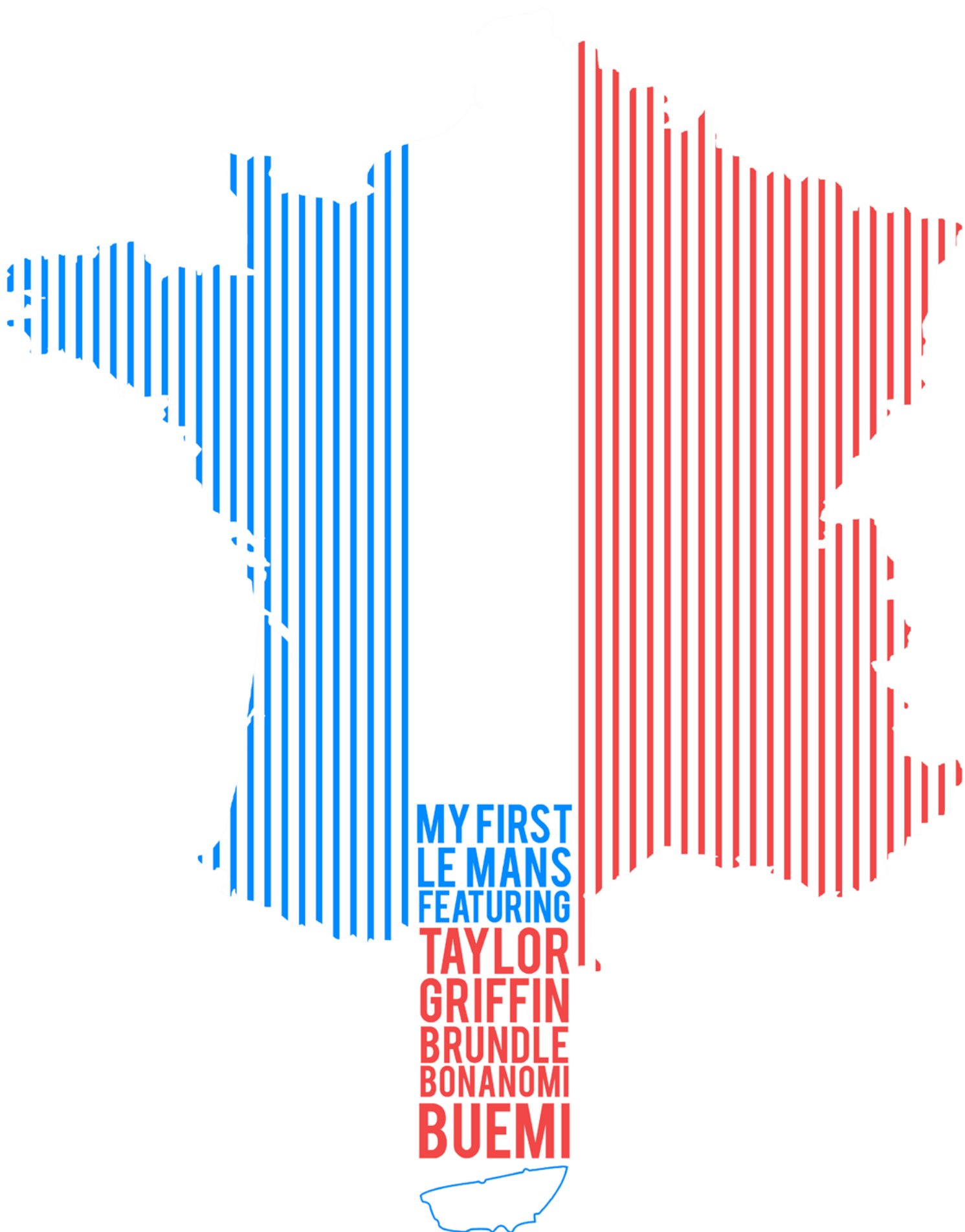


# l'endurance

July 2012

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# My First Le Mans

*Buemi, Bonanomi, Griffin, Taylor and others share their thoughts on debuting at the world's greatest race.*



## ALMS Mid Term Report

*The American Le Mans Series reaches its midway - what have we seen so far? What's to come?*

# Mind Games With Brabs

*David Brabham lets us into his psyche, talking about his mental preparation and how he believes it to be key to racing.*



## Nic and the 905

*Ex Peugeot works driver Nicolas Minassian got the opportunity of a lifetime at the Silverstone Classic - drive the Peugeot 905.*



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Photo: Dan Bathie

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European Le Mans Series, Donington Park  
Dan Bathie used a Nikon D50 and 300 F4 Nikkor.  
Shutter speed 1/1600th at F5.6, ISO200.

*in focus*







**American Le Mans Series Mosport**  
Nick Busato used a Nikon D3s and 300mm F2.8 + 1.4x  
Tele. Shutter speed 1/1600th at F5.6, ISO100.

*in focus*







**British GT Championship, Brands Hatch**  
Adam Pigott used a Canon 60D and 70-200mm F2.8  
+ 1.4x Tele. Shutter speed 1/1600th at F4, ISO100.



*in focus*







**Le Mans 24 Hours**

Jake Yorath used a Nikon D300s and 80-200 F2.8 Nikkor. Shutter speed 1/800th at F2.8, ISO1250.





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*in focus*







British GT Championship, Brands Hatch  
Adam Pigott used a Canon 60D and 70-200 F2.8  
+ 1.4x Tele. Shutter speed 1/800th at F4, ISO100.



*in focus*



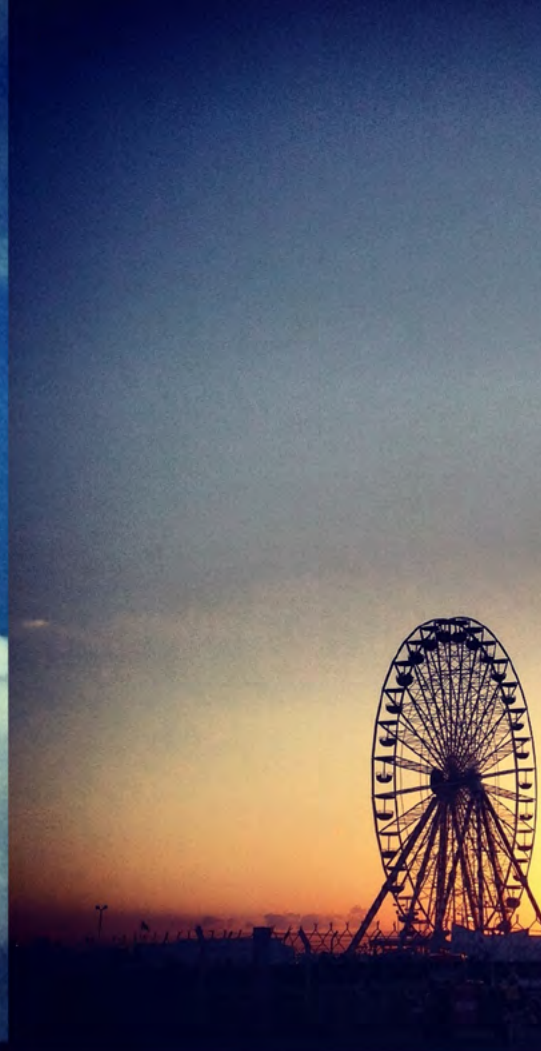




### Le Mans 24 Hours

Jake Yorath used a Nikon D300s and 300mm F4 + 1.4x tele. Shutter speed 1/640th at F11, ISO250.





Take a look at our special







# edition: Le Mans in Instagram





*in focus*







British GT Championship, Brands Hatch  
Adam Pigott used a Canon 60D and 70-200mm F2.8  
Canon. Shutter speed 1/640th at F2.8, ISO100.

*in focus*







**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D300S and 10-20mm F4-5.6  
Sigma. Shutter speed 1/20th at F11, ISO250.

*in focus*





American Le Mans Series, Mosport  
Nick Busato used a Nikon D3S and 300mm F2.8 +  
1.4x Tele. Shutter speed 1/1600th at F5.

*in focus*







**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
Jake Yorath used a Nikon D300s and 300mm F4  
+ 14x Tele. Shutter speed 1/640th at F14, ISO320.







