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F1 FIGHT IS OVER BUT THE WRC IS AS CLOSE AS EVER

More points given away by Ferrari and another commanding Lewis Hamilton performance mean that the 2018 Formula 1 World Championship fight is all but over. In all likelihood, Hamilton will become just the third person to take five titles at the United States Grand Prix later this month.

It was slightly surprising to see Sebastian Vettel try *that* move on – of all people – Max Verstappen, but in reality the Ferrari driver was already fighting a losing battle.

Fortunately, one major title contest is still very much alive. The World Rally Championship arrived in the UK last week with 13 points between the top two and 23 points covering the leading trio.

After another dramatic contest through the mud in Wales, Sebastien Ogier took a record-breaking fifth Rally GB victory, as David Evans explains in our report on page 34. Ogier's success puts him within seven points of Thierry Neuville, while the unfortunate Ott Tanak is still in contention with two rounds to go, 21 points off the top. And that's three drivers from three different teams.

Not only is the WRC providing one of its greatest seasons, there will be more homegrown interest next year with the news that Kris Meeke will return (p4). Meeke's ejection from Citroen in May after one too many crashes was dramatic, but the 39-year-old remains a rapid rally driver. Which is presumably exactly why Toyota has moved to add him to its line-up.

With benchmark driver Ogier moving to the beleaguered Citroen squad and Tanak now an established championship contender, it looks as though the WRC will provide plenty of new storylines in 2019. Wonder if F1 will.



Kevin Turner

KEVIN TURNER
EDITOR

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For your chance to sample the Belgian Grand Prix venue, head to the Performance supplement (p18)



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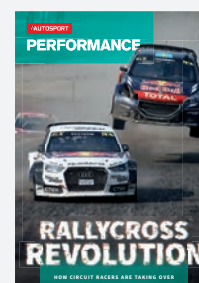
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FREE INSIDE

PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENT



Why racing drivers are taking over rallycross, Petter Solberg's Lydden track guide, plus we try the Citroen C1 24 Hours.



F1 set for Vietnam on new track

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 is set to announce the addition of a Vietnamese Grand Prix to its calendar for 2020 during the next month, with sources indicating that a deal has been reached.

The Asian country has long been rumoured to be on the radar of F1 owner Liberty Media, with a venue just over seven miles west

of Hanoi singled out as a location for the track, which will be partially street-based.

Talks have advanced quickly behind the scenes and sources at last weekend's Japanese GP insisted that an agreement was now in place for the event to go ahead in 2020.

F1 race director Charlie Whiting visited the Hanoi location ahead of the Japanese GP, and said he had

no doubts that the facility would be ready. "There is no actual progress at building the track, but the site has been identified," he said.

"It is in the advanced stages of design and, as far as I'm aware, they are aiming for a 2020 grand prix. That shouldn't be a problem based on previous experience.

"It's mainly on the streets, but there is a section that is not yet built. That is

MEEKE SEALS WORLD RALLY RETURN WITH TOYOTA

WRC

Toyota will field one of the most exciting driver line-ups in the history of the World Rally Championship when Kris Meeke joins Ott Tänak and Jari-Matti Latvala in the Yaris WRC squad next season.

The Northern Irishman's WRC return will be confirmed next week, when Esapekka Lappi is announced as a Citroën driver, freeing up Meeke's seat with Tommi Mäkinen's Finland-based team.

There appeared to be an opportunity at Toyota early last week for Craig Breen, but Autosport's sources confirmed that Meeke completed his deal right about the time the team was arriving at Rally GB last week. Speculation that his return was coming closer was heightened when the five-time world rally winner was spotted at nearby Manchester airport.

With gossip and rumour going into overdrive among WRC commentators, Meeke's destination out of Manchester was indeed confirmed as westerly – but he wouldn't be touching the M56. Instead he passed the Deeside service park at something approaching 500mph as he flew to Las Vegas to watch Conor McGregor's UFC fight against Khabib Nurmagomedov on Saturday.

Mäkinen refused to discuss drivers for 2019, confirming only that there may be changes to the line-up. "We are preparing for possible changes," he told Autosport.

"MEEKE'S DEAL IS DONE. WE KNOW HE IS COMING TO FINLAND"

"We're investigating potential [alternatives] and we have good chances. There's nothing to say at the moment. We are working with Japan on this subject now."

Asked specifically about Meeke and Breen, Mäkinen added: "They both have potential. And we are realistically thinking about not too many options [in terms of drivers] if we want to fight for the manufacturers' championship."

One thing Mäkinen did say is that he wanted an end to conversations of a clandestine nature. "I hope we can talk about this soon – pretty soon we need to know," he said. "I would say I hope everything is sorted out before Rally Spain at the end of this month."

Incumbent Toyota driver Ott Tänak admitted he could see the potential benefit of signing Meeke. "It's not my choice, it's not my decision," Tänak said, "but Kris is a fast driver – we all know that. Overall I think it would be a strong line-up."

Autosport's source said: "Meeke deal is done. We know he is coming to Finland. It's an exciting time for Toyota – to have three drivers so fast and all of them capable for the rally win on any event. We have seen Meeke's speed on any surface; he dominated in Corsica and he wins in Finland. This is special for Finnish people. It is showing what he is capable of – it makes the team warm to him."

It remains unclear whether Meeke has tested the Yaris, but he has visited the factory in Puuppola – and not for the first time. Before signing with Citroën, Meeke spent a long time considering an offer from Mäkinen to drive for Toyota from 2016 onwards. With Citroën's C3 WRC all at sea in the middle of the '17 season, the Andorra-based driver must have wondered if he'd made the right choice.

His relationship with the French firm nosedived following his Rally Portugal crash in May, with the decision to jettison Meeke coming just days later.

Since then, Meeke hasn't been seen at a rally, preferring to remain at home with family and friends. That will change this weekend, however, when he drives a Ford Fiesta RS WRC at Rallylegend in San Marino. He will be co-driven at the demonstration event by Derek Ringer, who guided Meeke's mentor Colin McRae to the 1995 World Rally Championship.

Meeke is expected to begin his pre-Monte Carlo running with Toyota in December, but it's likely that he will be in the car before running in the French Alps.

World champion Sébastien Ogier, who is heading in Citroën's direction for next year, told Autosport he was looking forward to seeing Meeke back.

"It would be good to have him back with us again," said Ogier. "He is one of the fastest guys around in the world championship. People can say he has missed some consistency through his career but, you know, this guy, he knows how to drive fast and he is able to win rallies. As well as that, he's a spectacular driver and we know that the fans love to watch this kind of driver."

Citroën is understood to be likely to run just two factory C3 WRCs for Ogier and Lappi next season. Hyundai is reckoned to be closing on agreements with Hayden Paddon and Dani Sordo to complete its 2019 line-up, while M-Sport remains open, with only Teemu Suninen under contract for next year. Elfyn Evans, Craig Breen and Mads Ostberg are all pushing for a seat at the Cumbrian table.

DAVID EVANS

an open site where the pit buildings are going to be. It will become a road after that."

Meanwhile, the return of the Dutch Grand Prix is looking more realistic, with Zandvoort (right) – which hosted the race from 1948-85 – moving into pole position as likeliest venue. The circuit co-owner has stated that an F1 return is "realistic", while Whiting

has visited the track recently and says that the project is feasible.

Zandvoort attracts a six-figure crowd for its annual 'Jumbo Racedagen' driven by Max Verstappen; where the local hero set the quickest time ever recorded there in May this year at the wheel of a 2012 Red Bull RB8.

JONATHAN NOBLE
AND ADAM COOPER





Mercedes splashed out over £300m on winning 2017 titles

FORMULA 1

The Mercedes Formula 1 team spent an eye-watering £309.7million in 2017, a rise of £45.9m over the preceding season's figure, reflecting the extra R&D costs of developing a car for the new rules.

The numbers, which only reflect the cost of the team and not engine development at HPP in Brixworth, compare to the £263.8m spend of Mercedes' 2016 campaign.

Only around £60m of the 2017 total was actually paid by parent company Daimler AG, indicating that Mercedes' F1 campaign continues to fare well for sponsorship and prize-money revenue. Overall turnover, which includes F1 prize-money payments, sponsorship and marketing revenue from Daimler, rose from £289.4m to £337.2m. A foreign-exchange gain also contributed to that increase.

Mercedes points out that its revenue has increased by 194% since 2012.

The Daimler marketing revenue, a figure that covers the benefits the team created for the main brand, is listed in the accounts as £90.8m, although that covers the combined payments made in 2016 and '17. Although there is no official split listed for the two years, it is understood to have been roughly £30m in '16, and £60m

in '17 – as Daimler increased its payment by £30m last year to in effect address the extra car-development costs.

In 2016 the team posted a loss of £3.8m, but that was impacted by a one-off tax payment, and in '17 it made a profit of £13.3m.

The figures show that the team officially paid £19.9m back to Daimler AG to cover the lease of engines for the season.

The head count at Brackley in 2017 averaged 912, up from 849 the previous year, which contributed to the wage bill rising by £3.9m. Mercedes also points out that it enjoyed a 24.7% share of TV coverage in 2017, representing an AER (Advertising Value Equivalent) of £3.4billion for its parent manufacturer and the team's partners.

Coincidentally, Red Bull's accounts for 2017 reveal that the team's spending rose by the same percentage – 17.4% – as Mercedes' from the previous season, increasing from £193.0m to £226.7m.

Team boss Christian Horner told Autosport that the change to wider-track, high-downforce cars was instrumental. "It's as simple as that, the cost of change in F1 is enormous," he said. "You can see it will have an impact on all the teams. When you scrap a concept of regulations and have a change of the size that we had, it's significant."

ADAM COOPER

Paffett switches to Formula E

FORMULA E

Mercedes DTM star Gary Paffett is to switch to Formula E with HWA – the same team with which he is bidding for a second German tin-top crown in this weekend's Hockenheim finale.

The 37-year-old Briton, who has FE experience from the series' inaugural rookie test in Marrakech last January, represents HWA in its debut campaign in the electric championship after Mercedes' pull-out from the DTM. The team is a precursor to the works Merc squad, which takes over for the 2019-20 season.

"It's incredibly valuable to have such an experienced man as Gary at the wheel," said HWA head of FE operations Franco Chiochetti, who was formerly Lucas di Grassi's engineer at the Abt Audi squad. "His feedback is an important indicator for the further development of the cars."

As a customer Venturi squad, HWA is only guaranteed running in the three days of official pre-season FE testing, which takes place at Valencia over October 16-19.

Two other FE teams have also confirmed their 2018-19 line-ups. At Virgin Racing, team stalwart Sam Bird is joined by Robin Frijns, who returns to FE after a season out following his exit from the BMW-aligned Andretti squad at the end of the 2016-17 campaign.

Virgin will run Audi powertrains as a customer squad this season, although it is understood that the manufacturer has granted the team three of its private testing days to double the squad's preparation time.

Audi works driver Frijns's place with Virgin is understood not to be part of the team's arrangement to run the manufacturer's technology. Audi motorsport boss Dieter Gass explained that Frijns's Virgin deal "is completely separate to the contract with Audi".

At NIO, which revealed its driver line-up and 004 Gen2 car livery at a smoke-filled Copper Box Arena in London on Monday (below), Oliver Turvey continues for a fourth full season with the team alongside new hire Tom Dillmann. The Frenchman, who has impressed on 10 FE appearances for Venturi over the past two seasons, said he enjoys "the competitive and professional atmosphere within the team".

ALEX KALINAUCKAS





FORMULA 1 Suzuka heroes took to the track at last weekend's Japanese Grand Prix for demo runs in old F1 machinery. Apart from Mika Hakkinen in his 1998 McLaren (see p27), Takuma Sato (pictured) drove a '91 McLaren MP4/6. Others on circuit were Jean Alesi (Ferrari F1/87), Felipe Massa (Ferrari 248 F1), Aguri Suzuki (Benetton B189) and Nakajima father-and-son Satoru (Lotus 100T) and Kazuki (his dad's old Tyrrell 019). **Photograph by Motorsport Images/Goria/LAT**

GT megateam closes on DTM Audi move

DTM

Audi is looking close to home for a customer team to add to its car count in next year's DTM. The Belgian WRT squad, a stalwart of the marque's GT3 programmes, has emerged as a clear contender to run two cars in 2019.

WRT, a winner of the Spa and Nurburgring 24-hour enduros with Audi factory backing, has revealed that it is in discussions about expanding into the German-based touring car series next year. No deal is done, but team boss Vincent Vosse is expecting to make a decision soon.

"We want to be part of the DTM and are looking at it very closely with Audi," said Vosse, whose team also fields the German manufacturer's cars in the World Touring Car Cup. "It would be a big financial commitment, but the championship is looking strong with new technical regulations that bring everything in line with Super GT in Japan." Vosse added that "time is short" when it comes to giving the DTM plans the green light.

Audi wants a minimum of eight of its cars in the DTM next season — up from six this

year — to make up for the shortfall of entries on the withdrawal of Mercedes. Audi Sport head Dieter Gass doesn't envisage an expansion of its factory line-up, but has promised parity of equipment for any customers ahead of a season in which a new generation of turbocharged two-litre DTM machinery comes on stream.

Vosse indicated that 2019 would be a good time for a customer team to enter the DTM. "Going into the DTM when there were three manufacturers would probably have been a very difficult thing to do," he explained. "Now it looks more achievable for someone like us."

Vosse also admitted dissatisfaction with the Blancpain GT Series, in which the team has added to its collection of titles with victory in this year's Sprint Cup. He said that it was now "harder and harder for the team to make the difference" under the BGTS sporting rules.

Rowe Racing (right, below), another team to have won the Spa 24 Hours, also has aspirations to expand into the DTM. It is appears close to a deal to run with BMW.

GARY WATKINS



Women only to compete in new F3-level series



W SERIES

A new European Formula 3 championship for women has been launched for 2019, with a prize fund of \$1.5million.

W Series will select 18 to 20 women to compete in the contest, which will use the Tatuus T-318 Regional F3 car powered by a 1.8-litre turbocharged engine from Autotecnica – the same combination used in Asian F3 (left), which kicked off this year.

Multiple grand prix winner David Coulthard, Red Bull technical wizard Adrian Newey and former McLaren F1 team manager Dave Ryan all have significant roles in the series, which is fronted by sports lawyer Catherine Bond Muir. While next year's races will take place entirely in Europe, W Series plans to incorporate rounds in America, Asia and Australia in future.

The ethos behind W Series, for which entry is free, is to help women at a level beyond karting and Formula 4, where they frequently fall by the single-seater wayside.

Coulthard said: "They [women] have this big support from the FIA bringing them through grass roots, but how long will that take? Five years? Ten years? A generation it will take in racing terms. Our view is we don't want to wait a generation, but we welcome that generation of women racers coming through. This is providing a solution right now – the timing is absolutely right."

MARCUS SIMMONS
AND JONATHAN NOBLE

HERE ARE THE...

MEN BEHIND THE WOMEN

Why these F1 luminaries are getting behind a series that is groundbreaking in motorsport... but could prove controversial



#1 DAVID COULTHARD

The 13-time grand prix winner-turned-Channel 4 F1 commentator is an advisory board member. "At the moment, women racing drivers tend to reach a 'glass ceiling' at around the GP3/Formula 3 level on their learning curve, often as a result of a lack of funding rather than a lack of talent," he said. "That's why an all-new all-female series is required."



#2 ADRIAN NEWEY

Like Coulthard, Newey is an advisory board member. "I have a reasonable understanding of the constituents of a top-class driver's skill-set," he said. "Brute strength isn't on that list. That being the case, I believe that the reason why so few women have raced successfully at the highest levels against men is a lack of opportunity rather than a lack of capability."



#3 DAVE RYAN

The ex-McLaren and Manor F1 team manager and GT team boss is in charge of operations as the series' racing director. "W Series will give women crucial experience to help them progress beyond the levels that have traditionally been attainable by them," he said. "More than that, we want to be a catalyst for positive change for all women in motorsport."

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Toyota slows itself down

WEC

Toyota has done the right thing by the World Endurance Championship. It has seen “the big picture”, according to technical director Pascal Vasselon, and agreed to a double performance hit designed to bring the privateers in LMP1 closer ahead of this weekend’s Fuji round.

The Japanese manufacturer has understood that the championship needs to provide a better show than at Silverstone in August. It concedes that the prospect of the two Toyota TS050 HYBRIDS repeatedly running away at the front of the field from the non-hybrid independents could undermine the WEC as it plots a bright new future with the new regulations for 2020-21.

“We came to the conclusion that we could not continue as at Silverstone,” said Vasselon, whose cars finished four laps up on the best of the privateers before their exclusion for a technical infringement. “We clearly need to provide a better spectacle.”

That’s why it has agreed to a 26kg hike in the minimum weight of the TS050s and a removal of the two-lap advantage in stint length enshrined in the original Equivalence of Technology, the means by which the rulemakers have been attempting to bring the privateers closer to the front over the course 2018-19 WEC superseason.

These EoT changes cover the remainder of the superseason and the 2019-20 WEC – the first to run to a ‘winter-series’ format – with the exception of the Le Mans 24 Hours. The EoT that came into force at Silverstone will remain in force for the 2019 and ’20 editions of the French enduro.

Vasselon stated that the agreement does not cover Le Mans for two reasons. “The gap should have been much closer at Le Mans because of the lower energy release per kilometre for our cars. At Le Mans we have 55% less [hybrid] power,” he explained. “At the main marketing event of the year we also need to keep this one-lap advantage; it has to do with the marketing value of the series. Hybrid cars should be seen to be running longer”

Vasselon said the increase in the weight of the Toyotas to 904kg would probably cost them half a second per lap, but he refused to be drawn on whether the changes would allow the privateers to mount a challenge. “How close they are may vary from track to track, so it is difficult to predict,” he explained. “What we don’t understand is why the big change for Silverstone did not alter the situation. The advantage the privateers should have gained from Spa to Silverstone did not materialise.”

Asked if this was the final EoT change, Vasselon (below) replied: “The last one was meant to be the final one, so we should be at the end of the story.”

GARY WATKINS



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/EHRHARDT/LAT

IN THE HEADLINES

HAAS ITALIAN GP APPEAL

A date has been set for the Haas team’s appeal of Romain Grosjean’s exclusion from sixth place in last month’s Italian Grand Prix. The hearing into whether Grosjean had an illegal floor will take place at the FIA’s International Court of Appeal on November 1.

MARKELOV DAD ARRESTED

Formula 2 star Artem Markelov’s father Valery has been placed in custody in Moscow days after his son’s grand prix weekend debut with Renault. The Basmanny District Court of Moscow last week approved the detention for Markelov Sr over an alleged breach of Article 291, Section 5 the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which covers bribery “committed on a very large scale”. According to Russian news agency RIA, Markelov Sr is accused of giving bribes to former Ministry of Internal Affairs Colonel Dmitry Zakharchenko between 2007 and ’16.

TURKINGTON IN CHINA

British Touring Car champion Colin Turkington jetted straight to the Wuhan street circuit after clinching the 2018 crown to compete in the Chinese Touring Car Championship. Driving a Volkswagen Lamando for the SAIC VW333 Racing team, Turkington qualified on pole position and finished fourth in the first race. He was third in race two, only for all four Lamandos to be excluded for non-homologated brake pads. This reversed-grid race was won by another BTCC driver, Adam Morgan, in a BAIC Senova. The field also includes 2014 British F3 champion Martin Cao in a Ford Focus.

ANOTHER F3 SCHUMACHER

David Schumacher, the cousin of Formula 3 European Championship leader Mick and son of ex-F1 star Ralf, made his race debut in an F3 chassis at Jerez last weekend. Schumacher, this year’s German Formula 4 Rookie champion, took a best finish of eighth from the 13-car Euroformula Open field with RP Motorsport. Italian team RP’s runaway champion Felipe Drugovich won both races.

DI GRASSI IN MAZDA

Formula E star Lucas di Grassi will make his first prototype start since Audi’s end-of-2016 withdrawal from the World Endurance Championship in this weekend’s Petit Le Mans IMSA SportsCar finale at Road Atlanta. Di Grassi will join Oliver Jarvis and Tristan Nunez in the factory Mazda RT24-P squad run by Joest Racing in place of Rene Rast, who is trying to win the DTM for Audi at Hockenheim. Marino Franchitti slots into the sister car in place of Harry Tincknell, who is on WEC duty at Fuji, alongside Jonathan Bomarito and Spencer Pigot.

G-Drive loses appeal over Le Mans refuelling breach



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LE MANS 24 HOURS

The disqualification of the G-Drive ORECA from LMP2 class victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours in June was confirmed last week. The FIA International Court of Appeal upheld the exclusion of the TDS-run entry, handing the win and fifth place overall to the Alpine Signatech ORECA driven by Nicolas Lapierre, Andre Negrao and Pierre Thiriet.

The court, which met in Paris on September 18, upheld the stewards' decision that TDS Racing had illegally modified the refuelling rigs used by both the G-Drive

ORECA shared by Jean-Eric Vergne, Roman Rusinov and Andrea Pizzitola and the fourth-placed sister car run under its own banner. It threw out the French team's appeal, which claimed a part it had added to the systems was a "commendable technical innovation" and that there was no specific regulation covering the area of its modification.

But because the additional component TDS fitted to the rigs protruded into the flow restrictor designed to control the rate at which fuel goes into the car, the court decided that it constituted a breach of regulations. It stated that it is not permitted

to have a compliant part that is rendered redundant by another part.

The court noted that refuelling of the two TDS-run ORECA was approximately 25% faster than the other cars in class, which constituted a gain of six to 10 seconds per pitstop. G-Drive finished two laps ahead of Signatech at the end of the blue-riband World Endurance Championship round.

The decision means that the Graff-SO24 ORECA and United Autosports Ligier have been confirmed in second and third places in class respectively.

GARY WATKINS

Eurotech calls time on BTCC project

BTCC

Eurotech Racing has sold its British Touring Car Championship licence and will not compete in the series in 2019, in a move that is likely to prompt a raft of team-ownership changes.

The team, which is owned by racer Jeff Smith and ran Honda Civics for his son Brett and Jack Goff, has sold its TOCA BTCC Licences (TBLs) to another squad,

which is expected to make an announcement soon. Several teams in the lower part of the grid are expected to sell or swap licences as the end-of-November deadline for 2019 entries looms.

Smith Sr, who bought Eurotech from founder Mike Jordan in December 2014, said: "One of our major sponsors, ICD, are currently unable to continue their level of support. I would like to thank all of our team and

drivers for their hard work, our sponsors, technical partners and fans for their support during the past four seasons."

Jack Goff took the team's maiden win under new ownership at Silverstone in 2017 and was in the heart of the title fight this season with two more victories. He took eighth in the standings and third in the Independents Trophy.

MATT JAMES



Rally GB could leave Wales from 2020

WRC

The future of Rally GB has rarely looked brighter following a blockbuster event last week and news that it could return to rotating its base around the country.

Rally organisers have struck a new deal with long-term backer the Welsh Government, and the event will celebrate its 20th successive season in the principality next season. But from 2020 the rally could move to another part of the country.

MSA chairman David Richards (right, below) explained the situation to Autosport, saying: "The Welsh Government has seen the economic benefits of the rally and they're very supportive of its growth."

"They're willing to support the event for another three years, but they also see that if the event has to expand and go to other regions of the UK as part of that process, they're willing to support that as well – so long as we're willing to come back again. It's a win-win for everybody."

Prior to its arrival in Cardiff in 2000, Britain's round of the World Rally Championship had run out of seven

different host cities – now is the chance to return to some of those regions. One source told Autosport: "There's interest in Rally GB and now there is potential for it to move. Let's see what happens. It's going to be an interesting future – it's an opportunity to move the event far and wide."

Sebastien Ogier (right) won what could be the penultimate Welsh-based event for a while last Sunday. "They always do a very good job here," said Ogier. "We know it's tough and a real challenge and it was again – the roads are also really beautiful and I'm proud to be the first to win it five times."

Rally GB's relationship with Conwy Council and Llandudno has grown stronger in recent years and there was speculation last week that Llandudno could host the entire event, including the service park, next season. There was also talk of a ceremonial start in Liverpool or Manchester, with the potential for a city centre stage through either city to kick-start proceedings.

DAVID EVANS

➔ P34 RALLY GB



MCKLEIN



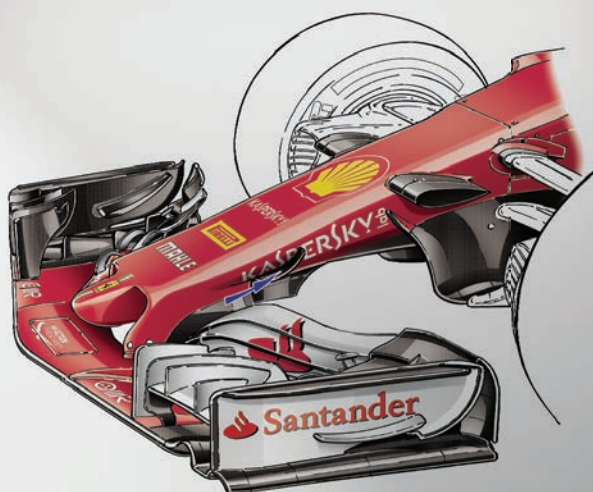
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THOMAS HILDEBRAND

VLN Aston Martin won the battle of the new, unhomologated GT3 cars in last Saturday's VLN round on the Nurburgring Nordschleife. Maxime Martin qualified the new Vantage GT3 on pole, and combined with Darren Turner to finish fourth, beating the new Audi R8 LMS Evo of Christopher Mies and Jamie Green by one place. Running in the separate SPX class, both cars were required to spend 20 seconds longer in the pits at each stop. The race was won by the Auto Arena Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Dominik Baumann and Patrick Assenheimer, 3.7s clear of the SPS Merc of Edoardo Mortara and Renger van der Zande.

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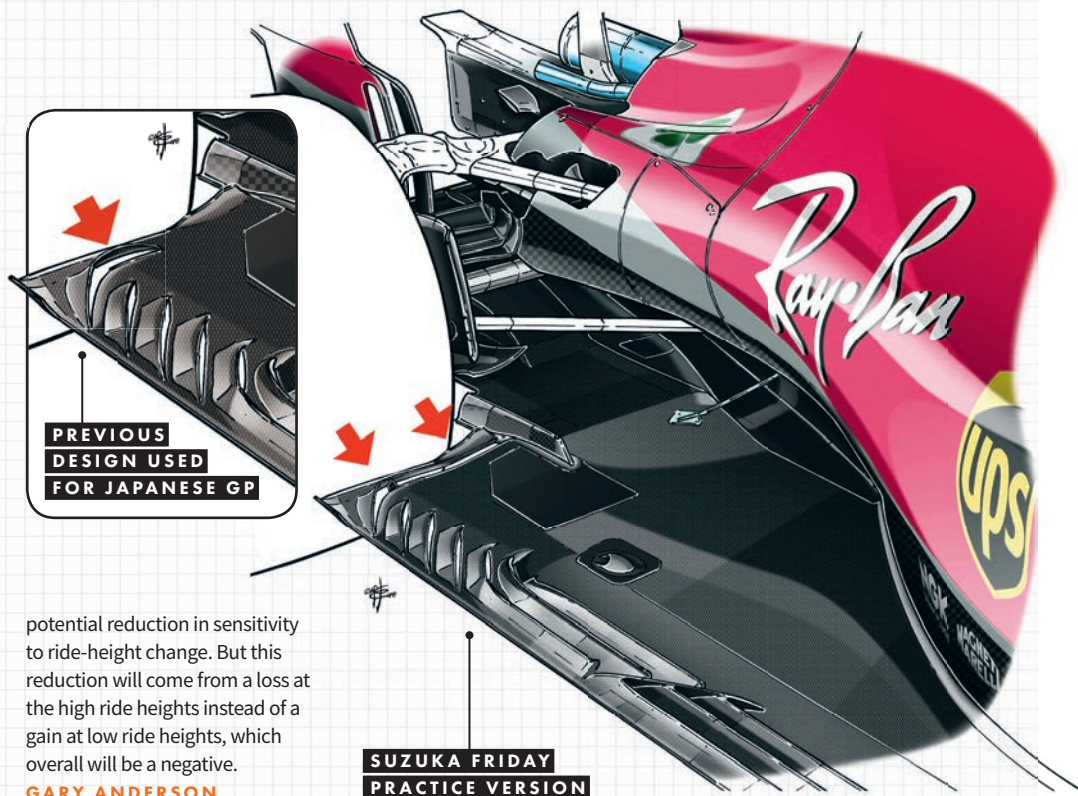
FERRARI FLOOR

Ferrari tested a new floor at Suzuka last Friday, but reverted to the older version for Saturday onwards.

The older version (inset) has an L-shaped outer corner slot gap. This allows the air that is displaced by the rear tyre rotating onto the ground to pull on this slot, taking airflow from the top surface of the floor through the slot; and with it, scavenging airflow outwards that would normally be pulled into the diffuser area, reducing the performance of the whole floor.

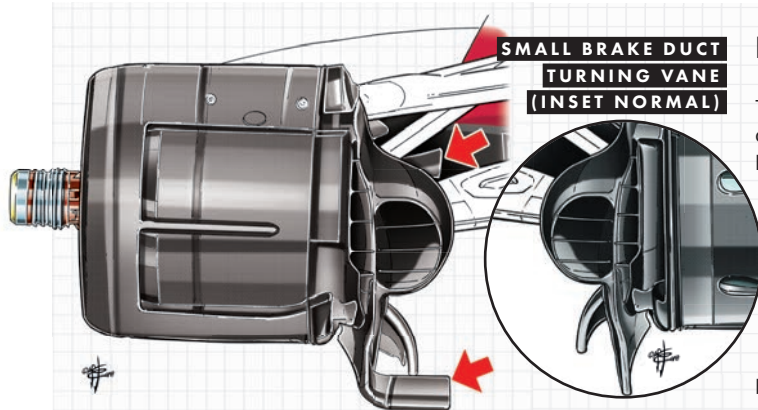
The new version with the two arrows extends that L-shaped slot inwards. With my limited understanding of how Ferrari's analysis expects this area to work, I have no idea why you would do this. It will allow more airflow to go inside the rear tyre, which will reduce the diffuser's performance.

The only positive that could come from this development is a



potential reduction in sensitivity to ride-height change. But this reduction will come from a loss at the high ride heights instead of a gain at low ride heights, which overall will be a negative.

GARY ANDERSON



FERRARI BRAKE DUCTS

The brake-duct sizing is a compromise. You generate most heat in the brake by braking from high speed to low speed, so you need decent airflow at low speed. But it will not be able to take all that volume of air at high speed and the excess will spill around the outer surface.

This small turning vane just behind the actual brake-cooling

inlet will just be managing the excess airflow that comes around the outer surface of the duct.

The lower horizontal turning vane, which in effect puts an endplate on the vertical turning vane it's attached to, gives a more consistent airflow coming off the trailing edge of that component – especially with varying steering lock.

GARY ANDERSON

MERCEDES FRONT WING

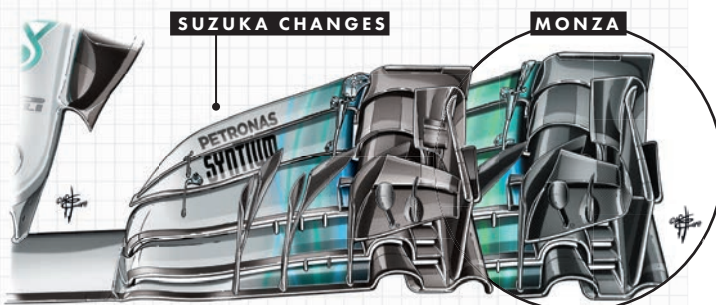
The airflow structure of the car is all set up by the front wing. It's vitally important that you minimise changes to this area, since there may be unintended consequences for the performance of every component downstream.

Comparing the Mercedes front wing from a very low-downforce track such as Monza (inset) to Suzuka shows how small those changes really are. Details on the turning vanes at the trailing top edge of the

endplate change it from a single element to a double element. This allows this component to work harder and be more consistent.

The other small change for Suzuka was a slightly longer chord on the trailing flap (with Petronas logo). You can see the outer corner now cuts back into the black part of the wing.

Normally, to get an aerodynamic balance with varying levels of rear wing, the easy way is to adjust the front-wing angle. But that changes



how the rest of the car works, so with these small front-wing alterations the team will have to have some other way of altering the car's balance. A

slightly higher front ride height will cost front downforce but not alter anything else too dramatically.

GARY ANDERSON

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DE FERRAN'S BIG TASK

The McLaren sporting director's otherwise hugely impressive CV doesn't include success in Formula 1. Will he be able to rectify that?

EDD STRAW

Few get three shots at Formula 1; the surprise about Daniil Kvyat getting a third stint at Toro Rosso in 2019 is evidence of that. But there's another, surprisingly low-profile, figure who has made it a hat-trick of opportunities with a comeback of his own this season — and he's among the most successful drivers in the grand prix paddock.

What's more, he's got a big challenge on his hands. "Solving a puzzle" is how this sometime Williams and Footwork test driver describes the challenge he faces. And it's not a straightforward one — it's one of the most complicated in F1.

But this France-born Brazilian knows how to achieve motorsport success better than most. Both as a racing driver — he won two IndyCar titles and the Indianapolis 500 — and as a team owner in sportscars, Gil de Ferran is used to winning.

Since being appointed McLaren's sporting director two months ago, the 50-year-old has kept a deliberately low profile as part of the team's policy of keeping its head down. This is a natural reaction to its bombast turning to bust when the 2018 season got under way and its Renault rebirth was exposed as a false dawn. That's fine by de Ferran, an erudite, intelligent man not known for

panacea proving to be nothing of the sort.

De Ferran should not be underestimated. He's characterised very much as Zak Brown's man, and it's true that the duo had a pre-existing relationship. De Ferran's initial involvement with McLaren was at last year's Indianapolis 500 as Fernando Alonso's driver coach, before growing to a consultancy role and then his current job. He forms one of the key triumvirate at the centre of McLaren along with Brown and Simon Roberts, who has overall technical responsibility for the car.

"Between Zak, Simon and myself, with great input from Jonathan Neale [McLaren Group chief operations officer], we're working through this puzzle together," says de Ferran. "It's a complete cliché, but it's about people and process, and a great deal about culture as well. It's about how you bring the people together, communicate with clarity, how you ensure the processes between all of these people work."

McLaren senior personnel frequently talk up the talent within the team, and justifiably so. The question is how you harness that, and how you eliminate the barriers to doing so. Culture is the keyword, and in recent years murmurings suggest that part of the problem at McLaren is that self-interest has trumped self-analysis when it comes to tackling — or not, as it may be — problems. Perhaps this is what de Ferran is alluding to?

De Ferran is just part of what is going to be a long process of recovery, but he's nothing if not pragmatic and recognises the scale of the challenge. He showed that when, after that first brush with F1, his attention turned to Indycars rather than missing that chance to chase the grand prix dream.

Given that F1 shunned him, you can forgive de Ferran for enjoying another opportunity to make an impact in grand prix racing. But it's not about righting past wrongs.

"I was quite busy outside of motorsports, but when an opportunity like this comes up, it touches something deep inside your heart that I'm very passionate about," he says. "Is it the same thing [as driving]? Completely different! The thrill that I had as a driver, that was then and this is now, it's a completely different feeling. There are some similarities, the feeling of competition, the feel of trying to bring everyone together and meeting the challenge head on. But the thrill of driving is unique, of sliding a car at 200mph, 230mph or even higher. That was a great part of my youth; I'm now an old man."

How de Ferran fares with McLaren in his — in racing-driver years — 'old age' will define how he's seen in F1. McLaren makes much of its legend, playing on the fact that it is more than a racing team. What it needs to do now is live up to it. If de Ferran can be part of this, he will justify his place in the legend. If not, he'll just end up as another casualty of McLaren's struggles. ❧

"WE CAN'T ACCUSE McLAREN OF FAILING TO ACCEPT IT HAS SERIOUS WEAKNESSES"

self-aggrandisement. His first 'chance' in F1 came with the aforementioned test outings during his final seasons in Europe. The second was a stint as sporting director at the works Honda team from 2005-07. The Brackley-based squad, which went on to become today's Mercedes squad via a year as Brawn, was not an easy place to work at. From April '05 to June '07, de Ferran was just one of a number who struggled during a period characterised by some involved as a quagmire of internal politics in the pre-Ross Brawn days. He walked away, but on good terms.

Does that mean things will go the same way at McLaren, especially given there are still mutterings of disgruntlement in the ranks about the leadership? It's only fair to judge him and his management-team cohorts by whether or not McLaren makes good on its promises to rebuild. One thing we can't accuse McLaren of is failing to accept that there are serious weaknesses that have been laid bare by the Renault engine



ORANGE-TINTED SPECS

It's easy to see the appeal of a revival of the Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort, but the full implications of F1's mooted return may take some of the shine off

MARCUS SIMMONS

W

hen Niki Lauda pipped Alain Prost to victory in the 1985 Dutch Grand Prix in a McLaren one-two, that was the end of Formula 1 at Zandvoort. Or so, for the past three decades and counting, we thought.

