

# Button joins Le Mans NASCAR effort

# AUTOSPORT

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2 FEBRUARY 2023

## Hamilton's decade at Mercedes

The story of an F1 superteam – and what comes next

'He has realised how much more he can draw out of the team'

ANDREW SHOVLIN

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# Reflecting on Hamilton's epic decade at Mercedes

You can always trust young people to make you feel old... When our Grand Prix Editor Alex Kalinauckas began work on this week's cover story on Lewis Hamilton's 10 years at Mercedes, the first reaction was, 'But it *can't* be 10 years!' Of course, what Hamilton and the team have achieved in that decade – six world titles, and still counting? – is staggering and has set the standard in Formula 1.

It's easy to forget what a risk Hamilton seemed to be taking when he upped sticks from his alma mater at McLaren but, starting on p16, Kalinauckas details exactly what has made the combination such a phenomenon, with insight from Mercedes engineering chief Andrew Shovlin. Kevin Turner follows this up on p24 by ranking Hamilton's 10 seasons with the Three-Pointed Star. See if you agree...

Endurance racing fans had been salivating with anticipation about the inaugural race for the new LMDh/GTP cars. Gary Watkins was your man at the Daytona 24 Hours, and on p38 you can read how the Acuras beat the Cadillacs to victory, just like in the DPi era. In a way, it's heartening to see good old sportscar nous trumping the incoming powerhouses of Porsche and BMW, but you can bet that it won't be long before one of the German giants is on top of the podium.

By contrast, over in the world of Formula E it's beginning to look as though it's going to take something remarkable to *stop* Porsche. Jake Boxall-Legge brings us the action from Diriyah on p46.



*MPS*

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**NEXT WEEK**  
**9 FEBRUARY**

**F1's big questions**  
Karun Chandhok gazes into his crystal ball to give some answers for 2023



Cover image  
Sebastian Kawka for  
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# PIT + PADDOCK

## Tensions grow between F1 and FIA president

### FORMULA 1

Tensions between motorsport's governing body and Formula 1's commercial rights holder grew last week after FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem described a suggested \$20billion valuation of the series as "inflated".

A report from Bloomberg last month claimed that Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund had considered a \$20bn bid for F1, only for Liberty Media to show little interest in selling the series. Although it is understood that talks between PIF and F1 were in fact related to sponsorship opportunities, Ben Sulayem (right) took to social media to say he was "cautious about alleged inflated price tags of \$20bn being put on F1".

"Any potential buyer is advised to apply common sense, consider the greater good of the sport and come with a clear, sustainable plan – not just a lot of money," he wrote. "It is our duty to consider what the future impact will be for promoters in terms of increased hosting fees and other commercial costs, and any adverse impact that it could have on fans."

It sparked an angry response from Liberty, which formally expressed its annoyance over his comments by sending a letter from its legal department to the FIA, warning that Ben Sulayem had overstepped the mark. As part of an original deal agreed by former FIA president Max Mosley in 2000 to lease the rights out to F1 for more than 100 years, the governing body agreed not to get involved in any commercial matters, and focus solely on regulatory matters.

"The FIA has given unequivocal undertakings that it will not do anything to prejudice the ownership, management and/or exploitation of those rights," read the letter, a copy of which has been seen by Autosport. "We consider that those comments, made from the FIA President's official social media account, interfere with those rights in an unacceptable manner."

It represents the latest escalation in tensions between the FIA and FOM, which have recently found themselves on opposite sides of the debate to allow Andretti and General Motors to join the F1 grid.

Ben Sulayem has also faced criticism from a member of the House



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

of Lords for being "deeply discourteous and unprofessional" in failing to reply to human rights concerns. Paul Scriven, a Liberal Democrat life peer, has written to Ben Sulayem to express his concerns about the FIA's clampdown on drivers making political statements, as well as the president's failure to respond to correspondence sent last year.

"Why do you think you can ignore parliamentarians?" wrote Scriven. "Do you think that concerns raised over human rights and the policies of the FIA should be above scrutiny? We wrote to you in order to raise concerns that are in the public interest, and we expect openness and transparency from the FIA."

Ben Sulayem also came under fire last week for comments published on his website back in 2001 in which he said that he did not like "women who think they are smarter than men, for they are not in truth". The quote was in an archived version of his former website. The FIA responded by stating that Ben Sulayem's remarks "do not reflect the FIA president's beliefs" and pointed to his "strong record on promoting women and equality in sport".

LUKE SMITH & JONATHAN NOBLE



Is this lot worth \$20billion? FIA chief says not

HONE motorsport IMAGES



HAAS

## Haas drops its 'Russian' look for 2023 season

### FORMULA 1

Haas became the first team to unveil its new livery for the 2023 Formula 1 season on Tuesday, and has ditched the Russian colours of former title sponsor Uralkali.

Haas cut ties with Uralkali and its driver, Nikita Mazepin, last February in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but was stuck with the red, white and blue colours of the

company for the entirety of the 2022 season. Following the arrival of new title sponsor MoneyGram, it has reverted to its white, red and black colours of old.

The team fields a revised driver line-up this season after replacing Mick Schumacher with Nico Hulkenberg, who completes one of the most experienced pairings on the grid alongside incumbent Kevin Magnussen as the team pursues

greater consistency. The extra financial boost from MoneyGram should see Haas operate closer to the budget cap, although it will retain its model of working closely with technical partner and engine supplier Ferrari.

Haas will complete a first shakedown with its new VF-23 at Silverstone on 11 February before pre-season testing begins in Bahrain on 23 February.

**LUKE SMITH**

## Ford chief coy on Red Bull speculation

### FORMULA 1

Ford's head of motorsport has admitted that a return to Formula 1 "requires consideration" as rumours of a potential link-up with Red Bull begin to gather momentum.

Following the collapse of its planned partnership with Porsche, Red Bull is understood to be in advanced talks with Ford about a deal that would mean the Blue Oval's return to F1 after two decades. The agreement would centre on Red Bull Powertrains, the engine arm that is working on Red Bull's power unit for the new regulations in 2026, and could bring the Ford name back to F1 for the first time since it sold the Jaguar team to Red Bull in 2004.



Fisichella and Jordan took Ford's last F1 win, in 2003 Brazilian GP

Although Ford head of motorsport Mark Rushbrook would not comment on speculation regarding Red Bull, he told Autosport at last weekend's Daytona 24 Hours: "Formula 1 is certainly strong and growing, both in the United States and globally. What they have done well is create great racing and great competition. It's still the pinnacle, but they've been able to reach new audiences with things like *Drive to Survive*. As a company we go

racing for innovation, tech transfer, the learning opportunity, but also for marketing reasons as well. It's shifted for sure, and it definitely requires consideration."

A deal could be struck before the start of the new season, while there have even been suggestions that the partnership could be announced to tie in with the unveiling of Red Bull's new car, the RB19, tomorrow (Friday) in New York.

**LUKE SMITH & JAMIE KLEIN**

## Button on board for Le Mans Chev Camaro

### LE MANS 24 HOURS

Jenson Button is on course to return to the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. It will not be at the wheel of a prototype like last time in 2018, rather the Garage 56 racer based around a Next Gen NASCAR Cup car.

The 2009 Formula 1 world champion has been announced as one of the drivers for the bid by Chevrolet and Hendrick Motorsports for the Le Mans grid slot aimed at experimental machinery. Button was unveiled last week during Daytona 24 Hours week alongside NASCAR legend Jimmie Johnson, who drove for Hendrick throughout his illustrious Cup career, and 2010 Le Mans winner Mike Rockenfeller, who has led development of the Camaro LS1 on the simulator and

then on the track.

Button, whose previous Le Mans start came at the wheel of an AER-engined BR1 Engineering LMP1, revealed that his interest in the project had been sparked by a discussion with Johnson.

“I was just asking Jimmie what he was up to in 2023, because this guy can’t sit still,” explained Button of his friend, who announced he was quitting full-time competition last year. “He was running through a few things he’s hoping to do, and he said, ‘I’m hoping to bring NASCAR to Le Mans.’

“I was like, ‘Sorry, what?’ It started there, and then I got in touch with Rocky, and he said, ‘We’re testing out at Sebring, come and check out what we’re doing and see if it’s something that would interest you.’ Then I spoke



J BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

to John [Doonan, IMSA boss, who is playing a key role in the project] and it all started from there.”

Button was due to get his first experience of the car over the course of a two-day test scheduled for Daytona this week.

Chevrolet has yet to reveal the specification of the

Camaro, but it is expected to trial an energy-retrieval system that will one day be used in NASCAR. Pierre Fillon, president of Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l’Ouest, said on the launch of the project last March that he is demanding it runs hybrid technology.

**GARY WATKINS**

## Commercial shuffles end Kubica F1 run

### FORMULA 1

A busy week for the Sauber-run Alfa Romeo Formula 1 team has resulted in a new title sponsor, a new team boss and a first shareholding from Audi, while bidding farewell to Robert Kubica (right), who served as its reserve driver since 2020.

Orlen has been replaced by Stake, a gambling company that has relationships with Canadian rapper Drake and is struggling Premier League side Everton’s shirt sponsor. Although Orlen was swiftly announced as a new principal partner for AlphaTauri, Kubica is not thought to be in line for any role with the Red Bull sister team, meaning his departure from F1 after an association stretching back to 2006.

Kubica was one of F1’s brightest talents



prior to sustaining severe injuries to his right arm in a rally accident ahead of the 2011 season, which appeared to have ended his career. He made a return to competition in F1 in 2019 with Williams, but was left frustrated after languishing at the back of the grid. He made two race appearances for Alfa Romeo in 2021, deputising for Kimi Raikkonen when the Finn was ruled out with COVID-19, but has since concentrated his competitive efforts in sportscars.

Ex-McLaren F1 boss Andreas Seidl is set to oversee the running of the Sauber Group following his arrival as CEO over the winter. But it was confirmed last week that Sauber’s

managing director, Alessandro Alunni Bravi, will take on the role of “team representative”, akin to that of team principal looking after day-to-day operations.

Capping off a busy week of news at Hinwil, Sauber announced on Monday that Audi had acquired its first minority shareholding in the company this month as it readies for its works F1 entry in 2026. Audi announced last October that it would be working with the Swiss squad under the new engine rules, building towards a majority ownership of the team by the time it joins the grid.

**LUKE SMITH**



**WEC/IMSA** Chevrolet has taken the wraps off the new Corvette with which it will join the GT3 ranks for the first time next year. The Corvette Z06 GT3.R has been developed like its GT1, GT2 and GTE predecessors by Pratt & Miller, but is the first customer-focused machine of a programme stretching back 25 years. At least 10 examples of a car with a list price of \$735,000 will be built for 2024 as per GT3 rules, with four earmarked for the IMSA SportsCar Championship and two for the World Endurance Championship. It has yet to be revealed whether Corvette Racing will continue to fly the Chevrolet flag in IMSA. **Photo by Chevrolet**

## Auer hospitalised with back injury after Daytona shunt

### DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Mercedes factory driver and 2022 DTM runner-up Lucas Auer has undergone back surgery after an accident in practice that ruled him out of last weekend's Daytona 24 Hours. He was operated on at the Halifax Medical Center adjacent to the venue hosting the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

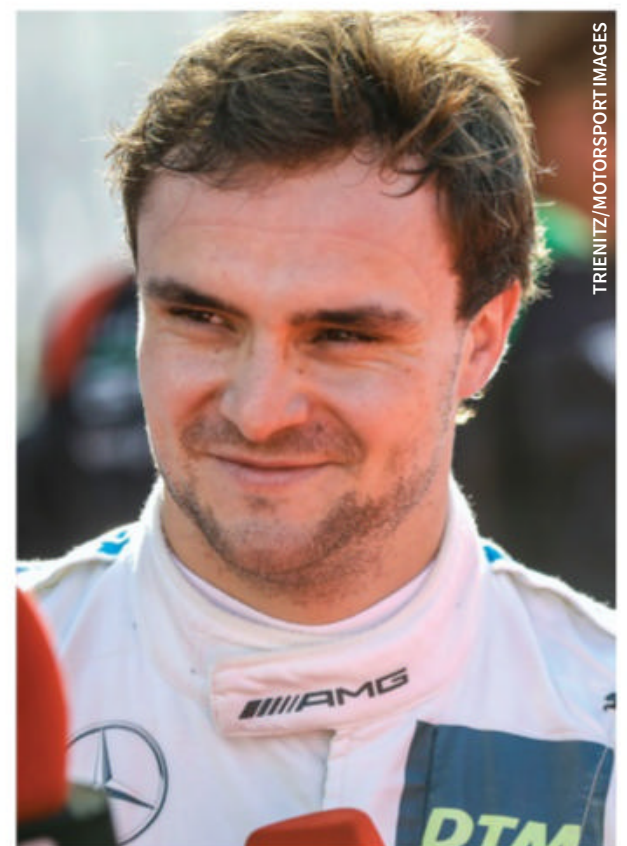
Auer crashed his Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 into the pitlane exit wall in the opening practice session last Thursday. The 28-year-old Austrian had to be removed from the car through the roof and was diagnosed with fractured vertebrae in his lower back. He was described as awake and

communicating with his team-mates and family in Europe immediately after the shunt.

Winward rebuilt the car around a spare chassis transported from its Texas workshops and brought in Canadian Daniel Morad to take Auer's place alongside team boss Russell Ward, Philip Ellis and Indy Dontje. The car Ellis had put on the class pole the previous weekend had to start from the back of the grid but was in the fight for GTD victory when Ellis crashed at Turn 2 with an hour and a half of the race remaining.

Ellis will take Auer's place in the Craft-Bamboo Mercedes for this weekend's Bathurst 12 Hours alongside Daniel Juncadella and Nicky Catsburg.

**GARY WATKINS**



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## Sebring set to drop off WEC calendar in 2024

### WEC

This year's Sebring 1000 Miles round of the World Endurance Championship looks set to be the last on the undercard of the IMSA SportsCar Championship 12-hour classic. The WEC's contract with IMSA to race at the Florida venue comes to an end after the 2023 event in March, and series promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest has admitted that it is exploring alternatives for the championship's visit to the US.

Over the course of Daytona 24 Hours week, ACO president Pierre Fillon stressed the problems involved in the WEC racing on the IMSA bill. He highlighted issues with sponsorship clashes as well as timing, a reference to the deal announced for the

Losail circuit in Qatar to become the championship curtain-raiser from 2024.

Fillon stressed the importance of the WEC taking in a US round and insisted that the ACO will continue to work with IMSA on the event. "I can say today that our partnership will continue and we will continue to have an American event," he explained. "But it is too early to answer the question [where it will be]. We have to rethink how we can build a double-event, is it Sebring?"

The latest comments from Fillon represent a change of stance by the WEC in the weeks since Qatar's place on the calendar from 2024 was announced in December. Back then series boss Frederic Lequien said that he was not looking

beyond Sebring for the WEC's US round, and that the race in the Middle East could take place early enough to allow for the mid-March fixture to continue.

A race at Road Atlanta has been rumoured, although IMSA boss John Doonan insisted that no discussions to that effect had taken place. Indianapolis boss Roger Penske has also talked openly of his desire to build a major endurance race at the facility, which returns to the IMSA schedule with a sprint event this September.

The inaugural Sebring 1000 Miles was held in 2019, but the races in years two and three of the contract were lost to COVID. The Florida airfield venue finally returned to the schedule last March.

**GARY WATKINS**

## Mazepin returns to racing in new LMP2 team

### ASIAN LE MANS SERIES

He's back... Ex-Formula 1 driver Nikita Mazepin will return to racing for the first time in over a year when he joins the Asian Le Mans Series next week.

The Russian will share an ORECA 07 entered by new team 99 Racing with factory Lexus driver Ben Barnicoat and ex-World Touring Car BMW racer Felix Porteiro in the premier LMP2 class.

It will be his first foray into circuit racing since he was dropped by Haas on the eve of the 2022 season following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

99 Racing is part of a nine-car LMP2 field for the two events in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Its sporting director is Dan Hodder, a former staffer at the Hitech team with which Mazepin raced in Formula 3 and in which his father invested heavily. Barnicoat was his team-

mate in 2016.

"It's a great championship for 99 Racing to launch into sportscar racing, which is currently going through a resurgence," said Hodder. "Ben will be a key component of us getting up to speed as the new team on the block. Of course, it's an opportunity for Nikita to try something new in a professional yet more relaxed environment to what he's accustomed to."

**RACHIT THUKRAL**



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DUTCH PHOTOAGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



## Rodin buys out Chilton at Carlin

### FORMULA 2/3/4

Top British single-seater powerhouse Carlin has a new name following a change in majority ownership. Australian businessman and Rodin Cars chief David Dicker has bought out Grahame Chilton at Capsicum Motorsport, which took control of the team in October 2009.

The Farnham-based squad will now be known as Rodin Carlin in deference to new chairman Dicker's emerging New Zealand-based track car marque, which has so far launched the FZED and is developing the FZERO, expected to hit the track in July. Rodin supported Kiwi Carlin drivers Liam Lawson (above) and Louis Sharp last year in FIA Formula 2 and British F4 respectively.

Like Chilton, whose son Max had been racing with Carlin in British Formula 3 in 2009 and would then compete with the squad in GP2 and later in IndyCar up to 2021, Dicker will keep the team unchanged under the helm of co-founder Trevor Carlin and his wife Stephanie.

"I heard that Carlin was likely to be available last July and we started to look into it," explained Dicker. "We worked with them last year running Liam and Louis and it's a good set-up. I'm just replacing Grahame Chilton; Trevor

and Steph are going to run it.

"Carlin has got a fantastic record going back a very long time so there's no question about the quality of the operation. I don't have plans to get in there and make any real changes – I'm not going to interfere because their results are good. From the operational side, I'm really leaving it up to them."

Dicker added that investing in an established team brings benefits for Rodin: "When you're a start-up, you have always got that credibility gap and you've got to try to find ways to bridge that – and this is one of them. There's a lot of opportunity in junior teams, which I don't feel has been explored in the past."

Trevor Carlin said: "I'm thrilled to be on this journey alongside such an innovative company as Rodin Cars. I'd also like to thank Grahame Chilton for his incredible support over the last 13 seasons as shareholder and business partner. Our fantastic factory will continue to be a great legacy of what we built together."

Rodin Carlin will continue in 2023 in FIA F2 and F3, GB3 and British F4, and is adding teams for the female-only F1 Academy F4 series plus the burgeoning Spanish F4 Championship.

**MARCUS SIMMONS & STEPHEN LICKORISH**

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### FERRARI RUNS AT SEBRING

Ferrari tested its new 499P Le Mans Hypercar at Sebring last week ahead of the car's race debut in the World Endurance Championship opener at the US venue in March. A single car ran for two days with a roster of drivers including Alessandro Pier Guidi.

#### DELETRAZ IS A YOUNG TURK

Two-time and reigning European Le Mans Series champion Louis Deletraz has shuffled across to the TF Sport-run Racing Team Turkey for the 2023 season. Deletraz, who won the 2021 LMP2 class title with WRT and the 2022 contest with Prema, replaces Jack Aitken alongside Charlie Eastwood and Salih Yoluc as they bid for another crown in the Pro Am sub-division. Aitken, meanwhile, has stood down from his Williams F1 reserve role to pursue his sportscar career. His primary programme is with the Action Express Cadillac team in the four IMSA enduros.

#### VAN DER DRIFT FOR NZGP

Ex-Formula Master champion and Superleague Formula racer Chris van der Drift is to make another bid for New Zealand Grand Prix victory this weekend. The 36-year-old will join the grid at Hampton Downs for what is the fourth round of the Formula Regional Oceania series. Van der Drift was looking good to win it in 2021 when contact damaged his front wing. "My mistake in the Grand Prix has been bothering me for two years now!" he said. "I genuinely feel we could have won that day, which every Kiwi driver wants to do of course."

#### FOURMAUX ON TOP ON ICE

The French Andros Trophy ice racing series drew to a close last weekend at Super Besse with a maiden victory for Adrien Fourmaux. The rally man defeated Jean-Baptiste Dubourg and Nathanael Berthon in the final and on points for the event. Le Mans winner Benoit Treluyer joined the field and finished in sixth position.

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Hill (inset, with Blundell and cloaked BMW at Laser Tools) chases Infiniti of Sutton in 2021

## Laser Tools reverses BTCC pullout to back Hill's BMW

### BTCC

Laser Tools Racing is to continue in the British Touring Car Championship after all as title backer of Jake Hill's West Surrey Racing-run BMW 330e M Sport. The company's livery, sported by Ash Sutton on his way to BTCC crowns in 2020 and 2021, replaces mobile phone company ROKiT.

The deal has been put together by Hill's management, Mark Blundell's MB company, only weeks after Laser Tools announced its exit from the series after nine years. Hill, whose entry will run under the Laser Tools

Racing with MB Motorsport banner, is joined in the WSR line-up by Adam Morgan and Stephen Jelley, who was confirmed last week for a third consecutive season. Four-time champion Colin Turkington is also expected to remain at the team.

"Laser Tools Racing has already achieved so much in the series and we are proud to be carrying that baton forward," said Blundell.

Laser Tools entered the BTCC in 2014 as backer of Aiden Moffat, and became title sponsor of the Scot's team when he went it



alone in 2019 after a split from Ciceley Motorsport. Moffat's operation merged with BMR Racing, run by Sutton's then-manager Warren Scott, for 2020 and 2021, before an association with Team Hard for 2022. It will continue under a new identity in 2023.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**

## Lopez, di Resta and Bruni ramp up heat in ELMS



Ex-Toyota teammates Lapierre and Lopez are reunited

### ELMS

Toyota's Jose Maria Lopez is one of a number of name factory drivers from the World Endurance Championship to pull double duty with an LMP2 campaign in the European Le Mans Series this year. The two-time winner of the WEC title will be joined by Peugeot's Paul di Resta and Porsche driver Gianmaria Bruni in the premier class of the six-round series after a flurry of announcements in the past 10 days.

Lopez has been signed up by the Swiss Cool Racing

squad run by former Toyota driver Nicolas Lapierre. Lopez has been announced in one of two Cool ORECA-Gibson 07s alongside 18-year-old Russian Vlad Lomko, who is moving over to sportscars from Euroformula Open.

Di Resta will race with United Autosports, the team with which he took his first steps in sportscar racing back in 2018. He will share an ORECA with 2003 Le Mans winner Guy Smith and American amateur Jim McGuire, who has previously raced in both LMP2 and P3 with the team.

Bruni will continue in the ELMS with the Proton Competition squad after winning the GTE title with the Porsche team last year. He will dovetail a campaign with the same ORECA in which he won the P2 class at last weekend's Daytona 24 Hours with his duties in the team's new Porsche 963 LMDh, which is due to come on stream later in the season. Bruni will share the ORECA with boss Christian Ried's son Jonas, who is a graduate of Formula 4 in Italy and Germany, and Italian Giorgio Roda.

**GARY WATKINS**



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# A decade of leadership

*It's not only Mercedes' totemic driver who's marked a 10-year milestone – team boss Toto Wolff has spent the same period at the tiller of the F1 powerhouse*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**M**ercedes seems to be fumbling in the dark. It's not a question of a certain individual not being good enough, it's about whether the culture of the way a team operates is conducive to success."

So stated Autosport in October 2012, just a week after Lewis Hamilton had been announced as joining Mercedes and ending his long association with McLaren. Back then, Mercedes' standing in the modern era was not great. It stood as an illustrious marque that had the resources, but couldn't put them to use in achieving lasting F1 success. It hadn't sustained the Brawn GP magic from 2009. Staff who had worked through its guises since it started life as BAR speak of it lacking "the belief" that it could win a title.