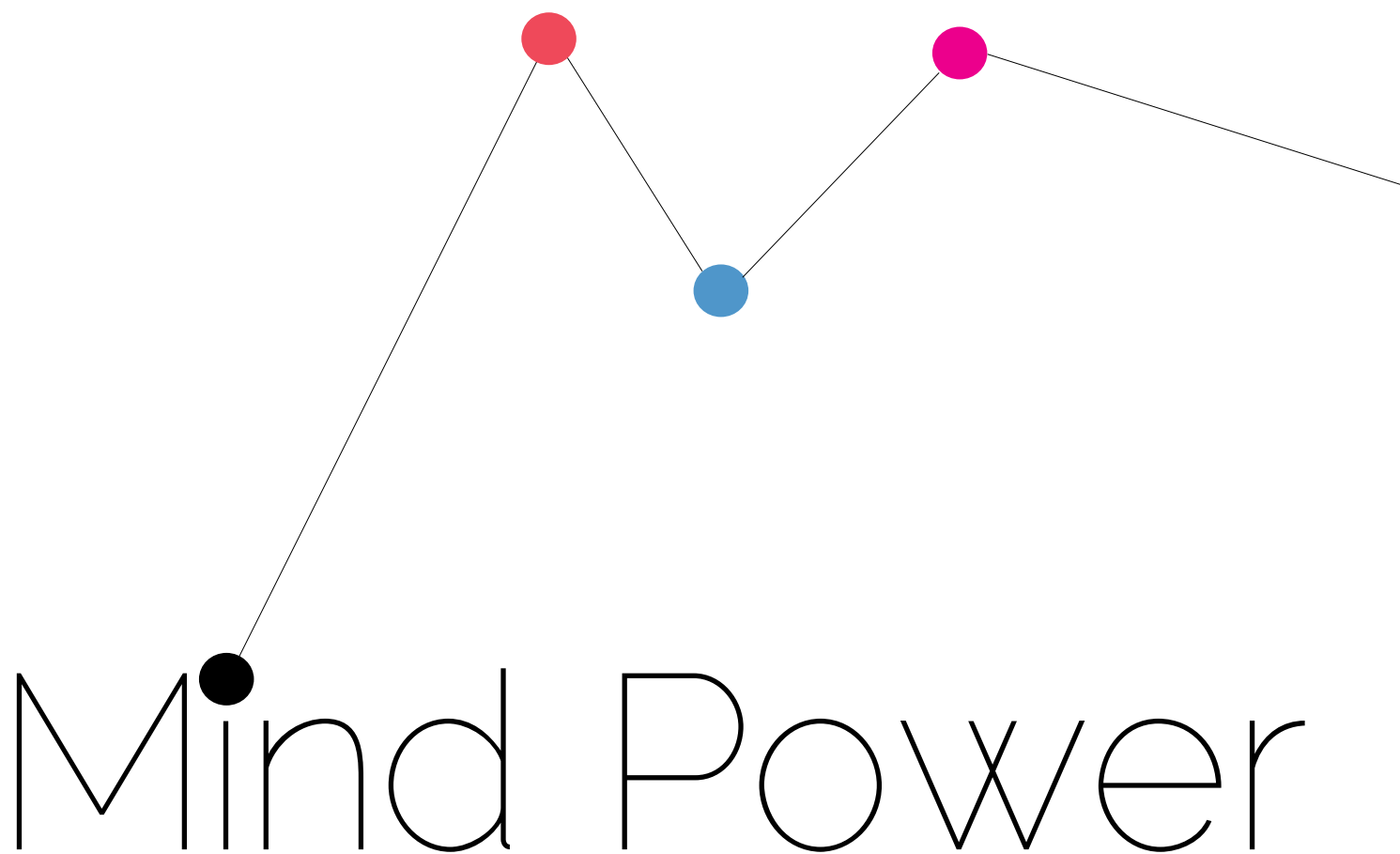




# Patriot Games

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*Stephen Errity interviews David Brabham on training the mind for racing.*



Seen from the outside, a racing car attacking a circuit is noisy, exciting, chaotic - even violent. But inside the cockpit, and inside the driver's head, should ideally be an oasis of calm. 2009 Le Mans winner David Brabham appreciates this even more than your average driver. One of the calmest yet most focused individuals you'll find in any racing paddock, he's worked throughout his career to optimise the relationship between mind and body to extract the best possible performance on track.

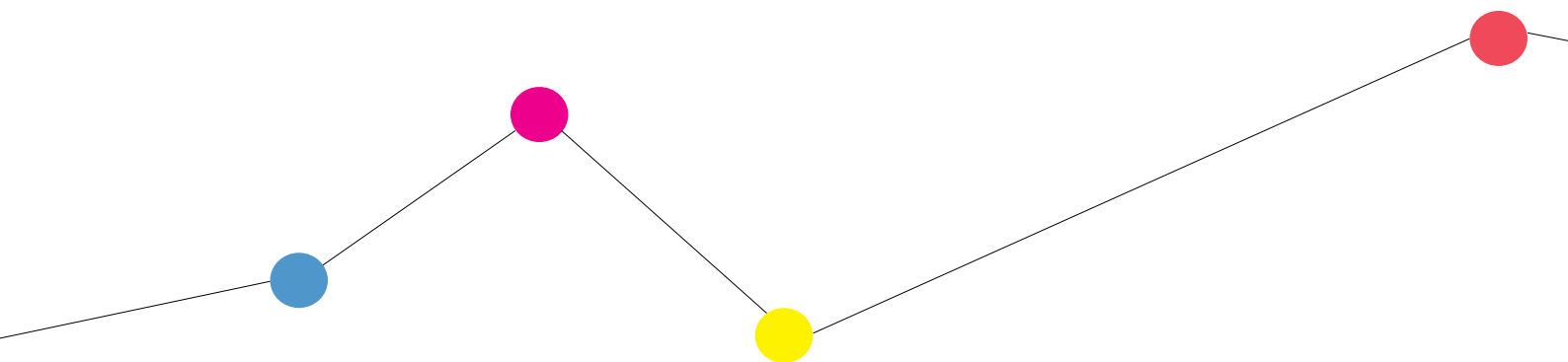
His first insight into the effect a driver's mental state can have on his potential behind the wheel came early in his career, at a Formula 2 race supporting the Australian Grand Prix. "That was when it was first highlighted to me, though I didn't understand it at the time," he remembers. Although young Brabham's star was on the rise, and he was already being talked about as a future F1 prospect, it was a very difficult time for him personally. "I had a massive problem with my family leading up to the event, because I had to tell my parents my girlfriend was pregnant. To my Dad, that was the end of my career. We didn't speak for a month leading up to the race. So I was trying to strike

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I drove at a higher level than I ever thought I was capable of

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I got to a point where I would write down exactly how I wanted my day to pan out.

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up a conversation with him at the track, and he said to me ‘the chances of you getting to F1 are finished’. A switch went off in my head - I was absolutely furious at him.”

This was only one of many things to go wrong for Brabham that weekend. An electrical problem in qualifying had prevented him from setting a time, so he started the 15-lap race from the back of the grid. “After I had that conversation with Dad, I was a different person,” he says. “I had so much anger, which I shifted to a determination and a hunger that I’d never experienced before. I drove at a higher level than I ever thought I was capable of, and I ended up winning the race. It was the first time I’d experienced something being triggered in my head that made me do extraordinary things.”

That was Brabham’s first introduction to the psychological side of racing, but he says the biggest turning point came in 1992, when he lost hearing in his right ear. “I thought ‘that’s it, my career’s gone, my life’s gone’. I went to a lot of specialists and met a lot of people along that journey. One was a chiropractor, a guy called Steve Carpenter. He taught me a lot about the body, but also about how the mind relates to the body, and I became intrigued by what he was showing me.”

