. Having one person doing the ▶

F1 LAUNCH MERCEDES MGP W03



Schuey on track at Barcelona with W03

◀ car can work, or you can do what we have done.”

This, inevitably, brings us to the question of the late start for the car. The revealing of the new machine didn't show any of the promised magic-bullet secret innovations that so many people always expect, but it was never likely to. What Mercedes has done is taken its time after being caught out by several things with last year's machine. The car that ran in the first test of 2011 was a basic one, and the expectation was that its vices would be solved by a major aerodynamic package brought in at the final test. It didn't quite work out as expected, and the team had locked in some troublesome characteristics to the car that limited its potential. For Brawn, it's a question of less haste equalling more speed.

“When we set out the programme, we were mindful of last year when we had a flawed strategy,” says Brawn. “We started with a basic car that we

released early, then did the update before the first race to give our aero group the maximum time. That meant certain things were frozen early in the programme that could have been done later. It also meant that we had two distinct cars, as they started to diverge quite early. We were testing with a car that was not representative of what we were going to race by a large margin.

“So we took a step back and asked what we wanted to achieve. We only wanted to design one car and, when we introduced it, to have already alleviated the unreliability issues. We did a lot of things before the car ran. All of the suspension, for example, has done thousands of kilometres on rigs. We had trouble with the cooling system last year, but that has been on the rigs and looks OK. We decided that eight reasonable days with the car was going to be enough, so left the car spec as late as possible.”

That philosophy was applied

elsewhere. Last year Rob Thomas was appointed as chief operating officer, and he has overseen a comprehensive investigation into shortening manufacturing lead times. The aim is to produce parts to the same high standard in a far shorter period, with Brawn citing the aim to cut build of a floor from 30 days to 20 days.

All of this effectively gifts the team time in an era when the calendar is more compressed than ever. It's an area in which Red Bull has become a master of late, and could be key to Mercedes fulfilling its aspirations. There has also been prodigious ongoing investment in the simulator, with plans to run overnight sessions regularly this year after experimenting with doing so using on-track data from concurrent race weekends in 2011.

All of what Brawn says adds up. You can understand why Mercedes has not managed to do better than par during the past two seasons, and the technical structure appears to be logical for a team of its size. But despite all that, the size of step that Mercedes is gunning to take is far bigger than the one position in the constructors' championship would suggest. In two seasons, Mercedes has claimed only three podiums. By contrast, last year's lowest-step-of-the-podium finisher, Ferrari, managed 10, despite having only one truly effective driver. That's a huge difference in results.

Whether or not Mercedes does achieve Brawn's stated aim is perhaps secondary to seeing marked progress, even if it yields only superficially improved results. Realistically, 2014 is the season by which it must emerge as a title-contending force, given that it's one of those ground-zero years as far as regulations are concerned. Brackley has had plenty of time to evolve into a genuine top-line works F1 team. Now it's time to start delivering. ☼

KEY TECHNICAL RECRUITS

Three big F1 paddock names joined Mercedes last year. Each comes with a wealth of experience

BOB BELL - TECHNICAL DIRECTOR



Bell joined McLaren as aerodynamicist in 1982. He was promoted to head of research and development in '89 and worked on the stillborn land-speed record project in the mid-'90s

before moving to Benetton in '97 as chief of aero. He joined Jordan as head of R&D in '99 before returning to the Renault-owned Benetton team in 2001 as deputy technical director. He was promoted to technical director in '03. He became interim team principal in '09 after Flavio Briatore quit, becoming managing director in '10. He left Renault in October '10, joining Mercedes last year.

GEOFF WILLIS - TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR



Willis first became involved in F1 as a result of Adrian Newey's early experiments with CFD at Leyton House. He then switched to Williams for 1991 as chief aerodynamicist under Newey

and remained there until '99, when he joined the new BAR team as technical director. He left what had then become Honda in 2007 to rejoin Newey as technical director at Red Bull, but departed in the middle of '09. In '10 he became technical director of HRT only to quit the team after the summer break in '11 over a lack of financial assurances for development funds. He joined Mercedes in October.

ALDO COSTA - ENGINEERING DIRECTOR



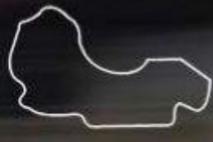
Costa's first break in Formula 1 came as chief designer at Minardi in 1988. He was promoted to the role of technical director a year later before moving to Ferrari in '95 to head

up its design office working under Rory Byrne. When Byrne retired, Costa was appointed chief designer in '04. He has held positions heading up the design and development and chassis departments from '06, rising to the role of technical director at the end of '07. He lost his job as technical director last May before leaving Ferrari, and joined Mercedes in October.

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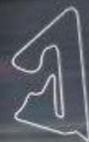
Melbourne
16-18 Mar



Kuala Lumpur
23-25 Mar



Shanghai
13-15 Apr



Sakhir
20-22 Apr



Catalunya
11-13 May



Monte-Carlo
24-27 May



Montreal
8-10 Jun



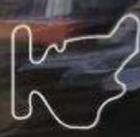
Valencia
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Silverstone
6-8 Jul



Hockenheim
20-22 Jul



Budapest
27-29 Jul



Spa-Francorchamps
31 Aug-2 Sep



Monza
7-9 Sep



Singapore
21-23 Sep



Suzuka
5-7 Oct



Yeongam
12-14 Oct



New Delhi
26-28 Oct



Yas Marina
2-4 Nov



Austin
16-18 Nov



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Diamond highlights

This year is the 60th anniversary of the return of Mercedes-Benz to international motorsport after World War Two. Here are some of the best moments

A one-two at Le Mans



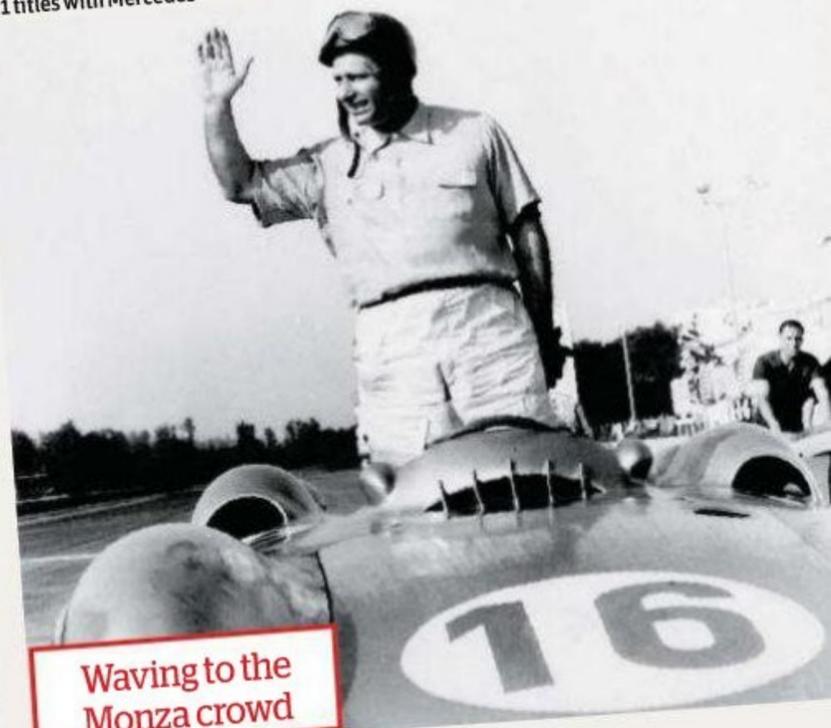
1952: Merc returns to international motorsport

1954: first and second on return to grand prix racing



Fangio beats Kling at Reims

1954: first of Fangio's two F1 titles with Mercedes



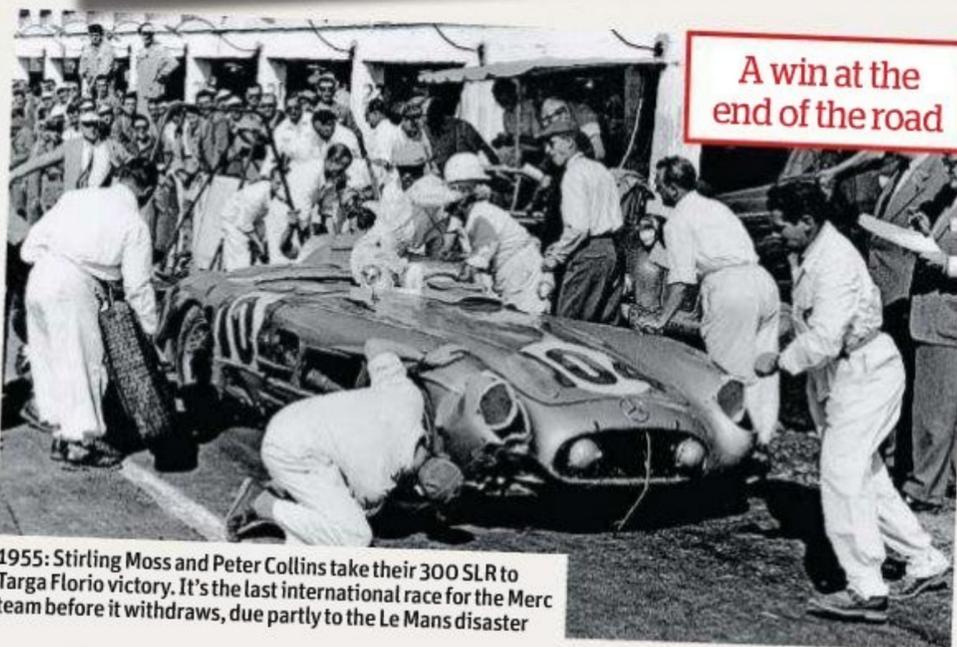
Waving to the Monza crowd

Unstreamlined at Nurburgring



1954: Fangio wins the German GP, this time on the first outing of the open-wheeled W196

A win at the end of the road

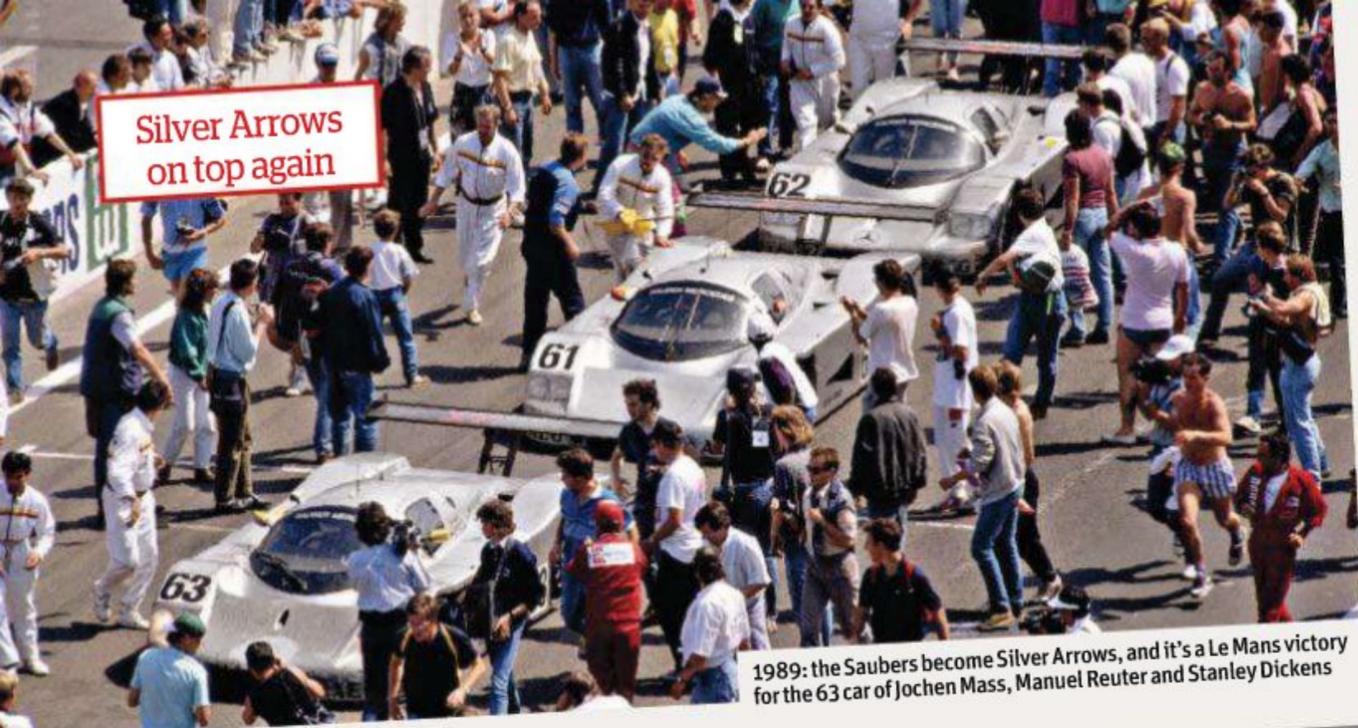


1955: Stirling Moss and Peter Collins take their 300 SLR to Targa Florio victory. It's the last international race for the Merc team before it withdraws, due partly to the Le Mans disaster

Regenmeisters at the Ring



1986: first international race win for over 30 years at the 1986 Nurburgring 1000Km. Mike Thackwell and Henri Pescarolo win in Merc-engined Sauber C8



Silver Arrows on top again

1989: the Saubers become Silver Arrows, and it's a Le Mans victory for the 63 car of Jochen Mass, Manuel Reuter and Stanley Dickens

MERCEDES-BENZ
DIAMOND JUBILEE



Wunderkind Schumacher

1991: youthful Michael Schumacher and Karl Wendlinger win the World Sports Car finale at Autopolis in their C291. It's Merc's last race before pulling out of the series



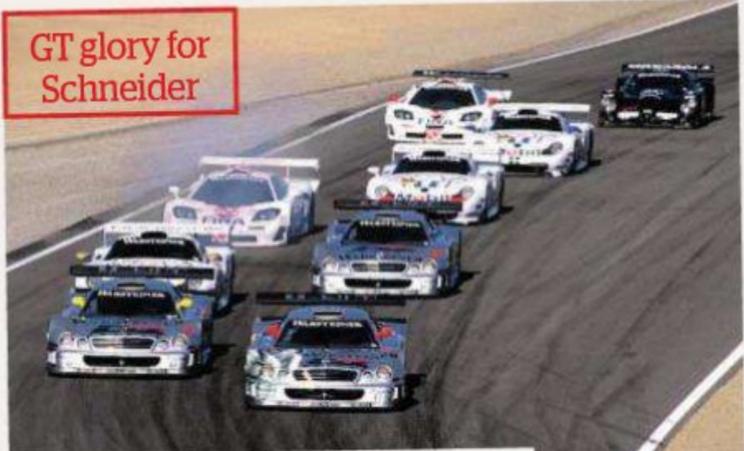
Lehto close to the F1 podium

1993: Mercedes returns to F1 as an engine supplier for Sauber. Best results for the C12 are fourths for JJ Lehto at Imola and for Wendlinger at Monza



Melbourne magic for DC

1997: David Coulthard takes Mercedes' first win since its F1 return as an engine supplier when he triumphs for McLaren in Australia



GT glory for Schneider

1997: Bernd Schneider wins the FIA GT title with the Mercedes CLK-GTR. He wins five races, including this one at Laguna Seca, where he shared with Klaus Ludwig



Hakkinen's first of two

1998: first F1 title win for Mercedes as engine supplier to McLaren, with Mika Hakkinen

Last-lap Lewis wins it



2008: Lewis Hamilton wins the world championship on the final lap at Interlagos

Three thirds are the peak



2010: Nico Rosberg gets third, for the third time, at the British Grand Prix. The Mercedes GP team has yet to achieve a better result since its F1 return

“I don't think my business in Formula 1 is finished”

Rubens Barrichello is out in the cold after 19 seasons as a grand prix driver, and is close to completing a deal to race in IndyCar. *JONATHAN NOBLE* spoke to the Brazilian about his future and why the book may not yet have shut on F1...

Let's go back to when the news came that Williams said they were going for Bruno [Senna]. How did that feel?

Well, it was 6.30 in the morning in Orlando. I was beside the phone waiting for it to ring. When it did, it was Frank [Williams]. It was very disappointing because it was just the fact of saying, 'I have bad news and basically we are choosing another driver'. That's it. Honestly, it took me a few hours to think about it. It was depressing in a way. I went to play golf that day and I even won, but I still didn't feel good. When I came home, I told my wife not to tell the kids and kept on saying positive things. Then I went to tell them myself. I thought they were going to be upset, but they said, 'Daddy, they were not good last year, think of something else and just think positive.' That brought such a big smile to my face. I'm such a positive guy, and less than three hours later Tony [Kanaan] called me and I was testing his car within three days! It was amazing.

How were things with Bruno given that he took the Williams drive?

Like I told Bruno himself, I wasn't fighting with him, I was fighting for the position. I wish him all the best. He's going to be working with my engineers and I think he's going to learn a great deal, so for him it's going to be great.

At the Brazilian GP you were in such a happy mood all weekend, but was there a sense of frustration that there wasn't a big F1 goodbye?

No, I don't think my business in Formula 1 is finished just yet.

People know what I'm capable of and that I'm an experienced driver. With so little testing that's obviously high on the list. Last year was hard because all of the contracts were already set. I'm leaving my mind very open, probably the same way [Michael] Schumacher had [when he left], and how Kimi [Raikkonen] left his mind. You never know what might happen. And if I'm not in Formula 1 anymore, I'm going to be around. I want to say goodbye when I'm 60 or something!

Are the frustrations of the situation in F1 now bigger than they've ever been, with four or five seats that you can get on pure talent and the rest needing money?

It is frustrating, but it has always been like that, although not as much. When I came in, Jordan needed a driver and they needed some money so even in '93 I brought them a little. But right now there are too many factors that make money more important than drivers.

When you left Brawn you'd been fighting for the championship and had some fantastic wins. You went to Williams believing you could continue to be successful. Any regrets about that decision?

I don't regret anything I've ever done in my life. The [main] relationship I had at Williams was with Sam [Michael], and he was a professional and he was a leader. When he left, I felt the thing collapsed a little bit on my side because we were not talking about feedback, it was more about sponsors. It was like the passion in the car wasn't there anymore. Having said that, I think they'll build a better car this ▶



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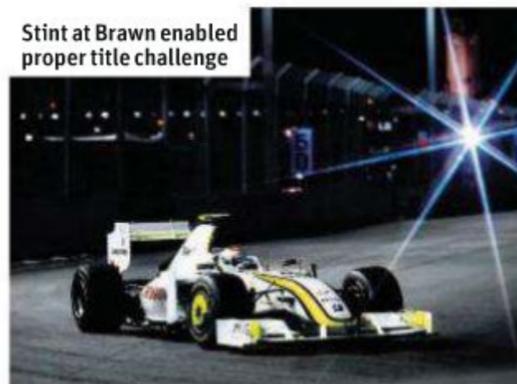
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Nine wins for Rubens at Ferrari – and no regrets



Stint at Brawn enabled proper title challenge



Race deal now pending after 'fun' IndyCar test

“I thought of racing in IndyCar and not doing the ovals, but that’s too chicken. I love the challenge of oval racing”

◀ year. It would have been good for me to be there, but honestly I don’t see myself out of F1, as probably some of my followers do as well. When testing was rolling in Jerez I was getting a lot of messages saying how bad it was not to see me in the car.