Even after the disastrous 2022 campaign just gone, that has well and truly changed over the past decade. Mercedes now very much understands winning. The team's culture has truly changed. One person credited with playing a huge part in the transformation is also celebrating a 10-year anniversary at Mercedes in 2023: the boss, Toto Wolff, who in 2013 arrived as a shareholder and executive director, as well as heading Mercedes' overall motorsport programmes. It would be wrong to state that Wolff alone is responsible for turning around Mercedes' fortunes. Indeed, the key decisions that led to its repositioning as F1's top team in 2014 were taken long before he joined, with the squad's work on nailing the V6 turbo hybrid rules and signing of Hamilton begun under Ross Brawn.

## "He wisely doesn't insert himself into the technical elements so critical to Formula 1 success"

F1 history is littered with teams not making the most of their time in the sun. Mercedes is absolutely not one to have failed in that way and, on the eve of the 2023 campaign, its sole goal is to get back to basking at the front of the grid as a title contender.

When Hamilton signed up to join the Mercedes project, the pressure was on the team to deliver a winning car. But if Mercedes' success in doing that in 2014 can't really be attributed to Wolff, what is the key element he brings that has ensured the team's sustained achievement? Hamilton says it's "leadership". And in the years since its team culture was being openly questioned, Mercedes has fostered one where it's OK for mistakes to be made, so long as they're owned, acted upon, and progressed from. This doesn't mean it's constant happy clapping – the team has attested to behind-the-scenes arguments in the aftermath of last year's W13 being revealed

as a dud. But therein lies the story of the true worth of the culture change instilled by Wolff: the W13 ended up as a race winner, while there were no signs of real fracture in the Mercedes camp. Of course, the whole 'team culture' element is overblown to a certain degree. It's a nice PR soundbite, but rooted in reality. After all, across all of sport and indeed society, it can be said that dysfunctional organisations do dysfunctional things. Therefore, other parts of Wolff's contribution to Mercedes' success have been just as crucial to the tale.

A self-confessed workaholic, he's involved in detail decisions such as aspects of team kit, but wisely doesn't insert himself into the technical elements so critical to F1 success. As the team leader, he must make sure that Mercedes has all the other key parts to make the best possible cars, ensuring there's no financial or commercial strife and playing the politics game to its advantage.

He's even made that pretty entertaining over the years, telling *The Times* recently that "I am living in his head rent-free" when speaking of Red Bull team principal Christian Horner, and embracing the upsides of Netflix after initially swerving *Drive to Survive*, but that's ultimately a secondary element to that of ensuring his team remains financially healthy. As a one-third co-owner, with his current contract as CEO running until 2024, Wolff has even more reason to want this, with his background as a venture capitalist clearly a boost in this regard. That acumen has led to the running of an F1 team with an entrepreneurial outlook becoming something of a model after the floundering manufacturer behemoths of the early 2000s. This structure and its performance have in turn been enhanced by F1's business boom under Liberty Media.

Things haven't always gone smoothly for Mercedes during Wolff's tenure, the Barcelona crash between Hamilton and Nico Rosberg the nadir of that broken relationship. But Mercedes kept on winning thanks to the engine performance advantages it had accrued, and which have since been eroded by the other manufacturers finally catching up. And it's intriguing to look at F1 overall in the context of all that Wolff has achieved in 10 years at Mercedes. Hamilton, who now conducts his contract negotiations personally with Wolff, remains its ultimate star, while his likely successor has been groomed in the form of George Russell. But Wolff's and Mercedes' influence filters through the championship.

With his 11th year at Mercedes in mind – the team has taken a low-key approach to celebrating the decade milestone just passed – Wolff says that things are "at a realistic level" regarding the W14 revitalising the team's fortunes. It can certainly be said that Mercedes' expectation-management game remains strong. But now it has the success-baked resilience to operate in such a way, which it couldn't in 2012. ✨

[P16 HAMILTON'S DECADE AT MERCEDES](#)

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# YOUR SAY

*I do not have all the latest electronic gadgets or 'high-tech' phones, so I really would have liked a simple programme with a list of cars and drivers*

**TERRY FLETCHER**

### **Plea for printed programmes**

I feel I must reply to the item regarding 'Should club meetings have printed programmes?' (Opinion, Club Autosport, 12 January). My own experience goes back to last year's VSCC meeting at Silverstone. I did not know entry to the circuit was with 'e-ticket', as I had turned up with fresh-crispy notes of money.

After 45 minutes I gained access to the meeting via the office, where a lady initially did not know what to do! She solved the problem by ordering a ticket for herself and I paid for it by credit card. Once inside, I hunted for a programme and was told they are online! I obtained a sheet of paper with just race start times, no drivers or cars listed etc.

I am in my late seventies and do not have all the latest electronic gadgets or 'high-tech' phones, so I really would have liked a simple programme with a list of cars and drivers.

It seemed quite a lot of spectators also complained about not having information regarding the meeting, like a programme, so I believe some sort of 'print-out' should be available to cater for us 'mortals'.

I have written this letter to you as I do not have a 'lap-top', so cannot send 'e-mails'.

**Terry Fletcher**  
Standon, Herts

### **F1 now more than merely a business**

You quite rightly gave top spot to Justin Lyle and his comment about what was originally a sport now "turned by greed into a business" (Your Say, 26 January).

Let's be blunt about this. F1 has not been a sport for some decades but it is now more than merely a business – it is a cartel.

Cartel definition: "an association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition".

Many cartels are deemed to be illegal, but it seems to me that the bigger and more powerful they get, and the more open they are about their activities (think OPEC), the more likely they are to go unchallenged.

**Mike Dodman**  
Bromsgrove, Worcs

*The real problem is not having a proper process for a new team to apply, something that should be corrected soon – ed*

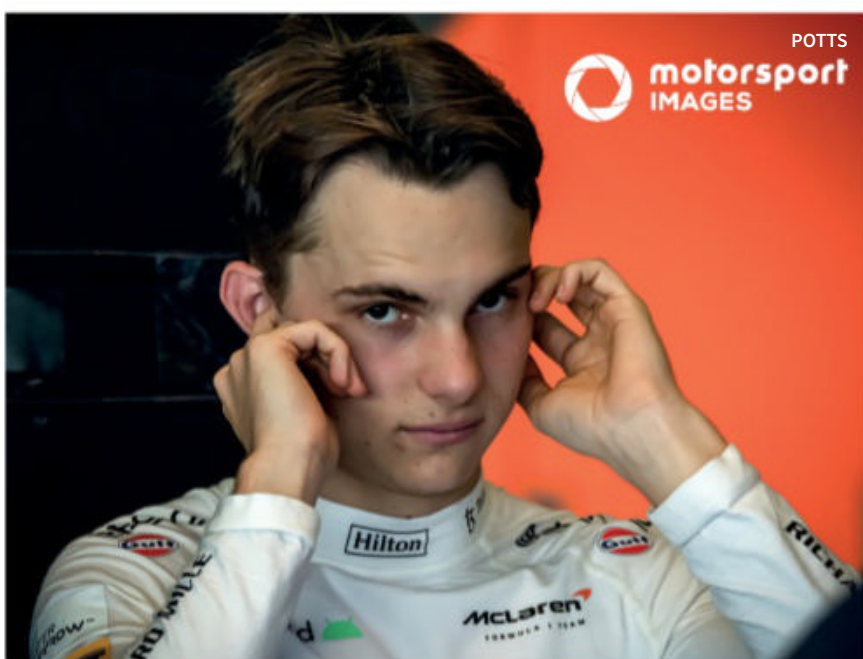
### **Intra-team battles promise to be a highlight**

With the new F1 season tantalisingly just around the corner, there are so many things to look forward to. The most notable, in my opinion, is how the team-mates stack up against each other.

Can George Russell get the better of Lewis Hamilton again, will Charles Leclerc come ahead of Carlos Sainz, and so on...?

The most exciting match-up, I believe, will be Oscar Piastri (left) versus Lando Norris. An on-form Oscar against an on-form Lando will provide huge entertainment. Both have self confidence in abundance, so I'm really looking forward to seeing how these two hugely rated young guns work, and race, together. Potential fireworks only adds to the intrigue.

**Michael Skeet**  
Lordswood, Southampton




## Have your say, get in touch


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# HAMILTON'S DECADE AT MERCEDES

*Many doubted Lewis Hamilton's move from McLaren to Mercedes, but the journey he's been on since has taken him to new heights*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY MERCEDES AND 

Next Monday will be the 10th anniversary of something unfortunate happening to Lewis Hamilton: the Mercedes chapter of his storied Formula 1 career getting off to rather a bad start...

After just 15 laps behind the wheel of the W04 challenger Mercedes had produced for 2013 – Hamilton's first season with the Brackley-based squad after departing McLaren – he locked up going into Jerez's Dry Sack hairpin. Hamilton skated across the gravel and went straight into the barriers. He climbed out, the damage relatively minor, but it came just a day after Mercedes had been forced to cut short its running due to an electrical gremlin with Nico Rosberg at the wheel.

Quite the down note on which to start one of F1's most famous success stories. What followed, starting from what was to be a mainly challenging 2013 campaign, were six world titles, 82 wins and 77 poles for Hamilton. For Mercedes itself, the run included eight straight crowns after it vaulted to the front of the F1 pack when the V6 hybrid era rewrote the established formbook from 2014 onwards.

The tale is well known. So too, that Hamilton opted to leave McLaren in part because he was frustrated with its underachievement in a period when Sebastian Vettel and Red Bull had swept away the records the Briton and the team he'd joined aged 13 in 1998 had established when >>







# AMG PETRONAS FORMULA ONE TEAM

## HAMILTON AT MERCEDES BIG STATS

**STARTS** 200

**WINS** 82 (41%)

**POLES** 77 (38.5%)

**FASTEST LAPS** 49 (24.5%)

**TITLES** 6 (60%)

**POINTS** 3492.5



making an instant and instantly impressive full arrival on the F1 scene. This time a decade ago, no one could have predicted precisely how pivotal a decision Hamilton had made when it came to cementing his F1 legend. Mainly because, for all his 21 wins and 2008 world title with McLaren, he simply hadn't yet reached that status.

Famously, in a sport so complex and covered as motorsport, there are many ways to define greatness. But in F1 one such criterion must be winning titles with multiple teams. It's as relative as all the others – for instance, harming Jim Clark's loyalty with Lotus and boosting Juan Manuel Fangio's five titles with four teams in a time when success swung more rapidly from one squad to another. But in the modern era, multi-team champions are restricted to Michael Schumacher and Hamilton. By that definition alone, Hamilton's 10 years at Mercedes can be said to have forged his F1 legend. As ever, things are more complex in F1, but in this case they're all the more impressive too.

Hamilton's first 10 seasons with Mercedes, which were bookended by the tyre-chomping W04 and porpoising-plagued W13, can be said to span four distinct mini-eras.

First, the narrative was all about Hamilton moving on from his upbringing at McLaren. The former de facto Mercedes works team had brought him through the ranks, building his skills with a comprehensive and oft-forgotten testing programme that further elevated his outstanding natural talent. But it piled on the pressure. Hamilton was required to win at every junior level or face being dropped. It worked. He added Formula Renault, Formula 3 and GP2 crowns to his British, European and world titles in karting, and he arrived in F1 with a reputation as a fine racer that was immediately enhanced by his around-the-outside pass on Robert Kubica and Fernando Alonso at the first corner of the 2007 season.

But comments from team supremo Ron Dennis left Hamilton feeling too much like 'just an employee' during his McLaren tenure – let alone the breakout star in the mould of his hero Ayrton Senna that he wished to become. And at the same time, his status as a homegrown driver meant the Hamilton of his early F1 career was too often reliant on McLaren making big calls in races, which can be said to have cost him a stunning rookie title when he slid off on worn tyres in the wet in China 2007. Little wonder that he recalled that moment as understanding "most often, my gut feeling is right" when in similar conditions in Turkey 13 years later, as he opted not to pit for fresh inters and scored a famous win while sealing his seventh title. It showed how far he'd come, the leader he'd grown to become.

Reports from 2013 indicate that Hamilton was as enthusiastic about his new F1 home as anyone embarking on a huge career switch would be expected to be. But he was fully embracing what leaving well-defined surroundings at McLaren could mean – that at Mercedes he was given the freedoms to establish his many outside interests in a way that ran rather contra to the Dennis tight ship at Woking (albeit by then helmed by Martin Whitmarsh, Dennis gone for the first time from McLaren, in part because his relationship with Hamilton had broken down). By 2014 Mercedes insiders were explaining how well Hamilton had begun to put roots down within the squad, his bond with team boss Toto Wolff – who hadn't been involved in signing Hamilton – flourishing. But with the new title pressures from the dawn of the V6 hybrid era, his once close relationship with Rosberg broke down. The next mini-era of Hamilton's Mercedes decade became one that descended into all-out intra-team war at times, with Wolff struggling to calm the waters, all while F1's latest superteam was gathering massive momentum.

Once Rosberg had retired, after giving all he had to beat Hamilton to the crown in 2016, F1 itself changed – the ugly, low-downforce chassis were switched out for the ultra-high-downforce cars in which

*“Comments from team supremo Ron Dennis left Hamilton feeling too much like ‘just an employee’ during his McLaren tenure”*



The launch of the 2013 campaign, with Wolff, Rosberg and Brawn



Mercedes leapt to the front of the pack from the start of the V6 hybrid era in 2014

Hamilton's legend was finally cemented. These rule changes brought Vettel's Ferrari squad into play, while Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo gave Mercedes regular problems from aboard their Red Bulls too. Mercedes' advantage over its opposition shrank in car performance terms, but Hamilton's output went the other way – he saw off Vettel's challenge in 2017, and then stunned him in Ferrari's best chance to end its long title drought in 2018.

While Ferrari in particular eased Hamilton's path in 2019, he was surely at the peak of his powers. When Mercedes' dual-axis-steering-armed W11 restored the team's pace advantage to early V6 hybrid era levels in 2020, Hamilton set records that will likely stand for a generation or more – including F1's fastest-ever pole lap at Monza.

Then came 2021, which demonstrated F1's cyclical nature once again, as the Hamilton-Verstappen title fight for the ages represented the latest instance of a young pretender taking on an established master. Unlike, say, the enigmatic Kimi Raikkonen or wily Fernando Alonso, Hamilton has been rather an ever-changing character in the F1 spotlight. Against Verstappen in 2021, F1 witnessed Hamilton unleash his absolute best at times, while also altering his tried-and-tested post-Rosberg approach of avoiding unnecessary collisions to match Verstappen's ferocity. But for the Abu Dhabi officiating shambles, his efforts would have been rewarded with an eighth world title and previously unknown F1 glory.

Given their F1 stories are now forever intrinsically linked, what >>

better place than the team for which he signed as a 28-year-old to understand how he has evolved within its embrace?

“We all like to think we develop as we go through our careers,” says Andrew Shovlin, Mercedes’ director of trackside engineering. “If you knew what you know today 10 years ago then I think we’d all have been more successful! Lewis, as a driver, puts an awful lot of effort into looking for where that edge is going to come, and a lot of that constant searching for how he can emerge into a new season as an even better driver than the one that we had before is just born out of his love of winning. He doesn’t want to be beaten and he puts an awful lot of effort into that.”

“He’s very engaged with the engineering process now, he’s talking to all [engineering departments] – on the aerodynamics side, vehicle dynamics side. He’s very familiar with all the people within the team and he knows where to go to ask questions and give feedback.”

There’s an interesting subtext to Shovlin’s words. The inference being that when he joined Mercedes, Hamilton was *not* as engaged with its engineering processes. Of course, this is also all relative. The team and its capabilities have grown with its considerable successes and, even back when he joined the team, Hamilton firmly insisted that no one set up his cars for him. Indeed, one of the features of his Rosberg rivalry was Hamilton’s clear frustrations that his team-mate could benefit from seeing his data traces and therefore adapt his own approach accordingly.

Throughout his entire time in F1, Hamilton has made it clear that he’s not a driver who lacks motivation. The painful defeats of his fallow years at McLaren can be seen to have contributed to the relentless way he has racked up wins and titles with Mercedes. And after losing to Rosberg in 2016, particularly given the way circumstances beyond his control contributed to that defeat (see page 24), it is clear to see how Hamilton made it his business to overcome such misfortune. After watching Rosberg gather momentum towards his 2016 title tilt with three walk-off wins at the end of 2015, that memory was recalled when Hamilton made a rapid return to action after contracting COVID-19 in late 2020. In 2015 and 2020 he paid considerable attention towards improving his qualifying results to make life easier come race days, where in any case his racecraft brilliance shone time and again.

“That loss would have been difficult for Lewis and you can go back through that year and say a lot of that was not down to Lewis, it was an unfortunate engine failure at certain times that set him back,” Shovlin says of Hamilton’s focus post-2016.

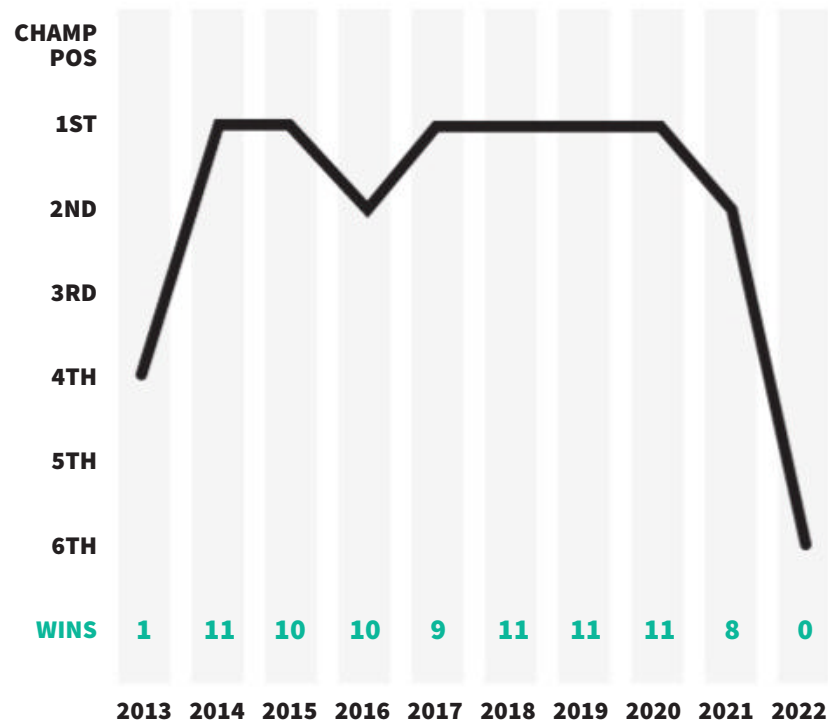
“I think the mechanism by which he is always looking to improve has always been there, the difference is he has realised how much more he can draw out of the team and the people around him to help



Shovlin cites how fully engaged Hamilton has become with all engineering elements

ETHERINGTON

HAMILTON AT MERCEDES YEAR BY YEAR



that learning and that improvement phase. And that’s the thing – that he’s become more and more comfortable and settled within the team, and confident and happy to go and speak to different people about different areas. He’s just drawing more effectively on the resource.

“But, ultimately, if he finds an area that he thinks he’s not good enough at, he just solves it by hard work. The amount of work a driver has to do these days out of the car, the homework – ‘understanding what the tyres are going to do, what do I need to be doing to manage them well, how am I going to get them at the right window in qualifying?’ – that workload is much higher than it’s ever been. And very often you’ll see Lewis as being one of the last drivers, if not the last driver, to leave the paddock. He’s just going round and round, making sure he knows what it is he needs to do.”

Hindsight’s benefit means we can see that the concerns many F1 observers had about Hamilton’s Mercedes switch back in 2012 – for instance “off-track lifestyle impinging on his driving”, as described in the 4 October 2012 issue of Autosport magazine – ended up being very wide of the mark. Ross Brawn, in signing Hamilton at the start of his Mercedes era, was unconcerned and proved very right in the end. These things go together, however. Mercedes had to produce the best car, and in return Hamilton give his top form from his best circumstances.

And it can be said as Hamilton’s 11th Mercedes campaign finally starts rolling in the next few weeks that he has done exactly that. In 10 years at Mercedes, exactly as he set out to, Hamilton has truly become his own person.

At times, Hamilton has even flattered Mercedes, winning with its “diva” W08 and W12 cars of 2017 and 2021, and not wilting against the Vettel/Ferrari and Verstappen/Red Bull challenges of the more recent silver years. Flaws remain such as the odd massive gaffe (think Imola and Baku 2021, or Spa 2022) in his overall brilliant game. These happened early on at McLaren and can even be said to be increasing in frequency again, suggesting F1 is now witnessing Hamilton returning from his ‘peak’ years. Plus, Hamilton retains something of a mercurial streak – he insisted in one press conference that he has a poor memory, yet recalled the specifics of radio messages and certain car upgrades in another. At Singapore last year, he went out of his way to explain that it wasn’t in the city state that he’d decided to join Mercedes after his McLaren gearbox failed in 2012, but rather while “sitting in Thailand in a very peaceful place and it really came to me that I was going to take this leap”, having been approached by Brawn and former non-executive Mercedes chairman Niki Lauda. The narrative, for some reason, needed clarifying.

For now, in anticipation of the W14’s unveiling at Silverstone in two weeks’ time, F1 is about to see exactly what 10 years at Mercedes has made Hamilton in terms of resilience. The generation-bridging battle with Verstappen didn’t last into a second consecutive season >>



Hamilton's relationship with the team deepened after sting of being title runner-up in 2016

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Engine failures – this is Malaysia – contributed to loss to Rosberg, inspiring a renewed focus



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thanks to the W13's various deficiencies last year, although it was clear in Brazil that, given one chance to really race each other, things haven't moved on for either from 2021.

Hamilton admitted late in 2022 that he'd not been driving at his previous best level, but insisted that was in part due to having to focus his efforts into addressing the problems baked into Mercedes' first ground-effects car and, in his words, "geeing people up" at his team to make the required gains. Given his latest Mercedes team-mate George Russell made the W13 a winner, these efforts were rewarded as part of the typical team-driver entanglement F1 has long been about.

Something that Hamilton has been unsettled by all through his career – braking instability stealing confidence to hang onto the oversteer he and few others can really handle – certainly occurred in 2022. Taking all that into account, his season high points (Paul Ricard, Zandvoort, Austin and Mexico City) were all the more impressive, even if they didn't produce Russell's glittering result, and Hamilton went winless for the first time at Mercedes and in F1 overall.

By now, Mercedes knows what it has in Hamilton the driver. But what of the championship's many fans and Hamilton the superstar?

His story, compared with many of his well-funded and well-connected peers, is truly compelling. Hamilton remains F1's only black driver and came from a humble background to dominate what in so many ways is an 'elite' sport. That alone is impressive. Add in his wild and fast driving style – one not as evident during his Mercedes



Seventh title  
clinched at 2020  
Turkish Grand Prix



Much of Hamilton's 2022  
focus directed at trying  
to fix the W13's issues

*“It is going to be really, really hard when I stop racing. I have been doing it for 30 years. When you stop, what is going to match that?”*

chapters as it was in his McLaren days with lighter cars running robust rubber – and it's clear why he's popular. The magnitude of that reach is seriously impressive too, with Hamilton possessing a network on Instagram alone that can reach a billion people. And it's worth considering how his story has flourished through the social media age compared to the champions who came before – winning Hamilton new fans while also exposing him and them to the toxic elements from other partisan camps. He has exploited social media's power to connect with people directly, and it has given him confidence to address narratives he feels he must for whatever aim.

