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RACING POINT TO THE
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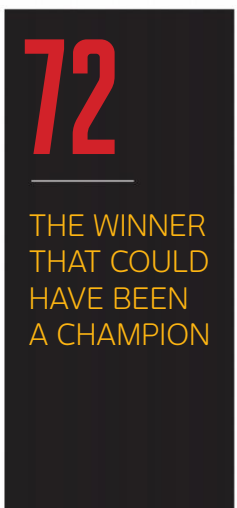
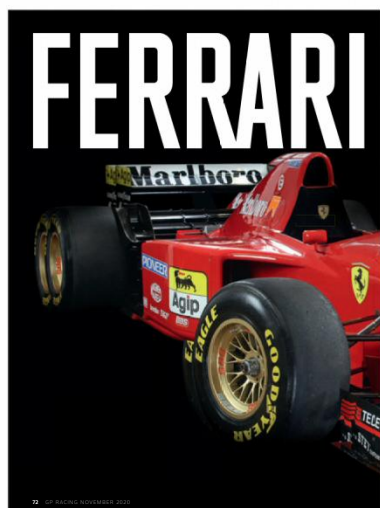
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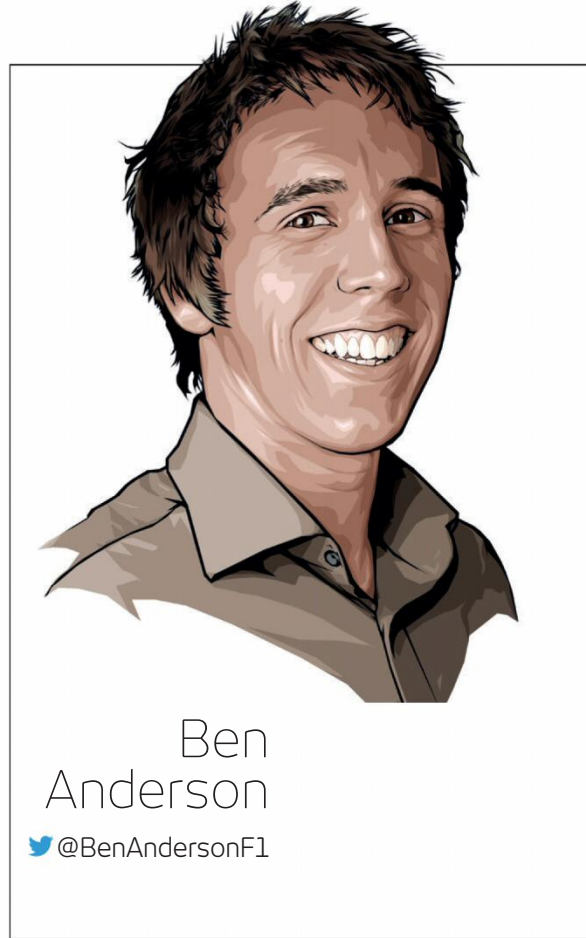
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Will Vettel be tickled pink in 2021?

Now we've got your attention with this month's bold cover image, let's talk about Sebastian Vettel's impending switch from Ferrari to the team known as Jordan/Midland/Spyker/Force India/Racing Point, soon to be known as Aston Martin.

We're well aware this forthcoming rebranding exercise will involve British racing green coming back into Formula 1 in some way, shape or form – but we've also learned that initial designs for next season's colour scheme were rejected for not including enough pink... Whichever way you slice it, Vettel will be looking pretty in pink next season.

However Lawrence Stroll chooses to dress his people – let's not forget Racing Point is not becoming a 'works' outfit in the technological sense of Ferrari, Mercedes or Renault, rather rebranding a partner team in the style of Sauber/Alfa Romeo – and however much green is ultimately thrown at the car, Vettel will still in reality be driving F1's 'pink Mercedes' in 2021.

It's a bold move for a four-time champion – swapping F1's oldest and grandest team for a true minnow. Of course, Racing Point (as it's currently known) has for years now been incredibly successful at punching above its weight. The question now is, how to take the next step? As Luke Smith explains, starting on page 34, that's where Vettel comes in.

Even if Stroll's ambition (and bank balance) allied to Vettel's experience and the potential for major

rebalancing of power in F1 thanks to new Concorde Agreements, budget caps and technical regulations, is enough to genuinely allow teams like Racing Point to truly compete, much will still depend on Vettel rediscovering his mojo in new surroundings.

Also standing in the way will be other resurgent midfield outfits looking to take advantage of F1's impending new dawn. Two of those are McLaren and Renault which, as Woking-bound Daniel Ricciardo tells us (page 46), has made a genuine step forward this year, after a trying 2019, thanks to a gradual shift in culture and mindset.

Whether a potential Red Bull reunion following Honda's shock decision to withdraw after 2021 (see page 16) negatively affects this momentum remains to be seen, but it does throw up interesting questions concerning Max Verstappen's future. Yes, he has a contract until the end of 2023, but that was agreed before Honda pulled out... Christian Horner says this is irrelevant, but such a seismic shift in the landscape always creates ripples, and drivers as powerful as Max can always reconsider options – does he really want to work with Renault again?

Perhaps then (if he's still in power) Toto Wolff will finally get his man. Verstappen versus (by then probably eight times) world champion Lewis Hamilton, in identical cars. What a fantastic final test that would be for Lewis before he finally calls time on a glittering career.

Contributors



LUKE SMITH

Luke, *Autosport's* F1 reporter, looks at how Sebastian Vettel will fit in at Racing Point/Aston Martin in 2021 after his switch from Ferrari (p34)



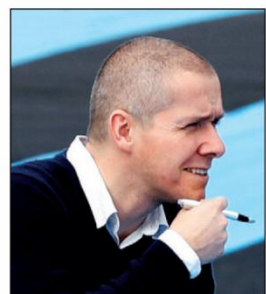
DAMIEN SMITH

All good things come to an end. The final part of Damien's superb history of Williams fittingly concludes with the team's sale (p62)



ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Interviewing F1's most experienced driver, Kimi Räikkönen, was Alex's task for this month, and he managed to get Kimi laughing... (p42)



STUART CODLING

Stuart finds out from Daniel Ricciardo and Cyril Abiteboul what exactly is behind Renault's renaissance this season (p46)

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Turning Sochi into Suzuka

Sochi Autodrom is nobody's idea of a photogenic circuit: it's flat and the corners look homogenous. Nevertheless the current cars look fantastic, and with the right light you can make something happen

The weather was great this year, giving a good quality of light – although for this image I took advantage of the shade to recreate one of the popular shots at Suzuka, where the cars dip under the flyover. By exposing the image for the shadows, where the car is, the highlights are blown out so you get an almost pure white background.

It's my little tribute to a great circuit which, very sadly, we won't be visiting this year.



Photographer
Andy Hone

Where Sochi, Russia

When 12.27pm, Saturday
26 September 2020

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkIII
500mm lens, 1/500 @ F4





Russian into the sunset

The absence of spectators has been one of the signature features of this year. So while it was somewhat unnerving to arrive in a place where there was perhaps less observation of social distancing and other elements of the 'new normal', it was also nice to see people back in the grandstands again.

The spectators form an important part of the graphic backdrop of this shot, which I took at a slow shutter speed to give a bit of motion blur and emphasise the speed of the cars. It was towards the end of the race, so the sun was just beginning to dip, giving a warm and slightly sepia-toned quality to the fading daylight.



Photographer
Zak Mauger

Where Sochi, Russia
When 3.41pm, Sunday
27 September 2020

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII
16-35mm lens, 1/25 @ F18





Serendipitous symmetry

It was a tricky weekend in Germany; the weather cost us pretty much half the normal track time and very few people were hanging around outside in the cold waiting to be photographed.

Neither of the pictures I had in my head as I was dashing to the podium came about – I'd expected Mercedes to hang out a pit board marking Lewis Hamilton's record-equalling victory, and surely Daniel Ricciardo would 'shoot the boot'? Perhaps sensibly, he didn't. Still, there was this pleasing moment of symmetry as they drank the champagne. And it was a fleeting one: it's only the Finnish drivers who take a huge glug...



Photographer

Charles Coates

Where Nürburgring, Germany

When 4.08pm, Sunday

11 October 2020

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII
600mm lens, 1/500 @ F5

Shake your Monet maker

Friday at the Eifel Grand Prix was shaping up to be quite frustrating as persistent bad weather put paid to any track activity. Without any cars on track, many teams elected to do pitstop practice.

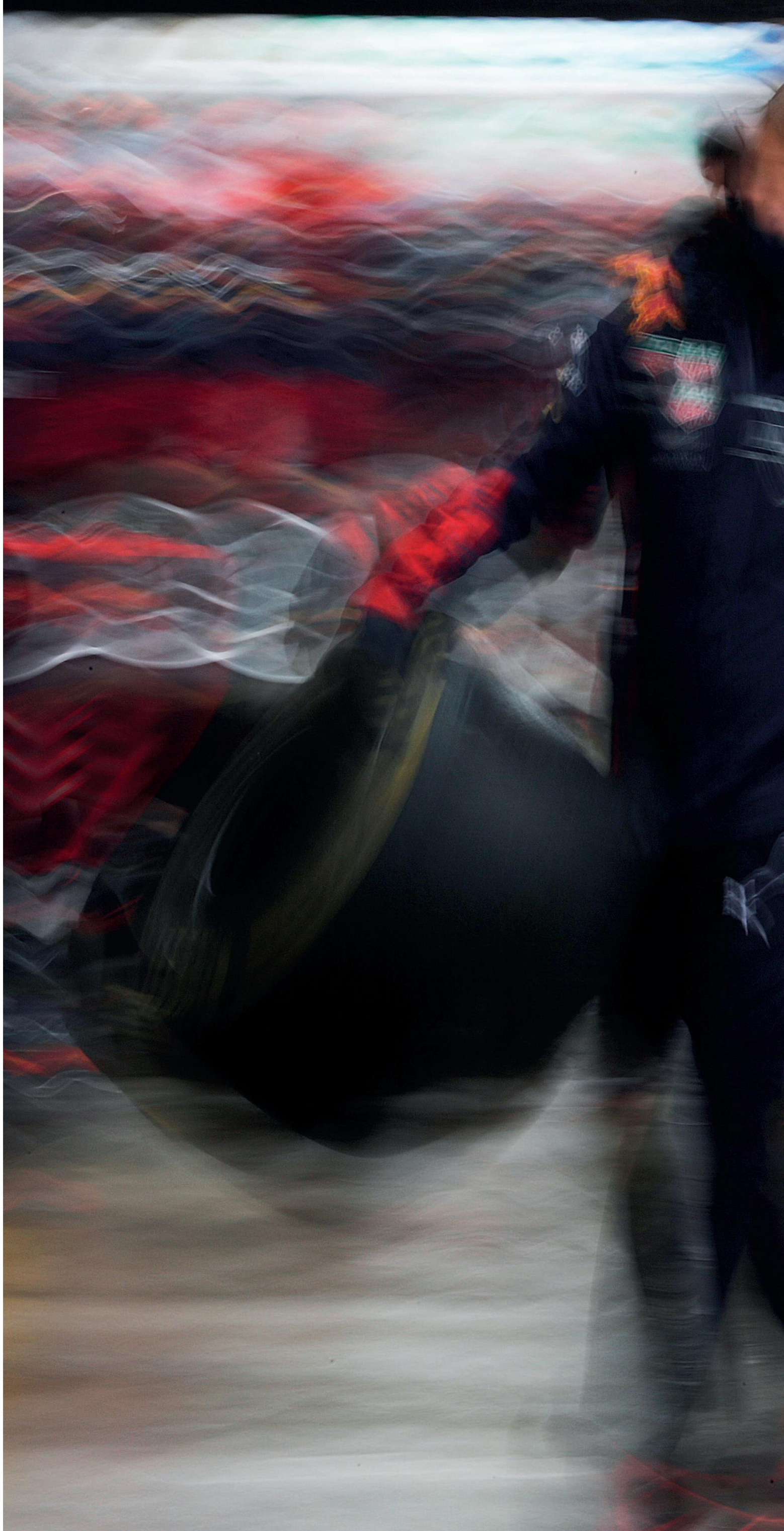
Photographers are still having to stick to their team bubbles and for me that meant McLaren, but we had Red Bull and Renault on either side. Since there was nothing much else going on I thought I'd do an experimental shot on a low shutter speed. It came out almost like a watercolour – you'd never be able to do this on film because it would be too dark, but modern digital cameras like to grab every bit of detail they can.



Photographer
Steven Tee

Where Nürburgring, Germany
When 2.31pm, Friday
9 October 2020

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII
70-200mm lens, 1/0.5 @ F32







Tantalisingly out of reach

One of many new elements in the Formula 1 show under Liberty Media's ownership is the added razzle-dazzle around the trophies. This year, while the COVID-19 protocols have meant a few changes to the podium ceremony and the way the trophies are handed over, F1 has stayed committed to that flourish of showmanship, putting them up for display not on some random patch of trackside asphalt but in the middle of huge banners.

As well as the striking graphics, it's aligned so Lewis seems to be not just looking at the trophy but also reaching out for it. Shame it didn't happen for him on the day!



Photographer
Glenn Dunbar

Where Sochi, Russia

When 12.51pm, Sunday
27 September 2020

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII
70-200mm lens, 1/2000 @ F2.8

RED BULL SCRAMBLES FOR ENGINE OPTIONS

01

Honda's commitment to Formula 1 beyond the end of the 2021 season has long been the subject of speculation. But even so, its announcement that it would withdraw (though the official phrasing was "ending its participation") came as a surprise to many – including, *GP Racing* understands, staff within the teams it supplies.

This is unequivocally the end of the F1 road: Honda boss Takahiro Hachigo declared during the official press conference that there would be no "re-participation" further down the line. Honda intends to refocus its considerable R&D resources, which for several years have

been drawn into propping up the troubled F1 engine project, onto alternative low-carbon engine technologies.

Not only is this a significant change of tack for a company whose founder was passionate about motor racing, it has had seismic consequences within F1. For although Honda will continue through 2021 (and field an all-new power unit design), Red Bull and its junior team AlphaTauri need to identify their next partner before they start serious work on their 2022 car concepts – in other words, within the next few months.