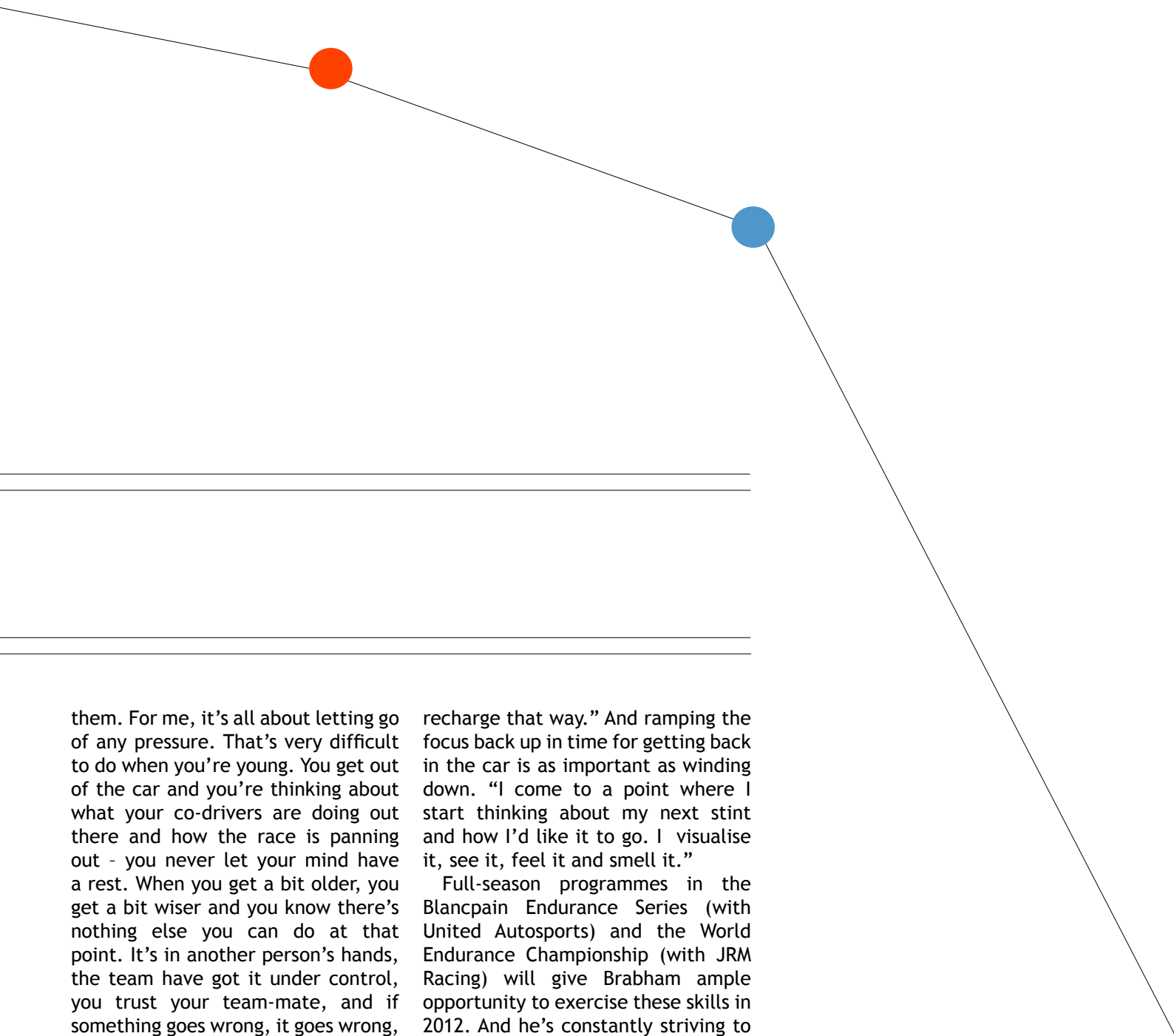
Brabham then began experimenting with different approaches to race meetings, to see how his new-found understanding could improve his performances. “It’s not always easy to get ‘in the zone’ with the amount of distractions at your average race meeting,” he notes. “When I first

started doing it, it was a case of just writing things down as I wanted to see them. Racing with Panoz in the ‘90s, I got to a point where I would write down exactly how I wanted my day to pan out. Then I would visualise it, see myself doing a lap and see a time on my dash. I’d write down that time and give it to my engineer, Chris Gorne. It would frequently be scarily close to my actual time.”

Mind management in qualifying and sprint races is one thing, but it takes on a new dimension in

24-hour events, where a driver must combine total focus during his driving stints with an ability to ‘switch off’ and rest when he’s out of the car. “You only find a routine that works for you through experience,” says Brabham. “I’m sure other people do different things that suit





them. For me, it's all about letting go of any pressure. That's very difficult to do when you're young. You get out of the car and you're thinking about what your co-drivers are doing out there and how the race is panning out - you never let your mind have a rest. When you get a bit older, you get a bit wiser and you know there's nothing else you can do at that point. It's in another person's hands, the team have got it under control, you trust your team-mate, and if something goes wrong, it goes wrong, it happens."

So what comes after getting out of the car? "Focusing on breathing is very important, because it makes me look inwards and forget about what's going on around me," Brabham continues. "It calms me down and I find it a lot easier to switch off and

recharge that way." And ramping the focus back up in time for getting back in the car is as important as winding down. "I come to a point where I start thinking about my next stint and how I'd like it to go. I visualise it, see it, feel it and smell it."

Full-season programmes in the Blancpain Endurance Series (with United Autosports) and the World Endurance Championship (with JRM Racing) will give Brabham ample opportunity to exercise these skills in 2012. And he's constantly striving to perfect and refine his methods. As he describes it: "Once you get into using these techniques, they become like a muscle. The more you develop it, the stronger the gets, and the mind is no different."



*My First Le Mans.* Words and photos: Jake Yorath

**L**e Mans. We don't mind the traffic jams, the endless miles of clogged pavements or the expensive beer. We've actually come to be rather fond of the fields full of drunk Danes and roundabouts full of drunk Brits (usually doing donuts), so it must be a pretty special place. Certainly, it's a daunting one, whether you're spectating, working or racing.

Personally, I have been cold (particularly so at 5am), wet (particularly so during this year's damp drivers' parade) and drunk

(particularly... OK, a lot). I've also been disappointed, pleasantly surprised and outright exhilarated. It's just one of those places.

My most enduring memory is actually from my second Le Mans. I was having a dire race. Shooting on outdated camera equipment without any real appreciation of the scale of the challenge, I had planned far too little and had a whole lot of photos I didn't like and was exhausted. However, that Sunday in June provided a spectacular dawn and suddenly it all made sense.

Mythology, Mecca comparisons, McQueen. 'Magic'. There really is something about this grand gathering of the world's best sportscar racers and their enduring fans.

Jordan Taylor, making his debut with Corvette Racing, found himself in a very similar situation this year. "It was just beginning to get light when I started, and it was really cool to go through the Porsche Curves at sunrise and then down the Esses at Dunlop, to remember the footage and photos from the old days and to think that I was in the same position







as those cars. I'm glad I got to do that kind of stint and feel the history while I was driving."

Taylor was far from alone in being a debutant - this year provided one of the richest rookie fields in history, with 40 drivers getting their first taste of La Sarthe. Recent Formula One expatriates, experienced GT drivers and straight up rookies - the field had them all.

"This is the race that made me want to race sportscars over open-wheeled cars," beams Taylor. He is quick to latch onto one of the things

many people notice when they first come here - the size.

"I went to Le Mans in 2001 and 2002 to watch my dad drive in the race," he muses. "I remember going around the track, seeing the cars at Indianapolis corner, watching the drivers' parade, and taking it all in. I thought how amazing it would be to someday compete in the race. Le Mans seemed so massive - we left the paddock and it took 20 minutes to drive to another corner. That was when I realized just how huge the track is."

Like any junior racer who plans to be successful, he's not afraid to ask for advice, but he's not just looking for racing tips. "I'd been talking with Jan and Antonio about Le Mans since our first test in January. They told me what to expect and gave me advice on how to focus on the race. I'd driven the track on video games and studied onboard camera videos to get up to speed," he adds. But onboard videos were not his only pre Le Mans TV time. "I watched Steve McQueen's Le Mans movie with my Dad," he admits.



It's not just about magic - Taylor might be a young man experiencing something amazing, but at the root of it he's a professional racing driver. The 21 year old, who hails from Florida, is likely to be coming back for some years to come - having been picked this year for enduros with Corvette, he's a surefire hope for the future.

Another with a father son connection to this race was Alex Brundle, breaking his Sarthe duck alongside his father, 1990 Le Mans winner Martin - and he sums Le Mans up in a fantastically succinct manner. "The circuit is amazing, the people crazy," he grinned, just before race week. "The fanatical nature of the spectators is quite incredible!"

For him, too, the race was far from perfect, various issues meaning his Greaves Motorsport Zytek Nissan finished eighth in class.

Familial connections were something of a theme at Le Mans this year - continuing the trend, Sebastien Buemi. The Swiss, moving from Formula One (and not shy about returning) into the Toyota team, followed in his grandfather's footsteps in racing at La Sarthe.

"I am impatient to be there at the start of this famous race," he enthused in the build up. "The feeling only grew during the test day when I discovered that the track is really a superb one. I like the last part, with the Porsche curves and Ford corners. There is also an emotional connection to this race because my grandfather already raced here and I am glad to follow in his footsteps. My family is also tied to the TOYOTA brand, so it is special."

His enthusiasm didn't fade, despite not finishing the race. "It was an unbelievable day for me to

start Le Mans for the first time and we gave a great performance until the accident. It was amazing; I really enjoyed it!"

Fellow Toyota rookie Kazuki Nakajimi (who was given 'Rookie of the Year' in the run up to the race, before connecting with the DeltaWing during the 24 Hours), got caught up in the parade.