All in all, Hamilton is F1's only true megastar – as comfortable in the cockpit as in the company of chat show hosts or royalty, while working on fashion lines, music as XNDA, and building a team ownership portfolio in and out of motorsport (including part-ownership of NFL team the Denver Broncos). He's charming too, while remaining wary of media scrutiny and ready to rebuff it at will, sometimes with jarring narrative shifts. Hamilton knows and understands his messages and their power to inspire, which has taken on a whole new meaning at Mercedes. He's banished the days where he made ill-thought-out references to Ali G in the context of sporting penalties or published McLaren's Spa 2012 qualifying data readout on Twitter. Hamilton has used his platforms to champion many social and environmental causes, and has established his Hamilton Commission and Mission 44 initiatives with his own funding. Only explained by our horribly polarised current world, to some Hamilton is a hypocrite for being a successful racing driver highlighting society's ills. But in a purely narrative-considering way, he's all the more interesting for it. In terms of morality, it's inspirational. In 2020, he admitted to Autosport that having the repeated conversations to make real change could be “energy-sapping”, but he admirably shows no signs of stopping.

Mercedes deserves enormous credit for how it has allowed and assisted Hamilton to become his true (three-pointed) star. It won't be forgotten how grateful the now-38-year-old was that the team, with the colossal corporate structure of its manufacturer backing in consideration, painted its cars black in 2020 and 2021 to highlight his desire to improve diversity in motorsport at a time when the world was reeling from the COVID pandemic. In fact, it's clear that he has concerns about leaving his now-well-established Mercedes home and F1 overall.

“It is going to be really, really hard when I stop racing,” Hamilton said recently on the *On Purpose* podcast. “I have been doing it for 30 years. When you stop, what is going to match that? Nothing is going to match being in a stadium, being at a race, being at the pinnacle of the sport and being at the front of the grid or coming through the grid and the emotion I get with that. When I do stop there will be a big hole, so I am trying to focus and find things that can replace that and be just as rewarding.”

That point is a way off yet, with Hamilton saying late last year that he planned to sign a “multi-year deal” with Mercedes. Wolff reckons that will be done when he's back from the off-season relief of holidays and then training ahead of the final year of his current contract, “physically being back in Europe, sticking our heads together, wrestling a bit and then leaving the room with white smoke after a few hours”. That's quite a change from 2012, when Hamilton's then-management company XIX Entertainment contacted Red Bull and Ferrari on his behalf only to be rebuffed. Now, he negotiates his own contracts.

There will be at least one more Mercedes mini-era to come for Hamilton. Given all that has already been established, it will be compelling – for him and for us. ✨

➔ P24 HAMILTON'S MERCEDES SEASONS RANKED

# RANKING HAMILTON'S MERCEDES SEASONS

*It's been a remarkable decade for Lewis Hamilton at the Silver Arrows. Here's how we think his campaigns stack up*

KEVIN TURNER



HONE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY



10

2013

## Promising start to a new era

Many questioned the wisdom of Hamilton's move from McLaren to Mercedes, but it quickly looked good when Mercedes produced the second-fastest car of 2013 and the 'other' silver team fell back.

Hamilton narrowly got the better of new team-mate Nico Rosberg and

took five pole positions, but the W04 voraciously devoured rubber. Hamilton was not always on top of tyre management with the soft Pirellis, something that he became a master of in subsequent years, and dramatically lost the British Grand Prix thanks to a tyre blowout.

Championship position (pts)	4th (189)
Wins	1
Poles	5

He didn't always like the feel of the brakes during his first Mercedes year either, but victory at the Hungaroring in late July and fourth in the drivers' standings (the same as in his final McLaren year), albeit well behind a rampant Sebastian Vettel at Red Bull, wasn't a bad start.

\*7.47 average score

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	3rd
Autosport Top 50 position	7th
Number of Autosport 10/10s	2*

### HIGHLIGHT Hungarian GP

Against even his own expectations, Hamilton won from pole despite a baking track. The W04 didn't destroy its tyres as anticipated and Hamilton did the rest, nailing crucial passes when required to score his first win for Mercedes by 10.9 seconds.

9

2022

## Fighting to fix the broken Silver Arrow

Yes, he got outscored by new team-mate George Russell and had his first winless campaign in F1, but Hamilton's 2022 wasn't as bad as many tried to make out.

With more experience than Russell, Hamilton led the way on trying to sort the W13's major problems and experimented with wild and varied set-ups, which compromised some of his weekends.

Despite that, he edged the qualifying battle with Russell and tended to be the quicker Merc driver on the car's better days, Brazil weekend aside.

Hamilton's peaks were still high – sublime drives in France, Mexico and the United States demonstrated he remained one of the few drivers capable of worrying Max Verstappen – although even the man himself conceded that perhaps he might

not have been quite as consistent as in previous years.

### HIGHLIGHT Dutch GP

The race that got away from Hamilton came at Zandvoort. The W13s came alive running long on the medium tyres and Hamilton might have beaten Verstappen had the safety car not arrived and ruined his chance.

\*7.73 average score

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	3rd
Autosport Top 50 position	4th
Number of Autosport 10/10s	1*



HONE



8

2016

## Hamilton's last missed opportunity

This is the one that, in part, Hamilton let slip through his fingers. Nico Rosberg managed to continue the momentum he had at the end of 2015, when he'd won the last three races, to take the first four GPs. Then the duo crashed on the opening lap in Spain.

Hamilton suffered more than his fair share of reliability problems, most spectacularly while leading in Malaysia, but Rosberg won fair and square in the crucial Japanese GP and Hamilton also gave away points with some poor getaways. The Italian GP was a prime example: Hamilton outqualified Rosberg by 0.5s but fell to sixth at the start and could

only recover to second, behind his team-mate.

Despite controlling the Abu Dhabi finale and backing Rosberg into the pack, Hamilton lost the title by five points. Rosberg then retired, giving Hamilton no chance for revenge, but the 2016 defeat spurred him on to leave no stone unturned in future.

**HIGHLIGHT Brazilian GP**

Everyone remembers Max Verstappen's charging drive – and dramatic save – in the very wet Interlagos race, but Hamilton always looked in control. He kept the pressure on title rival Rosberg with a dominant drive and led every lap.

Championship position (pts)	2nd (380)
Wins	10
Poles	12

\*8.24 average score

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	2nd
Autosport Top 50 position	2nd
Number of Autosport 10/10s	3*



Hamilton leads  
Rosberg on way to  
sublime Brazilian win

7

2014

## Beating Rosberg to the crown

Mercedes moved miles ahead of the opposition in the first year of F1's turbo-hybrid era – its whopping 0.881% raw pace advantage was a throwback to the 1990s – so Hamilton only really had to worry about team-mate Nico Rosberg.

Hamilton duly came out on top but was perhaps less convincing than might have been expected.

Rosberg's qualifying pace was stronger, forcing a few Hamilton errors, especially in the first half of the season. And although the #44 car was usually stronger on race day, the title fight went down to the Abu Dhabi finale.

Hamilton won that ridiculous double-points race, to make it 11-5 on wins against Rosberg and take

Championship position (pts)	1st (384)
Wins	11
Poles	7

\*8.79 average score

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	2nd
Autosport Top 50 position	2nd
Number of Autosport 10/10s	4*

the title by 67 points, but he was still some way from his peak.

**HIGHLIGHT Bahrain GP**

This race was one of those days when Rosberg had a pace advantage. But Hamilton beat his team-mate by showing his wheel-to-wheel prowess in a riveting late duel that resulted in victory by a mere second.



6

2015

## Underlining the new dominance

Championship position (pts)	1st (381)
Wins	10
Poles	11

\*8.37 average score

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	5*

His winning margin was slightly smaller at 59 points, but Hamilton's second Mercedes title was better than his first. There were fewer errors and this time Hamilton got the better of Nico Rosberg in qualifying, taking 11 poles from the first 12 races.

Once again, Mercedes' power advantage helped it lead the pack, although a reinvigorated Ferrari and Sebastian Vettel sometimes posed a threat. The Silver Arrows won 16 of the 19 races, with Hamilton beating Rosberg 10-6. That score stood at 10-3 when Hamilton clinched the crown in the United States GP.

The main criticism of Hamilton's

2015 campaign is that he allowed Rosberg to gain the initiative in the closing stages, the German taking six straight poles and three consecutive victories to get a real boost heading into the winter break.

**HIGHLIGHT Bahrain GP**

Ferrari was on form, Vettel qualifying second ahead of Rosberg, who then got embroiled in a fight with the red machines of Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen. Both W06s had brake issues late on, giving a charging Raikkonen a chance, but poleman Hamilton held his nerve to beat the Finn by 3.4s.

5

2021

### Fight against the odds dashed



Charge in Brazil kept title hopes alive

MAUGER

\*8.14 average score

Championship position (pts)	2nd (387.5)
Wins	8
Poles	5

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	2*

A rules tweak hurt Mercedes and handed Red Bull a small advantage. Hamilton superbly managed to win the Bahrain opener against Max Verstappen, starting a duel that would last until 2021's final lap.

Red Bull and Verstappen had the edge more often than not and Hamilton also made mistakes, notably with offs at Imola and Baku. But a combination of Hamilton brilliance elsewhere, some clashes and Red Bull misfortune kept things tight at the top of the table.

Mercedes came on strong over the final four races and Hamilton looked set to steal an unlikely eighth title with victory in the Abu Dhabi finale. A late safety car and Red Bull tyre change put things in doubt, then

a bizarre call from race control to allow only the cars between the two to unlap themselves set up a last-lap fight that he could never have won.

Hamilton's reign had finally come to an end, but either protagonist would have been a worthy champion and Mercedes extended its run of constructors' crowns to eight.

**HIGHLIGHT Sao Paulo GP**

A dominant pole became a back-of-the-grid start thanks to a DRS technical infringement, setting the scene for an overtaking masterclass. Hamilton charged from 20th to fifth in the sprint, then from 10th (due to an engine-change penalty) to win the GP, avoiding a wayward Verstappen along the way.

4

2017

### The start of peak Hamilton?

The W08 was described as a 'diva', tricky to get into its optimum set-up window. Hamilton struggled a little in the early part of the season and Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel built a small points lead. But Hamilton dug deep, raising his game as the battle wore on.

As Mercedes also got more on top of its car, Ferrari started to hit trouble and Hamilton didn't give points away like Vettel did. After driving into the Mercedes behind the safety car in

Azerbaijan and picking up a penalty, Vettel then gifted Hamilton an unlikely win from fifth on the grid when, from pole, he triggered a multi-car crash at the start in Singapore. That extended Hamilton's lead from three to 28 points and he clinched the crown at the Mexican GP, with two rounds still to go.

Hamilton's final winning margin of 46 points, and his 11 poles from 20 races, did not reflect how close

the championship could – or perhaps should – have been.

**HIGHLIGHT Belgian GP**

Ferrari was fast at Spa, Vettel harassing poleman Hamilton from the start. The German's best chance came at a safety car restart, but Hamilton used 90% throttle at a key moment to stymie the Ferrari's run. He held on to win while the Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas came home fifth.

\*8.70 average score

Championship position (pts)	1st (363)
Wins	9
Poles	11

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	5*



HONE

3

2019

### Too consistently strong for rivals

Mercedes' raw pace advantage was small (0.149%) and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc took more poles, but you wouldn't have guessed either given the results. Hamilton won more than half the races, having finished first or second in the first eight GPs, and beat team-mate Valtteri Bottas by 87 points to take his sixth title.

Ferrari and Red Bull had their moments and many of the races were close, particularly in the second half of the season, but neither could match the consistency of Hamilton and the W10 – and had given themselves too much work to do following the first part of the year.

Hamilton's constant striving for self-improvement was demonstrated when he identified qualifying as a weakness to work on (he scored 'only' five poles), but his performances on Sundays had been another example of making a good car look even better.

**HIGHLIGHT Monaco GP**

Hamilton was forced to rely on his tyre whispering when Mercedes gave him a 67-lap stint on medium tyres, with Max Verstappen chasing on harder rubber. Hamilton stayed in control and avoided disaster when the Red Bull's bold attack came.

\*8.48 average score

Championship position (pts)	1st (413)
Wins	11
Poles	5

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	3*



ETHERINGTON

Holding on at Monaco as his tyres wilt

2

2020

## Maximising Merc's greatest car

Stung by Ferrari's pace in 2019, Mercedes pushed the boat out and produced arguably the greatest car in its history for 2020. Complete with its controversial dual-axis system and helped by Ferrari's fall from grace after an engine rules 'clarification', the W11 dominated the COVID-delayed campaign.

In terms of raw pace, Valtteri Bottas got close to Hamilton but in the races the Briton usually had a decisive advantage. The result was 11 wins from 15 races before Hamilton missed the Sakhir GP with COVID. His final winning margin of 124 points is Hamilton's biggest, despite Mercedes stopping

development on the car early.

Along the way, Hamilton managed one of the great qualifying laps at Spa, beating Bottas by half a second, and set the fastest pole in world championship history at Monza (164mph) in what currently stands as the quickest F1 car of all time.

### HIGHLIGHT Turkish GP

On a rare day when the W11 wasn't the class of the field and a number of drivers could have won, Hamilton made the difference. While others, including Max Verstappen, made mistakes, Hamilton bided his time, stuck to his worn intermediates and won the rain-affected race by 31.6s.

\*8.81 average score

Championship position (pts)	1st (347)
Wins	11
Poles	10

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	6*



We reckon Hamilton's 2018 season was his best. Let us know what you think

1

2018

## Making the difference against Ferrari

Jim Clark in 1965, Jackie Stewart in 1973, Alain Prost in 1986. Hamilton's finest season stands comparison with the greatest in F1 history as he was consistently superb while battling a strong Ferrari challenge. The only thing that beats Hamilton's 2020 domination in a brilliant car is his comfortable 2018 title in a machine that wasn't the best for a significant portion of the year.

Ferrari and Sebastian Vettel started

the season with two wins and the advantage swung back and forth across the first 10 races. When Vettel took pole for the German GP he was eight points ahead, but he slid out of the lead in tricky conditions as Hamilton charged to victory from 14th. Hamilton then took advantage of rain on Saturday in Hungary to snare pole and win, despite the Ferraris appearing quicker in the dry.

A fantastic victory in Italy and a

qualifying lap in Singapore that stunned even Mercedes meant that, by the time the W09 had been developed to stamp its authority over the SF71H, Hamilton was already in command of the championship. The result was that he ultimately beat Vettel by a massive 88 points.

To underline Hamilton's outstanding campaign, team-mate Valtteri Bottas was fifth in the standings. In every other season

alongside Hamilton the Finn was second or third...

### HIGHLIGHT Italian GP

His win from 14th in Germany is more famous, but the relentless Monza drive was even better, Hamilton successfully going wheel to wheel with both Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen on a day when Ferrari had locked out the front row for its home race.

\*8.76 average score

Championship position (pts)	1st (408)
Wins	11
Poles	11

Autosport F1 Top 10 position	1st
Autosport Top 50 position	1st
Number of Autosport 10/10s	5*



# WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2023

*There's a lot happening this season, so here are the highlights Autosport staffers are getting excited about...*

FELIX BERGER/UNSPLASH

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport IMAGES

## P66 NATIONAL RACING'S 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



BINGHAM



SUTTON



**Kevin Turner**

### A REAL F1 TITLE FIGHT

The 2022 Formula 1 season had lots to recommend it. The new ground-effects cars allowed some fine racing, Ferrari started winning again, and there was plenty of midfield (and off-track!) battling. What it lacked was a sustained title fight as Red Bull and Max Verstappen romped away with things.

It's likely that this combination will be the one to beat again, but Mercedes should be more of a contender after a misstep with its W13. George Russell is now a grand prix winner, and Lewis Hamilton is still motivated after his unsatisfactory defeat in the 2021 Abu Dhabi finale. A three-way fight between the current champion, past master and rising star could be superb, and that's before we get on to Ferrari. The legendary Italian squad proved it could produce a good car in 2022, but questions remain over its ability to get the most out of its machinery. It will be interesting to see what new boss Fred Vasseur can do to help Charles Leclerc get into the title fight.

Beyond that, we have three rookies, including the exciting Oscar Piastri alongside Lando Norris at McLaren, potential fireworks at Alpine between Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon, and Fernando Alonso joining Lawrence Stroll's Aston Martin.

There's bound to be arguments about cost caps, and it would be nice if F1 was a little more welcoming to teams trying to join the party, but hopefully the on-track action will push such considerations into the background in 2023.



**Jake  
Boxall-Legge**

## A TRIP TO THE STATES FOR GEN3

Now that Formula E has pencilled in a race for the Glastonbury weekend, the priorities have shifted. Thanks to the browser-juggling dexterity of my friend Nathan, I'd managed to secure an elusive ticket for the mud-suffused music festival, but I'll have to throw that back into the pool. Instead, a trip to Portland awaits.

Only a race in the United States could have sweetened the pill, and it'll be an interesting experiment into whether Formula E can expand its aura in North America on an IndyCar circuit. Of course, it's sad that we're not going to New York City or Seoul this year, but the door's open for them to return after their renovations.

Otherwise, I'm looking forward to seeing what surprises Gen3 has in store; Porsche had a quiet Valencia test, but was suddenly the team to beat in the Mexico opener, while DS Penske and Maserati MSG suffered the reverse. With the strength in depth among the drivers on this year's grid it's going to be a fascinating year, and we can but hope that the new rules don't make the 2022-23 season one-way traffic like Formula 1's rules reset did.

Many in the paddock predicted an ebb and flow to the season as the teams and manufacturers progress at different rates, and it looks set to provide a thrilling, back-and-forth narrative to the year.



SBLOXHAM



JEP



**James  
Newbold**

## A CLASSIC LE MANS TO CELEBRATE A CENTURY

Rebellion, BR Engineering, Alpine and Glickenhaus have done their best to get on terms with Toyota in the World Endurance Championship in recent years, with Alpine even taking the title down to the wire last year. But at the biggest event of them all, the Le Mans 24 Hours, Toyota has not been beaten since 2017. In four of the past five editions, the Japanese cars have finished 1-2.

This year, as Le Mans celebrates the 100th anniversary of its first 24 Hours in 1923, the influx of manufacturers into the top class will make for a much sterner test. Peugeot gave us a taster of the 9X8's potential in last year's Bahrain WEC round by splitting the Toyotas in qualifying, and it will be a real treat to see the French cars going up against the Ferrari 499P, plus factory LMDh machinery from Porsche and Cadillac, which plans to enter additional cars from its IMSA roster to the sole Chip Ganassi-run WEC entry.

There will be strength in depth too in the form of customer Porsche squads Jota and Proton. Factor in garage entries from Glickenhaus — polesitter at Monza last year — and the ByKolles Vanwall, with a certain Jacques Villeneuve back at Le Mans 15 years after his last appearance with Peugeot, and we have all the ingredients needed to celebrate the centenary in style. If Toyota comes out on top once again, nobody can say it wasn't earned.



Haydn Cobb

## CAN ROVANPERA KEEP HIS CROWN?

The opening round of this year's World Rally Championship is already in the books and, politely ignoring a historic Monte masterclass by now part-timer Sebastien Ogier, reigning champion Kalle Rovanpera 'leads' the early standings by finishing runner-up in the opener. Now it's up to Thierry Neuville, Elfyn Evans, Ott Tanak and co to chase down Rovanpera in what will be a monumental title battle between the top dogs of rallying.

Rovanpera remains strong favourite to defend his WRC crown in the early pacesetter and updated Toyota GR Yaris, demonstrated at Monte Carlo where the Finn was the only one who could get within reach of Ogier, but there's hope that Evans can rediscover his 2020-21 form to forge a title fight after being delayed by a puncture in the opening round. Tanak back at M-Sport is a potent combination, while a resurgent Hyundai led by Neuville cannot be ruled out. And both Tanak and Neuville had seriously strong ends to 2022 when team-mates at the South Korean manufacturer.

The 2023 WRC calendar is also a delightful assortment of rallying's iconic and emerging events; from the snow of Sweden and the wilderness of Kenya to rally-mad nations such as Estonia and Finland, there's a little bit of everything to excite fans. The legendary locations, the most cutting-edge rally cars in history and the expectant title fighters – plus potential cameos from the Sebs Ogier and Loeb. What's not to love?



VUCKOVIC/REDBULL CONTENT POOL



DUNBAR



Megan White

## F1 SUPPORTS AT MELBOURNE AND MONACO

Formula 2 and 3 will venture to pastures new this season, with both series racing at Melbourne's Albert Park for the first time to support April's Australian Grand Prix.

Despite the logistical challenges it presents, teams welcomed the announcement with open arms, Prema Racing team principal Rene Rosin telling Autosport it was "very good news, it's an amazing opportunity from my point of view".

The move is further evidence of the boom in popularity that F2 and F3 have enjoyed in recent years, and CEO Bruno Michel says they are in the best shape they have been for some time. Both series have featured a number of Antipodean drivers in recent years – 2021 F2 champion Oscar Piastri, Alpine Academy member Jack Doohan and Red Bull reserve Liam Lawson among them – and the Australian round presents a prime opportunity for the series to garner more fans and sponsors.

F3 will also race alongside F2 in Monaco, its first visit to the principality in its modern era. The last time an equivalent series raced there was GP3 in 2012, but it was a mainstay of the grand prix weekend from 1964, when Jackie Stewart won, to the 1990s. Other F3 winners in Monaco include Lewis Hamilton, Alain Prost and Ronnie Peterson.

Watching a packed F3 grid attempt to navigate its way around Monaco will certainly make for interesting viewing.



GALSTAD

GALSTAD



Charles Bradley

## BMW AND PORSCHE REKINDLE WILD IMSA GTP RIVALRY

The last time that the GTP class was a thing in IMSA, BMW and Porsche were two big players with very different fortunes. Porsche revamped its super-successful 956 into the 962 model for IMSA Grand Touring Prototype competition. It led on its debut in the 1984 Daytona 24 Hours, and went on to become one of the longest-enduring sportscars in US racing history, scoring a hat-trick of titles from 1985-87.

In contrast, BMW's rival offering was a McLaren NA-run March 86G chassis boasting a version of its four-cylinder Formula 1 turbo engine of the time. In qualifying trim, the car produced 1400bhp and was capable of north of 220mph. It proved horrendously unreliable and worryingly crash prone. An unlikely win at Watkins Glen in 1986 wasn't enough to save the programme, which was one and done.

Fast-forward to 2023 and BMW has the chance to redeem itself in GTP v2.0 with its M Hybrid V8 – run by one of its brave drivers in 1986, Bobby Rahal (who was very lucky to survive being sent into orbit in one at Sebring). The new BMW has taken every inch afforded in the new rules' styling and looks just as sensational, even standing still, as its predecessor. Porsche, meantime, has very deliberately named its new car the 963. By turning to Roger Penske's team, this is a factory-blessed bid to reclaim past glories.

Seeing them in action in the Daytona 24 Hours was just the start of a new era, so sit back and enjoy this rebooted classic!



David Malsher-Lopez

## MCLAREN TO CHALLENGE INDYCAR'S GIANTS

The battle between Team Penske and Chip Ganassi Racing for pre-eminence in IndyCar racing is one that has endured for over 20 years, and not since 2012 has any other team produced the series champion. A decade ago we talked in terms of there being a Big Three in IndyCar, but you wouldn't dream of saying that now because Andretti Autosport has slipped. Last year, the top six places in the championship were occupied by Penske and Ganassi drivers; Andretti's highest were ninth and 10th.

For now, the team most likely to turn the Big Two back into a Big Three is Arrow McLaren, which has increased its chances of race wins by expanding to three full-time entries, and hiring Alexander Rossi to join Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist. Will employing another proven race winner play a major part in elevating McLaren's status? Think what they're up against. The stunningly fast Will Power, now psychologically 'off the leash' having taken his second championship, Josef Newgarden, Scott Dixon and Alex Palou – potential winners on any track on any weekend; a still improving but already excellent Scott McLaughlin, the redoubtable Marcus Ericsson, the unknown quantity that is Marcus Armstrong, and a brilliant oval racer in Takuma Sato.