Red Bull has never savoured customer status, which is the rock upon which its relationship with Renault foundered. Mercedes has already said no, while the Ferrari engine is now considered the weakest on the grid after its FIA-enforced pegging-back at the start of this season. An FIA regulation stipulating the engine supplier with the fewest clients must facilitate teams in need may yet engineer a shotgun remarriage between Renault and Red Bull, but there's another option on the table: taking

Red Bull needs to work quickly to sort out a new engine supply to replace Honda



over Honda's design and developing it with a new partner.

"Obviously, there are three current suppliers remaining past the end of 2021," said Red Bull team principal Christian Horner. "So it's only natural we will engage in discussion with those parties. We've got a bit of time on our side to evaluate all the options. Inevitably, though, there is always going to be a discussion about engines when you're without one for the 2022 season."

"Ideally [Red Bull would need to know] by the end of the year, because the engine forms an integral part within your 2022 design. So ideally by the end of this year, so the design team goes in to next year with a clear set of parameters."

New Renault CEO Luca de Meo was present at the Eifel GP, where 'his' team notched up its first podium since returning as a manufacturer in 2016. Senior figures from both sides, including Renault team principal Cyril Abiteboul and Red Bull motorsport adviser Helmut Marko – Red Bull magnate Dietrich Mateschitz's influential

**"THERE'S ANOTHER
OPTION ON THE
TABLE: TAKING
OVER HONDA'S
DESIGN AND
DEVELOPING
IT WITH A NEW
PARTNER"**

minister-without-portfolio – were observed in dialogue during the weekend. But Abiteboul was guarded when pressed about what this dialogue may have entailed.

"If you're asking about the level of the discussion, I think Helmut has always been my point of contact for these discussions," said Abiteboul. "So I would expect that he remains so. Dietrich Mateschitz knows Luca de Meo, so maybe there will be some discussion going on there."

"Having said that, there is no such discussion at this time. I think first Red Bull is still in the aftershock of Honda's announcement, which may or may not have been news to some persons in Red Bull. But I think they are still trying to take stock and understand the options."

"It's not before mid-May that we could be requested [under the regulations] to supply an engine to whichever team doesn't have a contract in place for 2022. So there's lots of time as you can measure in Formula 1, between today and mid-May. God knows what can happen. And we'll bridge that gap when we get there."



Honda CEO Takahiro Hachigo is adamant that the company's withdrawal from Formula 1 is permanent this time

Senior personnel within Honda have indicated the company would be receptive if Red Bull was to make a formal proposition to acquire the intellectual property (IP) of its 2021 powertrain. In an interview with the German TV channel Sport1, Helmut Marko confirmed this is Red Bull's preferred option and that it would also push for a development

freeze from the start of the 2022 season.

Acquiring an engine programme would pose challenges for an organisation which already needs to slim down in order to comply with the forthcoming budget cap. And there's no guarantee the wider political waters will flow in the direction of a development freeze. But options remain: Honda's existing F1 facility in Milton Keynes could form part of the acquisition, or Red Bull could partner up with an external engineering company with F1 experience.

Ilmor Engineering is just down the road, within a stone's throw of the Mercedes engine facility at Brixworth. It has collaborated with Honda on IndyCar engines in the past, though it now services a rival. Cosworth has the expertise and recent F1 history, plus it supplied the engine for the Red Bull/Aston Martin Valkyrie hypercar. A more leftfield candidate – but one which would tick boxes with Red Bull's Austrian ownership – is Graz-based engineering specialist AVL, an ambitious company with plenty of high-level motorsport experience. ►



PICTURES: GLENN DUBAR; STEVEN TEE

SCHUMACHER EYES ALFA ROMEO BERTH

02 While the prime seats are already spoken for, further down the grid options remain at the Ferrari-aligned teams Alfa Romeo and Haas. But time is now running out for Ferrari to evaluate the next crop of talent coming through its Driver Academy, of which Mick Schumacher – son of Michael – is just one.

Schumacher Jr's first season in F2 last year was considered insufficiently impressive for him to be promoted to the Alfa Romeo seat currently occupied by Antonio Giovinazzi. But he appears to have developed over the course of 2020 and has overhauled fellow FDA protégé Callum Ilott to lead with two rounds to go. Despite three wins the third FDA man in F2, Robert Shwartzman, has been less consistent and currently lies fifth.

All three FDA drivers have sampled Ferrari's 2018



Bad weather at the Eifel GP meant Schumacher Junior was deprived of an Alfa FP1 run

F1 car in a private test at Fiorano, but plans to give Schumacher and Ilott seat time at Alfa and Haas in FP1 at the Eifel GP were nixed by bad weather. After Friday's running was cancelled, both drivers spent the rest of the weekend as observers.

As GP Racing closed for press it was expected that Kimi Räikkönen would be confirmed for at least one more year at Alfa, since team

Mick Schumacher drove for Alfa during the Bahrain test in April last year (above) and has also sampled a 2018 Ferrari at Fiorano

principal Frédéric Vasseur is known to want an experienced driver in the line-up. Vasseur would not commit to a deadline for a decision on the second seat, but conceded "I think in the course of October we have to take a decision for the last four events".

Since the next few races are either two-day weekends (Emilia Romagna) or at venues which are new (Portugal) or returning after a long hiatus (Turkey), further FP1 opportunities for the F2 drivers could be limited.

Ilott missed his Nürburgring FP1 drive for Haas, where Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen are out of contract at the end of the season and Grosjean is known to be exploring possibilities with Peugeot's WEC hypercar programme. Rumours have linked Russian businessman Dmitry Mazepin with an investment in Haas, in which case his son Nikita, who races in F2, may be a candidate. Another F2 driver rumoured to be in with a shot at graduation to F1 is Yuki Tsunoda, a member of Honda's Formula Dream Project. He is likely to replace Daniil Kvyat at Scuderia AlphaTauri.

The clock is also ticking for Alex Albon at Red Bull. He was close to being replaced by Nico Hülkenberg at the Eifel GP after a pre-race coronavirus test returned inconclusive results, and Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko says both Hülkenberg and Sergio Pérez could be in the running for a 2021 seat.

"The question is how far away would they be from Max," said Marko. "I don't think anyone would get closer than three tenths. On good days, Albon is also able to create this proximity to Max. But we are aware that if he can't stand the pressure, we can't afford to be standing on one leg when it comes to the world championship." ►



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DOMENICALI TAKES TOP FORMULA 1 JOB

03

After months of speculation linking Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff with the Formula 1 CEO role soon to be vacated by Chase Carey, former Ferrari team principal Stefano Domenicali has been named as Carey's replacement. Wolff admitted that he had held discussions with F1's owner, Liberty Media, about the job but that *realpolitik* had intervened.

"Liberty made me think about it but I realised I love the stopwatch and I like the competition," Wolff said. "If you're in that role it's obviously a totally different ball game. It didn't make a lot of sense to pursue because Ferrari made a clear commitment and said, 'No, we would veto that.'"

Wolff's counterpart at Ferrari, Mattia Binotto, confirmed the Scuderia had exercised its veto over the proposal to install Wolff as F1 CEO. Other team leaders were also reportedly squeamish about the prospect; it's understood that matters came to a head during the final negotiations over the Concorde Agreement, resolved by F1 committing to not employ anyone who had worked for a team during the preceeding two years.

"Our choice regarding Toto was not personal," Binotto told *Sky Italia*. "I believe he could have been good for the role. But we did not find it correct that an individual directly involved in F1 today should be nominated. Stefano represents a much more neutral person who has been outside of this environment for many years."

Domenicali enjoyed a long career at Ferrari in which he rose from junior accountant to team manager – famously separating an enraged Michael Schumacher from David Coulthard after their crash in the 1998 Belgian GP. Following Jean Todt's departure in 2007, Domenicali became team principal, resigning in 2014 when Ferrari's poor start to the new hybrid era led to calls for heads to roll.

Post-Ferrari, Domenicali joined the Volkswagen-Audi Group and was subsequently made chief executive of Lamborghini, which has been part of the VAG empire since 1998. He has dovetailed that with another high-profile role as head of the FIA's single-seater commission.

Domenicali remains rightly well-regarded by many figures within F1, but some disquiet has remained over the number of figures at the reins who have previous associations with Ferrari. *GP Racing* understands that one of the other conditions agreed by the teams, F1 and the FIA is that Domenicali's appointment is contingent upon Todt not standing for re-election when his term ends next year.



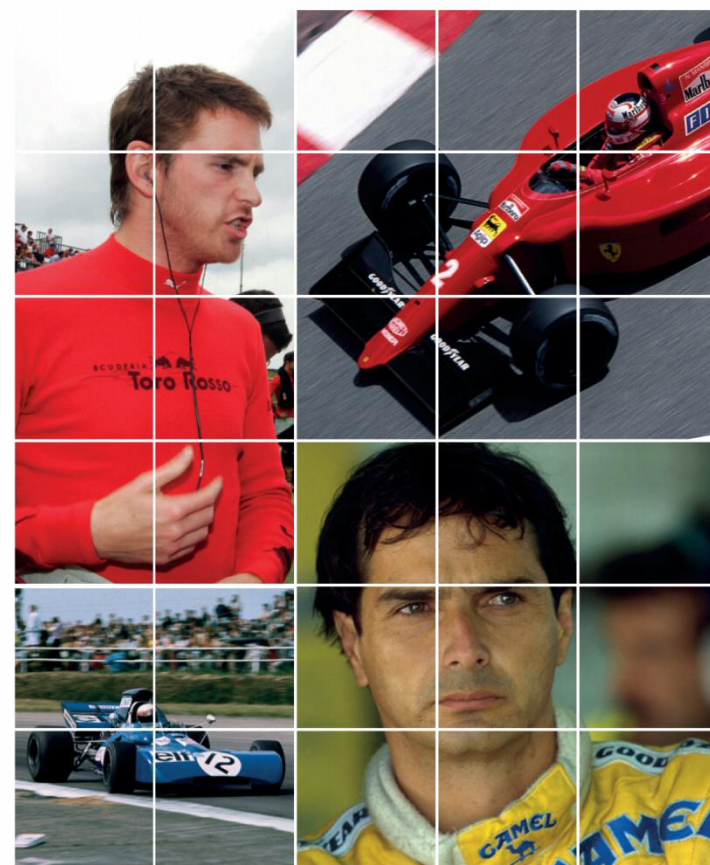
Domenicali will join former Ferrari colleague Ross Brawn at Formula 1

**"MATTIA BINOTTO
CONFIRMED THE
SCUDERIA HAD
EXERCISED ITS
VETO OVER THE
PROPOSAL TO
INSTALL WOLFF
AS F1 CEO"**

F1 MASTERMIND

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- Q1** How many world championship F1 races did Nelson Piquet win: 23, 24 or 25?
- Q2** Who won the 2010 Bahrain GP, held on a lengthened layout of the normal circuit?
- Q3** Kimi Räikkönen has led 83 F1 races in his long career, but which was the first?
- Q4** Which driver won the last world championship race of the 1950s and the first of the 1960s?
- Q5** Who was the last Portuguese driver to race in the Portuguese Grand Prix and in which year?
- Q6** Which driver broke Riccardo Patrese's record of 257 GP starts, which had stood for 15 years?
- Q7** Renault's last podium as a manufacturer, prior to the 2020 Eifel GP, came at the 2011 Malaysian GP, but which driver claimed it?
- Q8** How many times did Jackie Stewart win his home race, the British GP?
- Q9** Nigel Mansell won three races as a Ferrari driver. The 1989 Brazilian and Hungarian GPs are two, but which is the third?
- Q10** True or false: Scott Speed scored six points from his 28 starts in 2006 and 2007?



1 23 Fernando Alonso **3** 2002 French GP **4** Bruce McLaren **5** Pedro Lamy (1996) **6** Rubens Barrichello **7** Nick Heidfeld **8** Twice (1969 and 1971) **9** 1990 Portuguese GP **10** False – he never scored a point

PICTURES: SIMON GALLOWAY; MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE

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The return of the Portuguese Grand Prix gives me goosebumps. In 1985 I watched Ayrton Senna claim his first grand prix victory at Estoril on TV, at a time when I was going through difficult decisions about my own future. For a couple of hours, I lost myself in the majesty of his driving in appallingly wet conditions, thrilled to see Lotus win for the first time since 1982.

Three years later I competed in a support race at the 1988 GP. Estoril was a fabulous circuit to drive – fast and challenging, and at that particular event a key moment occurred in the ever-fermenting relationship between Senna and Alain Prost, in their first season as team-mates at McLaren.

Unusually, Prost qualified ahead of Senna – but the Brazilian was in determined mood at the start, cheered on by fans who spoke his language. Side by side into the first corner, Senna turned in and Prost had to back out. Then a red flag meant they had to go again, and once more Senna chopped across in aggressive style to claim the advantage.

Everyone expected Ayrton to disappear into the

distance, but Prost had other ideas. As they came back onto the main straight, the Frenchman picked up the tow and pulled alongside. Senna reacted by squeezing him towards the pit wall; it was a heart-stopping moment and mechanics were hauling pit boards in to avoid contact.

Prost kept his focus and made it through into the lead. He would go on to take victory, but afterwards was still fuming about Senna's aggressive tactics: "If Ayrton wants the championship that much, he can have it. That was unacceptable."

Until that race the relationship had shown strain, but it was controlled. After that race it was all-out conflict and, as we know, there were plenty more dramas to come. Yet what struck me that day, watching from the roof of a truck in the support paddock, was a fantastic second place for 25-year-old Ivan Capelli in the Leyton House March.

The first F1 car to be designed by Adrian Newey ran a normally aspirated Judd V8 engine, as opposed to the turbocharged motors in the McLarens and Ferraris, yet Capelli qualified third, ahead of Gerhard Berger's Ferrari. In the race Capelli was able to pass Senna, who found himself limited by high fuel consumption.

It was a stunning result for a small team, and the first glimpse of Newey's technical prowess which is still having an impact today with Red Bull. Ivan achieved just three podiums in his 93-race career, and it was a privilege to witness one of them.

There have been other key moments in Portugal; in the 1984 season finale Prost won the Estoril

race, but Niki Lauda clinched the title by half a point with a battling drive. On the street track of Porto in 1958, Stirling Moss was such a gentleman in defending Mike Hawthorn's actions when he went off that he effectively handed his rival the championship. The first year I commentated on F1 for Eurosport, my current booth companion David Coulthard scored his maiden F1 win at Estoril in 1995, beating Michael Schumacher. Jacques Villeneuve replaced DC at Williams in 1996 and took the final victory to date.