News that FIA race director Charlie Whiting reckons Zandvoort would need “minimal” changes to host a grand prix broke last week on autosport.com. “I think there’s great potential there in Zandvoort,” he said. “A few things need to be changed there, and there’s a great willingness to change. But I think it’s rather too early to be talking about that. They’re coming back to us with some proposals, and we’ll see purely from a circuit point of view – nothing to do with the commercial elements of it – but from a circuit safety point of view I think it could be done. “There would be a nice long straight good enough to use DRS well, and you’d maintain the historic elements of the circuit as well. I think it would be a very nice circuit.”

So far so good. After all, any attempt to bring F1 back to its heartlands and foundation fanbase – rather than the Ecclestone-era fixation with rinsing as much money as possible out of oppressive regimes in countries with no motorsport tradition – must be applauded. But I must admit that, as a veteran of 18

“THE REQUIREMENTS OF F1 CAN DAMAGE WHAT MADE A VENUE SPECIAL IN THE FIRST PLACE”

visits to Zandvoort, it’s left me with mixed feelings.

But first, how has Zandvoort suddenly appeared back on the radar for F1? Owned since 1989 by Hans Ernst, it transferred in 2016 into the hands of a Dutch company by the name of Chapman Andretti Partners – no prizes for guessing who their favourite F1 team from history is... CAP is fronted by entrepreneur Menno de Jong and Bernhard van Oranje, a highly capable GT4 racer and who, as his name suggests, is a member of the Dutch royal family (King Willem-Alexander is his cousin). At the same time, F1 fever that curiously failed to grip the nation during the eras of Robert Doornbos and Giedo van der Garde was in full swing thanks to the exploits of Max Verstappen. Numerous times a ‘potential street circuit’ – this phrase seemingly second only to ‘dull Tilke track in a country you’ve never wanted to go to’ on the longlists of F1 prospects over the past couple of decades – was mooted. And then Zandvoort and Assen, the latter better-known as the venue for the Dutch TT motorcycle

grand prix than its car-racing heritage, moved into the frame.

Taking F1 to a circuit already in existence, thereby boosting the country’s proper motorsport infrastructure, has to be a good thing. According to reports, Zandvoort has now moved ahead of Assen into a position of prominence with F1 owner Liberty – which is also fair enough, because it’s a much cooler venue.

The initial layout was emasculated in the late 1980s because of the construction of a holiday park at the south end of the circuit. But the new extension that appeared in the late ’90s was – like the rebuild of Spa two decades earlier – thoroughly in keeping with the original feel of the circuit. It’s a great driving track, and in feel is not too dissimilar to Suzuka. Which is not particularly surprising when you consider that John Hugenholtz, who became the director at Zandvoort after the Second World War, designed the Japanese venue. Furthermore, the atmosphere is fantastic, the viewing is terrific, the staff and marshals are always friendly, and the town itself – only a 15-minute walk from the main entrance to the track – has a host of good bars and restaurants, and there always seems to be a festival of some sort going on. It is always a highlight of the year.

So why the mixed feelings about F1? Simply, what F1 does to a venue. Look at Brands Hatch. It went through years of neglect and shabbiness while the owners made vain attempts to bring back the British Grand Prix. Then, when Jonathan Palmer took over and dropped any such pretence, instead targeting prestige non-F1 series and themed days, the place blossomed and has never looked better. Donington Park just missed a demise because of an F1 folly. And, if you’ve been to Imola recently, you’ll know that it’s a venue that keeps its challenge and atmosphere precisely because it was axed from the F1 calendar after 2006.

Improvements in the name of circuit safety and to meet the requirements of F1 can damage the appeal of what made a venue special in the first place – look at the travesties of Hockenheim and the Österreichring/A1-Ring/Red Bull Ring. Whiting isn’t suggesting anything as wide-ranging as those examples happening to Zandvoort, but one small extension of runoff at, say, Tarzanbocht could mean a great spectator location disappears. Also, whisper it, the racing at Zandvoort is more processional than at virtually any other circuit in Europe, thanks to the proliferation of long, medium and high-speed corners. Would some be tightened up, thereby removing part of the driving challenge?

And then there’s the road infrastructure. Getting out of Zandvoort on a Sunday evening is a nightmare. While it’s a far better idea to travel by train if you’re going to Schiphol airport, that won’t be an option for those driving home or to ferry ports. So yes, bringing a Dutch GP back to Zandvoort sounds fantastic in principle – but only if it’s to the Zandvoort we know and love, and no-one has to travel home on Sunday. 🏁

YOUR SAY

Formula 1 is big business — the interest, excitement and spectacle provided over a few days need to be supported by teams who take decisions and the consequences seriously

SANDY WILSON

Act on direction changes sooner rather than later

How many times do we have to hear about a driver making one or two direction changes as dangerous, when in fact the real issue is a direction change when it's too late.

With DRS we now have so much overtaking closing speed that a late move has become hugely dangerous.

Both Vettel in Sochi and Magnussen at Suzuka moved too late to block and it was only the brilliance of Hamilton and Leclerc that avoided an aircraft-style accident.

This needs to be addressed sooner rather than later!

Tim Richardson

By email

After you, Max; oh no, I insist

With reference to Max Verstappen's penalty for rejoining the track and pushing Kimi Raikkonen off, his comments implied that he believes that when a driver goes off the track, as he rejoins the other drivers should politely slow down and allow him to retake his place in front of them. I look forward to seeing him putting this policy into practice.

ARitemann

By email

If you don't like it, I'll have a go...

So Max didn't enjoy his first day of free practice. Well, at 71 I can assure Red Bull that I may have been a few tenths slower, but I would certainly have enjoyed it!

Chris Davis

By email

Team orders are all part of the game

In the context of the letter entitled 'Mercedes was out of order' (October 4), I'd like to ask what the correspondent would consider an 'un-appalling' use of team orders?

I have been to the tracks in Monaco, Singapore, Sepang (sadly missed) and Monza — for none of these grands prix would I have felt badly done by had team



orders affected the outcome.

Formula 1 is big business — the interest, excitement and spectacle provided over a few days need to be supported by teams who take decisions and the consequences seriously. At the end of the season, Mercedes and Toto Wolff might have been damned if they hadn't issued the order for Valtteri Bottas to let Lewis Hamilton through.

Unpopular decisions are no doubt frequently made by teams — this was just a very public one and probably well-judged in the great scheme of things.

Sandy Wilson

By email

Missing motorsport spectacle

I believe there was some sort of motorsport spectacle in Wales over the weekend, as evidenced by all the coverage it got (not)? Oh for the days of the RAC Lombard...

Graeme Innes-Johnstone


Elland, West Yorks

Your letter provoked an outpouring of nostalgia for the days of Top Gear Rally Report... Turn to page 34 for David Evans's round-up of a thrilling weekend's action (above) — ed

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MERCEDES IMPERIOUS AS FERRARI CRUMBLES

Mistakes in qualifying left Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari desperately chasing a result while Lewis Hamilton was in a race of his own

EDD STRAW

PRESSURE IS A FUNNY THING. SOME THRIVE UNDER IT, OTHERS FOLD, AND THE JAPANESE Grand Prix laid bare the difference between a secure Mercedes team on the brink of yet another world championship double, and an insecure Ferrari squad seemingly intent on self-sabotage. Lewis Hamilton's accomplished victory, taking pole position, leading every lap and only being denied a 'grand slam' by Sebastian Vettel's pace on the penultimate lap, was immaculate. But for Vettel, fastest lap was the most feeble of consolation prizes as he finished sixth after a weekend of mishaps both for himself and Ferrari.

While Mercedes cruised serenely towards its inevitable front-row lockout and one-two, Ferrari struggled. The pace was not there throughout, and the extraordinary decision to send both Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen out on intermediate rubber at the start of Q3 – on a dry track – was a big mistake.

Team principal Maurizio Arrivabene heavily criticised the team after what happened but, irrespective of where responsibility lay for that particular mistake, the error was compounded by Vettel going off at Spoon Curve on what was his only Q3 shot before the rain finally arrived. Even Raikkonen got in on the act, kissing the kerb on entry to the same corner and catching a moment, costing him third on the grid to Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

While Mercedes appears to have fallen back on its tried-and-tested processes to get the best out of itself, Ferrari has become increasingly 'grabby'. The team's alarming slump in pace relative to Mercedes over the past three race weekends is one thing, but the attempts to compensate for it with needless gambles speaks of a team ill at ease with its place in the competitive order. In the slipstream of that self-destructive punt in qualifying, supersoft-shod Vettel became overeager in the race after performing what initially seemed like a tremendous recovery, in which he had stormed from eighth on the grid to fourth on the first lap.

Brendon Hartley's wheel-spinning start meant Vettel jinked to the right on the run to the first corner having immediately taken seventh, before dispatching the other Toro Rosso of Pierre Gasly through the Turn 2 right-hander. He then squeezed past the somewhat more compliant Romain Grosjean's Haas through the right-hand kink before the hairpin.

Verstappen's mistake at the end of the first lap handed Vettel his fourth place. Running ahead of Raikkonen, Verstappen locked up and took to the grass at the chicane, rejoining as Raikkonen justifiably attempted to go around the corner while keeping out of the Red Bull's way. Light contact ensued and Raikkonen was forced briefly off the track, enabling Vettel to nab the position. It also earned Verstappen censure from the stewards and a five-second penalty for rejoining the circuit in an irresponsible manner.

"I braked a little bit too late into the chicane, so I did everything I could to get back onto the track," said Verstappen.

"And I think I did it in a safe way, because I was not crazy-fast onto the track. But Kimi chose the wrong line in the chicane. He could have also just waited for me to come back on the track. We touched a little bit, but I think it's really ridiculous, those five seconds."

Raikkonen, who picked up a little damage while being ushered off the circuit and struggled for the rest of the race as a result, resisted the temptation to become too agitated about the incident. "I tried to go outside and leave as much as I could," he said. "But he obviously came kind of off the track over the grass kerb part so maybe he could not turn more, and maybe he just ended up there. In an ideal world, he should have left a bit more."

"We lost quite a lot of downforce, but there's not much you can do after that because it is quite a sensitive area where I got hit. And after that, it was pretty difficult."

The safety car, deployed on lap four, allowed Vettel to get his breath back. This was to sweep up the shards of Kevin Magnussen had scattered around the track, particularly at the exit of Spoon Curve as he toured round with his left-rear Pirelli flailing. Charles Leclerc >>



Verstappen runs off the track at the chicane...



...and then ushers Raikkonen wide as he rejoins



"THE SAFETY CAR
ALLOWED VETTEL TO
GET HIS BREATH BACK"



had hit the rear of the Haas while the pair disputed 12th place at the start of lap two when Magnussen darted to his right at the same time as the Sauber moved to pass him.

“He is, and will always be, stupid – it’s a fact,” said Leclerc over the radio. The stewards took no action because the pair moved right simultaneously, but it was easy to sympathise with Leclerc.

Vettel looked like he might threaten Verstappen at the restart at the end of lap seven, but got a rear-end wobble on the power on the run out of the final chicane. He saw his chance when Verstappen’s engine briefly derated thanks to lack of battery power for the 160bhp MGU-K to deploy on lap eight.

Vettel jinked to the inside in an attempt to pass Verstappen at Spoon. He was absolutely justified in doing so, even though Verstappen inevitably gave him little room. But what Vettel misjudged was the level of grip available, and he understeered just enough to lock

wheels with Verstappen. Both cars picked up some minor damage but, while Verstappen kept going and rejoined from the runoff just in time to cut in front of Raikkonen and hold third, Vettel spun to the back of the field with 17 cars between him and his title rival.

“The gap was there but as soon as he saw me obviously he defended,” said Vettel. “But I had the inside. As soon as he realises somebody is close or next to him, he tries to – in my opinion – push when you shouldn’t push any more.

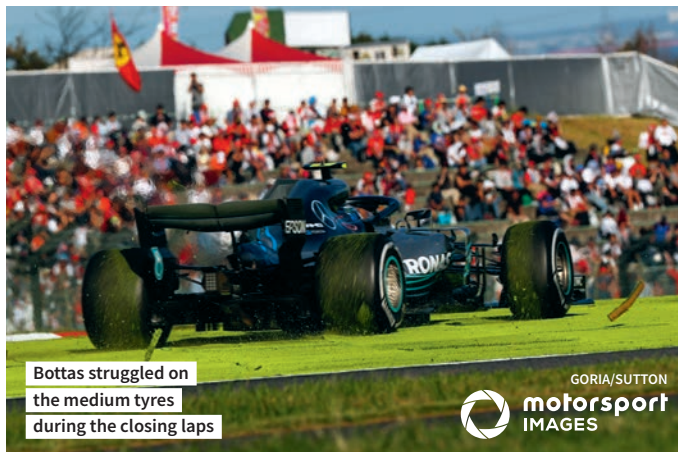
“Look at [the incident with] Kimi – [Verstappen] is off the track and he comes back and if Kimi just drives on they’d collide. But it’s not always right that the other guy has to move. We’re all racing.”

Verstappen, not to mention the stewards who considered this to be a racing incident after investigating, did not agree. He suggested it was similar to the clash in the Chinese Grand Prix, when roles were reversed and Verstappen clattered into Vettel with a misjudged move at the hairpin. The stewards’ verdict was that neither was wholly or predominantly at fault, which is reasonable, although Verstappen’s annoyance was entirely understandable.

“I thought it was a bit like China this year with me,” said Verstappen. “He could have easily gone past me on the straight one lap later or so. But then you see that even the most experienced drivers make mistakes here.”

The upshot was that Vettel was no longer a podium threat. Hamilton, meanwhile, was pulling his usual trick of disguising virtuosity as tedium on a weekend that seemed so simple for him, and avoiding any such scrapes. After taking pole, and along with teammate Valtteri Bottas earning the right to start on softs having used the compound to set his Q2 time, he could barely contain himself, and told anyone who would listen what a great time he was having behind the wheel of the Mercedes W09. And who could blame him?

After a perfect qualifying came a good start, with Hamilton comfortably holding the lead while Bottas slotted into second place.





The lead was 1.341 seconds by the end of the lap, with Verstappen already another 2.6s behind Bottas.

Hamilton timed his restart well, gunning it as he completed a tyre-warm weave on the approach to 130R at the end of the back straight and immediately establishing a 1.3s lead over Bottas. That became 2.2s next time round, then 2.6s as he asserted his authority.

Hamilton was just over 5.8s clear when Bottas dived into the pits at the end of lap 23. Although usual procedure is for the leader to have priority, Hamilton had a big enough lead to be safe from the undercut to let Bottas go first even though there wasn't, at that stage, any big threat from behind.

Verstappen had pitted from third two laps before Bottas, by which time he had slipped almost 10s behind the Finn, and once both had stopped the gap stood at 9.5s.

Up front, Hamilton was able to make his stop to switch to mediums and emerge with a lead reduced to 4.4s. The top three broadly held station in the ensuing laps, until Bottas, also on mediums, started losing ground on lap 28. At the start of that lap, he had 10.2s over soft-shod Verstappen, but over the following 12 laps the gap closed to nothing. On the final two of those laps, Verstappen was over a second faster, and soon piling on the pressure.

Bottas held firm and Verstappen never quite managed to launch an attack, but Bottas did make an error and cut the chicane during the contest. Verstappen, carrying a little floor damage from his earlier Ferrari clashes, had one final push on the last lap, but locked up at the hairpin and ran deep, extinguishing what was already the faintest hope of making a move.

"Initially during the race, everything felt good, I knew what I had to do and I was really just executing the plan," said Bottas. "The pace felt good. But at the end of the second stint I had some blistering, which made it a bit more tricky. But anyway, for me the job was to get to the finish line in P2." >>

QUALIFYING

SOMETIMES IT'S THE HOPE THAT GETS YOU. HAVING BEEN outclassed by Mercedes throughout practice and qualifying, Ferrari thought it was seizing an opportunity by sending both Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen out on intermediate tyres at the start of Q3. The gambit backfired spectacularly, contributing to Vettel ending up ninth fastest, while Raikkonen could only salvage fourth. Up front, for the second consecutive race, it was a Mercedes front-row lockout.

The rain did come, but too late to help Ferrari. In fact, it hindered Vettel, because while Raikkonen at least salvaged fourth place, which he admitted should have been third but for a small mistake at the entry to Spoon Curve, Vettel ran off the road at the same corner and didn't set a serious dry lap time thanks to the rain setting in.

Lewis Hamilton, meanwhile, calmly nailed a lap of 1m27.760s to earn his 80th F1 pole position by 0.299s ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas.

"From the way things were done, I do not think that pole position was within our reach, but what happened today is unacceptable," said Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene. "I am very angry – it is not the first time that these mistakes have occurred."

To add insult to Ferrari's injury, both Mercedes drivers set their fastest Q2 times on soft rubber that gave them a more favourable race strategy, while Vettel and fourth-placed Raikkonen used supersofts.

While Hamilton and Bottas were happy to talk up the decision-making in the Mercedes team, Red Bull had reason to feel ambivalent about the session. Max Verstappen grabbed third place, albeit 1.297s off pole, to put himself ahead of both Ferraris, but Daniel Ricciardo was 15th after a throttle-actuator failure struck on his Q2 out-lap.

In the battle for 'Class B' honours, Romain Grosjean was fifth for Haas, 0.262s faster than Toro Rosso's Brendon Hartley. Grosjean's great achievement was to follow the Mercedes drivers' example, reaching the top 10 using soft rubber in Q2, making that his tyre for the race start.

Hartley was a career-best sixth using the 'Spec 3' Honda engine. He shaded team-mate Pierre Gasly, who said he was not able to run with as aggressive an engine setting as Hartley because of a calibration problem.

Esteban Ocon was eighth in the lead Racing Point Force India, but a three-place grid penalty for not slowing down enough for a red flag in FP3 dropped him behind Vettel, team-mate Sergio Perez and the Sauber of Charles Leclerc.

EDD STRAW

**"I DO NOT
THINK POLE
POSITION
WAS WITHIN
OUR REACH"
ARRIVABENE**





TRACKSIDE VIEW

THE SNAKE IS A NEVER-ENDING, slithering strip of asphalt that comprises much of the first sector of Suzuka. From Turn 3 to Turn 7, wending its way left and right, left and right, then finally left before spitting drivers into the precipitous double Degner right-handers, it's a piece of track only the best master.

Watching FP1 overlooking Turns 3 to 5 gives an up-close perspective of this section of track. It was through the snake in 2000 that rookie Jenson Button excelled for Williams, but it's not easy. Charles Leclerc immediately catches the eye on his first experience of Suzuka. He is able to carry decent speed through the left/right/left without getting out of shape. That translates to a pace advantage in the first sector of almost a tenth of a second over Sauber team-mate Marcus Ericsson on the first runs in FP1, which grows to 0.118s on the second runs.

That may not sound like much, but Ericsson is an underrated driver and one who hadn't been outqualified by any of his team-mates – Kamui Kobayashi, Felipe Nasr and Pascal Wehrlein – in his previous four Japanese Grands Prix. And Leclerc is, along with Sergey Sirotkin and Brendon Hartley, one of only three Suzuka



F1 rookies on the 2018 grid.

"It's probably the first track where I struggled a bit to find the rhythm because there are a lot of corners where you need to compromise one to go quicker in the other," says Leclerc. "Being a new driver to this track, you never know which one you need to compromise on to go quicker in the other. I struggled a bit but from Saturday morning I found the right compromise.

"You need to be extremely

precise and as soon as you lose the line a little bit you're late for the other corners, then you lose a lot. It's very interesting and also a very high-speed part."

On one lap he attacks Turn 3 a bit more aggressively, but the rear isn't quite stable enough for the transition for Turn 4. On another, a little too much kerb also disturbs the Sauber. Leclerc is literally feeling his way here, and learning fast.

Sirotkin, by contrast, is struggling, all corrections and

adjustments both on the steering wheel and the throttle as he harries the car through. But there are mitigating circumstances, not just that he's in a Williams that is inferior to the ever-improving Sauber, but also because he's using a set of supersofts for the whole session thanks to a team tyre mix-up.

So very different to a certain future world champion who qualified fifth for the team here 18 years ago...

EDD STRAW

The Esses at Suzuka is among Formula 1's most exquisite sections



“REALISTICALLY THE
TITLE WAS LOST
BEFORE THE TEAMS
GOT TO SUZUKA”



GORIA/SUTTON
motorsport
IMAGES

Surprisingly, it was Daniel Ricciardo rather than Raikkonen who rounded out the top four. Ricciardo started 15th after a throttle-actuator failure early in Q2, but made short work of clearing the midfield. He did so by the chicane on lap 13, passing Grosjean's Haas for fifth, and then set about closing on Raikkonen.

Ricciardo brought the gap down from 7.7s to 4.2s when Raikkonen inexplicably peeled into the pits to take on medium Pirellis at the end of lap 17. This was a puzzling strategic error by Ferrari, and it's unclear whether it was a serious attempt to undercut ahead of Verstappen, who was by this stage over six seconds up the road but still in range thanks to the five-second penalty he had to serve at his stop, or a consequence of the fear of Ricciardo closing.

Either way, it left Raikkonen mired in traffic. With Verstappen running to the end of lap 21 before pitting to take on softs, the time lost meant there was no chance for Raikkonen to recover third, even with Verstappen's penalty.

Ricciardo, meanwhile, was able to run to lap 23 and stop for mediums and emerge ahead of Raikkonen. Ricciardo did have a tyre-range advantage in that first stint over Raikkonen thanks to starting on softs, and was quicker, but it was strange that Ferrari made it so easy for Red Bull to jump him.

Vettel was making his recovery to sixth while this was going on. None of the midfield drivers showed any inclination to put up much of a fight, save perhaps for a fleeting flash of futile belligerence from Fernando Alonso, as Vettel spent much of the afternoon overtaking sundry 'Class B' runners – some of them twice, having had to make his pitstop for softs at the end of lap 26.

But making 20-odd passes in the race was of little solace given Vettel's sixth place means Hamilton could clinch the world championship with three races to spare in Austin. That's just a question of mathematics, since realistically we all know this title was lost before the teams even got to Suzuka. The instability at Ferrari, in stark contrast to the serenity at Mercedes, is proof of that.

There's no question the Mercedes is now the quicker car. Ferrari has reason to be disappointed with that and the apparent loss of some of its power advantage has led to all sorts of rumours, but what reflects badly on the team is that it has started making too many errors.

One of the first rules of winning a championship is you need to do the best you can on any given day. In qualifying, Ferrari's intermediate-tyre gamble was motivated by a refusal to accept third and fourth. If you can be third, be third – don't throw it away in a vainglorious attempt to change the inevitable.

Ferrari would have looked heroic had the gamble paid off, certainly, but the fact remains that the other eight cars in Q3 all played the conditions in front of them at the time and went for slicks. You could say it's ambition, but Arrivabene's reaction to the blunder is evidence of a team in which the pressure has got to them – perhaps the leadership in particular.

Hamilton, meanwhile, can barely believe what is happening. Just over a month ago, this was one of the fiercest drivers' championship battles in history: the lead had changed hands five times and Hamilton was only ahead thanks to wet-weather virtuosity in Germany and Hungary, and a few costly Vettel errors. Now he's got one whole hand and four fingers of the other on the championship. ❧



Leclerc slates 'stupid' Magnussen after collision

Sauber driver Charles Leclerc believed Kevin Magnussen should have been penalised for his defence of 12th place at the start of the second lap of the race that led to the pair colliding.

Leclerc was closing on Magnussen on the start/finish straight when he jinked to the right at the same time as the Dane moved that way in anticipation of Leclerc's attempt to pass.

Leclerc hit the rear of Magnussen's car, sustaining front-wing damage that forced a change under the safety car. Magnussen suffered a left-rear puncture and subsequently retired after the flailing rubber left a large amount of carbonfibre from the Haas around the track as he recovered to the pits.

"I don't understand why he hasn't been penalised today," said Leclerc, who later also retired. "I need to understand because if that's possible then I'll do that next time and I will also expect a driver to do that. It's dangerous at this type of speed."

Magnussen was not penalised because stewards considered that both drivers moved to the right simultaneously, meaning it was not considered to be a late block.

"I think it is impossible to say Kevin blocked him," said F1 race director Charlie Whiting. "It was just that he had made the decision, he was going to go right, fractionally after Charles had."

Why Verstappen was penalised for Raikkonen clash

Formula 1 race director Charlie Whiting has no doubts Max Verstappen "clearly" deserved a penalty for his first-lap incident with Kimi Raikkonen in the Japanese Grand Prix.

Verstappen felt it was a "bit stupid" that he received a five-second penalty for rejoining the track in an unsafe manner after he ran wide at the chicane and pushed Raikkonen wide, allowing Sebastian Vettel to pass.

But Whiting thinks there can be no doubt that the Red Bull driver deserved punishment for the way he came back onto the circuit.

"It was quite clearly a penalty because Max went off the track and rejoined the track unsafely," said Whiting. "You are required to rejoin safely and Kimi was there, and [Verstappen] pushed

him off the track. So I think that was a fairly straightforward one for the stewards."

Whiting believed that the later Verstappen incident with Vettel, when they clashed at Spoon Curve in the fight for third, could not be blamed on either driver, which is why no penalty was handed out.

"Seb tried to get up the inside, and it was a reasonable move," added Whiting. "He got halfway alongside and Max turned in – a bit of a classic really. Stewards don't normally give penalties unless they are sure that one driver was wholly or predominantly to blame."

"Opinions will vary on whether there was equal blame, but no driver was predominantly to blame, they felt."



STAT

20

Combined total of seconds Verstappen has been penalised in races this season

Sainz salvages a point for Renault as Hulk strategy fails

Carlos Sainz Jr picked up a point for Renault with 10th place at Suzuka, meaning Haas is still eight points behind in the battle for fourth in the constructors' championship.

Renault endured an uncompetitive weekend at Suzuka, and Sainz started 13th on the grid and ran 12th early on having been passed by Daniel Ricciardo on lap two following a good start. He ran his set of softs to the end of lap 32, emerging in 13th place. He overcame Marcus Ericsson and gained another place when Charles Leclerc made a second pitstop.

Sainz then picked off Pierre Gasly's Toro Rosso on his 50th lap to claim the point. Gasly was struggling with grip at that stage as his Toro Rosso was unusually hard on the tyres, having run as high as sixth early on but faded late in both stints.

Team-mate Nico Hulkenberg tried an alternative strategy, starting 16th and running long on medium rubber in the hope that a well-timed safety car could elevate him into points contention. It didn't come and he retired from last place with a 'rear-end issue' – the issue being that he was at the rear of the field.





Perez grabs 'Class B' victory with Grosjean pass

Sergio Perez won Formula 1's unofficial 'Class B' race by finishing seventh after an opportunistic pass on Romain Grosjean's Haas at a virtual-safety-car restart.

Perez's move came at the chicane at the end of the 41st lap, as he carried a little more speed when the green flags flew and was able to go around the outside of Grosjean into the right/left flick.

Grosjean was furious about the overtake, asking how it was possible, but the VSC rules simply dictate how quickly drivers can complete sectors, and Perez was simply sharper at the restart and already carrying more speed when the track went green.

Grosjean had started from class pole after a superb qualifying performance, particularly in Q2 when he was the only midfield runner to set his time on softs. That gave him a strategic advantage.

With both Toro Rosso drivers, who started behind Grosjean, fading in the race (see page 29), it came down to a battle between Grosjean and the Racing Point Force Indias of Perez and Esteban Ocon. Perez had failed to set a serious lap time in dry conditions in Q3, so started ninth, while Ocon had started 11th after a three-place grid penalty for speeding under the red flag in FP3.

The pair ran eighth and ninth early on before undercutting their way past Pierre Gasly, and did have stronger race pace than Haas even though Ocon was unable to get past Grosjean.



REMEMBER WHEN

JAPANESE GRAND PRIX 1998 MIKA HAKKINEN'S FIRST TITLE

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of winning his first world championship with victory in the Japanese Grand Prix, Mika Hakkinen drove his title-winning McLaren-Mercedes MP4-13 on all three days at Suzuka this year. It was part of a celebration of classic grand prix cars and drivers, with Satoru Nakajima, Takuma Sato, Aguri Suzuki and Jean Alesi also appearing – as well as an unexpected outing for a 1988 AGS JH23.

"Driving my winning car here, it's an incredible feeling," said Hakkinen. "Some people think 20 years since you won a world championship, so is it emotional? Only in terms of happiness. It was great to win a championship here twice, so there's only good memories, and driving this car is amazing. What the designers, engineers, mechanics created... it was just a mega, mega job. It has a beautiful balance all the way through the corner."



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Ericsson crashes in misjudged pass of Bottas in qualifying

Sauber's Marcus Ericsson crashed out of the first stage of qualifying after a misjudgement while passing the cruising Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas.

Ericsson was on his second push lap in Q1 when he entered the long Turn 7 left-hander. Bottas was offline and tight on the inside, but the momentary loss of front-end downforce thanks to airflow disturbance led to Ericsson understeering

his Sauber off the track.

"I just lost the front end," said Ericsson. "I knew there was a car up there but it was well on the inside so I thought it was going to be fine, but I looked at the video afterwards and I think it's enough to disturb the car."

"You can see on the data that I had quite a bit more understeer on that lap compared to the previous lap. It's not an excuse, I obviously went too fast for the grip available,

but it was a shame."

Ericsson qualified and started last, taking a new gearbox and energy store, but finished 12th after a marathon stint on mediums following a stop under the safety car.

He held off Brendon Hartley, on fresher rubber, in the closing stages, surviving rear-ending team-mate Charles Leclerc in a concertina effect at the chicane at the safety car restart.

Alonso and Stroll penalised for same incident

Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll were both hit with five-second time penalties for the same incident early in the Japanese Grand Prix.

Alonso was battling with the Williams driver on the run to 130R, with Stroll running slightly wide at the exit of the corner after entering it ahead. This allowed Alonso to get a run on him into

the chicane on the outside line, with Stroll moving left and hitting the McLaren's right-front wheel with his left-rear. This forced Alonso off track, which is what Stroll was penalised for.

Alonso went onto the grass at the chicane, but decided to keep the throttle lit and cut more of the corner than necessary. This was deemed to earn him a "significant

advantage", meaning he was also penalised, and led to him criticising the punishment after the race.

"You are braking on the outside at the last corner, and one guy didn't see you and came here to apologise after you go on the gravel and you get the penalty," said Alonso. "It's a shame."



'Spec 3' Honda engine a success despite Toro Rosso woes

Honda was satisfied with the performance of its upgraded Formula 1 engine in the Japanese Grand Prix, despite Toro Rosso's failure to convert sixth and seventh-placed starts into points at Honda's home race.

Honda opted not to race the updated engine in Russia the previous weekend after recording higher-than-expected post-upshift oscillations in practice. It addressed the problem at its Milton Keynes base in the week and declared it "a big improvement" after Friday practice at Suzuka.

The upgrade played a key role in Brendon Hartley and Pierre Gasly qualifying sixth and seventh, but they failed to score points due to a poor start and tyre problems respectively.

Gasly's race was also compromised slightly after Honda was stopped from changing the post-shift ignition-retard settings on his car after qualifying. The FIA gave Honda permission to do so, but Honda contests it was then informed on the grid that it needed to change back and does not know why.

It is understood that Honda is considered to have not made the change specifically as it was requested, so was told to revert to the previous settings.

Gasly had to alter the timing of his upshifts during the grand prix. Honda says the change did not limit the engine's performance in the race, but wants more information on why the FIA changed its original decision.





FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.691s
2	Bottas	1m29.137s
3	Ricciardo	1m29.373s
4	Raikkonen	1m29.627s
5	Vettel	1m29.685s
6	Verstappen	1m29.841s
7	Ocon	1m30.591s
8	Grosjean	1m30.814s
9	Leclerc	1m30.929s
10	Ericsson	1m31.073s
11	Gasly	1m31.073s
12	Sainz	1m31.100s
13	Perez	1m31.272s
14	Magnussen	1m31.274s
15	Hulkenberg	1m31.418s
16	Stroll	1m31.508s
17	Hartley	1m31.908s
18	Alonso	1m32.034s
19	Sirotkin	1m32.513s
20	Norris	1m32.683s

WEATHER 24C, cloudy

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.217s
2	Bottas	1m28.678s
3	Vettel	1m29.050s
4	Verstappen	1m29.257s
5	Raikkonen	1m29.498s
6	Ricciardo	1m29.513s
7	Ocon	1m30.035s
8	Grosjean	1m30.440s
9	Ericsson	1m30.478s
10	Hartley	1m30.502s
11	Perez	1m30.510s
12	Hulkenberg	1m30.644s
13	Gasly	1m30.795s
14	Sainz	1m30.904s
15	Leclerc	1m30.906s
16	Magnussen	1m30.956s
17	Alonso	1m30.988s
18	Sirotkin	1m31.087s
19	Stroll	1m31.215s
20	Vandoorne	1m31.981s

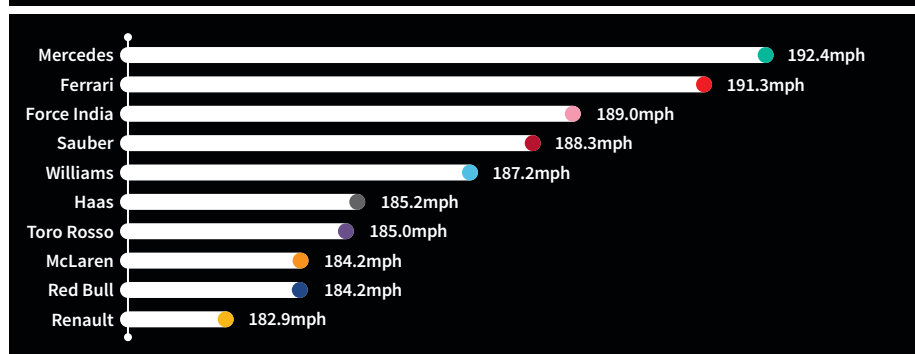
WEATHER 24C, cloudy

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m29.599s
2	Vettel	1m29.715s
3	Raikkonen	1m30.054s
4	Verstappen	1m30.304s
5	Bottas	1m30.422s
6	Ricciardo	1m30.474s
7	Ocon	1m31.088s
8	Perez	1m31.483s
9	Sainz	1m31.513s
10	Magnussen	1m31.521s
11	Grosjean	1m31.636s
12	Leclerc	1m31.760s
13	Hartley	1m32.030s
14	Stroll	1m32.201s
15	Hulkenberg	1m32.224s
16	Ericsson	1m32.442s
17	Alonso	1m32.608s
18	Sirotkin	1m32.631s
19	Vandoorne	1m33.034s
20	Gasly	1m33.105s

WEATHER 25C, cloudy/damp

SPEED TRAP



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m28.702s
2	Vettel	1m29.049s
3	Bottas	1m29.297s
4	Verstappen	1m29.480s
5	Raikkonen	1m29.631s
6	Leclerc	1m29.706s
7	Grosjean	1m29.724s
8	Ricciardo	1m29.806s
9	Ocon	1m29.899s
10	Gasly	1m30.137s
11	Magnussen	1m30.219s
12	Sainz	1m30.236s
13	Perez	1m30.247s
14	Hartley	1m30.248s
15	Stroll	1m30.317s
16	Hulkenberg	1m30.361s
17	Sirotkin	1m30.372s
18	Alonso	1m30.573s
19	Vandoorne	1m31.041s
20	Ericsson	1m31.213s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m27.987s
2	Hamilton	1m28.017s
3	Vettel	1m28.279s
4	Raikkonen	1m28.595s
5	Verstappen	1m28.849s
6	Ocon	1m29.538s
7	Perez	1m29.567s
8	Grosjean	1m29.678s
9	Gasly	1m29.810s
10	Hartley	1m29.848s
11	Leclerc	1m29.864s
12	Magnussen	1m30.226s
13	Sainz	1m30.490s
14	Stroll	1m30.714s
15	Ricciardo	no time

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m27.760s
2	Bottas	1m28.059s
3	Verstappen	1m29.057s
4	Raikkonen	1m29.521s
5	Grosjean	1m29.761s
6	Hartley	1m30.023s
7	Gasly	1m30.093s
8	Ocon	1m30.126s
9	Vettel	1m32.192s
10	Perez	1m37.229s

WEATHER 26C, cloudy/rain

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Hamilton	331
2	Vettel	264
3	Bottas	207
4	Raikkonen	196
5	Verstappen	173
6	Ricciardo	146
7	Perez	53
8	Magnussen	53
9	Hulkenberg	53
10	Alonso	50
11	Ocon	49
12	Sainz	39
13	Grosjean	31
14	Gasly	28
15	Leclerc	21
16	Vandoorne	8
17	Stroll	6
18	Ericsson	6
19	Hartley	2
20	Sirotkin	1

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	538
2	Ferrari	460
3	Red Bull	319
4	Renault	92
5	Haas	84
6	McLaren	58
7	Racing Point Force India	43*
8	Toro Rosso	30
9	Sauber	27
10	Williams	7

* Team lost its 59 points scored in rounds 1-12 as Force India due to its name change.