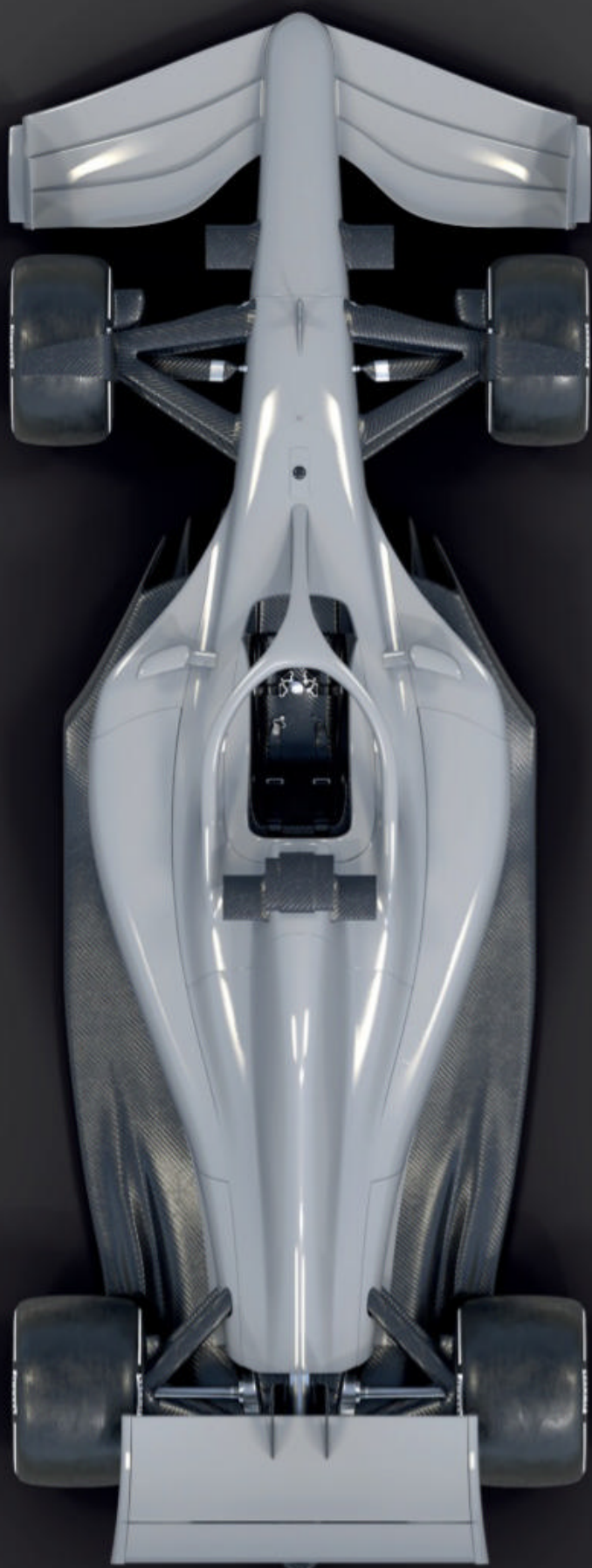
Can any of the McLaren drivers beat that galaxy of stars – and Colton Herta – enough times to take the title to fight to the final round? That's what's going to be fun to watch.



ABBOTT

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**Lewis  
Duncan**

## THE RISE OF THE 'OTHER' MARQUEZ

While there are many storylines coming up in MotoGP 2023 that will be worth paying attention to – not least with the series undergoing its biggest format change ever with the introduction of sprint races – it is the exploits of a Marquez that interests me the most.

And it's not the one you think either. Alex Marquez has long lived in the shadow of his MotoGP legend brother Marc; inevitable, but unfair when you consider that he is a double world champion in the junior ranks (just like his brother) and was the only Honda rider in 2020 in his rookie year to get on the podium, doing so twice.

His move to LCR for 2021 and 2022 failed to build on that form as the Honda proved to be an immensely difficult bike. Frustrated by this situation, the younger Marquez brother elected to sign for Gresini Racing to ride a satellite Ducati for 2023.

Although not factory-backed, Marquez will ride the GP22 Ducati that Francesco Bagnaia took to the title last season. Based on the form of his Gresini predecessor Enea Bastianini at the start of 2022 on a one-year-old Ducati, Marquez should be quick straight out of the gates.

After his first test on the bike last November at Valencia, he was contractually bound from comparing the Ducati and the Honda. But he did note he "immediately felt at home" on the Ducati – while his brother derided Honda's 2023 prototype. All signs point to a breakout year for Alex Marquez.



K SUTTON





GOLD AND GOOSE



GOLD AND GOOSE

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**Marcus Simmons**

**AFFORDABLE FIRST STEPS – A MOTORSPORT PIPE DREAM?**

The British Touring Car Championship is going to have a cracking season as we see whether Tom Ingram can make it two titles in a row, or his main 2022 rivals Ash Sutton, Jake Hill and Colin Turkington – or anyone else – can prise the crown away.

But there's no point banging on here about the 30 exciting and closely contested races I'll be covering for Autosport. Here, after all, is a series with well-drafted rules, efficiently run and with the capacity to evolve and tweak to suit any given situation.

Instead, what I'm looking forward to is someone in authority – and let's start with the FIA – getting realistic about the outrageous costs of starting out on the professional career ladder in motorsport. Recently we have seen the demise of Germany's Formula 4 series as more and more of that nation's drivers transfer direct from karting to GTs. Nyck de Vries is facing a lawsuit because of a massive loan he had to take out in his F2 days. Yet cast your mind back to the 1970s – the Geoff Lees autobiography we reviewed last week details how a humble motor mechanic was able to win three Formula Ford titles in one year.

There used to be a theory that drivers switching to GT, prototypes or touring cars would be better prepared for that crossover the further they went in single-seaters. But now their lumbering weaponry is almost as heavy as a tin-top, and testing is massively restricted... I'm going to dream that this is tackled in 2023, while I enjoy watching the BTCC.



Testing ban turned potential WRC dominator into a museum piece

## TOYOTA'S WORLD-BEATER THAT NEVER GOT ITS CHANCE

*Not content with already having one of the world's top rally cars, Toyota dreamed big in 2020, only for COVID to stop the project in its tracks*

TOM HOWARD

“ |

It was probably a good thing for the World Rally Championship that this car never came to be.” That’s quite a statement from Toyota’s WRC technical director Tom Fowler, but he’s most probably correct.

Fowler is referring to an abandoned project that appeared likely to dominate the WRC in 2021, potentially blowing rivals Hyundai and M-Sport Ford completely out of the water. Its creators are adamant that it was much faster than its predecessor, an ominous thought given Toyota had romped to nine wins from 12 events with its old car in 2021. Of course, we will never truly know how good the ultimate Toyota GR Yaris WRC would have been, because the COVID pandemic effectively killed it without a competitive rally under its belt.

Was the rallying world cruelly denied the chance to see a

true masterpiece of engineering, or was the WRC lucky to avoid such dominance? Either way, the story of this GR Yaris WRC is a curious one.

Despite the impending move towards Rally1 hybrid regulations for 2022, Toyota elected to push its resources into homologating a completely new car for the 2021 season – the final year of the popular 2017 WRC regulations that had already spawned modern day ‘Group B’ beasts.

Buoyed by the launch of its all-new GR Yaris road car, the platform was there for one last hurrah, pooling everything Toyota had learned from its previous Yaris into creating the perfect WRC machine. But let’s remember, the original Yaris WRC wasn’t exactly slow by any means. Launched in 2017, the car scored two wins in its debut season in Sweden



The car that Toyota had to 'make do' with in 2021 won nine out of 12 rallies



(Jari-Matti Latvala) and Finland (Esapekka Lappi). Five wins had followed in 2018 thanks to Ott Tanak (Argentina, Finland, Germany and Turkey) and Latvala (Australia) as Toyota scooped the manufacturers' crown in only the second year of its much-heralded WRC return.

Tanak secured the drivers' title in 2019, a feat repeated by new signing Sebastien Ogier in the COVID-shortened 2020 campaign. There was seemingly no shortage of speed required to beat the opposition, or need for a new car. But Toyota wanted more.

Its engineers spent a year and a half working on a 'Yaris Greatest Hits' project. What eventuated is a spectacular-looking GR Yaris WRC that now has pride of place in the foyer of Toyota's Jyvaskyla factory in Finland, having never turned a wheel in anger.

This is because after initial testing in 2020, the plan came to a

grinding halt as the effects of the coronavirus pandemic hit home. A testing ban was imposed on the teams in April 2020 that ultimately ended Toyota's dream, ensuring it wouldn't be possible to ready the car in time for the January 2021 season-opening Monte Carlo Rally.

Regardless, Toyota still dominated the campaign. As he had the year before, Ogier came out on top in a head-to-head duel with team-mate Elfyn Evans and Toyota's rivals were left to feed from scraps. But sitting in its factory, furnished with the most Finnish

*“Have you seen the aero on this thing? It is incredible. It was a very disappointing situation”*

of things, a sauna, is a WRC car on steroids that was significantly faster than the previous generation Yaris WRC. Fowler calls it “an incredible thing”.

“This car is unbelievable,” he says. “It is a WRC regulation car but built from the GR Yaris, so it is built to the same regulations as our 2017 Yaris. To make a completely new homologation of a completely new car in the middle of that was not really feasible.

“If you recall back to mid-2020, there was a complete test ban in WRC and at that point we had driven the car for four days. Then the ban came and we were supposed to be introducing that in a matter of months after that. It became very complicated, but after those four days it was already faster than the Yaris.

“Have you seen the aero on this thing? It is incredible. It was a very disappointing situation.” >>



GR Yaris WRC's steroidal aero took a leap forward in the modern day 'Group B' concept

TOM HOWARD

## TOYOTA'S OTHER ABANDONED WRC PROJECT

The World Rally Championship's Group B era was at its height in the mid-1980s. But by 1985, one year before its collapse, plans were emerging to try to rein in the speed of these cars. FISA, the global motorsport governing body of the time, imposed restrictions on aerodynamics to reduce cornering speed for its tweaked set of rules for 1986.

But this was just the start of a more significant movement, led by FISA president Jean-Marie Balestre, as a new set of regulations to be known as Group S

was drawn up.

These rules were effectively a duplicate of Group B, but with an emphasis on limiting horsepower. To appease manufacturers concerned by the financial burden of

**“ENGINEERS ELECTED TO TURN THE MR2 INTO A 4WD MID-ENGINE RALLY CAR”**

having to produce 200 cars in order to homologate a rally car, the new rules would require only 10 to be built. Set to be introduced in 1988, Group S was, in a

nutshell, a rally prototype ruleset that would allow marques to continue to showcase the lightweight, exotic aerodynamic innovations displayed in Group B, albeit with some power restrictions.

Among the makes to sign up was Toyota. In 1984 it set about transforming its recently launched MR2 roadster into a rally car. Toyota had been competing in Group B with a rear-wheel-drive Celica, but for this new Group S weapon the marque's engineers elected to turn the MR2 into a four-wheel-drive, mid-engined rally car known as 222D. It is said

that it would be capable of producing more than 700bhp and weigh 750kg.

The first prototype was built in 1985 and featured significantly beefed-up bodywork compared to the standard MR2. Its testing and development phase was well under way, but the 222D would never reach the WRC.

Following the deaths of Lancia's Henri Toivonen and co-driver Sergio Cresto on the 1986 Tour de Corse, FISA moved to ban Group B and subsequently scrap its plans for Group S. In 1987 the WRC was for much milder Group A cars, restricted to 300bhp.

The 222D is therefore one of several Group S cars that never competed.

Toyota's focus turned back to the Celica GT-Four ST165 and its ST185 successor. Both would become forces in their own right, guiding Carlos Sainz to world titles in 1990 and 1992 before Juha Kankkunen and Didier Auriol continued the Celica's success with crowns in 1993 and 1994 respectively.

As for the 222D, it is thought that only two examples remain. One is housed at Toyota's motorsport facility in Cologne, while the other is in Japan.

Indeed, the GR Yaris WRC is eye-catching from every angle. It's pretty clear to see the areas where Toyota's ingenuity was deployed. With the 2017 WRC regulations came a heavy focus on aerodynamics as cars sprouted appendages designed to create downforce, while still being slippery through the air. The current Rally1 regulations have clamped down on that area, with aero reduced by 15% today. But the unused GR Yaris WRC shows what could have been had teams maxed out the capabilities in the aero department.

The car features much wider and more prominent dive planes at the front. This concept is extended to the wheel arches, where the side lip has been widened and designed to channel air to an all-new striking rear wing. Also at the rear is a new diffuser and modified fenders. Altogether, it creates quite a sight.

*“I had a dream that we went to the first test and there were six reverse gears and one forward”*

It's easy to understand Fowler's disappointment that the car never turned a wheel in competition, as a tremendous amount of hours by a team of people went into what is now effectively a show car in a workshop foyer. An untested potential world-beater reduced to a vision of what could have been.

“Unless you've done it, it's really difficult to understand what it takes to make any competition car,” Fowler adds. “To create a WRC car, the team effort that goes into it, it's a huge amount of work. It's one and a half years of every single day doing more than a working day every day.

“In one and a half years, every single component of a new car has to be designed, manufactured, delivered, assembled, tested, and not work properly and designed again potentially until it then goes to a rally and is ‘scrutinized’ by the media.

“When we go to the rally, everyone is interested if something has fallen off or something broke. That thing you're scrutinising is someone's one year of their lives. The reality is you can't be involved in this unless it's your life. You can be waking up in the middle of the night and thinking that you can do that better and then in the morning try to remember what you had dreamed in the night and if it was real or not. This genuinely happens.

“In the late phases of designing the 2017 car, in the middle of the night I had a dream that we went to the first test and there were six reverse gears and one forward. You might laugh, but it has happened before. The gearbox and the engine is quite complicated which direction everything is rotating.

“I woke up in the night thinking that the car had six reverse gears and I needed to find out from the schematics if my dream was real or not. I didn't have my computer at home, so I had to go to work at three o'clock in the morning as I wasn't going back to sleep. There was no point trying. This was two weeks before the car was going to be running, and we were waiting for a gearbox at the time.”

Ultimately there was no need to panic over the GR Yaris WRC, because it was mothballed. But its legacy is still alive to some degree since Toyota was able to transfer some of the work carried out to its 2022 GR Yaris Rally1.

The new hybrid car proved a success, and Kalle Rovanpera and co-driver Jonne Halttunen broke records on their way to the title, while Toyota picked up seven wins to claim a sixth WRC manufacturers' title. Perhaps the car's most impressive feat was scoring a top-four sweep at the challenging Safari Rally, repeating a feat last achieved by the marque in 1993.

“We did learn a lot from this car,” Fowler adds. “And for Rally1 there was some learning – also we used some of the information to make updates to the previous WRC car. But the way it was developed, as a package with the road car, it gave so many advantages that it was probably a good thing for the WRC this car never came to be.”

It might be wishful thinking, but maybe one day Toyota will be allowed to field the GR Yaris WRC into a rally to show the world what it missed. ❄️



JBLOXHAM

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IMAGES

MR2 was basis for Toyota's  
muscular-looking 222D  
Group S weapon

# RACE CENTRE

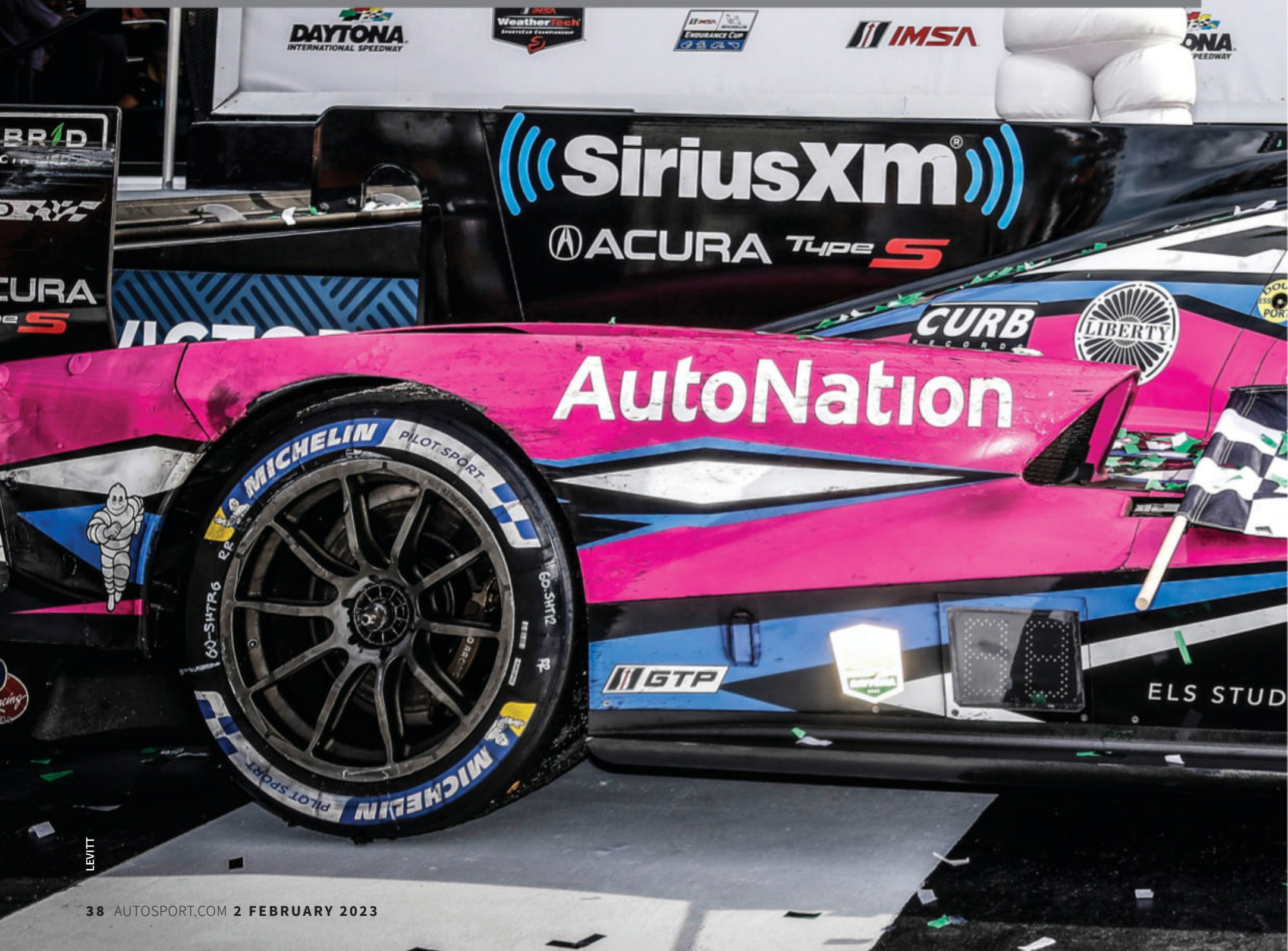
DAYTONA 24 HOURS

## Acura in the pink as new era begins

*Meyer Shank Racing was fast and largely trouble-free to take first blood in the new GTP division and head an Acura 1-2*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES





Winning crew of Blomqvist, Castroneves, Pagnaud and Braun celebrate

BLOMQUIST PAGNAUD  
BRAUN CASTRONEVES

ARCTIC WOLF

WeatherTech

60

AERO PENNZOIL

MICHELIN PILOT SPORT

60-SHT12

RF

60-SHT12

RF

IO 3D

Here we go! Meyer Shank Acura leads from pole at the first start of LMDh and new-era GTP...



DOLE

**A** new era and new cars, yet the result was the same. Acura and Meyer Shank Racing reprised its 2022 Daytona 24 Hours victory in the first race for the latest breed of LMDh prototypes. And just like 12 months ago, Shank took what on the stopwatch at least looked like a narrow triumph over marquee stablemate Wayne Taylor Racing.

But unlike last year's IMSA series-opener, Shank had the fastest car throughout last weekend's 24 Hours, not just in the crucial laps as the IMSA SportsCar Championship curtain-raiser drew to an end. The team's new ARX-06 had a clear edge over Cadillac, the other manufacturer to get through the duration without major technical issues, and also those that didn't: Porsche and BMW.

Tom Blomqvist took the flag four seconds up the road in the Shank Acura he shared with Colin Braun, Helio Castroneves and Simon Pagenaud, but that margin over WTR driver Filipe

Albuquerque revealed little about a race in which the winning car outpaced its rivals in the GTP class all the way.

It was quicker on new tyres or old – double-stinting was the rule rather than the exception this year because of the reduced tyre allocation. It was the fastest car in the nine-car GTP field by a tenth or so over the WTR Acura driven by Albuquerque, Ricky Taylor, Louis Deletraz and Brendon Hartley on both the regular soft high-temperature Michelin that could be used throughout the race, and the low-temp rubber that could only be put on the cars during a 13-hour period in the night. It then had two or three tenths over the Caddys and the Porsches.

But perhaps crucially, Blomqvist and his team-mates could seemingly pass their rivals at will up on the banking of the 3.56-mile Daytona International Speedway. It wasn't so much that it had an advantage in terms of straightline speed as much as in acceleration. And just for good measure, the Acuras could sometimes eke out their energy allocation for a stint that little bit longer than Cadillac et al.

Yet for Shank's domination of this event – it led 365 of 783 laps completed – there was a period of the race, nearly a quarter of it, when the #60 wasn't nailed to the head of the leaderboard. It even lagged the better part of a minute behind the Chip Ganassi Racing Cadillac V-LMDh shared by Sebastien Bourdais, Renger van der Zande and Scott Dixon, the car that led the second most laps and finished as best of the rest in third. That resulted from an engine issue that afflicted both Acuras and meant that the Shank car made significantly more pitstops than its rivals: it pitted 36 times in comparison to the best-placed Caddy's 29.