Following in the footsteps of Estoril, Porto and Monsanto Park in Lisbon, the Autodromo do Algarve, near Portimão, becomes the fourth venue in the country to host a grand prix. There are similarities to Estoril, as the layout combines fast and slow corners but with even more elevation change.

Portugal's Felipe Albuquerque, a former member of the Red Bull junior programme, winner of the LMP2 class at this year's Le Mans 24 Hours, and a front runner in the World Endurance Championship, raced at the venue's first international single-seater event in April 2009 with A1GP.

"Portimão is a tricky track because it has many blind corners and hairpins," he says. "It's not a flat track where you know where all the references are. But then we are talking about the best drivers in the world and they'll learn quickly! What will be interesting to see is how the new asphalt that they have put down for this event affects things. It will help traction for sure."

Sitting in Portugal's south west corner, with surf from the Atlantic rolling onto beaches nearby, wind speed and direction can be a factor. The main grandstand provides a windbreak for some sections but a sudden transition from shelter to gusts in others.

Reviving the grand prix has created a buzz across the nation. F1 coverage has been behind a paywall in Portugal for a while, but now the country is hosting a race again, news coverage of the 2020 season has expanded.

"Having Formula 1 returning to the country, there is a lot of interest amongst the fans," Felipe confirms. "I remember those races at Estoril; as a kid I was a big fan in the early 1990s and then I started karting in 1992. Me and Antonio da Costa and many others were inspired to go racing by F1, and then that faded out a bit when it disappeared. The return is helping give the whole motorsport community in Portugal a boost."

New and revisited circuits on the calendar this year have added an extra dimension to Formula 1. Mugello was dramatic, and Portimão has the potential to add yet more variables. The Portuguese GP is back, and I for one am suitably revved up.

Ayrton Senna's superb winning performance in the rain at Estoril in 1985 (right) was an inspiration and Lotus returned to the top step of the podium for the first time since 1982



Prost and Senna at the start in 1988. Prost (pictured on the podium) won but was angry with Senna's driving



Adrian Newey's first F1 design, the Leyton House March, shone at Estoril where Ivan Capelli took the normally aspirated car to an amazing second in 1988 beating many turbo-engined cars



The first of David Coulthard's 13 Formula 1 wins was achieved at the 1995 Portuguese Grand Prix after the Scot had qualified his Williams on pole



UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

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a chip known as an EPROM if we wanted to change the engine management settings.

These chips were programmed in hexadecimal and it didn't take me long to figure out how to re-programme them for additional performance. This was totally unapproved as we officially only had two chips available to us – one for qualifying and one for racing. My self-programmed chips allowed us to race something more like qualifying settings and qualify on maps that were only dreamed of by the works team.

After we locked out the front row in Austria, the late Paul Roche, head of BMW Motorsport and in charge of the engines for the

works Brabhams, got an inkling I was up to something and demanded the chip we'd used for qualifying. I was expecting such a challenge and some sleight of hand meant he went away to interrogate an absolutely standard chip rather than the one we actually used...

The return to normally aspirated engines did not remove the need for electronic engine controls. In fact, the ability to build better and better transducers to measure engine parameters allowed the engines to be run much closer to their reliability limits, in the knowledge that the electronic systems could protect them if they measured conditions that could lead to detonation or if they were in danger of over-revving when the driver missed a gear.

Of course, along with this better control came huge improvements in efficiency from having fully mapped engines and also the ability to control to very precise limits. With engines running at 20,000rpm each cylinder required an injection of fuel and a spark 166 times a second. It is hard to believe this could have been achieved consistently without electronics. The sophistication also allowed some novel strategies. For example, at Renault we were doing most of the torque modulation without closing the throttles, to keep high gas flows through the engine and thereby enhancing the effect of the blown diffuser we were running at the time.

For the 2.4-litre, V8 engines first introduced in 2006 it was decided that the controls were becoming so sophisticated,

WHY EVERYONE IN F1 WANTED TO 'PARTY'

It was Lewis Hamilton who, in 2018, coined the term 'Party Mode', to describe the engine settings that gave maximum performance, and in doing so brought to fans' attention procedures that actually go back way before the introduction of the hybrid power unit in 2014.

Even the venerable Cosworth DFV had some adjustability on its fuel injection, and some historic racers still know that the trick to starting these was to click the cam on the fuel metering unit to 'full rich' and then back to 'one off lean' when the engine warmed up. When racing at altitude, in Mexico for example, the engines ran better with the cam set at 'full lean'.

The advent of electronic engine controls initially just controlled the spark settings, and then only to a single pre-programmed map of engine speed. However, as microprocessors became more available in the 1980s, sophistication soon grew. Much of this was driven by the complex mapping needs of developing turbo engines. High boost settings and increased air mass flow

required totally different fuelling and ignition characteristics to those required when the driver was just picking up the throttle mid-corner.

Even as those systems developed, the thought of the driver changing anything other than possibly the turbocharger boost setting was unheard of. In 1986, when working for Benetton with our customer BMW engine, we actually had to open up the electronic control unit (ECU) and change

Benetton's front row lock-out in Austria in 1986, with customer BMW engines, surprised the man in charge of the works engines...



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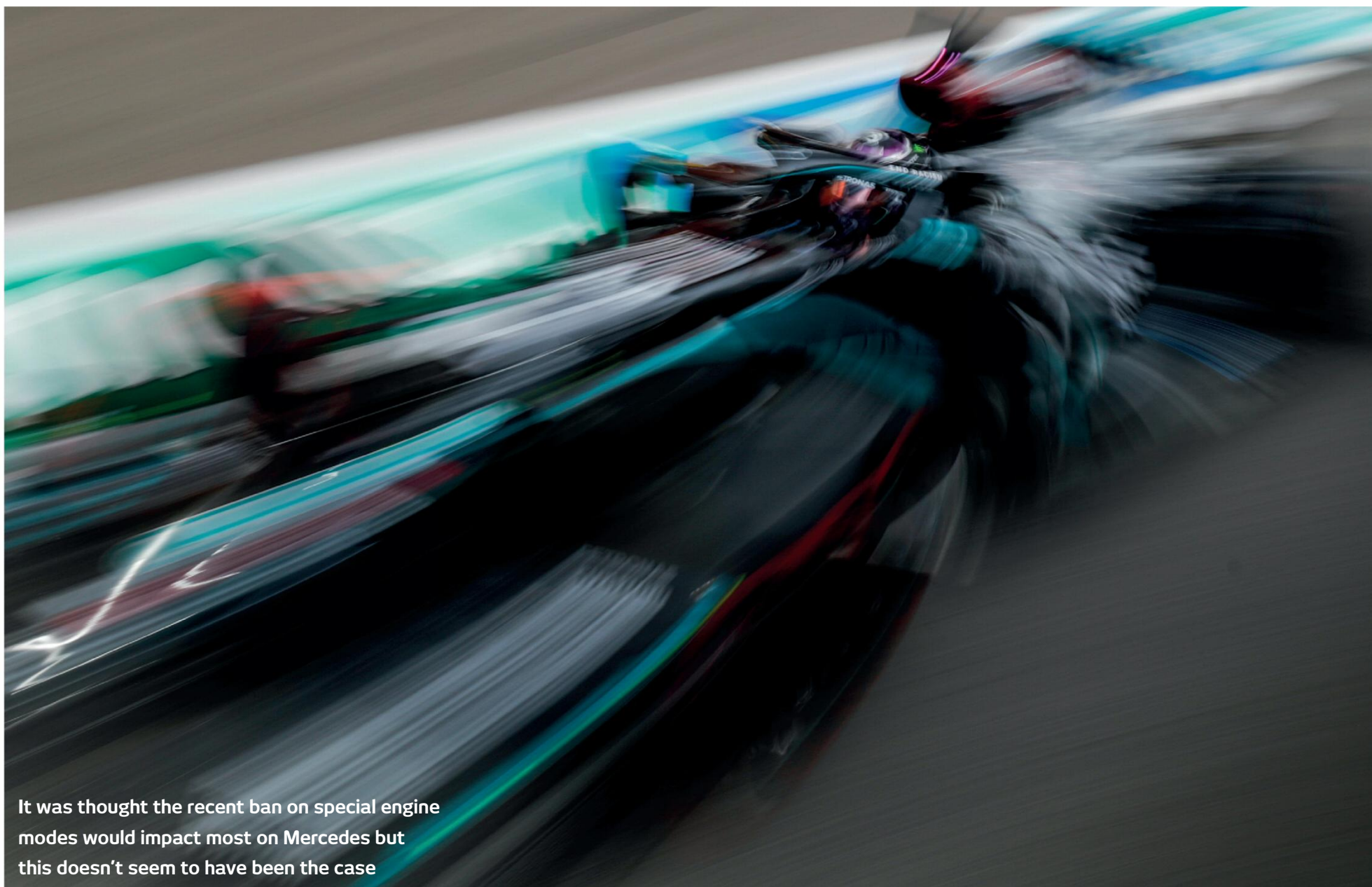
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It was thought the recent ban on special engine modes would impact most on Mercedes but this doesn't seem to have been the case

PICTURES: STEVE ETHERINGTON; GLENN DUNBAR

and therefore difficult to police, that a standard ECU running standard software was required from 2008. The tender went to McLaren Electronics and the TAG310 was introduced. This brought a level of standardisation as to how engine modes could be used. In 2014, although the hardware remained standard, more freedom was given on the control software to

manage the complex turbo hybrid engines. A 48-page manual was issued by the FIA to assist in determining how the engine could be controlled, as well as many technical directives that went into finer detail. This is still the way the controls are governed today, albeit with the power unit document now forming part of the 370-page appendix to the technical regulations.

Typically, a driver was able to select a multitude of modes and one could hear engineers instructing drivers to move to different modes when there were problems. To keep things simple, around four or five multi-dimensional modes would be put on a single switch. A qualifying, or 'party', mode might increase the boost, advance the ignition, take the fuel flow to the absolute maximum, open the wastegate and give maximum electrical energy deployment, among other things, with a single driver

selection. A 'safe' mode might move the shift lights to a lower setting and reduce the maximum torque available to give extra margin to the engine.

A technical directive issued in August 2020 put an end to the party. From now on drivers must use

The changing of engine modes by a driver for performance gain during a race, by using switches, buttons or dials on the steering wheel, has been outlawed



FROM NOW ON DRIVERS MUST USE THE SAME BASIC MODE FROM THE START OF QUALIFYING TO THE END OF THE RACE

the same basic mode from the start of qualifying to the end of the race. There is still the option to turn the engine down for genuine reliability reasons, but if this is done a noticeable drop in performance must be observed and once engaged there can be no return to a more performant mode.

Drivers can still use electrical energy mapping and the 'overtake' button in the race. With the former they can store electrical energy and then release it to attack or defend position, and with the latter a small extra boost of torque is available by opening the wastegate and giving maximum electrical deployment.

I do believe that having competing cars with different performance profiles does lead to less deterministic racing, but I also believe that the tactical deployment of performance should be in the hands of the driver and not an engineer who is merely verbalising what some software has determined. Have we got the balance right?

Only time will tell.

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STRAIGHT TALK

MARK GALLAGHER

[@_markgallagher](#)

WELCOME TO F1'S 'PIRANHA CLUB', CYRIL

It's a long time since Ron Dennis welcomed Eddie Jordan to the Piranha Club. Inevitably the membership has changed over the years, but the club is thriving despite Liberty introducing a more collegiate style of governance the previous management would never have permitted.

The cutthroat nature of Formula 1 remains. It's not for the faint-hearted, and while it's nice to be popular, it's rather better to be hard as nails, politically astute and successful at keeping the shareholders on side – something that team principals learn quickly.

One such is Cyril Abiteboul. He has had a good year, as Renault has scored a podium for the first time since its return to team ownership in 2016, and the 43-year-old Parisian has secured the team's future in Formula 1. This is no small achievement considering the parent company's recent woes, capped by 2020's global coronavirus pandemic.

He has even had occasion to smile trackside thanks to the soon-to-depart Daniel Ricciardo scoring a hat trick of fourth-place finishes in recent races and that elusive podium in the

Eifel Grand Prix at the Nürburgring.

If trouble at the top in the form of the scandal surrounding former CEO Carlos Ghosn was not going to lead to Renault opting to bail out of Formula 1, the effects of COVID-19 on car sales could have created the perfect reason for stepping away from the pinnacle of world motorsport. See Honda, Toyota and BMW after the 2008 financial crisis for details.

Renault's interim CEO Clotilde Delbos undertook a full review of the business, starting last autumn, and while many observers fully expected Formula 1 to fall under the axe, quite the reverse has actually happened.

Her successor, Luca de Meo, has only been in the hot seat for two months but has already taken the opportunity to attend a race – Monza offering the time and place to announce the Alpine brand will carry Renault's Formula 1 hopes forward, starting next season. The timing of the announcement made for a neat sequence of events, coming two weeks after Renault joined the other teams in signing up to the new, more equitable Concorde Agreement, and two months

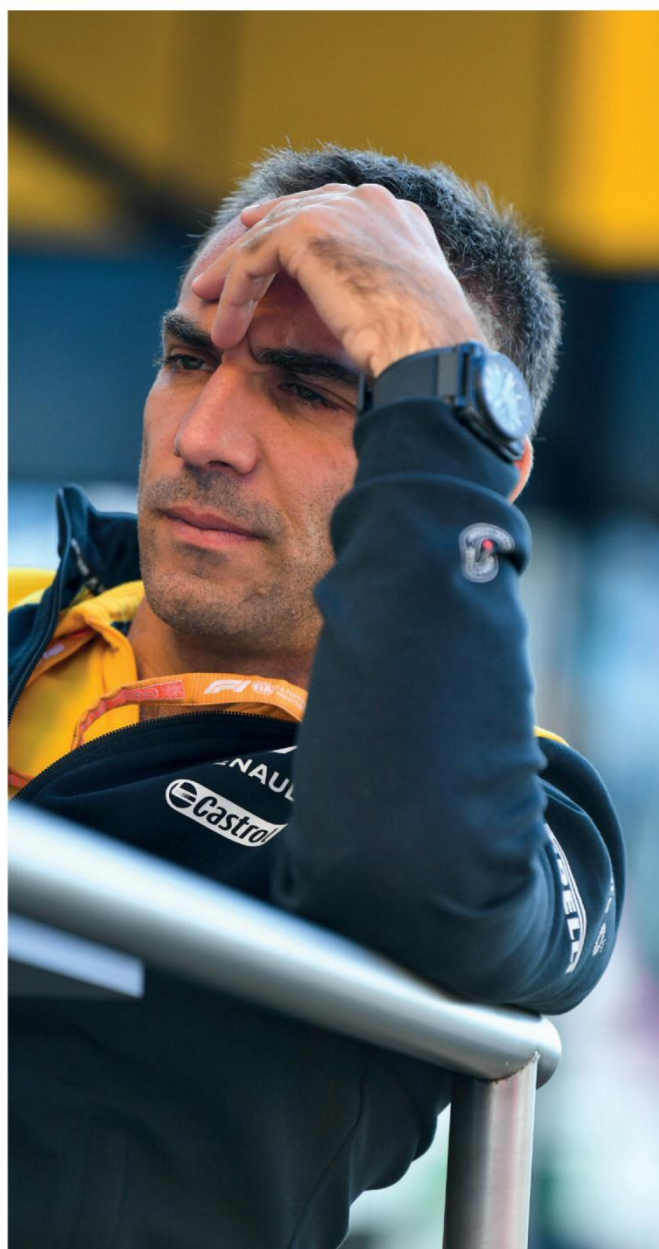
after securing Fernando Alonso's impending return to the driver line-up.