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	11	6	Bottas
Vettel	13	4	Raikkonen
Ricciardo	2	14	Verstappen
Perez	4	13	Ocon
Stroll	7	10	Sirotkin
Hulkenberg	9	8	Sainz
Gasly	11	4	Hartley
Grosjean	7	9	Magnussen
Vandoorne	0	17	Alonso
Ericsson	3	14	Leclerc

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying, as happened with Hartley in Spain and GB, Verstappen in Monaco, and Grosjean in Canada.

WINS

Hamilton	9
Vettel	5
Ricciardo	2
Verstappen	1

FASTEST LAPS

Bottas	5
Ricciardo	4
Hamilton	2
Verstappen	2
Vettel	2
Magnussen	1
Raikkonen	1

POLE POSITIONS

Hamilton	8
Vettel	5
Bottas	2
Raikkonen	1
Ricciardo	1

STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 17/21, 53 LAPS - 191.05 MILES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GB)	Mercedes	1h27m17.062s	53	Su, Mn
2	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+12.919s		Su, Mn
3	Max Verstappen (NL)	Red Bull-Renault	+14.295s		SSu, Sn
4	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Red Bull-Renault	+19.495s		Sn, Mn
5	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Ferrari	+50.998s		SSu, Mn
6	Sebastian Vettel (D)	Ferrari	+1m09.873s		SSu, Sn
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Force India-Mercedes	+1m19.379s		SSu, Sn
8	Romain Grosjean (F)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m27.198s		Su, Mn
9	Esteban Ocon (F)	Force India-Mercedes	+1m28.055s		SSu, Mn
10	Carlos Sainz (E)	Renault	-1lap		Sn, Mn
11	Pierre Gasly (F)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1lap		SSu, Sn
12	Marcus Ericsson (S)	Sauber-Ferrari	-1lap		Sn, Mn
13	Brendon Hartley (NZ)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1lap		SSu, Sn
14	Fernando Alonso (E)	McLaren-Renault	-1lap		Sn, Mn
15	Stoffel Vandoorne (B)	McLaren-Renault	-1lap		Sn, Mn
16	Sergey Sirotkin (RUS)	Williams-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, SSn
17	Lance Stroll (CDN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, SSn
R	Charles Leclerc (MC)	Sauber-Ferrari	38laps-accident damage		Sn, Mn, Su
R	Nico Hulkenberg (D)	Renault	37laps-rear end		Mn, Sn
R	Kevin Magnussen (DK)	Haas-Ferrari	8laps-accident damage		Sn, Mn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Vettel	1m32.318s	-	53
2	Hamilton	1m32.785s	+0.467s	51
3	Bottas	1m33.110s	+0.792s	46
4	Ricciardo	1m33.187s	+0.869s	50
5	Stroll	1m33.354s	+1.036s	41
6	Verstappen	1m33.367s	+1.049s	50
7	Alonso	1m33.943s	+1.625s	28
8	Sirotkin	1m33.985s	+1.667s	41
9	Perez	1m34.073s	+1.755s	43
10	Gasly	1m34.133s	+1.815s	35
11	Sainz	1m34.197s	+1.879s	50
12	Raikkonen	1m34.223s	+1.905s	28
13	Leclerc	1m34.515s	+2.197s	37
14	Ocon	1m34.670s	+2.352s	50
15	Grosjean	1m34.786s	+2.468s	47
16	Hartley	1m34.857s	+2.539s	30
17	Hulkenberg	1m34.934s	+2.616s	32
18	Vandoorne	1m35.023s	+2.705s	25
19	Ericsson	1m36.294s	+3.976s	8
20	Magnussen	1m39.908s	+7.590s	6

WEATHER 28C, sunny

TYRES n - New set u - Used set Available | SH - Superhard H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft SS - Supersoft US - Ultrasoft HS - Hypersoft I - Intermediate W - Wet

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 131.34mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 140.71mph

RACE BRIEFING

FP1
LANDO NORRIS replaced Vandoorne at McLaren

GRID PENALTIES

OCN Three-place penalty and two licence points for failing to slow during a red-flag period

ERICSSON 15-place penalty for replacement gearbox and additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES

VERSTAPPEN Five-second penalty and one licence point

for rejoining the track unsafely
STROLL Five-second penalty and two licence points for forcing Alonso off the track
ALONSO Five-second penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an advantage

STAT
80

Hamilton has now scored 80 pole positions in F1, 12 more than previous record holder Michael Schumacher

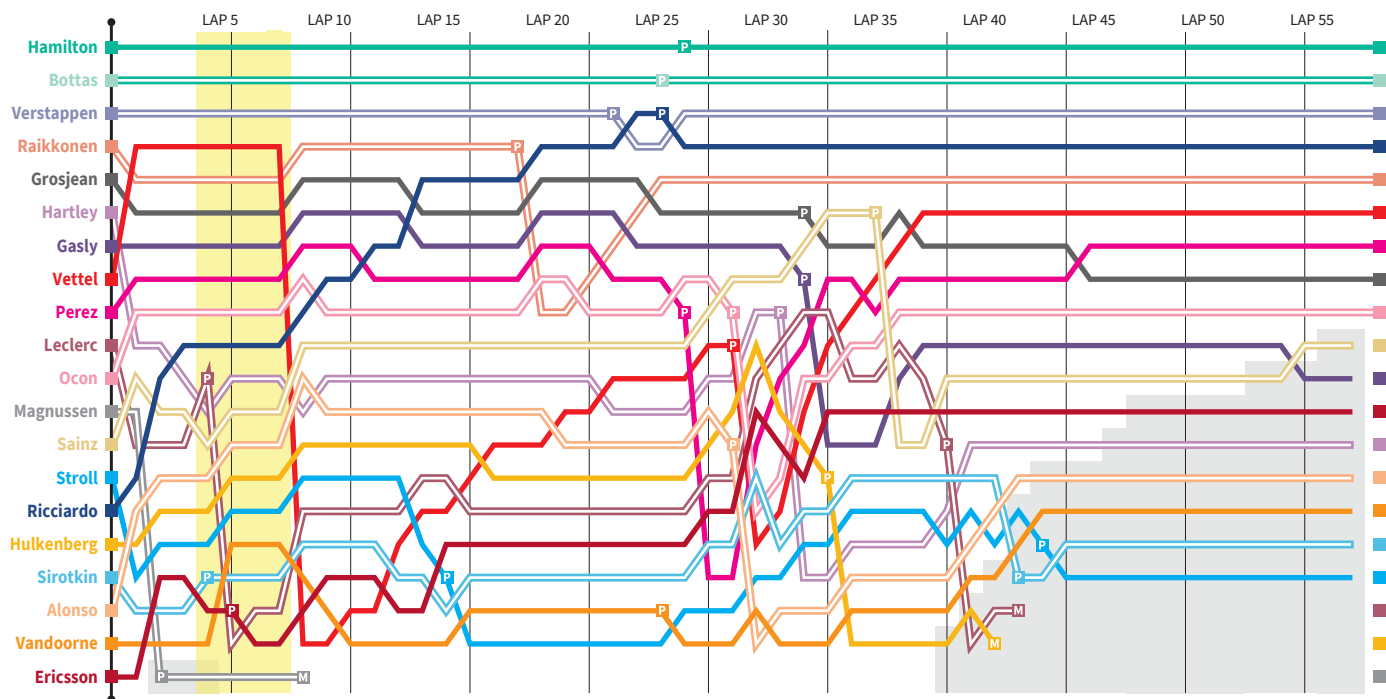
NEXT RACE

OCTOBER 21
UNITED STATES GP

Austin



LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin + Penalty L Car lapped Y Safety car

THE SUN SETS ON VETTEL'S CHAMPIONSHIP HOPES

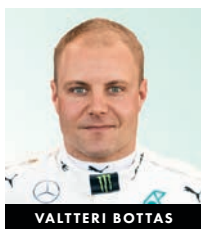
Japan may be the land of the rising sun, but Lewis Hamilton's superlative performance decisively put Sebastian Vettel in the shade

EDD STRAW

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON



VALTTERI BOTTAS

10 Like all the best drivers, he not only capitalised on the best car but also made it look more dominant. He drove with the freedom you'd expect of a man who knows he's got the upper hand, but the fact that he avoided any of the problems Bottas had shows just how in control he was.

7 Bottas did the job he was there to do, but he didn't quite have his team-mate's pace in qualifying. His first stint in the race was hard to fault, but he did struggle with the tyres later on and came under intense pressure. He made a few errors, but still delivered the required result.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

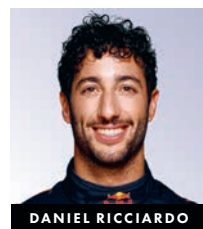


KIMI RAIKKONEN

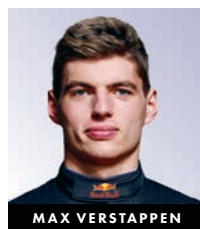
5 Vettel's pace was not a problem, and the quality error was not his. But he did make a big mistake on his one Q3 shot that left him ninth fastest. He recovered superbly early in the race before his misjudgement in passing Verstappen. The move was on, but Vettel overestimated the grip. Too scrappy.

7 Raikkonen didn't quite have the pace of Vettel, and a mistake cost him third on the grid. But it was a far smaller mistake than his team-mate's. Raikkonen's race was compromised by damage caused by the Verstappen collision, which he couldn't do much about. His drive was decent enough.

RED BULL



DANIEL RICCIARDO

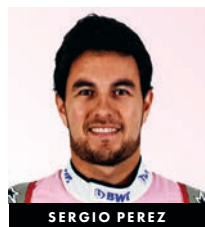


MAX VERSTAPPEN

9 As has become usual, Ricciardo was giving away a few tenths to Verstappen on single-lap pace. But after a throttle-actuator failure in Q2 left him 15th on the grid he made quick progress to clear the 'Class B' cars by lap 13, then leapfrogged Raikkonen. It was a classy recovery.

9 Verstappen made the best of a bad job in trying to take the fight to the Mercedes drivers, and the fact that he gave Bottas so much to think about in the closing stages is to his credit. The downside is the error that resulted in him being penalised, though it probably didn't impact his result.

FORCE INDIA



SERGIO PEREZ

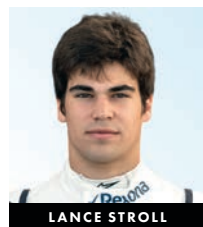


ESTEBAN OCON

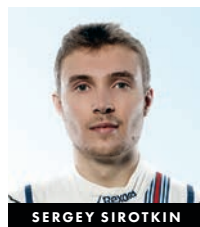
9 Qualifying wasn't as good as it should have been: Perez was four or five places behind where he should have started. But in the race he drove well, and a combination of the timing of the end of the VSC and his own precision let him mug Grosjean at the restart for 'Class B' victory.

7 Ocon did a better job than Perez in qualifying, but arguably he could have picked off the two Toro Rossos. Has to shoulder part of the blame for the three-place grid drop for speeding under the red flag in FP3, but he drove an accomplished race to finish right behind Grosjean's Haas.

WILLIAMS



LANCE STROLL

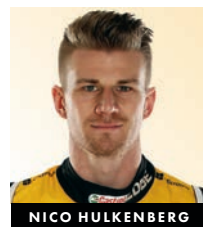


SERGEY SIROTKIN

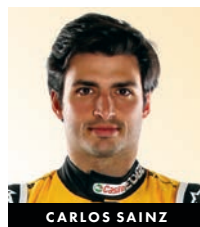
6 Stroll qualified well, reaching Q2 after shading Sirotkin. His race was a little messy, notably running wide at the exit of 130R, then shoving Alonso off the track at the chicane while trying to repulse the resulting attack. Stroll's pace was decent but scruffy moments didn't help him.

7 While Stroll had the edge in quali, Sirotkin did pick up a fraction more rain in the final sector. He drove a good race in difficult circumstances after pitting under the safety car and managed to beat Stroll by a few seconds. A decent weekend's work on his first visit to Suzuka.

RENAULT



NICO HULKENBERG



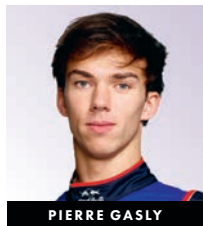
CARLOS SAINZ

7 The rating may seem a little generous, but circumstances made it very difficult for Hulkenberg. The team did reckon the slipstream he ended up giving Sainz in Q1 made the difference between him being ahead or behind Sainz, and he was put on a strategy that required luck that never came.

9 Circumstances make it difficult to compare his performance with Hulkenberg's, but Sainz deserves enormous credit for nicking a point in a Renault that didn't look much like a top-10 runner. What's more, it came thanks to a late pass on Gasly. Effectively a point from nothing.

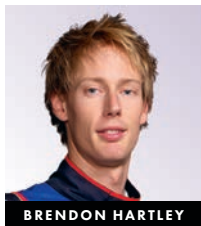


TORO ROSSO



PIERRE GASLY

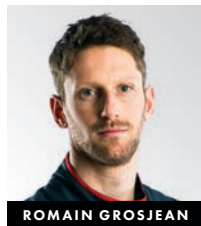
7 Gasly was quick, and but for not having quite the same engine settings as Hartley in Q3 he might well have been one place higher on the grid. The race didn't come together owing to various minor engine-related glitches, which on top of tyre troubles meant he lost the final points position to Sainz.



BRENDON HARTLEY

7 After Hartley's career-best qualifying performance, his race fell apart in the first few seconds when he picked up a load of wheelspin. Struggles with both sets of tyres didn't help matters, although Hartley perhaps should still have found his way back past Ericsson in the closing stages.

HAAS



ROMAIN GROSJEAN

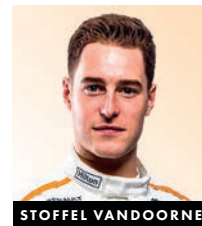
9 Grosjean had a largely superb weekend, taking 'Class B' pole, making Q3 using softs and then doing just about everything right until he got ambushed by Perez at the VSC restart. That cost him seventh place; his defence against Ocon proved that he was capable of keeping the Force Indias behind.



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

5 Magnussen couldn't nail his soft-tyre run as effectively as Grosjean did in Q2, which left him 12th on the grid. While his move when being attacked by Leclerc was ruled legal, ultimately this ruined his race. Magnussen underachieved in qualifying, then his race went nowhere.

McLAREN



STOFFEL VANDOORNE

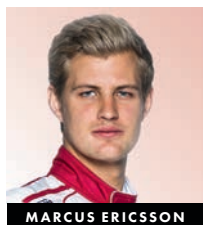
6 Vandoorne was 0.468s slower than Alonso in Q1. But to that we have to add the caveat that he missed FP1 to allow Lando Norris a first taste of Suzuka. Vandoorne's race drive was quietly decent, and he finished in the traffic jam behind the obstinate Ericsson – just behind Alonso.



FERNANDO ALONSO

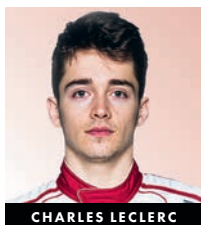
7 Saturday brought the usual order of outpacing Vandoorne followed by hyperbole (it was Alonso's best Suzuka lap, apparently). But Alonso bafflingly believed he could get away with keeping the throttle nailed after being forced off-track by Stroll. This moment compromised his race.

SAUBER



MARCUS ERICSSON

7 Ericsson's drive to 12th was impressive considering he stopped for mediums under the early safety car and ran to the end. But the Q1 crash was what defined his hopes, forcing him onto the unusual strategy. Rear-ending team-mate Leclerc at the safety-car restart was unfortunate.

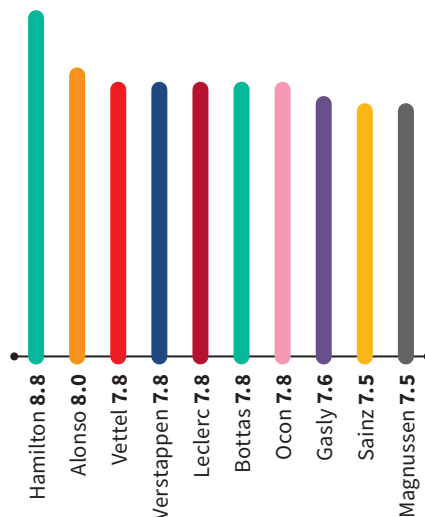


CHARLES LECLERC

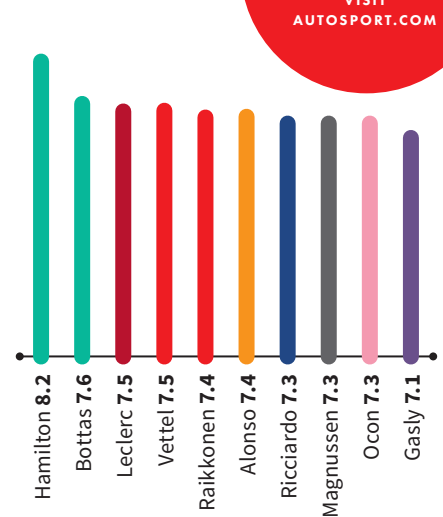
6 Leclerc found Suzuka a challenging circuit to get on top of, but he did so well, even though a mistake cost him a Q3 place the car had the pace to achieve. He was understandably unhappy with Magnussen's move on the straight, which forced him onto an alternative strategy.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS

AUTOSPORT'S RATING AFTER ROUND 17



READERS' RATING AFTER ROUND 17



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High five for Ogier in GB battle royal

The reigning champion is now the most successful driver in the history of Britain's round of the WRC after a thrilling fight to the finish

DAVID EVANS





It was agony. And ecstasy. Agony again. And a bit more ecstasy. Last week's Rally GB was an emotional rollercoaster. They fought, drove like heroes, won seconds and lost minutes. In an impossible-to-call season that has ebbed and flowed around three drivers, round 11 followed that trend perfectly. But come Sunday afternoon it was reigning champion Sebastien Ogier who won an absolute thriller.

It was some story that carried us through the four days to the finish. Toyota's Esapekka Lappi led the crews into Friday, although not actually on the road – that duty would still fall to championship leader Thierry Neuville.

Ahead of the rally, title contender Ott Tanak had been upbeat – not surprising given that the Toyota ace hadn't lost a rally since Sardinia in early June. Sliding off on a square-right while fiddling with the wipers hadn't been the best start to shakedown. He dinked the radiator on the Yaris, but his main concern was dented pride and an unexpected tenderness after an abrupt stop tightened his crotch strap painfully.

"The feeling is good now," he said between mouthfuls of grapes and apple later on Thursday. "I'm making changes with the car and it's working now."

Feeding that confidence, the Estonian had been the only driver to test Michelin's new soft tyre in nearly dry, damp and soaking conditions during his pre-event running.

Away from the spotlight, Tanak admitted the team had found something with the car, something that would suit the conditions. Last time out in Turkey, team principal Tommi Makinen had talked of his fears for the Yaris in changeable and particularly slippery conditions.

"I think it's the opposite now," smiled Tanak. And so it played out.

The Clocaenog stage is narrow, muddy under the trees and generally a tricky place to start. Tanak was fastest.

Moving on to Brenig, the event's longest stage has more surface and grip changes than you could possibly imagine in 18 miles. Great gravel gave way to a lumpy, rutted, muddy nightmare, with rocky sections, the odd bit of bedrock and more asphalt than any other stage thrown in for good measure.

"It was the nightmare," said Tanak. "You didn't know what was coming next. So hard to judge." But he was still fastest.

Into the mountains and the drizzle of Snowdonia's classic Penmachno test. Same story: Tanak was fastest.

By that point on Friday, the only driver able to hold a candle to the flying Toyota was local hero Elfyn Evans. By the time they rocked up at the all-new Slate Mountain stage, last year's winner was nine seconds down – with his nearest rival Jari-Matti Latvala a similar distance behind in third.

"It's not a bad start," said Evans, "it's just been so hard to judge the grip – I've been quite careful this morning."

Unfortunately, it didn't last. The two runs around the former slate quarry in Blaenau Ffestiniog were the last we'd see of the #2 Ford Fiesta WRC in competition on Friday. A flash of flame from the rear of the car coming out of service spelled disaster for Evans. A misfire hit the Fiesta and, despite solid work beneath the bonnet for the second rally in succession, he couldn't coax this one back.

Evans isn't a man who often shows his emotions, as the absence of any overt victory celebrations demonstrated last year. But the hurt this one delivered was written across his face.

"We could have done with this one," said his co-driver Dan Barritt, before adding with a thin smile, "but at least we were there with Ott through the morning."

Beyond breaking Tanak's run of fastest times, the sodden and mist-shrouded Slate Mountain test had little impact on the leaderboard. Tanak won two of the afternoon's rerun three stages and arrived at the final control, just after the finish of



Penmachno, with a big smile.

He switched the Toyota off just behind Neuville's Hyundai. He'd conceded fastest time to his rival in the final Friday test, but held a near half-minute lead over him. Stepping from the Yaris, he pulled on his jacket and began to reflect on the day when the car started to roll forward. Quick as a flash he dived in and stamped on the brake.

Was that the biggest moment of the day? "Maybe it was," he grinned, safe in the knowledge that the thing was firmly in gear and going nowhere. "Actually, there were some funny slides in there as well. Good day today. I didn't think we were going crazy this morning, I was just driving neat, middle of the road. It's good, but there's a long way to go."

Neuville may have been second, but his mood was dark. "We can't stay with him," said Hyundai's championship leader of his nearest challenger coming into the event. "He is flying."

Which made now a good time to fill us in on what changed with a Welsh-spec Yaris comprehensively outgunned here last year. But Tanak liked his secret and wanted to keep it. Turns out a working



Evans was in a strong second place until a misfire intervened



week in the Welsh woods with five days of solid chassis, geometry and damper work had done wonders.

Beyond Tanak's searing pace through the first of two days in north Wales, the other talking point was the abject misery that descended on M-Sport. Last time the Cumbrians were here, they were winning everything. Now they were in danger of losing the lot.

Evans was out and team-mate Teemu Suninen joined him on the Friday retirement list on the second run through Penmachno, where he dropped his Fiesta in a ditch.

But what of Ogier? What of the man who had talked so eloquently and determinedly of his need to show Tanak and Neuville a clean pair of heels to keep his title hopes alive? Try fifth, 38.2s behind (albeit just 10s behind Neuville in second). The first time through Penmachno had done for the Frenchman. He'd spun the Fiesta and tried to snatch reverse too quickly.

"It was my fault," said Ogier. "It was between gears and it broke the dogs. I lost first and second gear. Now we

have nothing to lose tomorrow — we have to make the full attack. Finishing in fourth or fifth place means nothing for us."

Ogier cut a disgruntled figure as he eyed a top 10 that had him in the middle and his two main title rivals right at the top.

Looking to offer some sliver of silver lining in the gathering gloom, Autosport pointed out that Saturday's wider and faster stages were more to his liking than Friday's narrow, nadgery mileage. "You're right, they're beautiful," he said. "But with the speed, it's harder to make the time."

Next morning, Ogier delivered on the opener. Above the generator station that harvests power from the wind turbines dominating a clear-felled stretch across the top of Myherin, nobody could have denied Ogier's delivery on his commitment call.

The cars come into sight over a brow and accelerate hard downhill through a fast right and left. The third corner is the one to watch. It's a right-hander that's flat. Sometimes — if you're feeling brave enough.

The Fiesta was flat. "Actually it was not completely flat," he smiled later that morning. "I take a small lift to help >>

WRC BREAKS NEW GROUND



Trevor and Janine weren't expecting this. Walking out of Beachside Guest House on Llandudno's South Parade on Sunday morning, they were confronted by a different world. Bags in hand, the journey home to St Albans was halted. At least for half an hour.

Right on cue, Thierry Neuville came to town in a style nobody in Britain had ever seen before. He lifted off and threw his Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC at the first chicane on the A456. With the car unsettled, he was back hard on the throttle, drifting the thing between the bales before repeating the process for the second chicane 100 yards down the road.

The car's machine-gun-fire anti-lag bounced off the walls, and the pure noise of a modern-day World Rally Car caused bags to be dropped, fingers to be put in ears and jaws to slacken. It's fair to say Trevor and Janine had never seen anything like this.

"What is it?" Trevor asked, transfixed. Donut completed at the end of Gloddaeth Street, Neuville was back heading our way. Trailing the throttle through the right-hander onto the seafront where the finish was waiting, this glorious blue-and-orange sensory invasion once again exploded unused fuel as the turbo continued to spin. A flash of flame accompanied half a turn of lock and the noise and commotion were gone. At least for the next two minutes.

Hertfordshire could wait. The WRC had found two more fans. World-class motorsport arrived on British streets last Sunday, and it couldn't have been more welcome. Rally GB managing director Ben Taylor and his team had worked for a year for that moment, and many hadn't seen their beds as they put the stage together on Saturday night. But when the sun rose on Sunday morning, the magic began.

DAVID EVANS

ROVANPERA TO THE MAX



Rovanpera was supreme in the WRC2 class

Kalle Roovanpera is here. A second WRC2 win (and the first with opposition) couldn't have come in more dominant fashion as 'rallying's Max Verstappen' won 15 of Rally GB's 23 stages. Realistically, the event was over after Friday morning, when he took a 36-second lead into service.

The field had been lauded as one of the strongest in the WRC2's history for the R5-class cars, not least Roovanpera's reigning champion Skoda team-mate Pontus Tidemand, who won the class in last year's Rally GB and has long been touted for a top WRC seat in the future.

Bearing in mind Roovanpera is just 18 years old – becoming the class's youngest-ever winner – he has well and truly banished any doubt that he is destined for great things.

He had made his WRC2 debut in Wales weeks after his 17th birthday last year, becoming its youngest starter, but a lacklustre performance (including an off that broke his radiator) left question marks. This year he's

switched to descriptive notes and swapped a Fiesta for a Fabia.

His pace has been brilliant in 2018, but the odd mistake – like a roll into a car park in Argentina – has been made. But at his age, he probably ought to be making those mistakes and in Wales he proved he could lead from the front in style.

Tidemand came under pressure from Brit Gus Greensmith – leading the M-Sport charge in his Fiesta R5 – but a spin for Greensmith on Saturday morning's Dyfi stage made the gap too big to reconcile. Jari Huttunen (Hyundai i20) and Stephane Lefebvre (Citroen C3) made it four manufacturers in the top five.

Matt Edwards wrapped up the British Rally Championship in his Fiesta R5 on the first day of the event. David Bogie was the star of the class and was fifth in the R5 class overall before crashing in Gwydir on Sunday morning. Steve Rokland sealed the Junior BRC and his Peugeot 208 was the top R2-spec car in the overall order.

JACK BENYON



Edwards clinched the British Rally title with victory in his Fiesta

rotate the car into the corner."

That small lift came in top gear, with the speed already well above 100mph. And rotating the car into the corner delivered a savage yet inch-perfect drift into the maintenance car park that sits at the foot of the modern-day windmill. "I knew we had this parking lot to use," said Ogier, "so we used it."

That was the way to start Saturday, both for Ogier and for the massive number of fans lining the banks. The result was an immediate elevation of two places, into third and onto Neuville's bumper, as his Myherin time slashed the difference between the M-Sport Ford and lead Hyundai to 2.2s.

One stage later and Neuville's bumper would be out of sight – left in the bottom of a ditch on the outside of a long right-hander three quarters of the way through the 12 miles of Hafren. Too quick in, Neuville grabbed the handbrake and tried his luck on the throttle. No chance. It slid off the road, left-rear first.

Onboard footage showed wide-eyed co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul imploring spectators to heave them back onto the road, by implication pleading with them to keep his and Neuville's title tilt on track. They lost 51.4s and finished the stage eighth. "When you are driving on the edge, these things can happen," said Neuville. "My fault."

Few would question Neuville blaming himself for his arrival in the ditch not far from the source of the River Severn but, rewinding to that quick downhill in Myherin an hour or so earlier, the Belgian-flagged i20 Coupe WRC had looked more of a handful than anything else.

For the remainder of Saturday, Neuville looked to be anywhere but at the races. Was his title challenge slipping away?

As the crews lined up for the start of Sweet Lamb the second time, it seemed a good moment to take a snapshot of provisional championship positions. Forgetting the powerstage and the potential for a Hyundai reshuffle, Tanak would lead the title race on 189, with Neuville next, eight behind, and Ogier third on 172.

None of the interested parties were interested in such calculations. The points were all at the finish (apart from a bonus that waited at the end of Gwydir early on Sunday morning).

As a double act, Sweet Lamb and Hafren have prompted plenty of WRC storylines down the years. It was here that Colin McRae usurped team-mate Carlos Sainz for the box seat in the 1995 world championship.

Not content with having potentially seen Neuville knobbled, the fans lining one of rallying's most famous hillsides were on for even more drama in the afternoon. Out of the bowl, Tanak pulled gears up the hill, slotted the Yaris through the hairpin and



Neuville dropped his
Hyundai into a ditch,
then fought back to fifth

**“When you are
driving on the edge,
these things can
happen. My fault”**

thundered over a jump. Braking for the next left, the car bottomed out and almost immediately the engine note quietened on the next incline. At junction 13, he pulled off the stage and switched the car off.

A water-pressure and temperature warning warranted a quick inspection of the car's front corner. Damage to the sumpguard and cooling package allied to steam from the radiator signalled the end of one of the finest drives in the recent history of Britain's round of the World Rally

Championship. A heartbroken Tanak could do nothing but lie on the ground and gaze up at beautiful blue skies. Such promise, such pace and such potential all gone.

The championship had taken *another* turn, swinging firmly in Ogier's direction. We'd been here before, though. Three Saturdays earlier on Rally Turkey, M-Sport's Frenchman had been presented with a golden opportunity, only to let it slip through his fingers. Surely he wouldn't make the same mistake...

Having had the time to compose himself on the journey north through Machynlleth, Ogier arrived at the start of Dyfi with a thin smile. Now was no time for triumph. Jubilation could and would wait. Now was a moment to think about his mate.

“Ott didn't deserve this,” he said. “Honestly, he was on another planet on this rally. We could do nothing. I know from Turkey how hard this can be. This sport... sometimes it hurts.”

And Tanak was hurting badly. “Yesterday was the worst I ever felt,” he said. “Honestly, I wouldn't want anybody to feel that. There aren't words...”

But now what? Surely this season was running out of curveballs... Apparently not. Toyota may have lost its lead car, but a brace of Finns in two more Yaris WRCs were right there ready to hassle Ogier all the way home. Latvala was 4.4s behind, with Lappi 7.4s down on his team-mate after what had been the sort of action-packed, perfect-conditions ‘Super Saturday’ the organisers could only dream of.

What did Latvala and Lappi do? Holding station would mean increasing Toyota's lead in the makes' race, but Latvala wanted his shot. And anyway, Citroen's Craig Breen was only 1.7s behind Lappi, so throttling back wasn't an option. And it would have taken a brave man to suggest such a line to J-ML. >>



Latvala gave it his all, but
at the last gasp could
not keep Ogier at bay

“It’s more like Monte,’ grumbled more than one as numb fingers scraped frost away”



“I’m here and I want to fight for the victory,” Latvala said. “It’s been one and a half years since I won last time and that’s a long, long, long time. The motivation is almost higher than ever. I want this one.”

Ogier smiled when Latvala’s line was relayed to him. “I know,” he said. “I tried to speak to him earlier, I tried to joke a little bit, to remind him how important is the manufacturers’ championship. He didn’t get it – his answer was that he would fight for the win. I know he will.”

Latvala’s not a man to hold a grudge, but four years firmly in the shadow of Ogier at Volkswagen was enough to test the patience of any man. His time had come.

Through Saturday, some drivers had been concerned about ‘smoke’ coming from the front wheels – until they realised it was dust, as conditions dried rapidly after the deluge of the day before. Collecting cars from parc ferme just after five on Sunday morning, and screens had to be cleared of thick ice. “It’s more like Monte,” grumbled more than one as numb fingers scraped frost away to clear a view.

Sunday morning was more complicated than usual, with the powerstage following immediately after the shock to the system that was the Elsi opener. With the frost still sitting at the side of the road in places, the narrow tracks above Betws-y-Coed were treacherous in the extreme and, with five

points on offer on the next stage, nobody was willing to take a risk in SS19.

But who would take the risk in Gwydir? Would Ogier and Neuville risk what they had in the bank in the pursuit of five more? Would Latvala risk a rally win? And how much would Tanak beat everybody by?

Latvala’s answer was emphatic. On the startline, there was a little more energy in his pre-stage routine. He was ready. And he flew, beating Tanak by 0.8s.

It had almost cost him everything.

“I went over one crest and the car was sideways straight away,” he panted. “I was waiting for the impact. Waiting... but it didn’t come.”

His effort had delivered the lead. Now there was just the small matter of holding it. Privately, Latvala would have expected Ogier to take some of the 3.6s back on the all-asphalt Great Orme stage. After another sublime display of how to get the best out of the wrong boots on asphalt, just 0.2s separated the top two



Ogier and Ingrassia are now five-time Rally GB winners

MCKLEIN



Breen upheld Citroen honours in fourth and had a shot at victory until he spun

ahead of the penultimate stage.

Before the second run at Gwydir, there was a tyre zone and the chance to fit new covers. If you had them. The soft 'option' tyre had been so popular since Friday that few had any new ones left. It would be a case of making the best of what they'd got.

But nobody was telling anybody what they may or may not have beneath them. Latvala charged through, fastest – on the medium compound: "If he [Ogier] is on a medium and he's quicker, then I lift my hat."

Get ready with that hat. On the medium, Ogier went a staggering 3.3s quicker to lead into the last stage by 3.1s.

Ogier was fully fired up at the finish: "I want this. I'm fighting for it!"

And he took it. Clipping a kerb a mile into the final run around Orme left the Latvala Yaris toeing out for the rally's final miles, but the Finn knew his day was done.

A spin earlier in the day cost Breen his shot at the win. He finished fourth, one place up on a fast-recovering Neuville. But the podium was all about two Toyotas as Lappi joined Latvala on the lower two steps to look up at Ogier.

In winning on Sunday, Ogier became the most successful driver in the history of Britain's round of the world championship. That made him happy. Moving to within seven points of the championship lead made him happier still. 🏆

RESULTS ROUND 11/13, RALLY GB, OCTOBER 4-7

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (F) Julien Ingrassia (F)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	3h06m12.5s
2	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN) Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+10.6s
3	Esapekka Lappi (FIN) Janne Ferm (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+35.1s
4	Craig Breen (IRL) Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen Total / Citroen C3 WRC	+1m10.4s
5	Thierry Neuville (B) Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m14.4s
6	Andreas Mikkelsen (N) Anders Jager (N)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m15.9s
7	Hayden Paddon (NZ) Sebastian Marshall (GB)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m18.4s
8	Mads Ostberg (N) Torstein Eriksen (N)	Citroen Total / Citroen C3 WRC	+1m21.6s
9	Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Skoda Motorsport II / Skoda Fabia R5	+9m14.7s
10	Pontus Tidemand (S) Jonas Andersson (S)	Skoda Motorsport II / Skoda Fabia R5	+10m48.9s
OTHERS			
19	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+20m38.9s
20	Elfyn Evans (GB) Daniel Barritt (GB)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	+21m28.0s
R	Teemu Suninen (FIN) Mikko Markkula (FIN)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	SS9-accident

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Neuville** 189; 2 **Ogier** 182; 3 **Tanak** 168; 4 **Lappi** 104; 5 **Latvala** 98; 6 **Mikkelsen** 83; 7 **Sordo** 60; 8 **Breen** 59; 9 **Paddon** 55; 10 **Suninen** 54.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT** 317; 2 **Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT** 297; 3 **M-Sport Ford WRT** 273; 4 **Citroen Total** 187.

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Tir Prince (1.06 miles)	Lappi 1m21.6s	Lappi	Neuville +0.3s
SS2 Clocaenog 1 (4.77 miles)	Tanak 4m07.2s	Tanak	Ogier +0.9s
SS3 Brenig 1 (18.10 miles)	Tanak 16m52.4s	Tanak	Evans +5.4s
SS4 Penmachno 1 (10.53 miles)	Tanak 10m15.9s	Tanak	Evans +9.0s
SS5 Slate Mountain 1 (1.01 miles)	Neuville 1m16.8s	Tanak	Evans +9.7s
SS6 Slate Mountain 2 (1.01 miles)	Latvala 1m15.3s	Tanak	Evans +8.9s
SS7 Clocaenog 2 (4.77 miles)	Tanak 4m01.6s	Tanak	Latvala +16.7s
SS8 Brenig 2 (18.10 miles)	Tanak 16m30.5s	Tanak	Neuville +31.2s
SS9 Penmachno 2 (10.53 miles)	Neuville 10m16.4s	Tanak	Neuville +28.8s
SS10 Myherin 1 (12.60 miles)	Ogier 10m46.2s	Tanak	Neuville +32.9s
SS11 Sweet Lamb Hafren 1 (12.40 miles)	Ostberg 11m39.4s	Tanak	Ogier +43.2s
SS12 Dyfi 1 (12.10 miles)	Tanak 10m56.7s	Tanak	Ogier +45.7s
SS13 Gartheiniog 1 (7.00 miles)	Mikkelsen 6m51.0s	Tanak	Ogier +48.0s
SS14 Dyfnant (5.16 miles)	Latvala 4m28.2s	Tanak	Ogier +48.0s
SS15 Myherin 2 (12.60 miles)	Ogier 10m37.9s	Tanak	Ogier +41.9s
SS16 Sweet Lamb Hafren 2 (12.40 miles)	Mikkelsen 11m26.6s	Ogier	Latvala +5.5s
SS17 Dyfi 2 (12.10 miles)	Latvala 10m42.8s	Ogier	Latvala +2.9s
SS18 Gartheiniog 2 (7.00 miles)	Mikkelsen 6m43.6s	Ogier	Latvala +4.4s
SS19 Elsi (6.25 miles)	Lappi 7m17.1s	Ogier	Latvala +1.7s
SS20 Gwydir 1 (Power Stage) (9.13 miles)	Latvala 9m31.6s	Latvala	Ogier +3.6s
SS21 Great Orme Llandudno 1 (4.99 miles)	Ogier 4m22.0s	Latvala	Ogier +0.2s
SS22 Gwydir 2 (9.13 miles)	Ogier 9m30.4s	Ogier	Latvala +3.1s
SS23 Great Orme Llandudno 2 (4.59 miles)	Ogier 3m59.3s	Ogier	Latvala +10.6s

WORLD OF SPORT



The triple BTCC champ scored his first WTCR win

Shedden shines on the world stage

WTCR
WUHAN (PRC)
OCTOBER 6-7
ROUND 8/10

The World Touring Car Cup's Wuhan weekend was a tale of two WRT drivers but, while Jean-Karl Vernay's third success of 2018 was significant for playing him back into the championship picture, his teammate Gordon Shedden's breakthrough win was the highlight on the streets of China's automotive-manufacturing capital.