"The parade is an amazing event," he said. "The streets were lined with thousands of fans who route around the narrow streets of the old city of Le Mans despite the rain pouring down and it was great to receive such a warm welcome from the crowd. As it is my first time I did not know what to expect and I have to say that I really enjoyed it."

None had it quite as bad as Matt Griffin, however. The Irishman has moved from a largely GT3 based career with Ferrari into GTE-Am with





AF Corse in 2012. He saw a strong position catastrophically fall apart when his team mate, Piergiuseppe Perazzini, clashed heavily with Anthony Davidson's Toyota at Mulsanne Corner.

"Finally running at Le Mans was a dream come true for me, so of course the crash was very disappointing. We had a really good car and we were getting stronger and stronger, which was the plan. We were getting great fuel consumption, too, with 16 laps per stint. It's motorsport, though, and these things can happen, especially in multi-class endurance racing. I'm just happy that neither driver was too badly hurt, but given the effort the team put in, hopefully we can race at Le Mans again."

The incident was arguably the stand out moment of the 2012 - hopefully Matt can return in 2013, with less drama!

For Audi's newest star, it was always a clear choice on career path. Italian Marco Bonanomi trained as a graphic designer before he found he was good at driving and a career in Italian GTs followed. He was reserve driver for Audi in 2011 and stepped up for 2012.

"I think sportscars are better than single-seaters. For sure, it's a better option for many young drivers right now," he explains. "It's one of the few categories in racing at the moment where you can be guaranteed a professional drive if you're good enough. Once you're a professional, you can just concentrate on your job: driving the car, developing it with the engineers and not thinking about anything else."

And his love of sportscars translates, naturally, to a love of Le Mans. "The track is really beautiful. But with 56 cars, it's not easy to

find a clear lap without traffic, but I managed to get one or two during qualifying. I love the Porsche curves - when in a clear lap, it's really fantastic," he told [lemans.org](http://lemans.org) before the race. Remarkably, it was not just his debut at Le Mans but in 24 hour racing. "I'm just excited. Everything is big here: great expectations, a lot of pressure even if we have less on my car. It is true that I never did A 24-hour race before, it is new but I'm in one of the best cars on the grid!"

It's safe to say, there's a good likelihood all of the drivers featured in this piece will be on the grid in 2012. But perhaps it won't be as special the second time, with each man taking a special set of memories away with him. Some, it seems, will have been rather surprised by the 24 hours of Le Mans, and might just find themselves hooked. Others were probably hooked already...



With thanks to: *Stephen Errity, Ed Fahey*

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NEVER BEFORE  
RACE OR VENU  
FELT AS INVOL  
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*Ben Yorath* tastes his first Le Mans and,  
via drunken men, menus and marvelling  
at the view, finds he rather likes it.  
Photos: Ben Yorath

LE MANS

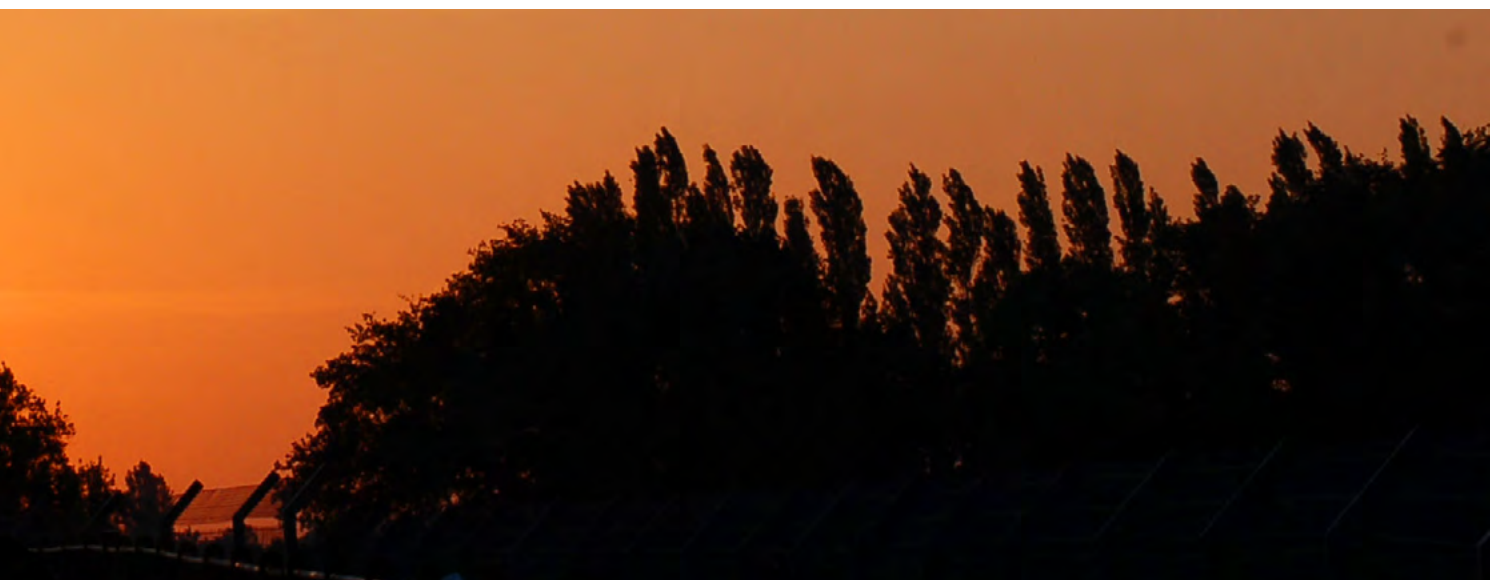


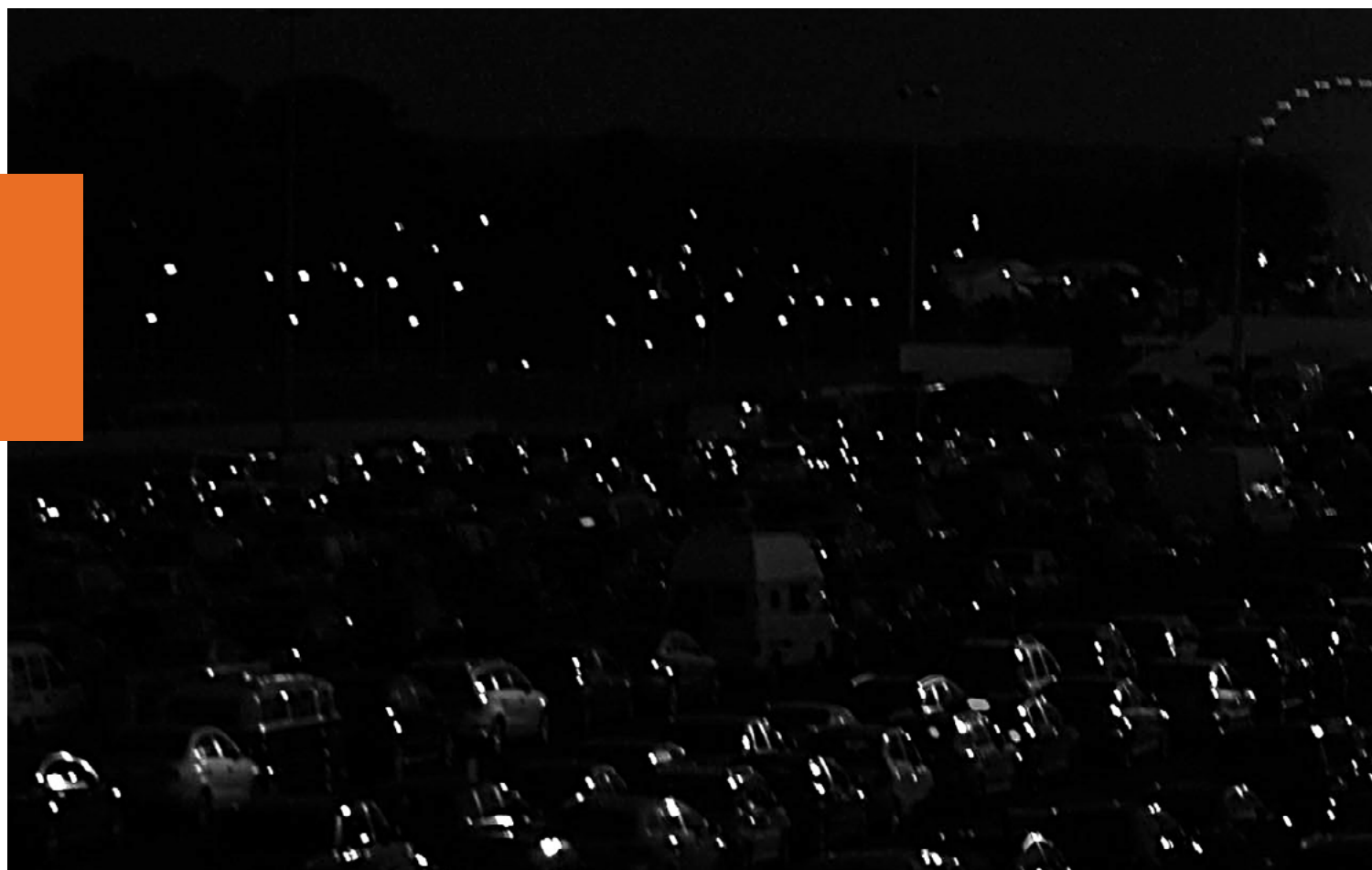


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**A**s this was my first Le Mans I was looking forward to seeing the iconic circuit in the flesh. I thought about angles of photos I would love to take from the sweeping views of the Porsche curves and the speed filled Mulsanne straight - the whole idea of the energy and atmosphere of Le Mans enthralled me, and I was prepared for the spectacle of endurance racing that has captured the hearts and minds of motorsports fans for decades.