Abiteboul had every right to be smiling long before those announcements were made, for May's confirmation of a USD\$145million budget cap was a fairy tale outcome, a 'Goldilocks' deal in which the cap is neither too high nor too low but just about right for the French team. While Ferrari, Mercedes and Red Bull must downsize, the majority of the rest of the field won't get anywhere near the cap. Renault is, on paper at least, ideally placed to make the most of Formula 1's new dawn.

Alpine, which in 2019 sold just under 5000 cars, now finds itself with a Formula 1 project sitting atop an ambitious motorsport programme, including an LMP1 assault on Le Mans. Manufacturers with brands and sales much larger than Alpine would struggle to justify such a programme, but its managing director, Patrick Marinoff, confirmed that the Dieppe company is now the *de facto* sports division of a group which last year enjoyed total revenues of around £51billion.

The clever, ground-up design of the company's current A110 gives more than a nod to the future – one in which Renault Group design boss Laurens van den Acker admits lightweight cars offering instant performance from hybrid and fully electric powertrains will be key.

Ambitious times ahead for Abiteboul and the Enstone crew.



Cyril Abiteboul endured a tough start to life as Renault's team boss, but recent events have strengthened his position

THIS MONTH

Jochen Braunwarth

Director of
Motorsport,
Geobrugg

As Formula 1 cars get faster – and, sadly, heavier – the technology required to bring them to a halt safely in an accident has had to become ever more sophisticated. Geobrugg is the company behind the state-of-the-art debris fences at the new Hanoi and renovated Zandvoort tracks, among many other F1 venues...

CV

2013 – Present

Director of
Motorsport, Geobrugg

2008 – 2013

Head of Business
Development
International,
Geobrugg

2006 – 2008

Project Manager, Ed.
Züblin AG

GP Racing: Your company's background is based in the mining industry, rockfall protection and roadside barriers – how did you make the leap over to motorsport?

Jochen Braunwarth: In developing our products for slope stabilisation and rockfall barriers, we did extensive field testing because we wanted to demonstrate they had been scientifically evaluated and could guarantee a certain level of safety. We created this mesh out of high-tensile steel wire and we're the only company in the world currently capable of manufacturing this type of wire. Our introduction to motorsport came about through coincidence: there was a German speaker working at the FIA Institute when it was looking into this area, and he reached out to us. At the time the FIA was more interested in our testing capabilities than the product itself. I think originally, at most circuits, debris fences were essentially just designed on paper with a few calculations, then installed. And as cars got faster, the solution was to modify that original design by increasing post dimensions and cable diameters – the fences weren't really tested properly. What the FIA wanted to do was introduce a standard.

GPR: The energies involved in an accident on track can be pretty unpredictable. How did you go about setting up the testing process?

JB: In the UK, certain tests had been done with a wrecking ball fired out of an air cannon. But there was a variation in the speeds so it was giving lots of different results and impact types. What you need is consistency and repeatability in the testing so you can properly evaluate whatever you're doing with the barrier design. The FIA asked us if we had the capability to conduct tests with this level of repeatability and the short answer was yes. So at first we weren't testing with our products, we were testing the existing barriers. And the first results were pretty shocking – although they were stronger on paper [than previous designs], they weren't really absorbing the energy

INTERVIEW STUART COOLING

that had to be absorbed. The starting point was a 780kg wrecking ball, simulating the weight of an F1 car, and an impact speed of 60km/h, which was the assumed speed at the end of a run-off area.

With that approach we soon came up with a nice system using our mesh, and the FIA issued us with a letter saying we could put that system on the market.

GPR: What challenges did you face in persuading circuits to add these systems?

JB: This was a little over ten years ago, and let's say I was a young and eager sales guy at the time. I approached most of the German race tracks, showed them all our videos, and, apart from the Nürburgring, they were saying, "It's a very interesting solution but we don't need it. We don't have steel balls flying around at our circuit." I could understand that: it was a very scientific approach and, although the ball accurately represented what would happen if a car impacted the barriers, they couldn't make that connection. The Nürburgring could because they'd had a crash where a car's engine block had landed on the public road outside the track.

This was all a bit disappointing because we'd been researching this for three years. So we approached the FIA again and suggested that a head-on-impact at the end of a straight wasn't the only kind of test we should be doing; that's how the second test specification was born, which involves an actual car with 20 degrees impact angle and a speed of 120km/h. Potential customers could relate to that.

GPR: And that has formed the basis for the FIA's requirements for equipment at Grade One circuits?

JB: Yes – to pass, the fence must not become detached, or deflect or move more than three metres beyond the installation site. Both our fixed and mobile systems meet those requirements, and there's now nearly 50 circuits worldwide, from country club level up to F1 circuits, which use our products.





PICTURES: McLAREN; SHUTTERSTOCK



The stunning interiors and exteriors of the MTC, which McLaren moved into in 2004. The adjoining road car factory was opened by PM David Cameron in 2011

Got a spare £200m lying around? If so, the McLaren Technology Centre could be yours. The company has appointed a property agent to market it, although it has no intention to leave its home of the past 17 years.

McLaren, which was forced to make 1200 positions redundant and borrow £150m from the Bank of Bahrain earlier this year, urgently needs to shore up its balance sheet and reduce its debts. The MTC was valued at £200m on its most recent set of accounts. If a sale goes through, McLaren will in effect become a tenant.

“We’re going to do a traditional sale and lease back,” says CEO Zak Brown. “I think the majority of companies in this world don’t actually own the real estate they are tenants of. We’ve got a lot of cash tied up in that building, and that’s not a very productive use of funds when you’re looking to invest in your business. So, we’ll ultimately sell it to someone, and will then do an extremely long-term lease. We’ll use that money to help us grow our business. It’s a pretty typical financial restructuring exercise.”

Brown is correct that so-called leaseback arrangements are increasingly common, and the impetus has grown worldwide during the coronavirus pandemic as companies struggle to obtain financing by traditional routes. Leasebacks enable a company to turn capital locked up in bricks and mortar into cash which can be deployed immediately, and remove borrowings leveraged on properties from the balance sheet. But they are not without pitfalls.

Chief among these is that the company no longer owns the property, so it won’t benefit from any increase in its market value. Neither will the value of the property form part of the value of the company. And, while the rental payments are tax-deductible, the company is still paying rent.

These leases are often described as ‘quasi debt’. When the high street retail chain Woolworths collapsed in 2008, those close to the business pointed the finger at a decision to sell and lease back 182 shops in 2001, which raised £614m but saddled the company with an ongoing lease burden. It is claimed (in the *Financial Times*) that within seven years the annual rent bill rose from £70m to £160m.

Also, when a company is financially troubled it is unlikely to achieve the book cost of its assets in any sale. McLaren spent an estimated £300m building the MTC and another £50m on the adjoining car factory – and it will be fortunate to realise the £200m value it current places on the campus.

Brown insists that the growth trajectory of the

ONE (FAIRLY) CAREFUL OWNER

McLaren has put its award-winning Norman Foster-designed headquarters up for sale. But it’s not planning on moving out...

WORDS STUART COOLING

company will unlock revenues which will outweigh the rent costs. He also suggests desperation for cash is not McLaren’s reason for selling.

“We’re fine financially from a cashflow standpoint,” he insists. “Obviously when COVID hit and that turned off our Formula 1 business, our automotive business and to a certain extent our technology business, that consumed an immediate amount of cash.

“We’ve now done that [via the Bank of Bahrain loan]. And we’ve now got plenty of runway to be able to make sound business decisions – and I think the sale leaseback is a very good decision.

“The growth that we’re going to be able to generate from our business by taking those resources and putting them into the business, we should be able to multiply that money we’re getting because it will drive our business to the next level. So I do think it’s the right decision.”

For McLaren the next step is not only to realise the right valuation for its property, but also to ensure the lease is favourable. Specialised facilities – ie factories rather than offices – are considered riskier investments because it’s harder for the landlord to find new tenants if the current one vacates. And the McLaren campus is the very definition of specialised.

The site itself is a valuable asset, but one with little room for development. When McLaren acquired the land – a derelict farm with a miniature railway adjoining – it had to undertake a complex series of mitigations in order to build on it, including substantial landscaping and the opening up of some of the land for public access. Upon completion, a restrictive covenant was placed upon it, limiting further development.

When former boss Ron Dennis decided to expand the Automotive business and construct another factory on site, locals objected, and the company had to undertake further mitigations. The building itself is partially underground (beneath the water table, in fact) and screened from view; McLaren also bought a defunct mushroom farm nearby and turned it over to the Horsell Common Protection Society.

Subsequent applications to extend the MTC and build a new site for McLaren Applied Technologies on the other side of the road have been blocked. McLaren even went so far as to propose that the sites be connected by a hidden underground transport system, dubbed the “Ronorail” by insiders.

Will potential investors bite? If so, it will mean a new era for the team and put further distance between its past and present. For what is this place if not the house that Ron built?





SEB'S
IN
THE

PINK

WORDS LUKE SMITH

PORTRAIT ADRIAN MYERS

PICTURES  **motorsport**
IMAGES

After being unceremoniously ditched by Ferrari, **Sebastian Vettel** looked short of options to remain in F1 for 2021. But the four-time world champion was wooed by new Aston Martin owner Lawrence Stroll, and has decided to take a leap of faith with Racing Point. Can Vettel rediscover his best form and help take F1's midfield minnow to the next level?

WHEN SEBASTIAN VETTEL RECEIVED THE UNEXPECTED PHONE CALL FROM MATTIA BINOTTO INFORMING HIM FERRARI WOULD NOT BE EXTENDING HIS CONTRACT BEYOND 2020, SEB FOUND HIMSELF AT AN UNEXPECTED CROSSROADS...

For Vettel, the path had seemed obvious. Despite the tension that had brewed through 2019 amid Charles Leclerc's emergence, and the five-year deal his young team-mate was rewarded with for his fine start to life at Maranello, Seb still felt a new contract offer for himself seemed likely.

But Ferrari had other ideas. Talks were never opened with Vettel, the Scuderia's focus instead shifting to signing Carlos Sainz from McLaren, thus making Leclerc the new team leader and the man on whom it wanted to stake its future.

It was never a situation Vettel thought he would be in, nor one he has ever suffered previously. He had never needed to go out in search of an F1 seat before, always being coveted. Now he was weighing up not only his options to stay on the grid for 2021, but whether he wanted to remain in Formula 1 at all.

The soon-to-be-rebranded Racing Point team ultimately became Vettel's destination for 2021, the deal being announced in September – cynics might suggest deliberately – on the eve of Ferrari's big 1,000th race celebrations at Mugello. It left Sergio Pérez in the cold after the existing Racing Point bosses elected to break his contract for next year, much to the Mexican's own surprise, but this cold-blooded move ensures four-time world champion Vettel's

Lawrence Stroll (left) and son Lance (right). With Lance's seat assured for 2021, if Lawrence wanted Vettel he knew the team would have to break Sergio Pérez's contract to make room for the four-time world champion



PICTURES: ZAK MAUGER; GLENN DUNBAR



Formula 1 career will be prolonged.

It was a statement of intent not just from Racing Point's bosses ahead of the Aston Martin rebrand in 2021, but also from Vettel himself. Four world titles and 53 race wins isn't enough for him; he still has unfinished business in F1. He wants more, and Aston Martin is the perfect team with which to move forward.

From the moment Vettel got off the phone with Binotto, he knew his options to remain with one of F1's top-tier teams were slim. While Mercedes made positive noises about Vettel's availability in public, the idea of creating a 'superteam' alongside Lewis Hamilton was never seriously entertained. A return to Red Bull was also never a real option, given that team's commitment to promoting from within, and its current intense focus on making Max Verstappen world champion.

If Vettel wished to remain in F1, he would have to lower his sights and step down into the midfield. Talks with Renault came to nought as the French marque opted to rekindle its old flame with Fernando Alonso, leaving very few serious options remaining.

Aston Martin emerged as a realistic option over the summer as talks commenced with team owner Lawrence Stroll. Vettel was left dodging questions about his favourite James Bond car –

cleverly picking the BMW Z8 from *The World Is Not Enough* – and a ride in Racing Point team principal Otmar Szafnauer's car following the British GP, allegedly to a nearby petrol station.

But the deal was never a formality. It was only concluded shortly before the announcement on the Thursday of the Tuscan Grand Prix, as both sides wrestled over the decision. Racing Point terminated Pérez's new three-year contract early with a heavy heart – given an exit for Lance Stroll, son of team owner Lawrence, was never a realistic possibility – while Vettel was thinking about whether or not to continue in F1 at all.

"It wasn't an easy call," Vettel admitted. "The last weeks and months have been quite intense for me, a different and new situation for me to be in. As I have put out from day one, I felt like I wanted to remain in Formula 1 only if there is something that really attracts me.

"It was getting more and more clear the [Racing Point] team's performances this year have been very encouraging. Even more than that is where the regulations are going, into hopefully a more and more level playing field.