This had been a long time coming for Shedden. There were flashes of pace at the Marrakech season-opener (Shedden finished fifth in the opening race) and at Vila Real (he was third over the line in race two before a penalty), but his campaign had faltered at times, and failed to live up to expectations many had of the three-time British Touring Car champion.

Shedden talked after July's Slovakia Ring round of a "desperate" need to fix car issues – that if unresolved threatened to make the rest of the season "a write-off" – and pushed for a car swap. WRT obliged, giving him the RS3 LMS that Vernay had raced in TCR Europe. But things got no better last time out at Ningbo, where both drivers failed to score a point.

But still, Shedden held out hope.

"The car was quite strong at the other street races in Marrakech and Vila Real, so hopefully that'll work in our favour," he said. "It's also a new circuit for everybody, no team or driver has even been there before so everyone starts a bit more on an even keel."

Sure enough, things finally came good at Wuhan, where the Audi package reigned supreme. Third-fastest in FP1 and FP2, Shedden was fifth on the grid (and the fourth Audi) for race one and had to cede the limelight to Vernay – as the 2017 TCR International champion romped to victory to keep his title-outsider status alive.

Even so, Shedden had reason to celebrate as a pass on the Munnich Motorsport Honda Civic of Yann Ehrlicher midway through gave him third place – which ended a run of seven races without a point. More importantly, it marked his first podium since stepping up to the World Cup.

But after qualifying on pole for Sunday's main race, the chance he'd been waiting for could have gone begging thanks to an incident on lap one of the reversed-grid race two. When Aurelien Panis bumped into the side of Rob Huff (Sebastien Loeb Racing Volkswagen Golf GTI), he in turn tagged his compatriot – and off went the Audi into the barrier. Shedden dragged his hobbled car back to the pits, but played no further part after it was discovered

his steering rack had been damaged.

A swift rack change allowed Shedden to take up pole – he feared he might miss the race – but he still wasn't out of the woods. After beating fellow front-row starter Frederic Vervisch into Turn 1, Shedden was then hit by another Audi – that of Comtoyau driver Denis Dupont – into the corner and sent sideways, although he managed to continue still in the lead.

The other side of a lengthy early-race safety car period, Shedden was again caught up in an incident with Dupont, who clumsily clattered a tyre stack at the Turn 10/11 right-left that was fired into the back of the leading Audi. That resulted in another safety car, before which Vervisch passed Dupont and set up a nine-lap run to the finish.

Vervisch stayed within reach of Shedden in the closing stages, but failed to overhaul the WRT car. Shedden clinched a first win on the world stage by 0.558 seconds.

"It's been an absolutely epic weekend," said Shedden. "The car's just been transformed since last week. There's been a lot of work done by the team behind the scenes, and this is the first weekend where I feel like I'm part of the car, and it makes such a difference."

Shedden wasn't the only first-time WTCR winner at Wuhan, as Mehdi Bennani took his first spoils of 2018 in

WEEKEND WINNERS

WTCR

WUHAN

Race 1 Jean-Karl Vernay

WRT Audi RS 3 LMS TCR

Race 2 Mehdi Bennani

Sebastien Loeb Racing

Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR

Race 3 Gordon Shedden

WRT Audi RS 3 LMS TCR

NASCAR CUP

DOVER

Chase Elliott

Hendrick Motorsports

Chevrolet Camaro

NASCAR XFINITY

DOVER

Christopher Bell

Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota Camry

EUROFORMULA OPEN

JEREZ

Race 1 Felipe Drugovich

RP Motorsport

Race 2 Felipe Drugovich

RP Motorsport

For full results visit:
motorsportstats.com

DE MATTIA/DPPI

the reversed-grid race. Having led from the start, the Moroccan almost lost out on the crazy final lap when he was passed by the Peugeot 308 TCR of Aurelien Comte on the run to the penultimate corner, but Comte then ran wide at the hairpin, allowing Loeb driver Bennani back up the inside.

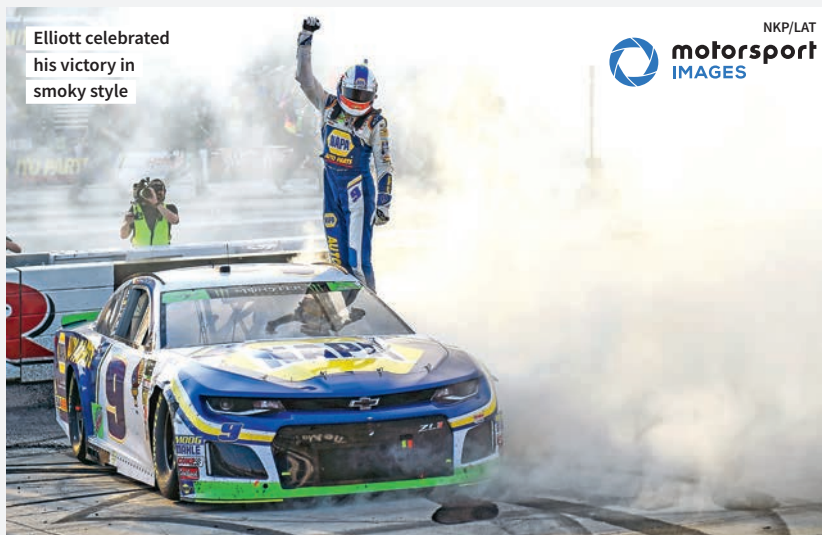
So, what of the title race? With all four Hyundais that started the weekend at the head of the title race enduring a nightmare event, the door remains ajar for an outsider to sneak in.

YMR pair Thed Bjork and Yvan Muller claimed all three triumphs at Ningbo, but at Wuhan accumulated just three points between them as the 130 Ns struggled for pace. That meant that, even though Gabriele Tarquini fared even worse — like BRC team-mate Norbert Michelisz, failing to score — he still leads by seven points, with Bjork and Muller tied for second overall.

Although Vernay had the chance to lead the best-of-the-rest charge, he fluffed his lines when he put Comte into the wall at the start of race three, earning himself a drivethrough penalty that dropped him out of points contention.

Instead, Pepe Oriola — who was second to Vernay in race one — leads the chasing pack. A run of 13 points finishes from the past 14 races, including a victory and three podiums, has allowed the Campos Racing Cupra driver to go under the radar, and he now sits 34 points off the summit.

JACK COZENS



Elliott celebrated his victory in smoky style

NKP/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES

Elliott wins as wheels fall off Harvick's double

NASCAR CUP
DOVER (USA)
OCTOBER 7
ROUND 30/36

For more than three quarters of the NASCAR Cup race at Dover, Kevin Harvick looked nailed on to win at the venue for the second time this year as Stewart-Haas Racing dominated the top four.

Instead, when the chequered flag fell it was Hendrick Motorsports' Chase Elliott moving himself into the round-of-eight stage of the playoffs and celebrating victory.

It was Elliott's second Cup career win — the first was two months ago at Watkins Glen — and one that looked highly unlikely until the final laps.

Harvick dominated the first stage and lapped more than half of the field after passing polesitter Kyle Busch on lap 16 of 400. He also finished stage two in first place, although he had team-mate Clint Bowyer on his tail.

The Stewart-Haas Racing Ford

Fusions covered the top four positions until lap 321, when Harvick had a loose wheel following a routine pitstop.

He went a lap down, but received a free pass on lap 338 from the first unplanned caution and eventually recovered to finish sixth.

Team-mate Aric Almirola then led the field until the penultimate caution came out with eight laps to go after Bowyer hit the wall.

Along with Penske's Brad Keselowski and Furniture Row Racing's Martin Truex Jr, Elliott decided not to pit so that he could gain track position.

While Elliott restarted well, Almirola hit the back of Keselowski, with Truex and Alex Bowman caught up in the crash. Elliott went on to win the race in overtime from Denny Hamlin's Toyota Camry.

"This was a lot about perseverance," said Elliott. "We had a penalty early and fell behind and luckily had a good enough car and good strategy to get back [to the front]."

TIM LUMB



Pitstop error denied Harvick Dover double

NKP/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES

Marquez and Dovizioso star to kickstart life in Thailand



MOTO GP
BURIRAM (T)
OCTOBER 7
ROUND 15/19

Marc Marquez versus Andrea Dovizioso may not be widely regarded as one of grand prix motorcycle racing's classic rivalries, but on the evidence of the inaugural MotoGP race in Thailand perhaps in the future it will come to be remembered fondly.

After all, in the past two years there have been some sensational duels between Marquez and Dovizioso. The first ever grand prix event at the Buriram track was yet another barnstormer – with

Honda rider Marquez this time getting the upper hand to score victory in a battle that went all the way to the final corner.

More than 100,000 fans filled the grandstands at the new-for-2018 track, and they were served up a thriller, albeit yet another race dominated by tyre preservation in the early stages in the blistering 32C heat. But those who turned up hoping to see Dovizioso's Ducati stablemate Jorge Lorenzo make it a three-way fight for honours were disappointed.

The Spaniard decided to compete in Thailand after suffering foot injuries in his first-corner crash at Aragon two weeks earlier. He was unfortunate enough to

have another huge accident during Friday afternoon's second practice session, one that left his Desmosedici GP18 in pieces strewn across the track.

Lorenzo sustained a hairline fracture to his left wrist in the accident, and opted to recover for the next race at Motegi. That left Dovizioso alone to take the fight not only to Marquez, but also to a resurgent Yamaha. After several races in the doldrums, both Valentino Rossi and Maverick Vinales featured towards the sharp end. Rossi qualified a close second to Marquez.

After Marquez led the opening laps, Rossi even enjoyed a spell out front – slipstreaming by his former arch-rival on the long run down towards Turn 3 on lap five of 26.

But soon it became clear that Yamaha's longtime acceleration woes had not been completely solved, as Rossi got poor drive out of the first corner on lap 11 and slipped behind both Marquez and Dovizioso. He would not challenge for the lead again.

As the race reached the halfway mark, the long 10-rider pack at the front began to string out. Marquez, then Dovizioso, Rossi and Vinales pulled away from the rest.

Vinales picked off Rossi for third on lap 20, and stayed close to the lead pair, but only because of the spectacular moves Marquez and Dovizioso were putting on each other.

On both the antepenultimate and the penultimate laps, the two riders swapped the lead twice and eventually Dovizioso



More than 100,000 fans
 packed out the first
 Thai MotoGP race



led at the start of the final lap. But Marquez was in no mood to play the percentages despite title number five looming large, and dived underneath his adversary with a daring move at Turn 5.

Dovizioso tried to come back at Marquez, but in a role-reversal of their famous last-lap Austrian GP battle of last year, the Ducati rider just overshot the turn. That allowed Marquez to cut underneath and get the drive to the line.

It means Marquez's points lead is now up to 77 with just 100 left on the table. His first chance to wrap up a fifth MotoGP title will be in Japan later this month.

Vinales beat Rossi for his first podium since July's Sachsenring race. Tech 3 rider Johann Zarco underlined Yamaha's upturn with fifth, his best finish since May.

Zarco was helped by Dani Pedrosa crashing at Turn 5, ironically the very place where his team-mate Marquez made the race's decisive move, on lap 19, just as Pedrosa seemed to be catching the lead four.

Suzuki's challenge was led by Alex Rins in sixth, ahead of LCR Honda's Cal Crutchlow. Despite an uncharacteristically subdued run, Crutchlow could at least take solace in beating his main rival in the independents' race – ninth-placed Danilo Petrucci.

After Aleix Espargaro's miracle run to sixth at Aragon, normality was restored for Aprilia as he finished 13th. Bradley Smith added another point to KTM's tally in 15th.

JAMIE KLEIN

RESULTS ROUND 15/19, BURIRAM (T), OCTOBER 7 (26 LAPS – 73.573 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Marc Marquez (E)	Honda	39m55.722s
2	Andrea Dovizioso (I)	Ducati	+0.115s
3	Maverick Vinales (E)	Yamaha	+0.270s
4	Valentino Rossi (I)	Yamaha	+1.564s
5	Johann Zarco (F)	Tech 3 Yamaha	+2.747s
6	Alex Rins (E)	Suzuki	+3.023s
7	Cal Crutchlow (GB)	LCR Honda	+6.520s
8	Alvaro Bautista (E)	Aspar Ducati	+6.691s
9	Danilo Petrucci (I)	Pramac Ducati	+9.944s
10	Jack Miller (AUS)	Pramac Ducati	+11.077s
11	Andrea Iannone (I)	Suzuki	+15.488s
12	Hafizh Syahrin (MAL)	Tech 3 Yamaha	+17.691s
13	Aleix Espargaro (E)	Aprilia	+21.413s
14	Franco Morbidelli (I)	Marc VDS Honda	+22.802s
15	Bradley Smith (GB)	KTM	+23.628s
16	Scott Redding (GB)	Aprilia	+23.804s
17	Karel Abraham (CZ)	Aspar Ducati	+32.507s
18	Xavier Simeon (B)	Avintia Ducati	+37.216s
19	Jordi Torres (E)	Avintia Ducati	+39.204s
20	Thomas Luthi (CH)	Marc VDS Honda	+39.421s
21	Pol Espargaro (E)	KTM	+53.388s
22	Takaaki Nakagami (J)	LCR Honda	-2 laps
R	Dani Pedrosa (E)	Honda	18 laps-accident
W	Jorge Lorenzo (E)	Ducati	did not start due to injury

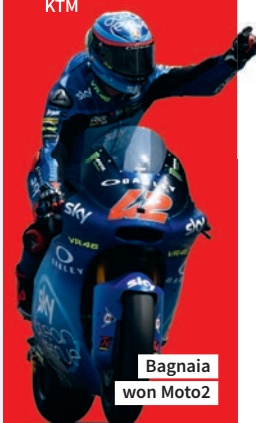
WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2 BURIRAM

- 1 Francesco Bagnaia Kalex
- 2 Luca Marini Kalex
- 3 Miguel Oliveira KTM

MOTO3 BURIRAM

- 1 Fabio Di Giannantonio Honda
- 2 Lorenzo Dalla Porta Honda
- 3 Dennis Foggia KTM



Winner's average speed 110.556mph. Fastest lap Marquez 1m31.471s, 111.368mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Marquez 1m30.088s; 2 Rossi 1m30.099s; 3 Dovizioso 1m30.227s; 4 Vinales 1m30.328s; 5 Crutchlow 1m30.356s; 6 Iannone 1m30.419s; 7 Pedrosa 1m30.458s; 8 Zarco 1m30.471s; 9 Petrucci 1m30.599s; 10 Miller 1m30.660s; 11 Rins 1m30.738s; 12 Bautista 1m30.976s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Marquez 1m30.031s; 2 Rins 1m30.921s; 3 Morbidelli 1m30.923s; 4 Nakagami 1m30.995s; 5 Smith 1m31.207s; 6 A Espargaro 1m31.243s; 7 Abraham 1m31.374s; 8 Syahrin 1m31.389s; 9 P Espargaro 1m31.399s; 10 Simeon 1m31.686s; 11 Torres 1m31.819s; 12 Luthi 1m31.830s; 13 Redding 1m31.835s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Marquez 271; 2 Dovizioso 194; 3 Rossi 172; 4 Vinales 146; 5 Lorenzo 130; 6 Crutchlow 128; 7 Petrucci 126; 8 Zarco 123; 9 Iannone 113; 10 Rins 102; 11 Pedrosa 87; 12 Miller 74; 13 Bautista 72; 14 Tito Rabat 35; 15 Morbidelli 33; 16 A Espargaro 32; 17 P Espargaro 32; 18 Syahrin 28; 19 Smith 19; 20 Nakagami 18; 21 Redding 12; 22 Mika Kallio 6; 23 Abraham 5; 24 Michele Pirro 1; 25 Luthi 0; 26 Stefan Bradl 0; 27 Simeon 0; 28 Torres 0; 29 Sylvain Guintoli 0; 30 Christophe Ponsson 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Honda 306; 2 Ducati 273; 3 Yamaha 218; 4 Suzuki 157; 5 KTM 45; 6 Aprilia 42.



Lowndes makes it one for the oldies

They weren't the quickest, but Craig Lowndes and Steve Richards — combined age 90 years — were on form when it counted at Mount Panorama

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN



Craig Lowndes knows it better than anyone. You don't have to be the fastest to win at Mount Panorama; you only have to be the fastest when it counts.

With 27 laps to go of last weekend's Bathurst 1000, 44-year-old Lowndes and 46-year-old co-driver Steve Richards took control. The weekend's pacesetters had been hit with issues both physical and mechanical, and the veterans were left to take as dominant a win as Lowndes has ever experienced, despite their Triple Eight Holden leading relatively few laps.

It was an odd week in central New South Wales. There were five hours of practice leading into qualifying, but it was mostly useless. Persistent rain meant crews often opted to not even head on track — Erebus Racing didn't turn a wheel until three sessions in — with the only few minutes of dry practice running coming during a dedicated co-driver session.

So the primary drivers were faced with the exceptional situation of heading into qualifying without having turned a lap on a slick tyre. And the cream quickly rose to the top. Within 20 minutes Jamie Whincup had set a mid-2m04s lap, something that three years ago would have been considered nearly impossible. It got even better. When a thrilling hour came to an end, Whincup had been forced to improve to a 2m04.109s to take provisional pole in his Triple Eight-run Red Bull Holden, with David Reynolds (Erebus Holden) and Scott McLaughlin (DJR Penske Ford) less than two tenths back.

It wasn't all about spectacular times, with a feel-good factor coming from Lowndes. After missing the Top 10 Shootout for the past two years, he qualified for the single-lap dash on what was his last ever attempt before retiring as a primary driver. Not that the Shootout itself was that impressive for Lowndes, the veteran slipping from sixth in qualifying to ninth on the grid.

The star of the Shootout was, initially at

least, Anton de Pasquale. The Bathurst 1000 rookie posted a 2m04.3498s running second, despite "going bush" at the last corner. The next six guys couldn't get near it, not even series leader Shane van Gisbergen. In the end it took a stunning 2m04.0589s from team-mate Reynolds to deny de Pasquale a shock pole, Whincup then falling just 0.009s short of the benchmark as he split the Erebus Holdens.

The two stages of qualifying suggested that Reynolds/Luke Youlden and Whincup/Paul Dumbrell were the pairings to beat, and the opening 40 laps of Sunday's race did likewise. With Reynolds having bolted from pole, he was able to hand over to Youlden after a single stint with a 4.9s lead. Dumbrell took over the #1 Red Bull Holden in third at the same time, but was able to clear Earl Bamber in the sister car (started by van Gisbergen) for second as he eased onto the back of Youlden.

Ten laps later the co-drivers found themselves back in the lane, a safety car to



ALL PICS: KLYNSMITH/LAT
motorsport
 IMAGES

retrieve Jack Perkins's broken Commodore sparking an all-in round of stops. The two Red Bull cars came in running second and third, which meant servicing Dumbrell as quickly as possible was crucial, as Bamber was waiting impatiently behind.

Three laps after the restart, Dumbrell's front-right wheel unexpectedly parted ways with the rest of the car. In the rush to limit the damage of the double stack, the wheelnut hadn't been tightened properly – the team that so rarely makes mistakes had made a huge one.

Funnily enough, Dumbrell had found himself running on three wheels during Saturday's Super2 race after a clash with Dean Fiore. He would later joke that the experience proved very handy as he hustled the Red Bull car across the top of The Mountain without a right-front, desperate to get back to the pits so that maybe he could avoid going any more than a lap down. It was a genuine case of get back quick, or crash trying. >>

AIN'T NO PLEASING CHAZ & DAVE



Mostert wasn't the most popular bloke in the Tickford pit

Chaz Mostert may have been Tickford Racing's standout performer on Sunday at Mount Panorama, but that doesn't mean he was the most popular man in the garage.

The #55 crew chose to invert their driver strategy early in the race, which meant James Moffat started and Mostert took over after the first stint. As a result, Mostert and David Russell – co-driver for the Cam Waters Falcon on the other side of the garage – found themselves fighting for seventh just after the first round of stops.

Knowing that making ground on the co-drivers was key to the strategy working, Mostert got a little impatient at Forrest's Elbow. He slapped the inside of the Monster Ford, sending Russell into the wall. Mostert kept going, while Russell limped back to the pits, his and Waters' hopes of a strong result shattered.

When the TV cameras came calling,

Waters didn't hold back, referencing contact between the two in 2017: "I don't know what Chaz was doing trying to pass him and put him in the fence. Pretty dumb, 30 laps into the race. Two years in a row, got taken out by Chaz."

Even more damning was what the in-car mic picked up as Waters consulted with Russell when the car arrived back in the garage. "Sorry man, we just got f*cked up by our f*cking team-mate," he shouted.

Mostert, who finished fourth, later took the blame. "It's an absolute shame for the team and it's not the way I want to go out there racing," he said. "I just purely went to the inside, I couldn't go any more narrow. I just ran out of room and it's always pretty tight at the Elbow."

"I'm sorry to Cam and Dave, but it's a tough day for the team – it would have been nice to get them a trophy."



Collision ended hopes of Waters and Russell

REYNOLDS SPEAKS
OF HIS CRAMPS

"I'm gutted. You work your whole career for a fast car at Bathurst.

"I struggled to concentrate. It was all tunnel vision. [The team] did a tear-off at the last stop – I thought the screen was dirty – but my vision didn't get any clearer. I put my foot on the clutch during the stop, I put the car in the gear, and my foot was cramping so much. I was telling myself to keep the clutch in, but the wheels must have been spinning. To be honest I had no idea.

"Before that happened I should have said, 'I'm out, put Luke [Youlden] in', and we could have got a good result. But I was here to win.

"I've never failed physically like that – I've never had anything like that happen in my life. I've never had a cramp running, cycling, racing... it just came out of nowhere.

"I've had a massive lead-up to the race, which probably contributed to it. I've spoken to every man and his dog about the race. I started with media commitments last Sunday and I was flat-out all week. I was probably 70% fit in qualifying, and I woke up 50% on Sunday. And the race took it all out of me. The warning signs were there.

"I need to go to the doctor and figure out what actually happened. I think I know what happened – I just dehydrated myself. I sweated out everything I had. I'm notoriously bad at drinking while I'm in the car. I never do it, because I've never needed to. I've never felt those signs of dehydration. I'll go see someone and be better prepared. That's all I can do. Knowing the signs is the first thing."



He got back quick, the Triple Eight crew fitting a new wheel, a new front bumper, and sending Dumbrell back out a lap and a half down. The front-roll bar adjustment had been ground away to nothing, but that would have to be fixed later, if a safety car rolled the right way...

Back at the front of the field, Youlden found himself under pressure from Alex Premat in the Penske Ford. On lap 45 the Frenchman executed the first proper change for the lead, but it only lasted until the next round of stops. DJR Team Penske took too long swapping Premat for McLaughlin, meaning Reynolds could replace Youlden and regain control of the race.

It looked for all money that the 2017 winners were going to go back to back. Youlden jumped back in for his final stint, before handing back to Reynolds when a safety car conveniently fell on the very lap that the majority of the co-drivers satisfied their minimum requirement at the wheel.

The safety car meant Reynolds, now in for a triple-stinter to the end, had lost a bit of track advantage. But he had speed, and Lowndes, who had floated up the order to second, hadn't shown any signs of being a threat to win the race.

In fact, the #888 Holden was a little lucky to still be in contention, given that Richards had run wide on his way into pitlane during his stint and nearly beached himself at pit entry. But thanks to a turn of speed from Lowndes during a patch of light rain, and clean stops while the likes of van Gisbergen/Bamber and McLaughlin/Premat had delays, the third T8 entry was sitting second.

When the race restarted with 65 laps to go it seemed inevitable that Reynolds would pull away, but he didn't, at least not right away. Instead Lowndes piled on the pressure, until Reynolds kicked into gear, broke his own lap record, and established a small gap.

That little wobble in pace after the restart seemed innocent enough – it could easily have been tyres coming up to pressure – but there was something more sinister at play – it was the first sign of Reynolds starting to lose concentration. When he came in for what should have been his penultimate stop, Reynolds asked the team to remove a tear-off from the windscreen as he had been struggling to see for most of the stint. They did, but when he got back out on track he realised the view in front of him was still as blurry as it had been before. Now the dash looked fuzzy too. Something wasn't right.



RESULTS ROUND 13/16, MOUNT PANORAMA (AUS), OCTOBER 7 (161 LAPS – 621.553 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Craig Lowndes (AUS) Steven Richards (AUS)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Holden Commodore ZB	6h01m44.8637s
2	Scott Pye (AUS) Warren Luff (AUS)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden Commodore ZB	+6.2920s
3	Scott McLaughlin (NZ) Alexandre Premat (F)	DJR Team Penske Ford Falcon FG/X	+9.4081s
4	Chaz Mostert (AUS) James Moffat (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Falcon FG/X	+10.2530s
5	Shane van Gisbergen (NZ) Earl Bamber (NZ)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Holden Commodore ZB	+27.4209s
6	Garth Tander (AUS) Chris Pither (NZ)	Garry Rogers Motorsport Holden Commodore ZB	+30.0098s
7	Nick Percat (AUS) Macauley Jones (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+36.5424s
8	James Golding (AUS) Richard Muscat (AUS)	Garry Rogers Motorsport Holden Commodore ZB	+37.2325s
9	Fabian Coulthard (NZ) Tony D'Alberto (AUS)	DJR Team Penske Ford Falcon FG/X	+47.1120s
10	Jamie Whincup (AUS) Paul Dumbrell (AUS)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Team Holden Commodore ZB	+56.4334s
11	Rick Kelly (AUS) Garry Jacobson (AUS)	Nissan Motorsport (Kelly) Nissan Altima L33	+1m19.0739s
12	Mark Winterbottom (AUS) Dean Canto (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Falcon FG/X	+1m35.0093s
13	David Reynolds (AUS) Luke Youlden (AUS)	Erebus Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+1m39.1046s
14	Simona de Silvestro (CH) Alex Rullo (AUS)	Nissan Motorsport (Kelly) Nissan Altima L33	+1m47.7762s
15	Jack Le Brocq (AUS) Jonathon Webb (AUS)	Tekno Autosports Holden Commodore ZB	+1m52.3973s
16	Andre Heimgartner (NZ) Aaren Russell (AUS)	Nissan Motorsport (Kelly) Nissan Altima L33	+1m54.8234s
17	Tim Slade (AUS) Ashley Walsh (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	-1 lap
18	Tim Blanchard (AUS) Dale Wood (AUS)	Tim Blanchard Racing (BJR) Holden Commodore ZB	-2 laps
19	Will Davison (AUS) Alex Davison (AUS)	23Red Racing Ford Falcon FG/X	-2 laps
20	Todd Hazelwood (AUS) Bryce Fullwood (AUS)	Matt Stone Racing Holden Commodore VF	-2 laps
21	Lee Holdsworth (AUS) Jason Bright (AUS)	Charlie Schwerholt Racing Holden Commodore ZB	-4 laps
22	Richie Stanaway (NZ) Steve Owen (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Falcon FG/X	-9 laps
23	Cameron Waters (AUS) David Russell (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Falcon FG/X	-13 laps
24	Anton de Pasquale (AUS) William Brown (AUS)	Erebus Racing Holden Commodore ZB	-18 laps
R	Michael Caruso (AUS) Dean Fiore (AUS)	Nissan Motorsport (Kelly) Nissan Altima L33	69 laps
R	James Courtney (AUS) Jack Perkins (AUS)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden Commodore ZB	33 laps

Winner's average speed 103.091mph. **Fastest lap** Reynolds 2m06.1492s, 110.171mph.

QUALIFYING**TOP 10 SHOOTOUT 1 Reynolds**

2m04.0589s; **2 Whincup** 2m04.0683s;
3 de Pasquale 2m04.3498s; **4 van Gisbergen**
 2m04.5385s; **5 McLaughlin** 2m04.5494s;
6 Waters 2m04.7517s; **7 Percat** 2m04.7673s;
8 Courtney 2m05.0034s; **9 Lowndes**
 2m05.0835s; **10 Tander** 2m05.1717s.

QUALIFYING 1 Whincup 2m04.1093s;

Reynolds 2m04.2648s; **McLaughlin**
 2m04.2862s; **van Gisbergen** 2m04.3818s;
Courtney 2m04.4759s; **Lowndes**
 2m04.5702s; **Waters** 2m04.5794s; **Percat**
 2m04.6381s; **de Pasquale** 2m04.6942s;
Tander 2m04.8567s; **11 Mostert**
 2m04.9133s; **12 Golding** 2m04.9720s;
13 Heimgartner 2m05.0358s; **14 Kelly**
 2m05.0645s; **15 Coulthard** 2m05.1789s;
16 Caruso 2m05.3195s; **17 Stanaway**
 2m05.4607s; **18 Pye** 2m05.4655s;
19 Winterbottom 2m05.5106s; **20 Slade**
 2m05.5656s; **21 Holdsworth** 2m05.7075s;
22 Blanchard 2m05.8433s; **23 Hazelwood**
 2m06.0376s; **24 W Davison** 2m06.0429s;
25 Le Brocq 2m06.1325s; **26 de Silvestro**
 2m06.4374s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 van Gisbergen 3276; **2 McLaughlin 3257**;
3 Whincup 2872; **4 Lowndes 2787**; **5**
Reynolds 2567; **6 Mostert 2288**; **7 Coulthard**
 2282; **8 Kelly 2242**; **9 Pye 2182**; **10 Slade 1970**.

Then came the cramps. Reynolds suddenly didn't know if he was at full throttle or not; he didn't know if he was applying enough brake pressure. With 27 laps to go he was powerless to stop Lowndes charging into the lead. Conferring with the team over the radio, a decision was made to keep Reynolds in the car for the final stint. He'd be handed a drink bottle full of electrolyte-heavy fluid through the window and he'd battle through, hoping to hang on to second. But he was so exhausted he couldn't even keep his foot on the clutch during the stop, the rear wheels spinning before the car came off its stands.

That meant a drivethrough penalty, which dumped Reynolds to seventh. After a heartbreaking apology to his team over the radio, Reynolds served his penalty, then came straight back into the lane waving the white flag, finally ready to hand over to Youlden. On a day when they had all they needed to win, they finished 13th.

While this was happening, Lowndes was cruising to a fairytale final Bathurst victory as a Supercars full-timer. With Scott Pye's Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden seven-odd seconds behind him, Lowndes – not even wearing a cool suit – made light work of the final stint and a half.

After just over six hours of racing, Lowndes crossed the line to secure his seventh Bathurst crown, and a fifth for



Richards. It was their second win together and, with Lowndes set to return to Red Bull colours for the long-distance races next year, more than likely their last. "[The 2006 win] is sort of the special one because of the emotions that went behind it, but this is definitely right up there," said Lowndes. "It's probably the second best because now I know I'm not going to be a full-time driver next year and these guys can all battle it out. But I'll be back here next year as a co-driver and to have a bit of fun..."

Pye and co-driver Warren Luff finished second for a second consecutive year, while McLaughlin and Premat came home third.

Chaz Mostert and James Moffat were fourth, despite tangling with a Tickford Ford team-mate earlier in the race (see panel, p47), with van Gisbergen and Bamber finishing fifth to help SVG hang on to a narrow 19-point series lead over fellow New Zealander McLaughlin.

As for Whincup and Dumbrell, they did get the right mix of safety cars to get back onto the lead lap, and showed plenty of pace during the closing stages of the race. But 10th was as high as Whincup could climb, meaning that the pair's horror Bathurst run since winning in 2012 continues for at least another year. ❧

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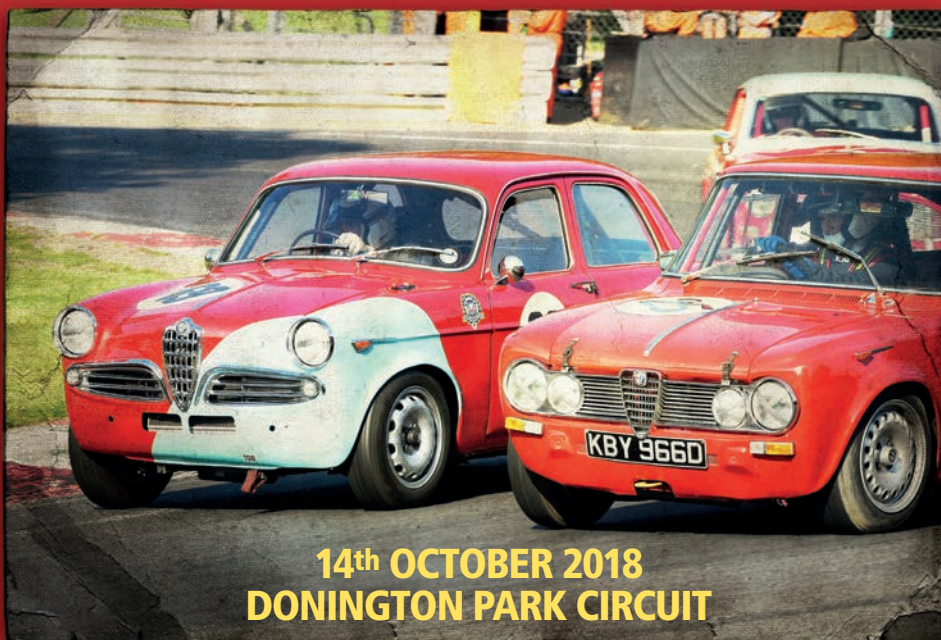
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CARLIN TO MAKE BRITISH FORMULA 4 RETURN IN 2019

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Leading single-seater squad Carlin has confirmed that it will return to British Formula 4 next season after taking a sabbatical this year.

Carlin powered new McLaren Formula 1

recruit Lando Norris (when it was MSA Formula), Max Fewtrell and Jamie Caroline to the British F4 title in a three-year period of series domination. But it announced it would not compete in the 2018 season after expanding into IndyCar and Formula 2. The team did

Lambo factory drive for Keen

BRITISH GT

Phil Keen admits he thought he was “a bit old” to be given the call-up to become a Lamborghini factory driver, which was confirmed last week.

The 34-year-old has been a regular in British GT in recent years, finishing as championship runner-up with Jon Minshaw in each of the past three seasons, and raced for the de facto works Lamborghini team, Grasser Racing, in the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup this season.

Keen and former GP2 racer Franck Perera will join 2017 Blancpain Endurance champions Mirko Bortolotti and Andrea Caldarelli, Marco Mapelli and Giovanni Venturini on Lamborghini's driver roster, and completed a three-day Pirelli tyre test for the marque last week.

“It was a little bit unexpected, I never really thought about it to be honest!” he told Autosport.

“There are lots of quick drivers out there. I thought ‘I’m old now’ and because of my age, I didn’t think I would be considered – 10 years ago maybe, but you just assume you’re a bit old now.

“It was a pleasant surprise, but at the same time I’m looking forward to learning and moving forward with Lamborghini.”

Keen hopes to remain in British GT next year, but has also set his sights on a return to the Daytona 24 Hours, which he contested as the winner of the Sunoco Challenge in 2015.

“They’re very keen to have me in the States for the Michelin test in December and that’s something I’m really going to push for,” he added. “I really enjoyed my time in the States.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



Caroline took British F4 title in 2017 before Carlin sabbatical



Trevor Carlin (l) praised British F4 for young drivers

not sell its F4 equipment, and has already begun testing drivers for '19.

"The championship holds many happy memories for us," said team boss Trevor Carlin. "We won the inaugural season with Lando Norris, who three years later is on his way to Formula 1, so we know that the championship is the perfect platform for young and talented drivers looking to launch their career in the best possible way.

"We loved being in the paddock as part of the TOCA package and the racing was always exciting to watch, so we look forward to being part of this again."