What was the secret to your longevity in F1?

I think it’s that I love it so much. I never thought primarily that I needed the money. I’ve always done it because I love it, so I think that’s the reason. You can obviously have the experience, but if you don’t have the speed then you’re nothing in F1, so the speed kept me at it and the hard times showed me how to be better. I’ve always given myself the chance to improve, I’ve never said, ‘That’s enough.’

When you look back on your career, which was your favourite – the year at Brawn or the years at Ferrari?

I had great times, but I tell you those four months that I was out of a job and then I drove the Brawn for the first time and saw that it was a winner, that was the happiest time of my career.

Do you think you came closer to winning the title with Brawn than at Ferrari?

Well, at least a chance was given, much, much more so than at Ferrari.

Would you have done things differently at Ferrari?

I’ve always believed in being a nice guy

and working my way through things. Sometimes they would face their chairs in an opposite direction to me to talk about strategy and things like that, so I would take my chair and go to the other side and develop the conversation and hope that the situation would turn around and one day they would think, ‘OK, this boy deserves something because he’s a big tester, he’s the one that chooses the tyres, the one that helps, so he deserves to have a free race.’ It made me angry with so many decisions. I always thought things would go better, and they did. I had a better time there, but then we got to a point when enough is enough.

How do you reflect on all those years working alongside Michael?

I learned a great deal with him and I’m sure he felt the same. He was very, very competitive and we had fun together; on the track maybe a little bit less, but we were good team-mates in a way. I had a good time and I wouldn’t change a thing. I would have liked to have been given a proper chance at the championship, but at the end of the day I drove for Ferrari, I had nine wins with them and I gave my very, very best. I always had to try different strategies because I always knew that he had Plan A and I had Plan B. I learned a great deal more mentally because there was a time I could remember thinking that I concentrated too much on my team-mate when I should have concentrated on myself.

RUBENS IN F1

Races	322
Wins	11
Podiums	68
Poles	14
Fastest laps	17
Points	658

That’s why I felt happier when I left. I wasn’t winning, but I felt happier.

So your love of motor racing is undimmed? You’re still fired up about being in the cockpit?

Yeah, absolutely. People thought I just wanted to be in F1, but that’s not true. I had so much fun in the [IndyCar] test, it’s a different car, different animal, and in 20 laps I was actually doing good times. You could see the buzz from the team. I have a long career ahead and that’s why I say that F1 is still open.

Do you think you could get the same satisfaction in IndyCar as you did in F1?

It’s different. I never thought of myself racing on ovals because I’ve seen accidents and I’ve lost friends, and my wife never wanted it. I thought I’d race in F1 for 25 years and then I’d quit. I thought of the possibility of [IndyCar] offering me a chance to race and then not doing the ovals, but that’s being too much of a chicken. I love the challenge of going to race on an oval.

Do you think you could do as many IndyCar races as F1 races?

No, I don’t think so otherwise I’ll be about 65!

If IndyCar doesn’t happen, do you think you’ll race somewhere else, or take a year off?

I’m working to make IndyCar happen, so we’ll wait and see. ☺



“I’m ready for Formula 1. Now I have to show it...”

Despite failing to achieve his target of securing the GP2 title in 2011, Jules Bianchi is still on the road to F1 as Force India’s reserve driver. *GLENN FREEMAN* caught up with the Frenchman who remains on Ferrari’s books

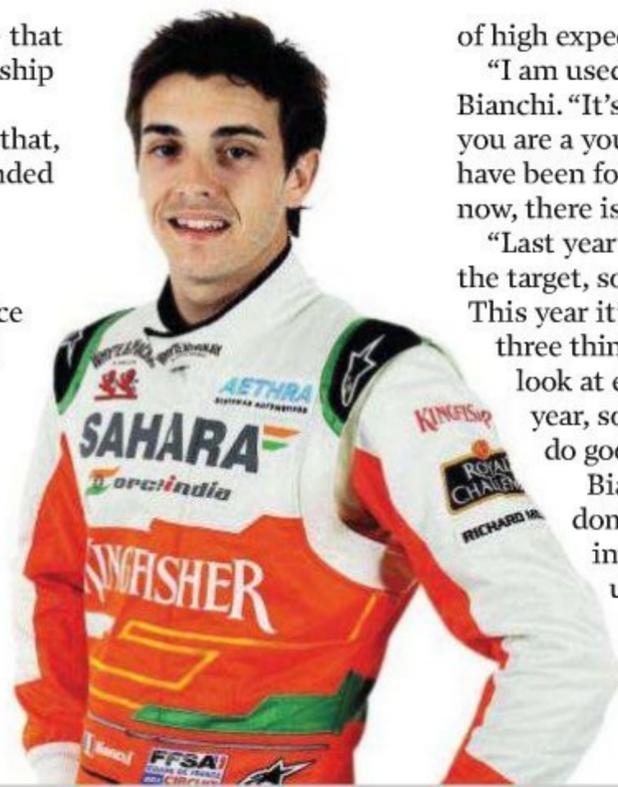
Jules Bianchi’s career has gone in all sorts of directions in the past couple of years. The man touted as “faster than Sebastian Vettel” by his Formula 3 race engineer (who worked with the now double world champion at the same level) has since lost his way on the ladder to Formula 1.

Now, he finds himself in the last-chance saloon with a wealth of opportunities to put right the wrongs of two seasons in GP2.

Finishing third in the series that tops the F1 support bill is nothing to be ashamed of, but the fact that it was achieved in both years is slightly more disappointing. Especially given the fact that Bianchi had been told – not for

the first time in his career – that he had to win the championship second time around.

Despite failing to achieve that, the Frenchman has been handed a couple of big chances for 2012. He’ll be driving on at least nine grand prix weekends during free practice with Force India, and racing full-time in Formula Renault 3.5 with three-time title-winning team Tech 1 Racing. Throw plenty of work with the Ferrari Driver Academy into the mix and another busy season



of high expectations awaits.

“I am used to the pressure now,” says Bianchi. “It’s part of the job, and when you are a young driver for Ferrari, as I have been for more than two years now, there is always more pressure.”

“Last year I had to win GP2. It was the target, so I had a lot of pressure. This year it’s a bit different, but I have three things to do well. Everyone will look at everything I am doing this year, so it won’t be easy. I have to do good things everywhere.”

Bianchi’s reputation after he dominated the F3 Euro Series in 2009 was practically unblemished. But it has taken a battering at times



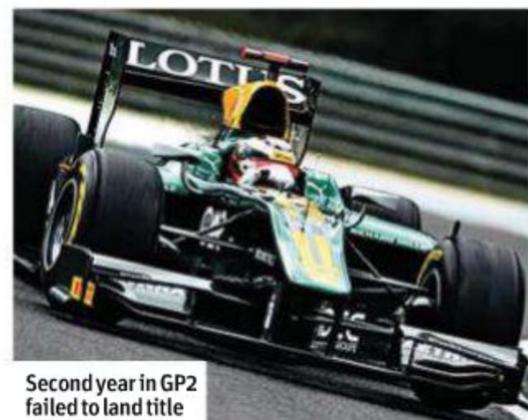
Bianchi will get plenty more F1 practice in '12



Year one in GP2 promised much



Ferrari has kept faith in Bianchi



Second year in GP2 failed to land title

since then. GP2 appeared to expose a lack of polish to his racecraft, which could explain why Ferrari shared its protege's belief that he needed to keep racing alongside his F1 duties this year.

"After we agreed the programme with Force India we felt it was important to continue racing," he says. "I wanted it a lot, and Ferrari wanted me to continue. If you go one year without racing, not doing any overtaking and things like that then it's not very nice. I think it's important to keep doing this and I'm happy to do that. I can continue to grow my experience and that is important."

Ferrari has worked extensively with the leading light of its young driver programme over the past two years, and had it not seen some potential worth pursuing it wouldn't have taken such an interest by giving him so much to do this season. Placing him with Force India will give the Scuderia an invaluable insight into his ability to make a splash in F1, while a third season racing just below the pinnacle is a great chance to recapture the career momentum he had going into 2010.

However, as far as Bianchi is concerned, he is already capable of making the final step.

"I know I am ready for Formula 1," he declares. "So now I will have to show people that they can trust in me, and that I can do a good job."

Such a declaration is bold for someone who has not quite delivered what was expected of him. In fact, what is more interesting is to hear his response when asked why he holds such a belief. Making the statement is one thing, backing it up quite another.

"I didn't have the same feeling in GP2 as I did in Formula 3," he begins. "I was doing the same things as I did in F3, but I was making mistakes because it is so different. You have to think in a different way when you move up and change your approach to the races. You have to be really calm all the time, and wait a lot. If you just try to overtake all the time, and you're not patient, you do mistakes."

Patience was clearly missing from Bianchi's armoury on far too many occasions in GP2. There had been nothing wrong with his racecraft in F3, but overtaking is a rarity at that level. In GP2 the racing is fast and frantic, and the amount of action on track seemed to take him out of his comfort zone. Those who have worked with him in the junior categories vouch for his

**BIANCHI'S
GP2 HIGHS
AND LOWS**

- Spain 2010**
Takes pole for his main-series debut at Catalunya
- Hungary 2010**
Suffers back injuries in a first-lap crash, but recovers for the next race
- Abu Dhabi 2011**
Wins head-to-head scrap with Romain Grosjean in first race for 2011 cars
- Spain 2011**
Has pole taken away for yellow-flag infringement, then crashes at the start of race two
- Britain 2011**
Takes only main-series win after thrilling battle with Christian Vietoris

intelligence out of the car, but he seemed to lack the ability to bring everything together in the cockpit as he had managed so often in F3.

Having spent the winter reflecting on why GP2 didn't work out, he appears to have come up with plenty of answers. Making good on those promises is now the key. Things started off well with a solid day of testing for Force India earlier this month, but that good work was overshadowed by a silly off the following morning on cold tyres. Race driver Nico Hulkenberg was not amused at having to sit out the afternoon while the car was repaired, but Bianchi is determined that the incident won't set the tone for his relationship with the team.

"These things can happen, and I won't make the same mistake again," he says with little fuss. "That's life, it's all about experience. I have to forget about it. The first day was really positive and that's what I have to think about."

It's a level-headed response to an incident that had the potential to derail Bianchi's 2012 before it had really got going. Proving that it hasn't got to him will go a long way to showing that he really has learned the lessons of the past two years. ☼



Rallying's

'BAD BOY'

comes of age

Replacing a Brit and then binning his Skoda on his first outing didn't make Andreas Mikkelsen a popular man, but now he's aiming for back-to-back titles. *By DAVID EVANS*



Twelve months ago, Andreas Mikkelsen and Skoda UK Motorsport were the bad boys of British rallying. The dream ticket had been given to a driver from Norway rather than Norwich, and now he'd failed to make it to the second corner of round one.

There were plenty standing by with advice along the lines of 'told you so'. And, for once, the more poisonous elements of the forum dwellers felt they had a genuine case for vitriol.

And the passing of the season didn't ease that pressure. Unspectacular sixth places in the Canaries and Corsica were followed by fourth in Yalta, then rock bottom in Ypres, where Mikkelsen put the team's Fabia S2000 off the road almost within sight of the start of a rally for the second time. This time he was caught out by a square junction with a ditch on the outside. Imagine that, in Ypres...

Skoda UK Motorsport team manager Catherine Sleigh reflects on a tough time.

"I was surprised at some of the bad feeling [towards the team]," she says. "Guy [Wilks, Mikkelsen's predecessor at Skoda UK] had moved to Peugeot and there didn't seem to be a young

Cyprus Rally – were offering points-and-a-half and double-points respectively. In terms of the 2011 season, the series would definitely favour the late developer, and in this case that was Mikkelsen.

Scotland brought the breakthrough win, and immense emotion from the team. But was the title really on?

Skoda factory drivers Juho Hanninen and Jan Kopecky, along with Neuville, were still standing firmly in the way of Mikkelsen's rocky road to redemption in Cyprus.

Hanninen was the first to go, when he rolled on the second corner of the second stage. Then Neuville, with a puncture and electrical issues. Suddenly it was winner takes all between Kopecky and Mikkelsen. And the Norwegian didn't put a foot wrong, winning by almost two minutes.

"I couldn't watch that last stage," says Sleigh. "I went and hid myself away."

She needn't have worried.

Mikkelsen had started the season as a headstrong and hard-charging 21-year-old. But he ended the campaign as a mature, consistent and devastatingly quick 22-year-old.

Mikkelsen's career has moved

says Mikkelsen, "but I want to pay back some more this year. They took a lot of grief when they hired me and it didn't look good after the Monte, but nobody stopped believing. Cathie and Skoda UK gave me the chance to show my potential. I have to say a big thank you to Cathie, actually: she's amazing. Sometimes, we'll be sitting in the debrief and she'll ask how the diff works or something like that – she wants to know. She's been a real driving force behind this programme."

There's a pause, a reflection and then a fixed stare: "But I want to win more rallies this year."

Mikkelsen formed part of last season's FIA Institute Young Driver Excellence Academy pilot year – and of the 12 drivers on the scheme it was hard to see another driver who took more from his year of learning. Watching the grit and determination as he ran up a mountain in Chamonix, it was clear that the spoiled lad who'd been gifted World Rally Cars from the age of 15 had gone. And in his place was a Norwegian with a steely determination to win.

"Coming to this year, I know I can go quicker in my second season in the IRC with Skoda UK," says Mikkelsen.



Joy for Floene (co-driver), Mikkelsen and Sleigh

"Skoda UK took a lot of grief when they hired me and initially it didn't look good, but nobody stopped believing"



Overcome at title in Cyprus



AM in fjord-like scenery on way to Cyprus win

British driver capable of taking over from him. So we spoke to Skoda Motorsport and they recommended Andreas. We took that advice. Looking back, I'm sorry that we seemed to upset a few people along the way."

Sitting eating chips and mayonnaise in Belgium last June, Sleigh and her team must have felt pretty low.

But then things changed. Mikkelsen returned to the stages under SuperRally and was fastest. Then he went to the Azores and put the car on the podium.

And then came Sanremo and a massive battle with Thierry Neuville. That fight went to the wire and, while Mikkelsen lost out on the day, he was convinced the war wasn't finished.

"We sat in the debrief after Sanremo," recalls Sleigh, "and Andreas said, 'We can still win this! We looked at him and asked him if he'd lost his mind!'"

The final two IRC rounds of the season – Rally of Scotland and the

further forward in the winter that followed those tears of joy in Paphos. There was an internal call from the other side of the Volkswagen Group – the call to VW's Junior Programme for half the rounds of this year's World Rally Championship, with the potential carrot of the keys to a Polo R WRC for 2013.

Where does an IRC title defence fit into that kind of big picture?

"IRC is the focus," says Mikkelsen firmly. "It's fantastic to be working with Volkswagen and maybe that's the future. But for now, in terms of competition, the IRC is everything this year. I want to be the first driver ever to win back-to-back IRC titles."

That answer had been expected, but not the kind of genuine forcefulness with which it came. Skoda UK Motorsport still means everything to Mikkelsen.

"I feel I have paid Skoda UK back,"

"The motivation is just as high as last year, but we go to win every rally. This year is going to be a big battle with Juho and Jan all of the time – and there are plenty of other drivers coming out who will be quick and capable of winning rallies. It's definitely not going to be easy."

But it can't be as hard as last year.

"That's what I'm hoping for," smiles Sleigh. "Just the chance to watch rallies and not be biting my nails quite so much."

And Sleigh's not worried in the slightest about Mikkelsen's eye being taken off the ball by a carrot and a Polo.

"There's not a better way to show people what you're capable of," she reasons, "than by showing the maturity and consistency to lead from the front."

And the chance to do that starts with round one in the Azores this week. ☘

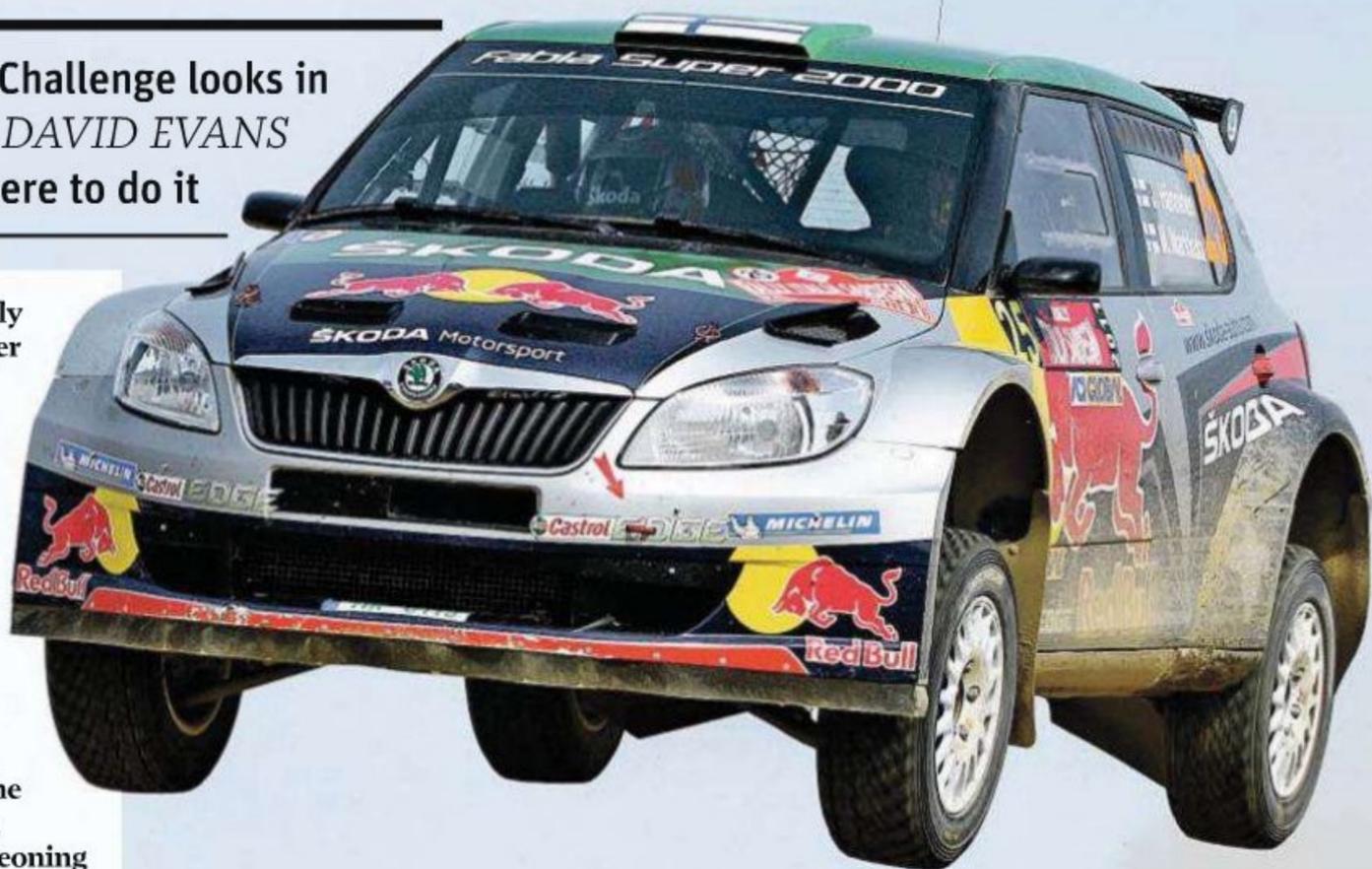
Sixth of the best

The Intercontinental Rally Challenge looks in good shape for season six. *DAVID EVANS* picks who to watch and where to do it

The Intercontinental Rally Challenge looks stronger than ever as it enters year six with Rally Azores this week.