"It will be a lot of firsts, and the first time for the team to be in a position to have the same money as other teams and show what they are capable of."

Racing Point's form through 2020 has rightly

given Vettel confidence. As controversial as the 'pink Mercedes' RP20 car has proved, it has catapulted Racing Point to the front of the midfield fight – even ahead of Ferrari. Given the enforced carryover of existing designs into 2021, it bodes well for next year at least for Vettel to be in a more competitive position than he currently finds himself.

But there is also the raised performance ceiling that gives the Aston Martin project room to grow into. As Vettel said, the incoming budget cap for 2021 means the advantage enjoyed by the big spenders at the front of the field should be significantly diminished.

Team owner Lawrence Stroll has been bold in his plans for the future, commencing construction on a new factory at Silverstone that will be ready to move in to come August 2022, following a year's delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The workforce has grown by 20% since Stroll's takeover, and the funding has been there to take bold risks – such as following Mercedes' 2019 car design – without fearing the consequences of one bad year had the move backfired.

And of course, signing Vettel is itself a bold statement of where Stroll wants to take Aston Martin. He wants this to be a team for a world champion to race for. "I believe the team has huge potential," says Vettel, who has acquired ►

THIS IS UNCHARTED TERRITORY FOR VETTEL. HE'S NEVER BEEN PART OF A TEAM TRYING TO BUILD AND GROW IN THIS WAY BEFORE, MOSTLY RACING FOR A WINNING OUTFIT

shares in Aston Martin and is looking forward to the challenge of helping Racing Point grow into Stroll's ultimate vision. "There's some really good people on board, clever people, and I'm looking forward to help and show that those qualities are there and demonstrate that as well with the results."

This is uncharted territory for Vettel. He's never been part of a team trying to build and grow in this way before, mostly racing for a winning outfit. Yes, he was Red Bull's first race winner and world champion, but the growing pains were over by the time Vettel arrived in 2009, and the team had the funding and

resources in place to fight the big guns. With Ferrari it was much the same – Vettel's focus was on putting the jigsaw pieces in the right place and building a once-successful team around him, not building one up.

That new challenge is motivating Vettel, enough to keep his F1 career going. While he

Vettel has spent most of 2020 chasing the Racing Point cars, so bad has been Ferrari's performance this season, but he'll be hoping that his new team will maintain this status quo into 2021



may only be 33, Vettel has a young family and has achieved much over the past 13 years. He admitted himself that he came “close” to calling it quits and walking away, something few would have begrudged him doing. But there remains a burning desire to race and to add to his accolades, as well as building something new at Aston Martin. He will be required to get involved at every level of the operation, which in turn will tap into the experience that only a four-time world champion can offer.

Former team-mate Daniel Ricciardo has been in a similar situation with Renault over the past two years, trying to bring a midfield team forward. Ricciardo thinks the need to be hands-on in all areas will suit Vettel down to the ground.

“He’s very driven – stating the obvious – but he’s always been very interested in the team itself,” Ricciardo says. “He’s always willing to put the work in. Racing is in all of our DNA, but he really lives and breathes it. We might go to sleep at night with maybe other thoughts, and I feel like most of the time, he’s going to sleep with racing thoughts!

“It will probably be very successful for him. The team looks like they’re in a good place. I think he’ll contribute to that quite tremendously.”

The chance to work with a driver of Vettel’s experience and work ethic was something Racing Point’s bosses felt they could not pass up ahead of the Aston Martin rebrand. But his profile is also important. From a marketing standpoint, to say one of the greatest drivers in F1 history – statistically, at the very least – is racing for your team offers some big clout for Aston Martin to leverage commercially.

That legacy is one thing Pérez could not compete with and was perhaps the decisive factor that swung the decision in Vettel’s favour. Pérez played a critical role in saving the Silverstone operation back in 2018, when Force India collapsed and the Racing Point consortium bought the ailing team. He has scored all but

two of the team’s podium finishes – Giancarlo Fisichella in Belgium in 2009 and Lance Stroll at Monza this year are the exceptions – and proven himself to be one of the best pound-for-pound drivers in F1’s midfield.

“The final decision, it wasn’t easy,” confirms Racing Point team principal Szafnauer. “Sergio has served us well, he’s a great racer. He’s a quick driver. He’s a safe pair of hands on a Sunday, especially doesn’t make many mistakes and brings points in. It’s a compliment to Sergio – for us to deliberate so long whether to take a four-time world champion with all the experience that Sebastian brings, or stay with Sergio.

“Ultimately, with Aston Martin coming in, I think it’s the right decision to get the experience that Sebastian brings with him, the experience of a top team – and that’s where Aston Martin aspires to be.”

For Vettel, there is also the opportunity to try and regain some lost confidence after recent trying times with Ferrari. Through the title defeats of 2017 and 2018, the loss of status to Leclerc last year and the disastrous campaign Ferrari has embarked on in 2020, Vettel’s ability has been called into question. Mistakes, especially in high-pressure race situations, have led to a degree of revisionism about Vettel’s standing – and even questions over whether Pérez might have been the better out-and-out

driver to go with after all.

But there are no concerns at all for Racing Point in that regard. “He’s 33 years old, he’s still in the prime of his career,” Szafnauer says of Vettel. “He’s got a vast amount of experience. He’s still highly motivated to do well. He works really hard, and we believe with our team, and where we want to take it to and the level that we want to get to, Seb’s a perfect fit for that. I’m confident that he’ll race well.”

There is also the hope that away from the high-pressure and political environment at Maranello, Vettel can rekindle some of the form that allowed him to reach dizzying heights with Red Bull in the early 2010s. Seb recognises that since confirmation of his Aston Martin switch, he’s felt clearer in his mind, giving him a better chance to relax and savour his final races with Ferrari.

Turning to next season, competing with the likes of Mercedes and Red Bull in 2021 may not be realistic for Vettel and Aston Martin, but as both look further into the future, there seems to be real hope on both sides that they can build something special.

Vettel arrived at Ferrari in 2015 hoping to be at the heart of the team, much as his hero Michael Schumacher was during his time at Maranello. But those plans evaporated as titles were lost, frustration set in, and Leclerc emerged as the new favourite son of Italy’s greatest car brand. ▶

Stroll (left) and Vettel compare notes at the Spanish GP this year. The 21-year old should benefit massively from Vettel’s experience



PICTURES: ANDY HONE; MARK SUTTON



THE ASTON MARTIN
PROJECT NEEDS A DRIVER
OF VETTEL'S EXPERIENCE
AND STANDING TO DRIVE
IT FORWARD AND HELP
FULFIL ITS ASPIRATIONS
OF BREAKING UP THE
STATUS QUO AT F1'S
TOP TABLE

PICTURES: CHARLES COATES; ANDY HONE

Now, Vettel gets another shot at finding that kind of status. It's perhaps a safer bet for him this time around. Ferrari being Ferrari, it can afford to show the door to a four-time world champion. But the Aston Martin project needs a driver of Vettel's experience and standing to drive it forward and help fulfil its aspirations of

breaking up the status quo at F1's top table.

This is likely to be the defining chapter of Vettel's F1 career, cementing his legacy and how he is remembered. It also gives him the opportunity to define Aston Martin's story upon the brand's return to F1 as a so-called works operation, donning a blend of British racing green

alongside Racing Point's familiar BWT pink.

He's a sucker for motorsport history, making this a project that also appeals to the romantic in Vettel. Even when asked by *GP Racing* about his hopes for next year, Vettel's attention turned to the motorsport print hung in the office that was visible in the background of our Zoom call.



RACING POINT DOESN'T STAND ON SENTIMENT



Sergio Pérez has been instrumental in not only the success of Racing Point and its predecessor, Force India, since 2014, but the team's very survival.

Pérez was the catalyst in administration proceedings for Force India during its collapse in the summer of 2018, allowing for the Lawrence Stroll-led Racing Point consortium to take over the operation and pave the way for a brighter future. Yet when Vettel popped up on the driver market, Pérez's position always looked precarious. Despite repeated claims from Racing Point that both of its drivers were under contract for 2021 – Pérez signed a new three-year deal just last season – exit clauses meant that if the team really wanted Vettel in the car, it could make it happen.

And so it came to pass. Pérez was informed shortly before the deal was finalised with Vettel that his services would not be required for 2021. It came as a surprise to the Mexican, who felt all the signs from the team had been that he would be continuing next year.

"The feedback that I was getting [was] that the team wanted to keep me," Pérez says. "There were some discussions in the background about contracts and so on. There were a couple of things in the contract that we went through. In the end, they officially told me that I'm not continuing. I didn't expect that."


Pérez's confidence in his future at Racing Point was such that he had not even considered alternative options. But his appeal, thanks to both his on-track abilities and his bumper sponsorship offering, was such that talks quickly kicked off with both Haas and Alfa Romeo over a deal.

At the time of writing, no announcement has yet been made regarding Pérez's future. But he has stressed that while his priority is to remain in F1, it must be the right proposition.

"It has to be a package that really gives me the maximum motivation to give my 100% every single lap," Pérez adds. "It's got to be a long-term project, targeting 2022, because there I expect the rule change to play a major effect. That's the main reason that I want to continue for 2022, because I feel there are plenty of opportunities. If I don't find anything attractive in F1, I would think about other series, other things, we'll see..."

"What track is that?" Vettel asked.

"Le Mans from 1958. Tony Brooks is leading the start – in an Aston Martin."

Should Aston Martin maximise the potential its burgeoning F1 project has, that could well be a position Vettel again finds himself in at some point in the future. 

323

NOT

OUT

Kimi Räikkönen is now F1's most experienced driver ever (at least he should be by the time you read this) and has a reputation for giving journalists the cold shoulder. But he's also authentic and no-nonsense, with feet firmly planted on the ground – and it's this, allied to his extraordinary driving ability and technical nous, which has kept his career going, and going...

WORDS ALEX KALINAUCKAS PICTURES  **motorsport** IMAGES AND ALFA ROMEO

GP Racing is trying not to panic. We're minutes away from speaking to Kimi Räikkönen and the doors to the Monza 'Media Meeting Area' are seemingly locked. "It's fine," we think, clearly exasperated, "he's only notoriously difficult to interview and hates to be dragged away from the parts of Formula 1 he actually enjoys..."

A text to the FIA's media delegate, another to Will Ponissi (Alfa Romeo's press attaché), a few moments of struggling to banish our unhelpful inner monologue, and we're saved! A circuit press officer arrives – and reveals the locked door isn't the right one, and the correct one just needs a good shove. Mercifully, she holds back her thoughts on our obvious inadequacy...

There's no time to focus on the embarrassment – we're in, and Kimi and Will are not far behind. We scramble to our seat at a large table with three chairs and notice a flash of red to our left. It turns out to be Sebastian Vettel speaking to another journalist.

Phone out, notifications off, questions ready to scroll. The doors open again, painfully easily, and in they come. Kimi is in his typical hat and sunglasses combo, paired with the mandatory mask that will muffle his words further. The glasses are quickly



removed – he’s sizing us up, ready as ever to swiftly dismiss misjudged questions, much as he has throughout his almost 20 years racing in F1.

A good thing we’ve decided to go high risk for our opening gambit:

“In a few races, you’re going to become F1’s most experienced driver – do you care?”

He doesn’t miss a beat: “No, not really.”

Just as we’d expected, but it’s too early to know if the gamble has paid off. *GP Racing*’s interview preparations involved overloading on topics just in case Kimi isn’t in a chatty mood, but we’re armed with (hopefully) engaging talking points – so nothing about Alfa’s troublesome C39, just in case... Plus, this being modern journalism, we’ve been commissioned to ask questions for *GP Racing*’s sister publications as well, which means there’s lots of potential ground to cover.

By the time you’re reading this, Raikkonen is on 323 actual F1 starts. His record-beating moment will be celebrated (not by him) at the Eifel GP, but three are ‘missing’. These stem from his transmission-induced retirement in the subsequently nullified opening laps of the 2001 Belgian GP, (after Luciano Burti’s horrific crash), the farce of Indianapolis 2005, and a Ferrari turbo failure on the grid at Sepang in 2017.

Much to our relief, Kimi opens up. When it comes to picking his three best races for an *Autosport* feature he goes further – offering up his Australia 2013 triumph for Lotus alongside his most famous wins at McLaren and Ferrari: Suzuka 2005 and Spa 2009. And his world title clincher in Brazil, of course.

This is one of the interesting things about Kimi Räikkönen – the 2007 world champion, the 21-time grand prix winner, the no-nonsense, hard-partying cult figure, soon to be F1’s most experienced driver. Despite all of that, he genuinely doesn’t care about the achievements, or the missed opportunities – the sort of stuff that would enthrall and vex other sportspeople, let alone mere mortals on the outside.

On F1’s return to the Nürburgring, Kimi will likely break Rubens Barrichello’s record for most F1 race starts. The extended nature of the modern calendar, 2020 and the pandemic aside, means soon there will be plenty of F1 drivers with start totals to rival cricket scores. But right now, it’s just Kimi, Barrichello, Michael Schumacher, Fernando Alonso and ▶

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions at Monza, Kimi gave *GP Racing* a no-nonsense and informative interview



Jenson Button that stand with Brian Lara-esque 300-plus totals.

Kimi puts his own F1 longevity, in part, down to his famously nonchalant attitude.

"F1 has never been the most important thing in my life," he says. *GP Racing* freezes. Kimi is rubbing his neck. In *The Unknown Kimi Räikkönen* by Kari Hotakainen, we learn that neck rubbing with his right hand means "the boy's pissed off". – and we've been watching out for it. But it's the left hand, panic subsides again...

"It's for sure taking most of the time in my life," Kimi continues. "But when I go out of here and I go home, I never... I have my own life and F1's never been part of it really. I enjoy it more, because if it would be 24 hours, seven days a week, then I wouldn't be here today. It's always been two separate things. And people can say: 'Oh, it's the wrong approach and this [and that]'. Well, for me it works and I don't care what people say."

The criticism Räikkönen mentions does make some sense. A driver totally committed to improving their F1 prospects, allied with proven natural ability, would logically triumph over a driver that plugs in and plays – even if they are superbly fast. And yet, Mercedes' decision to loosen the reins around Lewis Hamilton has also paid off handsomely.