The first thing I would like to mention is the sheer volume of people spread out around the nearly eight and a half mile circuit. Bearing in mind the expanse of campsites, stalls and other Le Mans related paraphernalia around and inside the circuit the whole area is just enormous. In my first trip I would love to say I saw everything but that would be a lie. I walked miles, caught the sun and barely scratched the surface of this place.

I must also mention Le Mans' lack of ability to control the rain... Waking up in the morning to wet feet is never pleasant but it's even worse when it's scorching hot outside. However, the rain could not

dampen the spirits of the thousands of people attending the race. The only thing I was slightly disappointed by was the drivers' parade and that again is due to the rain - I had heard such great things about the event and I was really looking forward to it however the rain seemed to ruin the spectacle as drivers sat under their umbrellas and waved to a damp and dreary crowd. I find it hard to blame them, mind, as I found myself soaked through a hoodie, T shirt and jeans combination that has served well in the sun and snow of the ever changing British climate.

I would also like to advise an early arrival at the circuit. By early, I don't mean the night before, but get there for Wednesday and see the whole show. The build up was arguably better than the race itself to me. I enjoyed seeing so many people who were all attending for the same reason as I (except some rather flamboyant displays of drunkenness by some rather flamboyant gentlemen). Never before at any race, show or venue had I felt as involved in a community as I did during the trip build up. With even the first practice bring a murmur of anticipation to the crowds the tension only rose as the days

counted down to Saturday.

Part of Le Mans that I had heard only about in passing was the so called 'Mad Friday'. For those who do not know, let me first explain the idea behind the madness. It's the day where drivers have only the obligation to sit in old cars and be driven through the centre of the town. So, with no on track action, it gives those old enough to do so the opportunity to cram a few extra beers into their already busy schedule of 'wake up, drink and see how the day progresses'.

**The whole circuit just seems to buzz with life**









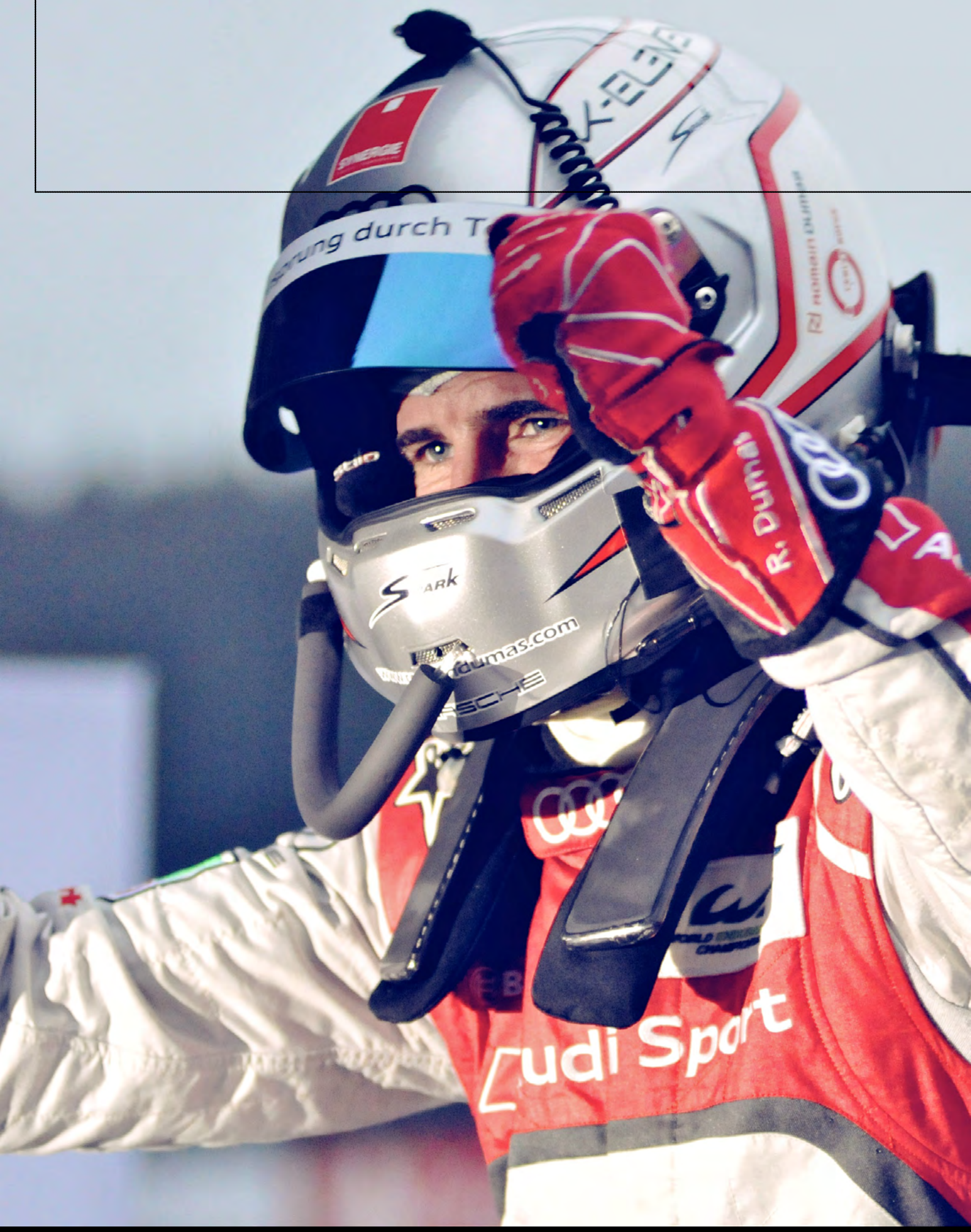


the sleep you have before the race itself in order to ready your mind and body for the 24 hours of awakesness which is soon to follow. I say I name it laughingly because the chance of sleeping any later than nine o'clock is just impossible. The whole circuit just seems to buzz with life and I finally understood the phrase 'cut the tension with a knife'. The murmurs had grown in intensity as everyone knew what was soon to come. I took a trip to Arnage and thoroughly enjoyed watching the start of the race from there - the big TV helped but also the thick crowd helped to make it a fantastic start to the race for me.

I must admit I didn't manage the whole 24 as I decided a trip to bed and a wake up at dawn was a good idea. It worked, and dawn at the Porsche curves is something I will never forget. Not just because there was a man asleep in what appeared to be about four sleeping bags and a cardboard box, but because of the beauty! If I could recommend one place to be at dawn that would be it. And I can't think of any better view at a race circuit that I've seen.

I have thank the wonderful Travel Destinations guys and girls. They were fantastic in handling any problems that arose on the campsite, which from what I gather were not particularly frequent, and they treated everyone who stayed with them brilliantly well so thank you to them! Thanks also to l'endurance taxi Tim Yorath, who once again suffered admirably for the cause.



**Dawn  
at the  
Porsche  
Curves is  
something  
I will never  
forget**





# Enduring Love

Le Mans might be over but there's still the rest of the World Endurance Championship, American Le Mans Series and European Le Mans series to come. *l'endurance, c'est Le Mans...*

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Prototype racing in the American Le Mans Series has been dominated by Muscle Milk...

# A TALE OF TWO







# TWO HALVES

...But the GT ranks have been as open as ever. Words: Jack Evans Photos: Nick Busato



**T**he American Le Mans Series leaves the Grand Prix of Mosport with half a season done. Five races have produced many questions and few answers, and only five races remain to fulfill. But fulfill they will, because, as proven in the ALMS, nothing can be known until the racing is over. Until that racing is over, we know only this, the story of the first half of ALMS 2012.