Undoubtedly, the IRC has been hard hit by the loss of Monte Carlo and Scotland, but with the classic Circuit of Ireland joining Ypres, Sanremo and the Tour de Corse, it's still high on quality.

What's not so great about the IRC this year is its huge asphalt bias, with nine of the 13 rounds running on sealed surfaces. And the geographical shift towards eastern Europe might well reflect the burgeoning car market in that part of the world, but including events like Romania's Sibiu Rally or Rally Sliven in Bulgaria – great events as I'm sure they are – does detract slightly from the household names elsewhere on the schedule.



Skoda returns to defend its title

IRC CALENDAR 2012

1. RALLY AZORES

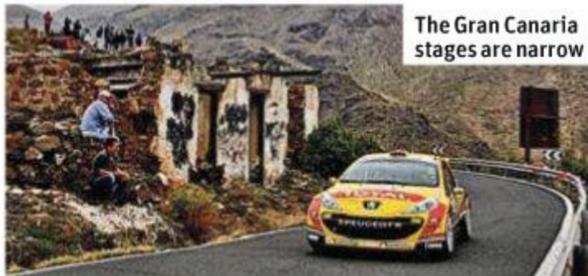
Date: February 23-25
Based: Ponta Delgada, Azores, Portugal
Surface: Gravel

Based on the Atlantic archipelago's largest island of Sao Miguel, the event is characterised by narrow and undulating stages with one test taking crews along the rim of a dormant volcano. Known for its notoriously changeable climate, a move from its traditional July slot to mid-February only increases the unpredictability.

2. RALLY ISLAS CANARIAS EL CORTE INGLES

Date: March 15-17
Based: Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Spain
Surface: Asphalt

With the rally's mixture of narrow and fast sections, optimal car set-up and effective pacenotes are key to success. The surface is abrasive, meaning grip levels are high, but tyre wear can be at a premium – especially on longer-than-ever stages this season.



The Gran Canaria stages are narrow

3. CIRCUIT OF IRELAND RALLY

Date: April 6-7
Based: Armagh, Northern Ireland
Surface: Asphalt

An IRC newcomer for 2012, the Circuit of Ireland is one of the world's oldest rallies having run for the first time in 1931. Superspecials in Belfast and Lisburn bookend the classic, fast and bumpy roads of Northern Ireland.

4. TOUR DE CORSE

Date: May 10-12
Based: Ajaccio/Bastia, Corsica, France
Surface: Asphalt

Shunned by the WRC in favour of a mainland rally, the Tour de Corse joined the IRC for the first time in 2011 with an arduous route covering large parts of the picturesque island. This year looks like starting in Ajaccio in the south and finishing in Bastia in the north.



5. CANON MECSEK RALLYE

Date: June 2-3
Based: Pecs, Hungary
Surface: Asphalt

This event's IRC 2011 debut produced the closest finish in the series' history with Jan Kopecky edging Thierry Neuville by 0.8s. The rally uses fast and flowing asphalt stages, which require big bravery and commitment.

Corner cutting typifies Ypres



6. YPRES RALLY

Date: June 21-23
Based: Ypres, Belgium
Surface: Asphalt

Using asphalt roads around the historic town of Ypres, the narrow stages are lined by drainage ditches and telegraph poles. Rain showers can be a constant menace, while the second passes are often treacherous with gravel and mud pulled onto the slippery asphalt surface.

7. RALLY SAN MARINO

Date: July 6-7
Based: Italy/San Marino
Surface: Gravel

Rally San Marino marks its 40th anniversary by joining the IRC schedule for the first time. The event's mountainous, sandy gravel stages are notoriously tough. Day one takes place in Italy, day two in San Marino. ▶



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Qualifying
Pre-final
Final

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1 x 3hr race

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8. SIBIU RALLY ROMANIA

Date: July 20-22
Based: Sibiu, Romania
Surface: Gravel

Romania takes its IRC bow with a mainly gravel event based around Sibiu. The fast and flowing stages run through the surrounding mountains and valleys. Random fact: Sibiu was once rated by US magazine *Forbes* as the eighth most idyllic place to live in Europe.

9. BARUM CZECH RALLY ZLIN

Date: August 31-September 2
Based: Zlin, Czech Republic
Surface: Asphalt

Crowds of up to 200,000 will watch one of the most difficult events on the IRC calendar. The rally is complicated by the high-speed asphalt stages ducking in and out of forests and woodland and across sections of broken and bumpy asphalt. Service is at Barum's Continental tyre factory in Otrokovice.

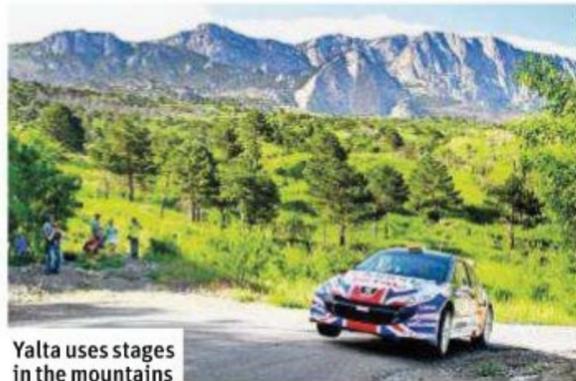
Czech out the crowds in Zlin!



10. PRIME YALTA RALLY

Date: September 15-16
Based: Yalta, Ukraine
Surface: Asphalt

Located in the Black Sea city of Yalta in Ukraine's Crimea region, the rally is effectively two stages going up a mountain and two stages coming back down, both of which are then reversed to form the route. The asphalt is slippery and broken in places, meaning punctures are a big factor.



Yalta uses stages in the mountains

11. RALLY SLIVEN

Date: September 29-30
Based: Sliven, Bulgaria
Surface: Asphalt

A mainstay of the Bulgarian championship and part of the FIA European Rally Cups, the event is famed for its tricky and unique asphalt. Two legendary downhill stages, Bulgarka and Stara Reka, are back on the itinerary for the first time in 20 years.

12. RALLYE SANREMO

Date: October 12-13
Based: Sanremo, Italy
Surface: Asphalt

Running a few weeks later than usual this season, Rallye Sanremo has been an IRC round since the series formally began in 2007 and with the competitive action contained within a 24-hour window, there's a huge strain on cars and crews. The stages use narrow, mountain roads above Sanremo, with the 27-mile Ronde stage forming the event's centrepiece.

13. CYPRUS RALLY

Date: November 2-3
Based: Pafos, Cyprus
Surface: Gravel

Rough and rocky gravel roads, smooth and broken asphalt, plus punishing ambient temperatures ensure a tough finish to the IRC season. The mixed-surface event moved from its old base in Limassol for 2011 and produced a thrilling five-way battle for the drivers' crown.



Water splashes cool cars in hot Cyprus finale

THE ONES TO WATCH

This season's IRC title is likely to be fought over by the Fabias. Skoda has won the drivers' and manufacturers' titles for the past two years and that doesn't look like changing any time soon.

Having said that, a season-long scrap between Skoda UK Motorsport's defending champion Andreas Mikkelsen and his predecessor Juho Hanninen will be fascinating to watch. But, with nine of the 13 IRC rounds running on asphalt this season, could it finally be Jan Kopecky's year?

Highly rated German drivers Sepp Wiegand and Hermann Gassner start as IRC rookies in their Skodas. Beyond the Fabias, Peugeot stalwarts Bryan Bouffier and Bruno Magalhaes ensure there will be a 207 presence, while Belgian star Freddy Loix looks set to make history by bringing a turbo-charged Fiesta RRC to the series for the first time.

Londoner Harry Hunt makes a full IRC attack in his Citroen DS3 R3, with the Englishman starting as favourite to follow up his 2WD world title last season with IRC success in 2012.



Veteran Loix may bring turbo Fiesta

Mikkelsen will defend his title



PAST FIVE IRC CHAMPIONS

2011	Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Floene (Skoda Fabia S2000)
2010	Juho Hanninen/Mikko Markkula (Skoda Fabia S2000)
2009	Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Peugeot 207 S2000)
2008	Nicolas Vouilloz/Nicolas Klinger (Peugeot 207 S2000)
2007	Enrique Garcia-Ojeda/Jordi Barrabes (Peugeot 207 S2000)



WHERE TO WATCH ON TV

As usual, Eurosport will provide all-encompassing IRC coverage on Eurosport and Eurosport 2. The more popular rounds, including Ypres and Sanremo, will include live coverage of stages. The Azores action starts tonight (Thursday) with a season preview on Eurosport at 2300 with a day one report at 2300 on Friday and an event round-up on Saturday at 2330. Repeats come on Eurosport and Eurosport 2 during the event.

8

STEPS TO DAYTONA 500 GLORY

2010 Daytona 500 victor *JAMIE McMURRAY*
reveals the secret to winning NASCAR's biggest race



1 Forget the fear

When you pull onto the track it doesn't look wide enough to be three-wide. You look at it and you think there's just no way. And then the race starts and it just happens. It's hairy!

1



2 Plan well ahead

It's about making the right decisions at the end of the race. Sometimes when you make a move on the track it's not going to benefit you the next lap – you're looking three laps ahead. Sometimes you make a move and it doesn't look like the right one, but two laps later it does. And I don't know that everyone can see that coming. Some people are better at that type of racing than others.

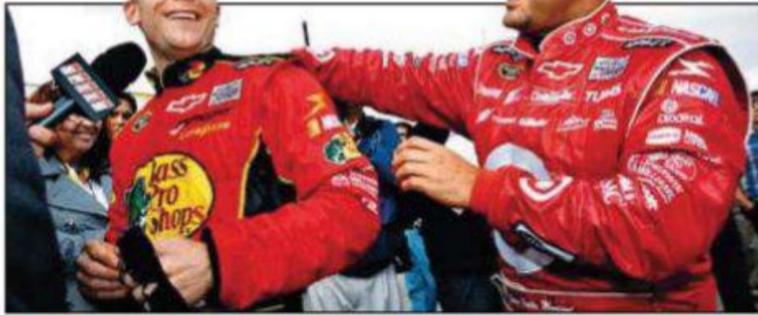
3 Keep it flat

Since they repaved the track there's so much more grip it's become much easier. It was a lot harder when the track was worn out and the cars would move around a lot more. Now it feels like you have brand new tyres on for an entire run. Daytona used to be a place where if you had a really good car you could run maybe 10 laps flat. And then after 10 laps you'd have to start lifting a little bit, and by the end of the fuel run it was just hanging on. The difference was in who could make the car handle the best. Now we can run wide open literally from the first lap to the very last lap – there's just lots of grip.



JAMIE McMURRAY'S CUP PEDIGREE

Starts	330
Wins	6
Poles	8
Top fives	41
Top 10s	96
Average start	19.4
Average finish	19.4
Laps led	1356
Earnings	\$44,390,835



Trust in your team-mate...

We used to work together at restrictor-plate races for four or five laps and then move on to the next guy. But now Juan [Pablo Montoya] and I work together – since we went to tandem racing five or six races ago, we are the only guys we've helped. It's so neat to be truly working together as team-mates. Juan really likes to push, and he's good at it. I know it sounds kinda odd, but there are some guys that are better at it than others, and Juan is one of those. We've talked about it and I do a little bit better at talking on the radio, saying I'm going high or low or driving the car for him. He likes pushing and I like being out front.

4

...and believe in your spotter

If it's back to three-wide that's really nerve-wracking for the spotters, because they have to drive for you. They'll get on the radio and say the outside lane is really moving so you'll naturally go up and block that lane: they'll give you a couple of scenarios and you'll have to make the decision in the car. Everyone knows what it's like to drive down the road and you want to pull out, but the car behind is going too fast so you let them go. If you want to block you need to work out if that's possible. So there's a lot of decision-making going on.

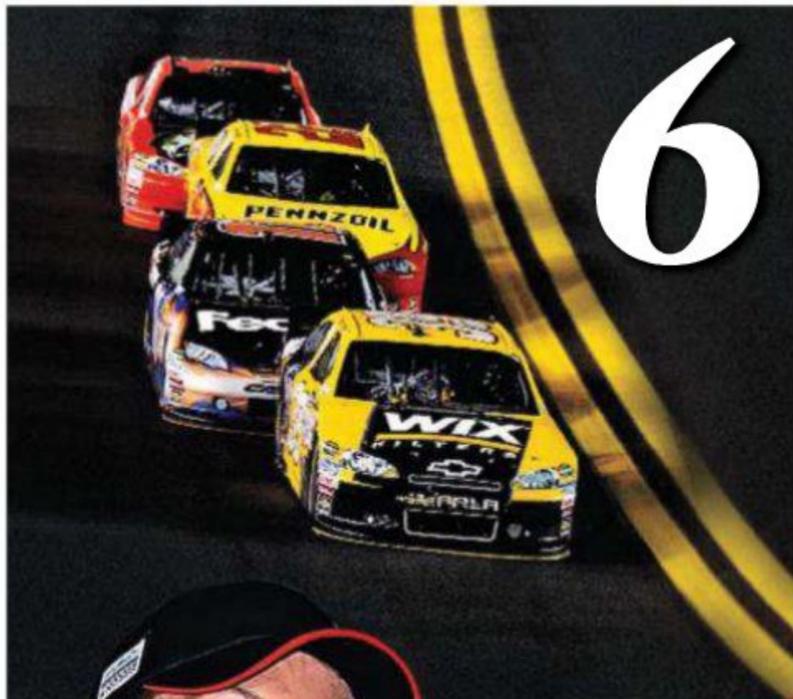
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Never give up

Daytona is a wild card. Anyone can win it. The slowest car in qualifying will legitimately have a chance to win the race if everything goes their way. It's at Phoenix or Vegas or Bristol where the good teams win.

6



Ride your luck

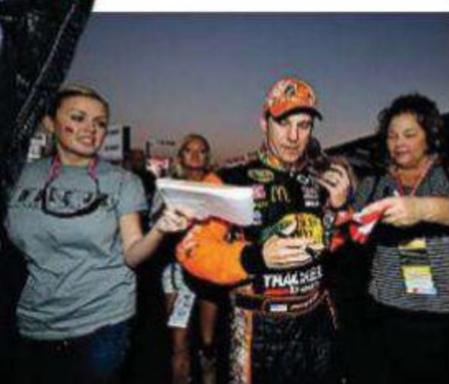
You don't really get to dictate where you're going to be; you search around and a lot of that is just luck. I was really fortunate to finish first or second in six plate races in a row, and honestly, everything just worked out for me in those events.

7

Prepare for it to change your life

The Daytona 500 is certainly one of those races that everyone always remembers. They don't remember some of the other races even though it's a really big deal to win them, but the Daytona 500 is something that you put in a different category and that makes it even more special. Growing up in America you either want to race in the Daytona 500 or the Indy 500, and for me I've always been a stock car guy. To get to win it is... it's just one of the coolest races you can win.

8



PIC: LAT SOUTH, WILLIAMS, MILLER/LAT, GREENWOOD/GETTY



KAHNE KEEN TO PROVE HE'S ABLE

After eight unsettling years driving Dodge, Ford and Toyota machinery, Kasey Kahne now has stability with a Hendrick Chevrolet.

By CHUCK BRADBURY SR

Chances don't come bigger than this. For 2012, Kasey Kahne joins Hendrick Motorsports, the most powerful team in all of NASCAR. Alongside five-time champion Jimmie Johnson, four-time titlist Jeff Gordon and the baffling enigma that is Dale Earnhardt Jr – it simply doesn't get better than that.

Yet Kahne's Sprint Cup career to date has been tumultuous, ever since he burst onto the scene with Ray Evernham's team in 2004 as Rookie of the Year. It all seemed so easy: four poles in his first season, a breakthrough victory in his second, a monumental six wins in his third (one more than champion Jimmie Johnson) with six poles too – this kid was gold dust.

Sponsors queued up to get this fresh-faced, blue-eyed boy to endorse their products, especially on TV. How could this possibly go wrong?

It did, yet through little fault of his own. Multi-millionaire George Gillett Jr bought into Evernham's squad, about the time he obtained Liverpool FC. Just like the Merseyside Reds, results swung downhill and recriminations soon filled the newsprint. By 2009 Evernham was long gone, the ashes of his team merging with Richard Petty's team, which later absorbed Yates Racing. This constant changing served to derail the Kahne express. He staggered into Red Bull Racing last year, a doomed team with a sponsor/team owner searching for an exit plan, but Kahne had an ace up his sleeve –

Kahne spent '09 season in Richard Petty Dodge





Kahne is relishing new deal in Hendrick #5 car

to this point. I still am pretty fresh with the whole deal, so I think it only gets better from here."

Team owner Rick Hendrick, one of racing's true visionaries, sees genius in Kahne's abilities. He's renowned for having exceptional feel for a changing racetrack, and has never been afraid to change his racing line in search of better lap times as he knows he has the skills to keep it on the island if that quest finds less, rather than more, grip.

Kahne is also capable of amazing results, such as winning the Charlotte All-Star race in 2008 after being voted onto the starting grid by his fans, then going on to win the following weekend's Coca-Cola 600 there.

"I see him as a future star," says Hendrick, "and a guy who will be racing here a long time winning championships and races."

The other element of this equation, and perhaps the most intriguing, is that Kahne has brought crew chief Kenny Francis with him. Both men of few words, they've worked exclusively together at Cup level since 2006, and twice qualified for the Chase for the Championship. Francis has been granted the leeway to sign up some staff of his own, rather than just settle for the original crew of the #5. Both

"I see Kasey as a future star and a guy who will be racing here a long time and winning"

Rick Hendrick

a four-season contract with Hendrick.

Signed in 2010, only now does it actually kick-in and assures his future until 2015. For someone who will have driven for all four of NASCAR's manufacturers in the past five years, it offers stability at last.

"Oh, man, stability – that's a great word," says Kahne, seizing on this suggestion with relish. "It's a good word to hear. I have four years here that I know are going to be stable and be competitive. I have great people and a great team around me. To be able to be a part of all that is something that I haven't had. Each time you change [teams], it takes time to figure out the cars and get that feeling you're looking for. It's not the easiest way to win races.

"It's definitely nice to have stability,

KASEY KAHNE'S CUP PEDIGREE

Starts	288
Wins	12
Poles	22
Top-5s	57
Top-10s	102
Average start	13.5
Average finish	18
Laps led	3364
Earnings	\$48,539,887

makes you feel pretty good about where you're at. It's taken time. I've had some really good years in Cup, and I've learned a lot from everything, and now I'm just in a really solid situation and need to take full advantage of it. They have given me such a good opportunity, I need to perform. This is definitely a place that wins championships."