This is the Räikkönen enigma – it's the detachedness that makes him focused. He's famously direct, as his 2020 British GP radio swearing attests, but there's no fuss; he just *does*. It's what makes him as good as he is – but perhaps that naturally creates a limit also.

And here we come to another fascinating aspect of the Räikkönen riddle – his career, to the outsider, is frustrating. His title and win totals pale in comparison to his friend Vettel's, and Hamilton's too. And Kimi's second stint at Ferrari is being made to look ever more underwhelming with every starring Charles Leclerc drive – even though Räikkönen was provided with underwhelming machinery by the Scuderia in 2014 and 2016.

But even at his Ferrari exit he was still wanted in F1. Alfa Romeo, then Sauber, wanted to hire Kimi because it viewed – and still does – his experience and development skills as an asset.

"Nearly 323 races and 20 years is a lot of driving and a lot of F1 – why do you love it so much?" *GP Racing* asks. And Räikkönen's answer shows his worth to Alfa.

"The racing, obviously, but over the years also the challenge to try to improve, to try to fix issues and make the car better," says Kimi – who in 2019 sketched his own designs for changes to his car's brake pedals, highlighting his mechanical skills acquired in part from "destroying my mum's bike and [taking] parts from it" as a youngster.

One of the most interesting aspects of our discussion concerns Räikkönen's reputation for forging lasting bonds. Whether that's his long-term manager Steve Robertson; his trainer since 2002, Mark Arnall – "it's more friendship than anything else [now]"

– or engineers such as Mark Slade, who Räikkönen persuaded to rejoin the then Lotus squad from Mercedes ahead of his 2012 F1 comeback. Together they worked with performance engineer Julien Simon-Chautemps – now Kimi's Alfa race engineer.

"I don't feel that I needed to work – I don't think you need to," Raikkonen replies when asked if it's hard work that has maintained these relationships. "Either it's going to work itself or, if you have to force it to really work out, something is wrong with it. When I was younger, it was more important on race engineers and now... as long as the working relationship is

good and we're kind of on the same page, I also know enough myself."

As you may have guessed, this was this particular writer's first meeting with Räikkönen – in restricted circumstances thanks to F1's necessary COVID-secure rules. At one point, the flash of red starts moving – Vettel is exiting the room with a quizzical look at our table. *GP Racing* is not sure if he's more puzzled by our ridiculous haircut, or his former team-mate doing a 1-1 interview...

In spite of Kimi's reputation, this isn't a chore. Many of our questions are left unasked simply because Kimi has spent so long responding to what we've already put to him. In fact, we unexpectedly overrun. He doesn't go into forensic detail, or give the headline-grabbing soundbites others might, but his answers feel authentic. There are few pauses, he just tells it like it is. Classic Räikkönen.

He has nothing planned to celebrate taking Barrichello's record – although one suspects Alfa may do so on his behalf – and so we head towards our conclusion, with Kimi... *laughing*.

"You know, 20 or 19 years, whatever it is, it doesn't feel [like that long]," he ponders. "It goes quickly – when the season starts and it finishes. But it's a long time when you start [to think about it], it's half of my life. In one way, it's a bit sad but that's how it goes!"

We ask: "When the end does come..."

"It's more closer than the beginning!"

"... will you come back and visit F1?"

He doesn't know. Probably. It depends. "Obviously I will never do any commentating" – but he's open to other work the F1 world may throw his way. And our interview ends on a tantalising note...

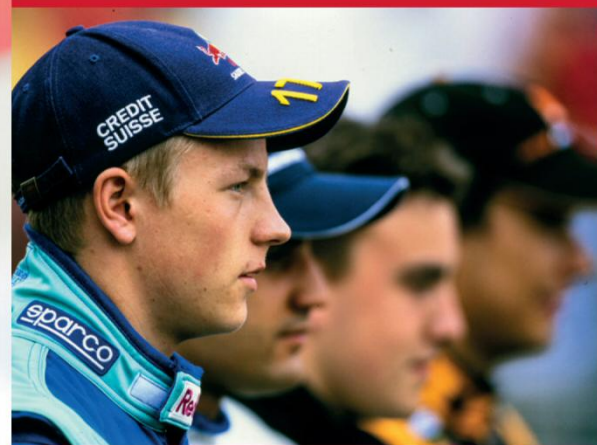
"My kids, they are both interested in the sport and so if they want to come one day, we should come. But I wouldn't say that I'm desperate to come because I do try to enjoy other things [with] them than that."

We've made it to the end. We've heard Kimi's memories, and got him laughing and there's just one more thing to try. Can Will take a photo to capture the reality of the COVID media restrictions? He can, but will Kimi mind? He doesn't – so we wish him good luck for the race weekend to create the illusion of discussion; two pairs of eyebrows raised at the levels of absurdity.

"Thanks, Kimi – I don't know yet if I'll be at the Nürburgring when you break the record..."

"Oh, so it's the Nürburgring? Well, if we start all the races..." 

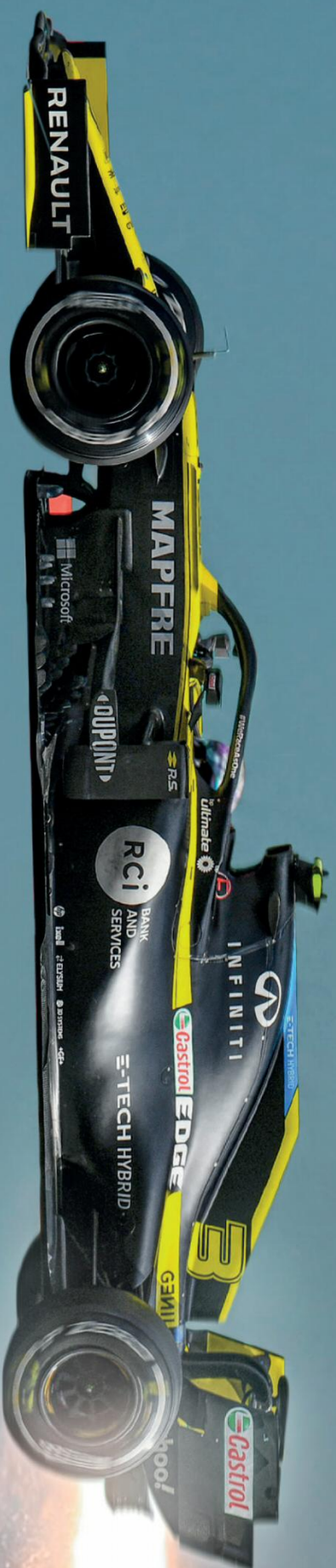
**"I HAVE MY OWN LIFE
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REALLY. I ENJOY IT
MORE, BECAUSE IF IT
WOULD BE 24 HOURS,
SEVEN DAYS A WEEK,
THEN I WOULDN'T BE
HERE TODAY"**



Australia in 2001 (top) was the starting point for Kimi's F1 journey. Champion in 2007, one of his favourite wins was at Spa in 2009 (above), his last season before a two-year break. And at Alfa (below), he still enjoys the challenge of F1

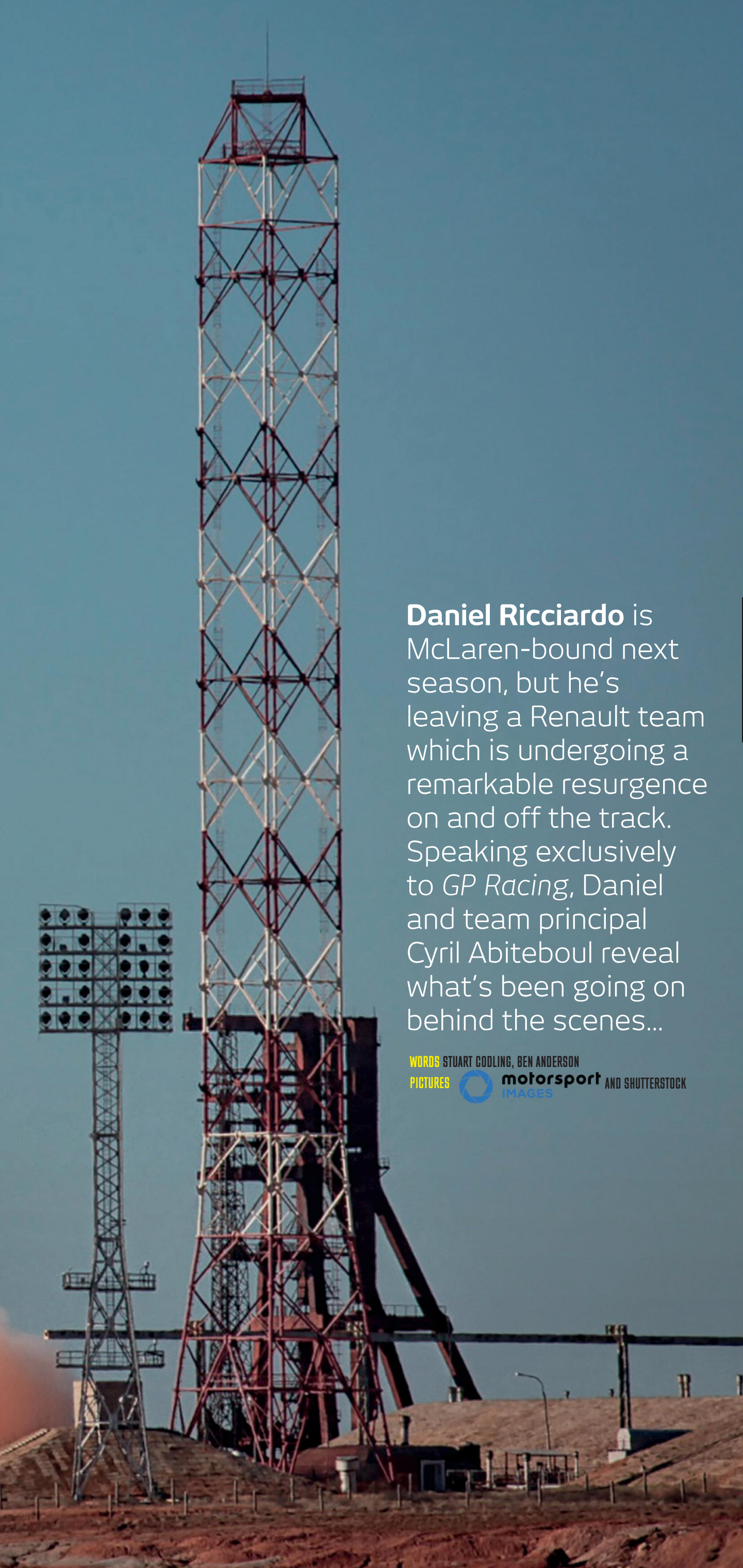


RENAISSANCE



THE RENAULT





Daniel Ricciardo is McLaren-bound next season, but he's leaving a Renault team which is undergoing a remarkable resurgence on and off the track. Speaking exclusively to *GP Racing*, Daniel and team principal Cyril Abiteboul reveal what's been going on behind the scenes...

WORDS STUART COOLING, BEN ANDERSON
PICTURES  AND SHUTTERSTOCK

R

Renault's stuttering progress back towards the front of the grid has been a persistent thread within Formula 1's tangled narratives since the company returned as a manufacturer in 2016. It's taken tentative steps up the order only to slip back

again – particularly whenever it approaches that unbridgeable chasm which has existed between F1's top three teams and the gaggle of midfielders seemingly doomed to hope, at best, for fourth.

Sceptics have, rightly, asked questions: was Renault too optimistic in expecting to return to winning ways within a five-year timespan? In thinking it could do so while spending less than the top three? In persisting with engine and chassis manufacturing operations in different countries?

Indubitably these were the right questions to ask – but, amid the many curveballs 2020 has thrown at the world championship, the competitive picture is changing. Renault has emerged as a strong contender for what might, given Ferrari's implosion, become third place. Speaking to *GP Racing* during the Russian Grand Prix weekend *before* the Eifel Grand Prix in which he nails Renault's first podium since its return as a manufacturer, Daniel Ricciardo is clear that real substance rather than good luck is underpinning Renault's renaissance.

"The best example," he says, "is probably last weekend [the Tuscan GP at Mugello] we were kind of pissed off with fourth place. As far as the culture goes, that's a big change – the *expectation* and belief that there's more, or knowing there's more, and just raising the bar.

"The team has a lot more belief than it did 18 months ago, that's the biggest thing. Obviously ►

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; SHUTTERSTOCK



RENAULT
F1 TEAM

EDGE



Castrol

Microsoft

Microsoft



INFINITI



BANK
AND
SERVICES



RENAULT

DP WORLD





One of the best signs of the progress Renault has made this season was at Mugello where Ricciardo was able to pass Bottas at the third restart

I had that at Red Bull – it was a group of winners and they had that swagger about them. Certainly I feel Renault are showing signs of that now.”

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this return to form is that 2020 was shaping up to be an ‘interim year’ with a car package largely carried over from the previous season. Renault’s stated focus had been on the new technical rules originally scheduled for 2021, and to that end had restructured the Enstone-based technical team: chassis technical director Nick Chester departed last December, while head of aerodynamics Peter Machin was replaced by the returning Dirk de Beer. James Rodgers was promoted to chief aerodynamicist. Only in February did former Benetton, McLaren and Ferrari man Pat Fry slide his feet under the desk vacated by Chester.

At that point Renault was playing down immediate expectations, and with good reason. Last year’s car, the RS19, had shown flashes of promise but in-season developments were ineffectual, chiefly because Renault – in common with several other teams – was struggling to simulate the turbulent wake of the front wheels accurately, particularly when steering lock was applied and the car was in yaw. The result was confidence-sapping inconsistency in downforce levels through long corners. Suspension kinematics have also been a problem since ‘Team Enstone’ was forced to shelve its trick interconnected hydraulic systems under its previous ownership, and the cars have generally been too stiff-legged ever since.

But while the RS20 essentially carried over much of the previous design, key aerodynamic changes have provided more development runway. There’s now more space between the leading edges of the sidepods and the front wheels, for instance, enabling better management of their wake.

“In F1 small differences can make a big impact on the overall results,” says team principal Cyril Abiteboul. “Every year [since 2016] it’s been a case of marginal gains over our previous performance, but the others are improving too. So sometimes these marginal gains were putting us in what looked like a nice position, such as in 2018 when we finished fourth in the championship. In 2019 we weren’t performing worse than we

were the previous season, it’s just the gain we’d made *versus the rest of the field* wasn’t good enough to keep that position.