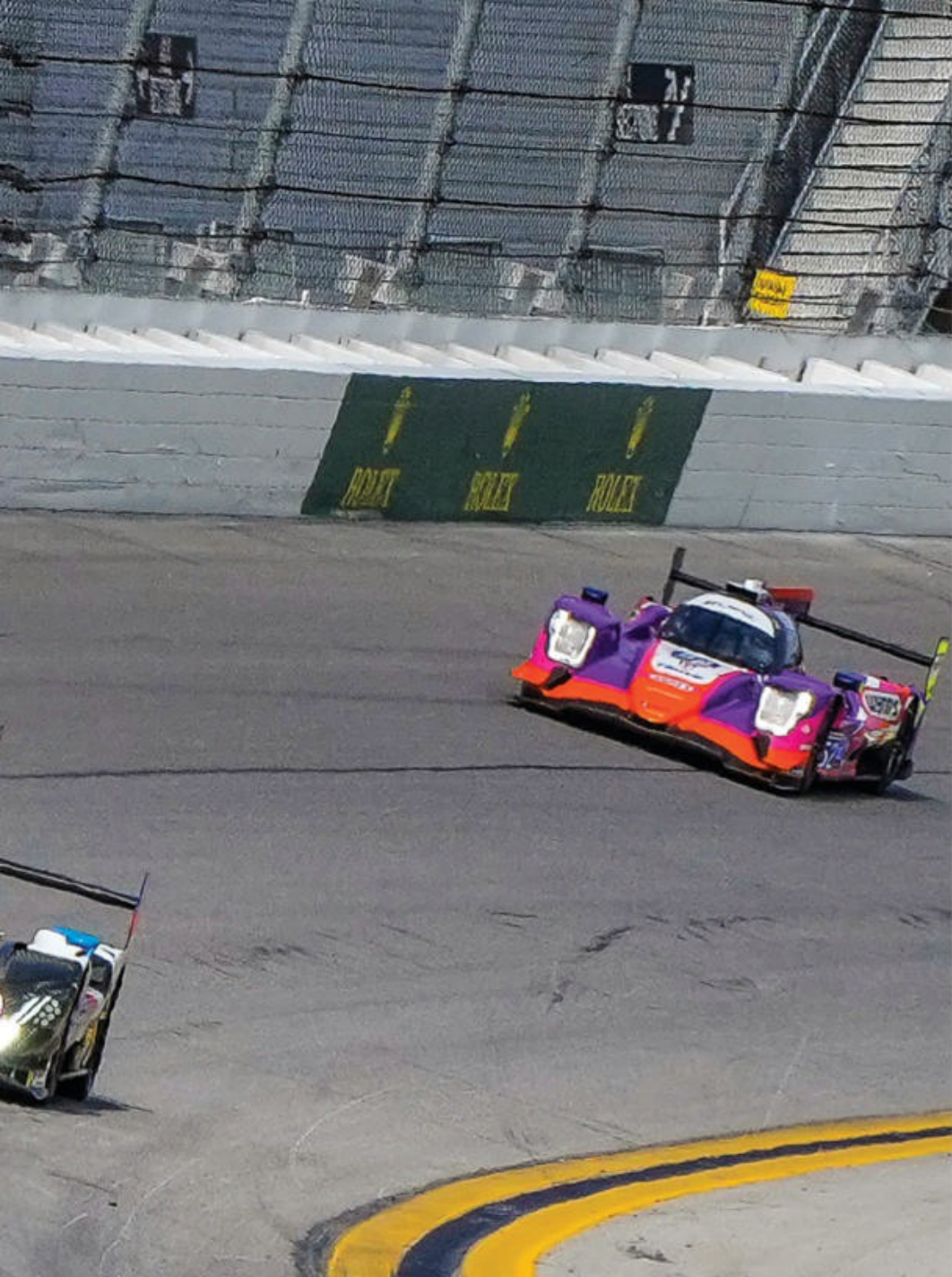
The VP Racing biofuel introduced for 2023 was contaminating the oil, which forced partial and periodic flushes of the lubrication system under yellow flags. Cadillac, it should be noted, had a similar but not so severe problem and just added oil every so often. The root of the issue was the low oil consumption of the ARX-06's new 2.4-litre direct injection twin-turbo engine. Honda Performance



Wayne Taylor Racing dropped laps but fought back to claim second

DOLE





**ASTON MARTIN CREW ARE ALL HEART**



Heart of Racing Aston won GTD – and beat all of the GTD Pro cars

GALSTAD

Aston Martin and Mercedes shared honours in the GT Daytona classes, but it was the British marque that crossed the line first with a regular GTD entry, while Mercedes took the GTD Pro laurels as the second car home.

Heart of Racing triumphed in the unofficial overall GTD classification with the Vantage GT3 shared by Marco Sorensen, Darren Turner, Roman De Angelis and team boss Ian James. The line-up of two pros and two silver-rated drivers had a near-perfect run as they came home two seconds ahead of the Proton-run WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Maro Engel, Jules Gounon, Daniel Juncadella and Cooper MacNeil.

The Aston prevailed in class after a battle with the Winward Racing Merc driven by Philip Ellis, Indy Dontje, team boss Russell Ward and Daniel Morad, who came into the line-up after Lucas Auer crashed in practice and was ruled out of the race (see *Pit & Paddock*). When Ellis tagged the wall in Turn 2 after the penultimate safety-car period, that allowed Aston to claim a 1-2 in class, Nicki Thiim propelling the Magnus Racing Vantage he shared with Andy Lally, Spencer Pumpelly and John Potter into the runner-up spot.

The WeatherTech Merc prevailed in a three-way fight in Pro with the grandfathered factory Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GT Le Mans car driven by Antonio Garcia, Jordan Taylor and Tommy Milner and the Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 of Jack Hawksworth, Ben Barnicoat and Mike Conway, which finished 3.9s and 10.9s behind the Merc in second and third.

The Ferrari 296 GT3, 992-shape Porsche 911 GT3-R and EVO2 version of the Lamborghini Huracan GT3 weren't on the pace on their race debuts. There were complaints about the Balance of Performance, particularly from the Porsche drivers, but IMSA's stance is always to go conservative on the BoP with new cars and nibble them up over time. Best new car was the Iron Lynx Lambo driven by Romain Grosjean, Mirko Bortolotti, Andrea Caldarelli and Jordan Pepper. It finished fourth in GTD Pro, but was only the ninth GTD car home.



Merc-Lexus-Corvette GTD Pro war was a thriller

GALSTAD



...and it ended with obligatory Castroneves-style fence-climbing

DOLE

**“Pagenaud took a lead at the restart from Bourdais that Shank would never relinquish”**

Development, which masterminds the Acura programme, had worked hard to reduce oil usage, only to discover this problem when it first got its hands on the latest IMSA spec fuel with an 80% bio content in November. “With bio fuel some of the bits are a bit heavier and want to stick around more in the oil,” explained HPD president David Salters. “If the engine is burning a bit more oil, it kind of balances itself out. Six months ago we really worked quite hard to reduce oil consumption, so it proves that sometimes you’ve got to be careful what you wish for.”

Shank was able to make up the deficit when normal service for Daytona was resumed with the ninth safety car of the race in hour 20 after a protracted period of green-flag running lasting more than five hours. Pagenaud took a lead at the restart from Bourdais that Shank would never relinquish over the final 97 laps. That was >>



Chip Ganassi's factory  
Cadillacs finished in this  
order, third and fourth

GALSTAD

despite a further four yellow-flag periods, the last setting up a 26-minute dash to the finish.

Blomqvist admitted that he was a bit nervous when the WTR Acura came through to second position in the closing stages “because it was the second fastest car today”, but in reality there was little real threat to Shank even with the proliferation of yellows at the end. “My life was made easier because I had such a fantastic car under me,” said Blomqvist, who maintained his 100% winning record at the 24 Hours.

There was another problem for Shank that was a worry for the engineers in the pits if not a handicap for the drivers in the car. The team had noticed that gearbox temperatures were above normal and rising as early as six hours in. The team kept a watching brief on the temps until they hit a dangerous 90C, at which point the crew just crossed its collective fingers and hoped for the best. After that it was a case of “if it goes, it goes”, reckoned team boss Mike Shank.

The WTR Acura, now entered in conjunction with Andretti Autosport, might have had something for the race winners. The team had a trimmed out rear aerodynamic section ready to go onto the car for the final hours of the race. But when it tried to get it onto the car, it found the mountings on the higher-downforce version had broken. “We got the original tail section off, but a couple of the dowels had broken off and were stuck in the rear deck,” explained team boss Wayne Taylor. “It wasn’t a problem to put the old one back, but it meant we couldn’t get the new one on.”

The WTR Acura had dropped back in the night as a result of the oil issue. A bracket on the oil filler broke and repairs back in the

## “We beat Porsche and my old friend Roger Penske, but that doesn’t make me feel any better”

garage dropped it briefly as much as three laps off the lead. The long period of green running meant it wasn’t until late in the penultimate hour that WTR could get back on terms by exploiting the wave-around rules to claw back the lost laps.

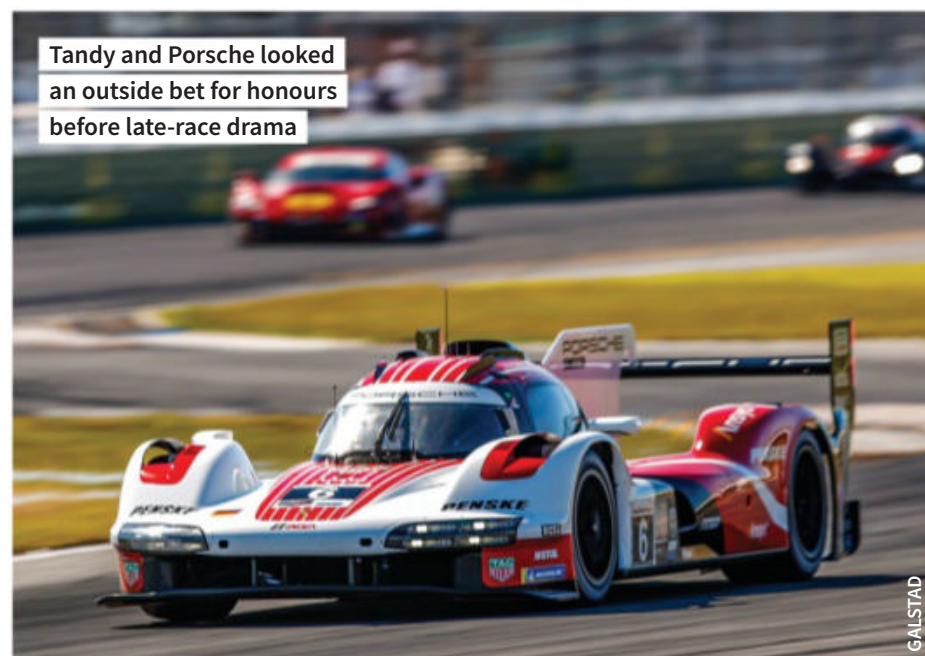
Cadillac admitted that this wasn’t really its race to win after filling out positions three to five with its trio of V-LMDhs. “We just didn’t have the pace; the Acura was too quick all day,” said team boss Chip Ganassi. “We beat my old friend Roger [Penske, who runs the Porsches], but that doesn’t make me feel any better.”

The Bourdais car, Ganassi’s full-season IMSA entry under the Cadillac Racing banner, was the quicker of its two GTPs and took the final podium spot five seconds behind WTR. It had a clean race save for one change of rear bodywork after a hit from behind and one steering wheel replacement. The sister car, which will now swap to the World Endurance Championship, took fourth in the hands of Earl Bamber, Alex Lynn and Richard Westbrook a further second and a half adrift.

The Action Express Racing Caddy ended up 12 laps down in fifth in the hands of Pipo Derani, Alexander Sims and Jack Aitken. It dropped out of contention in the 15th hour after a clash with a GT Daytona car that damaged the rear suspension, the team changing the complete rear end with the loss of half an hour.

BMW was the third LMDh manufacturer home, getting one of its M Hybrid V8s in front of the best of the Porsche 963s. Philipp Eng, Augusto Farfus, Marco Wittmann and Colton Herta claimed sixth, 19 laps ahead of the only one of the two 963s to make the finish.

Felipe Nasr, Matt Campbell and Michael Christensen were seventh in class and 14th overall behind seven LMP2 entries. The big delay for the Porsche Penske Motorsport entry that Nasr had put on the outside of the front row came as early as the sixth hour when the high-voltage battery supplied by Williams Advanced Engineering required changing. The problem encountered by the first of the LMDh manufacturers to get its car up and running was a new one for the team. It was related to “safety systems and protocols”, explained team boss Jonathan Diuguid. A subsequent delay for this car was related to old tech rather than the hybrid system. A water leak lost it more time with a series of stops after the sun had come up, including one of 29 minutes in hour 19. >>



Tandy and Porsche looked  
an outside bet for honours  
before late-race drama

GALSTAD

## BMW SEES HOPE AFTER DISAPPOINTING DAYTONA

BMW was definitely the fourth of the four LMDh manufacturers in the GTP pecking order at Daytona last weekend: its pair of Rahal-run M Hybrid V8s brought up the rear in qualifying, and had more problems and less pace than their rivals on the way to delayed sixth and ninth-place (in class) finishes. But project boss Maurizio Leschiutta stressed after the race that there was no disappointment in the camp.

Leschiutta pointed out first off that the team had two cars running at the finish. And BMW's analysis showed that at least one of the cars wasn't so far off Cadillac and Porsche. Given the timeframe of the project, he insisted that BMW shouldn't be disappointed with its maiden outing on its return to the top flight of sportscar racing.

"We had a very ambitious programme because we started from a clean sheet of paper 18 months ago," said Leschiutta. "We were coming to our first race, which was a 24-hour event. We had our challenges during testing, so this was our first 24-hour test – we can be very happy. We know now what our weaknesses are and will be working on them before the Sebring 12 Hours."

That could be interpreted as Leschiutta putting a brave face on what was a torrid debut. The M Hybrid raced by Nick Yelloly, Connor De Phillippi, Sheldon van der Linde and Colton Herta (the last-named drove both cars) was in trouble with hybrid problems before the end of the opening hour.

The car, started by Yelloly, would spend more than two and a half hours back in its garage before returning to the action.



The #24 car made it to the finish in sixth position

"We changed the entire hybrid system because it wouldn't have been efficient to do a piece-by-piece analysis," explained Leschiutta. "We just had to get the car back on track as soon as possible."

There would be a further delay that added to its deficit to the winners, which ended up at 131 laps, when an engine alarm went off on Sunday morning.

The second car, which Herta drove together with Augusto Farfus, Philipp Eng and Marco Wittmann, lost time with more minor hybrid problems. It need a hard reset and then a change of brakes at the cost of 25 minutes, which was linked to problems with the brake-by-wire controls to the rear axle.

Farfus and co were running fifth on 18 hours and only a lap down, Leschiutta suggesting that a podium might not have been out of the question. That was probably a bit hopeful given that the least-delayed of the Bimmers was more than a second off the pace. The other car, however, was significantly quicker.

"If you do a quick analysis you will find that Cadillac and Porsche were comparable and the #25 was nearly on that mark, missing a little something but not far off," said Leschiutta. Autosport's analysis suggested that "little something" was probably in the margin of two or three tenths. Now, said Leschiutta, it's time to do a "deep dive into all the data as soon as we get some sleep".



It's the start of BMW's first top-flight prototype programme since 2000

The second Porsche, shared by Nick Tandy, Mathieu Jaminet and Dane Cameron, didn't see the chequered flag. A gearbox issue in the 22nd hour – the team reported a significant sized hole in the casing – resulted in the car being pushed back to its garage for repairs. The intent was to get back out on track until, said Diuguid, “we found some other problems”. It wouldn't have made any difference to the car's points haul: it was going to be classified eighth in GTP ahead of the second of the Bimmers come what may.

It wasn't a good day for Porsche, admitted programme head Urs Kuratle: “A disappointing race, not the result we were looking

## “A disappointing race, not the result we were looking for. We had a lot of problems”

for. We had a lot of problems, but almost everything was new, something we hadn't encountered before. Hopefully we've had all our problems now in one race.”

Yet there was a brief moment when the Tandy car looked like it might have a sniff of a podium despite dropping three laps down during the night. Kuratle, it should be said, was pretty sure that the car was on for a top three. The deficit followed an off for Tandy on 16 hours when an LMP3 car turned in on him at the flat-out kink between the two infield hairpins. On three-stint-old tyres he “bailed out of the corner”, went across the grass and hit a polystyrene advertising hoarding. “What I didn't realise was that those things are weighted down with sandbags”, he said in explanation of the #6 Porsche sustaining significant damage to both the front splitter and the rear diffuser. Three laps were lost



to repairs and the protracted period of green-flag running offered no chance to get them back.

But the quickfire succession of safety cars late on Sunday morning gave Porsche hope of salvaging something from this race. Tandy moved to only one complete lap down after yellow number nine in hour 21, when he was able to pass race leader Pagnaud and pull away, but pretty quickly he was in trouble. Twice he overshot Turn 1 and came to halt, and then stopped again out on track before bringing the car back on electrical power. “We don't know why we had that pace all of a sudden; we picked up pace from the previous stint that I ran,” explained Tandy. “All we did was change tyres. Maybe we just got the tyre into a nice temperature window and it started to work for us.”

The problem for Shank's rivals at Daytona last weekend was that the winning Acura worked all race long. ❄️

### P2s IN A THRILLING FIGHT FOR P1

Proton Competition was the comeback king in LMP2 on the way to a sensational last-gasp victory. The German team's crew of Gianmaria Bruni, James Allen, Francesco Pizzi and Fred Poordad bounced back from three major setbacks to secure the win by just 0.016s on its debut with its ORECA-Gibson 07.

Allen sealed a victory that looked unlikely for most of Daytona week when he outdragged Ben Hanley in the Algarve Pro-run Crowdstrike

Racing ORECA down the front stretch on the final lap. Proton had to come back from a shunt in qualifying the previous Sunday, a monster accident in night practice in race week, and then the loss of two and a half laps during the hours of darkness in the race.

Bruni led the P2 class on Saturday evening, but Proton faced an uphill struggle through the night. Silver driver Pizzi's shunt on the Thursday not only forced a major rebuild but

also meant he didn't compete his mandatory night laps and could only race during the day. So bronze driver Poordad had to take to the wheel during the long winter night to give Bruni and Allen a rest. The result was a two-and-a-half-lap deficit on Sunday morning.

The quickfire series of safety cars as the clock ticked down brought Proton back into the game. Allen was fourth at the final restart, made up a position when Job van Uitert in the best of the TDS ORECA's tangled with Hanley in a bid for the lead at Turn 1, then passed Nicklas Nielsen's AF Corse ORECA with four laps to go.

Hanley, who shared the Crowdstrike ORECA with Esteban Gutierrez, Matt McMurry and George Kurtz, was baulked by an LMP3 in the Le Mans Chicane on the final lap, and Allen got a double tow from the two cars to sweep around the outside for victory.

LMP3 went to the AWA Duqueine-Nissan driven by Wayne Boyd, Nico Varrone, Thomas Merrill and Anthony Mantella after the Sean Creech Ligier lost a two-lap lead on Sunday morning when a broken exhaust component burnt through the gearbox wiring loom.



**RESULTS DAYTONA 24 HOURS, IMSA SPORTSCAR CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 1/11, DAYTONA (USA), 28-29 JANUARY (783 LAPS – 2787.48 MILES)**

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	TIME	CLASS	GRID
1	Tom Blomqvist/Colin Braun/Helio Castroneves/Simon Pagenaud	Meyer Shank Racing	Acura ARX-06	24h01m19.952s	GTP	1
2	Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque/Louis Deletraz/Brendon Hartley	Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti	Acura ARX-06	+4.190s	GTP	3
3	Sebastien Bourdais/Renger van der Zande/Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing	Cadillac V-LMDh	+9.630s	GTP	4
4	Alex Lynn/Earl Bamber/Richard Westbrook	Chip Ganassi Racing	Cadillac V-LMDh	+11.176s	GTP	5
5	Pipo Derani/Alexander Sims/Jack Aitken	Action Express Racing	Cadillac V-LMDh	-12 laps	GTP	6
6	Philipp Eng/Augusto Farfus/Marco Wittmann/Colton Herta	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	-15 laps	GTP	7
7	Fred Poordad/Francesco Pizzi/James Allen/Gianmaria Bruni	Proton Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07	-22 laps	LMP2	19
8	George Kurtz/Ben Hanley/Matt McMurry/Esteban Gutierrez	Crowdstrike Racing by APR	ORECA-Gibson 07	-22 laps	LMP2	14
9	Francois Perrodo/Matthieu Vaxiviere/Julien Canal/Nicklas Nielsen	AF Corse	ORECA-Gibson 07	-22 laps	LMP2	13
10	Francois Heriau/Giedo van der Garde/Josh Pierson/Job van Uitert	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	-22 laps	LMP2	11
11	John Farano/Scott McLaughlin/Josel Newgarden/Kyffin Simpson	Tower Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	-24 laps	LMP2	18
12	Eric Lux/Devlin DeFrancesco/Austin Cindric/Pietro Fittipaldi	Rick Ware Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	-25 laps	LMP2	15
13	Ben Keating/Paul-Loup Chatin/Alex Quinn/Nicolas Lapierre	PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	-26 laps	LMP2	10
14	Felipe Nasr/Matt Campbell/Michael Christensen	Porsche Penske Motorsports	Porsche 963	-34 laps	GTP	2
15	Anthony Mantella/Wayne Boyd/Nico Varrone/Thomas Merrill	AWA	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	-46 laps	LMP3	28
16	Ian James/Roman De Angelis/Marco Sorensen/Darren Turner	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	-54 laps	GTD	37
17	Maro Engel/Cooper MacNeil/Daniel Juncadella/Jules Gounon	WeatherTech Racing (Proton)	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	-54 laps	GTD Pro	31
18	John Potter/Andy Lally/Spencer Pumpelly/Nicki Thiim	Magnus Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	-54 laps	GTD	45
19	Antonio Garcia/Jordan Taylor/Tommy Milner	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GTD	-54 laps	GTD Pro	39
20	Ben Barnicoat/Jack Hawksworth/Mike Conway	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	-54 laps	GTD Pro	34
21	Marvin Kirchhofer/Brendan Iribe/Frederik Schandorff/Ollie Millroy	Inception Racing (Optimum)	McLaren 720S GT3	-54 laps	GTD	36
22	Sheena Monk/Katherine Legge/Mario Farnbacher/Marc Miller	Gradient Racing	Acura NSX GT3	-54 laps	GTD	35
23	Aaron Telitz/Frankie Montecalvo/Kyle Kirkwood/Parker Thompson	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	-55 laps	GTD	38
24	Jordan Pepper/Andrea Caldarelli/Mirko Bortolotti/Romain Grosjean	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	-55 laps	GTD Pro	40
25	Klaus Bachler/Patrick Pilet/Laurens Vanthoor	Pfaff Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-55 laps	GTD Pro	47
26	Kyle Marcelli/Ashton Harrison/Danny Formal/Ryan Briscoe	Racers Edge Motorsports with WTR	Acura NSX GT3	-56 laps	GTD	33
27	Misha Goikhberg/Loris Spinelli/Benja Hites/Marco Mapelli	US RaceTronics	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	-57 laps	GTD	49
28	Madison Snow/Bryan Sellers/Corey Lewis/Maxime Martin	Paul Miller Racing	BMW M4 GT3	-57 laps	GTD	43
29	Nico Pino/Lance Willsey/Joao Barbosa/Nolan Siegel	Sean Creech Motorsport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	-58 laps	LMP3	20
30	Ryan Hardwick/Jan Heylen/Zacharie Robichon/Dennis Olsen	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-60 laps	GTD	46
31	Cameron Shields/John DeAngelis/Chris Allen/Connor Bloum	Performance Tech Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	-62 laps	LMP3	22
32	Alessio Rovera/Onofrio Triarsi/Charles Scardina/Andrea Bertolini	Triarsi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	-64 laps	GTD	56
33	Alan Brynjolfsson/Trent Hindman/Maxwell Root/Kevin Estre	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-64 laps	GTD	51
34	Mark Kvamme/Trenton Estep/Jan Magnussen/Jason Hart	MDK Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-66 laps	GTD Pro	58
35	Orey Fidani/Matthew Bell/Lars Kern/Moritz Kranz	AWA	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	-66 laps	LMP3	27
36	Ross Gunn/Alex Riberas/David Pittard	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	-67 laps	GTD Pro	32
37	Till Bechtolsheimer/Tijmen van der Helm/Luca Mars/Mason Filippi	JDC-Miller Motorsports	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	-68 laps	LMP3	25
38	Claudio Schiavoni/Rolf Ineichen/Raffaele Giammaria/Franck Perera	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	-69 laps	GTD	61
39	Russell Ward/Philip Ellis/Indy Dontje/Daniel Morad	Winward Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	710 laps-accident	GTD	59
40	PJ Hyett/Seb Priaulx/Gunnar Jeannette/Harry Tincknell	AO Racing	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-73 laps	GTD	55
41	Mike Skeen/Mikael Grenier/Kenton Koch/Maximilian Gotz	Team Korthoff Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	-74 laps	GTD	30
42	Nick Tandy/Mathieu Jaminet/Dane Cameron	Porsche Penske Motorsports	Porsche 963	700 laps-gearbox	GTP	9
43	Alan Metni/Kay van Berlo/Jaxon Evans/Julien Andlauer	Kellymoss with Riley	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-84 laps	GTD	54
44	Robby Foley/Patrick Gallagher/Michael Dinan/Jens Klingmann	Turner Motorsport	BMW M4 GT3	-88 laps	GTD	44
45	Ted Giovanis/Hugh Plumb/Matt Plumb/Owen Trinkler	TGM/TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	-109 laps	GTD Pro	60
46	Rahel Frey/Sarah Bovy/Michelle Gatting/Doriane Pin	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	-124 laps	GTD	48
47	Simon Mann/Luis Perez Compagnon/Miguel Molina/Francesco Castellacci	AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3	655 laps-accident	GTD	50
48	Nick Yelloly/Connor De Phillippi/Sheldon van der Linde/Colton Herta	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	-131 laps	GTP	8
49	Dennis Andersen/Ed Jones/Anders Fjordbach/Raffaele Marciello	High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	646 laps-accident	LMP2	16
50	Bill Auberlen/Chandler Hull/Bruno Spengler/John Edwards	Turner Motorsport	BMW M4 GT3	635 laps-power-steering	GTD Pro	42
51	Yu Kanamaru/Antonio Serravalle/Nick Boule/James Vance	FastMD Racing	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	618 laps-DNF	LMP3	26
52	Dwight Merriman/Ryan Dalziel/Christian Rasmussen/Oliver Jarvis	Era Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	510 laps-engine	LMP2	17
53	Dakota Dickerson/Jarett Andretti/Gabby Chaves/Rasmus Lindh	Andretti Autosport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	371 laps-engine	LMP3	21
54	Guilherme Oliveira/Sebastian Alvarez/James French/Daniel Frost	MRS GT-Racing	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	368 laps-DNF	LMP3	23
55	Alessio Deledda/Robert Megennis/Jaden Conwright/Kerong Li	NTE Sport	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	356 laps-accident	GTD	57
56	Daniel Serra/Alessandro Pier Guidi/James Calado/Davide Rigon	Risi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	349 laps-vibration	GTD Pro	53
57	David Brule/Alec Udell/Andrew Davis/Jeroen Bleekemolen	Kellymoss with Riley	Porsche 911 GT3-R	278 laps-engine	GTD	52
58	Steven Thomas/Mikkel Jensen/Scott Huffaker/Rinus van Kalmthout	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	249 laps-accident	LMP2	12
59	Fabian Schiller/Kenny Habul/Luca Stolz/Axcil Jefferies	SunEnergy1 (Gradient)	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	233 laps-radiator	GTD	29
60	Gar Robinson/Felipe Fraga/Josh Burdon/Glenn van Berlo	Riley Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	89 laps-engine	LMP3	24
61	Giorgio Sernagiotto/Roberto Lacorte/Antonio Fuoco/Alessandro Balzan	Cetilar Racing (AF Corse)	Ferrari 296 GT3	44 laps-accident damage	GTD	41

In each car, first-named driver started race. **Winners' average speed** 116.037mph. **Fastest lap** Blomqvist 1m35.616s, 134.036mph; **LMP2** Quinn 1m39.205s, 129.187mph; **LMP3** Siegel 1m43.265s, 124.108mph; **GTD Pro** Gounon 1m45.541s, 121.431mph; **GTD** Sorensen 1m46.078s, 120.816mph.