The 12 Hours of Sebring was the first round of the new FIA World Endurance Championship, so its competitors were to intermingle with those of the American Le Mans Series—each class in its own race for long-term points. But that meant little on the track. There was still a Sebring to be won.

Overall, it was duly won by Audi with a predicted one-two, and the highest-placed ALMS car was the P2 Level 5 Motorsports Honda of Scott Tucker, Christophe Bouchut, and Joao Barbosa in an admirable fourth behind a similar Starworks HPD. For contenders Muscle Milk, it could have been as good as third, but the heartbreak of fueling rig problems was realized with minutes to go. They dropped to a non-running 28th place, leaving their only regular season rivals, Dyson Racing, happy with eighth overall—it was still a full points haul over Muscle Milk.

But a few classes down the competition was much harsher. And







**The white Honda is faster than the blue Mazda, but  
a slip up could still hand Dyson the championship**

**”**







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The GT battle turns the mid-season corner four wide. Corvette, BMW, Porsche or Ferrari can challenge from here on out





much closer; BMW's Joey Hand, Dirk Müller and Jonathan Summerton continued the team's overwhelming 2011 record of success, but only by a few seconds over the opportunistic Corvette of Jan Magnussen, Antonio Garcia, and Jordan Taylor. That car was promoted by Olivier Beretta's (AF Corse) mistake on a desperate final lap, and the Ferrari dropped to third, albeit first in the WEC's GTE Pro class.

Also on the lead lap as the checkered fell were the other Corvette and the other BMW. Clearly, the championship was to be their battle. The ALMS's third major manufacturer—Porsche—didn't show well that 12 Hours, even between the newly threatening Team Falken Tire, two veteran Flying Lizards, and a few major WEC entries. Perhaps the revised 2012 chassis isn't what they expected.

So a fascinating Sebring, and a good showing by ALMS machinery on the temporarily international stage, but who would come to the fore in the lessened competition of the regular season?

The answer, in P1, is Muscle Milk. The next race at Long Beach proves why. The pump that betrayed them in Florida was put to good use when, by diving into the pits immediately after yellow flags came out mid-

race, then again just before green racing resumed, Lucas Luhr and Klaus Graf were able to run flat out to the end while Chris Dyson (in the Dyson) pedaled around saving fuel. The brilliant strategy call pulled the Honda team right next to their rivals in points.

P2's usual commanders Level 5 had a new challenge in the form of their own 2010 Petit Le Mans Lola chassis, curiously powered by a Honda engine, but now painted in GTC experts Black Swan Racing's signature white, green, yellow, black, and chrome (catchier than you might think). While it looked optimistic, the car's debut was a failure, starting from the pitlane and exiting straight into a GT pileup. Though Level 5 did have a poor race, they automatically won the class by finishing as an LMPC car took 'their' third spot on the podium.

In GT, the #56 BMW was finally felled by the win-deprived Corvette team, specifically their #4 Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner car. Milner is himself an ex-Bimmer-er, and the win must have felt especially deserved after seven dry ALMS rounds for Chevrolet, even if #56 was just behind them (on a deflating tyre, actually!). In third, Extreme Speed Motorsports stood having finally made an impression on the Series in their green and black Ferraris.

The next month, at Laguna Seca, it happened again for Muscle Milk and Corvette, only both times in much more convincing cases. The P1 Honda took victory from Dyson by twenty laps, and was followed immediately by Level 5's second car that was not chosen to score points for the round. The exciting battle in LMPC put the winner at the foot of the overall podium.

Meanwhile, Gavin and Milner emerged first from a rotation of GT lead changes. Just behind them was a second Chevy and a BMW, but not the usual points-hoarding #56. That launched the winners to the top of the standings, as well as putting Corvette Racing over Team RLL, and so began the summer break; six weeks off for resting, testing, and Le Mans before a return to Connecticut's Lime Rock Park in July.

Only a few ALMS entries would appear at Le Mans in June, and none did particularly well. Flying Lizard had its usual 24 hours of bad luck and Corvette failed to repeat last year's win, particularly in the garage. The BMW team found itself isolated from the German factory HQ at the beginning of the year, and funders BMW North America elected to skip La Sarthe. That left the win for a hard-charging AF Corse Ferrari, and those ALMS teams came home disappointed

to prepare for Lime Rock.

But while they were occupied, a few other teams appeared at Virginia International Raceway for some testing before September's Four Hours. Most notably, it was Dempsey Racing's new ALMS Lola Judd project that timed in... second to an LMPC car. But some further running was accomplished after their Laguna ended early in the sand. The Extreme Speed Ferraris also put in laps, and even the Alex Job Racing Evora appeared and didn't break. And, interestingly, Black Swan Racing did not appear in their Lola. They are tipped for an eventual return to GTC.

The month and a half away left many burning questions; is there any speed left in the aging Dyson car? Can they mount a comeback on Muscle Milk? Will it be Corvette or BMW? Gavin/Milner or Hand/Müller? Will ESM surprise? Is the 2012 Porsche even capable? None of these, of course, could be answered until the two hours and 45 minutes were up at Lime Rock Park.

And yet, after only an hour of Lime Rock Park, the first two questions seemed to be done with, because the Muscle Milk Honda sat four laps down, victim of phantom electronic issues, lost time exacerbated by the safety car, all gone wrong. Still, to conclude the question of the one-on-one rivalry so early would be a mistake, especially with Lucas Luhr driving.

In the car now, he gains back a lap. Then another lap. Then hands over to Graf, who gains back a lap. Maybe a full comeback now? They've certainly got the lap times over Dyson. But then another safety car; the agony! So Klaus puts his foot down and passes the Mazda for the fourth time in a row. The next overtake will be for position. No longer a distant charge, but a battle. Nevertheless, he sweeps by Guy Smith like just another GT car, and is headed for another lap around—a full tip of the scale from just minutes earlier—when the flag falls.

On the podium, as Dyson rued their chassis from second, Porsche celebrated. They had won! A surprise to all in the midst of some “slump.” Classic, faultless driving from Patrick Long and Jörg Bergmeister carried what was thought to be a

useless iteration of the 997 GT3 to a fantastic win complete with speed, dominance, and reliability—all the ingredients of racing potential. But if this represented a U-turn in the team's fortunes, it would need to have a tight radius. Corvette, so far ahead already and right behind, 2-3 at Lime Rock, would have to be beaten each round without fail and even have a bit of bad luck—something no rival can count on.

But at Mosport the next weekend (or Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, to be commercially correct), the Lizards dutifully gave it their all, moving from fifth to first purely on speed, using the raw simplicity and gut-dropping, limit-hugging hill-corners of the Canadian track to their advantage. They held off a Corvette, Jan Magnussen diving up and down, almost and almost close enough to the flanks of the #45 Porsche. While it lurched about, thrown from the racing line by the scent of first place, an interesting guest stepped into second, one lap remaining.

It was the ESM Ferrari. So as Bergmeister won in Canada, Johannes van Overbeek gave his team its highest-placed finish, and right on the back of fourths and thirds. He and Scott Sharp, owner-founder of the long-standing, rarely successful outfit celebrated their second, but realised, dreamt that it could have been a first. Meanwhile, Corvette celebrated a mediocre third and tenth in class, the Americans failing to find success in Canada once again on this bicentennial of the War of 1812. BMW followed in fourth with the #56, but only got the #55 to seventh.

Up at the front there was little contest. The weekend had belonged to Muscle Milk. They practiced little but were clearly faster, then set a pole time 2.2 seconds faster than any Lola-Mazda. Chris Dyson was furious, but could not channel his rage into any scrap of contention. They finished many seconds back, watching their challengers slip away with their challenge.

On the Mosport Podium, the wild questions started to settle down. Muscle Milk had and will have more pace, that's clear. The new Porsche is not crap, not at all. It's a back-to-back race winner with a brilliant

team behind it. Corvette has lost little but is vulnerable to misfortune, and ESM can, in fact, race anyone now and must be watched for.

But then, in the late afternoon at an empty racetrack, a bit of a shuffle. Actually, a major shuffle; Flying Lizard didn't win. They failed a “stall test.” When IMSA covered the intakes of the Porsche post-race, the engine kept running. Air was making it in and potentially boosting power. Congratulations, ESM, #45 disqualified and #01 bumped up to a maiden win.

So the racing ends with two weeks to Mid-Ohio, the second half of a season with only a few essential questions so far answered. Though the white Honda is faster than any blue Mazda, a Petit Le Mans mechanical slip-up (where points value is increased with race length) could still hand Dyson the championship, and with not a round after for Luhr and Graf remedy a sudden drop down the charts. The Lola is nothing if not reliable, while the HPD finds this to be it's weakness. But that's for a coming half of the year. The fact is that Muscle Milk has won four times in succession.