“There’s also a latency between you making a decision and that translating into an effect on track, even though it’s typical in F1 to be assessed by the outside world on a weekly basis! So, frankly, what you’re seeing on track at the moment is probably a reflection of last year’s team and you’re yet to see what we are today.

“There have been lots of changes – probably more last year than this year – so I’d say what you’re seeing at the moment is the result of what we’ve been doing over the past few seasons.”

Cars within the midfield pack possess a variety of different strengths and weaknesses, all of which leads to a shifting balance of power from track to track. But there’s no evidence to suggest the picture so far has been skewed by the configuration of the circuits that make up 2020’s make-do-and-mend calendar favouring Renault’s car.

Quite the opposite: the aforementioned Mugello is garlanded with the kind of long, high-speed corners which would have flushed out the RS19’s inherent pendulousness. And yet Ricciardo was high enough up the order to cheekily pass the Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas at the third restart. In Austria last year, Ricciardo and Nico Hülkenberg laboured in the midfield to 12th and 13th, a net gain for Ricciardo of two places from qualifying and a drop of one for Hülkenberg. This July, Renault looked much sharper during the two rounds at the Red Bull Ring, ▶

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OVER THE PAST
FEW SEASONS
” CYRIL ABITEBOUL

albeit pegged back by overheating in the races.

“There is a step being made,” says Ricciardo. “Your first impression is normally a lasting one, especially with a race car. There was a bit of a step in winter testing, but to be honest it still wasn’t massive. It was when we came to race one in Austria – a circuit that was quite poor for the team last year. I remember going out in FP1 and thinking, ‘Ooh, the rear’s got some grip – I can get to full throttle quite a lot easier.’ So there was certainly a step [again].

“Obviously other teams have also made progress but I felt last year, a lot of the time we were just hanging on in the midfield, and now we’re really in [it] at the moment.”

From a technical point of view, Renault may have benefitted from the enforced COVID-19 hiatus, during which the two-week gap between testing and the start of the season expanded to four months. Abiteboul argues that the amount of carry-over in the RS20, a design which will now be ‘frozen’ for the most part during 2021, means the first Renault to properly benefit from Pat Fry’s input from the ground up will be the 2022 car. But Cyril also alludes to a “new dynamic” within the aerodynamics department, and that Fry has taken certain aspects of the technical operation to “the next level”.

Essentially Renault has been able to mature a development package which had originally been planned for June or July, and which delivered a real uplift in competitiveness – something which can’t be said of many previous upgrade packages.

If the season had run to the original calendar, Renault might have contested the first handful of races with a car Ricciardo considered to be not much of an advance on its predecessor.

Ricciardo himself has had a tangible effect, despite his impending defection to McLaren. Pre-season he’d had to spend considerable time batting off suggestions that Renault might instinctively rally round and favour his new (French) team-mate, Esteban Ocon. Instead, Ricciardo – initially regarded as a trophy hire when he joined Renault from Red Bull ahead of the 2019 season – has quietly outpaced Ocon on the track and eschewed politics in the garage while underlining his credentials as undisputed team leader.

“There’s a perception in the outside world that a driver can come in and bring immediate competitiveness,” says Abiteboul, clicking his fingers for emphasis. “Unfortunately, it doesn’t work like that, and it comes down to these marginal differences between the cars. It’s not like we’re missing something major against Red Bull, it’s the sum of many small differences which unfortunately Daniel can have no impact on. He’s not bringing *car* competitiveness, but he brings many other things – such as motivation.

“He’s a people person. We have a group of people who are working extremely well – just look at the progression of his very young race engineer, Karel Loos. It’s been a remarkable ramp up and he’s been able to scale up his game. That’s very much down to the way he’s been working with Daniel and the same is true for all his side of the garage.

“It’s also important [since hiring Daniel] that there’s now nowhere to hide. I know some people in the F1 community had doubts about Renault’s commitment and it was important to make a statement internally and externally, to the partners, to the media, to the fans, making a statement of intent. ▶

“
I KNOW SOME PEOPLE
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” CYRIL ABITEBOUL

Ricciardo has managed to deflect any possible negativity surrounding his move to McLaren by outperforming his younger French team-mate Ocon



PICTURE: GLENN DUNBAR



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PICTURE: STEVEN TEE

It puts pressure on everyone to do what's required to get the momentum going. You saw a number of changes to the organisation over the past year that may or may not have happened without Daniel, but we had him, the competitiveness was not what we wanted, so we had no choice but to make decisions which aren't easy to make with long-lasting team members."

Trackside operations are also noticeably sharper: the pitstops are generally slicker, the strategies less ploddingly route-one (for the past few seasons it's seemed as if the default setting has been to 'go long' on harder-compound tyres in the first stint).

Ricciardo talks about "trying to create that level of intensity, that kind of purpose" he'd seen in the Red Bull garage, and which "wasn't quite there at the start of last year". There are also more debriefs outside the race-weekend environment, involving factory staff as well as the drivers and race engineers, in which a greater depth of analysis is encouraged.

"I'm not gonna take all the credit for it," says Ricciardo. "But there is certainly a change. One thing we've noticed – by 'we' I mean me and my trainer, Michael, who gives me feedback – during a race, if I do a good overtake or have a good result, the team is getting excited. It's kind of a unit and you need that camaraderie, that sense of belief in all the members."

Developments in the boardroom – a place whose occupants have not always had cause to smile upon Renault's F1 project – have given further cause for positivity. Following a long period of uncertainty in the wake of former boss Carlos Ghosn's disgrace

“
WE’RE TRYING
TO CREATE
THAT LEVEL OF
INTENSITY I HAD AT
RED BULL WHICH
WASN’T QUITE THERE
AT THE START OF
LAST YEAR

” DANIEL RICCIARDO


in Japan, the denizens of Enstone and Viry-Chatillon now have an ally in the form of new CEO Luca de Meo, long considered a protégé of Sergio Marchionne during his service in the Fiat Chrysler empire.

De Meo is what automotive folk like to call 'a car guy' rather than a bean counter, and one of his first calls was to inject some juice into Renault's sporting sub-brand, Alpine. In support of that, Renault F1 will rebrand as Alpine next season.

Further change is blowing in – in the form of Fernando Alonso, who brings a reputation for finding tenths of a second nobody else can, at a cost of being an often prickly and divisive personality. Abiteboul insists the team is ready for what's coming.

"He [Alonso] is probably a bit more aggressive and pushy. Talking about very important stuff with Daniel isn't that easy because he's actually quite shy, he's not going to be very direct about things that don't work. It took me some time to decode and understand what's really behind that smile.

"Fernando is a completely different animal. He will be blunt on the engine, the car, the strategy, the organisation. We know that. Both of them are commanding us to do our absolute best, one by telling you the way it is, the other one through his expectations and the standard of driver he is."

This is patently a team that's lifted its game in response to the velvet-glove treatment. What awaits when that is replaced with the clunking fist? 

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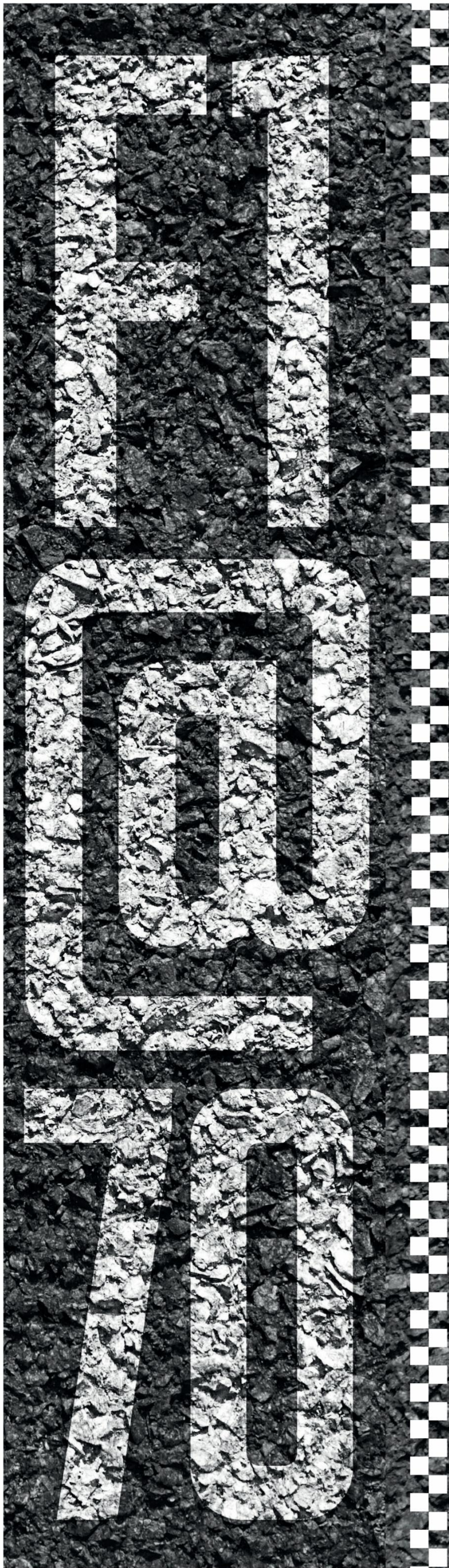
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FORMULA 1'S SEVENTY GREATEST INFLUENCERS

PART 6 THE 2000s

AKI HINTSA
MURRAY WALKER
ROSS BRAWN
MARIO THEISSEN
FERNANDO ALONSO

ADRIAN NEWEY
DIETRICH
MATESCHITZ
CHRISTIAN HORNER
MARTIN BRUNDLE
DONALD MACKENZIE

THE SCIENCE OF
HUMAN AS WELL
AS MECHANICAL
PERFORMANCE HIT
NEW HEIGHTS AS
FORMULA 1 REACHED
THE 21ST CENTURY,
DRIVERS ADOPTED
RADICAL NEW
TRAINING REGIMES
AND THE MONEY
MEN CONTINUED
TO CIRCLE...

WORDS RICHARD WILLIAMS

PICTURES

 motorsport
IMAGES

F1'S 70 GREATEST INFLUENCERS: THE 2000s

At the start of the new millennium, **Aki Hintsa** opened the eyes of the F1 paddock to new dimensions of performance. Hintsa was not a driver or a designer. He had no prior connection to motorsport. He was a doctor, and the potential he explored was not mechanical but human: the mind and body of the athlete in the cockpit.

In 1998 and 1999 he had been alongside Mika Häkkinen as his fellow Finn secured his two world titles at the expense of Michael Schumacher. Häkkinen knew of Hintsa's work with the Finnish Olympic team, and that Hintsa had spent time as a doctor and missionary in Ethiopia, where he had studied the success of the country's long-distance runners.

Fitness instructors had long been a part of the F1 scene, but Hintsa took a broader approach than the average physiotherapist, breaking down the elements of an athlete's wellbeing into six categories: physical activity, nutrition, recovery, biomechanics, mental energy and general health. His work with a succession of drivers at McLaren – including Lewis Hamilton and Kimi Räikkönen – made Hintsa a familiar and respected figure in the paddock, and others queued for the services of his company.

Hintsa saw F1 as an ideal laboratory for his theories, and by the time he died of cancer in 2016, aged 58, his network of performance coaches was working with an array of clients, including corporate

Lewis Hamilton is just one of many F1 drivers to have benefited from the groundbreaking work and methods of Aki Hintsa (right)



“WALKER HAD A VOICE THAT, IN ITS MORE EXCITABLE MOMENTS, SEEMED CAPABLE OF DROWNING OUT AN ENTIRE FIELD OF RACING ENGINES”

executives. Were Hamilton to win his seventh world title in 2020, it would be the 15th for a Hintsa-guided driver in 23 seasons.

By comparison with Hintsa, who arrived in F1 knowing nothing about its history, **Murray Walker** was steeped in gearbox oil from childhood. He may even have been the last active denizen of the paddock to have met the legendary Tazio Nuvolari, during a visit to Donington Park in 1938. It was Walker's greatest quality that even in 2001, when he ended his full-time career as television's voice of F1 at the age of 78, Murray retained all the enthusiasm of the 14-year old who had begged the Italian champion for his autograph.

Succeeding Raymond Baxter as the BBC's chief F1 commentator in 1978, after a successful career in advertising, Walker achieved the sort of identification with his sport enjoyed by Dan Maskell in tennis, David Coleman in athletics and Eddie Waring in rugby league. As with all great commentators, Walker's idiosyncrasies exasperated his critics but were cherished by his fans.

Always delivering his commentary from a standing position, Walker had a voice that, in its more excitable moments, seemed capable of drowning out an entire field of racing engines, a perfect contrast to the laid-back drawl of James Hunt, with whom Murray formed a memorable double-act. No one came closer than Clive James to capturing his appeal: “Even in moments of tranquility, Murray Walker sounds like a man whose trousers are on fire.”