Kahne had to wait for this opportunity until the previous incumbent of Hendrick's famed #5 car, Mark Martin, was forced to relinquish his grip on the car after a winless 2011. The #5 is Hendrick's most cherished digit – it was its first winner in the hands of Geoff Bodine in 1984. But it's had a chequered history too, with its only title coming with its longest-associated driver, Terry Labonte, in 1996, while Ricky Rudd, Kyle Busch and Casey Mears all raced it for far shorter stints.

"I always couldn't wait to get in the 5," says Kahne. "Couldn't wait to get started working with the guys over there. The Daytona test was the first time I started to feel kind of part of the team, and it's been really good so far. It's been everything that I expected up

Kahne and Francis are products of the old-school World of Outlaw winged sprint-car scene, but can they bring something new to the Hendrick party?

"We'll just see how high we can rise, how well we can step up and see what we can do throughout the whole season," says Kahne. "My biggest deal this year is to be as consistent as I've ever been each week and to win races. If we can do that, we're going to have a great year.

"The biggest impression [about Hendrick's team] so far is the amount of cars and the amount of work that they've got going on. I'm very, very impressed. There's a lot going on, and [the factory] is just a really impressive place to see how many people put their heads together to try to figure out how to go as fast as we can."

After all his team moves, and changes in management when he did stay put, the infrastructure is there for Kahne to thrive. Most of all, this year we will discover if he is a true stock-car superstar – and whether he deserves his seat at NASCAR's top table – or whether he's simply one of racing's hobos. ☼

Life in Hendrick #5 began in recent Bud Shootout



PICS: LAT SOUTH, INGHAM/GETTY

WHAT'S NEW IN NASCAR 2012

The US's biggest form of racing isn't renowned for fixin' what ain't broke, but there have been changes. *By CHUCK BRADBURY SR*

Saturday night's Bud
Shootout kicked off year

DRIVER MERRY-GO-ROUND

Kurt Busch

If you're not aware of why he was sacked by Penske Racing, simply search YouTube for 'Kurt Busch Rages During Interview' (warning: contains adult content) and bear in mind that Dr Jerry Punch is one of the most respected pitlane reporters in the series. The older of the Busch brothers lands at the team of James Finch, who is ironically named as he a) builds airports and b) his team is called Phoenix Racing.



It's a relative minnow in the grand scheme of things, but uses customer Hendrick chassis and engines, so there are no shortcomings on equipment. The team is a one-time winner at this level, thanks to Busch's former team-mate Brad Keselowski's victory at Talladega in 2009.

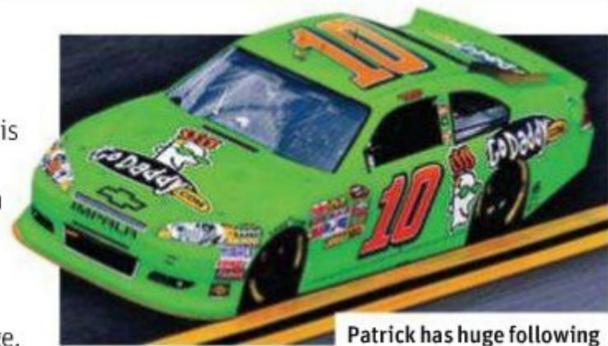
AJ Allmendinger

Along with Kasey Kahne at Hendrick, this is a huge opportunity for former Champ Car star 'Dinger' to hit the big time in stock cars. He's been calmly carving a reputation for himself with Richard Petty's team, steadily improving his points position year on year to finish 15th last term. He has big shoes to fill in replacing Kurt Busch, but he's undoubtedly got the machinery at his disposal to show his oft-fearless skills.



Danica Patrick & David Reutimann

The big story of 2012, as far as America is concerned, is Patrick's full-time shift from IndyCar to NASCAR. She will contest 10 Cup races for Tony Stewart's champion team (in its Tommy Baldwin-run satellite squad), and she'll have the expertise of Greg Zipadelli as crew chief. When she's not driving Reutimann is, and the difference in attention will be massive: he's Mr Average.



Patrick has huge following

Bowyer (15) gets shoved by Martin (55)

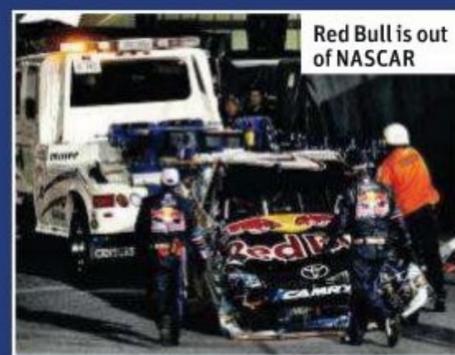


Clint Bowyer & Mark Martin

Bowyer had looked like a bit of a 'lifer' at Richard Childress Racing, but the apron strings have been cut for 2012 and he joins Michael Waltrip Racing in the #15 (previously the #00 vacated by David Reutimann). Perhaps the most surprising aspect about this is Bowyer's declaration at Bristol three years ago that Waltrip was "the worst driver in NASCAR, period". They've set their differences aside, and Bowyer brings three years of Chase-qualifying success to Waltrip's relatively young team. He is joined there by Hendrick refugee Mark Martin. He might be over 50, but Martin is as tough a cookie as they come.

Bye-bye Red Bull

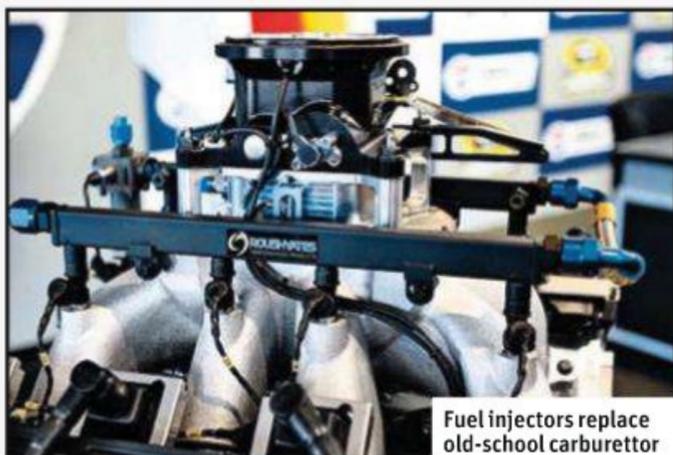
It might be the world champion of Formula 1, but Red Bull's efforts in NASCAR ended with a whimper. After five seasons produced just two race wins, it cited NASCAR's lack of 18-34 demographic as the reason for its withdrawal. Truth was, it never quite got on terms with the grandee teams from its relatively small facility, and randomly sacking drivers AJ Allmendinger and Scott Speed was an exercise in papering over the cracks of its deficiency.



Red Bull is out of NASCAR



TECHNICAL REVAMP



Fuel injectors replace old-school carburettor

Fuel injection

It's only a couple of decades behind the rest of the world in this regard, but finally NASCAR has ditched its trusty four-barrel carburettor for fuel injection of its V8 behemoths. The common ECU is supplied by McLaren, while long-time carburettor specialist Holley stays involved as supplier for the throttle-body unit. Restrictor plates will still be used at superspeedways Daytona and Talladega, but these will be positioned at the end of the throttle body to restrict airflow only, rather than on the carburettor, which previously limited the amount of air and fuel into the engine.

Car-to-car radio banned

The tandem drafting that cropped up as a result of the resurfacing of superspeedways Daytona and Talladega prompted teams to allow their drivers to communicate from car to car with each other. This practice has now been banned. Driver Kyle Busch predicts: "You're going to have to talk to your spotter, have your spotter talk to his spotter, and his spotter talk to him – just to get the communication going."



Car radio link-up selector dial (left) is now banned



NASCAR SPRINT CUP 2012 CALENDAR

February 26	Daytona 500
March 4	Phoenix
March 11	Las Vegas
March 18	Bristol
April 1	Martinsville
April 14	Texas*
April 22	Kansas
April 28	Richmond*
May 6	Talladega
May 12	Darlington*
May 27	Charlotte*
June 3	Dover
June 10	Pocono
June 17	Michigan
June 24	Sears Point
June 30	Kentucky*
July 7	Daytona*
July 15	Loudon
July 29	Indianapolis
August 5	Pocono
August 12	Watkins Glen
August 19	Michigan
August 25	Bristol*
September 2	Atlanta*
September 8	Richmond*
September 16	Chicagoland
September 23	Loudon
September 30	Dover
October 7	Talladega
October 13	Charlotte*
October 21	Kansas
October 28	Martinsville
November 4	Texas
November 11	Phoenix
November 18	Homestead

*night races

WHERE TO WATCH ON TV

Premier Sports is showing live coverage of every round of the Sprint Cup, with highlights on Sky Sports on the Monday after each event. Motors TV is showing the second-tier Nationwide Series.

LAST FIVE CHAMPIONS

2011	Tony Stewart
2010	Jimmie Johnson
2009	Jimmie Johnson
2008	Jimmie Johnson
2007	Jimmie Johnson



Tony Stewart is the current king

CAN BTCC NEARLY MAN BECOME THE CHAMPION?

Gordon Shedden is one of the BTCC's most successful drivers but has yet to win the drivers' title. The Scot, who was runner-up in 2011, tells *KEVIN TURNER* that he's determined to set the record straight this time

Gordon Shedden is the third most successful British Touring Car driver not to have won the crown. And whereas Gordon Spice and Brian Muir could point to the bizarre multi-class structure of the past to help explain why their wins didn't result in titles, 'Flash' has to look elsewhere.

Although he had finished third twice before (in 2007 and 2010), Shedden's best chance came last year. He went toe-to-toe with Honda team-mate Matt Neal and double champion Jason Plato, and fell just eight points short of Neal's total after 30 races.

The 33-year-old believes consistency, rather than outright pace, has been the hardest thing to unlock, which is why he feels he made a significant step up in 2011.

"Last year I drove a mature season in terms of putting the championship together," he says. "Even in 2010 I was up and down, but last year Donington and Croft were the only meetings I didn't score a podium.



I was always there or thereabouts.”
 “I think it’s just experience. It’s a right bugger of a championship to win, with reversed grids and success ballast. It’s no coincidence that the people who have won it in recent years have a lot of touring-car experience – Matt with 20 years, and Jason with 15.

“It’s one thing to come in and be quick over a lap or a race, but to do so over 30 races is the challenge.”

That’s one reason why he can’t pick a highlight from 2011. Whereas the lowlights – the practice off thanks to a cut tyre at the Brands Hatch opener, and being disqualified from third at Donington – come to mind easily, Shedden’s over-riding positive from the season was his overall performance.

“There wasn’t one highlight,” he says. “For me it was about going to the last race with a genuine chance of winning the championship.”

Nevertheless, he still fell short as team-mate Neal claimed a third title. This year will be Shedden’s sixth full

campaign in a topline BTCC racer (2009 was a part-season) and he has to build on the year that made him the most successful Scot in the BTCC’s history with 21 wins. He believes he can.

“The aim is the title,” he asserts. “Every year I’ve tried to look at myself to see how to improve. I’m still young and I’m still getting better. I took a step up last year and I need to make another one this time.”

Of course, the team and how the Honda Racing/Dynamics squad gets on with its first full NGTC machine will dictate part of how successful he can be. Having produced the best car-engine package of 2011 – which took 13 wins on its way to the drivers’, manufacturers’ and teams’ titles – the expectation is that Honda will be favourites this year, particularly with the loss of the RML Chevrolets.

“It was important financially to split development over two years,” says Shedden. “We’ll use the engine and gearbox from last year, but it’s a completely new installation.

“Last year the chassis was so well sorted the turbo worked with it. This time we’ve got to make the chassis stop and go around corners. We’ve got a lot of work to do, but hopefully we can be competitive from the off.”

To score that elusive title, Shedden will also have to beat Neal. Given Matt is the son of team boss Steve Neal, that might seem a tall order, but Shedden has no doubt he gets a fair deal. “It is a family team, but I feel part of that family,” he says. “I talk to them pretty much every day. They trust me a lot and I trust them – it just works.”

So who will be his biggest rival outside of Honda? Does he think Plato and the new MG/Triple Eight combo can fight from the title from the off?

“They’ve got a hell of a lot of experience,” says Shedden. “I think they’ll get it built OK, but I know from our experience how many things you have to sort even before you hit the track. But you can almost bet your house Jason will be in the title hunt come the end of the year.

“The series has such strength in depth. Andrew Jordan [who will have an NGTC Civic run by the Eurotech squad] will have everything we’ve got, then there are those with NGTC experience, like Frank Wrathall, and Motorbase and West Surrey will be strong. It’s a shame RML has gone because I had some good races against them, but there will be plenty of competition.”

Shedden is certainly hungry enough and even Neal Jr seemed to feel at the end of last year that the Scot’s time was coming. There will only be two BTCC champions on the grid at the Brands opener this year, but it would be great for the series if there was a third for 2013. ☼

TWO INTO ONE DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK

One of the most memorable moments of last season was undoubtedly Matt Neal’s doomed attempt at passing his team-mate for the win in Oulton Park’s second race. Almost as remarkable was Shedden’s calm response at being driven into the gravel within yards of victory.

“Of course it was difficult, but I had a lap to think about it,” he recalls. “Had I been 18 or 19 I’d have been bouncing off the garage roof, but I’ve been around long enough to know these things happen. It wouldn’t have achieved anything.”

Fortunately, Shedden found his way out to score some points and team harmony was maintained.

“Once it’s happened there is nothing you can do about it, and Matt was in bits about it,” adds Flash.

“Being in the same cars we’re going to be fighting for the same bit of track occasionally, but I’d rather race side-by-side with him than some of the others. And just look at Rob Huff and Alain Menu [Chevrolet team-mates in the World Touring Car Championship]: they had their moments in 2011 too. It’s just touring car racing.”

SHEDDEN’S BTCC RECORD

2006	4th	4 wins
2007	3rd	4 wins
2008	7th	2 wins
2009	14th	0 wins*
2010	3rd	5 wins
2011	2nd	6 wins

*Part-season

ALL-TIME BTCC CAREER WINNERS

Jason Plato	68 wins	2 titles
Andy Rouse	60 wins	4 titles
Matt Neal	43 wins	3 titles
Alain Menu	36 wins	2 titles
James Thompson	36 wins	2 titles
Yvan Muller	36 wins	1 title
Frank Gardner	35 wins	3 titles
Gordon Spice	28 wins	0 titles
Fabrizio Giovanardi	24 wins	2 titles
Brian Muir	22 wins	0 titles
Rickard Rydell	21 wins	1 title
Gordon Shedden	21 wins	0 titles



Oulton team tangle was 2011 low point



Honda’s new NGTC-spec Civic in the windtunnel



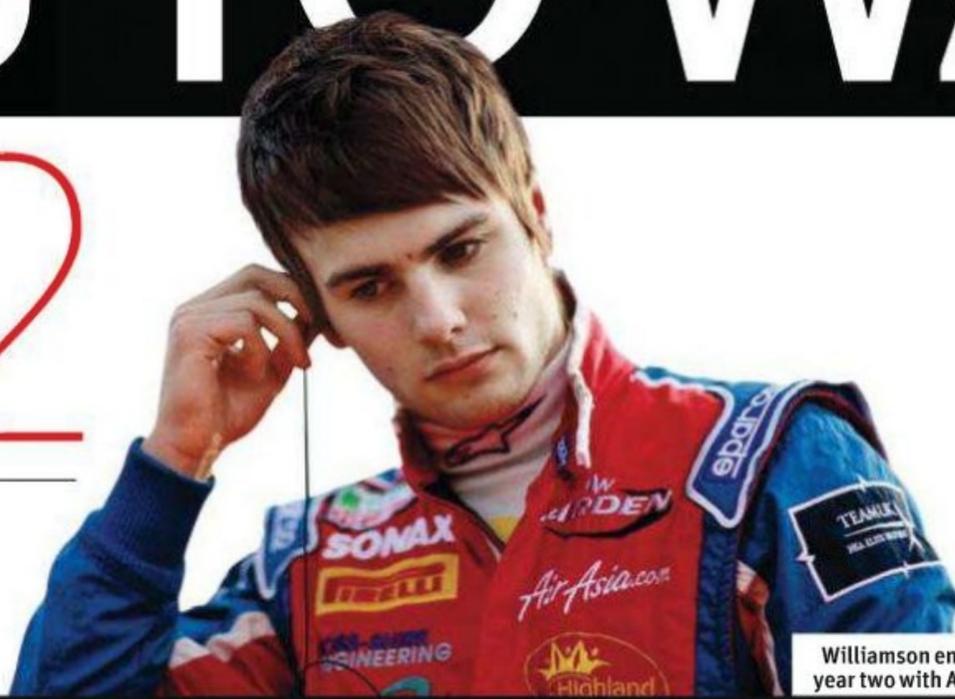
Shedden only has eyes for the '12 title



BRITTS TO WWA

IN 2012

The UK can't rely on Hamilton, Button and di Resta to uphold F1 fortunes forever. Here are the best youngsters climbing the ranks



Williamson enters year two with Arden

LEWIS WILLIAMSON

Formula Renault 3.5 with Arden

When Red Bull places a driver in Formula Renault 3.5, it is with a clear plan in mind: deliver at this level, and a chance in Formula 1 beckons. Don't believe us? How about some case studies: Sebastian Vettel, Jaime Alguersuari, Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne.

The latest youngster on the Austrian firm's conveyor belt is 2010 McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award winner Lewis Williamson, who moves to FR3.5 as a fully-fledged Red Bull junior driver after initially securing the backing on the eve of the 2011

GP3 season. There's more good news for the Scot, as Arden's expansion into the series means he can stay with the team he gelled so well with last year.

"Arden really brought me on as a driver last year, so I said to the team it would be a dream to keep working with them," says the 22-year-old. "To get the opportunity to be a Red Bull driver in a Red Bull car is awesome. All you can wish for is the chance, and now it's down to me."

There were question marks over the pressure being applied by Red Bull junior programme chief Helmut Marko as Williamson's 2011 campaign wore on. But very little of the responsibility for the trailing off of his season fell at the feet of the man

himself, and perhaps being involved in a team owned by Mark Webber and Christian Horner helped him make that point.

Given how quickly Williamson has risen through the junior ranks, he could be forgiven for hoping Red Bull will give him time to settle in. But he's already stated that he's not expecting a period of grace. Glenn Freeman

ALSO

Williamson will be joined on the grid by another British rookie: Will Stevens joins Carlin, stepping up after finishing fourth in last year's Formula Renault Eurocup.

Williamson had toe in FR3.5 water last year



Calado wants more of these in GP2

JAMES CALADO
GP2 with ART/Lotus

James Calado joins the GP2 field as one of the most exciting rookies on the grid, after a spectacular season in GP3 that he admits really put him on the map.

Missing out on the title last year to Williams test driver Valtteri Bottas was a shame, but the most important thing for Calado was to prove to French superteam ART Grand Prix (now Lotus GP) that he was worthy of one of its much-sought-after berths in GP2.