Championship promoter Sam Roach said: "It's great news to have their cars

back on the grid. They always said it would be a sabbatical and we were hopeful they would be back with us.

"As three-time championship winners it gives everyone else a benchmark."

Roach is hopeful that Carlin won't be the only additional team in the championship in 2019. After its withdrawal, only five teams regularly competed this year, but the series is in talks with a number of outfits.

"I think the whole single-seater market is changing a lot and there's a bit of a 'wait and see' situation with F3 [with the new International F3 series replacing GP3 and a yet-to-be-determined Regional F3 category in Europe], which has affected

peoples' plan-making. Other teams are interested and there are two that are talking to us quite seriously."

● Fortec British Formula 4 driver Johnathan Hoggard says a reset of the team's goals was responsible for his storming end to the year. Hoggard headed into the season eyeing a title fight, but struggles before the summer break prompted a rethink. For the final five rounds, Hoggard emerged as top scorer overall with 227 points compared to 213 for Patrik Pasma, taking his eighth win of the year in the last race. Hoggard is unsure of his plans for next season.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



HISTORICS

The car that Mike and Andrew Jordan are hoping to use to contest the Spa 3 Hours next year made its track debut at Donington Park last week. The TVR Griffith – crafted by their Jordan Racing Team – has been built from a barn-find road car from the USA, and 2013 British Touring Car champion Andrew and British GT champion Mike were on hand to see it in action for the first time. "We want to share it in the Spa 3 Hours and we'll probably do some Masters Gentleman Drivers races as well," said Jordan Sr of next season's plans.

Photograph by Paul Lawrence



FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL

Former British Touring Car Championship racer Vincent Radermecker is to make an unexpected return to the Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch later this month.

Radermecker, now 51, twice competed in the event in the early 1990s and says he has “unfinished business” in it. From there his career took him to British Formula 3, where he was the runner-up in ’94

before switching to tin-tops.

He contested the BTCC in a works Volvo in 1999 and then moved to Vauxhall in 2000, taking a total of five podiums.

“The story is that Geoffroy Horion – a Belgian driver who did Formula Ford a bit later than me and afterwards did F3 and touring car races in Belgium – he bought a Van Diemen RF91 and RF92 and then started a little team, Old Racing School,” Radermecker told Autosport. “He’s doing

some historic racing with Formula Ford and he asked me if I was interested. If it was a normal track somewhere I’m not sure, but it was not possible to say no [to the Festival at Brands Hatch].

“I did two Festivals – in 1991 I finished ninth in the final, then in 1992 I was running sixth in the semi-final and I tried to improve my classification. But I had an off because I locked my brakes in the wet. So I have unfinished business and I will try to improve on that.”

More recently Radermecker has competed in TCR machinery – including taking three wins in TCR Benelux in 2016 – as well as taking part in endurance races.

This will be his first race in the UK since Belcar visited Donington Park in 2007, and Radermecker is unsure how he will compare with his Festival rivals.

“I will do free practice before the weekend to remember everything with the car and to try to improve the car and myself,” he said. “Brands Hatch I know quite well and it will be very quickly in my memory.”

Radermecker added that he had looked at making a return to the BTCC over the years and, more recently, at competing in TCR UK. But the need to pay for a drive dissuaded him from taking it up. “With TCR UK I did have some contact there but still needed to bring budget with it, which is not what I do,” he said.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

FF1600 champ takes debut historic pole

HISTORICS

Newly crowned BRSCC National Formula Ford champion Niall Murray left a huge impression on his historic debut at Castle Combe last Saturday when he qualified Niall McFadden’s 1963 Jaguar E-type on pole for the GT & Sports Car Cup race.

The two met when family team Murray Motorsport ran McFadden in Fiesta Enduro races in Ireland. Murray tested the car on Thursday before the

Combe meeting but the head gasket blew. “I really liked Combe when I raced there for the first time this season [scoring an FF1600 treble], but didn’t know what to expect in the rain,” said Murray. “The Jag’s heavy but handled really well, and had grip, but finding clear laps was difficult.

“I didn’t have a clue what any of the cars were or who was who. When I noticed a faster car catching me [Ben Adams’s Lola Mk1] I let it past. Then I saw P1 on his pit board



so I chased him, but I was very surprised to get pole on my final lap.”

Murray took over the car

from 19th and set some impressive lap times, although a safety car hampered progress.

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Faster Locost series planned for next season

LOCOST

A new Mazda-powered Locost series is being planned for 2019 to run with the 750 Motor Club.

A more powerful version of the Locost has already been entered by TSR in the Sports Specials Championship, and its driver – Lee Emm – was crowned class champion at the Snetterton finale.

The 1.8-litre Mazda engine is expected to have 130bhp, 40 more than the standard Locost, in a slightly modified version of the car Emm has raced this season.

Altered rear brakes and different specifications of tyres will be used on the Mazda-Locost class car, which has

been dubbed the Ma7da.

“This season was the first time we entered it for the full year and I was the lucky one to take that on,” Emm said. “With the results it’s got people interested in what you can do after Locost, and we’ve proved that there’s something, hopefully with not too much expense, if you’ve already got your Locost car.

“I’d say the running cost once you’re in the series isn’t much more expensive. The engine itself is cheap. We got it for £90, so if it blew up tomorrow we wouldn’t be worried about buying another one.”

CHRIS STEVENS



JONES

Combe scholar selected

CASTLE COMBE FF1600

The winner of the first Search for a Star Scholarship at Castle Combe, the recipient of a partially funded 2019 Formula Ford drive, has been chosen.

Matt Hallam beat four other contenders on an assessment day at Combe. It involved both one-to-one interviews and on-track assessments with a racing instructor and in a Ford Focus Zetec S.

The 20-year-old, who made his

FF1600 debut at Combe this year aboard a Reynard, will contest the local series next year in a Wiltshire College-run Spectrum.

“It feels really good and I hope that I can get some good results,” said Hallam. “I feel very lucky and glad that I’ve won the Scholarship, but I’ve driven up against some tough people on the track. They were really even. Hopefully I can get progressively quicker and go for outright podiums.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

IN THE HEADLINES

FOSTER BACK TO BRITCAR

Formula Ford stalwart Joey Foster made a one-off return to the Britcar paddock last weekend at Silverstone. Foster, who is competing in the National FF1600 series this year, rejoined Chris Headlam behind the wheel of a Lotus Exige prepared by Orbital Sound. They finished seventh in the opener before suffering a gearshift problem in race two, and were several laps down at the flag.

HAMILTON RIVAL RETURNS

Colin Brown, one of Lewis Hamilton’s main rivals in karting, will make a return to racing at Donington Park later this month in F1000. Brown, 36, competed against a number of future racing stars including Hamilton and fellow Mercedes Formula 1 champion Nico Rosberg when rising up the ranks. Brown later progressed into Formula Renault 2.0 machinery before last racing in European F3000 15 years ago.

HANNAH TARGETS FF1600

Logan Hannah is targeting a full-time move to Scottish Formula Ford 1600 next season after making her debut with Graham Brunton Racing at Knockhill last weekend, taking a best result of seventh. The teenager from East Kilbride has been a member of the Arden Young Racing Driver Academy since 2016 and recently tested Arden’s British Formula 4 car at Croft.

ENGINE STILL ON SONG

Tim Mogridge’s historic Ferrari F355 survived its 17th season of racing without an engine change, despite running into reliability problems last weekend at Silverstone. “I’ve had it for 17 years, and it’s still got the same engine it had then,” said Mogridge, who retired from the AMOC Intermarque race with mechanical issues unrelated to the engine. “I shouldn’t say that out loud, just in case.”

TWO WINS IN A WEEKEND

Andrew Gallacher celebrated an unlikely double victory last weekend, winning the Rally GB National Rally before adding a circuit racing success at Knockhill the next day. The Ford Focus WRC driver held off R5 competition in the form of John Wink’s Hyundai i20 to win the rally by over a minute by the end of Saturday. Gallacher then entered the one-day Scottish Motor Racing Club season finale meeting at Knockhill on the Sunday in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9. He qualified fourth, 0.6s off pole, but finished second in the first race, three seconds off winner Andy Forrest. In race two Gallacher broke away to finish 20s clear.



Owner Ric Wood says Mega Bertha is "very heavy, very wide"

READ

Mega (l) and Baby (r) Berthas head-to-head

READ

Mega Bertha's race debut

SPECIAL SALOONS

Dealer Team Vauxhall's last special saloon, dubbed 'Mega Bertha', made its race debut in the Special Saloons and Modsports series at Mallory Park last Sunday, 40 years after the project began.

The car was the brainchild of DTV chief Bill Blydenstein, who set about creating the Cavalier-based special for Gerry Marshall to race. It features a widened body and an 8400cc rear-mounted engine, but never raced in period after Vauxhall stopped funding the build in 1979.

The 7ft6in-wide 'Mega Bertha', which is owned by car preparer Ric Wood, produces 800bhp and uses 110 litres of fuel per hour. "Awesome, that's the best word for it," said Wood. "It feels very heavy, very

wide, but wow – fun to drive."

Wood finished 14th in the second Special Saloons race, behind Piers Ward in the Vauxhall Firenza 'Baby Bertha'.

"It's got too much power and not enough grip, but that's exactly what Gerry would want," added Wood.

Wood missed the first race on Saturday because the car's windows fogged up excessively in the wet weather, and it was excluded from the third-race grid because the exhaust was too loud.

Marshall died in 2005 and never knew that Mega Bertha would be completed, but Wood believes he would be proud. "This was his ultimate saloon," he said. "He'll be up there looking at this and he'll have a big smile on his face."

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER

Mustang sally forth

BERNIE'S V8s

Martin Reynolds made a surprise appearance in the Bernie's V8 series last weekend at Snetterton aboard the distinctive Joey Logano-liveried Ford Mustang Mach 1.

Reynolds has raced a Sebring V8 in Bernie's V8s this year, but that suffered a master-cylinder failure on the morning of the Snetterton meeting.

He decided to switch to the 1971 Mach 1 for the first time as a try-out before it undergoes a major upgrade over the winter ahead of being raced full-time in the series in 2019.

Reynolds recently bought the car, which sports a yellow-and-red tribute livery to NASCAR Cup star Logano, from fellow series competitor Marcus Bicknell. It is the only Mach 1 racing in the UK.

"Today's the first time competitively out," said Reynolds. "The master cylinder [on the Sebring] gave way this morning, so we had to do a quick change-around. That's shocked everybody today, including the scrutineers."

Reynolds (below) took part in the first of two Bernie's V8 races and finished third overall and second in class, as well as setting fastest lap in class.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



READ

Mitchell thrilled to drive March F2



Ex-South March will race at Dijon

LAWRENCE

HISTORICS

Ben Mitchell says he is thrilled at the chance to race the ex-Stephen South March 782 in Historic F2 at Dijon this weekend.

The Cheltenham racer has a strong reputation in historic competition and will pilot the car for the Retro Track and Air team on its return to racing after an absence of more than 30 years.

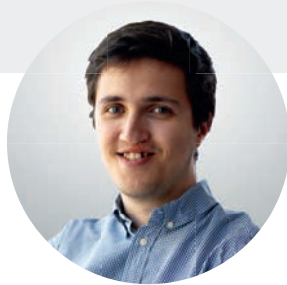
Mitchell, 25, first had contact with Matthew Watts and the Retro team doing work

experience before he left school. Now he will race the newly restored March.

"I've never raced a two-litre F2 car before," said Mitchell. "Hopefully I can give it a good showing, but the first priority is to look after the car."

Mitchell is second in the Historic Sports Car Club's Historic Formula Ford 1600 Championship in a Merlyn Mk20, but leads Cameron Jackson's Lola T200 on dropped scores by 14. The series has two races left.

PAUL LAWRENCE



BRITISH GT MAKES RIGHT CHOICE ON CALENDAR

The decision to visit a venue twice next year may seem underwhelming, but plans are afoot to add an intriguing twist to the additional Donington Park round

JAMES NEWBOLD

When news of Rockingham's imminent demise broke, it presented national championships with an opportunity to fill the vacant slots on the calendar with something different. But these hopes proved short-lived, as British GT followed the lead of the British Touring Car Championship in opting for a second visit to a track already on the schedule, in its case plumping for Donington Park for the June 22-23 weekend.

Yet this apparently unadventurous decision has a streak of logic to it that could outweigh the novelty of change. Aside from a one-year experiment with switching the season opener to Brands Hatch in 2016, the British GT calendar has been fairly stable in recent years, with Oulton Park and Donington bookending the season and Spa established as the championship's one overseas round since '14 after visits to the Nurburgring ('12) and Zandvoort ('13).

But while returning to one of those famous circuits on the continent would have injected some spice into the calendar –

"I WANT TO MAKE THAT FORMAT DIFFERENT, WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO MAKE IT SPECIAL"

and appealed to gentleman drivers with a keen appreciation for history – it would have driven up costs still further for a national championship that already has to face questions year on year about value for money in GT3. Several paddock figures have voiced concerns to Autosport about a works driver not being enough to win anymore, with a healthy testing budget also required to figure at the sharp end.

Also of concern was that adding another overseas race would require the amateur drivers who are the bedrock of the series to take more time off work for travel. One of the key benefits of racing in British GT over the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup is that free practice starts on Saturday, rather than Friday.

Although variety is welcome, it comes at a cost.

On the flipside, one driver's suggestion that British GT should drop the seventh round altogether with a view to reducing costs was swiftly dismissed by championship organiser the Stéphane

Ratel Organisation. In 2016 SRO reduced the number of Blancpain Sprint rounds from seven to five, which saw a dramatic increase in grid numbers from 21 to 38, but that also coincided with a rule that manufacturers had to enter cars in both the Sprint and Endurance Cups to be permitted an entry into the flagship Spa 24 Hours and be eligible for a \$150,000 per race prize fund, which had a greater effect than any cost reduction.

"Most of the teams are professional, they run a business and they need to go racing," explains British GT championship manager Benjamin Franassovici. "We try to control costs, but it's difficult – would it suddenly make a difference? I would have the reaction of people saying, 'You can't do that, we need seven rounds.' I think seven rounds for a national championship is necessary – six is a bit on the low side."

So that left SRO with the question of which UK circuit could replace Rockingham, which had the advantage of having room for teams to refuel. This isn't the case at Oulton Park and Snetterton, which as a result run one-hour sprints. Rejecting the short hop across the Irish Sea to Mondello Park or a return to Thruxton on this basis, Franassovici chose Donington, a drivers' favourite that usually produces excellent racing in its two-hour season finale, over Silverstone, venue for the only three-hour race on the calendar.

Two-time series champion Andrew Howard was among the leading drivers who welcomed the move, but called on SRO to be "brave" and make the round an "ambassadorial" one for the championship. It doesn't take much reading between the lines to see what he means – night racing.

"I think the key is to mix up the format," he says. "The most important thing is that it's got to be different, so if we go into the night – awesome. From a championship point of view, it brings a new dynamic to it without being massively expensive."

The motion was also received positively by team bosses. "It's endurance racing, so doing something in the dark makes sense to me," was the response of TF Sport's Tom Ferrier at Brands Hatch.

For its part, SRO is working behind the scenes to bring about a different format to differentiate the round from the two-hour finale, although the finer details are yet to be ironed out.

"MSV [circuit operator] are helping to make that second Donington visit exciting – I'm working behind the scenes to get the format right," says Franassovici. "I want to make that format different; we're going to try to make it special."

While at first glance the return to Donington could be viewed as an opportunity missed, the logical choice doesn't have to be underwhelming. 🏁



A rain-soaked track favoured Young's (31) heavy, softer Mk1

Young upsets the odds in washout Classic

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC
OCTOBER 6

Ever the great leveller, rain sowed the seeds of an unlikely victory when John Young planted his Mk1 saloon on pole for the Norman Dewis Trophy Pre-'66 Jaguar race, humbling E-type ace Julian Thomas. Come the afternoon, those seeds germinated spectacularly. Essex veteran Young's sublime car control earned a popular result that was the on-track highlight of the seventh Castle Combe Autumn Classic.

Had Saturday dawned dry, Young wouldn't

have had a prayer in his skinny-tyred, 1350kg 3.4-litre saloon. But with Thomas's muscular low-drag coupe alongside and the best field of Mk1 and 3.8-litre Mk2s in memory punching above their weight, not to mention a Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club contingent of XKs, Es, a lumbering MkVII and an S-type, continued precipitation played to John's arm-twirling strengths.

Once Thomas's monster hooked up at the start, he growled past the lofty black saloon on Avon Rise and stayed narrowly ahead for eight laps. "On the twisty bits John was so much quicker than me," conceded Thomas afterwards.

"I was sideways quite a lot, but just managed to get past – that did the trick," smiled his conqueror to podium interviewer Chris Dawes, a sight to behold in hippy garb.

Thomas considered himself fortunate to hang on to second, for Tom Butterfield scrambled his Mk2 by, only to rotate at Quarry. He recovered to finish fourth behind Andy Keith-Lucas in the CKL Developments XK150S, which had duelled with Marc Gordon's similar car, then staved off the recovering Butterfield to the chequer.

The VSCC's charismatic Owner-Driver-Mechanic Pre-War set opened the programme in style. At the head of an

FLYING SOLO, FLYING HIGHEST

"What a great place. I've only raced here once before, more than 30 years ago in Pre-'74 Formula Ford, before the chicanes [went in]," enthused Gary Pearson after winning a fragmented GT & Sports Car Cup endurance race, driving his semi-lightweight Jaguar E-type solo after 2005 FIA Thoroughbred GP champion Christian Glaesel was unexpectedly called back to Germany.

Two safety-car interventions defused what should have been a sensational hour of racing from a topsy-turvy 40-car grid following gruesomely wet practice conditions. National Formula Ford champion Niall Murray – a triple winner here earlier this season – had staggered his fellow entrants by qualifying fellow Dubliner Niall McFadden's 1963-spec wire-wheeled GT3-class E-type Fixed Head Coupe on pole,

pping Hampshireman Ben Adams in his diminutive Lola-Climax Mk1.

Last year's winner Philip Walker shot his Lotus 15 from ninth to second inside a lap, but was out within four owing to a detached ignition switch wire, denying Miles Griffiths a run. Bob Binfield biffing his Gilbern GT at Quarry brought the first caution, just before the pit window opened, which threw tactics into disarray. Theo Hunt's Healey arrived 40 seconds too early, and pit-exit holds during the yellow periods annulled the mandatory one-minute stops for soloists including Pearson, Mark Williams (AC Cobra) and Adams.

The second hiatus followed an incident at Folly, the fast right-handed kink after the startline, where Steve Wright's Porsche 356 expired leaving oil down on lap five. This coated the screen of pursuer Julian

Bronson in the ex-Neil Dangerfield Triumph TR4 SLR, before catching out Nick Paul, whose MGB was abandoned on the outfield facing oncoming traffic.

Up from eighth on the grid to third, Billy Bellinger had relayed Morgan +4 SLR owner Keith Ahlers during the first caution period. Six laps into his stint, three of them green, Ahlers was chasing Tim Reid's double-lapped MGB, which entered Folly wide, on the slippery side, then snapped sideways. Just as Ahlers was committed to passing on the racing line, the pale blue car found grip and speared right and across the track, wallowing the Morgan amidsthips. With both cars on the infield (the heavily damaged SLR immobile) and drivers out, the safety car had to be redeployed.

Once leader Pearson was located, he had a buffer of six lapped cars between himself and

CASTLE COMBE WEEKEND WINNERS

JEC NORMAN DEWIS TROPHY PRE-'66

JAGUARS

John Young (Mk1)

VSCC VINTAGE SPORTS CARS

Mark Gillies (Aston Martin 2-litre Speed Model)

PHIL BROSTER MEMORIAL AUSTIN-HEALEYS

Bruce Montgomery (3000 Mk2)

FJHRA HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR

Richard Bradley (Brabham BT2)

FISCAR HISTORIC INTERMARQUE

Martyn Corfield (Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica)

PRE-'66 HISTORIC TOURING CARS

Michael Squire (Ford Mustang)

GT & SPORTS CAR CUP

Gary Pearson (Jaguar E-type)

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11-marque field, young Tom Waterfield skittered his Frazer Nash Super Sports around, battling with Mark Gillies in Dick Skipworth's Aston Martin 2-litre Speed Model – the last Bertelli Aston, designed to take the Brooklands Outer Circuit class record – until his Meadows engine went flat on lap four of 12.

When it came back on song Waterfield caught Gillies again, but the problem recurred and Waterfield had to nurse it home in second. "The Nash is quick off the corners, but the Aston is magic through them," said Gillies.

"We were having a great race, then my engine wouldn't rev, but it was fantastic," said Waterfield, wringing out his overalls.

Chris Mann brought his stunning Alfa Romeo Monza up from fifth to third.



Mark Gillies's Aston
leads VSCC pack

"Those guys are younger and braver than me," he noted approvingly.

The Austin-Healey race was led throughout by top qualifier Bruce Montgomery, but after an adventurous drive Oliver Chatham (son of marque legend John) upheld family honour with second in the afternoon's closest finish. Chatham had passed fast-starter Mike Thorne's 100/4 and was homing in on Montgomery when he gyrated. "I saw them [David Grace and Thorne] pass me as I went backwards through Quarry, which wasn't ideal," he admitted. When Grace also had a moment, Thorne pounced for a superb third. Best Sprite was always Drew Cameron's, which slipped from second to a lonely fifth.

On a rapidly drying track reigning champion Peter de la Roche made the early Formula Junior running in Pat Barford's Lola Mk3, before prototype racer Richard Bradley (understandably cautious on his first wet standing start in his Brabham BT2) powered past for a maiden UK win.

De la Roche spun at the Esses, promoting Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk4) and Adrian Russell (Lotus 22), with whom he scrapped to the flag, content that another class win was enough to retain his crown. In a field in



Squire's Mustang
usurped Minis for
touring car glory

which the top nine finishers were from different constructors, sixth-placed Nick Taylor (Elva-BMC 100) dominated the front-engined contingent.

Martyn Corfield led both ends of FISCAR's diverse and well-populated Historic Intermarque race in his rorty Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica Mk2. Robin Ellis's zippy Lotus Elite went ahead on lap five of 19, but having relayed Richard Fores a loud "bang" on acceleration from the Esses heralded a loss of drive. Corfield thus won from Stephen Bond (Lister-Bristol 'Flat Iron'), who overhauled Marc Gordon (XK150) on the penultimate lap. Brian Arculus (Elite) salvaged fourth for the Lotus team.

Once through the Mini Cooper S flotilla that had topped the qualifying order, Michael Squire (Ford Mustang) and Julian Thomas (Falcon) controlled the Terry Sanger Trophy touring car finale, trading fastest laps as they wagged their V8 monsters' tails to increasingly impressive angles. Alas they circulated around 10 seconds apart, unlike the seven-car chasing group from which Mini duo Steve Maxted and Dan Lewis prevailed over Chris Clarkson's Falcon, Nick Stagg's Lotus Cortina and Paul Inch's Mini.

MARCUS PYE



Pearson's E-type leads
away to Combe victory

pursuer Williams when the track went live for the final time. Pearson thus had no difficulty in keeping his advantage over the remaining eight minutes until the chequered flag fell. Williams had no complaints. "I was busy chasing Jaguar drivers all the time," he grinned.

One lap down, Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in Martin Hunt's E-type passed John Burton's

well-driven E-type FHC at the green for third place, a lap before Jeremy Welch in Martyn Corfield's Austin-Healey 3000 snatched GT3-class honours from Burton. Rick Bourne/Malcolm Paul (TVR Grantura) landed sixth overall and the GT2 class, saved by the caution, which hobbled fast-closing Tim Jacobsen, whose MGB was started by father Laurence. Joe Ward's TVR

fell early when it shed a front wheel.

Belgian Guy Peeters (Lotus 11) claimed SP1 honours after a tussle with compatriot Louis Zurstrassen (Elva MkV), but Adams's Lola eventually split them despite engine problems. The Lotus Elites of Marc Gordon and series debutants David Groves/Dougal Cawley finished one-two in GT1.

MARCUS PYE



Lock opened up
a big lead in
dry race one

JONES

Lock secures maiden prototype success

**SNETTERTON
750MC
OCTOBER 6-7**

In the absence of Lee Torrie, Richard Stables could have taken the Bikesports Class A championship with two class wins at Snetterton. But he finished a distant second in class in race one to Joe Lock, who took his first prototype win (both in class and overall) in dominant fashion.

"I just tried to get as big a gap as I could at the start and then defend – and luckily I didn't really have to defend!" said Lock.

"It's a big step for me; it's going to be a good stepping stone for every other result I can get next year."

Stables' son Joe had already guaranteed the overall and Class B titles but sat out race one after crashing at Coram on the first lap of qualifying. Stables Sr let him take over his car for race two, now in teeming rain. Plenty of cars, including Lock's, left the track, and the race was eventually stopped

when Richard Hardie went off at Riches. Aaron Bailey was leading at the time, with Stables running second.

"[It was my] first weekend of actually going off and hitting the wall," Stables Jr said of his qualifying shunt. "Luckily it was the end of the season and I've already won the championship, so I'm not too bothered apart from the damage. My dad didn't want to go out in the wet so he thought he'd give me a shot."

Ben Rushworth in effect had his Hot Hatch Class A title confirmed in advance when Alistair Camp entered a Class B machine. That meant Rushworth was almost certain to score enough points to keep him ahead of Steve Sawley.

The driveshaft on Rushworth's Honda Integra failed on the first lap of qualifying but, starting the race from the back in sodden conditions, he snatched the lead within two laps and maintained it. Class C's Michael Winkworth secured the overall title with a class win, while Rodren Vella clinched

the Class B championship. Rushworth also won the dry race two the following day.

Lee Scott in his Ford Fiesta settled the three-way Classic Stock Hatch championship battle in his favour by winning a frenzied race one ahead of title rival Matt Rozier's Peugeot 205. It was also Scott's first win of the season. The third title contender, Marcus Ward, had an eventful run to sixth, but consoled himself by holding off Rozier for victory in race two.

Shaun Traynor only needed to follow rival Ben Rowe home in both races for the MR2 title but beat him in both. He won race one while Rowe – struggling with meagre rear brake pads – was penalised post-race for contact, dropping from third to sixth. Then Traynor passed Rowe on race two's final lap to finish second behind Paul Cook.

Ben Short had a triumphant MX-5 Cup return with three wins, the first in the wet and the final after starting seventh on a reversed grid. Paul Maguire secured the overall championship.

Matthew Booth took his MK Indy RR to a fifth Sport Specials win of the year in race one, while Lee Emm in his Locost 7 confirmed the overall title with Class B victory. Rob Johnston clinched the Class A title with sixth in race two, despite losing several places on lap one when he heard a strange noise and thought his engine had blown. Tom Griffiths, in a Tiger R10, beat Booth to the race win.

Graham Crowhurst took an astonishing M3 Cup race win in the wet, rising from the back after spinning at the first corner, then lapping seven seconds faster than anyone



Triumphant return
brought Short hat-trick

JONES

SNETTERTON WEEKEND WINNERS

BIKESPORTS

Race 1 Joe Lock (Radical PR6)

Race 2 Aaron Bailey (Radical SR3)

HOT HATCH

Races 1 & 2 Ben Rushworth (Honda Integra DC2)

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Race 1 Lee Scott (Ford Fiesta XR2i)

Race 2 Marcus Ward (Ford Fiesta XR2i)

TOYOTA MR2

Race 1 Shaun Traynor (Mk2)

Race 2 Paul Cook (Mk2)

MAZDA MX-5 CUP

Races 1, 2 & 3 Ben Short

SPORT SPECIALS

Race 1 Matthew Booth (MK Indy RR)

Race 2 Tom Griffiths (Tiger R10)

M3 CUP/330 CHALLENGE

Race 1 Graham Crowhurst (E46 M3)

Race 2 Tom Collier (E46 M3)

ROADSPORTS

Michael Price/Marcus Clutton (Porsche 997S)

BMW CAR CLUB SERIES

Races 1 & 2 David Heasman (M3 Saloon)

MGCC BCV8

Race 1 Russell McCarthy (MGB GT V8)

Race 2 Jordan Spencer (MGB GT V8)

CLUB ENDURO

Phil Keen/Del Shelton (BMW E36 M3)

BERNIE'S V8s/SRG Challenge

Race 1 Gwyn Pollard (Crossle 9S)

Race 2 Mark Bowd (Ford GT40)

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else on lap two. His win meant Tom Collier secured the championship, despite stopping on lap one with a bent steering arm. Collier then took his first win of the season in an even wetter race two, making his own comeback after stalling at the start.

Michael Price and Marcus Clutton (Porsche 997S) won the 45-minute Roadsports race, benefiting from making their pitstop under the safety car.

David Heasman pipped David Kempton on the line by a mere 0.02s to win the first BMW Car Club Racing contest. Heasman won race two as well, holding off Michael Cutt who had risen from the back.

Russell McCarthy clinched the overall BCV8 title. He won the dry first race, then won Class D in a sodden race two in which the Class C cars proved better suited to the conditions. That race was won by Jordan Spencer.

GRAHAM KEILLOH

CLUB ENDURO BLOSSOMS



As Club Enduro rounded out its first season as a championship, the paddock reflected on what a gem of a club-level endurance series had come into being. This two-hour event has become a highlight of several 750 Motor Club weekends, boasting grids of consistently more than 40 cars drawn from a broad variety of brands, including Porsche, BMW, Lotus, Mazda and Ginetta.

The drivers involved have loved the number of entrants as well the amount of track time on offer, which makes it great value. Recently crowned Class B champion Matt Faizey praised the club for the efforts put into the championship.

"Special mention needs to be given to the 750 Motor Club for putting together this incredible series, and to Giles [Groombridge, competitions manager] for having the bottle to do this," he said. "This is a lot of track time to try and sell. He's written a fantastic set of regulations, which can't have been easy."

As a regular in Roadsports, the 45-minute alternative endurance race, Sam McKee said the championship status of Club Enduro is a big pull factor in his switch to the category for 2019.

"We're definitely doing it next season," he said. "The fact that it's a championship as well is really nice; that's the main reason we looked at it. Roadsports is good for your first couple seasons but we want to fight for overall honours."

"The fact that the entry fee is only twice as much [as Roadsports] but

you're getting 2.5 times the track time, plus being in an enormous feature race with 51 cars out there, is all great."

British GT racer Phil Keen and Del Shelton's BMW E36 M3 bested 49 other entrants to win the Snetterton finale. Shelton led from pole, but a smaller fuel tank meant he could not afford an early pitstop during a safety car period half an hour into the race (for a SEAT Leon Cupra that pulled over with a gearbox issue), nor could the second-placed Porsche 997S driven by Michael Price. That gave the likes of Julian McBride and the Carl Readshaw/Daniel Taylor and Andy Baylie/Luke Schlewitz pairings the chance to reach the head of the field as they battled for the Class A championship in BMW E46 M3s.

Eventually they had to yield to Keen for the top spot, while former British GT class champion Marcus Clutton, who took over from Price in the Porsche, claimed second. Fellow ex-British GT racer Michael Bentwood put his BMW M4, shared with Chris Brown, on the podium.

Despite a 30-second stop-go penalty for the Baylie/Schlewitz BMW for overtaking under yellow flags, and a brief off at Riches during a heated battle with their title rivals, sixth overall was enough for them to claim the Class A title.

Meanwhile Steve Hewson/Matt Nossiter's Class C BMW E36 328i was trying to beat Faizey's Class B Porsche 968 to the overall title. Both won their respective classes, but a fastest lap by Hewson gave him and Nossiter the necessary advantage to become Club Enduro's inaugural champions.

"It was so tight coming into this, we really didn't know how it was going to land," Hewson said. "Faizey was flying in the second half of the season so we weren't taking anything for granted coming here, but it was a clean race."

CHRIS STEVENS



Hall (left) and Sibley
duel in Special Saloons
and Modsports



Modsports star in anniversary celebration

**MALLORY PARK
CSCC
OCTOBER 6-7**

Special Saloons and Modsports appropriately provided the most frenetic action at Mallory Park as the Classic Sports Car Club celebrated the 40th anniversary of Wendy Wools taking over title sponsorship of the famed tin-top championship.

Wayne Crabtree's Ford Escort BDT won the first race on Saturday in slippery, changing conditions, Crabtree claiming that the track surface felt different on every lap.

Crabtree and Ian Wilson (TVR Tasmin) relegated this season's regular winner Andy Southcott (MG Modsport) to the bottom step of the podium. Southcott pushed hard after making a slow start, while polesitter Tony Paxman spun his Escort on the opening lap.

Southcott returned to business as usual for the first of two races on Sunday, winning by a large margin. Crabtree's earlier win meant he was placed 11th on the grid, but retired on the first lap with lack of grip. Wilson's TVR could only manage eighth.

The warmer weather favoured the lighter, lower sports-derived models. Ian Hall (Darrian Wildcat) took advantage of a safety car period at about half-distance to catch up with the leading group from sixth place and sprint his way to second, followed by Paul Sibley's Lotus Elan.

The race also featured the long-awaited debut of the Vauxhall V8 'Mega Bertha', driven by Ric Wood. He finished 14th after taking it steady.

Hall was the winner of race three, which was curtailed by a lengthy safety-car period, then stopped early when the stranded MG Midget of Ian Staines/Rob

Griffith had to be hoisted off the Hairpin. Southcott was second, right on the tail of Hall, with Sibley third.

Saturday's opening Modern Classics/New Millennium race was won by Karl Cattliff in a BMW M3 from Tom Brenton's Ford Sierra XR8.

The New Millennium class was won by Nigel Ainge and Danny Cassar in a Honda Integra. The pair started from the back due to a car change, but worked their way through the pack and won on the road by a comfortable margin. But a one-minute penalty for not switching the engine off during their pitstop dropped them to fourth overall.

Red flags were a familiar sight on Saturday. The opener was halted twice, and the Tin Tops race did not even get a lap in before the Integra of Angela Jones and William Jarman spun and triggered a restart. The red flags appeared again after one lap and the race was shortened to 20 minutes. Tom Mensley was the eventual winner in his Renault Clio, after a long and tense scrap with Martin Addison's Peugeot 106, which finished second. Shaun Ely was third in a Peugeot 205.

Paul Dingle (Porsche 944) won the Future Classics race on the line from Tony and Aston Blake's 911.

Sunday had more of a historic flavour, featuring the two Swinging Sixties races. Ian Staines was the winner of the Group 1 race. His MG Midget was locked in a close battle with Tim Cairns's Austin-Healey

Ramm (99) and Philpott (67)
enjoyed close battles



JONES

MALLORY PARK WEEKEND WINNERS

SPECIAL SALOONS AND MODSPORTS

Race 1 Wayne Crabtree (Ford Escort BDT)

Race 2 Andy Southcott (MG Modsport)

Race 3 Ian Hall (Darrian Wildcat T98 GTR)

MODERN CLASSICS/NEW MILLENNIUM

Karl Cattliff (BMW E46 M3)

TIN TOPS

Tom Mensley (Renault Clio 172)

FUTURE CLASSICS

Paul Dingle (Porsche 944 S2)

SWINGING SIXTIES

Group 1 Ian Staines (MG Midget)

Group 2 Malcolm Johnson (Lotus Europa)

JAGUAR SALOONS/GTs

Race 1 James Ramm (XJS)

Race 2 Colin Philpott (XJS)

TURBO TIN TOPS/PUMA CUP/ SMART 4 TWO CUP

John Hammersley/Nigel Tongue

(Renault Megane F1 R26)

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

Tim Davis (Caterham C400)

OPEN SERIES

Tim Davis (Caterham C400)

For full results visit:
www.tsl-timing.com

Frogeye Sprite in the later stages. Cairns briefly led a couple of laps from the end, but Staines retook the place at the Hairpin and Cairns was unable to get back past at the Esses, despite his best attempts. The Sunbeam Alpine of Timothy Kemp/Sam Loughnan was third. Chris Watkinson's Mini looked very strong at the beginning and even led, but a mechanical problem ended its challenge on lap five.

The fastest of the bigger Group 2 cars was Malcolm Johnson's yellow Lotus Europa, which won comfortably. The real battle was for third, with Dean Halsey in a Datsun 240Z and Jon Ellison (Triumph TR4) both in contention until Halsey pushed a bit too hard at Gerards and went across the grass twice. He finished fourth. Jon Wolfe was a solid second, having run his own race in his TVR Tuscan.

Polesitter Nigel Reuben had been on course for a podium despite stalling on the startline, but his TVR Griffith developed problems and he retired.

James Ramm and Colin Philpott won a race apiece in the Jaguar Saloon and GT Championship after tussling throughout the weekend.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



HOLLYWOOD BEYOND Dean Halsey's Datsun 240Z was built from scratch, using original parts, and is modelled on the 240Zs that were raced in the US in the 1970s. Its red, blue and white paint scheme is a tribute to the 240Zs raced by movie legend Paul Newman and his team. Driving solo for only the second time, having shared with Wil Arif last season, Halsey used the Datsun's superior straightline speed to challenge for an overall podium position in the Swinging Sixties race.