The GT battle turns the mid-season corner four wide, any Corvette, a BMW, a Porsche, or a Ferrari can challenge from here out. Their success will depend just as much on their own accomplishments as other's shortcomings, though. Unpredictability abounds.

Speaking of unpredictability, Mid-Ohio. It's next, and last year biblical downpour shuffled the order class-by-class until Team Falken Tire topped GT. Though 2011's flash flood was entirely a wildcard, the ultra-technical track still doesn't provide any hints of advantage to one team or another. It's followed by Road America, (home of the six-hour race with .6 second finishes) the streets of Baltimore (an unforgiving labyrinth that tends already to produce upsets), Virginia International Raceway (where the rolling hills disguise an unknown quantity of challenge), and Petit Le Mans (where everything's tested and the stakes are high). It's a tough second half, and the racing will be equally tough, and there are still more questions.

Who knows what the answers will be until it's over?



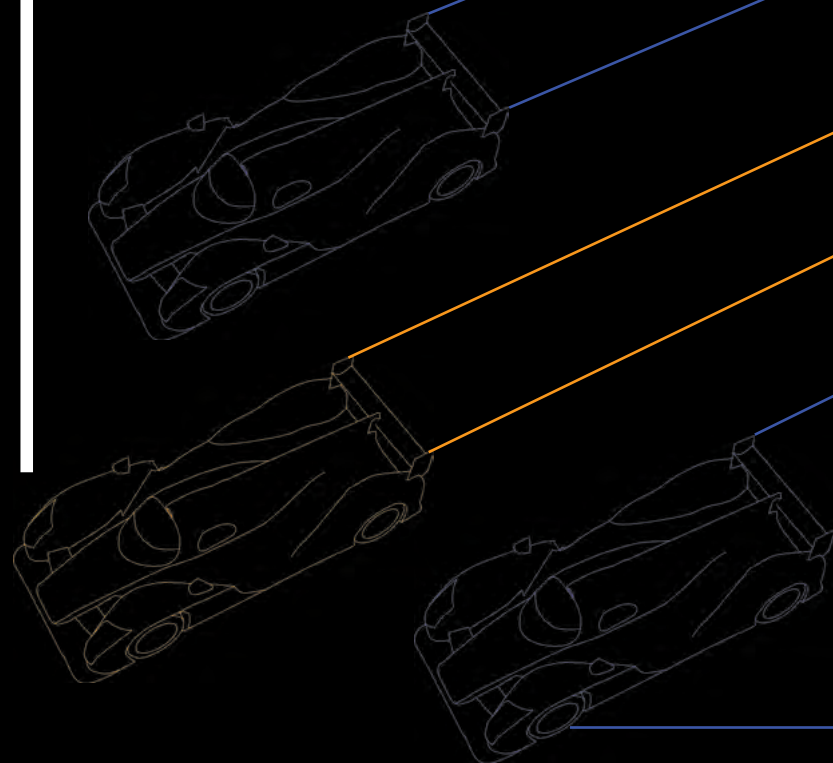


# AUDI\_WIN

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LOADING....  
AUDI\_TEAM\_JOEST  
CAR\_#01  
FASSLER\_LOTTERER\_TRELUYER  
E-TRON\_TECHNOLOGY  
LE\_MANS  
INITIALIZING...  
DRIVE.

This year Audi wrapped up its eleventh win at the prestigious Circuit de la Sarthe in the 80th running of the Le Mans 24-hour race, a race which would go down in the history books. In this feature we take a look at the numbers that made Audi's win at Le Mans so special.



FASTEST LAP  
**03:24.189**



78.57%

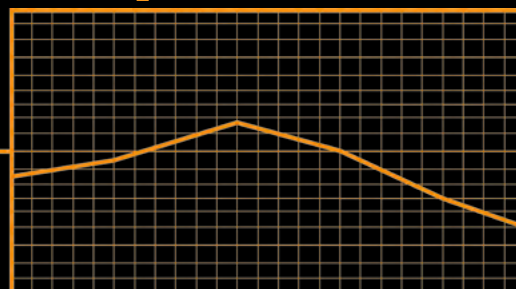


WINNING PERCENTAGE

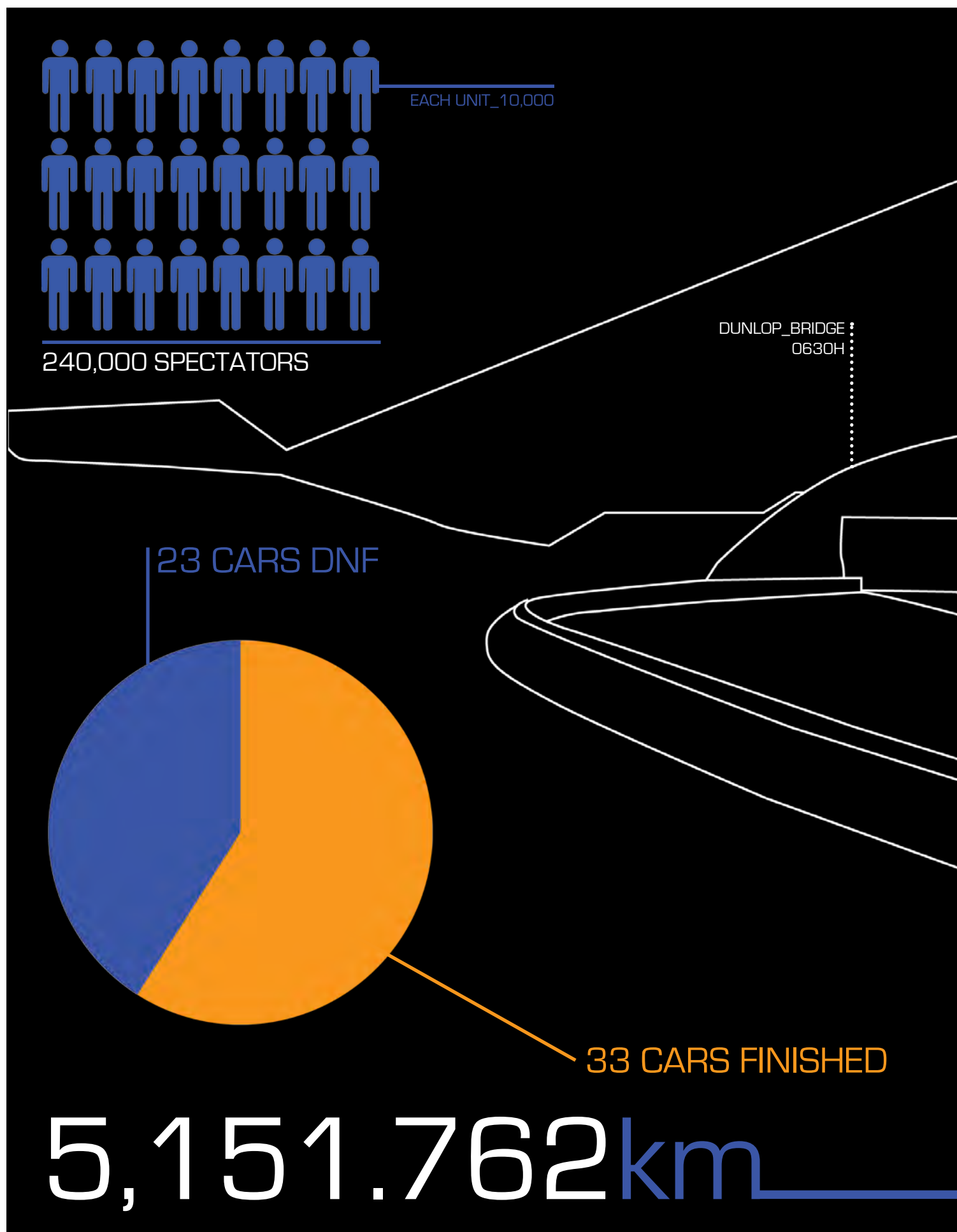
6.4% FASTER  
THAN 2011

11 VICTORIES

FUEL USAGE\_



REDUCED CONSUMPTION BY 10%





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TIME SPENT IN THE PITS



326 LAPS LED



# Nic and the **905**

The Silverstone Classic provided a rare opportunity  
for Nic Minassian - driving the Peugeot 905.

Words: *Stephen Errity* Photo: *Scott Mitchell*



**H**aving been part of Peugeot Sport's present right up until the manufacturer announced its shock withdrawal at the start of this season, Frenchman Nicolas Minassian was able to sample the team's past at the recent Silverstone Classic historic motorsport festival, where he got behind the wheel of one of the last, and greatest, Group C cars: the Peugeot 905.