He's already proven he can handle the step up with a victory in last year's one-off non-championship round in Abu Dhabi. Claims

that the 22-year-old can fight for the title in his first year could be perceived as a bit over the top in current-spec GP2, but the field is weaker than last year and Calado believes that he was only driving at 80 per cent of the car's potential on his way to his victory in the Middle East.

If driver and team can unlock that remaining 20 per cent by the time the season starts, then expect Calado's reputation to continue growing as the 2012 season unfolds.

Glenn Freeman

ALSO

While Calado comes in with lots to learn, Max Chilton and Jolyon Palmer return for their third and second GP2 seasons respectively.

ATCH



Harvey: ready to win races

Lynn cruised to UK Formula Renault title

JACK HARVEY AND ALEX LYNN
British Formula 3

Hard to call between these two, with Harvey returning for a second season with Carlin and Lynn stepping up as reigning Formula Renault UK champion with Fortec Motorsports.

A protege of the Racing Steps Foundation (like Calado), Harvey made strong progress in the second half of 2011, but the early races were a shock to his system on his graduation from Formula BMW.

"We really thought he'd need a year to learn, but unfortunately Jack didn't think that," says Carlin chief engineer Mark Owen. "It's a big step from

BMW, but by the end of the season he was ready for a title challenge."

It was when the series moved to the continental circuits he knew from BMW that Harvey's results improved, and back in the UK he carried that on. And he's learned lessons to come back sharper in 2012.

"He's done a good job over the winter," says Owen. "He's lost a bit of weight and looks a lot fitter. That's a good step forward. He's a good team player and very determined."

Meanwhile, Lynn steps up to F3 with his former Renault engineer at Fortec, Russell Dixon.

"I always said his style would suit F3 more than the Renault," says Dixon. "He's got an almost

"You know Alex will pop up to the top when he needs to"
Fortec engineer Russell Dixon

Jenson Button-type ability to be smooth but still be absolutely on the limit.

"You watch videos of him and think he must be two seconds off the pace, but he's bang on it. He's got the ability to go right up to that limit and hardly over it."

Dixon also reckons Lynn is learning quickly how to get the best out of an F3 car on new tyres. "He's always keen to make the car right for the tyres," he says. "He finds big chunks of time on them. He's one of those kids you know will pop up to the top when they need to."

Marcus Simmons

ALSO

Will Buller is the subject of a tug of love between Fortec, his 2011 team, and Double R Racing – but could end up in GP3 with Carlin. Harry Tincknell has switched from Fortec to Carlin for season two in F3 and is recovering well from a hand injury; now he really needs to turn it on.

Swiss-based Philip Ellis moves up to the F3 Euro Series with GU Racing. He won last year's Formula Lista (for ex-FBMW cars) title.



Rowland went on late-2011 win spree

OLIVER ROWLAND

Formula Renault Eurocup with Fortec

Rowland stole some of Lynn's late-season glory in Formula Renault UK last year and went on to claim the McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award. He now makes a half-step to the category's Eurocup in 2012 – which also means selected UK-series outings.

Another Racing Steps Foundation driver, the Yorkshireman will have his work cut out this season. Since the demise of Formula BMW Europe

the cream of the continent's sub-F3 talent has converged in the Renault Eurocup. It'll be tough to beat Daniil Kvyat, Stoffel Vandoorne, Timmy Hansen, Oscar Tunjo and Paul-Loup Chatin, all of whom were strong runners last season.

Rowland remains with Fortec Motorsports, which is itching to crack the elusive Eurocup, and his 2011 engineer/team manager Russell Dixon says he should be a major contender.

"It's impossible not to like him," says Dixon, "but he's a street-fighter – more of a Senna than a Prost.

Talent-wise he is absolutely unquestionable, but getting used to qualifying was his problem. At the start of the year, he'd go out and try three different things on one lap. By the end of it he'd got crafty: he'd never bother about being quickest in testing – he'd just try something in each session, look at it on the data and then pick the best bits for qualifying."

Even if Rowland initially struggled with qualifying, racing was not a problem. "He's been doing it in karting so long," points out Dixon. "There was one weekend at Snetterton where he was over the top, but you can't take it out of him – he's a racer.

"The good thing for him is that the European circuits are easier to learn than the British ones – they have similar kerbs and nice radius corners. He tends to find the limit by going over it and bringing it back, and you can afford that on those tracks."

Marcus Simmons

ALSO

Alex Albon, a former World Karting champion, steps into car racing in the Formula Renault Eurocup as a Red Bull junior with Epic Racing. Jordan King moves from Formula Renault UK to the Eurocup. He stays with the Manor team in its new collaboration with Dutch squad MP Motorsport. Melville McKee, who was a surprise package of Formula Renault ALPS last season, makes a switch to the Eurocup with the Interwetten team.

LUCIANO BACHETA

Formula 2

This Essex racer returns to Jonathan Palmer's empire to contest a full Formula 2 campaign, having raced in T Cars and then Formula Palmer Audi during his early days.

After claiming runner-up in the 2010 Formula Renault Eurocup, Bacheta was made a McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award finalist and put in some strong showings in the tests. As he gathered momentum, he was even crowned British Asian Sports Personality of the Year last spring.

He then had a disappointing time in GP3 last year with RSC Mücke Motorsport, but a late-season switch to F2 provided him with

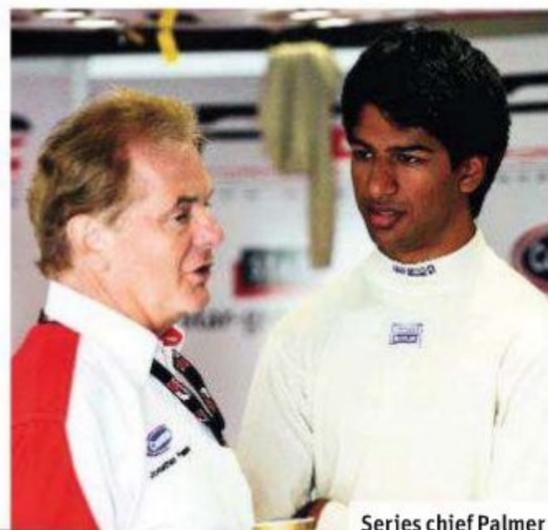
"Luciano will be a major contender for the F2 title"
F2 boss Jonathan Palmer

a best result of fifth in his two race weekends.

Bacheta has a level of maturity that could pay dividends this season, and few drivers have yet been confirmed for the championship, so the level of competition is an unknown.

It could just be that he becomes the second British champion – after Dean Stoneman – in the four-year history of the revived category and take his first title since the T Cars championship in 2006.

Kevin Turner



Series chief Palmer is a fan of Bacheta



Bacheta made his F2 debut at Red Bull Ring



Webb already has Lights mileage

OLIVER WEBB

Indy Lights with Sam Schmidt Motorsports

An unhappy foray into Formula Renault 3.5 in 2011 provided the first dip in an otherwise encouraging career curve for Oliver Webb, but the 20-year-old is looking to reverse that with a move across the Atlantic this year.

Webb has joined Sam Schmidt Motorsports to contest Indy Lights this year. The team has a formidable pedigree – it has won five of the past eight series titles, and is going into this season chasing a hat-trick after enjoying success with Jean-Karl Vernay in 2010 and Josef Newgarden in '11.

In between his World Series duties last year, Webb found time to make the trip across to North America to run three Lights events with former

Atlantic Series team Jensen MotorSport. His debut outing at Edmonton yielded a podium, and he also competed at Baltimore and Las Vegas. In other words, he has already picked up some experience on all three types of track that the series races on: road courses, street circuits and ovals.

Reigning Star Mazda champion Tristan Vautier will provide a solid benchmark and rival on the other side of the Schmidt garage, meaning that, on paper at least, Webb has everything he needs for a strong season and to pick up where he left off after a strong British F3 campaign. *Mark Glendenning*

ALSO

Formula Renault UK race winner Jack Hawksworth moves across to the US to race in Star Mazda with Team Pelfrey.



“Josh Hill will start with an experience advantage – he was seventh last season”

BUBBLING UNDER...

British national motorsport

It's no secret that Britain's top entry-level single-seater series – Formula Renault UK – is struggling for quantity at the moment, but it's rarely short on quality.

Richard Dutton's Fortec Motorsports squad has run the past two champions and this year will count Josh Hill, son of 1996 F1 world champion Damon, and reigning InterSteps (think Formula BMW UK) champion Jake Dennis among its line-up.

Hill has won races in Ginetta Junior, Formula Ford, Formula Renault and the Toyota Racing Series over the first four seasons of his career (which doesn't include a karting background). He will start with an experience advantage, having finished seventh with Manor Competition in the series last season, and was the only driver other than McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award winner Oliver Rowland

to win races in the Finals Series last November.

Team-mate Dennis arrives in FR UK with Racing Steps Foundation backing and world karting champion pedigree, so he should be one to watch as the season progresses.

The cheaper Formula Renault BARC series enjoyed a much bigger grid than its TOCA cousin in 2011 and last year's runner-up Josh Webster will definitely be worth watching as he steps up to FR UK with Mark Burdett Motorsport. He and Finals Series runner-up Dan Wells are both drivers who narrowly lost out to Rowland on securing RSF funding at the end of 2010.

There's also a clutch of promising newcomers set to come into FR BARC this season. Ginetta Junior champion Seb Morris, Formula Ford 1600 champion Chris Middlehurst, Formula Jedi runner-up James Fletcher and Formula Vee runner-up Michael Epps all enjoyed excellent seasons in 2011. *Ben Anderson*

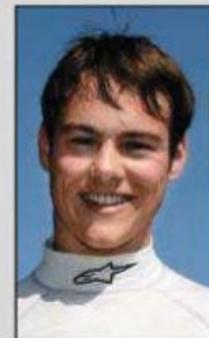
NOT FORGETTING...



Emil Bernstorff finished as runner-up in last year's ADAC Formel Masters after starting his single-seater career in British Formula Ford. Currently looking at F3 options for 2012.

GP2 race winner Sam Bird is still an outside bet to land a drive somewhere this year. He would be one of the title favourites in either GP2 or Formula Renault 3.5, and a switch to the World Series class seems more likely than a third season on the F1 support bill.

Ex-Formula Renault UK champion Tom Blomqvist is still trying to sort his plans for this season after bouncing back from a nasty F3 crash to perform well at November's McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award tests.



Northern Irishman Wayne Boyd picked up two wins in his debut US Formula 2000 season last year, although he is still yet to confirm his plans for 2012.



Formula Ford race winner and FRenault frontrunner Dan Cammish is another to have been blighted by a lack of funding, but has potential to be a contender in F2 or Renault UK again if he is able to commit to a full season in either.

Yorkshireman Jon Lancaster is another yet to finalise his 2012 racing plans, but is targeting a return to Auto GP. The former Formula Renault Eurocup runner-up took a dominant victory in only his second meeting in the category at Donington Park last year.

Adrian Quaife-Hobbs came on a great deal in his second year of GP3 with Manor last season and could have fought for the title with better reliability. Yet to confirm a 2012 programme.



Former McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award winner Stefan Wilson finished third in the Indy Lights rankings last year, although his plans for this season remain up in the air.

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NASCAR BUDWEISER SHOOTOUT DAYTONA (USA), FEBRUARY 18

Busch clashes before he wins Bud Shootout



Sparking Busch (18) won but Gordon (24) ended up on roof

THE ACTION WAS CLOSE and fraught throughout NASCAR's annual curtain raiser, the non-points Budweiser Shootout, at Daytona last weekend.

Three sizeable accidents, as the newly fuel-injected cars ran flat-out and three-wide virtually from start to finish, meant that the result was always going to be determined by what happened at the final restart.

Reigning Cup champion Tony Stewart led in his Stewart Haas Chevrolet, but Kyle Busch was perfectly placed to outdrag his former team-mate at the finish. A photograph was required to separate the top two cars and capped a sensational race for the Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota driver.

His Camry sustained

damage to its front splitter after he was tipped into a half-spin that showered the chasing pack with sparks as his car straddled the banking and the apron. A stunning save kept him out of harm's way.

In the closing miles of the race he produced an equally amazing piece of car control to prevent a crash. This also gave him the track position from which to attack Stewart at the restart.

"It was an awesome feeling to see pack racing back at Daytona," said Busch. "It was great to see all the pushing and bumping and banging, and people pushing three-deep or five-deep and the sidewaysness down the straight... It was pretty fun and an awesome way to start the season."

Runner-up Stewart reckons the positioning of the finish line means that running second on the final restart of this weekend's 500 will be advantageous, but feels it is still possible to win from the front: "I wouldn't rule it out," he said. "You just have to plan ahead for it."

Busch's late-race save led to a much bigger accident for the cars following him, in particular Jeff Gordon, whose Hendrick Motorsports Chevy was wrecked as he covered most of the back straight sliding on the driver's door before finishing upside down after a few low-speed rolls. The next-worst-damaged car in the incident was that of team-mate Jimmie Johnson.

Australian Marcos Ambrose (Richard Petty

Motorsports Ford) and Brad Keselowski (Penske Dodge) somehow picked their way through the wreckage and were rewarded with third and fourth place respectively. Just 13 of the 25 starters finished the race, with Juan Pablo Montoya claiming 10th in his Ganassi Chevy, the last of those on the lead lap.

Martin Truex Jr, who drew pole, failed to finish. ● Connell Sanders Jr

RESULTS

1 Kyle Busch (Toyota Camry), 82 laps in 1h39m07s; 2 Tony Stewart (Chevrolet Impala), +0.013s; 3 Marcos Ambrose (Ford Fusion); 4 Brad Keselowski (Dodge Charger); 5 Denny Hamlin (Toyota); 6 Greg Biffle (Ford); 7 Ryan Newman (Chevy); 8 Clint Bowyer (Toyota); 9 Carl Edwards (Ford); 10 Juan Pablo Montoya (Chevy).

IN BRIEF



Murphy won twice

NZ V8 SUPERTOURERS

Ex-Bathurst 1000 winner Greg Murphy won the first two races of the newly-established series at Hampton Downs in his Holden. Ant Pedersen took race three ahead of fellow Ford man John McIntyre.

ARCA

Bobby Gerhart made it three straight Daytona wins in his Chevy, as long-time leader Brandon McReynolds ran out of fuel coming out of the last corner.

- 1 **Sebastian Vettel** <> 31,442
- 2 **Mark Webber** <> 21,777
- 3 **Jenson Button** <> 19,745
- 4 **Lewis Hamilton** <> 19,305
- 5 **Fernando Alonso** <> 18,663

Ranking the world's best drivers

WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEK

New Zealand V8 SuperTourers is the only series to offer points this week, and Greg Murphy boosts his Aussie V8 foundations to vault 77 places to 251. Daytona 500 qualifying will give poleman Carl Edwards (7) a boost if he can match his runner-up spot from 2011.

To see the full list, visit castroldriverrankings.com

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Mr D Hallows, Bath

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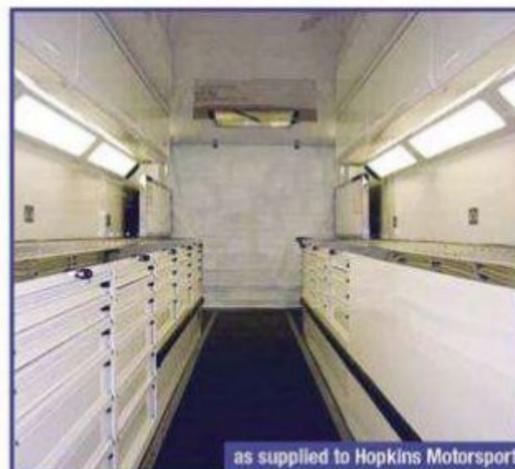


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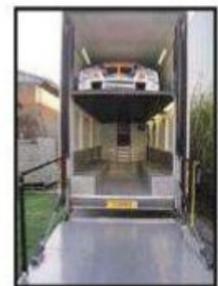
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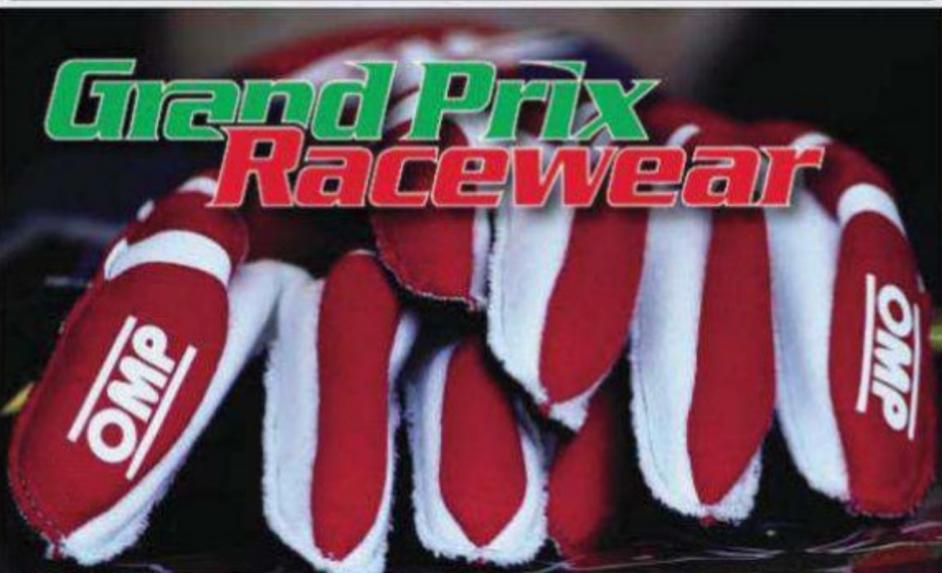
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CATERHAM FI TEAM

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COMPOSITES & MECHANICAL DESIGNERS CF1/CMD/067/12

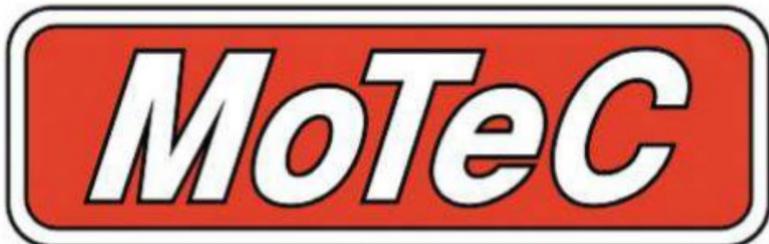
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If you wish to be considered for any of these posts, please email hr@caterhamfi.com quoting the specific reference number, attaching an up to date CV and salary expectations.

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Svendsen-Cook won three times in British F3

Svendsen-Cook targets GTs

British F3 race winner joins Formula Ford champions in looking to sportscars

» BRITISH FORMULA 3 RACE winner Rupert Svendsen-Cook and former British Formula Ford champion Callum MacLeod are both targeting a seat in the British GT Championship after turning their backs on single-seaters for sportscars.

Svendsen-Cook, 21, tested for Porsche Carrera Cup GB squad Celtic Speed at Silverstone at the end of last year and has received offers to race in British GT and the Blancpain Endurance Series in 2012.

"Caterham F1 rang me a few weeks ago and said they were interested with everything I'd done in F3 over the past two years," he said. "But they want millions just to be somewhere on the reserve side, and millions are impossible."