# Twin peaks for imperious Wehrlein

*Porsche emphatically on top as ex-F1 driver and Jake Dennis scorch clear of the Gen3 pack in Diriyah double-header*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES

**T**hree races in, and there's a pattern emerging in Formula E's new era. After Valencia's pre-season testing, you'd have been hard pressed to predict that a Porsche would win the first three races of the season, given the German giant's tepid showing in December. Yet, as the rest of the field tries to gather some semblance of a pecking order, Weissach's finest has firmly become the manufacturer to beat.

The consummate ease with which Jake Dennis and Pascal Wehrlein scarpiped off into the distance in the Mexico City opener was a hint of Porsche's progress around the Christmas and New Year breaks. But it was nothing more than that; Porsche had dominated proceedings at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez last season, but failed to follow up on that in the succeeding rounds. To commandeer and butcher a phrase from footballing parlance, could Porsche do it on a cold, dark night in Riyadh?

With Diriyah's double-header now in the history books, we have our answer: a resounding yes. Wehrlein's and Dennis's swashbuckling drives in both Diriyah races painted a giant target on Porsche's back, as both the works team and 'customer' Andretti operation illuminated the Arabian nights. Where Dennis had dominated in Mexico, Wehrlein's pair of ripostes in Saudi Arabia lifted the German to the top of the early points standings. Neither has finished lower than second so far.

If there's a weakness of the Porsche-powered cars, it's qualifying. On one lap, the motor doesn't quite have the braking performance of some of the other manufacturers, which means the drivers can't quite attack the slower-speed corners with the same verve as their rivals. None of the four drivers across Porsche and Andretti made the duels in qualifying for Diriyah's Friday race.

Instead, two members of the old guard impressed ahead of their Formula E century milestones; Envision's Sebastien Buemi claimed his first pole since 2019, while Sam Bird looked rejuvenated after a dismal 2022 to grab third on the grid. Buemi beat Bird and his Jaguar team-mate Mitch Evans en route to the final, where the veteran Swiss faced up against rookie Jake Hughes.

Hughes's start to life in Formula E has been nothing short of stunning; his promotion to a race seat could be construed as a



Make his a double: big weekend for Wehrlein

gamble by McLaren, but he's looked completely at home in the Nissan-powered orange machine. Buemi proved a bridge too far for the Briton in Friday's final, but he later had a chance at retribution.

"Qualifying didn't quite go as planned, although P9 was not so bad," Wehrlein mused, as Porsche's one-lap pace still left a little to be desired. But there were no such doubts about the race, and the black-and-red machine was demonstrably effective in his hands.

Bird's opening salvo put the Briton in control in the opening stages when his patient offensive on polesitter Buemi increased in intensity, and ultimately proved too much for the Swiss to resist by the seventh lap. At the favoured Turn 18 braking zone into the chicane, Bird migrated north into the lead and set about leaving the Envision driver in his wake. Buemi kept tabs on the Briton, maintaining a one-second gap as their common Jaguar powertrains ensured they were evenly matched. Of the two, Buemi was also consuming slightly more energy, giving Bird the advantage as the race progressed into its second half.

Then Wehrlein entered from stage left in the lead battle. Elevated to sixth by the close of the first lap after Evans's first-corner



Pascal Wehrlein leapt to the head of the points with his second and third Formula E wins

## “I knew we could make up some positions but I never imagined that we would win the race”

lock-up left him to tangle with the two Mahindras, Wehrlein dispatched Rene Rast and Dan Ticktum in the first 10 laps as the Porsche began to demonstrate its greater efficiency. Hughes was a tougher nut to crack, and Wehrlein instead camped out on the Brummie's doorstep and waited for the McLaren driver to go off line at Turn 19 for attack mode.

Not only had Wehrlein manoeuvred his way into third place, but he was immediately on the tail of the Bird-Buemi leading dyad. Buemi was next to accept attack mode, which elevated Wehrlein into second and thrust him immediately into a stunning lead battle with Bird.

Thanks to his foresight and Porsche's strategy, Wehrlein hadn't needed to battle too hard to make up places, so had not expended his energy in frivolous fights through the order. Bird, however, wasn't in any mood to hand Wehrlein the lead on a silver platter. With a run on the 25th lap (of 39) on the exit of Turn 17, Wehrlein stabbed at the brakes and looked to have threaded his car down the inside of Bird, but proved too boisterous and ran wide to allow the Londoner to reclaim track position.

Bird switched to a more defensive stance over the next four laps, covering off the inside down the straight to offer Wehrlein no incentives to pass. But the Jaguar driver's efforts seemed to be delaying the inevitable, and on lap 30 Wehrlein's assault was finally successful. The lead belonged to the Porsche ace.

Dennis, meanwhile, had come into play in the second half after starting 11th. The cars around him, particularly the Envisions and the McLarens, expended more energy owing to their deficit to the Andretti Porsche's strong efficiency. The Nuneaton-born driver could start to pick people off one by one, working his way up to Bird, who he passed with five laps remaining.

While Dennis had about 0.5% more useable energy than Wehrlein in the final stages and managed to catch the leader, Wehrlein had enough in the tank to claim his second Formula E win. “I knew that we could make up some positions but I never imagined that we would win the race,” he admitted. “The strategy was perfect, the car felt amazing and I was able to save quite a lot of energy and use it for the overtakes. Strategy-wise, the times we took attack mode worked perfectly.”

In the interests of self-improvement, Porsche spent the night ironing out some of the creases in its qualifying performance. This time, Wehrlein and Dennis made it into the duels, but did not progress beyond the quarter-finals, as Hughes claimed his first pole after beating Dennis into the semis. The ex-Formula 3 mainstay cleared Buemi in their semi-final rematch, and then found a tenth over Evans in the final to start at the front. >>



Jake Dennis followed up Mexico win with a pair of second places

FERRARO

Hughes attributed his lesser getaway off the line relative to Evans to the blue paint in the first-place starting slot, and he had to fold behind the Kiwi into the first corner. But with Wehrlein in a stronger grid position – fifth this time – in Saturday’s race, another buccaneering drive looked inevitable.

Wehrlein cleared Buemi into the first corner, and let the triumvirate of Evans, Hughes and Rast fight among themselves ahead. The leading trio swapped positions through their initial attack mode exchanges, as Hughes dropped to third and McLaren team-mate Rast performed a well-executed overcut on Evans to pick up the lead.

While fast, McLaren’s efficiency had not been at the same level as that of the manufacturer squads, and Hughes was a sitting duck for Wehrlein’s Turn 18 pass on lap 12. Evans was dispatched a lap later, and Wehrlein took the opportunity to use three minutes of attack mode to scythe away at Rast’s two-second lead.

It took barely a lap for Wehrlein to catch his compatriot. An overtaking move looked inevitable and Rast knew this, deciding not to fight with the Porsche when it appeared in his mirrors and instead using the chance to take his own attack mode. Once again, Wehrlein was in command – and, once again, Dennis’s slowburning opener eventually escalated into challenging his powertrain stablemate.

The British driver’s passes were decisive as he clawed through the order, and his ascent was precipitated by Buemi taking attack mode. Edoardo Mortara was easy prey to Dennis’s advances, and quickfire moves on Hughes, Evans and Rast ensured that the top two from the previous day were once again controlling proceedings.

Dennis had yet to use any of his attack mode at this stage but, with the chasing pack at arm’s length behind him, he opted to

## “Dennis ran into an energy deficit relative to Wehrlein, thus the die had been cast”

swallow his first minute of 350kW power to pursue Wehrlein. It proved to be an irrelevance, however, as Nico Muller’s crash on lap 27 prompted the emergence of the safety car to wipe out Wehrlein’s advantage. Dennis attempted to cling onto Wehrlein’s coat-tails on the restart, but they were evenly matched and the Andretti driver had to seek solace in the final three minutes of attack mode to address the gap.

This instead ran Dennis into an energy deficit relative to Wehrlein, and thus the die had been cast; the top two would remain the same across both races to demonstrate Porsche’s irrepressible dominance so far in 2023.

Bird, whose third place in Friday’s race was his first podium in over a year, was hoping to ensure that the same three drivers would appear on the rostrum. Rast had presided over the position when Bird had taken his three minutes of attack mode at the same time as Dennis, but was about 2% shy on energy compared to his pursuer. It appeared near-certain that Bird would mount a pass, but he overcooked it into Turn 18 on lap 33 to hand Rast a reprieve. When those three minutes elapsed, Bird used his final minute of attack to mount a final siege.

Despite his energy advantage and the close proximity at which he chased Rast through the downhill sweepers, Bird was caught out by the ex-Audi driver’s canny approach to the exit of Turn 17 and could not find enough traction to mount a pass. Rast held on, ensuring that the podium was at least slightly different across both Diriyah races and securing McLaren’s first top-three finish in Formula E.

Nonetheless, the weekend belonged to Porsche. Wehrlein and Dennis now have a healthy buffer in the championship stakes to third-placed Buemi, and the 99X Electro has been the early season star in race trim. As Formula E heads to Hyderabad in India for the first time, the question is simply this: can anyone beat Porsche? ❄️



Impressive Hughes (right) beat Evans to pole for race two

SBLOXHAM



## IN THE HEADLINES

### FRUSTRATION FOR VANDOORNE

Reigning Formula E world champion Stoffel Vandoorne copped a 24-second penalty in race two after failing to use both attack mode activations, although electronics woes meant the DS Penske driver couldn't arm the second hit of 350kW. "I simply couldn't activate it - I didn't know what energy I had," he griped. "I couldn't see anything [on the dash]. Shit day."

### GUENTHER IN THE WARS

Maserati MSG put in an all-nighter to rebuild Maximilian Guenther's car after a Friday qualifying shunt left him on the sidelines for race one. "We had to salvage a huge amount from the damaged chassis," said team principal James Rossiter, who praised his mechanics' team spirit in preparing the car for Saturday.

### FENESTRAZ OFF THE MARK

Nissan's Sacha Fenestraz scored his first Formula E points in the second Diriyah race, grabbing eighth with a last-ditch dive on Edoardo Mortara. "On the last lap I saw he lifted - I was quite far back," recalled the Japanese Super Formula and Super GT convert. "And I was like, 'Let's give it a go, I can finish on three wheels.' I just went in and I passed!"

### UPHILL TOIL FOR ROOKIE

DTM race winner Kelvin van der Linde took part in his first Formula E races as a replacement for Abt's injured Robin Frijns, who hurt a hand crashing in Mexico. Van der Linde enjoyed his maiden outings, but the South African admitted the weekend was "tough; it was a bit of an uphill battle".

### AND TICKTUM SCORES!

After performing heroics in qualifying, Dan Ticktum got NIO 333 onto the scoreboard with a point on Saturday, but efficiency concerns have tempered the Chinese squad's expectations. "Our main focus will be to prove ourselves in quali this season, and do what we can with what we have in the races," reckoned Ticktum (below).



## RESULTS ROUND 2/11, DIRIYAH (SAU), 27-28 JANUARY (39 LAPS - 60.829 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	<b>Pascal Wehrlein</b> (DEU)	Porsche/Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	47m45.567s
2	<b>Jake Dennis</b> (GBR)	Andretti/Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+0.531s
3	<b>Sam Bird</b> (GBR)	Jaguar Racing/Jaguar I-Type 6	+3.526s
4	<b>Sebastien Buemi</b> (CHE)	Envision Racing/Jaguar I-Type 6	+6.048s
5	<b>Rene Rast</b> (DEU)	McLaren/Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+7.471s
6	<b>Nick Cassidy</b> (NZL)	Envision Racing/Jaguar I-Type 6	+7.614s
7	<b>Jean-Eric Vergne</b> (FRA)	DS Penske/DS E-TENSE FE23	+12.394s
8	<b>Jake Hughes</b> (GBR)	McLaren/Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+15.187s
9	<b>Andre Lotterer</b> (DEU)	Andretti/Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+15.563s
10	<b>Mitch Evans</b> (NZL)	Jaguar Racing/Jaguar I-Type 6	+17.914s
11	<b>Stoffel Vandoorne</b> (BEL)	DS Penske/DS E-TENSE FE23	+26.307s
12	<b>Norman Nato</b> (FRA)	Nissan/Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+27.070s
13	<b>Lucas di Grassi</b> (BRA)	Mahindra Racing/Mahindra M9Electro	+28.799s
14	<b>Dan Ticktum</b> (GBR)	NIO 333/NIO 333 ER9	+37.318s
15	<b>Sergio Sette Camara</b> (BRA)	NIO 333/NIO 333 ER9	+45.034s
16	<b>Kelvin van der Linde</b> (ZAF)	Abt/Mahindra M9Electro	+1m00.135s
17	<b>Sacha Fenestraz</b> (FRA)	Nissan/Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+1m09.547s
18	<b>Antonio Felix da Costa</b> (PRT)	Porsche/Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	-1 lap
19	<b>Oliver Rowland</b> (GBR)	Mahindra Racing/Mahindra M9Electro	-1 lap
R	<b>Edoardo Mortara</b> (CHE)	Maserati/Maserati Tipo Folgore	32 laps-accident damage
R	<b>Nico Muller</b> (CHE)	Abt/Mahindra M9Electro	13 laps-mechanical
NS	<b>Maximilian Gunther</b> (DEU)	Maserati/Maserati Tipo Folgore	accident damage

**Winner's average speed** 76.419mph. **Fastest lap** Rast 1m10.117s, 79.597mph.

**QUALIFYING** 1 Buemi 1m09.435s; 2 Hughes 1m09.495s; 3 Bird 1m09.462s; 4 Ticktum 1m10.246s; 5 Rast 1m09.729s; 6 Evans 1m10.039s; 7 di Grassi 1m10.052s; 8 Rowland 1m10.114s; 9 Wehrlein 1m10.407s; 10 Cassidy 1m10.829s; 11 Dennis 1m10.903s; 12 Vergne 1m10.602s; 13 da Costa 1m10.940s; 14 Sette Camara 1m10.598s\*; 15 Lotterer 1m10.607s; 16 Nato 1m10.985s; 17 Vandoorne 1m10.636s; 18 Fenestraz 1m11.073s; 19 van der Linde 1m11.048s; 20 Mortara 1m11.708s; 21 Muller no time; NS Gunther 1m32.982s. \*grid penalty.

#### RACE 2 (40 LAPS - 62.379 MILES)

1 Wehrlein 50m40.304s; 2 Dennis +1.252s; 3 Rast +4.554s; 4 Bird +4.851s; 5 Hughes +10.869s; 6 Buemi +10.947s; 7 Evans +11.088s; 8 Fenestraz +12.409s; 9 Mortara +12.753s; 10 Ticktum +13.275s; 11 da Costa +15.229s; 12 Lotterer +15.623s; 13 Cassidy +17.038s; 14 Nato +19.569s; 15 di Grassi +20.796s; 16 Vergne +21.221s; 17 Sette Camara +22.243s; 18 van der Linde +25.291s; 19 Gunther +27.137s; 20 Vandoorne +37.572s; R Rowland 30 laps-damage; R Muller 25 laps-accident.

**Winner's average speed** 73.863mph. **Fastest lap** Bird 1m09.010s, 80.874mph.

**QUALIFYING** 1 Hughes 1m08.693s; 2 Evans 1m08.797s; 3 Rast 1m08.922s; 4 Buemi 1m08.926s; 5 Wehrlein 1m09.028s; 6 Dennis 1m09.198s; 7 Mortara 1m09.279s; 8 Vandoorne 1m09.282s; 9 Bird 1m09.628s; 10 Gunther 1m09.643s; 11 Ticktum 1m09.698s; 12 Fenestraz 1m09.670s; 13 Sette Camara 1m09.735s; 14 Rowland 1m09.690s; 15 Cassidy 1m09.761s; 16 Vergne 1m09.794s; 17 da Costa 1m09.832s; 18 Lotterer 1m09.843s; 19 Nato 1m10.107s; 20 di Grassi 1m09.975s; 21 van der Linde 1m10.221s; 22 Muller 1m10.072s.

**CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Wehrlein 68; 2 Dennis 62; 3 Buemi 31; 4 Bird 28; 5 Hughes 27; 6 Rast 26; 7 di Grassi 18; 8 Lotterer 14; 9 Evans 11; 10 Cassidy 10.

## NEXT REPORT

**HYDERABAD**  
**16 FEBRUARY ISSUE**

Ekstrom beats Schumacher to the finish in the final



## No smoke without fire for cool Ekstrom on ice

**RACE OF CHAMPIONS  
PITE HAVSBAD (SWE)  
28-29 JANUARY**

There's an old cliché about Scandinavian racers staying ice cool no matter what. But a Swede putting out a cockpit fire with one hand while keeping his foot buried on his way to victory around a frozen track close to the Arctic Circle? Too much? Not if you were Mattias Ekstrom in the 2023 Race of Champions final!

One-nil up after the first heat, the double DTM champion really did face smoke in the cockpit of his Supercar Lite early in the second. "I had an OK start, but after half a lap something caught fire in the car," related Ekstrom. "There was some bad smoke coming from the centre console. That wasn't in the plan. My co-driver wanted to stop – but I wasn't so interested in that! I switched off the windscreen heater and

kept going. I tried to shut down the fire on the straight, and luckily it stopped."

Neither did the distraction have any effect on his speed – he wrapped up the two-lap heat with more than a second to spare. Having taken the Race of Champions and told of his fire dramas, Ekstrom then reached over towards his vanquished opponent: a certain Mick Schumacher.

"This is even more special than actually winning," said Ekstrom, putting an arm around the German's shoulder and struggling to keep his voice steady. "I had two finals against Michael Schumacher in this event and it's so fantastic to compete against Mick. And also very emotional for me. I had only great moments with Michael at the Race of Champions and to see Mick in the final is very special. He's such a huge talent – and I know it won't take long before I get beaten by him!"

Ekstrom's victory at Pite Havsbad was his

fourth in the Race of Champions, elevating him to the top of the all-time list alongside Sebastien Loeb and Didier Auriol. But it had been a long time since the three (stadium) wins he posted in the noughties, two of them over Schumacher Sr.

Ekstrom wasn't the favourite coming into Sunday's Race of Champions. Oliver Solberg's unbeaten Saturday, on which he'd claimed the Nations Cup alongside father Petter, had earned him that tag. Day two began well with victory over dad in the first round, but he pushed the powerful FC1-X a little too hard against his former Hyundai WRC team-mate Thierry Neuville in the subsequent quarter-final. The resulting shunt ended his day – and that of the spectacular machine.

Schumacher impressed on both days. First, he paired up with Sebastian Vettel to take Team Germany to the Nations Cup semi-final, where they fell to the Team All Stars line-up of Neuville and Felipe Drugovich. On Sunday, he booked his spot in the final by pressuring the four-time F1 champion into a costly mistake at the same stage.

Neuville also stood out across the weekend, reaching the semi-final on Sunday. But he bent his steering by nudging a snowbank against Ekstrom, and fell narrowly short of the eventual winner.

And Loeb? The rally legend couldn't make it for Friday practice and perhaps paid the price. He was eliminated at the earliest opportunity on both days, albeit by the eventual winners of the Nations Cup and one of the fastest men of the week in Neuville.

**RICHARD ASHER**



Solberg father-and-son celebrate their Nations Cup victory

# Antonelli in front amid drama

**FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST  
KUWAIT MOTOR TOWN (KWT)  
28-29 JANUARY  
ROUND 2/5**

Mercedes F1 protege Andrea Kimi Antonelli led the way in the points after the first two rounds, despite the Italian not yet having won a race. Once again, consistency was his forte at the first single-seater event on the new Kuwait Motor Town facility.

The track is like a hybrid of Macau without buildings (thanks to a super-long blast down to Turn 2) crossed with Circuit of The Americas. That became evident in race one, when the MP Motorsport-run Hyderabad Blackbirds team detonated in a Turn 2 shunt that eliminated three of its four drivers – including poleman Joshua Durksen – and



Meguettounif leads the way in finale

FRMEC

delayed the other. From ninth on the grid, Dino Beganovic emerged through the chaos in front, and the Ferrari-backed Swede then held off Antonelli, his team-mate in the Prema-run Mumbai Falcons stable.

Taylor Barnard was held to be partially at fault for the crash, and the Briton's penalty relegated him from third to outside the points, promoting PHM Racing team-mate Josh Dufek to the final podium position. But the roles were swapped in race two...

Dufek battled his way through from eighth on the reversed grid to take a fine victory from Barnard, who had stormed from 14th, and former leader Nikhil Bohra. But the Swiss was later found to have a non-homologated rear rollbar link, and his exclusion promoted Barnard to his first Formula Regional victory. Beganovic was this time a victim of the early tussles, losing a front wing in a clash with Luke Browning, while Antonelli went out with broken left-rear suspension.

Antonelli was back in the points-scoring habit in the final race. Sami Meguettounif at last gave the Hyderabad/MP camp some cheer with a lights-to-flag victory from pole, soaking up late pressure from Antonelli. Durksen, who missed the opening round, finished third, while Beganovic, for whom this was the final outing, charged from a track-limits-plagued grid position of 19th to fifth behind team-mate Lorenzo Fluxa.