MAJOR MORRIS Craig Percy's Morris Minor is not your typical gran's trusty runabout. Instead of the usual 998cc A-series engine, a six-litre Chevrolet small-block V8 resides in its engine bay, and what began its life as a police car in the 1960s now sports flared wheelarches and a big spoiler. The Super Saloon's wide wheels and unusual weight distribution do not make for a car that handles well in the wet, and Percy found Sunday's dry track much easier going than Saturday's deluge.



GOOD VIBRATIONS Every time David Beatty drove through the Esses, his Aston Martin V8's deep and resonant engine note set off an alarm on a spectator's car. The mighty seven-litre machine was raced in the 1980s and '90s by Gerry Marshall, under the name 'Silver Dream Machine'. Other notable drivers include Anthony Reid, who crashed it into a wall at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

Mason and Wylie master tricky conditions



SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL BARC OCTOBER 6-7

David Mason and Ross Wylie were the indisputable stars of the Britcar Endurance Championship weekend, stretching away in the Sprint championship lead on the back of two strong results.

The duo's Ferrari 458 GT3 started on pole for the sprint race after persistent rain forced organisers to abandon the usual qualifying format, and grid order was determined by an abstruse mixture of class and championship positions. But Mason

dropped down the order immediately owing to confusion over the starting procedure in the wet: he followed the safety car into the pits while the others took the rolling start.

Fulvio Mussi seized the lead and had a strong opening stint in his Ferrari 458 Challenge before a crash during team-mate Ronnie Garrick's first racing lap forced them out for the day.

This left the Ferrari 488 of Jamie Stanley and John Seale to take the victory despite the best efforts of Wylie, who had the speed but not enough laps to retake the lead.

Broken brake calipers forced Stanley and Seale out before the reduced 50-minute

endurance race, leaving Wylie and Mason to inherit their second pole position of the day. The pair built up a lead of nearly 40 seconds in the early part of the race and although second-placed Jonny MacGregor narrowed the gap, his Taranis was unable to challenge the dominant #7 car.

In the Michelin Clio Cup, recently re-crowned champion Ben Palmer focused on completing a clean sweep in 2018, having won the 13 races to date.

Race one followed the form guide as Palmer claimed a comfortable victory. But although he led from pole in race two, he lost his 100% win record when his

Jaguar tops Aston in British battle at soggy Silverstone

SILVERSTONE NATIONAL MSVR OCTOBER 6

The home of British motorsport fittingly played host to a battle of British marques in the final Aston Martin Owners Club meeting of the season.

In typically British weather, Aston Martin's glory was snatched away in an intense Equipe Pre-'63 contest by Jaguar, as Tim Mogridge recovered from a poor getaway to win in his returning E-type.

"I need to practice my starts", was Mogridge's summary after falling from pole position to fifth.

Andrew Hibberd pounced in the Aston Martin Project 214, one of a very small number still surviving. He soon dispatched Tom Smith's MGA to lead

by lap four, and enjoyed a tactically longer stint before handing over to Martin Brewer.

Mogridge closed rapidly and snatched victory with five minutes to run despite a misted screen (which was damaged in a historic race at Le Mans). "The car is lovely to drive," said Mogridge. "It had two DNFs recently so I went out to prove it can do it."

Brewer followed Mogridge home, while Nick Matthews's Austin-Healey completed the podium after third-placed Smith — who survived a dramatic Brooklands spin — was penalised for speeding in the pitlane.

While luck was on Matthews's side on that occasion, his dominant victory from pole in the Equipe GTS race was no fluke. Matthews lapped all but those inside the top seven, while Tom Grindall's MG Midget trailed the Healey by almost 30 seconds after climbing two spots on lap one. Nick



Mountford was a star performer and completed his recovery from 11th to the podium when his Triumph TR4 passed Henry Rice's MGB in the closing laps.

Victory was much more hotly contested in the Jack Fairman Cup for 1950s machinery. Tony Bianchi's nostalgic Farrallac Mk2 locked horns with the MGA of Mark Ellis, both battling the elements. Though the Farrallac was "a handful" and overpowered by Ellis late on, Bianchi powered back past on the penultimate lap with a brave exit from Luffield. "I literally had full power on to accelerate by him," said Bianchi, who narrowly hung on to his advantage at the flag.

In the GT Challenge race, Grahame Tilley



throttle cable snapped on the second lap.

Palmer's retirement promoted Ben Colburn into the lead, and he proceeded to dominate the race to grab second place in the championship from Simon Freeman, who headed a four-way battle for third on track behind Ronan Pearson.

Nic Harrison was able to perform the season sweep in the production-spec Road Class with his 14th and 15th class victories.

In the Junior Saloon Car Championship Lewis Saunders extended his title lead with a win in the opening race, passing Joel Wren for the victory on the penultimate lap. Ben Kasperczak won the second race.

Aaron Smith claimed the Mini Miglia Championship after winning race one, while former points leader Dave Drew spun after a touch from Alex Osborne and was forced to enact a recovery drive. Smith snatched the win on the final lap from reigning Historic Formula 1 champion Nick Padmore, who won the second race.

By dominating both races in the Kumho BMW Championship – and securing a six-race win streak to close the season – Garrie Whittaker was able to seal second in the championship. James Card, runner-up in both races, ended the season third in points. Russell Dack took class victories in both races to win a closely contested CC crown under pressure from title rival Paul Wood.

The Mini Se7en Championship went to Max Hunter, who took victory in the opening race while title rival Spencer Wanstall dropped to the back of the pack after picking up a puncture from contact with Dan Budd. Andrew Deviny pipped Wanstall on the final lap to win race two.

Stuart Plotnek earned a maiden win of the season in the final race of the MG Owners' Club Championship. He passed race one winner and champion Martin Wills, who eventually finished the final race in sixth place.

KYRAN GIBBONS AND ANNA DUXBURY



was derailed by his own turn of speed. The Brands Hatch winner was over 2s quicker in qualifying than Tom and Nick Cresswell in their similar Ginetta G55, resulting in Tilley having an extra minute added to his mandatory pitstop time.

Having dominated, Tilley's Ginetta was left playing catch-up in the final 15 minutes because of the handicap. "I was too quick!" he said, as the Cresswells took advantage to win by over 20s. The BMW of Arran and James Moulton-Smith was a lonely third.

In a two-horse Intermarque race, only winner Chris Bialan and nearest rival Robert Hollyman finished on the lead lap. Bialan lost out to the fast-starting Porsche 964



of Hollyman at the start, but his BMW 330 relished the conditions and waded by on lap two for an untroubled triumph. An all-Porsche squabble for third was more intense. Karl Weaver had looked safe in his Cayman, but Andrew Peck fought back in his 968CS to complete the podium.

Anthony Seber fought hard to make up for lost time in the Pre-War Handicap race in the Wolseley Hornet restored by his father. Seber unlapped himself from nine opponents and grabbed the lead from a fighting Clive Morley and Trevor Swete in the closing stages.

DAN MASON

WEEKEND WINNERS



SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL BRITCAR

Race 1 John Seale/Jamie Stanley (Ferrari 488)

Race 2 David Mason/Ross Wylie (Ferrari 458 GT3)

MICHELIN CLIO CUP

Race 1 Ben Palmer

Race 2 Ben Colburn

JUNIOR SALOON CARS

Race 1 Lewis Saunders

Race 2 Ben Kasperczak

MINI MIGLIA

Race 1 Aaron Smith

Race 2 Nick Padmore

KUMHO BMWs

Races 1 & 2 Garrie Whittaker (E36 M3) (Pictured above)

MINI SE7EN

Race 1 Max Hunter

Race 2 Andrew Deviny

MG OWNERS' CLUB

Race 1 Martin Wills (F)

Race 2 Stuart Plotnek (F VVC)

CLUBMANS SPORTS PROTOTYPE

Race 1 Steven Dickens (Mallock Mk29)

Races 2 & 3 Clive Wood (Mallock Mk23)

SILVERSTONE NATIONAL

EQUIPE PRE-'63

Tim Mogridge (Jaguar E-type)

EQUIPE GTs

Nick Matthews (Austin-Healey 100/4)

JACK FAIRMAN CUP

Tony Bianchi (Farrallac Mk2)

GT CHALLENGE

Nick Cresswell/Tom Cresswell (Ginetta G55) (Pictured below)

INTERMARQUE

Chris Bialan (BMW 330 M3)

PRE-WAR TEAM CHALLENGE

Anthony Seber (Wolseley Hornet Special)

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KNOCKHILL WEEKEND WINNERS

SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS AND SALOONS

Race 1 Raymond Boyd (Porsche 911 Turbo)

Race 2 John Kinmond (Rover 3500)

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP

Race 1 Mark Geraghty

Race 2 & 3 Robbie Dalglish

SCOTTISH LEGENDS

Races 1, 2 & 3 David Newall

SCOTTISH SPORTS AND SALOONS

Race 1 Andy Forrest (Westfield SEi)

Race 2 Andrew Gallacher (Mitsubishi Lancer E9)

SCOTTISH FF1600

Races 1 & 2 Ross Martin (Ray GR17)

FIESTA AND HOT HATCH CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Wayne Macaulay (Ford Fiesta ST)



For full results visit:
speedhive.mylaps.com

of five second places to Sleigh's four.

Reigning champion and guest entrant Mark Geraghty romped to victory in the opening race, while title contender Robbie Dalglish prevailed in the remaining two encounters to elevate his season's win total to eight.

David Newall escaped frantic action behind to claim a trio of Scottish Legends victories to end the season on a high, while David Hunter secured the championship. Hunter's chief rival Ryan McLeish did everything he could by leading the early stages of race two, but he was taken out by veteran Ivor Greenwood as the pair disputed the lead at McIntyres.

Despite not turning up for the final round of the season, Will Robson was crowned Scottish Sports and Saloons champion for the second successive year. A bumper grid of 19 cars made up of guest and partial-season entries made for exciting racing as Andy Forrest and Rally GB National winner Andrew Gallacher took the spoils.

Scottish Formula Ford 1600 champion Ross Martin capped off a perfect year by becoming the first driver since Kenneth Thirlwall in 2011 to win every race in the season. The Graham Brunton Racing driver claimed both victories, beating team-mates Sebastian Melrose and Gary Sykes in races one and two respectively.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



Baptie beats Boyd to Classic Sports and Saloons crown

KNOCKHILL
SMRC
OCTOBER 7

Alastair Baptie clinched a second consecutive Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons title with a pair of Class A victories in a soaking wet season finale at Knockhill last weekend.

The Perthshire driver came into the meeting just three points ahead of 2016 champion Raymond Boyd and needed only to beat nearest Class A rival Mario Ferrari in each race to claim back-to-back championship crowns.

For Boyd, the challenge was far steeper, owing to the interloping Morgan +8 of Tommy Gilmartin and the returning John Kinmond (Rover 3500) entering Class E.

Polesitter Gilmartin suffered a terrible start in the opening race, then retired at half-distance because of problems with his tyres, gifting Boyd's turbocharged flat-six Porsche 911 victory over Kinmond.

Baptie took his mid-engined Fiat X1/9 to third overall, but only just clung on to class honours from Ferrari's Alfa Sprint

Trofeo by a mere 0.2 seconds.

Boyd initially led away from pole in the second race but lost out to Kinmond and Baptie after sliding off track at Duffus in treacherous conditions. Boyd got back past Baptie later in the lap and caught Kinmond in the closing stages, but could not mount a serious challenge.

Baptie was ultimately assured of the title when Ferrari pulled into the pits with mechanical trouble on the third lap of 12.

"It's probably worse being chased than doing the chasing, and it has been a lot harder than last year," a jubilant Baptie said post-race.

"The engine picked up a stone this year in the triple-header round so I missed two races, and lost what had been a good lead. But it's great to win the title in just my second full season of racing."

The Scottish Mini Cooper Cup was settled in similarly tense fashion as John Duncan was crowned champion on countback, after he and David Sleigh were tied on points following the final race. The pair each scored five wins throughout the season; Duncan took the honours by dint





NEVER OBEY THE LOCAL TR



VIDEO GAME
FORZA
HORIZON 4
RRP £49.99

"It's not your dream holiday, it's your dream life. That's what I see on the horizon," says fictional racing champion Rebecca – Autosport hopes we're taking her phonecall via a hands-free device, since we've been thrust into the cockpit of a McLaren Senna.

After blasting along very familiar Scottish B-roads alongside other titans of the UK automotive scene, we're straight into winter and driving a Polaris off-road buggy through an uphill section in the second stage of a racing/cinematic sequence that could be the *Forza Horizon 4* version of Marvel's *Avengers*.

Over a jump, across winter farmland and out of the mud, then it's into spring in a Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Ford Fiesta from the Global Rallycross Championship as you hunt down showboating bikes.

Back into the Senna for the 'Great Race', which, if won, takes you through the sleepy

town of Ashford and into the Forza Festival. 'Welcome to Britain', the message says.

Phew. Sound frantic, over-the-top bombastic? That's the *Forza Horizon* franchise, the *Top Gear*-like mad brother of the more serious *Forza Motorsport* racer.

This is not a game for those who enjoy fraught simulation racing provided by the likes of *Project Cars*, *rFactor* or *iRacing*, but more for the kinds of people who want to live out their *Fast and Furious* dreams.

The selection of cars from motorsport is as eclectic as you would expect from a sandbox, open-world game such as the *Horizon* series, no doubt highlighted by the stunning (if not road-legal) 1969 Penske Lola T70 in classic Sunoco livery, which in this game drives like a lightweight drifting machine. Autosport preferred driving this over the more typical Ford Transit vans that litter our road.

But taking the Lola around the streets of a surprisingly accurate, condensed Edinburgh, or through the tight-and-twisty confines of Cumbria, is a genuine delight. It's a relief to see a large-budget video game acknowledge that there is more to the UK than the tried-and-tested streets of London.



AFFIC LAWS

"TAKING A LOLA T70 AROUND THE STREETS OF EDINBURGH IS A GENUINE DELIGHT"

But not all feels quite so fresh, and several elements still fall flat. The insistence on a game avatar — particularly a selection so gormless — to introduce an element of clothes customisation is still as tacky as it sounds. Adding houses to buy makes for pleasant photos, but little else.

In reality, there's only one addition — outside of seasons — worth noting. *Forza Horizon 4* is the first game in the series to be totally online, which a gamble considering the failure of *The Crew* and its successor. But the likes of *GT Sport* have proved it can be done and is in keeping with what the 2018 gamer wants.

The greatest success is the dynamic seasons that drop each Thursday with a curated song playlist — evocatively presented as old-fashioned motorsport event posters that used to promote iconic races.

While the arcade style may not be to the taste of every motorsport fan, the fact is that the *Horizon* series, which started as a spin-off, has now overtaken the parent *Forza Motorsport* series in popularity. In an era of racing games that are shining new light on niche series or taking Formula 1 to new heights, that's remarkably telling.

Perhaps the knock-on effect will be that the wonderful but unrealistic Penske Lola will find a new audience to appreciate it too. If not, the additional content such as gadget-laden James Bond cars will suffice.

TOM ERRINGTON



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THIS WEEKEND'S EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

World Endurance Championship

Rd 4/8

Fuji, Japan

October 14

TV Live BT Sport 2,

Sunday 0230

TV Delayed

Eurosport 2,

Sunday 0730

DTM

Rd 10/10

Hockenheim,

Germany

October 13-14

European Formula 3

Rd 10/10

Hockenheim,

Germany

October 13-14

TV Live BT Sport 2,

Saturday 0945. BT

Sport 1, Saturday

1545. BT Sport 3,

Sunday 0945

Petit Le Mans

IMSA SportsCar

Rd 12/12

Road Atlanta, Georgia,

USA

October 13

World Rallycross

Rd 11/12

Estering, Germany

October 13-14

NASCAR Cup

Rd 31/36

Talladega, Alabama,

USA

October 14

TV Live Premier

Sports, Sunday 1800

24 Hour Series

Rd 7/8

Spa, Belgium

October 13

European Rally Championship

Rd 8/8

Rally Liepaja, Latvia

October 12-14



SILVERSTONE

UK MOTORSPORT

Snetterton 750MC

October 13

Clio 182s, Formula

Vee, Locosts, RGB

Sports 1000, 750

Formula, Historic

750 Formula

Donington Park

BRSCC

October 13-14

TCR, FF1600, Open

Sports, Mazda MX-5s,

BMW Compacts, Civic

Cup, HRDC Touring
Greats, HRDC Allstars,
Classic Alfes

Silverstone MSVR

October 13-14

British F3, LMP3

Cup, GT Cup, Radical

Challenge, F3 Cup,

Monoposto

Pembrey BARC

October 13-14

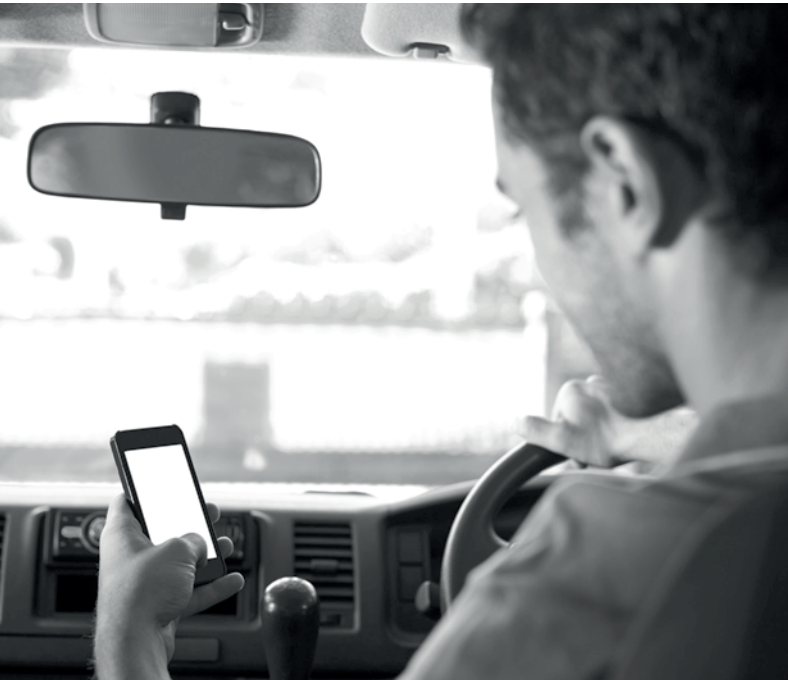
Trucks, Legends,

Pickups, Karts, Welsh

Sports/Saloons



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PENSKE SPORTSCARS

MCKLEIN

It's difficult to look beyond a car with over 1000bhp...

KEVIN TURNER

THE LEGENDARY AMERICAN team successfully returned to sportscar competition in 2018 with the Acura ARX-05 in IMSA, adding to a fine list of Penske endurance racers.

ZEREX SPECIAL

5

Always one to seek out the 'unfair advantage', Roger Penske pushed the limits of sportscar regulations even before he founded his eponymous team. The Zerex Special was essentially a rebodied Cooper Formula 1 car fitted with a 2.7-litre engine. Penske ran it at the 1962 Riverside Grand Prix and beat Jack Brabham, Graham Hill, Dan Gurney, Bruce McLaren, Jim Hall and Masten Gregory to win. The Zerex kept on winning until Penske sold it in '64, after which it played its part in the creation of Bruce McLaren's new marque.



MCKLEIN

FERRARI 512M

4

Porsche's 917K was the car of the five-litre Group 5 era, but Penske's 1971 work showed what the rival Ferrari 512M could do. With Traco-prepared V12 engines giving (initially at least) over 600bhp, Penske's blue Ferrari also sported other developments, including a rear wing. Mark Donohue outpaced the works 917s at Daytona, Sebring and Watkins Glen, only being denied by a combination of clashes and niggly problems. It's hard to argue with Donohue's assertion that, "We knew it was the fastest five-litre car on any track besides Le Mans."



LAT

LOLA T70 Mk3B

3

In a race of attrition, Mark Donohue and Chuck Parsons gave Penske's new T70 Mk3B victory first time out in the 1969 Daytona 24 Hours. The car then battled the works Ferrari and Porsche squads in the Sebring 12 Hours and there were plans for major development work ahead of an assault on that year's Le Mans 24 Hours. But then the car was stolen and the project terminated. History could have been different had Penske's campaign been bigger, which could also be said of our next entry...



MCKLEIN

PORSCHE RS SPYDER

2

Penske combined forces with its old German ally once again in the mid-2000s to develop this LMP2 contender. It moved the goalposts, Penske taking three consecutive American Le Mans Series LMP2 titles between 2006 and '08, and other Spyder teams winning the class at Le Mans in '08 and '09. Not only did the RS Spyder dominate the smaller prototype category, it proved capable of beating Audi's R10 to overall ALMS wins, probably the most famous of which was its '08 Sebring 12 Hours victory with Timo Bernhard/Emmanuel Collard/Romain Dumas.



LAT

PORSCHE 917/30

1

This is not just the greatest Penske sports-racer, but one of the finest competition cars of all time. Porsche and Penske ended McLaren's domination of Can-Am with the revolutionary turbocharged 917/10 in 1972, and the 1100+bhp 917/30 was the ultimate iteration. Mark Donohue, who did much of the development work, won six of the eight rounds in '73 on his way to the crown. Porsche's domination led to Can-Am rule changes, but there was still time for a closed-circuit land speed record at Talladega in '75, Donohue averaging 221.12mph.



MCKLEIN



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Denny Hulme (Brabham-Repco BT20) speeds past the pits, and its excellent ad hoc vantage point, en route to third (albeit two laps down) in the 1966 French

Grand Prix, the last time the race was held at the Reims-Gueux circuit. It was won by Jack Brabham (Brabham-Repco BT19) after Lorenzo Bandini (Ferrari 312) was forced to relinquish the lead by a broken

throttle linkage. Brabham became the first driver to win a world championship grand prix in a car bearing his own name. Mike Parkes (Ferrari 312) was an impressive second on his F1 debut for the Scuderia.



LATI IMAGES

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

QUIZ

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?



WHO IS THIS?

Racing royalty in his homeland, this versatile driver was a race winner in four different decades.

He rose to prominence on two fronts: by getting involved with a family affair whose tuning knowhow was rewarded with an unlikely triumph; and in a fire-spitting Italian holiday resort.

This resulted in a call to drive lucky number 7 – and so it proved as he secured back-to-back round-the-clock wins.

A move into the mountains took him onto the world stage only to fall agonisingly close of the summit. But when he returned home he ruled the roost, paving the way for years of success. He even went on a grand tour in a flying star, and triumphed there too.

He was still winning when he hit a half century before winding down to a hobby racer, while keeping his fans entertained from the commentary box.

ON THIS DAY

1 Alfonso de Portago was born on this day in 1928. With whom did he share the drive when he scored his best F1 world championship result?

2 Today is Wayne Gardner's birthday. How many 500cc GP motorcycle races did he win?

3 Who scored his 21st and final NASCAR Cup win on this day in 2008?

4 Which Indycar team owner scored his first podium as a driver on this day in 1998?

5 Walter Rohrl clinched the WRC title on this day in 1980. How many rounds of the championship remained?

NAME THE HELMET



LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

Who, what, where, when Michele Alboreto, Reynard-Ford 951, Indianapolis 500, May 26 1996. **Who is this?** Peter Revson. **On this day** 1) Reine Wisell. 2) 8. 3) Oscar Gonzalez, Alberto Uriá. 4) Kentucky Speedway. 5) Silverstone. **Name the helmet** Gerhard Berger.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

HAWTHORN: REMEMBERING BRITAIN'S FIRST F1 CHAMP



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WORLDS APART? MAYBE NOT FOR MUCH LONGER

When the World Rallycross Championship thundered onto the scene in 2014, it was dominated by Petter Solberg, whose all-action 'Hollywood' style proved unsurprisingly popular and was exactly the kind of crowd-pleasing draw the young championship needed to establish itself.

But fast-forward four years and the name on everybody's lips is Solberg's Volkswagen team-mate Johan Kristoffersson, who wrapped up his second consecutive title at Austin. In truth, it had never really been in doubt, a point underlined by his adding a ninth win from 10 rounds in Texas.

Kristoffersson had dominated most of those rounds from the front, so Austin was something of an outlier. Third on the grid after trailing Solberg in their semi-final, Kristoffersson hit the front when 2003 World Rally champion Solberg made an unforced error two laps from home.

The two make for a fascinating comparison, with Kristoffersson's silky-smooth style honed in circuit racing proving the more effective of the two. And with

two-time DTM champion Mattias Ekström claiming the 2016 world title, it marks the third year in a row that a driver with circuit-racing pedigree has prevailed over the rally drivers. Are we witnessing a changing of the guard?

Stephen Brunsdon takes an in-depth look at the evolution of rallycross on page 8, with input from the champion and those who have attempted to beat him this year, including Timmy Hansen, a contemporary of Carlos Sainz Jr and Robin Frijns in Formula BMW.

Their rise to prominence underlines the point made by our expert coach Rob Wilson on page 4 that the techniques needed to be quick in rallying are not so dissimilar to racing. While

Kimi Räikkönen's struggles in the World Rally Championship remain fresh in the memory, as Stéphane Sarrazin has proved (page 7), who's to say that we won't see another racing driver make the switch with aplomb in the near future?



James Newbold

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MASTERCLASS

WITH ROB WILSON

OUR EXPERT COACH EXPLAINS WHY CIRCUIT RACING SKILLS ARE TRANSFERABLE TO SPECIAL STAGES



The handbrake can be a useful tool, but shouldn't be abused

When I started working with rally drivers at the turn of the century, the thinking from Prodrive and M-Sport was that the asphalt stages must have a degree of similarity to circuit-racing techniques, but now it's become relevant to the loose surfaces, snow and gravel, as well.

The actual difference is not huge, at least not as much as people think, and some general

principles apply regardless of the surface. Whether you're on asphalt, gravel or snow, you don't want corners going on too long, you've still got to communicate with the surface in the same way with the rates of input, you've got to decrease the brake pressure in a smooth way and introduce the steering for the corner to make sure you're not sliding with no forward trajectory, which only costs you time.

Certainly, we're seeing a big reduction in the

Scandinavian flick now, which of course happens naturally with the pendulum effect if you come out of a left-hander and you've got a right-hander coming up pretty soon. But assuming it's a straight-ahead approach to a right-hand corner, then it's more effective to just introduce the weight transfer to the left front in the same way you would with a racing car. On the loose, it's still about achieving the straightest lines you can.

When it comes to acceleration, of course one doesn't want too much wheelspin, but on the gravel sometimes a tiny bit of wheelspin cuts through to a harder surface below, so it is tolerable to tease the throttle more than you would do on the race track.

The attitude does have to be different though – one thing you're not looking for in rally drivers is to be the world's latest braker. When you train a racing driver at Bruntingthorpe, you're rehearsing it 100 times over and always reducing speed for the slowest point of the corner, which is often further around the corner than you would expect. But in rallying, even with your pacenotes and the co-driver sitting alongside you, it's often hard to know precisely what that point is.

There are further tools that a rally driver can



Sliding looks dramatic, but isn't always the quickest



Neat and tidy lines
are still effective
on rough roads

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Gronholm could
have gone on
for longer

McKLEIN

“One thing you’re not looking for in rally drivers is to be the world’s latest braker”

use compared to a racing driver, but just because they are there it doesn’t necessarily mean you should use them all the time. The handbrake is a case in point – it does have a place, but you’ve got to be careful that you don’t slow the car down too much and don’t bog down or stall the engine on the way out.

One former Monte Carlo Rally winner I spent some time training once asked for my thoughts on left-foot braking, and it’s my view that there will be times when you use it to change the direction of the car, but it’s just another tool and not as critical as people think. One doesn’t have to be a natural left-foot braker to win rallies – you can get rotation with the brake decrease and the steering wheel, as well as the handbrake.

Rally drivers are thoroughly enjoyable characters to work with, because they are in a rugged sport and you need a cheerful optimism in the harsh conditions they compete in, and the potential danger they face every time.

I’ve worked with several great drivers in that time: Marcus Gronholm had a tremendous competence about him and could have gone on for longer had he not been at a certain stage in his life, and Petter Solberg, the 2003 world

A DISCIPLINE TO BE RESPECTED

It’s often said that rally drivers are a different breed, and from my one experience of rallying in 1987, I’ll admit that I fall very much into that camp. I did the Lakeland Stages in heavy fog, and as I changed from fourth to third over the brow of a hill, I was informed by my co-driver, Colin Wilson, that his regular partner would have gone from fourth to fifth there. The phrase stays in my mind – and it’s over 30 years ago!

The profile goes to the racing drivers, but those in the know have a great appreciation for rallying, and if you look back far enough to Jim Clark doing the RAC Rally in the Cortina, or Graham Hill on the Monte Carlo in a Ford Falcon, they always have done.

There was a time when the Monte Carlo Rally was as important as the Indy 500, Le Mans and the Monaco Grand Prix. There were major blockbuster films like *Monte Carlo Or Bust* because the event



Kubica was drawn to rallying to improve his sensitivity to grip changes

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had real glamour about it. Rallying carried such a natural affinity for everyone in racing and, although it doesn’t have quite the same profile now, I think it’s still the same today with people I talk to that voice their interest in having a go. They have big respect for what rally drivers do and there’s a fascination for it that comes with an appreciation for the danger involved.

Robert Kubica went rallying with the intention of broadening his skillset, and found the experience of driving in such vastly changeable conditions improved his confidence in a Formula 1 car. Carlos

Sainz Jr will have grown up watching his father competing on rallies and has a stage near his house in Spain that he practices on, but he will have only properly understood it for himself when he turned up to drive the course car on the Monte Carlo this year without doing a recce first.

As he discovered, rallying is a dramatic experience. There’s so much you have to take into consideration; the violence of the car, the noise and the trees that brush you, the rocks coming up from the surface of the road. It’s a challenging discipline and definitely broadens your horizons as a driver.



Loeb transferred his skills to Le Mans with Pescarolo

DOLE/LAT
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champion, is a fantastic character and a real all-guns-blazing driver who has been very effective since switching to rallycross.

Of course, the environment is spectacular, even in rallycross, but it doesn’t mean that behind the wheel you’re driving it in the same way it looks.

Sebastien Loeb is the most successful rally driver of all time and is almost Alain Prost-like in the way he drives the car, with very little excess energy and not a huge amount of correction or aggressiveness with the throttle. There’s a great

elegance to the way he performs and that’s almost the opposite of the impression that rallying creates.

Although it is necessary to be responsive to surface changes and oversteer/understeer as they come along, you can reduce the number of times you have to react by softening up your inputs, waiting until the car is rotated and not deliberately provoking the opposite lock.

Of course, this can make it more boring for spectators, but it’s effective and it’s here to stay.

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STEPHANE SARRAZIN

FROM THE F1 SCRAPHEAP, A SWITCH TO RALLYING GAVE THE FRENCHMAN A SHOT AT CAREER SALVATION



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- 2014-17** Formula E (Venturi/Techeetah), 3 podiums
- 2014** Winner of Tour de Corse
- 2012-17** FIA WEC (Toyota Gazoo Racing and Starworks), 3 wins, 17 podiums
- 2011** Intercontinental Le Mans Challenge (Peugeot); 1 win, 6 podiums
- 2010** Champion in Le Mans Series (Peugeot), 1 win, 3 podiums; ILMC, 2 wins, 3 podiums
- 2009** Second at Le Mans 24 Hours (Peugeot)
- 2008** LMS (Peugeot), 2 wins; Winner of Spa 24 Hours (Vitaphone Maserati)
- 2007** Champion in LMS (Peugeot), 3 wins, 5 podiums; Second at Le Mans 24H
- 2006** Second in ALMS GT1 (Aston Martin), 3 wins
- 2005-06** Selected WRC events (Subaru)
- 2004** Champion in French Rally Championship (FFSA Subaru)
- 2003** World Series Nissan (Racing Engineering), 1 win, 5 podiums
- 1999** 1x Formula 1 start (Minardi), 4th in F3000 (Prost), 1 win

W

here I live in the South of France, rallying is very famous. My father was a rally driver, so I followed it since I was a kid and tried to find the budget to do one rally a year.

It was for fun mainly, but also to show that I could do it. In 2001 I won my first round in the French Championship on Rallye du Var and I liked it a lot.

At the end of 2003 in World Series by Nissan, I felt a bit like I missed the boat. The 1999 Brazilian GP was supposed to be just the start of my career in Formula 1, but unfortunately I didn't make a very good choice. Minardi asked me to continue after Brazil but I had a contract with Prost Grand Prix, so I stayed in Formula 3000. It was always my plan after that to join Prost in F1, but that's life.

One day in the French magazine *Auto Hebdo*, I saw a picture with a Subaru WRC car reading 'What if it's you?' – Subaru and the French Federation were doing a selection for one driver to do the full French Championship in 2004 and three World Championship rounds as well. There were around 10-12 rally drivers there – there was Bryan Bouffier and a lot of guys still doing it now, but I won it.

12 Hours with Aston Martin in 2005. I told him, 'I don't want to do racing anymore' because in my mind I was flat out focused on rally, but as I was not doing enough driving I agreed to do Sebring. I wasn't racing for a year and a half at that point, so it was strange at first but I had a good feeling and, after that, he took me for the full American Le Mans Series in '06.

Peugeot contacted me at the end of that year to do LMP1 – and some rallies with the 207 S2000 in Intercontinental Rally Challenge and the French Championship. The opportunity David Richards gave me in GT1 gave me a chance to be back in a factory car in LMP1 – it came from doing rallying first.

What I like most about rallying is the adrenaline. The recce is a lot of work with the co-driver, preparing the pacenotes, working on the video, but you never know if your notes are good because the roads are different all the time. We push like in racing, but the adrenaline is amazing.

In racing, it's more like perfection, braking 20cm earlier or later. Endurance racing is exciting, you have lots of overtaking and the different classes, but rallying is more difficult to find a good pace.

“Endurance racing is exciting, you have lots of overtaking, but rallying is more difficult to find a good pace”

After that, I won the French title, and the three rounds in the World Championship went very well. It was very surprising; I did Corsica, Germany and Catalunya, all Tarmac and I was in the top five.

The Subaru World Rally Team then took me for 2005, which was just amazing. I liked David Richards, he was a great boss for me and I enjoyed working with him. But they gave me only eight rallies in 2005 and four in 2006. If you want to succeed in rallying, you need

to do every event. For me to just do half, only three rallies on gravel and not a lot of testing, it wasn't enough.

So David Richards asked me to do the Sebring

In a rally, you go to the limit of the trees or rocks and in Formula E it's a barrier, so they're actually very close. I think the rally training has helped me a lot in the bumpy tracks with very low grip.

I've been doing it for a long time, so maybe it's because I'm changing all the time and I know I'm not scared. For example, this year I did the Monte Carlo Rally with Hyundai, I was fighting for the lead but unfortunately I did a mistake and I crashed. We could have won there for sure.

I love racing, I love rallying, I'm lucky to do both. I like to follow my rally team and I will go to some rallies, but at the moment I am still racing at a high level and focused on my driving. I would like still to win Le Mans with SMP, I enjoy driving in Formula E and I will try to do one or two rallies per year.

I think many drivers would like to do both, but they are scared about their image; 'If I am not performing, the people will think I'm slow'. If you do it, you need to do 100%, preparing flat out. If you don't do it, the others are so fast and they are pushing all so hard, so you need to be like them.



WHY WORLD RALLYCROSS IS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS ROOTS

THE RECENT TRIUMPHS OF CIRCUIT RACERS MATTIAS EKSTROM AND JOHAN KRISTOFFERSSON HAVE POINTED TOWARDS A NEW WAY TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN RALLYCROSS, AS **STEPHEN BRUNSDON** EXPLAINS

Johan Kristoffersson is statistically the most successful World Rallycross driver in history. Known as much for his precision and smoothness as his 100% dedication and devastating one-lap pace, the two-time champion is at the top of his game.

People's perception of rallycross is changing as a result. Once it was seen as a gaggle of cars constantly sideways,

careering between dirt and asphalt. Furious sideways action and panel-bashing remain but, more than ever, technique, tactics and driving styles are evolving.

One reason for this is that rallycross is in a stage of development whereby circuit drivers are more prepared than ever to take it to the rally drivers and win.

This is perhaps why Kristoffersson has been so successful. The son of rallycross and touring car racer Tommy Kristoffersson, the Swede only

started racing at the age of 20 after turning his back on a career in cross-country skiing. Since then he has combined rallycross and circuit racing, winning the Scandinavian Touring Car Championship in 2012 and the World RX title last year. This year he's swept the board in both.

Methodical and blindingly quick, Kristoffersson is the benchmark for the future of rallycross. His success has prompted an interesting question: do circuit racers now hold the advantage in the world of rallycross?



On top of the world: Kristofferson

ALL PICS: WORLD RX

Circuit-racing takeover

Since gaining world championship status in 2014, rallycross has undergone something of a revolution. The category that used to be seen as a niche, suitable only for those with experience on loose surfaces, is now being dominated by circuit racers.

Kristofferson and fellow touring car ace Mattias Ekström have shared the past three titles between them, Kristofferson dominating this season with an unprecedented nine wins from 10 so far.

That's not to say that the chances of a 'traditional' rallycross driver ever winning the championship again are gone, just that they'll have to adapt to a changing landscape that's beginning to favour those with a circuit-racing background.