Svendsen-Cook has had four fully-funded seasons in Formula BMW Europe and British F3 between 2008 and '11 thanks to a chance meeting at a car dealership between his father and a wealthy investor.

He won two races and finished fifth in British F3 last year with top team Carlin, but failure to finish inside the top three in the points meant he lost his backing.

"I've managed to raise a bit of cash and want to move into sportscars," he added. "My problem is I've not got sportscar experience. No disrespect to people who've won races in sportscars, but they don't realise the level it takes to win races and take poles in F3.

"I've got to do a championship that long-term could lead to something that can secure my future. I'm not going to give up – all I want to do is be a paid racing driver."

MacLeod, 24, won the British Formula Ford title in 2007 and finished runner-up in European F3 Open in '10, but only completed a part season in the GP3 Series with Carlin in '11.

He told AUTOSPORT that single-seater budgets had become "unbelievably crazy", so he has decided to turn his attention to British GT.

"To be honest, I'm looking for anything that will establish me as a good sportscar driver," he said. "British GT is the most realistic option and I've had

some contact with teams.

"When you look at the likes of Peugeot, Audi and Porsche in recent years, there's a much better chance of becoming a professional driver in sportscars than in single-seaters.

"There's still a financial factor [to British GT], but nowhere near the figures you're talking about in single-seaters. A British GT budget is achievable by sponsorship, whereas you're never going to stumble across a million pounds to do Renault World Series."

Reigning British Formula Ford champion Scott Malvern said last month that he was also looking to move into British GT in 2012, after struggling to raise the budget to graduate to Formula 2.

MacLeod only made eight starts in GP3



AUTOSPORT SAYS...

BEN ANDERSON
NATIONAL EDITOR

ben.anderson@haymarket.com



IT'S A SAD SIGN OF THE TIMES

that drivers as decent as Rupert Svendsen-Cook, Callum MacLeod and Scott Malvern feel forced to turn their backs on single-seaters so early in their fledgling careers.

However, it's probably fair to say that switching focus to sportscars now is a sensible move for three racers who were unlikely to find paid work in Formula 1 – even if they could have found the money to progress further up the ladder than they have thus far.

Svendsen-Cook matured greatly during his two years with Carlin in British Formula 3, and was perhaps unlucky not to gain the top-three finish in the title race last season that might have earned him the chance to progress into Formula Renault 3.5 or GP2.

Meanwhile, MacLeod has been struggling to finance his racing properly since beating Porsche Supercup ace Nick Tandy to the 2007 British Formula Ford crown. He has no doubt been inspired by his former rival's rebirth under the Porsche umbrella after Tandy's F3 dalliance fizzled out in '09.

Scott Malvern utterly dominated fairly timid Formula Ford opposition last year, but was always going to struggle to fund a move into even the budget-conscious Formula 2 paddock, after failing to secure the £100,000 prize on offer to the winner of the 2011 McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award.

But single-seater racing's loss will most definitely be sportscar competition's gain if all three drivers land the British GT drives they are now targeting for 2012. Their inclusion on the grid would be another boon for a category that is currently riding the crest of a wave.

Extra contact details

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CONTENTS

p86 EVENT FOCUS
POMEROY TROPHY



Porsche Carrera Cup

Motorbase quits Carrera Cup

Race-winning squad calls time on single-make Porsche series

Motorbase has won 26 races in Carrera Cup

FRONTRUNNING Porsche Carrera Cup squad Motorbase Performance has quit the series.

Motorbase first joined the Carrera Cup when the Kent-based squad first formed in 2004. Although it has never won the drivers' title, Motorbase took the 2010 teams'

championship and has 26 Carrera Cup victories to its credit.

Last year, the team ran five cars and won three of the last four races, with Nick Tandy driving, but it has now decided to withdraw.

Team boss David Bartrum, who also runs Fords in British Touring Cars, said: "I love the Carrera Cup, but

we were looking for a new challenge for 2012. The Carrera Cup has been a big part of our team and Porsche will always be part of our future."

Bartrum confirmed that Motorbase still planned to contest a GT-based series this year, and did not rule out a return to the Carrera Cup in future.

"This isn't an ending, it's a

sabbatical," he added. "One day if the right situation is there, we'll be back."

"We've been really busy behind the scenes for the past few months and have a number of exciting plans in the pipeline for this year, and that's where our focus will be. We're not quite in a position to make any announcements at this moment, but we're close."

Renault Clio Cup

Dixon to Vittoria for Clio title tilt

RENAULT CLIO CUP FRONTRUNNER

James Dixon will switch from Total Control Racing to Scuderia Vittoria for a return to the category in 2012.

Dixon, 21, has won races and finished inside the top six in the Clio Cup for the past two seasons with TCR, since switching to tin-tops from Formula Renault at the end of 2009. He moves to SV thanks in part to money from the One Call insurance company that is backing the squad's three ex-Scottish Mini racers.

SV team boss Danny Buxton told AUTOSPORT that adding Dixon to the team's line-up represented a "big coup" for the team.

"He should have won it last year

really and was widely regarded as the quickest driver," Buxton said. "He's the one we wanted and we've worked hard to make it happen."

"With a bit of coaching and help from us he'll be a championship favourite - he's not the last piece in the jigsaw but he's definitely one of the biggest."



Dixon was fourth in '11 title race with TCR

Radical UK Cup

Radical race for Superbike ace

TRIPLE BRITISH SUPERBIKE

champion John Reynolds will contest a car race for the first time in more than 10 years when he makes his debut in the Radical UK Cup this season.

Retired bike racer Reynolds, 47, who won the BSB title in 1992, 2001 and 2004, will contest the Radical season opener at Snetterton on March 10 in a works-run SR3.

The deal is part of a tie-up that will mean Reynolds giving passenger rides in a Radical SR3 at BSB meetings. Reynolds, who hasn't raced a car since a celebrity appearance in the 2000 Ford Fiesta Challenge, is a former Suzuki rider, while Radical bases its in-house



BSB ace Reynolds sampled SR3 at Brands Hatch

engines on Suzuki bike powerplants.

Reynolds, who drove his SR3 for the first time at last week's MSVR media day at Brands Hatch, said: "The car is absolutely brilliant - it scared me half to death but I loved it! I know I've got a mountain to climb but I'm excited."

When asked whether he is likely to do further races in the Radical, Reynolds added: "We'll see how it goes at Snetterton."

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Formula Renault BARC

Ginetta champ Morris closes in on single-seater move after Fortec run

REIGNING GINETTA JUNIOR

champion Seb Morris is closing in on a deal to move into single-seaters this season in Formula Renault BARC.

The Welsh teenager, who won 11 races and the Ginetta Junior title with Hillspeed last season, had a taste of FR BARC at a Thruxton test last week.

He drove for top junior single-seater squad Fortec, which ran Josh Webster to second in last year's championship.

Fortec team manager Steve Lynch said: "It was his first time out with us and he got on very well. A lot of people

Morris drove for Fortec at Thruxton



want him in their car and he would be a great addition to the team if we could tie up a deal."

The squad has already signed former Chinese touring cars and Asian Formula Renault racer Martin Cao for 2012, and was due to run karter Laura Tillett in a test at Brands Hatch this week.

Meanwhile, rival squad MTECH Lite has signed Sean Walkinshaw for this season and is hoping to run James Thorpe alongside him. MTECH ran Thorp to third in the series in 2011 and has now confirmed Walkinshaw's switch to the team, after a difficult rookie season with Hillspeed last year.

MTECH general manager Mike Topp said: "He tested for us at Snetterton at the end of last year, on old tyres and in cold conditions, and put in a time faster than he'd been all season. He should be regularly in the top 10 - he's got more potential than he showed last year."

British GT

Ecosse to race BMW in British GT

LEGENDARY SCOTTISH SQUAD Ecurie Ecosse will make a full-time return to sportscar racing in 2012 by contesting British GT and the Blancpain Endurance Series with a BMW Z4 GT3.

Former British GT champion squad Barwell Motorsport recently acquired the ex-Marc VDS Racing BMW Z4 that won the last two rounds of the BES last season (see AUTOSPORT, January 26).

The team will fettle the car for the squad of Ecurie Ecosse drivers that it ran in last year's Spa 24 Hours in an Aston Martin DBRS9.

Former British GT race winner Oliver Bryant and Alasdair McCaig

will share the Z4 in British GT, while Andrew Smith and Joe Twyman will fill two of three seats in its Pro-Am Blancpain campaign.

Ecurie Ecosse boss Hugh McCaig said: "I believe with the BMW Z4 and the team at Barwell we have the right combination for success. Ultimately we want to be back at Le Mans, and this is a fantastic step in the right direction."



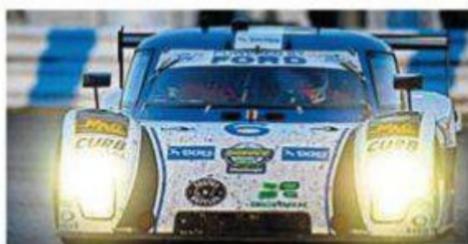
Z4 will carry patriotic livery

Daytona Challenge

No Daytona prize for British GT/F3

BRITISH GT AND F3 DRIVERS WILL not be eligible to win a prize drive in the 2013 Daytona 24 Hours, after a switch of fuel supplier for this season.

Sunoco, which has awarded a free drive in the Daytona 24 Hours to the



Nasr shone during Daytona 24 Hours prize drive

top performing driver from across its series over the past three seasons, will be replaced by WP Motorsport as supplier to British GT and F3 in 2012.

This means that only drivers from Britcar and SPEED Euro Series will be eligible to claim the prize in 2012.

Sunoco managing director Anders Hildebrand said the move was a blow coming so soon after reigning British F3 champion and 2011 Sunoco Challenge winner Felipe Nasr's breakthrough podium at this year's Daytona 24 Hours.

Hildebrand added: "It's hugely disappointing, but business is business."

MARCUS PYE

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club motor racing



Goodwin 'mercilessly' amputated Chevron B6

Tony Goodwin's newly published autobiography is the antithesis of the great Mark Donohue's *The Unfair Advantage*, his favourite racing book. Indeed, *Doctor on the Grid* could have been titled *The Unfair Disadvantage*, for he embarked on his motor sporting adventures without obvious driving talent, engineering expertise or money. The "journey" (as 'reality' TV non-entities irritatingly package three months of transient fame) would engross him for six decades.

How unwilling medical student Goodwin (father of McLaren's chief development driver Chris) got through the 750 Motor Club's 1172 Formula to become Monoposto champion in 1960 is a remarkable tale in itself. But fortitude and persistence sustained him through three Macau GPs and 1000cc Formula 3 with elderly and outmoded equipment, lashed together between races.

Some inept sportscars followed, but Tony found his forte racing the Chevrons and Lolas I adored reading about in AUTOSPORT as a kid. Myriad accounts - including buying Dr Peter Taggart's B6 for £1300 and mercilessly amputating its roof for more start money at the Nurburgring 1000Km - are illuminating. Happily, the renamed 'RedeX RPA Special' [CH-DBE-2, Michael Schryver's glorious coupe

these days] recovered. Tony's pocket never did.

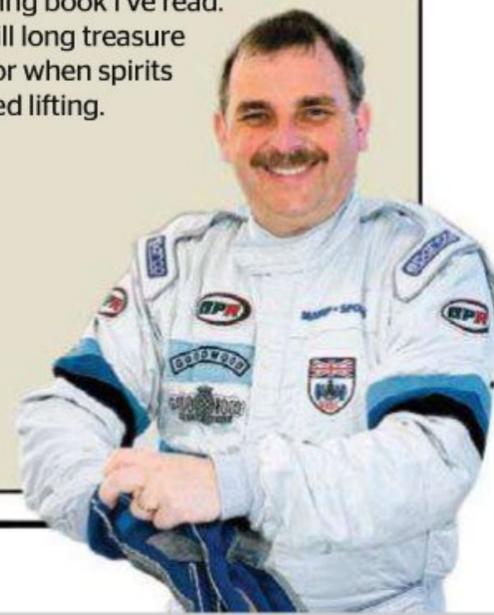
As a manual for how not to go motor racing this is priceless. But as an elegantly written social history of the last years when it was just about possible - if you were prepared to rough it and had accumulated a support network of loyal insomniac volunteers - to compete all over the world as a penniless privateer, Goodwin's work is a masterpiece.

Much as I would have adored to have 'hung out' with the circus in this era of beautiful cars and dangerous circuits (I'm not quite old enough have raced in it, alas), I couldn't have gone more than a day without a shower... But this story magically took me back to the '60s and '70s to share the tragedies, and occasional minor triumphs, of one of the unsung weekend warriors.

Thankfully Tony Goodwin kept diaries and notes of how little he spent scraping by through 463 races in 21 countries. Ronnie Peterson was my boyhood hero, but the good doctor's tale of life at the poor end of the pitlane makes more compelling reading than superstar biogs. Dodgy spellings and lack of Race Log appendix aside, his is the best amateur-racing book I've read.

I will long treasure it for when spirits need lifting.

“ Tony Goodwin kept diaries of how little he spent scraping through 463 races in 21 countries ”



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IN BRIEF



Covey rolled Clio

SCOTTISH MINI ACE VIC COVEY JR crashed his Scuderia Vittoria Renault Clio heavily during last week's Thruxton BARC test. The Scot lost control on the exit of Allard at 105mph and rolled the car onto its roof.

UP-AND-COMING BRITISH RALLY ace Nick Cristofaro had his first taste of single-seaters at Donington Park last week, when he tested one of SWB Motorsport's Formula Renault BARC cars. The 18-year-old Welshman formerly raced for the Zip Young Guns kart team before moving into rallying.

WILLIAM PALMER, SON OF CIRCUIT boss Jonathan, will return to Ginetta Juniors for a full season in 2012. The 15-year-old brother of GP2 racer Jolyon, who contested a part-season in 2011 with Hillspeed, will drive for HHC Motorsport.

BRAZILIAN RACER THIAGO CALVET will return to the Ginetta G40 Challenge for a second season in 2012. Calvet, 25, who finished 2011 with three podiums from the final four rounds, will again race with Optimum Motorsport.

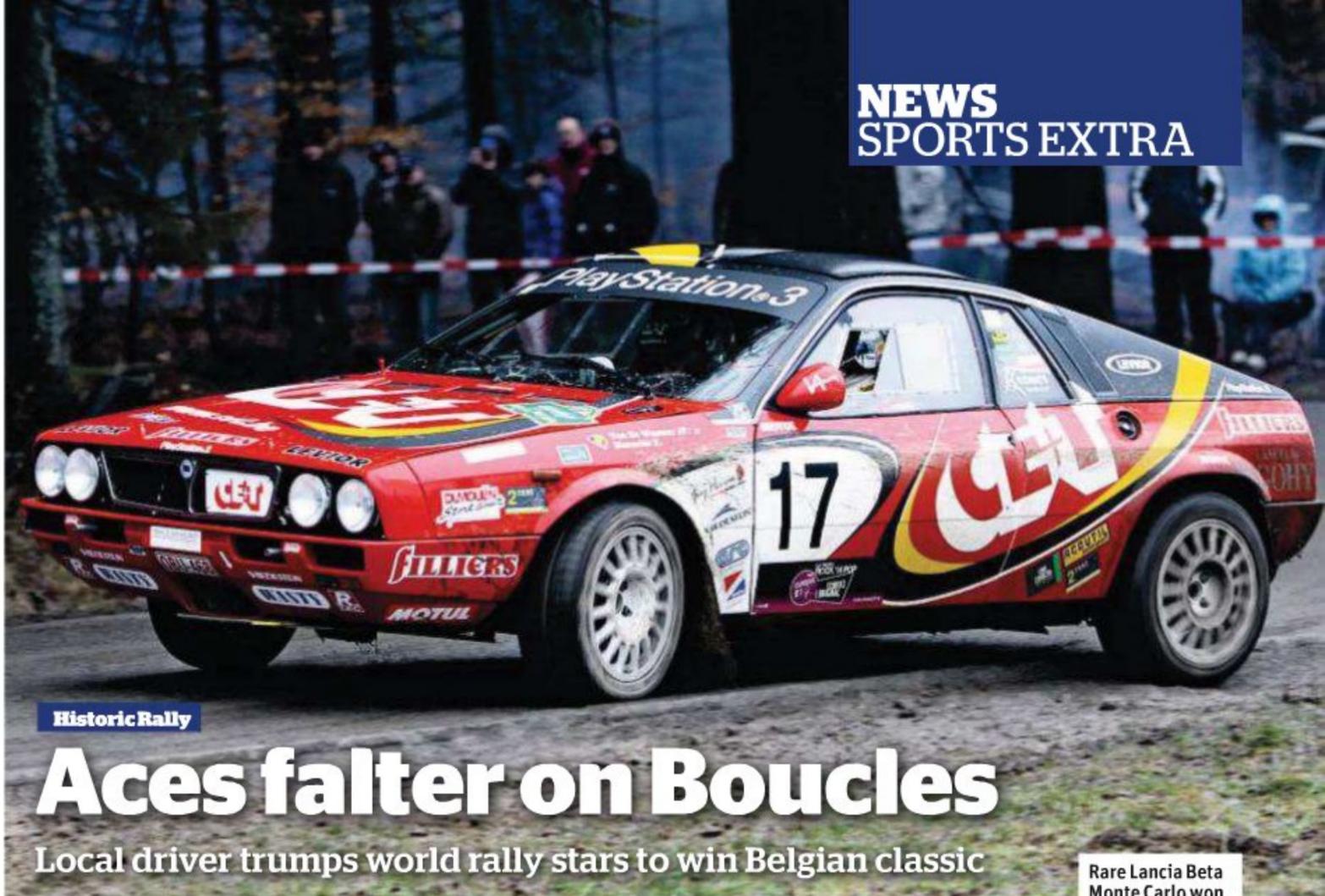
FORMER BRITISH TOURING CAR privateer Simon Blanckley will return to the GT Cup for a full season in 2012. The Sibsport team owner/driver will race the Porsche 997 GT3 he took to third in a one-off race at Brands Hatch last year.

GT SQUAD MOTORGROUND IS planning to enter two Ginetta G50s in GT4 in 2012. Team boss Henry Taylor, who was a frontrunner in Renault Clios in 2000 and did European GT4 last year, has recruited Tim Bullard to manage the squad, which also hopes to enter the Spa, Nurburgring and Dubai 24-hour races.

FORMER SUPERLEAGUE FORMULA race winner Duncan Tappy had a run out in the new Caterham SP/300.R sportscar at Donington Park, but found his session prematurely ended when the rear end of the car went up in flames.



Tappy turns fireman



Historic Rally

Aces falter on Boucles

Local driver trumps world rally stars to win Belgian classic

Rare Lancia Beta Monte Carlo won

LOCAL HERO JEAN-PIERRE VAN DE Wauwer scored an emotional victory on last Saturday's Boucles de Spa historic rally in Belgium, as star names including Thierry Neuville, Didier Auriol and Francois Duval failed to finish.

Van de Wauwer's rare Lancia Beta Monte Carlo finally gave its owner, who has finished second five times before, a maiden win on the Ardennes rally.

"This is the happiest day of my life," said van de Wauwer at the finish.

"I certainly benefited from retirements, but I was never far away."