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## WEEKEND WINNERS

### RACE OF CHAMPIONS PITE HAVSBAD (SWE)

Mattias Ekstrom  
Nations Cup: Norway  
(Petter Solberg/Oliver Solberg)

### FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST KUWAIT MOTOR TOWN (KWT)

**Race 1** Dino Beganovic (below)  
Mumbai Falcons Racing

**Race 2** Taylor Barnard  
PHM Racing

**Race 3** Sami Meguettounif  
Hyderabad Blackbirds with MP

### TOYOTA FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA MANFEILD (NZL)

**Race 1** Louis Foster  
Giles Motorsport

**Race 2** Josh Mason  
Kiwi Motorsport

**Race 3** James Penrose  
Kiwi Motorsport



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# Foster wins and clashes on debut

**FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA  
MANFEILD (NZL)  
28-29 JANUARY  
ROUND 3/5**

Louis Foster arrived in New Zealand with jetlag on Friday morning, on Saturday he claimed a debut Toyota Formula Regional Oceania victory, and on Sunday he was involved in a clash with points leader Charlie Wurz as they fought for the lead.

Wurz claimed pole from American-based Brit Foster, the reigning Indy Pro 2000 champion, in a wet qualifying session for race one. The rain remained for the race, and Foster quickly fought past the fast-starting Ryder Quinn for second place. After a safety car, Foster



Foster splashes to victory in the opening race

BRUCE JENKINS

went around the outside of Wurz at Turn 1, and the Giles Motorsport driver survived another safety-car restart to take the win. Wurz finished second, but a penalty for a restart infringement dropped the M2 Competition driver to ninth, promoting main title rival Callum Hedge to second and Jacob Abel to third.

Josh Mason (Kiwi Motorsport) led throughout the reversed-grid second race, while Foster charged from seventh to complete a British 1-2. Wurz beat Hedge to sixth to extend his series lead.

Wurz beat Foster away from pole in the final race, and the Austrian was still in front on the 18th lap of 27 when an error by Foster at the infield hairpin forced both off the track. A grateful James Penrose inherited the lead and the Kiwi Motorsport driver went on to win the race from Hedge, with Liam Sceats making it three Kiwis in the top three.

The incident dropped Wurz and Foster to sixth and seventh, and a drivethrough penalty further relegated the Englishman to a finishing position of 13th.

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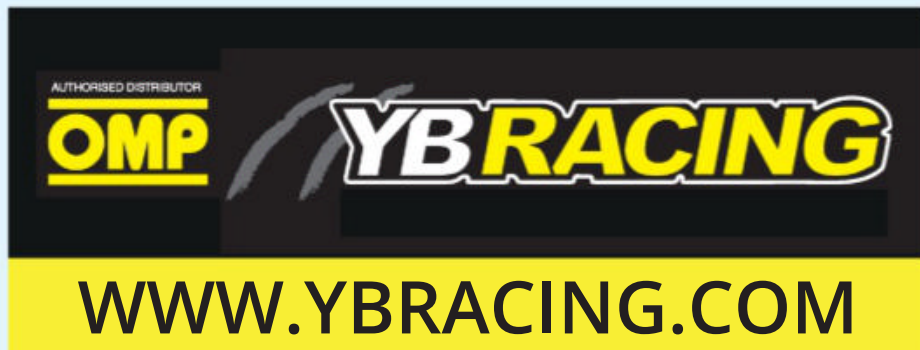
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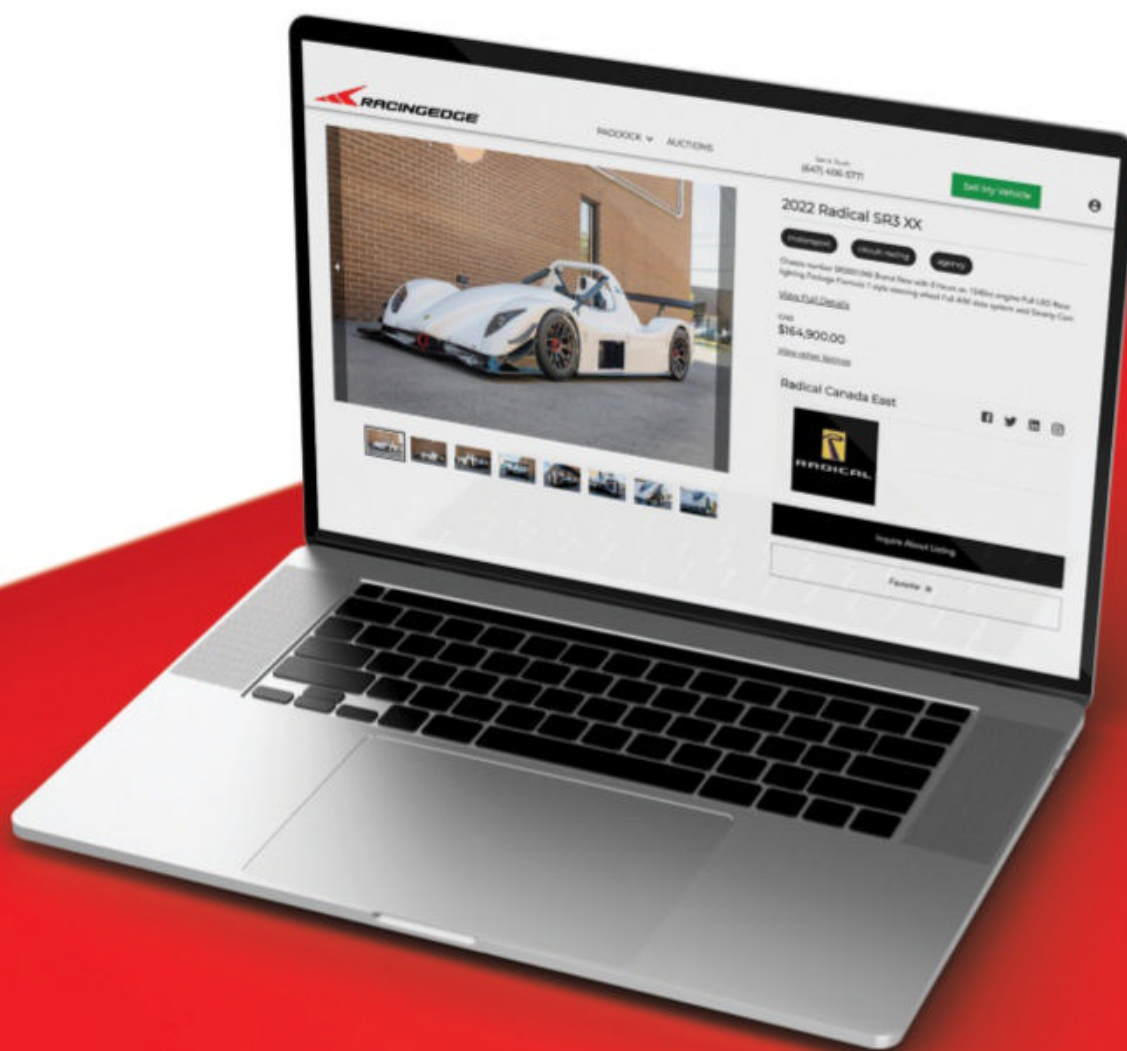


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- Ability to balance creativity and innovation with excellent attention to detail
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**Your role will include**

- Regular discussions with our current motorsport clients to identify new opportunities.
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- Running the pre-production process and working with the Director throughout.
- Working with Production Executives to plan shoots.
- Working on-set with the Director and the crew to run efficient shoot days.
- Working with the Director and the Editor to bring the films to life.
- Managing client comments and changes to films with the Post-Production Manager and Editor.
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**The Person**

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- Servicing and rebuilding all hydraulic components.
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**Managerial responsibilities may include:**

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- Maintaining parts tracking, lifing records, and parts ordering.
- Ensuring production quality and maintaining a high standard of workmanship within the department.

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- We're looking to create a department of self-motivated team players with an enthusiastic and positive attitude.
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- Generating and updating bill of materials for parts and assemblies.
- Produce documentation (internal and customer facing) to assist with electrical installations.
- Releasing of parts and assembly structures onto bill of materials
- Liaising with other departments and customers to support the build and testing of parts, systems, and vehicles

**Background and technical skills**

- Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Motorsport or Electronic Engineering or another relevant degree.
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- Fluent in the use of computers and Microsoft Office Suite.

**Attributes**

- Effective spoken and written communication skills
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- Ability to work under pressure
- Willingness to travel and support cars on event or test

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**GB3 Race winners Voisin and Rees continue**

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**NEW CLASS ADDED TO  
SUPER TOURERS SERIES**



**TRIBUTE TO HAWKE FF1600  
CREATOR DAVID LAZENBY**















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Voisin (inset) impressed in maiden season of single-seaters

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

JEP



## STILES BACK TO NZ IN FORMULA RENAULT CAR

### FORMULA OPEN

Multiple UK single-seater champion Ben Stiles has returned to New Zealand, where he started his racing career, and will compete in a Formula Renault machine bought from James Penrose.

Stiles will participate in Formula Open, which brings together everything from F5000 to Formula Toyotas, starting at the Scope Classic at Ruapuna Raceway later this month.

Stiles raced in New Zealand in 2017-18 and learned the ropes of Kent-engined Formula Ford machinery in a car owned by his father, Champion of Brands stalwart Trevor.

“I quickly understood that, if I wanted to race in the UK, I’d have to earn a good wage, so I set up Sussex Water Drainage Ltd to install water treatment plants and got my foot in the door,” said Stiles Jr.

Back in the UK, he netted consecutive Classic FF2000 crowns then a Monoposto 1800 accolade using the same Van Diemen RF82 between 2019-21.

“I’ve always loved adrenalin and needed more excitement in my life, so decided to come back,” he added about his return to New Zealand. “I bought the FRenault, which Andy Neale brought from the UK for Mark Munro for about £18k.

“It’s unlike anything I’ve driven. My first thought as I hammered down the back straight at Levels [Timaru] was, ‘Are the wheels about to come flying off?’ as the high negative camber makes it wander like mad. But, having learned to left-foot brake with serious force, and got the hang of it, the car [below] is wonderful.”

MARCUS PYE



# GB3 sophomores Voisin and Rees target title

### GB3

GB3 race winners Callum Voisin and Matthew Rees are aiming for a title tilt this season as they remain in the series with Rodin Carlin and JHR Developments respectively for a second year.

In his rookie single-seater campaign after graduating from Ginetta Juniors, Voisin scored three wins in GB3 in 2022 and missed out on third in the standings by fewer than five points. “I think the whole of last year I built a very good relationship with Carlin, and the year just got better and better,” said the 16-year-old.



Rees took one win in first season of GB3 with JHR

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

“I thought it would be good to come back because I would know what to expect, I’m a more experienced driver and I know what I have to do to win this. The GB3 car is also probably one of the best handling single-seaters at this level now as well.

“I think the main thing is just being more consistent; I’d have a good race then make a mistake in race two [in 2022]. This year I’ve got to work on the consistency. Getting a good start, that’s half the battle – I think that’s going to be key.”

Rees, meanwhile, moved into GB3 last season as the reigning British Formula 4 champion and finished sixth in the standings with one win to his name.

“My aspiration for 2023 is to be consistently in the top three and challenge for the title,” said the Welsh 17-year-old. “We had a great start to last year with a podium straight off the bat at Oulton Park, so I’m hoping to repeat that and continue the good form we had at the end of last season, as we had a win at Brands Hatch.”

Also confirmed for GB3 this season is Edward Pearson, who graduates from British F4 and will complete Fortec Motorsports’ line-up alongside Max Esterson and Jarrod Waberski.

STEFAN MACKLEY

# Gunn is magic BGT bullet for Beechdean

## BRITISH GT

Two-time British GT champion Andrew Howard will race full-time in the series this season with his Beechdean AMR operation alongside Ross Gunn in the GT3 class.

Howard, who took title success in 2013 and 2015, made sporadic British GT appearances last season in McLaren and Mercedes machinery prior to an outing in his Beechdean-run Aston Martin Vantage at the Donington Park finale with Lewis Proctor. After focusing on racing in Europe over the past few seasons, including the GT World Challenge in 2022, Howard now has his sights set on a third British crown.

“For us, what we needed to do was find out if the car was competitive against what is an incredibly competitive field,” said Howard, who forms a Pro-Am partnership with Gunn. “I think coming back [last year for Donington] the idea was also to look at, do we do Silver-Am or do we do Pro-Am?



“You’ve got to want to win British GT, you can’t do British unless you want to win it. It’s not one of those championships where you just turn up, have a bit of fun. It’s a properly competitive championship with top drivers in it.”

Gunn has already raced with Howard and Beechdean, taking victory alongside the team owner in the Silverstone 24 Hours and British GT4 title success with the squad in 2015. Over the past 12 months he has

become a multiple winner in the IMSA GTD Pro class, as well as being a class podium finisher in the Dubai 24 Hours this year.

“British GT is one of the most intensely competitive national series in the world and you can see how hard it is to win because so few drivers have done it more than once,” said Gunn. “My job is simple; work as hard as I possibly can to help Andrew fight for a third drivers’ title.”

**STEFAN MACKLEY**

# Century’s new BMW GT4 2023 line-up unveiled

## BRITISH GT

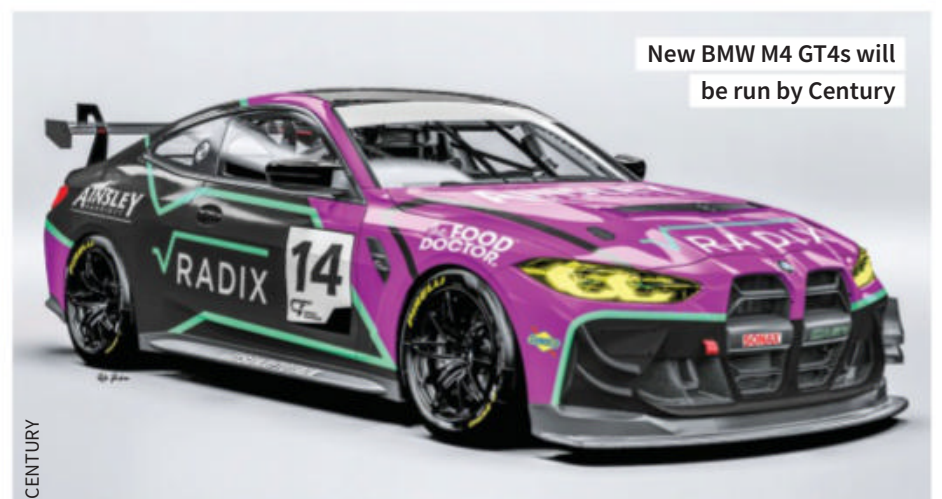
Century Motorsport will run two new BMW M4 GT4s in the British GT championship this season, with Michael Johnston, Chris Salkeld, Carl Cavers and Lewis Plato filling the line-up.

Salkeld remains for a third season with the team and will partner debutant Johnston, while Plato returns to British GT for the first time since 2015

and will race alongside reigning Porsche Sprint Challenge Am champion Cavers.

All four teamed up together to finish third in class aboard the new G82-based M4 in the Dubai 24 Hours last month, ahead of the British GT campaign beginning at Oulton Park on 8-10 April.

Johnston said: “I’m under no illusions that I’m going to have to work extremely hard to get



myself to the standard of the other bronze drivers if we want a successful year.”

Century’s GT3 programme,

which claimed victory at the 2022 British GT Donington Park season finale, will be revealed shortly.

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# CTCRC adds extra class to boost Super Tourers

## SUPER TOURERS

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Super Tourers series is targeting additional entries for this year by adding an invitational class for cars with non-original engines.

The series generated much attention in its inaugural season, with this year's Super Touring Power festival at Brands Hatch set to further boost its profile. While that is expected to draw a large entry, including cars from New Zealand, the series only attracted double figures once last year, for its opening round at Silverstone.

"We thought it was worth doing something because there's another 10 or 15 cars out there, easily," said CTCRC chairman Stuart Caie.

Likely candidates for the new class include Frazer Huntley, who raced his Honda-engined



Nissan Primera in Classic Thunder last year, and multiple Pre-'03 Touring Car champion AJ Owen, whose garage includes a 1993 Ford Mondeo running a Duratec engine.

"It makes cars like ours able to race," said Owen, whose father Craig last raced the Mondeo in 2011. "I said to dad, 'I'm fed up of looking at it in the workshop as an ornament with a cover over it!'"

MARK PAULSON

# LEY AND KENT CONFIRMED FOR 2023 CAMPAIGN

## TCR UK

Multiple race winners Alex Ley and Bradley Kent head the latest raft of TCR UK driver announcements, taking the confirmed number of entries for the series into the mid-teens with the opening round still two months away.

Ley will continue in the Hyundai i30 N in which he took three wins – the most of any driver – on his way to sixth in last year's standings, despite missing the opening round. The Daniel James Motorsport car will now be run in conjunction with Area Motorsport.

Kent, whose 2022 campaign was blighted by unreliability, will switch from an i30 to the Hyundai Veloster previously raced by his two-time champion brother Lewis, and run by the family's Essex and Kent Motorsport operation.

"Last year was a challenging one for me and it's now fully behind me," said Bradley Kent (below). "It's clear that TCR UK has stepped up another level for 2023 with the new cars, teams and drivers coming on board. However, our advantage is that we're not starting from scratch with a new car."

Also staying in the championship are JW Bird Motorsport's Matthew Wilson (Cupra Leon Competicion) as well as Darron Lewis (Audi RS3 LMS) and Neil Trotter.

Trotter's Chameleon Motorsport squad expands to a two-car line-up of Cupras, the second for former Mini Challenge frontrunner Lewis Brown, whose intended debut at last year's season finale was foiled by technical problems.

MARK PAULSON



# Radical announces new XXR upgrade for its SR10 model

## RADICAL

Radical has revealed an upgraded XXR version of its popular SR10 prototype, featuring numerous design improvements.

The SR10 was first launched in 2020 and over 100 cars have since been delivered to customers, the majority heading to the US. Now, following the announcement of an enhanced XXR version of the SR3 last year, similar developments are being applied to the SR10.

One of the most noticeable differences is new-look front louvres on the car, created to improve the SR10's aerodynamics as well as boosting its cooling efficiency. Other tweaks include a 'central fin' feature and new alloy wheels, while a new splitter and diffuser

package is available as an optional extra.

"Our fastest-selling model in our history, and a favourite with US customers in particular, we've been working hard to cherry-pick the best XXR model line upgrades and adding them to our best-selling model, the SR10," said Radical Motorsport CEO Joe Anwyll. "As well as some impressive styling updates to the bodywork, the addition of the 'central fin' and front louvres have proven to increase the SR10 XXR's usability even more, allowing drivers to extract even more of the car's mindblowing potential."

Those with an existing SR10 can also benefit from the upgrades with an XXR Evolution Pack being made available. The SR10 XXR is open for orders, with production due to begin in the spring.



# David Lazenby 1936-2023

## OBITUARY

David Lazenby, the genial early 1960s Team Lotus mechanic who designed and created Hawke racing cars, has died aged 86.

Following RAF service, Lazenby worked at Lotus, in the Elite assembly shop, then joined Colin Chapman's Team Lotus, under Jim Endruweit.

Preparing Jim Clark's Formula 1 cars, and on the Indianapolis 500 crew with which the world champion won at their third attempt in 1965, brought action and adventure before he joined Lotus Components.

The skilled fabricator left in 1968 to manufacture parts and Formula Ford cars. Unlike Lotus, which had monopolised FF1600's first year, Lazenby's Hawkes would use VW-based Hewland gearboxes rather than fragile Renault units.

The long-nosed Hawke DL1 appeared in 1969, developed by sales manager Tony Roberts. Around 35 production DL2s were made over three years, from workshops in Essex and Hertfordshire.

Tom Walkinshaw's 1969 Scottish title in a DL2 put him on the racing ladder,



Morris (left, in a Hawke) credits his racing career to Lazenby



Warwick is among famous names to have raced a Hawke

MOTORSPORTIMAGES

while Dane Tom Belso and Canadian importer Gary Magwood were among those who impressed in them.

Future FF1600 star Rick Morris credits his career to 'Lazo'. "I knew nothing when I bought a DL2 but, after I set fastest lap at Thruxton in 1973, he gave me a DL11, a DL12 [in which Morris was runner-up in the 1975 BAF series] and a DL15 in later years," he recalled. "We never had a cross word."

The inboard front-suspended 1976

DL15 was hugely successful, wins by Derek Daly, Derek Warwick and Bernard Devaney contributing to 65 sales. Daly won the Festival – Brands Hatch's first – in one badged as a prototype DL17.

After winning slicks-and-wings FF2000 races from 1975-77 with Tiff Needell, Geoff Friswell and Philip Bullman, and building an Adrian Reynard-designed F3 model, Hawke's FF1600 star waned, despite the brilliant efforts of James Weaver.

Hawke's owner since 1978, British Air Ferries boss Mike Keegan (Rupert's father), had grandiose F1 plans but closed the Southend factory in 1979. Lazenby's Pace Products subsequently specialised in oil pumps and after-market turbo conversions for road cars in Suffolk.

MARCUS PYE



Alongside Donington, Combe stays on calendar

## GTSCC to return to Donington

### HISTORICS

Automobiles Historiques' GT & Sports Car Cup invitation series will return to Donington Park this season following a year's sabbatical.

The category, open to owners of homologated pre-1966 GT cars and pre-'63 sportscars of a type that raced in period international events, has taken a 75-minute slot at Equipe Classic Racing's Donington fixture on 8 July. This meeting therefore

extends the relationship of series promoters Flavien Marcais and Vanessa Finburgh with the Equipe organisation, with which last season's quartet of races opened at Oulton Park.

The GTSCC season will begin over 90 minutes on Silverstone's Grand Prix circuit – another firm favourite – on 10-11 June as part of the MG Live extravaganza. This year the event will be extra special, celebrating the marque's centenary 30 miles from

its birthplace at Morris Garages in Oxford.

Competitors will reconvene on 23 September for another 90-minute race at Castle Combe's Autumn Classic, where five previous visits have provided as many winners from three divisions.

The annual trip to the Algarve Classic Festival at Portimao on 27-29 October then promises renowned Portuguese hospitality and a two-hour contest on another Formula 1 circuit.

MARCUS PYE



**BRABHAM BT52 TO RETURN TO GOODWOOD**

The Brabham BT52 Formula 1 car, an example of which powered Nelson Piquet to the 1983 drivers' title, is set to return to Goodwood at April's Members' Meeting as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Sussex circuit. The BMW turbo-powered machine reportedly set the fastest ever lap of the track, in under a minute, when Piquet was testing at the venue, but its time was never officially recorded. The car's designer Gordon Murray and Brabham team manager Herbie Blash are also both set to attend the event.

# HERO-ERA reveals scholarship to help young navigators

**HISTORIC RALLYING**

The Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation-Endurance Rally Association has launched a new scheme to encourage more young people to get involved in historic rallying.

The Bob Rutherford Historic Rally Scholarship for Young Navigators is designed to support and develop the skills of a young navigator across a year. They will attend training seminars and share a car with an experienced driver in four HERO-ERA events.

The scheme, endorsed by Motorsport UK, has been set up in memory of Bob Rutherford, who was killed on the

HERO-ERA Classic Marathon race in 2021. It is open to people aged between 14 and 24, and they do not need to have any previous motorsport experience. A shootout assessment day will take place in the summer to select the winner.

Rutherford's son Will is organising the scholarship and said: "Dad was passionate about welcoming new people into the sport, which is evident by the fact both his sons have enjoyed competing and organising rallies from a very young age. He was always keen to put something back into the sport he loved and this scholarship epitomises that desire. For me, this is the best way to yield something positive out of a truly devastating circumstance."