Despite strong rallycross roots, Timmy Hansen spent his early racing days climbing the single-seater ladder, and was a race winner in Formula BMW. Faced with no other options when budget issues curtailed his Formula

Renault Eurocup campaign in 2012, Hansen gave rallycross a crack with his 14-time European champion father Kenneth's team.

"I wanted to drive something and it didn't matter what it was," Hansen Jr explains. "I was really down when I gave up my F1 dream. So I spoke with my dad and he gave me a go in the rallycross car. The key to getting to where I am now is my dad, he really saved my career."

As a rallycross rookie, Hansen admits that he had to learn the trade the hard way, in competition. But far from trying to become an out-and-out rallycross driver, he decided to take his circuit-racing style and adapt it to his new environment instead.

"I knew nothing about driving sideways or using the handbrake. I was used to looking for marginal gains and focusing on minute details from circuit racing," he says. "When I made the switch, I just drove my normal style and developed the weaker areas."

Hansen just loves driving. And for him, rallycross is the ultimate challenge that

extracts everything from his skillset.

"It took some time for me to get used to sliding and using the handbrake," he says, "but I'm able to combine the precision in finding the right braking points and hitting the apex from a single-seater with the movement and sliding of a rally car."

Kristofferson concurs. "You can definitely combine circuit racing and rallycross to become a more perfected driver," he says. "For circuit racers, you have the experience of learning a new track and getting the maximum out of the car every time."

"For rally drivers, you can adapt to the changing conditions more and alter your driving style to suit these conditions. You are more comfortable with sliding and looking for extra grip on the loose."

Technique and raw skill are essential components of rallycross. Reacting to differing grip levels in a variety of weather conditions, combined with the awareness required to race tactically, is the key to success. ►

Ekstrom, who was champion in 2016, is another driver with rallycross in his blood, his father Bengt having raced competitively when Mattias was a child. A late bloomer in RX, the double DTM champion – and three-time Race Of Champions winner to boot – shares the views of Kristoffersson and Hansen.

“About 10 years ago, you would be better coming from a rallying background,” the Audi man explains. “There were more real gravel sections on the tracks, but these are becoming less common these days.

“Tyre management and driving within the grip limit available is now more important than ever. I guess drivers who have had side-by-side racing have an advantage in rallycross as they have had more experience of this than the rally drivers.”

Evolution of RX circuits

There is evidence to suggest that rallycross tracks are moving towards less surface-grip variation, favouring drivers with a circuit-racing background.

Ekstrom reckons that “traditional” RX tracks are now a thing of the past and the emergence of increased tyre management is a key part of this shift.

“The tracks have developed a lot more now,” Ekstrom says. “But in my view, they have developed in the wrong way. The gravel sections are more or less concrete now and actually, some gravel sections have more grip than the asphalt.”

It seems bizarre to think of gravel offering greater grip, but while some in the paddock lament the predictability of the surface, others feel that the consistency is no bad thing.

World Rallycross commentator Andrew

Ekstrom broke Solberg's WRX title run in 2016



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/KALISZ/SUTTON

Coley says: “Of course there are tracks now that don't have proper loose gravel sections anymore. Portugal [Montalegre] and Loheac [in France] are good examples where it's pretty solid.

“Riga, for example, has a really abrasive surface and a smooth gravel section. It definitely gives more consistent grip levels, but I think that's what the fans want. They don't want car-breaking surfaces and titles to be decided on mechanical failures. Consistency adds to the show and makes the championship more exciting.”

While rallycross is in essence anything but predictable, such is the nature of the short, sharp bursts of action and the juggling of the order resulting from the joker lap, the evolution

of circuits has forced traditional rally drivers to adapt to a style more akin to circuit racing.

A style like Hansen's, with precision honed in single-seaters, was no better demonstrated than in his semi-final win in Hell earlier this season.

“It definitely pays off to be clean in rallycross, to look after your tyres, even though the races are so short,” he says. “I still use the same style now. For example, in the semi-final in Hell, I tried so hard to preserve my tyres for the final. I ended up braking in a straight line, turning in smoothly, straightening the steering and feathering the throttle on acceleration.

“On that track especially, you

“With these tyres, it's better for your lap time to drive smoothly”





Hansen beat future F1 man Sainz in Formula BMW



Bakkerud is wary of overdriving

learn when to push, when not to. It definitely helps on certain tracks to drive sensibly.”

Having observed Hansen since the start of his rallycross career in 2013, Coley agrees that this approach is paying off.

“The advantage the circuit racers have, almost above racecraft, is their ability to hit the same apex at the same speed every time. Rally drivers are just as quick as the circuit racers over one lap, and probably better at dealing with the joker, but they aren’t as precise over the rest.

“That’s why Johan [Kristoffersson] has

been so good for the past two seasons. He never forgets a thing, and he’s tactically very good. Rallycross is all about building the weekend and Johan has been able to dig himself out of some big holes because he’s so precise on every detail.”

The loss of ‘Solberg style’

Is there such a thing as ‘rallycross technique?’ Not if you ask Ekstrom’s EKS team-mate Andreas Bakkerud, who is rallycross through-and-through.

The Norwegian did a bit of go-karting in his youth before dabbling in the hugely popular – and very Scandinavian – Bilcross, the budget version of rallycross, which gave him a grounding in the

necessary skills to make it as a professional. Bakkerud believes technique is not so much learned as acquired instinctively.

“Rallycross is motorsport’s answer to MMA!” he says. “It has everything: jumps, gravel, racing. It combines every aspect of racing with the craziest cars.

“I grew up watching rallycross on TV in Norway, watching Martin Schanche fighting with guys like Kenneth Hansen, Will Gollop. In the 1980s and ’90s it was very big.

“Bilcross is a great way to learn. You build your own car, race it and learn the workings of the car. It also teaches you how to drive with damage!”

A quick search on YouTube provides proof that Bakkerud is one of the best at dealing with a damaged car – he famously won a heat with broken rear suspension at the Estering, one of few classic rallycross tracks remaining on the world championship stage.

He insists that being quick in modern WRX beasts is more about who makes the fewest mistakes than any specific technique.

“These cars are very easy to overdrive,” he says. “The rear gets loose on the gravel and you also have to be precise on the Tarmac. Everyone overdrives in rallycross, it’s just that the guys at the front overdrive less than those at the rear.

“You do need to look after the tyres on the Tarmac sections so you have to alter your driving. You can’t always go sideways, ‘Solberg style’, you have to be clean as well.”

But Kristoffersson adds: “WRX cars invite you to push the limits, and sometimes you are forced to go way over the limit to get the most out of it.”

The truth is that traditional ‘Solberg style’ is beginning to fade away, at least on tracks where degradation on the control Cooper tyre is higher. But ‘old school’ tracks like the Estering, Holjes and Loheac, which retain a classical gravel/asphalt split, permit rally drivers to thrive and still allow for audacious moves of the kind that rallycross is so famous for.

Ekstrom is a fan of the traditional tracks, but also offers an insight into just how much the tyres alter his own driving technique. ►



Solberg’s lurid style is being usurped in RX



Solberg's joker-lap technique has helped his team-mate



Kristoffersson won STCC title in a TCR Golf

"The tyres we use, longitudinally they have very good grip, so acceleration and braking is very effective and you can use all the rubber," he says.

"Laterally they are not so good, so it puts you off sliding the car because you will lose grip and time. With these tyres, it's better for your lap time to drive smoothly."

That's why 'Solberg style' may be on the way out on asphalt. But, as Coley explains, there is still an area of rallycross where it's better to be lairy.

"Rally drivers, or drivers with a lot of experience on the loose, tend to fare better in the joker lap than circuit racers," he says.

"They're more used to changing grip levels and surfaces and can adapt, especially in changeable weather, to almost anything. Circuit drivers are more used to the consistency of grip, so I think they struggle a lot more."

"Guys like Petter [Solberg], I always say are more likely to find time in the joker with a more sideways approach. They look out of control but they always find the apex somehow. It's also why Johan has gone to Petter for advice on how to drive the jokers better – there's a lot to gain there."

Drivers therefore have to be more calculated in their technique, knowing when to deploy 'Solberg style' and when to look after the tyres. The balance is not always as obvious as it seems.

The Kristoffersson effect

For the past year and a half Kristoffersson has been the benchmark, not only for what he has achieved, but also for what he does away from rallycross.

Until Ekstrom hung up his DTM boots for good at Hockenheim earlier this season, Kristoffersson was one of only two full-time RX drivers to combine his regular job with circuit racing, which is all the more remarkable given his late start in the sport.

"I only really decided I wanted to do racing as a career when I was 20," says Kristoffersson. "My attitude was, if motorsport goes well, I quit skiing. If it doesn't, then I will try to become a professional in skiing. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you give it 100% effort, you will succeed."

"So I started very late compared to the other drivers I was racing against, but I think bringing the skiing mentality and approach to perfection and training helped me a lot when I started."

Kristoffersson strives to become the ultimate racing driver, and his exploits in the STCC are all part of the training.

Tyre management, straight-line braking and smooth acceleration – it all helps find those marginal gains. It's less of an art and more about calculated logic for Kristoffersson. He believes success comes with perfection and mixes circuit

racing with rallycross in pursuit of that.

"I think more drivers are trying different disciplines, which is a good thing. Ten years ago they used to say, 'This guy is only used to driving rear-wheel-drive cars or front-wheel-drive cars', whereas it's not really the case anymore."

Kristoffersson switches from his 4WD VW Polo R in rallycross to the FWD Golf GTI TCR in the STCC with comparative ease, although the two cars are very different. Kristoffersson has to point his TCR machine at the apex deliberately, not be too eager on throttle application and not allow it to drift, otherwise it will understeer. Tyre preservation is at a premium and drop-off can be severe.

Hansen says: "I think it is very important to drive a lot of different cars. What Fernando Alonso has done recently has been really impressive and I hope that encourages more drivers to do different things, not just stick to their series."

With rallycross increasing its profile and expanding its horizons with its made-for-TV format, it's little wonder that it's becoming a draw for drivers from various disciplines.

And while it seems that circuit racers are the pull-factor for many new fans, there is evidently still plenty room for the traditionalists to showcase the category's brilliance and take it further than ever before. ■




ALL PICS: WORLD RX

JOHAN KRISTOFFERSSON'S BREAKTHROUGH 2012 SEASON

All drivers have a defining year. It can be one in which everything came together, or that kickstarts a career. For Johan Kristoffersson, 2012 was a mixture of both.

The Swede had done partial seasons in his domestic touring car championship between 2009 and '11, with a best finish of third. The following year he embarked on



Kristoffersson
steals the lead from
Bakkerud in Loheac

“Drivers are trying different disciplines, which is a good thing”

a dual campaign of the Swedish Touring Car Championship and Porsche Carrera Cup Scandinavia, winning both titles.

“2012 was my best season for sure,” he says. “It was a challenge for me to change cars and be competitive in these different series.”

As the STCC and Porsches shared the same calendar, he was constantly switching between front and rear-wheel-drive cars, with limited time between sessions.

“I learned so much that year, especially switching from the front-wheel-drive Scirocco to the rear-wheel-drive Porsche,” he says. “I had no plan to win both those championships in that year, I just ended up being competitive and put together two strong campaigns.”

Kristoffersson also found time to compete in the Italian-based Superstars Series in an Audi RS5. He defeated some big names –

including Formula 1 exile Vitantonio Liuzzi and Gianni Morbidelli – to take the title despite having never visited most of the circuits before.

“You had to drive these cars in a certain way,” Kristoffersson recalls. “Sometimes you were competitive, other weekends not, so you had to make sure you got the best result possible at that round.”

“In many ways, it was exactly like cross-country skiing. You have

to be 100% in, otherwise you’ll fail. It’s all about the effort you put in.”

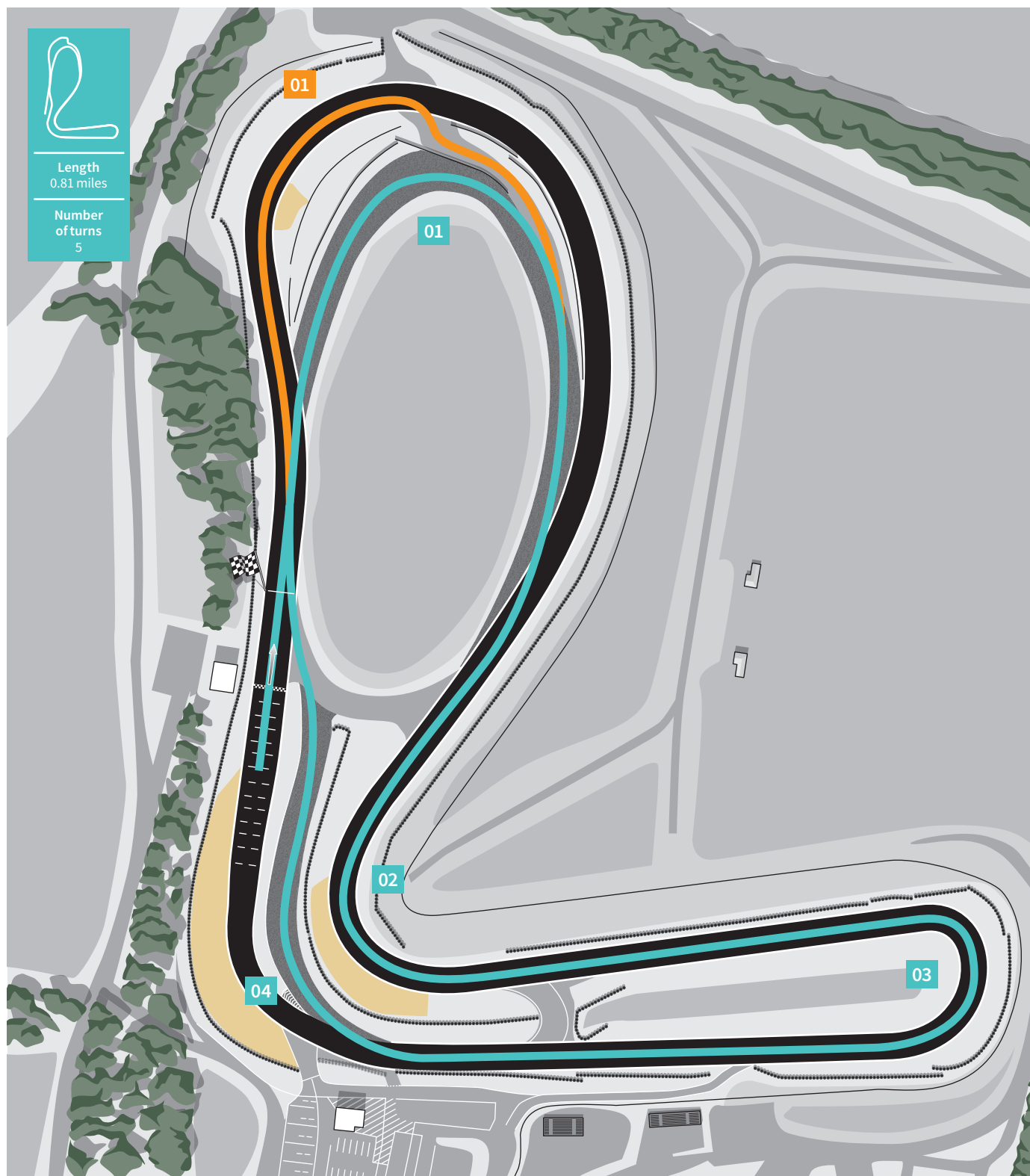
World Rallycross rival Timmy Hansen uses Kristoffersson’s 2012 feats as proof that combining disciplines has helped the reigning champion become what he is today: “Johan really shows us how to combine RX and circuit racing, and what he did in 2012 especially was really impressive. He has a good understanding of driving different cars fast, and he’s so consistent.”

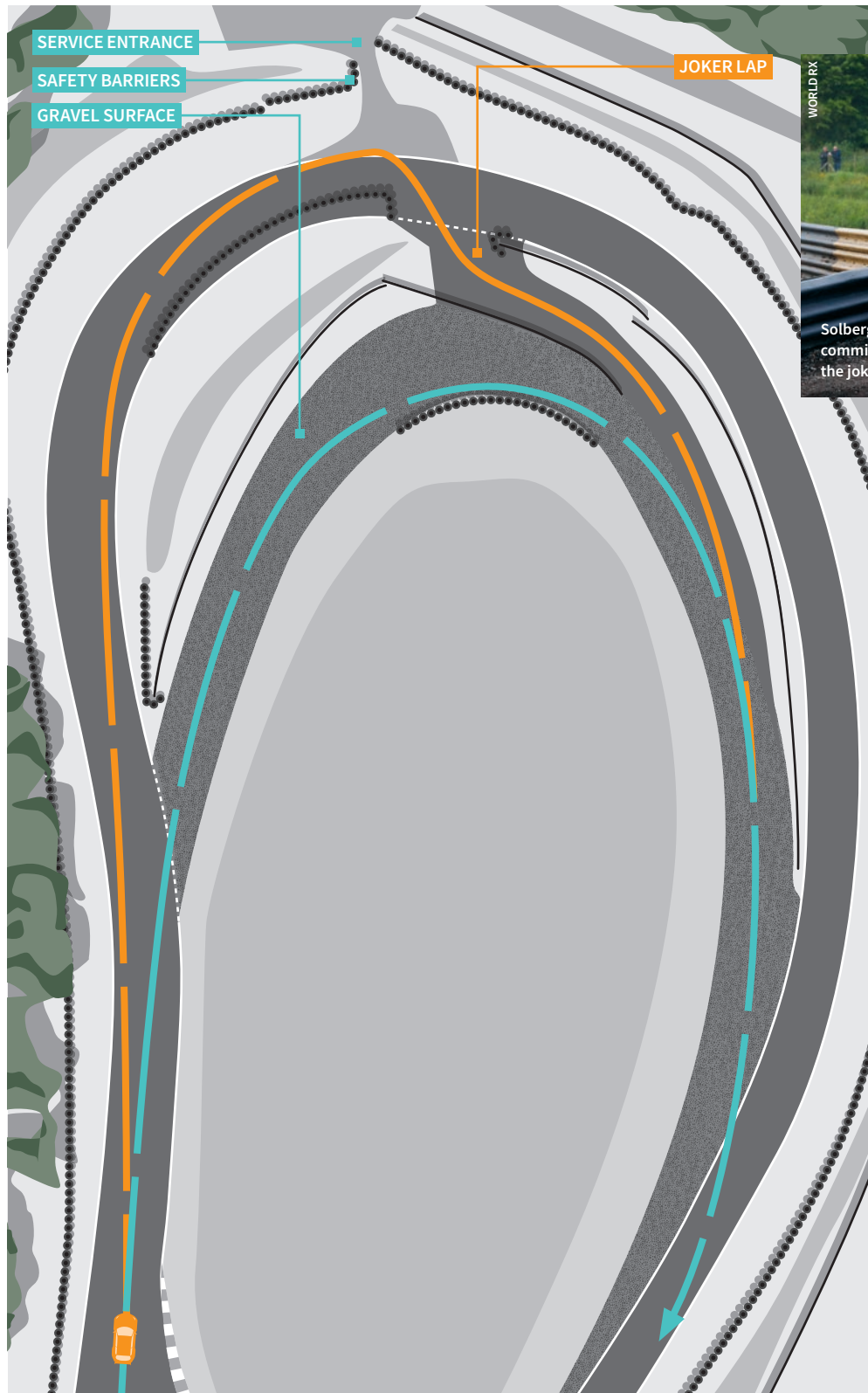


LYDDEN HILL

PETTER SOLBERG

TWICE A WINNER AT THE SPIRITUAL HOME OF RALLYCROSS, SOLBERG LOVES ITS OLD-SCHOOL CHARM





WORLD RX



Solberg: Always committed through the joker lap

JOKER LAP

01 CHESSONS Turn 1

When you go to the joker lap, that's the fastest speed you have on the track – down to Pilgrims you're doing around 110-120mph. Normally I brake very late here, and let the car really turn and float a little bit up to Chessons Drift, which is a very tight right-hander.

You have to be very neat before you hit the jump. My personal thing is the more gravel you have, the more chance you can do a big attack to gain time. But you have to be smart when you do it, attacking hard but neat at the right places as well.

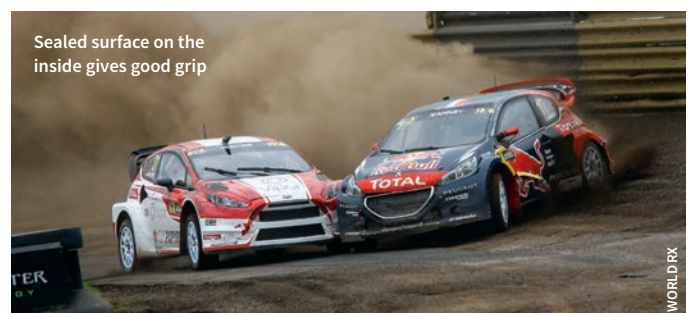
Deciding when to joker at Lydden is really dependent on the traffic, and for me the best timing was always the first or the last lap. What is good for the joker there is that you can commit early and carry lots of speed in.

01 PILGRIMS Turn 1

Lydden Hill is one of my favourite tracks – perhaps it has something to do with the fact that it's almost like a rally stage in some respects. From the startline it's a good width, and it runs a little bit downhill to where you have to choose whether you want to take the joker lap, or the normal lap.

When you come into the first corner, you're coming from asphalt to gravel so you need to be very neat and clean into the middle of the apex, where there is some asphalt. Then you need to get the best acceleration possible for when you hit the gravel again, up to sixth gear down the Dover Slope.

Sealed surface on the inside gives good grip



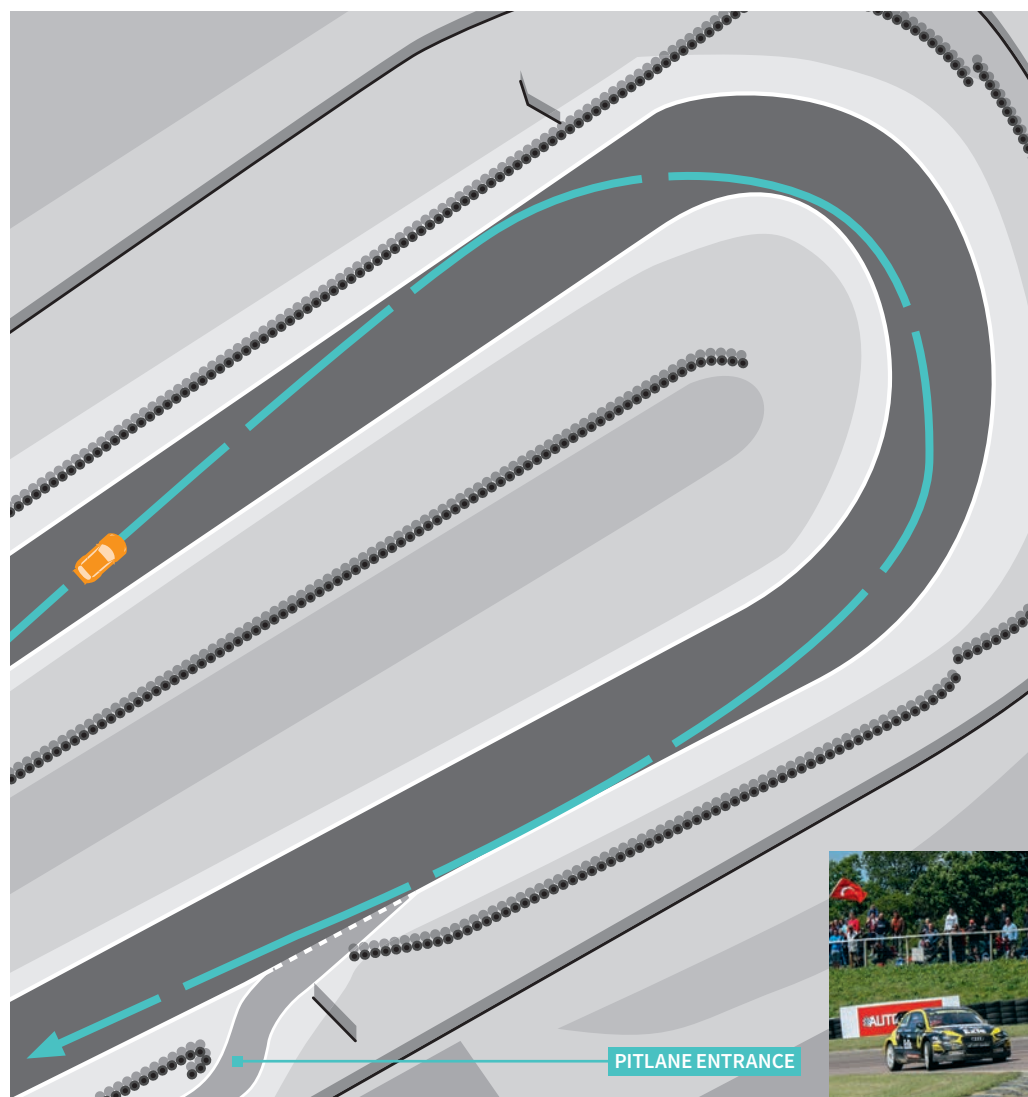
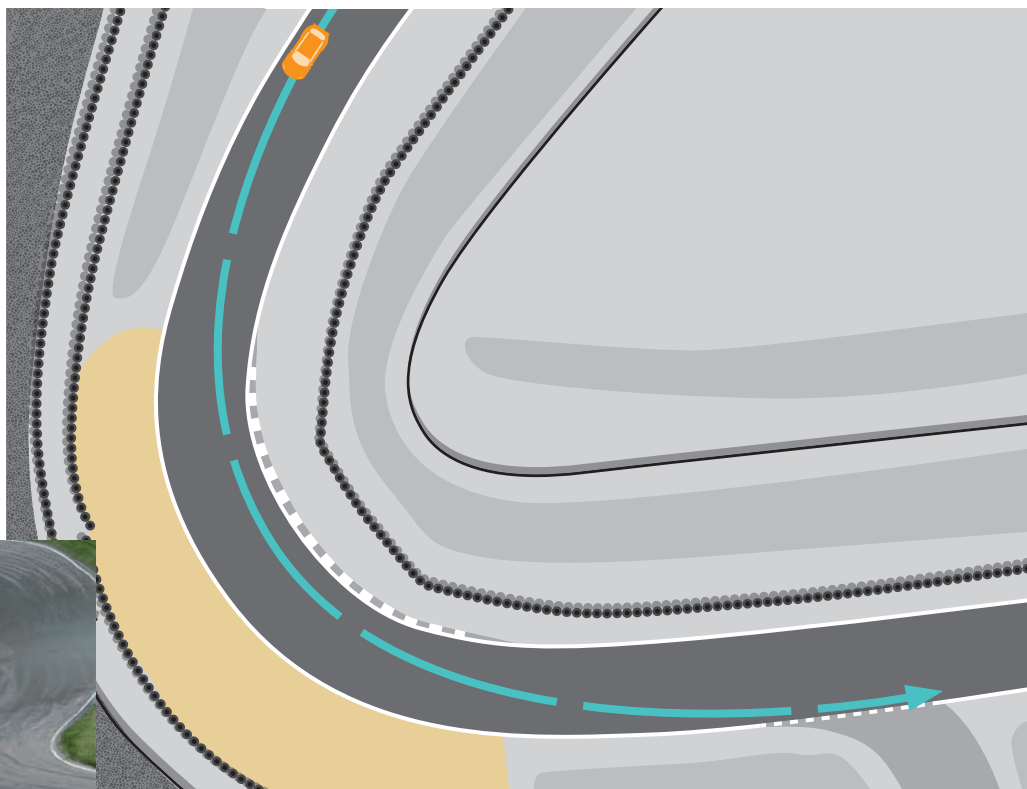
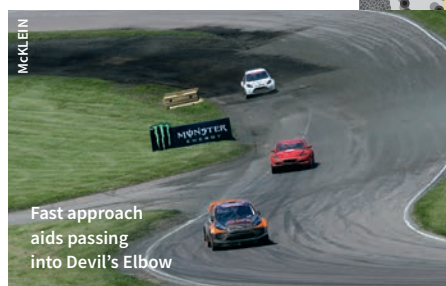
WORLD RX

02 DEVIL'S ELBOW Turn 2

From the exit of Pilgrims, you're coming down from gravel into the Devil's Elbow. You have to be really late on turn-in there, because it tightens at the end and you want to get a proper straight exit up the hill.

You can pass into there – it's where Tanner Foust and I hit in 2014. That was my fault, I was too much on the inside. I got a little bit on the grass and then pushed us both wide.

It's very important to get the perfect exit because it's a very steep uphill run to the North Bend – on TV it doesn't look so steep, but in reality it's a big one.



03 NORTH BEND Turn 3

You're braking uphill into the North Bend. It's a tricky hairpin, a fairly long corner that some people cut and bring grass onto the track.

It's probably the best place on the track to overtake: you could brake late and cut in, or just run up the inside. You need to get a good exit from there, using the whole road to the left going down the hill.

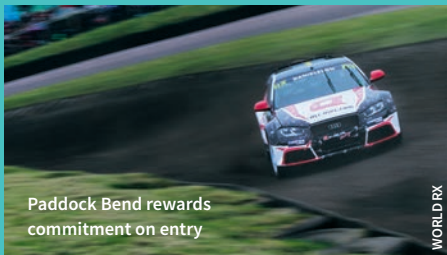
AUTOSPORT SAYS

As the spiritual home of rallycross, Lydden was a much-loved fixture on the World Championship calendar until replaced by Silverstone this year. While the lengthy queues to gain access to the circuit (and leave it) were frustrating, there could be no complaints about the viewing options, epitomised by the North Bend bank.

Here, where the cars clamber over the kerb before plunging flat chat downhill to Paddock, is justifiably classed as one of the best viewing spots in UK motorsport.



North Bend is a top viewing spot



Paddock Bend rewards commitment on entry

WORLD RX

KEY CORNER

04 PADDOCK BEND Turn 4

I love coming down the hill into one of my favourite corners, Paddock Bend. You're again using all six gears on the approach, flat out at maybe 87-94mph, and then you're into the long right-hand bend from Tarmac into gravel. The feeling is fantastic with the speed and setting the car up to slide - that gives me a real kick. You put it sideways, we go into it in fifth gear, and then we go to sixth gear straight away in the middle.

Then cut the corner to the left at the finish line: take plenty of kerb through the chicane to the left and the right, it's quite an exciting corner. But you have to get the car straight and sorted out so you can attack it. Even in the wet the track gives good grip there, but the gravel sections were starting to change a little bit when we drove there for the last time in 2017. It was still slippery and the car moved around lot, but it wasn't so deep in the end.



Solberg recommends using kerbs to straightline the run to Pilgrims

WORLD RX

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MY GREATEST TEAM-MATE

MARK BLUNDELL

ON MARTIN BRUNDLE

Give a racing driver the choice of an ideal team-mate to work alongside and many would choose someone who won't challenge their position in the team, and will flatter their own performances.

Even the best drivers aren't immune – take Ayrton Senna, who vetoed working with Derek Warwick at Lotus in 1986 and instead drove alongside the inexperienced Johnny Dumfries.

But while a team-mate can be a driver's greatest rival, they can also be a great resource to learn from, as Mark Blundell found while working with Martin Brundle.

Perhaps his choice of Brundle should come as little surprise given the number of times their careers intertwined. The 'Brundell Brothers' were founding partners in the 2MB management agency before Blundell took sole charge, and colleagues on ITV's Formula 1 coverage during the late 1990s. Before that they were F1 team-mates at Brabham and Ligier, where they were evenly matched and spurred one another on.

"I learned a lot from Martin because we were at different stages of our career," reflects Blundell, seven years Brundle's junior. "We were obviously different ages, but at the same time I could relate to him and I understood exactly how he went about his business."

Blundell had raced for Nissan in Group C against Brundle in 1990, when Brundle was the standout driver in a tough year for Jaguar, so he knew what he was up against when they faced off at struggling Brabham the following season. Blundell suffered the indignity of failing to pre-qualify at Suzuka on engine-builder Yamaha's home turf, and each managed one points score. Brundle's fifth place in Japan put him slightly ahead of Blundell's sixth in Belgium.



Blundell's relationship with Brundle (left) stretched beyond F1 to TV and business



"We had a very interesting relationship because we were extremely close and there was a massive amount of respect between us, but when it came to it on the circuit it was very much dog eat dog," says Blundell.

Since Brabham was in financial trouble, Brundle moved to Tom Walkinshaw-managed Benetton in 1992, while Blundell spent the year

"With him it was pretty level most of the time"

in the background testing for McLaren, although he also won Le Mans with Peugeot.

They were reunited at Ligier in 1993, and the JS39 was a much more competitive proposition than the Brabham had been. Benefiting from Renault V10 power meant they were points contenders whenever the car was reliable.

Blundell scored two podiums (Kyalami and Hockenheim) to Brundle's one (Imola), but finished seventh four times and finished three places behind him in the standings.

"With me and him it was pretty level pegging most of the time," says Blundell. "If you looked at the data we would do similar lap times but go about it a very different way, how we applied the brake and the throttle and turned right and left."

"I learned a great deal about making a team work for you as opposed to thinking they work for you. There's just as much work has to go on outside the car as there is inside the car."

"He probably taught me more about the politics of the sport than the actual sport itself. You only have to watch and understand, and from that you can learn a huge amount."

JAMES NEWBOLD

Blundell learned about the sport's politics from Brundle



ALL PICS: SUTTON
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MARTIN DONNELLY'S BIG GAMBLE

HIS BRITISH F3 TITLE HOPES ON THE WANE, MARTIN DONNELLY GAMBLED ON A MID-SEASON MOVE TO FORMULA 3000 THAT TURNED HIM INTO THE UK'S NEW GREAT HOPE. THIRTY YEARS ON FROM HIS REMARKABLE 1988 EXPLOITS, HE TOLD JAMES NEWBOLD THE STORY

Whenver Martin Donnelly is discussed, it's difficult to avoid the accident that ended his top-flight career while qualifying for the 1990 Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez, when the front suspension on his Lotus-Lamborghini failed at more than 140mph. As the affable Northern Irishman admits, it's what he's best known for.

But two years earlier, Donnelly came within a whisker of making the Formula 3000 paddock look very silly indeed in a half-season campaign that, 30 years on, stands as a timely reminder of what Formula 1 missed.

Making an instant impression when joining a championship late in the season is the mark of a driver who can rapidly adapt to new conditions – car, team, circuits and new rivals to boot. But despite contesting just five races with Eddie Jordan Racing, Donnelly ended the year third in the standings, with two victories and a brace of seconds. Had it not been for a gearbox failure while leading from pole at Zolder, he would have finished three points behind eventual champion Roberto Moreno.

Now 54, Donnelly looks back with satisfaction on a year that had threatened to become a story of underachievement in his third season of British Formula 3 and ended with a Team Lotus testing contract in his back pocket.

"I was just riding a wave," says Donnelly, now an instructor at the Lotus Driving Academy. "When you consider that the guys we were up

against were quick guys in their second or third year, I just got into a very unusual and fortuitous situation where the team had a competitive car. It was never easy.

"That was a massive gamble because it could have gone pear-shaped and not been competitive, not getting in the top six. But you've got to grab every opportunity with both hands and if you put time in and get the job done, you will win respect. I was a bit cheeky coming forward as well – if you don't ask, you don't get."

Third as an F3 rookie in 1986 behind second-year men Andy Wallace and Maurizio Sandro Sala with Swallow Racing, Donnelly was offered a free drive by Eddie Jordan for '87, but turned it down due to concerns over the competitiveness of the Speiss Volkswagen engine. But while Johnny Herbert took the vacant seat and waltzed to the title, Donnelly suffered as Swallow struggled to coax speed from its new Reynard and only hit form after joining Glenn Waters's Intersport squad, winning twice to end the year third once more.

Victory in the Macau Grand Prix and an impressive run on his first experience of F3000 in the Marlboro selection test at Donington confirmed Donnelly as a talent to watch, so he was disappointed to be back in F3 for a third year in 1988. His Intersport Ralt-Toyota lagged 21 points behind JJ Lehto in a Mugen-powered Pacific Reynard when Jordan came calling at Snetterton in August, after crash-prone Thomas Danielsson's licence had been temporarily revoked amid concerns over his eyesight.



Donnelly won on F3000 debut after Herbert's crash



Donnelly recalls roaring success of F3000 graduation

"EJ quoted me £30,000 to do the last five races with a bit of testing," Donnelly says. "If he had come when I was leading the championship, I still would have gone because what was [F3] going to do for me? I had proved I could win races – here was a chance to take the next step of the ladder.

"I had a contract with Cellnet, so I went grovelling to [sales and marketing director] Peter Waller and left having got his permission; there was no animosity at all. I went straight from there to meet [Jordan's legal man] Fred Rodgers to sign this contract and more or less everything EJ had said was in there. But underneath the contract was another piece of paper, the Sports EJ contract. It meant EJ was going to manage my career and would take 15% of everything that I earned. At the time I wasn't earning big money, so I signed."