He was battling with Citroen WRC star Neuville on the final leg of stages when the youngster's Citroen Visa Mille Pistes blew its engine, while Auriol and Duval both retired their Escorts.

Last year's winner Stefaan Stouf shunted his Escort, while alternator problems, which led to a major misfire, hobbled the Mazda RX7 of former British Rally champion Gwyndaf Evans.

Bjorn Waldegaard battled home seventh in a Ferrari 308GTB, while Le Mans 24 Hours winner Andre Lotterer was one place behind on his rallying debut in a Porsche 911.

With 320 cars starting the event, the Boucles de Spa was the biggest historic rally of the season and thousands of spectators packed into the stages.

So many fans lined the first test of the day that it was cancelled on grounds of safety.

Formula Ford 1600

Cunningham prize for FF1600



Cunningham will be honoured by FF1600

ORGANISERS OF THE NEW FF1600 SuperSeries will award a trophy to the best performing driver of 2012 in recognition of former category ace Neil Cunningham.

Series boss James Beckett has decided to inaugurate the trophy in honour of his Kiwi friend, who was recently diagnosed with Motor Neurone disease.

Although he enjoyed success in sports and GT racing, Cunningham's roots were in Formula Ford and his last race came at the wheel of one at Donington Park last September.

He said: "I am really pleased to be

associated with the SuperSeries and for the 'driver of the year' award to carry my name.

"Formula Ford 1600 is the world's best single-seater category and teaches you everything you need to know as a driver. I always had so much fun in Formula Ford."

Beckett added: "Neil is a legend. Every time he stepped into FF1600 you expected something special.

"Throughout his career he never gave up; he is a true sportsman. To reward the SuperSeries driver of the year with the Cunningham Cup seems wholly appropriate."

Historic F2

Brashaw to F2 in ex-BSR March

REIGNING CLASSIC FORMULA 3 F3 champion Jamie Brashaw plans to step up to Historic Formula 2 and the Derek Bell Trophy this season in an ex-Bob Salisbury Racing March 782.

Brashaw, who won four races and pipped Benn Simms to last year's Classic F3 crown in a March 793, had his first run in the recently acquired 782 at Donington Park last week.

The car, which was raced by Bernard de Dryver and Gianfranco Brancatelli in period, was previously owned by Historic F1 frontrunner Abba Kogan and has recently been re-fitted with a BMW engine, making it eligible for Historic F2.

Brashaw said: "I have enjoyed the F3 and will still race it, along with my FF1600, but I wanted a new challenge and F2 races at new circuits for me too."



Brashaw tested F2 March



A DIAMOND YEAR FOR A VINTAGE EVENT

Each season the Pomeroy Trophy brings an eclectic band of touring cars to Silverstone. *MARCUS PYE* celebrates the 60th birthday of one of British motorsport's curiosities

What constitutes the 'best' touring car is a subjective question. Without parameters, it's certainly a grand topic for lively discussion among friends at a motor club 'noggin and natter'.

Some would crow stately 4½-litre Bentley, lithe Vauxhall 30/98 or Bugatti 57S aerodyne without hesitation. Hardy types could contend that Archie Frazer Nash's inhospitable early bolides or svelte post-war offerings merit consideration. Jokers might suggest Ginetta G4. Or, to cock a snook at the cognoscenti, Ford Cortina Mk3. "Vista orange if possible!"

They and representatives of 14 other marques have all won the Vintage Sports-Car Club's Pomeroy Trophy title. To claim the coveted accolade,

all have satisfied a curious set of performance criteria (some scientifically based) designed to determine the tourer that stands above the rabble as dusk falls on a chilly spring day on a former airfield in Northamptonshire.

'Pom' success has not sold any more cars as far as I am aware, but it's great fun and long-lived. This Saturday at Silverstone, it mirrors HM Queen Elizabeth's reign in celebrating its diamond jubilee. To mark the occasion, it will be open to the public rather than club members exclusively.

In 1946, five years after pioneering automotive engineer and former Vauxhall Motors chief Laurence Pomeroy Sr died, a marvellous Rex Hays model of the company's 1914

Big Bentley would be popular choice in pub discussion



Vauxhall 30/98's only win came in first 'Pom'



4½-litre GP car (which, like its contemporary Prince Henry tourer, Pomeroy had designed) was presented to the VSCC as a memorial trophy by Laurence Pomeroy Jr and TW Badgery.

Having established that a competition for touring cars would be an appropriate tribute, future club president Harry Bowler devised in 1949 the ground rules of a multi-faceted trial to measure the efficiency of cars using complicated mathematical formulas specified in Pomeroy Jr's hallowed reference book *The Grand Prix Car, 1906-1939*.

As a result, acceleration, braking and steering, and fuel-consumption tests would form the basis of the Pomeroy Trophy rules. The winner would hold the trophy for a year, and the original steering wheel from the GP Vauxhall. Post-war fuel rationing delayed the inaugural event until 1952, since when it has always been staged at Silverstone. Only four times has it been cancelled, for the Suez oil crisis, snow and other *force majeure*.

Entry is now open to road-legal cars of any age, with a minimum capacity of 1949cc naturally aspirated, or 1495cc with forced induction and for Edwardian, Vintage and Post-Vintage Thoroughbred machines. All must be driven to the event.

Lengths and durations of the test elements have been shortened subsequently, but the format remains unchanged. The timed 'wobble-wobble' slalom through cones, braking, standing start and flying acceleration sections are now over a quarter-kilometre (rather than a quarter-mile), while the High-Speed Trial – a mixed stampede run to handicap targets on the Silverstone National Circuit – has been cut from an hour to 40 minutes.

“‘Pom’ success has not sold any cars as far as I am aware, but it is great fun and long-lived”

VSCC event has a relaxed feel

To torpedo thinly veiled rear-engined sports-racing cars, a rule requiring all entries to stow two 60cm x 40cm x 20cm suitcases (as specified by the FIA for endurance racing in the 1960s) was introduced in the '90s. Otherwise the basic tenets remain as they were when Peter Binns won the first 'Pom', fittingly in a Vauxhall 30/98. It remains the marque's only victory.

Now 95, Binns recalls the event vividly. "Back then competitors had to drive to Cheltenham afterwards, then come back to Silverstone where they dipped your tank to see how much fuel you had used. Now it's got cissy... I won it the second year as well, in an OM,



Metro 6R4 tackles the Pom's 'wobble-wobble'



Diffey won the Pomeroy in 'salubrious' BMW 2002



Blakeney-Edwards has only lost once in five years

which I still have, but there was a 'mistake'. Cars had to be two litres to enter then, and the OM was 1991cc so I declared it at 2003cc. When they found out they docked me half a mark, which cost me the win."

Of the quartet of entrants who have won it four times – Roesch Talbot guru Anthony Blight, Frazer Nash BMW 328 handler Richard Wills, James Diffey, and FN chain-ganger Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (beaten once in the past five years, by Dudley Sterry in his HRS in 2010) – Diffey's record is typically unconventional.

Gifted racer James – who died of cancer in 2007, aged 40 – and his brother Simon loved being different. Equally adept at hustling Brescia Bugatti, vintage Nash or Porsche 904/6, James became the 'scourge' of the VSCC by winning 'the Pom' in that two-litre Cortina in 1992, and wore the badge with pride. Later successes came in a more salubrious BMW 2002.

From 'Gentleman' Jack Sears, a double victor in his 1914 Sunbeam TT, to Neil Corner in a Ferrari 250 GTO, the roll of honour lists Lancia Lambda (JG Vessey), Alfa Romeo 8C (Sir Ralph Millais) and Monza (Rodney Felton), numerous of Ettore Bugatti's brainchildren, Lagonda, Alvis and Aston Martin DB3S. On a humbler note, racing photographer Robin Rew's Reliant Sabre Six, MGB and Triumph TR2 got there, before a raft of spindly Frazer Nashes moved to the fore.

Isn't it about time a Vauxhall won the 'Pom' again, particularly in this landmark year? Nothing too obvious, so a Wyvern perhaps? Black, if possible... ☹

PRE-WAR PRESERVER
THE VINTAGE SPORTS-CAR CLUB

FOUNDED IN 1934, THE VINTAGE Sports-Car Club is dedicated to the use and enjoyment of cars made before 1930. With a membership of around 7500, its tentacles embrace the world with that special spirit of camaraderie found in any field in which folks share a specialised interest.

The VSCC is promoting race meetings at Silverstone (April 21), Cadwell Park (June 9), Mallory Park (June 24), Pembrey (July 15) and Snetterton (September 30) this season. Its speed-event calendar is also busy, with hillclimbs at Wiscombe Park (May 13), Harewood (June 2), Shelsley Walsh (July 1), Prescott (August 4-5) and Loton Park (September 15-16), plus sprints at Curborough (May 6) and Pembrey (July 14). Its other public showcases are the Brooklands Double Twelve Motorsport Festival (June 16-17) and, for 2012, the Pomeroy Trophy.

The club's trials and rallies are enormously popular and its network of events embraces driving tests plus non-competitive road runs and longer tours. There are more than 600 pub gatherings per annum. While families have been hooked into the VSCC lifestyle for generations, you do not need a vintage car to become a member. Visit www.vsccl.co.uk for full details

YOUR SAY

What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



Hey, leave those kids alone

Why is it that Helmut Marko and Franz Tost feel the need to tell the media (what seems like every week) that Jaime Alguersuari and Sebastien Buemi were not good enough? Are they trying to destroy these two young lads?

They go on about the fact that Red Bull gave them their chance at F1 – true, and Alguersuari has acknowledged this many times and he is clearly very grateful. The powers that be at Red Bull talk about Alguersuari more now than when he drove for them!

Phil Beckett, Lancaster

EDITORIAL CONTACT mail@autosport.com

The powers that be appear determined the Bahrain GP will be taking place no matter what.

Irrespective of whatever the most recent reports say, nobody knows what the situation will be come the race weekend.

The FIA and FOM owe it to spectators, teams, drivers, track workers and yes, the highly-likely demonstrators, to ensure they are all given the space and safety to do whatever they are there for without fear.

Nobody should pretend everything is okay in Bahrain, but if the race

has to happen then F1 must do all it can to respect and act responsibly towards all sides.

David Herron
Washington, Tyne & Wear

I commend Sky TV for committing itself to the future of F1 TV coverage, and taking it into what is, I hope, a new dawn of exciting viewing for all us F1 enthusiasts.

F1 TV coverage doesn't come cheap, we all know that. But I am sure Sky will make it worthwhile for all us punters!

Rob Lucas
Blisworth, Northants

I found Mark Dunlop's letter (February 16) very negative with regard to the sport.

I know the WRC is having problems, but Formula 1 is now entering one of its most interesting seasons, with six world champions on the grid.

He states "GTs are a mess". Take the Blancpain Endurance Series and our very own British GT Championship – these are tremendous series.

I suggest Mr Dunlop gets out and visits some of the circuits across the UK.

Robert Blake
Banstead, Surrey

Has motorsport now reached its lowest level? After 50 odd years of watching, reading and being involved in the sport, I cannot really see the point of what's going on.

What is the point of the WRC? Nowadays it's pathetic.

And as for F1's Meccano-looking cars, what a joke. Little wings more important than racing – even the IndyCars look better.

I think the racing fans deserve better.
Simon Collier
Liskeard, Cornwall

AUTOSPORT.COM

TOP FIVE ON OUR WEBSITE

1. FIRST PICTURE OF NEW MERCEDES
2. MERCEDES SHAKES DOWN NEW W03
3. PETROV REPLACES TRULLI AT CATERHAM
4. TRULLI NOT SURPRISED BY CATERHAM EXIT
5. LOTUS 'WILL BRING BEST OUT OF RAIKKONEN'

AUTOSPORT.COM PLUS

TOP STORY ONLINE

PROS AND CONS OF PULLROD DESIGN

To read this exclusive feature and many others like it, log on to autosport.com/plus and choose which package you'd like. A month will cost £5.50, a year £46. Includes access to Forix – the ultimate stats website.

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

● The portrait on page 32 of the February 16 issue is of Paul Zuccarelli, not Georges Boillot as captioned.

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

NOREV 1:18 SEBASTIEN LOEB CITROEN C4 WRC

£52.99 (autosport.com/shop)

French diecast builder Norev has released two 1:18-scale replicas of world rally title-winning Citroen C4 WRCs, both driven by superstar Sebastien Loeb. The models, from Rally GB 2009 (pictured) and Rallye de France 2010, feature superb detail, given their sensible price, with opening doors and bonnet.

Eight-time champion Loeb has signed a limited run of 75 of each car, priced at £94.99.



HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YOUTUBE: TRULLI TAKES POLE AT MONACO IN 2004



SEARCH FOR: F1 Monaco 2004 Qualifying - Jarno Trulli pole Lap (1:57)
As veteran Jarno Trulli bows out of Formula 1, leaving no Italians on the grid for the first time in donkey's years, here's a quick reminder of why, on his day, he was a match for anyone.

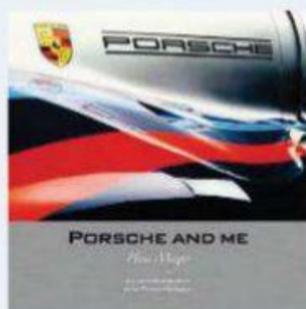


LEGO TECHNIC UNIMOG

£154.99
legoshop.com

The Mercedes Unimog U400 must rank as Lego's boldest Technic kit to date, thanks to an articulated crane and working grabber/winch among its 2048 parts. And it can all be rebuilt as a snow plough.

Aimed at 11-16-year old Lego diehards, it comes with 'working' engine, gearbox and steering, too.



HANS MEZGER BIOGRAPHY

£45 (978 1 906712 08 2)
pmmbooks.com

Long-serving and loyal Porsche engineer Hans Mezger joined the firm in 1956 and stayed for 35 years. In that time he was crucial in its most successful projects, including the 917 and the turbocharged F1 engine.

This is his fascinating personal account of a life dedicated to the cause.



ROSSI BEANIE HAT

£26.99
autosport.com/shop

Part of the official Valentino Rossi merchandise range, this is the beanie design sported by the bike-racing king during his appearance in last year's Monza Rally.

The acrylic knit hat features the Monster logo as well as the Italian's trademark #46 and Sun and Moon logos.

WHAT'S ON...

Your guide to the best events taking place in the UK and around the world this week – plus TV and online



DAYTONA 500

NASCAR Sprint Cup

Rd 1/36

Daytona, Florida, USA

February 26

nascar.com

Last year's championship runner-up Carl Edwards will share the front row with Roush Ford team-mate Greg Biffle, while the Gatorade Duel heat races on Thursday determine the rest of the order.

INTERCONTINENTAL RALLY CHALLENGE

Rd 1/13

Rally Azores

February 23-25

ircseries.com

NASCAR NATIONWIDE SERIES

Rd 1/33

Daytona, Florida, USA

February 25

nascar.com

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

Rd 1/22

Daytona, Florida, USA

February 24

nascar.com

Truck Series kicks off at Daytona on Friday night



ACCESS ALL AREAS

Our guide on how to keep the motorsport flame burning through the cold winter months

RACE RETRO SHOW

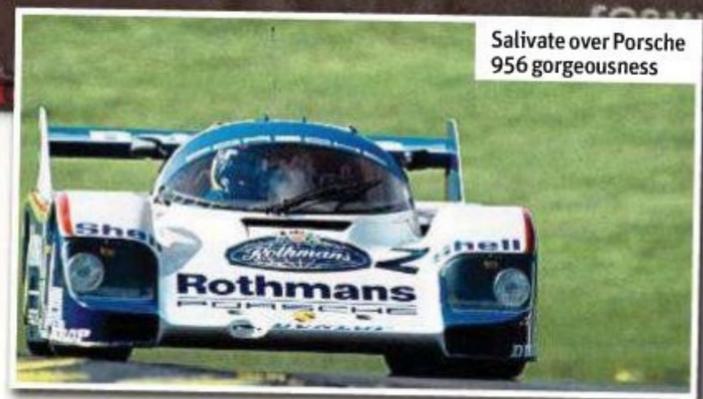
This weekend's Race Retro International Historic Motorsport Show will be a feast for fans with an appetite for the old and the gold.

The annual jamboree at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire mixes dozens of indoor displays and exhibitions across four halls, with plenty of outdoor noise and showboating. Whatever your favourite dish – F1, Le Mans, World Rallying or grand prix bike racing – you'll be amply catered for.

Several key themes for 2012 leap off the page. A celebration of Porsche's 60-plus years of competition

endeavour will include a 956 Group C tribute. The dominant endurance weapon of the 1980s will be represented, with a couple of star names from that era on hand for autograph-scribbling and story-telling.

Bike racing fans should head for the Honda Racing Corporation exhibit. The factory-blessed team has been cleaning up at the top of the two-wheeled world for 30 years and many of the winning machines and riders will be there. Make sure you're in the 'Fire-up Paddock' after lunch each day for aural pleasure.



Salivate over Porsche 956 gorgeousness

The Live Stage is back for rally fans, with some famous 'Scandinavian flickers' doing their thing in authentic machinery on the Saturday and Sunday. You can have a go too, courtesy of the Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation. Just visit the official Race Retro website and book it in advance.

The Silverstone Auctions sale is likely to throw up big interest and bigger prices.

Kicking off on Saturday lunchtime, this year's line-up includes a McLaren-authenticated Ayrton Senna helmet and set of overalls from 1991, while dozens of classic road, race and rally cars come under the hammer.

Race Retro open from 9.30am-5.30pm (Friday Feb 24 and Saturday Feb 25) and from 9.30-4.30pm (Sunday Feb 26). More info: www.raceretro.com

Television

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23

0300-0400, 1040-1135 **Premier Sports**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Budweiser Shootout Highlights
1730-1830 **Sky Sports 4**
Racemax
1900-2200 **Premier Sports LIVE**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Gatorade Duels
The two 150-mile qualifying races that determine the starting line-up for the 54th Daytona 500.
2300-2330 **Eurosport**
IRC Rally Azores Preview

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 24

0300-0530, 1900-2000 **Premier Sports**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Budweiser Shootout Highlights
0730-0800, 1300-1330 **Eurosport**
IRC Rally Azores Preview
1300-1400 **Sky Sports 3**
Racemax
1445-1545 **Motors TV**
AUTOSPORT International Highlights
2130-2235 **Motors TV**
WRC Rally Sweden Highlights
2300-2330 **Eurosport**
IRC Rally Azores: Day 1
2330-2400 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: Japanese Grand Prix 1976

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25

0530-0600, 1800-1830 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: British Grand Prix 1969
0810-0840 **Eurosport**
IRC Rally Azores: Day 1
1035-1105 **Motors TV**
NASCAR Nationwide Series Preview
1130-1200 **ESPN Classic**

Formula 1: Japanese Grand Prix 1976
1330-1630 **Premier Sports**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Gatorade Duels
1600-1700 **Sky Sports 2**
Max Power
1700-2105 **Motors TV LIVE**
NASCAR Nationwide Series: Daytona
2100-2200 **ESPN Classic**
The Quest of Le Mans
2200-2300 **Premier Sports**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Budweiser Shootout Highlights
2330-0000 **Eurosport**
IRC Rally Azores: Review

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 26

0130-0200, 2130-2200 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: Japanese Grand Prix 1976
1030-1100, 2100-2130 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: British Grand Prix 1969
1105-1415 **Motors TV**
NASCAR Nationwide Series: Daytona Replay
1700-2230 **Premier Sports LIVE**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Daytona 500
The opening round of stock car racing's season is its jewel-in-the-crown event.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 27

0700-0730 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: British Grand Prix 1969
0730-0800 **ESPN Classic**
Formula 1: Japanese Grand Prix 1976
1100-1200, 2100-2200 **ESPN Classic**
MotoGP: German Grand Prix 2006
2030-2340 **Motors TV**
NASCAR Nationwide Series: Daytona
2100-2200 **Sky Sports 3**
NASCAR Sprint Cup: Daytona 500

Online

AUTOSPORT.COM

Coming up on the web this week

DAYTONA 500 & F1 TESTING

The NASCAR Sprint Cup kicks off this weekend with its blue-riband event the Daytona 500, and AUTOSPORT.com will be there to bring you the latest reports from the track and news from the paddock. Plus check out our season preview and Daytona car-by-car guide. If F1 is more your thing, you can keep tabs on all the action from the final two days of Barcelona testing with our live commentary and exclusive analysis.