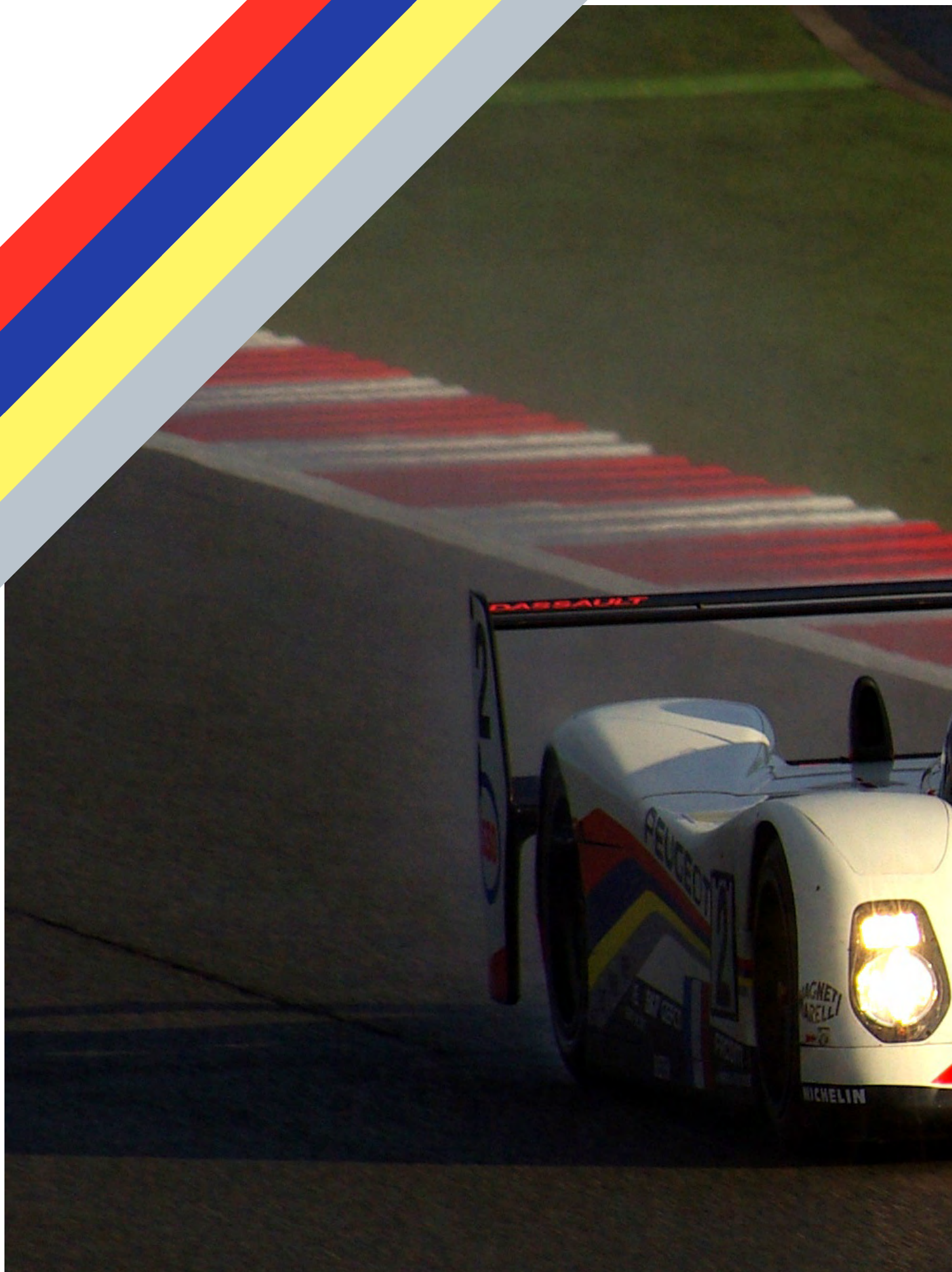
Now owned by British pub and restaurant magnate Rupert Celevely, the rarely used machine was prepared for the event by the Chamberlain-Synergy Motorsport outfit. Minassian's first taste of the iconic low-slung prototype came in

Friday's qualifying session, and he was immediately impressed.

"This was my first time in the 905, and it's really fantastic," he says with a smile. "It's funny, because it doesn't feel like an old car. I've driven historic cars before, but this does feel like a proper factory-run machine. Chamberlain-Synergy have done a very good job preparing it, but the set-up hasn't been adapted yet. The car hasn't raced since Le Mans in 1992, so it still has the full Mulsanne straight aero kit, which is a very low-downforce set-up. But it's still really well balanced and the engine is fantastic. Everything works perfectly: I don't feel like I'm struggling to drive it because it's

so old - it definitely doesn't feel 20 years before my time."

Minassian of course has extensive experience racing the 905's 21st-century descendent, the diesel-powered 908. So how do the two machines from the same stable compare? "The 905 feels quite different, because it's a much stiffer car," says Minassian. "That's mainly because the tyres worked differently back then compared to how they do now. There's hardly any suspension movement at all. It's lighter than the 908, too, and it's a bit easier to drive than the diesel, as there's no







turbo and not as much torque, so it's more driveable out of corners. But I was impressed by how much grip it has - there's a lot for a 20-year-old car. Although I'm not really surprised when I look at the lap times this car used to do at Le Mans - they're similar to what I was doing in the 908."

The Silverstone Classic fell shortly after news broke that the two remaining rounds of the European Le Mans Series had been cancelled and the championship would instead hold a combined season finale with the ALMS at Road Atlanta. After Peugeot Sport cancelled its programme, Minassian was quick to sign up for the ELMS with French multiple World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb's eponymous team, sharing an Oreca-Nissan LM P2 car with fellow Peugeot refugee Stephane Sarrazin and Nicolas Marroc. And although the overall turnout for the series's first two rounds was disappointing, he has nonetheless greatly enjoyed the intense competition that's been a feature of LM P2 this season. "The team is very well organised and the engineer I used to work with at Peugeot is now working at Loeb Racing as well," says Minassian, "so everything works really well. The way things are right now, I much prefer fighting for wins in P2 rather than struggling in P1."

Struggling in LM P1 was something Minassian did a lot of at Le Mans this year, driving a Dome S102.5 for Pescarolo Sport - a team he last raced for back in 2006. "Le Mans was tough," he states simply. "The engine vibrated a lot, and lots of other things went wrong that shouldn't. I don't know if it was because of Seiji [Ara]'s crash on Thursday night, but the car never felt right after that. It's a shame, because basically the Dome is a really good car and really nice to drive. But sometimes racing is like this: sometimes it works, sometimes it's a nightmare!"

And as if to ram that point home, gearbox trouble prevented the Peugeot 905 from playing any part in either of the Silverstone Classic's two Group C races, although there was an

unexpected bonus for the Frenchman when Cleveley offered him a seat in another of his historic racing fleet: a Lancia LC2. Minassian took the car to second overall in Sunday's 30-minute race, battling with Porsche 962s and a Sauber-Mercedes C9. He found the 30-year-old Italian machine to be a much different prospect to the 905. "That's a wild, wild car," he exclaimed on the podium afterwards.

It's funny,  
because it  
doesn't feel  
like an old  
car. It feels  
like a proper  
factory-run  
machine



"And with the manual gearbox and clutch, it's so physical - I was pushing very hard and I'm surprised by how tired I am after only half an hour driving it."

With the Classic out of the way, the rest of 2012 is looking decidedly quiet for the ex-Peugeot works driver, with no more top-line race appearances confirmed.

Minassian doesn't know yet if Loeb Racing will take up the offer to race in the combined

ALMS / ELMS

finale at

Petit Le

Mans.

"I don't really know what's going to happen with that, but whatever Loeb Racing decide to do, I'll be involved," he says. "It's a shame, because it was actually a great championship, there was just not enough people doing it. But when you split championships all over the place, that's what's going to happen." The other possibility is that the Dome will run again at the Japanese team's home race - the Fuji round of the World Endurance Championship. "We've talked about it, but they haven't said they're going to do it for sure - I hope they do."

And there remains the intriguing possibility that Sebastien Loeb himself will grow tired of his ongoing dominance of the World Rally Championship, and seek to complete the challenge he began during his two outings at Le Mans for the Pescarolo team in 2005 and 2006 - the latter year as team-mate to Minassian. "It would be good to have him in the car - just not taking my place!" laughs Nicolas. "He's a great guy - for somebody who has won as much as him, he has a very humble, simple personality, and he's just so talented: he jumps in anything and straight away he's quick. It's a very natural, unforced speed - it comes very easily to him."



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