A messy divorce with Intersport backer Cellnet followed. Donnelly's verbal approval from Waller to pursue the F3000 dream was retracted when F3 team-mate Damon Hill also sought to be released from his contract to pursue the EJF seat, but Jordan got his man and Donnelly lined up for his debut at round seven, Brands Hatch, paired with engineer Paul Crosby. ►

“That was a massive gamble because it could have gone pear-shaped”

SUTTON
motorsport
IMAGES

MID-SEASON HEROICS

EMERSON FITTIPALDI

1969 Formula 3

The Brazilian claimed the MCD Lombard title with the support of a young Ralph Firman as his mechanic on the strength of a half-season's effort, with funding from Jim Russell after impressing in a self-prepared Merlyn in Formula Ford.



PAUL RADISICH

1993 British Touring Car Championship

The Andy Rouse-built Mondeo only arrived for Pembrey in June, but Radisich made up for lost time by claiming third in points and winning three times, before adding the Touring Car World Cup at Monza.

LEWIS HAMILTON

2002 Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup

Dovetailed an impressive maiden campaign in the UK to finish fifth in the ultra-competitive Eurocup, beating the likes of Robert Kubica with three podiums in five rounds, including a win at Donington.



ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA

2012 Formula Renault 3.5

Parachuted into Arden-Caterham by Red Bull alongside his GP3 commitments, da Costa closed the year with four wins in five races, becoming a thorn in the side of title-chasers Robin Frijns and Jules Bianchi.



Second on the grid for F3000 debut came after minor changes to the steering



Donnelly didn't celebrate after debut win



Second in Birmingham came after passing Mark Blundell (left)

Crosby's drivers include Nigel Mansell, Jean Alesi, Allan McNish, David Coulthard and Gil de Ferran, but he rates Donnelly "in the top three or four of all the drivers I've ever worked with". He was instantly taken by Donnelly's ability to get quickly on the pace in a pre-event test at Oulton Park, which he followed up by qualifying two tenths off poleman and new EJRC team-mate Herbert on the outside of the front row.

"It was a two-way thing. He said that the 88D was the best-balanced car he'd ever driven, and he was one of the easiest drivers I ever worked with, so you put those two together and you get some fantastic results," remembers Crosby. "I knew a bit about Martin when he joined and he'd got some good results in F3. The first test we did, it didn't take him any time to get up to speed – he was on it straight away."

"The Reynard was certainly better than the March, which had just had its day; it was aerodynamically superior to the others at that stage and was easier to drive. But you've still got to drive it and get the best from it – that's not easy."

The events of Brands 1988 are well-known, as Herbert suffered terrible injuries to his ankles and feet in a multi-car pile-up that ruled him out for the rest of the season. But what is often forgotten is that Donnelly escaped the mayhem by aching the second start – Moreno's accident at Paddock Hill Bend having brought out the first red flags – and controlled the field on the third start to claim a win on his debut. Out of respect for Herbert, he

didn't open the champagne.

Without a team-mate for his Birmingham Superprix debut one week later, Donnelly qualified seventh and came through to second behind Moreno in another eventful race that required three attempts at starting. Crosby reckoned under the circumstances that it was even better than his performance to qualify on the front row at Brands.

"Martin took it all in his stride, that's the amazing thing," says Crosby. "He was very laid back – he didn't seem to suffer from any pressures that were around."

Donnelly's cool demeanour was remarkable given that the pressure on him was not just that of a rookie finding his feet. Jordan was anxious to be paid the agreed sum and Donnelly had no way of meeting it, as mentor and benefactor Frank Nolan had died in 1986 without leaving a will.

Donnelly had bet the farm on making a success of F3000 – if he failed and Jordan pulled the seat, the strained relationship with Cellnet meant there would be no fallback in F3.

"There was pressure to perform because I was putting it on the line, EJ was down my neck big-time looking for money," says Donnelly. "If EJ



"I was putting it on the line, EJ was down my neck big-time"

STYLES



Jordan played a vital role in Donnelly's rise...



...and arranged his GP debut in an Arrows in 1989

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said, 'You're three grand behind payments, I've got a driver going to pay 40 grand for the next three races', what are you going to do? There's no 3000 drive, no Cellnet drive, because Peter Kox was filling my boots. It was a massive risk, like playing the bluff at poker – how soon should you fold your hand?

"After Brands Hatch and Birmingham, EJ realised the money wasn't coming through, so he did a deal whereby I drove Richard Lloyd's Porsche 962 at Spa and did a few trips over to Japan [in F3000]; that way EJ got his money back."

Donnelly's red-hot form continued on his first visit to Le Mans, following home hero Olivier Grouillard to claim another second place, before stones on the road at Zolder caused him to skate off into the gravel. Although he got out again, the gearbox was beyond help – but Donnelly made up for it by winning the season finale at Dijon after Moreno's engine gave up. The best that Herbert's replacement Paolo Barilla – a third-year category veteran – could muster was seventh at Dijon.

"Thankfully, those two drives in 1988 at Brands Hatch and Birmingham carried me through for the last five races," says Donnelly. "After that, Lotus came knocking for the following year and EJ got big money from Nissan for Le Mans. He was going, 'kerching, kerching!'"

"Four months later from when we were negotiating at Snetterton, EJ's offering me 50 grand to drive for him [in 1989]. It's funny how things just turn so quickly."

After switching from Crosby to Trevor Foster, with whom he had worked at Swallow in F3, Donnelly had a disappointing 1989. Another victory at Brands aside, he only scored once more with third in Birmingham, as Crosby engineered new EJr team-mate Alesi to three wins and the title.

The die was cast when Donnelly was disqualified from victory in round two at Vallelunga after it was discovered his new nosecone had not been crash-tested. Having already suffered a Mugen engine failure at Silverstone, he then crashed while chasing Alesi at Pau, had two punctures at Jerez and tangled with Alesi at the first corner at Enna-Pergusa, arriving at Brands with no points once again.

Still, his name was hot property. Donnelly had made his F1 debut at Paul Ricard for Arrows subbing for the injured Derek Warwick ("If EJ was doing his job right, he should be on the phone to Jackie Oliver for Jean Alesi – French Grand Prix, French driver – but he didn't") having two weeks earlier been dubbed the 'next Mansell' on the cover of Autosport following a strong test showing for Lotus.

Had Jordan instead pushed Alesi on Arrows and Donnelly landed the Tyrrell seat that became vacant shortly afterwards – and which formed the launchpad for Alesi's F1 career – the story might have been very different. But Donnelly can always look back on that remarkable 1988 half-season as the time he showed his ability on the international scene. Yer man's ultimate gamble had paid off. ■

DANIELSSON'S TRIBUTE ACT

When it became clear after a trip to Willi Dungi's clinic that nothing more could be done for his legs, Martin Donnelly started his own team, which became a regular on the UK junior-formula scene in the 1990s with future iSport man Gavin Jones at the helm.

Today, Donnelly rates ex-Jaguar and Prost Formula 1 driver Luciano Burti as the best – "by miles" – of his Martin Donnelly Racing alumni, who also cover BTCC champion Jason Plato, DTM race winner Peter Dumbreck and future Champ Car racer Mario Haberfeld, winner of the British Grand Prix-supporting Formula 3 race with MDR in 1997.

But it was after MDR wound down and Donnelly linked up with Comtec's Jonathan Lewis that the greatest success of his managerial career arrived, guiding Alx Danielsson to an unlikely title in the 2006 Formula Renault 3.5 series (below).

Having managed no better than fourth in the first half of the season, Comtec was on the brink of going under after losing two tubs at Spa, but a small change in style turned Danielsson into an unstoppable force reminiscent of Donnelly's breakout year in 1988, prompting jibes from rival teams.

"People thought, 'They're cheating, they're doing something different', but it was him just thinking because he had new tyres on that he could move his braking point five or 10 metres down the track," says Donnelly.

"He wasn't in control of getting the car stopped on the apex and was slower on the gas getting out. Once he realised that, the next three races he was on pole."



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/HARTLEY/SUTTON

THE DIRTY TRUTHS OF GRASSROOTS ENDURANCE RACING

DISPELLING THE NOTION THAT MOTORSPORT IS ALL GLAMOUR, RACING ROOKIE **STEFAN MACKLEY** TRAVELLED TO ROCKINGHAM TO GET HIS FIRST TASTE BEHIND THE WHEEL IN THE CITROEN C1 24 HOURS

Everybody thinks they're a good driver. Whether presiding over driving standards on public roads or sitting in an armchair shouting at Formula 1 on the TV, they certainly *believe* they can do it better than the next person. I was no different, and earlier this year got my racing licence to test that theory.

The laboratory, as it were, would be the Citroen C1 24 Hours at Rockingham with the Citroen C1 Racing Club. An affordable, competitive one-make enduro event, this is practically a template for the ideal first step into motor racing. That was handy, because I'd never raced a car before, much less competed in an endurance contest.

Aside from arrive-and-drive karting events and a handful of trackdays – the most notable aboard a Ginetta G40 at Goodwood – I was starting from zero. I'd never driven at Rockingham, aside from on a PlayStation 2 game more than a decade earlier (experience that didn't help) and would be competing against seasoned racers, from British Touring Car Championship race winner Rob Austin to Castle Combe Formula Ford 1600 champions Bob and Adam Higgins, among others. To say that I'd been thrown in at the deep end would be an understatement.

Preparation for the event had hardly been ideal either. Whereas F1 drivers spend hours in the simulator, learning the nuances of every

corner in intricate detail and poring over streams of data, I had been logging the miles on the M40, M6 and M54, incorporating visits to Silverstone and Wrexham to collect my racing equipment, before travelling to Rockingham. In total that exceeded 350 miles – which, incidentally, is more than I would manage all weekend aboard the C1.

Arriving at the circuit for testing on Friday morning, I was introduced to my crew chief Stephen Brown, a former technical advisor to the BMW Compact Championship, who put me at ease by answering my many questions and making sure I was comfortable in the car.

I would be sharing the C1 with brothers Ian and Andrew Burgess, and Andrew's son Will. Between



GETTING STARTED IN
MOTORSPORT





Looking pensive before the race start



Mackley presses on in his first stint in the C1

them they had very little racing experience, and knowing that I wouldn't have the pressure of team-mates expecting to battle for outright victory (only to be appalled when I rock up in my squeaky clean new overalls) put me considerably more at ease. They wouldn't arrive until later that afternoon, which afforded me some valuable extra seat time once my equipment had been approved by the scrutineers.

A wave of excitement and dread washed over me as I ventured onto the track for the first time, but that was quickly buried by my need to focus on acclimatising to both

track and car, while not getting in the way of quicker drivers behind or damaging anything.

By the end of the morning session, my best time was a 2m28.66s according to the onboard display. The afternoon running consisted mainly of three-lap stints scrubbing in the Nankang AS1 tyres we would use for the race, which was a frustrating but necessary task. Despite being told that I was being easy on the tyres and

but I knew there was room for improvement. Exactly where soon became apparent.

"Don't use fifth," said Philip Wyatt, principal of the Citroën C1 series, who was checking on my progress before qualifying. Wyatt proceeded to explain that I'd been a gear too high in most of the turns and that my attempts to take the hairpins in third gear as opposed to second, as well as using fifth along the start/finish straight, was costing me time.

Armed with this knowledge, I felt considerably more confident ahead of qualifying, which was to be held across one day and one night session. Although the best time from any driver in either session would set our grid position, it was mandatory for every driver to complete at least three laps in the night session.

Endurance racing is like team pursuits in track cycling, where you are only as good as your slowest colleague, so I was keen to give my newly arrived team-mates as much track time as I possibly could.

Feeling certain that they would be quicker than me anyway, I came in after only three timed laps – in the last two of which I was held up by another car – and hoped I'd at least improved my PB. I was shocked to discover I had gone more than five seconds quicker than in testing, lapping in 2m20.682s.

But as quickly as motor racing can put you on the crest of a wave, it can quickly bring you crashing back down again.

Since our garage was at the end of the pitlane, I found myself almost at the very front of the queue for the night session. The moment we left the pits I was under attack, trying to create new reference points in the murky gloom but being dazzled by dozens of headlights. It was a daunting experience for my first night running.

On my second lap, I thought I had a car on my inside through the series of left-handers that is 'Pif-Paf and Gracelands', described to me as a 'big balls corner'. I drifted further and further from the racing line until the asphalt beneath my wheels was replaced by undulating grass. After completing my third lap I headed to the pits, dreading the thought of racing in the dark. ►



Brown shares tips with Mackley

ALL PICS: HOLBON



Mackley learned a huge amount from rookie experience

"It was a daunting experience for my first night running"

bedding them in well, I wanted to tackle more consecutive laps to get into my stride.

What was also frustrating was my apparent lack of pace. Learning the racing lines, notably hitting the apexes later to square off the corners, and finding reference points for my braking wasn't a problem. But accelerating out of the Tarzan and Gretton hairpins in particular, I was losing vast amounts of time compared with other cars.

With no official timing during testing and no data samples from my team-mates to compare myself against, I had no reference other than what I'd been told: "2m25s is a good time for a novice" had been Brown's message. By the end of testing I'd whittled down to a 2m26.02s,

PERFORMANCE

My team-mates clocked respectable times but by the end of the process my earlier time was the quickest we had managed, putting us 26th on the 36-car grid. Naturally this was a pleasant boost, but I went to bed still worried about how I would cope come the night stint. The last thing I needed when I returned the next morning was the added pressure of being asked to do the start...

The beginning of the race is where things can, and usually do, go wrong. Having gone off the circuit the last time I'd been in the car, I wasn't feeling overly confident, a matter not helped by a start time of 5pm, which left the majority of the day for my nerves to build up. Trying to get some sleep proved almost impossible, but talking race tactics with Brown – stint length, how long the tyres and fuel would last – as well as practicing driver changes helped pass the time.

It wasn't going to trouble the professional crews of the FIA World Endurance Championship, but after much practice I could jump in, move the seat forward (a curse of having short legs) and do my belts up by feel alone in under 35 seconds. This would prove especially helpful in the dark. Final advice from Brown: "Hold your line and try and get to the inside."

The track layout would bypass the treacherous Turn 1 banking in favour of the high-speed chicane to the inside of it, but this was deemed too dangerous to use at the start with cars approaching in a two-by-two formation, so it was through the banking we went as the green flag finally waved.

Brown's words ringing in my ears, I found myself on the outside line among the 'marbles', drifting uncomfortably close to the wall. Deciding that crashing on the first corner of a 24-hour race wouldn't go down too well, I lifted out of the throttle and lost a few places, but then tried to settle into a rhythm, slowly pulling away from the remaining cars behind and eventually gaining back a few of the lost positions.

It wasn't without its drama though. Heading into the Deene hairpin, I was left no room on the



inside while overtaking the driver in front, who shut the door when I was alongside. We touched, but fortunately the damage was minimal and I eventually chipped away to a 2m19.747s, almost a second faster than I'd managed in qualifying.

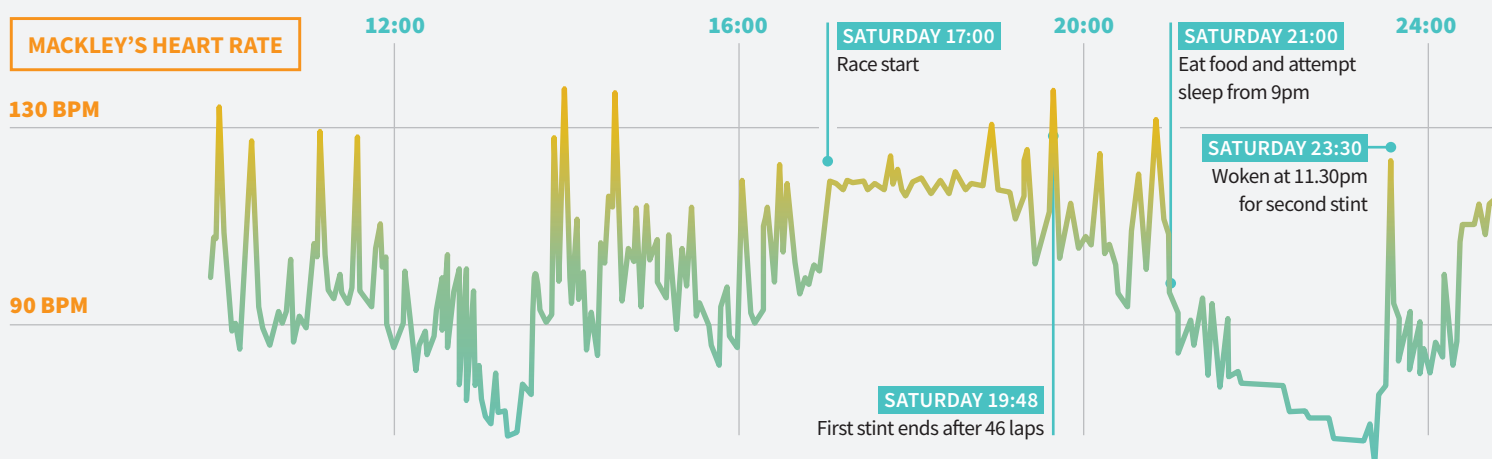
I was starting to enjoy myself but with 10 minutes remaining in my two-hour stint, reality once again sneaked up behind me with a length of lead piping. This time I bent a front-left wheel rim by hitting the kerbs at the first chicane just a little bit too hard. It could have been much worse – Katherine Legge managed to backflip a Formula 3 car there in 2003 – but I felt pretty miffed at undoing all my hard work.

I dragged the car back to the pits at a cost of 15 seconds and jumped out as new wheels were bolted on, fuel pumped in and Will strapped himself inside. Still, there was 22 hours left to make up for lost time...

"You okay to get back in?"

It was 11.30pm and Brown had just woken me from a one-and-a-half-hour power nap in the back of my rental car. Anyone who says motor racing is glamorous has never done a national endurance race before.

The moment I'd been dreading had arrived. My night stint. In fact, it turned out to be the part I most enjoyed. While my pace didn't improve





Still smiling
after 24
bruising hours

massively – my fastest lap across the two-hour stint was a 2m19.560s – other competitors' lap times seemed to drop off as tiredness took hold, and I found myself passing far more often than being passed.

Save for a moment at Gracelands – again – where a spinning car sent two others into the gravel and I was lucky to make it through unscathed, the racing was clean. By the time my stint ended at 2.20am, we were back up to 20th.

More than a little relieved nothing had gone wrong (aside from triggering the alarm on my rental car) I returned to the comfort of sleep.

Another lesson to take away from the event is that endurance racing is reactive and unpredictable. True to form, my final stint came sooner than expected owing to a safety car – I'd only just returned from a toilet break when I had to throw my helmet on and jump in just before 9am.

At Le Mans, the morning hours when the sun rises and track temperatures follow suit are often known as 'happy hour', where the fastest times are set. But of my three stints, this one felt the longest as a lack of cars to battle set my mind wandering.

Lapses in concentration weren't helped by the increasing heat inside the car, or by the fact that I had barely drunk or eaten anything of substance since the end of my first stint 14 hours earlier.

It was also during this stint that I noticed the Nankang tyres starting to give up grip for the first time, especially through Pif-Paf and Gracelands. In part it was due to the heat, but also because I was driving harder and faster than I had before.

My final 10 laps were some of my best of the weekend, and the final lap just before a safety car and subsequent pitstop was my fastest of all – a 2m19.534s, which was within four seconds of the fastest lap of the race.

As I got out of the car for the last time, having pitted from 16th, I was simply relieved to have had another trouble-free stint without crashing or incurring anyone's wrath.

I'd like to say that everything ended on a happy note, but with less than three hours to go, and while running in 14th, Andrew rolled at the chicane. Thankfully he was unhurt, but the car had seen better days and it wasn't until the final 20 minutes that we returned to the track, minus the shattered windscreen.

Battered and bruised, we duly crossed the line 29th of the 35 classified finishers. My sense of pride at making it to the end was mixed with the tangible disappointment of knowing that a spot just outside the top 10 had slipped through our fingers.

From feeling out of my depth and that I was getting in the way, to confidently overtaking and not being afraid to battle, my first experience of motorsport was a journey in every sense of the word. Being passed by other drivers who then disappeared into the distance did hammer home that I and *almost* everyone else aren't as good as we think. But the great thing I learned about motor racing is there is always room for improvement and there's no better way to go about that than by racing against better people.

But be warned, once you are bitten by the racing bug you won't want to stop. There really is nothing like it. ■



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KEY POINTS

- Take a head measurement as a starting point
- Try on before you buy to ensure the best fit – not too tight or loose
- Your head should be protected so invest in a high-quality helmet

HOW TO GET FITTED FOR A HELMET

BEFORE GOING RACING, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A LID, AS **STEFAN MACKLEY** FOUND OUT

Safety equipment in motorsport is constantly improving, with new standards governing its use by drivers at all levels from Formula 1 all the way down to club racing, in all of which competitors are required to be kitted out in FIA-approved gear.

The most essential piece of the ensemble is the driver's helmet, which can make the difference between life and death in the event of a crash.

Understandably, it's paramount for drivers to have a helmet that fits perfectly. Too loose and it risks not protecting the driver in an accident, and in a worst-case scenario could even come off. Too tight and it will cause discomfort and have a knock-on effect on performance.

But misunderstandings about what to look for in a helmet still pervade, so what should consumers keep in mind when trying on and buying their lid?

Gareth Evans is showroom manager at racewear supplier Demon Tweaks and has been helping customers with helmet fittings for more than 16 years. In his experience

there are several key points to consider.

"You're looking out for pressure points," he says. "You want the helmet to fit so it's nice and snug, but you don't want it to feel like it's pushing on the skull, such as on the front of the head, the crown of the head and on the side of the ears."

"You want to make sure your eyeline is in the middle of the opening and that the helmet pushes on your cheeks, but not with too much pressure so when you move it your face moves with it."

As well as selecting the right size of helmet, the choice of brand can be just as important.

Evans suggests that customers can't just assume that any brand will fit them, and that different makes suit different people depending on the size and shape of their head. Ordering online can therefore be a risk. "I would always recommend if they can get to us or another retailer to try on the helmet," he adds.

One of the most daunting aspects of selecting a helmet is the vast selection on offer, not only from different brands but also the variety of models from the same company.

To compete in any Motor Sports Association-

"You want the helmet to fit so it's nice and snug"

certified event, competitors will need a helmet that is FIA/SNELL approved. Prices vary from £400 to more than £2000, and according to Evans the key difference is the materials used in the construction, which as well as strength can affect lightness and aero efficiency.

"For example, the Bell Pro Series helmets are made of advanced carbon and composite materials to create a strong, lightweight shell," he says. "The Sport range is made from standard composite materials and has been through the same tests, but is not as light as some of the higher-range options."

The advice is always buy the most expensive helmet you can afford, but most importantly one that fits correctly.

FROM TRACKDAY TO LE MANS IN THREE YEARS



Mowlem presses on in the LMP3 Norma at Snetterton

JOHNNY MOWLEM'S RED RIVER SPORT AGENCY HAS BEEN CREATED WITH THE INTENTION OF TAKING THE HASSLE OUT OF RACING FOR AMBITIOUS AMATEUR NEWCOMERS, AS GARY WATKINS EXPLAINS

If you've never been out on a race track, you might think it fanciful that you could compete on the full 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe at Le Mans inside three years.

Even more so that you could win your class. But that's what Bon Grimes has achieved after getting behind the wheel of a racing car for the first time in 2015, at the age of 43.

The trophy on his mantelpiece wasn't garnered in the 24 Hours at Le Mans, rather the Aston Martin Racing Festival one-make event on the support bill. But the French enduro remains the ultimate target for Grimes, and the aim is to achieve it within the next two years under the direction of a new motorsport mentoring agency called Red River Sport.

Grimes has embarked on what he calls "an amazing adventure" together with Red River and its founder, long-time sportscar driver Johnny Mowlem. It was set up to be much more than

just a coaching operation: the aim is to guide someone essentially racing for fun through the pitfalls of modern motorsport.

Mowlem is pitching Red River as a one-stop shop for the ambitious amateur with the tag line of "maximising value for money, optimising the experience".

"It's about taking the client on a journey, setting goals and making things possible, as well as nurturing them as a driver," says the 49-year-old, who called time on what he describes as his professional racing career at the end of 2016.

"Red River takes the aggravation out of going racing for the amateur. I do all the dirty work, if you like. I have the contacts to do the best deals and everything is totally transparent, which is not always the case in motorsport. I get the invoice from the team, check it over, and send it to the client. Red River is only paid a management fee. We keep it simple, which helps ensure that it stays fun."

The journey for Grimes, co-founder of the Skyscanner travel website, began with a chance meeting with Mark Webber. The occasion was the Cannes Film Festival at which Grimes was present for the premiere of *Steve McQueen: The Man & Le Mans* in which he was the principal investor. Ex-Formula 1 driver Webber offered some sage advice when the subject of historic racing came up.

"I mentioned that I was thinking about doing some historic," recalls Grimes. "I'll always remember Mark's words: 'period cars have period accidents.'"

That resulted in Grimes linking up with Mowlem – who was in the process of setting up Red River – courtesy of an introduction from one of the film's producers. An exploratory trackday was arranged, though Grimes was slightly taken aback by the choice of car.

"I was thinking that we might start in a road-going Caterham," recalls Grimes, "but Johnny suggested we hire a Ferrari 458 Challenge car."



01

HOLEBON

- 1 Grimes (left) has benefited from Mowlem's mentoring
- 2 Mowlem has a lengthy sportscar CV, including nine Le Mans and 16 Daytona 24 Hours starts
- 3 Red River Sport strikes a balance between driver improvement and fun
- 4 Grimes and Dunbar will join Mowlem in TF's Aston for Asian Le Mans Series campaign



02

GIBSON/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES

03

HOLEBON



04

HOLEBON

The previous-generation Ferrari one-make racer is Mowlem's teaching tool of choice. "The 458 Challenge has narrow tyres that heat up quickly, a fair amount of power, a bit of downforce and a lot of mechanical grip," he explains. "It's a relatively easy car to handle in which you can learn a lot."

"It makes no sense to start out in a car on road tyres if you have aspirations to race something on slicks. You have to learn one style of driving and then have to unlearn it when you move to a proper racing car."

Grimes was hooked after his first experience of the Ferrari on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix Circuit. It was, he says, "the start of an addiction".

That addiction resulted in a purchase of his own 458 and more trackdays with Red River. Mowlem soon started setting goals for the first driver on the company's books. "First it was getting his race licence so we could start doing test days and then it was to do some racing," he explains. "It's important to give the client something to aim for to move them along."

The racing started with a mixed programme of events in 2016 driving his Ferrari, run by FF

Corse, in Britcar and the GT Cup. After that it was time to set a new goal.

"We sat down and talked about what I wanted to do and obviously I'm a fan of Le Mans," says Grimes in reference to the McQueen movie. "I'd watched the race on TV, but I didn't comprehend that someone in my position could actually share the track with all the big names."

A busy season of racing in 2017, which included six overall wins in the class-two Ferrari in Britcar alongside Mowlem, culminated in a couple of appearances in an LMP3 prototype. One was a first international start in the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi alongside his mentor and Ivor Dunbar, another amateur driver who had provided the inspiration for Red River and helped to start the business.

"The LMP3 is particularly relevant to someone with aspirations to race a GTE car," says Mowlem. "It doesn't have anti-lock brakes and the other driver aids of a GT3-type car like the 458 Challenge."

The graduation plan with Red River's Ligier-Nissan JSP3 always included a first outing on the Circuit de la Sarthe in the Road to Le Mans support event this summer with Nielsen Racing. A month or so beforehand, Grimes got the offer to double up in the Aston event aboard Whitebridge AMR's

Vantage GT4. What he thought was "a good chance to get a bit more track time" turned into a successful assault on the GT4 class.

Next up for Grimes is an Asian Le Mans Series campaign with an Aston Martin V12 Vantage GT3 run by TF Sport this winter. The campaign alongside Dunbar and Mowlem is another step towards the Le Mans goal, but also a chance to "get the enjoyment of going to some new tracks, especially places like Fuji and Sepang".

Next year's programme will include another LMP3 campaign overseen by Mowlem, this time with a Norma M30 that should make its debut this weekend at Silverstone. A bid for a Le Mans entry is then pencilled in for 2020.

Red River's plan is for Grimes to drive with Dunbar in GTE Am with Mowlem in the line-up as a coach and mentor. It would be a big moment for Red River's founder as he seeks to grow the company's roster of drivers.

"I was fortunate enough in my career to race in the 24 Hours 10 times and to stand on the podium, but should I get Bon to Le Mans it would be highly emotional for me," says Mowlem. "It would be a massive achievement for Red River, because he started with us from absolutely zero."

LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED

A NEW MOTORSPORT COMPANY BELIEVES THAT DNA PROFILING CAN HELP TO UNLOCK A RACING DRIVER'S INNATE POTENTIAL. GARY WATKINS WENT ALONG TO WITNESS THE APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE

Millions are spent designing and developing racing cars for any number of categories around the world. Yet when that machinery takes to the track, one cog in the wheel is largely ignored — the driver. That's the claim of a new company called No Stone Unturned aiming to put a new onus on human performance in motorsport.

Launched this summer, the British company is offering what it is calling "a complete driver-athlete performance programme that allows the individual to compete to 100% of their ability".

Understanding the genetics of the driver — which involves DNA testing — and applying individually tailored programmes are at the core of its offering, which NSU believes represents a first for motorsport.

Glen Thurgood, one of the three founders of NSU and joint performance director, is a former decathlete with a coaching background across a range of sports, including football and rugby. He believes that motor racing lags behind other disciplines when it comes to extracting the most from the human agent.

"One thing that has constantly astounded me as I've become involved in motorsport is that vast sums of money are being spent to get drivers to the top, but those drivers are not looking inwardly to see what they could do better themselves as human beings," he says. "There are programmes out there in motorsport that have a smattering of ideas on human performance, but

what we don't see is the group of people — the team, if you like — behind the individual."

Thurgood points out that race teams employ specialists to design and work on specific areas of a racing car. So why, he asks, should a single trainer have the expertise to do the same with the human body and mind?

"A driver will usually work with a trainer and the team might have a physio and perhaps a nutritionist, but those are only parts of what we call the performance model," he explains.

"One or two people can't have the necessary expertise in fine-tuning the human body, in the same way as one engineer doesn't design and develop the whole car."

Anyone can do a DNA test of course, but Thurgood suggests that few have the know-how to effectively make use of the information it yields.

"You can order a DNA test online, do a food intolerance test, or go to a physio and get a report, but what do you do with them next?" he says. "You need qualified specialists with a high degree of experience to interpret that data."

"That's what we are: a team of qualified and experienced people who can interpret the data to come up with the cohesive plan the driver needs to improve as an athlete."

Thurgood makes a comparison between motor racing and some of the Olympic sports in which Team GB has been highly successful this decade.

"Look at sports like cycling, skeleton and sailing," he explains. "There is a technical element to our successes because government-funded

programmes have given us the best bike and skeleton bob designs, but we have also had amazing set-ups to get the athlete as good as they can be. That's why we have won so many medals in those sports."

"In motorsport we clearly have the first part, the technical side, but not the second, so we want to drag it into the modern era of coaching. I've been blown away by the way the human performance side is largely ignored in the face of the millions spent doing the technical bit."

NSU believes that there can never be a one-size-fits-all performance model for drivers, nor that a training programme for a driver competing in one branch of the sport can be the same as that for another undertaking a different discipline.

"Marathon runners don't train in the same way as sprinters," says Thurgood. "In the same way, a driver doing 20-minute sprint races needs to train differently to someone doing endurance racing and three-hour stints at the Le Mans 24 Hours. It's our job to understand the journey that the driver is on."

NSU's model is a five-pointed one involving performance training, driver fuelling (what they eat and drink), motor function (which involves biomechanical testing), athlete mindset and lifestyle management. It is all data-driven, just like the technical side of motorsport, hence the incorporation of DNA testing.

Andy Key, the company's second performance director whose background is in rugby coaching, has a simple analogy to explain the benefits of genetic testing in the coaching process.



Thurgood applies expertise from other sports



DNA helps NSU to develop tailored training routines



“There is no point in doing the wrong kind of training”

Thurgood and Key look through the DNAFit data

“When you come to a crossroads, DNA testing allows us to pick the best way to turn,” he says. “That allows us to tune the performance model to the individual.”

The testing undertaken by DNAFit, which has a track record of success across a number of sports, allows NSU to understand how a driver responds to different types of training stimuli, what they should (and shouldn't) be eating, and their propensity to injury.

“Everyone is different and there is no point in fighting an uphill battle doing the wrong kind of training,” explains Thurgood, who was a fitness coach at League Two Northampton Town when

they famously beat Liverpool in the Carling Cup in 2010. “DNA testing allows us to be efficient with the athletes we work with and do what is right for the individual. It gives a direction to the programme and prevents you wasting time. That's the one thing you can never buy. It also allows you to pick the low-hanging fruit, to make quick gains.”

Thurgood offers an example of the benefits of DNA testing by contrasting his own genetic make-up with that of NSU managing director James Guess, a motorsport entrepreneur who met his company co-founders through his efforts to get fit for his own amateur racing exploits, losing three and a half stone as a result of

working with Thurgood and Key.

“Our DNA profiles tell us that I am only a medium recoverer, whereas James is a fast recoverer,” says Thurgood. “He can do intensive training sessions on consecutive days and his body will be okay to give 100% the next day. I need longer to recover, so if we are training together the day before a test, I'd be getting into the car in a worse condition than him.”

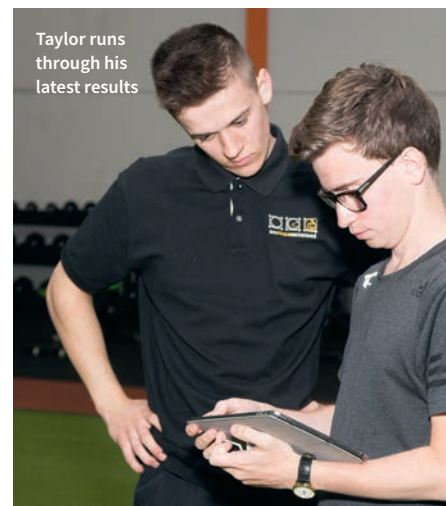
DNA testing has already paid dividends among the small roster of drivers with which NSU is so far working, including cadet karter Archie Clark, the nine-year-old grandson of rally legend Roger. Archie was found to be gluten intolerant and ▶

James Taylor (66) has improved with NSU support



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Taylor runs through his latest results





has changed his diet accordingly. The results of Ginetta Junior driver James Taylor, one of the marque's scholarship winners, have also been on an upward curve throughout his maiden year of car racing. Coming into the season, the 15-year-old had a niggling back problem that was a hang-over from his karting days. The NSU programme includes postural analysis, which allowed Taylor and his Richardson

Racing team to sort the problem.

Mentoring the drivers is also part of NSU's approach. Thurgood explains that earlier in the season he advised Taylor about his sleeping patterns in the run-up to events.

"I was at a race and asked James what he did the night before, and he told me he watched a film on his laptop," recalls Thurgood. "I asked if his hotel room had a television, and if so he should

watch that instead because the light emitted from a laptop, an iPad or a phone will stimulate the brain and disturb your sleep.

"It's not just training and nutrition; there are so many little stones that need turning if you want to succeed and be the best you possibly can."

The NSU programme includes a phone app with the training regime laid down for the individual driver. Tap on the specific exercise and there's an explanatory video.

"It's the same with the diet plan," adds Thurgood. "All the ingredients and cooking instructions are there. You can even order everything online with the app."

The app incorporates a daily questionnaire, covering everything from the training regime to the number of laps the driver has done in a car or kart that day. Each driver on the NSU programme has a weekly phone call with one of the performance coaches and a monthly face-to-face meeting where their fitness and motor function are assessed.

Any sport can benefit from the programme that NSU is offering, reckons Thurgood – "we could work in tiddlywinks if there's a performance gain to be made" – and motorsport is crying out for that help, according to NSU.

Thurgood wants to make cutting-edge coaching "accessible to anyone who wants it in motor racing".

"We're trying to change the outlook of a sport on human performance to bring it in line with the engineering side," he says. "Our programme is about efficiency, which is racing in a nutshell." ■

EMERGING FROM THE DARK AGES

Former Super Aguri sporting director Graham Taylor reckons that motor racing "remains somewhat in the dark ages" when it comes to human performance. He should know, after making a return as a race engineer with the Ganassi Ford World Endurance Championship squad following a seven-year stint as head of coaching at UK Sport.

He was charged with bringing what he calls 'a race engineer's approach' to the coaching programmes of the organisation that played a key role in Britain's

record medal hauls at the 2012 London and 2016 Rio Olympic Games. What he doesn't see are the approaches and knowledge that underpinned Team GB's success being transferred the other way into motorsport.

"There's something slightly wrong in motorsport because we are not looking holistically when it comes to the drivers and how we prepare them to go racing," says Taylor. "There isn't an integrated approach. Teams rarely look for the marginal gains that were championed



Taylor (right) thinks there is room to grow

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by Sir David Brailsford at Team Sky in cycling.

"Racing teams are going testing at Snetterton or wherever, and the drivers are having lasagne and chips for lunch before getting

back in the car. That's a very 1980s approach to putting energy into an athlete's body. Rarely do teams look at how to create the right environment to get the best out of the drivers."

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