Read AUTOSPORT.com on your phone to keep up to date

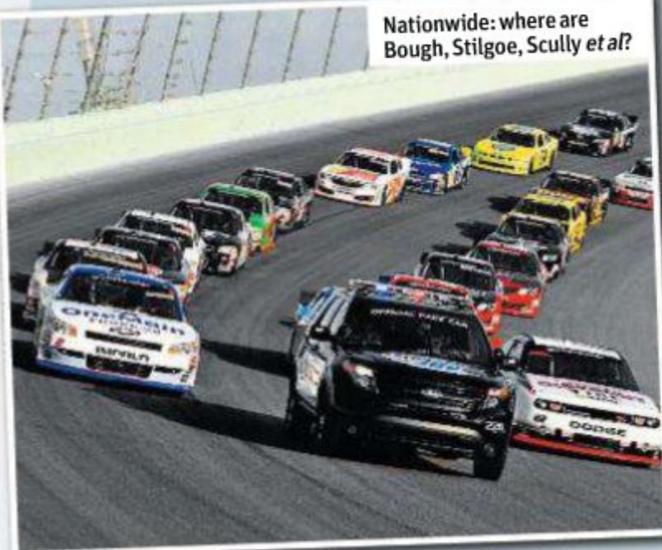
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REVVED UP OVER WHAT'S ON THE BOX

We cast a critical eye over the best and worst of this week's TV coverage

Nationwide: where are Bough, Stilgoe, Scully et al?



AH, *NATIONWIDE*. Straddling that difficult spot between the news and *Tomorrow's World*, it was must-view telly in a three-channel age (or two, if like me ITV was banned in your house).

With presenters Frank Bough – the man who put cocaine-fueled sex parties into cardigan wearing – and Sue Lawley, so great a host that Sting repeatedly calls her name throughout one of The Police's 1980 hits, it veered with the agility of a circus acrobat between investigations into corrupt pension schemes and froth like skateboarding ducks.

Talents such as Esther Rantzen, Richard Stilgoe

and John Stapleton were given their break during its 30-minute slot.

And who could forget Diana Gould from Cirencester going Paxman on Mrs Thatcher over the sinking of the General Belgrano? I'd like to see Meryl Streep act her way out of that one!

So imagine my shock when I turned to Motors TV to watch the *Nationwide Preview* on Sunday night. Granted, I thought it was strange that a defunct BBC current-affairs programme was on Motors, and slightly bemused that it required a preview show, but it turns out that Nationwide

is a form of NASCAR, only with better-looking cars.

It really is amazing that there are still some people bellyaching about the Sky/BBC F1 deal when the fact is that motorsport fans have never had it so good. Live second-tier stock car racing 20-odd times a year... Whatever next? Live TC2000? All-Japan F3 free practice? World of Outlaws Midget racing? (God, if that's half as good as the image I've got in my mind I'd get it on pay-per-view.)

And while Nationwide (the car racing, not the TV show) may not be your thing, serious race fans should be celebrating the amazing diversity, quantity and quality of the action on our screens.

Oh, and I couldn't let this column finish without mentioning that Ted Kravitz will have his own camera trained on him during the Sky F1 races this year! That's almost worthy of its own column each week. Stay tuned. *Revved Up*

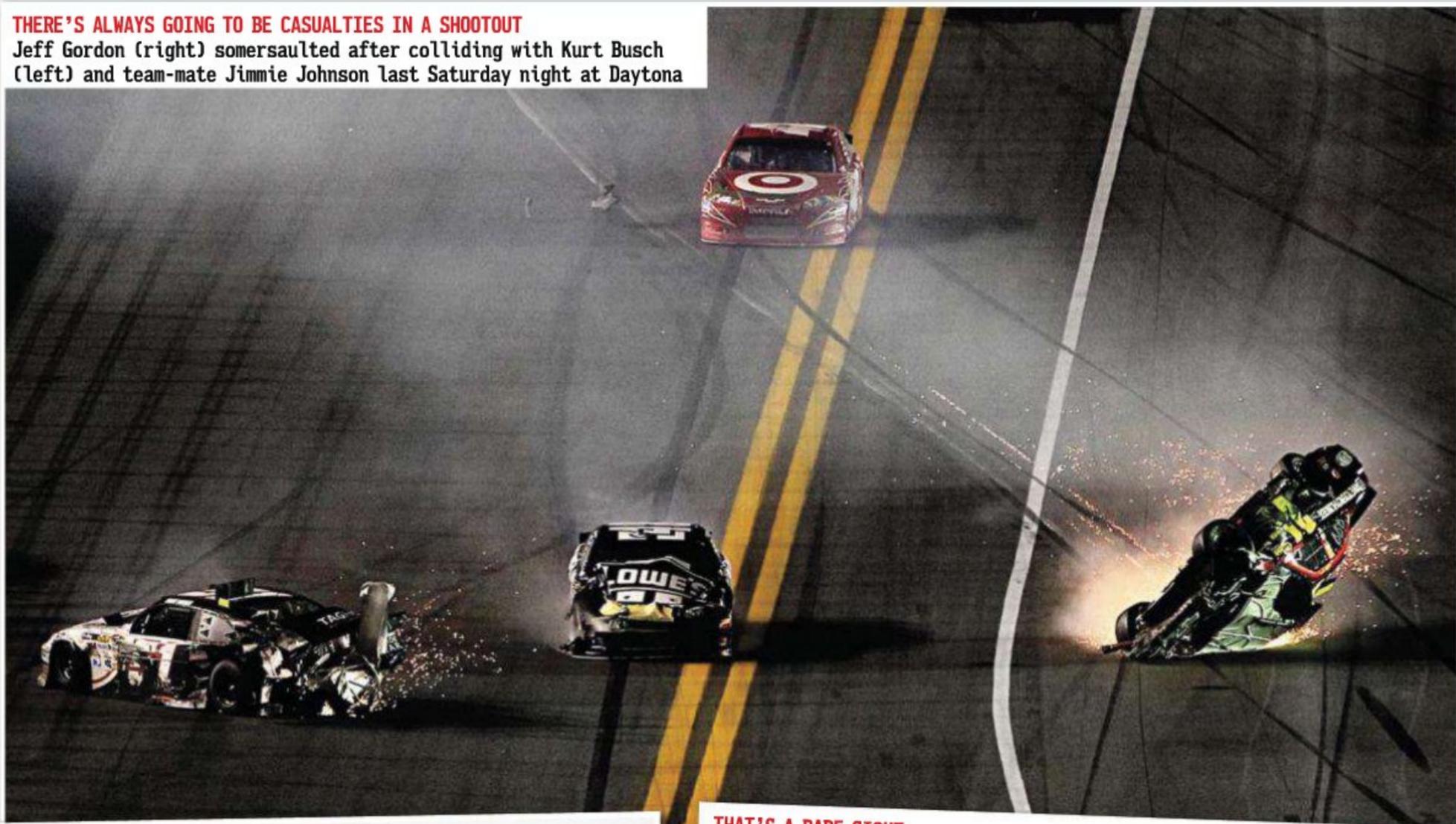
"Who could forget Diana Gould from Cirencester going Paxman on Mrs Thatcher over the sinking of the General Belgrano?"

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

Our lensmen pounding the beat from Florida to Alabama, via Kent

THERE'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE CASUALTIES IN A SHOOTOUT

Jeff Gordon (right) somersaulted after colliding with Kurt Busch (left) and team-mate Jimmie Johnson last Saturday night at Daytona



BRANDS HATCH ADOPTS THE LOTUS POSITION

The Lotus Festival happens in August, on the majestic GP track

THAT'S A RARE SIGHT...

It's the lesser-spotted-Dario Franchitti-on-the-back-of-a-wrecker in IndyCar testing at Barber Motorsports Park

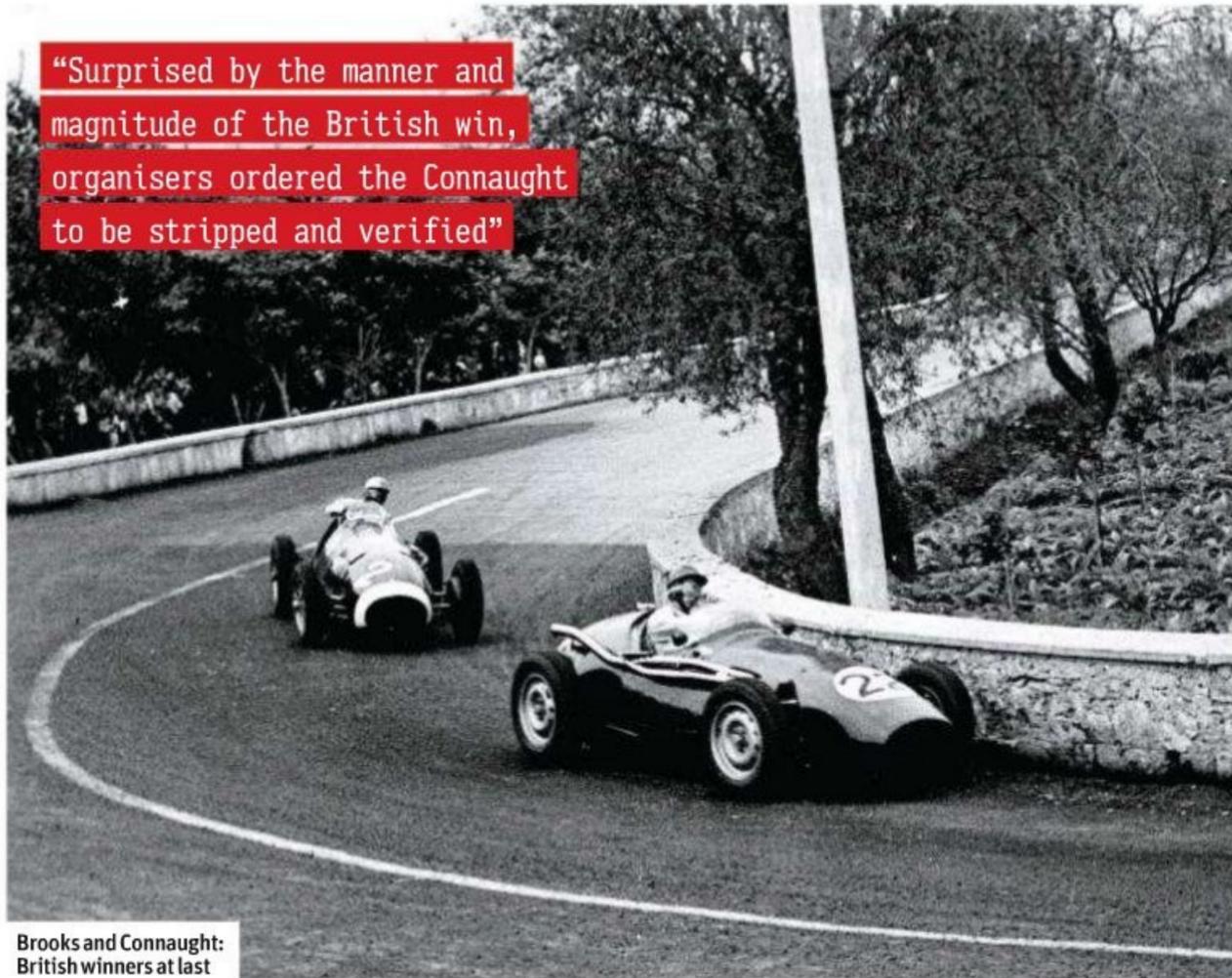


YOUNGSTER BAYNE GETS WITH THE OLD ROUTINE

Before the Daytona International Speedway was built, they used to race here. Last year's 500 winner Trevor Bayne takes his Ford for a spin on the beach

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Tony Brooks wins the Syracuse GP for Connaught, October 28, 1955



“Surprised by the manner and magnitude of the British win, organisers ordered the Connaught to be stripped and verified”

Brooks and Connaught: British winners at last

IN CELEBRATION OF TONY BROOKS'S 80TH BIRTHDAY on Saturday, we take a trip back to 1955 and the Syracuse Grand Prix, when he became the first British driver to win in a British car since Sir Henry Segrave's victory at San Sebastian in 1924.

Brooks's victory was all the more remarkable because it was the first time he had raced Formula 1 machinery, and also because it coincided with his final dentistry examinations.

The son of a dental surgeon, Brooks had balanced his studies with racing after taking up the sport in 1952. Having competed predominantly in club events for the first three years, in 1955 he was offered the chance to compete in a Formula 2 Connaught at Crystal Palace, where he finished fourth behind three F1 cars.

That performance, combined with similarly impressive displays during the year, led to the offer to drive an 'open' version of Connaught's fuel-injected grand prix car in the non-championship Syracuse Grand Prix in October – the same month as his final dentistry exams.

Over 15,000 spectators were present as 15 machines lined up for the start of the race, with Luigi Villorosi, Harry Schell (both Maserati) and Brooks sharing the front row. Villorosi led from the start but

was picked off by Maserati team-mate Luigi Musso on the second lap. Brooks found his way past on the ninth, joining Musso in a dice for the lead.

The Briton was soon in the ascendancy and on lap 55, now in the lead, he broke the circuit lap record.

His pace never relented and he eventually crossed the line 51s ahead of Musso, the Connaught completing the 70 laps at an average of nearly 100mph. Impressively, Brooks broke the lap record three times in total and never exceeded 6200rpm, well within his 2.5 litre engine's capacity.

Surprised by the manner and magnitude of the British victory, organisers ordered the Connaught to be stripped and verified, but it passed all tests and the victory stood – the first win for a British driver, in a British machine, since the war.

AUTOSPORT labelled the result a 'golden opportunity' for Britain – which at the time boasted the world's second largest motor industry – to end German superiority in Formula 1 and finally establish itself as a genuine force.

The victory was also a golden opportunity for Brooks, who made his way into F1 – first with BRM and then later with Vanwall and Ferrari. He won five times for Vanwall, and in 1959 finished second in the championship for Ferrari, behind Jack Brabham.

THIS WEEK IN...

Autosport



First Open win to Wilson's Audi

Senna face to face

Bell takes Miami GP

F3 season under way



FEBRUARY 28, 1985

DEREK BELL TOOK HIS FIRST VICTORY

of the year this week in 1985, as he and team-mate Al Holbert guided their Lowenbrau Porsche 962 to glory in the IMSA GT Miami Grand Prix.

Former Formula 1 world champion Emerson Fittipaldi had assumed control of the race early on, but he was controversially black-flagged after believing he was being waved through by the safety car. Holbert and then Bell took over the lead, but a late caution bunched the field and led to a late dice – Bell losing out to Darin Brassfield's March at the restart, only to pass him at the end of the long Biscayne Blvd straight three laps from the finish.

In the same week, Malcolm Wilson scored his first international win in the National Breakdown Rally, the first round of the RAC British Open Rally Championship in his Audi Quattro.



PIC: PUBLI FOTO/KEYSTONE



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JONATHAN PALMER

■ Monaco Grand Prix ■ Monte Carlo ■ Tyrrell-Ford 017 ■ May 15, 1988 ■ Car change reaps rewards



Palmer worked hard for 'miracle' result

I'VE GONE FOR MONACO 1988, where I was fifth for the second year running. It was my second season with Tyrrell and the 1988 car was pretty poor. The 017 was the last F1 car designed by Maurice Phillippe and my team-mate was Julian Bailey, in his first year.

The 1987 016, which I won the Jim Clark Trophy in [for non-turbo cars], was a bathtub but quite functional. The 017 was a narrow car, but the aerodynamics were pretty appalling. It wasn't quick and we generally qualified about 20th.

Before Monaco we had a test at Croix-en-Ternois in northern France. We had the standard 017 and a long-wheelbase one with a six-inch-longer adaptor and cobbled-up bodywork. We tested them back to back and the shorter wheelbase was quicker.

In Monaco practice the gearbox went so I jumped in the spare, which was the long-wheelbase car. I did a few laps and thought, 'This isn't too bad! It had a lot better turn-in, was more progressive, and I could really hustle it. I told Ken [Tyrrell] I'd try it for qualifying.

I went out and had the most phenomenal session and qualified 10th. I really had the confidence to

"I really loved Monaco - it's a place you really felt like a racing driver. There's no time to relax; it's just totally instinctive driving the whole way"

chuck the thing around, absolute banzai-lap stuff. Ahead of me was Eddie Cheever in the Arrows-BMW and behind was Nelson Piquet in the Lotus-Honda.

Ken was delighted and I was over the moon. Unfortunately poor Julian didn't qualify, not helped by it being his first time at Monaco. I don't think I'd have qualified the standard-wheelbase

car much in the top 20.

I got by Cheever in the first-lap kerfuffle. Then Nigel Mansell shunted [after a clash with Michele Alboreto], Alessandro Nannini's gearbox failed and Riccardo Patrese had to pit, so I was sixth.

Then I came through Portier and there was Ayrton Senna's McLaren in the barrier! I couldn't believe it

— never in my life had I seen a McLaren in the wall.

I was fifth and still hammering on. I was chasing Derek Warwick in the other Arrows. I was hoping that would blow — I wasn't going to get by him — but it didn't.

I made no mistakes at all. Getting fifth in that Tyrrell anywhere that year would have been a miracle and to do it at Monaco was great. I really loved the circuit — it's a place you really felt like a racing driver. There's no time to relax; it's just totally instinctive driving the whole way. My hands were absolutely covered in blisters and bleeding from all the gearchanges.

It was a fantastic result, one that I didn't just luck into — the bit of luck was the standard car failing in practice. ☼

Jonathan Palmer was talking to Kevin Turner



IN PROFILE



AFTER STARTING IN CLUB RACING, Jonathan Palmer began his single-seater career in Formula Ford, then graduated to F3. He won the 1981 British F3 title with West Surrey Racing. A European F2 title followed in '83, the same year he made his F1 debut. In 83 F1 starts he scored a best finish of fourth, and won two World Sportscar events. After being a commentator, he became part of the MotorSport Vision group, which operates Brands Hatch, Cadwell Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton.

NEXT
WEEK

Ken
TYRRELL



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