**IN THE HEADLINES**

**PARIAT MOVES TO ARGENTI**

British Formula 4 racer Jaden Pariat has switched to Argenti Motorsport for this year. The Indian contested the final two 2022 events with Chris Dittmann Racing, scoring a best finish of seventh, and now plans a full campaign with Argenti. "The team have had a great few years in the championship, bagging nine wins and multiple podiums," said Pariat. "Michael's [Meadows, team boss] vision to support and develop drivers in their first steps into single-seaters was also very fitting to our needs."

**PALMOWSKI JOINS ELITE**

Ginetta Junior driver Alisha Palmowski has moved to the frontrunning Elite Motorsport squad for this season. Palmowski was last year's scholar and took a best result of eighth in the main championship with Preptech UK, before starring in the Winter Series. "I am very proud to be joining Elite and feel privileged to have the opportunity to race with the reigning Ginetta Junior champions," she said.

**KINGSBURY BACK TO CLIOS**

Jack Kingsbury will return to the Clio Sport Championship in a newly built 197 model in 2023, having previously finished runner-up in 2018 and 2021 in a 182. "I've had a run in the car already and hope to be right on it from the opening round," he said. "Learning the set-up will be the biggest thing. I'm looking forward to racing again with Jack [Dwane, 2021 champion], who's also gone the 197 route - it's always clean and competitive with him."

**FROM UK TO MONTE CARLO**

A small selection of cars began the 25th edition of Rallye Monte-Carlo Historique from the Brooklands Museum last weekend (below). Over 250 crews are taking part in the event, with the rest starting from locations in Norway, Germany, Italy and France. The event was due to finish in the early hours of yesterday (Wednesday) morning.





# THE RACER



Pit talk from the HRDC

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# A successful theme

*There's lots to look forward to in national motorsport in 2023, and some of the most popular events are set to be those with a strong focus*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Over the next four pages, Autosport writers have picked out the UK events and championships they are most looking forward to attending or following over the coming year. Despite some of the depressing headlines in the news, this feature makes clear that there is still plenty to eagerly anticipate in the world of national motorsport for 2023.

Last month (19 January) we highlighted the volume of new categories being launched this year, despite the difficult financial climate, and the one that really seems to have got people excited is the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Audi TT Cup Racing series. Over 40 cars are already in build – a staggering achievement for a brand-new initiative. It may not be as cheap as some divisions, but it seems that the ability to get one of the Mk2 cars ready to race for under £12,000 has really struck a chord and it will be fascinating to see what the final entry number is for the first round at Brands Hatch in April. There are also plenty of anniversaries being celebrated with special events in 2023 – be it Silverstone and Goodwood commemorating 75 years since their first race meetings, the centenaries of MG and Triumph, or Caterham turning 50, and so the list goes on.

One of the events selected in the feature overleaf is the new Super Touring Power festival at Brands. As the name suggests, there will be a focus on the halcyon 1990s days of the British

**“Many of those attending have been hooked in by a passion for a particular marque of car”**

Touring Car Championship, an era that remains incredibly popular three decades on. But it will also feature tin-tops from throughout the 65 years of the BTCC (another anniversary!) and promises to be an event that draws in the crowds. It follows a recent trend, most commonly seen from leading circuit operator MotorSport Vision, for an increasing number of race meetings to have a central theme attached to them to help pull in the punters.

And this is a trend that is yielding results. You only have to head to the Mini Festival or Festival Italia at the Kent venue to see how successfully they entice people to attend. Sometimes the racing can take a back seat at such fixtures as the infield and paddock are filled with static displays, car clubs and marque enthusiasts, but these additional features play an important role in piquing the interest of even more people.

It's not just MSV meetings and venues that have tapped into this trend either. The British Automobile Racing Club organises its popular Thruxton Historic Festival, while some of its Convoy shows that feature truck racing also bring in the hordes – sometimes creating unexpected problems, such as when people descended upon Pembrey last year. “We had the biggest crowd there since the 1990s for the first truck meeting in May,” says BARC group CEO Ben Taylor, who admits: “We probably weren't 100% prepared for that level of interest!” It was a similar story when thousands arrived at Mallory Park for the annual Plum Pudding meeting on Boxing Day, prompting long queues at both the beginning and end of the day. Both of these examples serve as a reminder that specially promoted events can really capture the imagination of the public, and a venue's infrastructure must be prepared for that!

The Oulton Park Gold Cup was also tweaked last year with spectators very much in mind. A variety of different historic racing organisers had grids at the event, with such as the Classic Sports Car Club's Special Saloons and Modsports chosen because of their fan appeal. But, sometimes, there can be a slight discord between a themed event's on and off-track action. Take the Vaux Valves event trialled at Brands last year. While a range of Vauxhalls were assembled, the lack of a one-make series for the Griffin-badged machines meant a host of Vauxhall Tigras in the Intermarque Silhouettes contests was their best racing representation. This in turn raises an interesting point. Many of those attending these themed events would not be stalwart club racing visitors, instead they have been hooked in by a passion for a particular marque or type of car. If these people are presented with some compelling on-track action, it could spark an interest in this branch of the automotive world too.

Yet there is no point in attracting scores of people if the racing proves a disappointment, with small grids instead proving to be a missed opportunity. Given all the uncertainty surrounding the global economy, unsurprisingly it's far from clear how many people will continue to go racing this year. But there have been some encouraging signs. The BRSCC was the only club to grow its average grid size during 2022, and it is encouraged by the early signals for this season. “Registrations across the board are ahead of where they were this time last year,” says chairman Peter Daly. “But we're not complacent by any means – registrations don't always turn into race entries. We're apprehensively excited.”

As the next four pages illustrate, there is certainly plenty to be excited about. Sometimes spectators are not considered when planning club meetings, but it seems that themed events could have an important part to play in creating even more to look forward to. 🏁

➔ P66 UPCOMING NATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

# WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE UK IN 2023

*It's set to be another great season of national motorsport and here are some of the potential highlights*



**P28 INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

RICHARD STYLES

The Mini Miglias and Se7ens thrilled when on BTCC bill in 2020



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



**Stephen Lickorish**

## GUEST STARS ON THE BTCC BILL

There's always some fantastic racing among the British Touring Car Championship supports. It will be interesting to see whether Porsche GB Junior Adam Smalley can follow in four of his predecessors' footsteps and claim a title, or if anyone can repeat Alex Dunne's British Formula 4 domination. We wonder who will triumph from the packed Mini Challenge masses, and how the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB will fare now that the Caymans have permanently locked onto the TOCA bill. But it could well be the guests that steal the show.

Ginetta's departure to SRO has created the chance for a plethora of club championships to have a moment in the spotlight and race alongside the touring cars. The last time the Mini 7 Racing Club had such an opportunity, at Brands Hatch in 2020, they produced three barnstorming contests. Expect more of the same at Thruxton. Caterhams also have a reputation for close racing and the top-tier 420R machines will join the fray at Silverstone, while Radical's motorsport offering has undergone a revamp for 2023 and the Radical Cup UK will be in action at Snetterton and Oulton Park.

But perhaps the most eye-catching of the additions is a three-event Legends BTCC championship. These pocket rockets and their drawn-out-of-the-hat grids make for some spectacular action. Clearly, there is plenty to look forward to at these events, and that's without even mentioning the headline act.



**Stefan Mackley**

## AUTOSPORT 3 HOURS

There's every reason to be excited about the return of the Autosport 3 Hours this year, not least because of the race's roll call of previous winners and the plethora of pre-1966 GT cars likely to be in action.

The event was last held in 2015 but its history dates back to 1957, with two-time Formula 1 champion Jim Clark taking the top spot in 1959 and 1963 — the latter the same year as his maiden F1 title no less — while inaugural British Saloon Car champion Jack Sears proved victorious the following year.

The return of the event is in connection with the Historic Sports Car Club and will be the organiser's season-opener on 23 April at Snetterton, the Norfolk circuit that is the traditional home of the event.

The race is set to feature five different classes for pre-1966 GTs based on engine capacity, with a 50-minute qualifying session followed by a three-hour race. Machines can be driven solo or shared by up to three drivers, while it will be a rare chance to see cars in action on the 200 layout at the Snetterton venue.

Autosport's involvement with the event means there's also the possibility of a drive in the race itself. The chance to race an historic car in an event with such history certainly makes it this writer's most anticipated moment of the coming year.



RICHARD STYLES



Channel Islands trip  
will be a British  
Hillclimb highlight

PAUL LAWRENCE



**Paul Lawrence**

## THE BRITISH HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2022 British Hillclimb Championship season will take some beating this year. But there are signs that 2023 could be even better as the big guns of this incredible branch of the sport slug it out over fractions of a second.

With records being broken all over, there have been some stunning top-12 run-offs, when the fastest drivers of the day go head to head, in the past campaign. This time around, my season is due to take in at least nine of the events, including a return trip to the magnificent Bouley Bay in the Channel Islands.

Wallace Menzies starts as title favourite but he will be the first to say that nothing can be taken for granted and that he will have to work incredibly hard to bag a fourth straight title with his Gould GR59. Alex Summers, Scott Moran, Matthew Ryder and Trevor Willis can all take the fight to the flying Scotsman.

Summers, in his stunning IndyCar-powered DJ Firestorm, is the man who ran Menzies closest last year and their sporting rivalry was a delight to witness. That will be renewed, but multiple champion Moran can never be underestimated and Ryder proved to be quickest of all on his day.

So the stage is set for some mighty action and I commend a visit to at least one of the rounds. It's an underrated and sometimes overlooked branch of the sport, yet the spectacle, atmosphere and camaraderie is utterly outstanding.



Mark Paulson

## BRANDS HATCH SUPER TOURING POWER

There's plenty to whet the appetite in national and club-level tin-tops this year. Finally delivering on its promise, the burgeoning TCR UK series is set to provide close multi-marque action among a packed field of contemporary cars. Meanwhile, the increasing popularity of 1970s machinery – now catered for in multiple series – could be another feature.

But the potential stand-out is the new Super Touring Power event at Brands Hatch on 1-2 July. Circuit operator MotorSport Vision has successfully adopted a festival theme for many events in recent years and this is its latest addition.

Building on the buzz generated by the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Super Tourers series, the event will celebrate one of the most fondly remembered eras of the British Touring Car Championship. Period greats like John Cleland and Anthony Reid, both regulars in the series last year, should be among a host of star drivers and cars for demonstrations and displays as well as racing. The Super Tourers will contest two races each day, with the venue's spectator-friendly Indy circuit and ever-popular driving challenge of the Grand Prix layout offering the best of both worlds.

It's not all about 1990s Super Touring cars either. All eight CTCRC championships will feature in recognition of 65 years of the BTCC. From Minis and Hillman Imps battling American V8s in Pre-'66 Touring Cars, through the Ford Capris of the Pre-'83 Group 1 era and Pre-'93 Group A BMW M3s, it's a dream line-up for touring car aficionados.



STEVE JONES



GARY HAWKINS

## 750MC CLIO SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP

With predicted average grids of close to 30 cars, the reigning champion moving up to the top 197 class and a former nemesis of his returning, this year's 750 Motor Club Clio Sport Championship is shaping up to be a cracker.

After winning two titles in an older 182 model, Jack Dwane has switched to a Clio 197, meaning he will have to learn fast if he's to make it a hat-trick. Justin Griffiths and Owain Rosser, both outright winners in 197s in 2022, are continuing and their greater knowledge of the newer cars, which rapidly became dominant over the 182s after their introduction to the category, could pay dividends early on.

After sitting out last season, Dwane's closest challenger from 2021, Jack Kingsbury, is making a comeback, also in a newly built 197. In fact, K-Tec had reportedly sold 14 new 197 rollcages to date, with potentially more on order. A similar number of 182s look likely to turn out too, making for some potentially hairy and unpredictable qualifying sessions as the top 197 names thread their way through on a hot lap.

The competition at the front in both classes was fierce and wide open during the 2022 season, and the unpredictability is set to continue as the whole grid moves from Yokohama to Toyo rubber in 2023.

Another of the 750MC's tin-top categories, its Type R Trophy, is also one to watch with potentially its biggest grid yet, the club indicating that it anticipates around 25 full-season entries.

Carl McKellar

## ANOTHER INTRIGUING GB3 TITLE BATTLE

After a strong season in 2022, with record grids and a close duel for the title, things look promising for an even greater GB3 campaign this term. With Zandvoort added to the calendar for the first time alongside the traditional trek to Spa, the series has a growing international flavour while still maintaining its presence at some of the UK's best circuits.

The grid is starting to take shape as teams begin revealing line-ups, with an interesting mix of contenders once again, from karting and Formula 4 graduates looking to make their mark to sophomore drivers hoping to stamp their authority this time around.

All eyes will be on reigning British F4 champion Alex Dunne, who has chosen GB3 for the next phase of his career as he tries to

follow in the footsteps of 2022 series champion Luke Browning at Hitech GP. And the addition of Red Bull Junior Souta Arao alongside him is proof that the series is growing in reputation as a viable step on the single-seater ladder towards Formula 1.

Following his race-winning season in GB3 last year, Max Esterson reminded everybody of his potential by going on to win the prestigious Formula Ford Festival in October, and he will be another to watch as he looks to add to his trophy collection with a switch to Fortec. With more drivers set to be announced in the coming weeks, it promises to be another exciting season. Let battle commence!

Steve Whitfield



Intriguing mix of drivers has been announced for 2023 GB3 season

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## WATTS TACKLING THE MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP AT CADWELL PARK

Forging an independent career in motorsport when your father is a larger-than-life former touring car driver was never going to be easy. Add into the mix a partner who is not only a successful racer in his own right but also the son of a national treasure (and 1976 Formula 1 world champion), and it's easy to see why Aimee Watts has had to learn how to fight – to be seen and to be taken seriously.

Despite a lifetime in the paddock, she's still fairly new to this. Indeed, it wasn't until 2020 that she first made the transition from watching her dad to joining him (for a bit of fun) in the C1 Racing Series. One year later and she was on the top step of the podium.

Now, having partnered Patrick in both the

C1 and his historic Mini Cooper, it's time for Watts to make her own way in the sport. For 2023, she's joining the Mazda MX-5 Supercup. She had one solo outing last year in an old Mk1, but the Mk3 cars are a very different proposition. Fast and edgy, powerful and well-spec'd, they demand respect, and are easily capable of outpacing the likes of a Boxster S.

It's going to be a big leap, especially as she not only has to learn a new car but new circuits too, such as the uniquely challenging Cadwell Park in August. Nevertheless, she's ready, willing and – without a doubt – able.

See you on the Mountain.

**Steve Hindle**



Watts is making the jump to MX-5 Supercup



J BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



**Marcus Pye**

### GOODWOOD'S 25TH REVIVAL

Goodwood's 71st Members' Meeting on 2 July 1966 marked the end of the road for racing at the former RAF Westhampnett airfield, enshrined in motorsport folklore for 19 seasons.

Not in their wildest dreams did competitors or spectators that gloomy day foresee full-blooded racing returning, although testing, sprints and rallies continued. But, 32 years later, on 18 September 1998, precisely 50 years after Goodwood's opening, Lord March finally realised his ambition to rekindle his racer grandfather's passion.

There have been countless stunning races at what became an annual gathering, now livestreamed globally. Even if you have attended all 24 Revivals to date, as I have, September's 25th running, celebrating Goodwood's 75th anniversary, will be extra special.

It's high theatre set against a glorified pre-'66 backdrop, not historic racing *per se*, and the dynamic of the cast – like the cars – has evolved since 1948 opening day winner Stirling Moss, Jack Brabham and John Surtees thrilled fans at early Revivals. Only Jackie Stewart of the F1 champions who starred at Goodwood contemporarily remains.

So dress in period style, make the pilgrimage and enjoy a unique experience. We won't be wowed by a Spitfire thundering from Madgwick past the pits at low level and buzzing our host as in 1998, but doubtless his grace will be back in the Bristol with which his grandfather opened the venue.



Goodwood anniversaries should make the Revival extra special this year

J BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

# FINISHING STRAIGHT



## The highs and lows of an F1 legend



### DOCUMENTARY STEWART

Available on NOW and Sky

When it comes to successful British Formula 1 drivers, we're a little spoilt for choice. Lewis Hamilton continues to break records once thought out of reach, while fellow world champions Jenson Button,

Damon Hill and Nigel Mansell continue to have large and passionate followings even in retirement.

Before all of them was Jackie Stewart, whose career on and off the track is the focus of a new documentary. *Stewart* follows the life of the three-time F1 world champion during the 1960s and 1970s, his rise to becoming the best driver in the world, and his strong bond with wife Helen, while also dealing with the inherent dangers of motorsport and an unknown disability.

Without doubt the highlight of the 90-minute programme is the wealth of archive material – the majority is in colour and restored to outstanding quality, and includes plenty of racing footage and atmospheric clips. Stewart narrates at various points, but the majority of voices

are from period interviews with the Scot and his wife, as well as team owner Ken Tyrrell and broadcaster Murray Walker.

Much like Pele was football's first superstar, the same could be said in motorsport of Stewart, who revolutionised the stock of a grand prix driver outside of the car through commercial deals. The strain of all these commitments, with nearly 200 flights across the Atlantic in one year, is cited as the reason for his health problems in 1972, but it emphasises how big a star he was at the height of his powers.

For many the documentary is the chance to see Stewart in a new light, from a feisty interview with American journalist Peter Manso, to breaking down in tears when describing the aftermath of team-mate Francois Cevert's fatal crash in practice



Nurburgring 1973, Stewart's 27th and final GP victory

PHIPPS/SUTTON



Loss of team-mate and friend Cevert a huge blow



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY  
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 IMAGES



SCHLEGELMILCH

HUDSON

Documentary depicts  
 devotion to wife Helen

for the 1973 United States GP.

The danger of grand prix racing is a theme throughout, with Stewart's crusade to improve safety a main focus, even if it put him in direct conflict with officials and fellow drivers. At one point, Stirling Moss goes as far as to say: "I think we have to blame him for the emasculation of every decent circuit that's going." Stewart's story of son Paul as a child once asking, "When's daddy going to die?" and footage from Jochen Rindt's funeral put the issue in perspective.

One of the other focal points is Stewart's severe dyslexia, the diagnosis of which long after his F1 career had ended "saved me from drowning". It's an honest assessment of his life with the condition, from being called thick and dumb at school to, pre-diagnosis, hiding his disabilities from everyone, including his wife.

It's certainly well-made, thought-provoking and at times emotional to watch, but it does have its flaws. Sometimes there

is a lack of context, which is perhaps inevitable when it's not a blow-by-blow account of each race, but rather key moments picked out.

Little mention is given to Stewart's racing before his maiden F1 title in 1969 and, more bizarrely, there is no coverage of his life since he retired, such as the creation of Stewart Grand Prix. Neither is there any reference to Helen's battle with dementia or Stewart's founding of the charity Race Against Dementia. It's surprising, given the documentary's recent release and

especially since she features so prominently throughout, that nothing has been included even in post-production.

These points aside, it's fascinating viewing even for those who are ardent fans, with the archive footage alone worth sitting down for an hour and a half to watch. With Stewart now the oldest surviving F1 champion and grand prix winner at the age of 83, there's perhaps never been a more appropriate time to acknowledge a career that marked him out as the very best of his era.

**STEFAN MACKLEY**

YouTube

[youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom](https://youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom)



### How Mercedes and TeamViewer are fighting back in F1

After Mercedes' disappointing 2022 Formula 1 campaign, team principal Toto Wolff sees this season as a huge chance to grow and develop. Wolff, TeamViewer CEO Oliver Steil and Motorsport Network president James Allen chat about the past F1 season, important lessons and what role TeamViewer's technology plays in day-to-day race operations.

## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

#### Bathurst 12 Hours

##### Intercontinental GT Challenge

Mount Panorama, Australia

5 February

**Livestream** on Motorsport.tv,  
 Sat 0140, Sat 1815

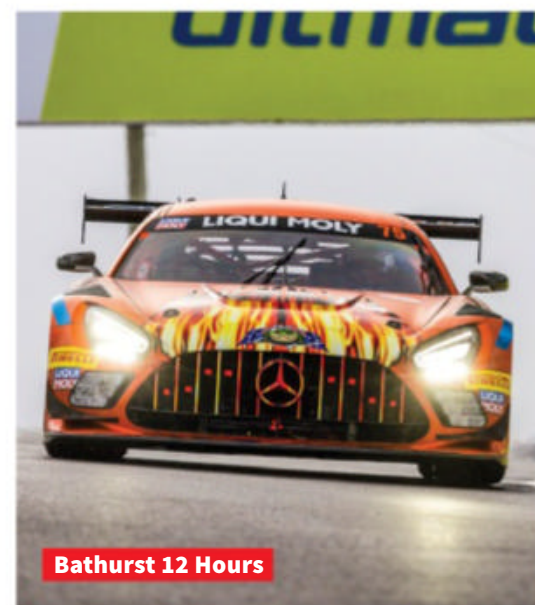
#### Toyota Formula Regional Oceania

##### Round 4/5

Hampton Downs, New Zealand

3-5 February

**Livestream** on Motorsport.tv,  
 Fri 2200, Sat 0000, Sat 2100, Sat 2300,  
 Sun 0100



**Bathurst 12 Hours**

HORSBURGH/EDGE PHOTOGRAPHICS



### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ferrari's pair of 126CKs, piloted by Gilles Villeneuve and Didier Pironi, and the McLaren-Ford MP4/1s of Andrea de Cesaris and John Watson undergo final prep before practice for the 1981

Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal. The race, run in gruelling wet conditions, is remembered chiefly for Villeneuve's drive to third from 11th on the grid – not so remarkable, except that in a fumbled lapping attempt the Ferrari's

front wing was badly damaged and over the following laps folded itself upwards, obscuring the driver's vision, before flying off completely, leaving him to wrestle it home at the two-hour time limit *sans* nosecone.

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# Rickard Rydell

**T**im Harvey enjoyed just one British Touring Car Championship season as a TWR Volvo driver, between stints at Renault and Peugeot. But his 1995 campaign alongside Rickard Rydell sticks in the 1992 champion's mind, for all the right reasons.

"My best times and favourite team-mate without any animosity, ego, anything, would be Rickard," says Harvey. "We honestly never had a bad moment between us, which is rare among team-mates. I thoroughly enjoyed his team effort, his friendship, his work ethic, everything was just very easy."

Rydell stormed to a remarkable 13 pole positions on his way to third in the standings aboard the 850 saloon, two places above Harvey. The pair became good friends, bonding over golf and their rigorous testing schedule.

"Back in those days, we were testing all the time," says Harvey. "In mid-1990s Super Touring, we had full-time test teams, so we could test twice a week, separate to the race team. And Rickard and I used to play golf quite a lot together."

"Maybe Rickard did get the development engine first or this or that first. But I didn't really mind. There was a good atmosphere within the team and when it was wet, I could beat him!"

Both of Harvey's Volvo wins came at a soaking Brands Hatch. He concedes that the fact that his best showings came in



the wet – although he followed Rydell home for podiums in both Knockhill races – was no coincidence since the conditions slightly negated the Volvo's front-wheel-drive tendencies "because you can induce more rotation in the car in the wet".

While Harvey was "never really 100% comfortable in front-wheel-drive cars", Rydell "had a really good touch" for FWD, which he used to devastating effect on flying laps.

"We'd do free practice and we would be the same, but come qualifying he always used to find that little bit extra on his new tyres and I could never do that," says Harvey, who came close to linking up with Rydell again for 1999 before TWR opted for the more 'cost-effective' Vincent Radermecker.

"He had that special ability. He was in that top echelon of exceptional drivers who can deliver that bit extra when it comes to it."

**JAMES NEWBOLD**



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## Big Questions of F1 2023

KARUN CHANDHOK TAKES ON THE BIG TOPICS OF THE YEAR AHEAD

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



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# RACE AGAINST DEMENTIA

“I am now facing one of the biggest challenges of my life  
and will put all my efforts into finding a cure for this  
horrendous illness”

Sir Jackie Stewart, OBE

Today, over 55 million people around the world live with dementia.  
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