Walker left Formula 1 just as the work of **Ross Brawn** on rebuilding Scuderia Ferrari was reaching its zenith. Lured by Luca di Montezemolo and Jean Todt to join Michael Schumacher at Maranello during 1996, the new technical director recreated the squad that had won two titles with Benetton: himself, Schumacher,

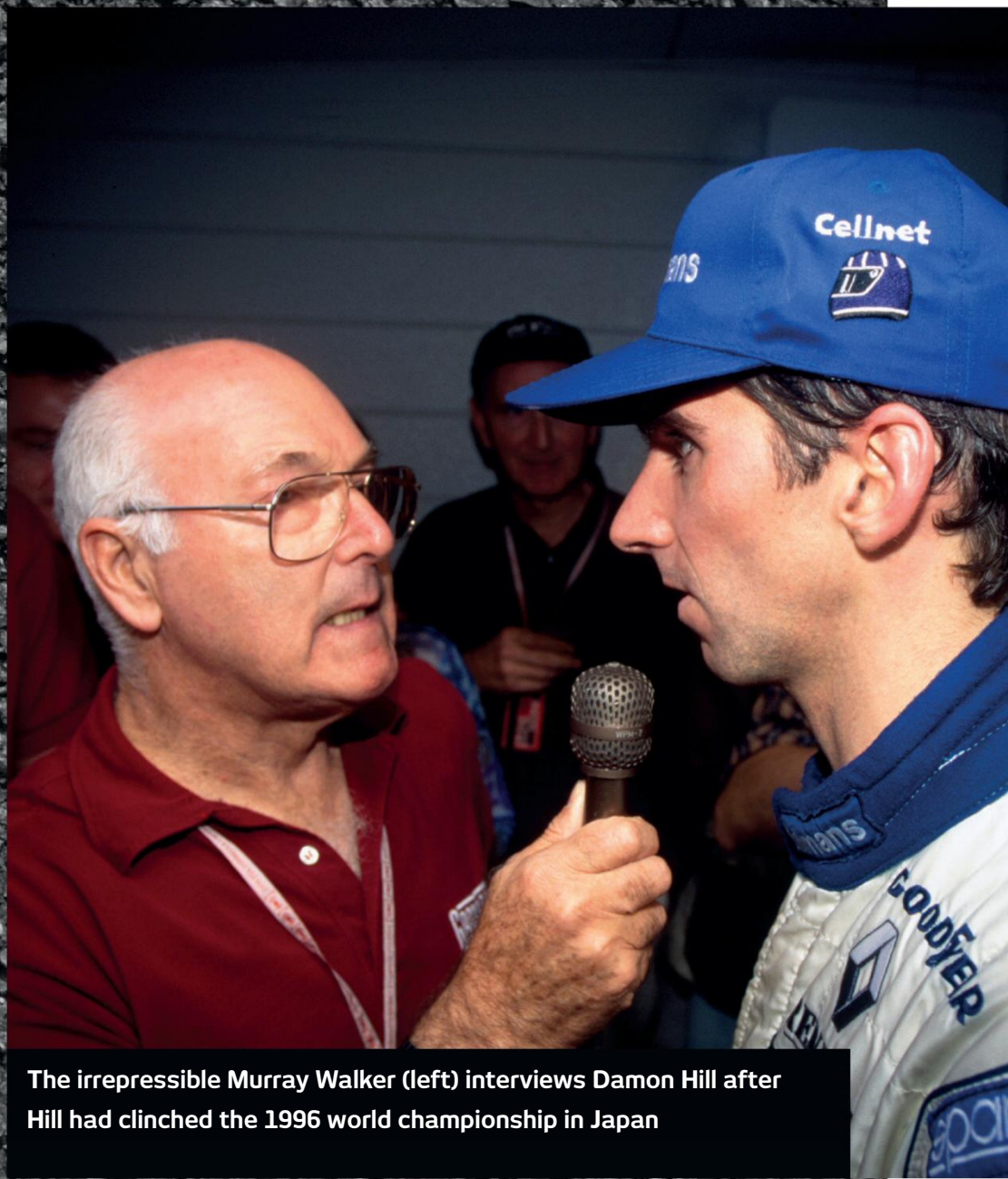
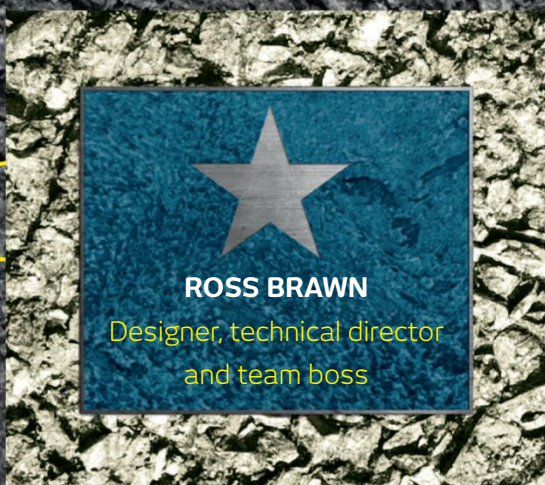


During his time at Ferrari Brawn helped remodel the Scuderia into a team capable of winning five straight title doubles from 2000-2004

the designer Rory Byrne, the electronics wizard Tad Czapski and the chief mechanic Nigel Stepney. Together with Paolo Martinelli, the resident engine specialist, they spent three years pulling the team into shape before embarking on a run of six consecutive constructors' championships and five drivers' titles.

Brawn had trained in mechanical engineering at the UK Atomic Energy Authority but in 1976 took his first step on a career in motor racing by joining March, first as a machinist and then as a mechanic. After moving to Williams in 1978, he progressed through R&D to a role as an aerodynamicist. A year on the Haas-Lola design team in 1985 was followed by three seasons with Arrows and two at Jaguar, where he designed the 1991 championship-winning XJR-14 sportscar.

Moving to Benetton, Brawn supervised Schumacher's first two titles in 1994 and 1995 while earning a reputation for pushing the technical regulations to the limit, something that would resurface during his years of unprecedented success at Ferrari. Leaving the



The irrepressible Murray Walker (left) interviews Damon Hill after Hill had clinched the 1996 world championship in Japan

F1'S 70 GREATEST INFLUENCERS: THE 2000s

Scuderia in 2006, Ross took a break before joining Honda for 2008. When the Japanese company suddenly withdrew at the end of the season, Brawn and Nick Fry took over, downsizing the team, acquiring Mercedes engines, changing the name to Brawn GP and exploiting a controversial double-diffuser design to win the 2009 world championship with Jenson Button.

Mercedes promptly bought and renamed the team, using it as the platform for its full-scale return to F1. Schumacher arrived for a couple of seasons but at the end of 2013 Brawn stepped away, leaving Toto Wolff to preside over a new era of success for the modern Silver Arrows. Four years later Brawn returned as the Formula One Group's managing director, tasked with creating new technical regulations that would make the racing more competitive: the ultimate poacher-turned-gamekeeper.

The new millennium also ushered a return of major manufacturers to Formula 1 in significant numbers. Among them was BMW, whose new motorsport director, **Mario Theissen**, inherited a deal with Frank Williams made by the German company's outgoing sporting boss, Paul Rosche. The first fruit of the arrangement was a win at Le Mans in 1999 with a six-litre V12 BMW prototype, but the subsequent F1 partnership proved less satisfactory.

There were occasional wins for the strong driver line-up of Juan Pablo Montoya and Ralf Schumacher in the first half of the decade, and the Colombian challenged Michael Schumacher strongly for the 2003 title, but the Williams-BMW team's overall results fell short of its potential. In Theissen's mind, the performance of the Grove-built chassis never matched that of the V10 engines from Munich.

The failure of the 2004 "walrus-nose" FW26, the loss of Montoya

BMW's attempts to run its own team from 2006 to 2009, with Theissen as team principal, provided just a solitary win at the 2008 Canadian GP



At Renault in 2005 and 2006 Fernando Alonso claimed his only world titles to date, and the Spaniard has returned to the team for 2021



MARIO THEISSEN

Munich's main man during BMW's most recent F1 stint



FERNANDO ALONSO

Double champion who should have won more



ADRIAN NEWAY

Designer who has won titles with three different teams



With his success at Williams, McLaren and Red Bull, Newey ranks as one of the greatest designers Formula 1 has ever seen

to McLaren and a winless 2005 widened a rift in the relationship between Theissen and Patrick Head, leading to the abrupt termination of the arrangement. Crucially, Williams had refused to entertain BMW's offer to become a part-owner of the team rather than a title sponsor and engine supplier.

Opting to stay in F1, BMW bought the Sauber team and installed Theissen as its principal. Despite the quality of Nick Heidfeld and Robert Kubica, four years of collaboration between Munich and Hinwil produced only a single win, for Kubica at the 2008 Canadian GP, in which Heidfeld finished second. At that point the future for BMW Sauber looked promising, but a poor showing in 2009, including abandoning the KERS regenerative braking system mid-season in mid-season, led to a decision to withdraw from Formula 1. Peter Sauber bought his team back, and Theissen's time in F1 was over.

The debut grand prix season of the 19-year-old **Fernando Alonso**, at the wheel of a Minardi in 2001, was the prelude to a career that brought a new generation of fans to F1. For a while his appeal resembled that of a boy-band hero and at the Spanish Grand Prix entire grandstands were blanketed with the blue and yellow flags of his native Asturias. They were also the colours of the Renault team he joined in 2002, although he would spend that first year as a test driver.

Renault's F1 boss, Flavio Briatore, was Alonso's personal manager, well placed to favour him over another young contender, Jenson Button, as a partner to Jarno Trulli for the 2003 season. Alonso justified the decision by taking his maiden grand prix win that year. In 2005 and 2006 he won 14 races, seven in each season, dethroning Schumacher and Ferrari to take consecutive world titles.

At that stage Alonso looked likely to dominate and define an entire era. But a move to McLaren, alongside the younger and equally competitive Lewis Hamilton, exposed chinks in his armour. The fallout from the Spygate affair opened a rift with Ron Dennis, the team principal, that even four race wins could not close, and a three-year contract was terminated after a single season.

Two years back at Renault were notable mainly for Alonso's victory in the 2008 Singapore GP, achieved after the team had staged a crash

by its number two, Nelsinho Piquet, to bring out the Safety Car and give Alonso – who had started 15th on the grid – the opportunity of a decisive early stop for fuel and tyres. Punishments were handed out to Piquet, Briatore and technical director Pat Symonds, but Alonso himself was deemed to have played no part in the scheme.

Alonso's move to Ferrari in 2010 should have restored his fortunes, but a strategy error during the last race of that season in Abu Dhabi cost him a third title and the next three seasons were a tale of inconsistency. The last of his 32 victories came at Barcelona in 2013. A year later his contract was terminated, with few tears on either side. Alonso was reunited with McLaren, but four years at Woking delivered nothing and again ended messily.

Alonso will always be seen as Spain's first great grand prix driver, but what should have been one of the great careers failed to reach fulfilment. His later adventures at Le Mans and the Indy 500 demonstrated his sheer love of racing, but it remains hard to imagine Alonso's return to F1 at Renault in 2021, with his 40th birthday looming, adding to his laurels.

It was Alonso's bad luck never to find himself in a team with cars designed by **Adrian Newey**, the man with a plausible claim to be considered the greatest F1 designer of all time. Starting in F1 at the end of the 1980s with a Leyton House-sponsored March car that clearly punched above its team's weight, in 1990 Newey joined Patrick Head in the Williams design office, contributing enormously to the sophisticated cars that dominated the field in 1992 and 1993, bringing world championships for Nigel Mansell and Alain Prost.

Frank Williams's refusal to grant Newey a shareholding led after 1995 to the departure of a man whose unequalled understanding of the effect of airflow on a chassis was expressed via a pencil and a drawing board rather than CAD tools. The FW19 car which took Jacques Villeneuve to the championship in 1997 still benefitted from the carryover of Newey's input, but his departure prefaced the team's long decline.

At McLaren, Newey's next employer, he designed the cars with which Mika Häkkinen won his two titles, and in 2005 the new ►

F1'S 70 GREATEST INFLUENCERS: THE 2000s



Red Bull team principal Christian Horner (left) with Sebastian Vettel, the driver who won four consecutive championships for the Milton Keynes-based operation from 2010 to 2013

DIETRICH MATESCHITZ
Energy drink billionaire and
owner of two F1 teams

CHRISTIAN HORNER
Team principal
of Red Bull

Red Bull team made him the sort of offer – believed to be around \$10m a year – normally made to a top driver. On arriving at the Milton Keynes factory, formerly the HQ of Jaguar's F1 operation, Newey found that bad habits and obsolete processes needed to be swept away. It would take the remainder of the decade to bring the team up to the level of his ambition, sealed with its first win, a one-two for Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber in the 2009 Chinese GP.

The men who made it possible for Newey to turn his visions into reality were **Dietrich Mateschitz**, owner of the Red Bull drinks company, and **Christian Horner**, the Red Bull F1 team principal. Mateschitz, born in Austria in 1944, had a background in marketing detergents and toothpaste before coming across a drink called Krating Daeng, sold in South East Asia, which would make him one of the world's richest men.

Sport was the vehicle Mateschitz chose to drive the worldwide promotion of his energy drink. His first venture into F1 came in 2001 with Sauber, but at the end of 2004 he bought the ailing Jaguar outfit, renamed it after his product, and installed a new hierarchy.

On Bernie Ecclestone's advice, Mateschitz hired Horner, an ambitious 31-year-old Englishman who had set aside a career as a driver to start his own team, Arden International, and led it to multiple F3000 titles. When Mateschitz put him in charge, Horner went from a staff of 20 to an operation employing 500 people, of whom one new arrival would prove crucial.

Newey and Horner had attended the same Warwickshire prep school, although they were 15 years apart in age. When Horner backed Newey's desire for Renault power, which meant dealing with Flavio Briatore, Mateschitz was willing to secure the deal by buying a box at Queens Park Rangers, then owned by the Italian.

The arrival of Red Bull, with its vast Energy Station hospitality unit, took F1 up a notch in terms of glitz. It coincided with F1's commercial rights being swallowed up by CVC Capital Partners, a venture capitalist organisation which would spend the following decade sweating F1's assets.

TV broadcast rights were key among those assets, and rising rates would render live F1 unaffordable to terrestrial broadcasters. In the UK F1 had moved in 1997 from the BBC, its longtime host, to ITV. Murray Walker was persuaded to move across, and was joined by **Martin Brundle**, recently retired from F1 and taking over as co-commentator. Brundle would hold the position as the live coverage moved from ITV back to the BBC and then on to Sky Sports.

The new ITV team was fronted by Jim Rosenthal, an all-round sports broadcaster who had no background in motor racing but, as a friendly face introducing the general viewer to a complex and highly technical world, set the tone for his successors, including the BBC's Jake Humphrey and Sky's Simon Lazenby. In a sport long resistant to hiring women as anything other than grid girls, ITV also introduced Louise Goodman as its pitlane interviewer.



Dietrich Mateschitz (right) decided Formula 1 would be one of the many vehicles he would use to promote Red Bull, and chose Horner to run the team he bought from Jaguar at the end of 2004

“BRUNDLE PIONEERED THE PRE-RACE GRID WALK, PROVIDING THE ILLUSION OF INTIMATE CONTACT WITH FORMULA 1’S MAIN PROTAGONISTS”



CVC’s Donald Mackenzie eschewed the normal practice of private equity firms by retaining ownership of F1 for ten years




Martin Brundle (right) joined Murray Walker in the commentary box when ITV took over F1 broadcasts in the UK in 1997 and were, until Walker retired, the perfect combination behind the microphones



Her professional approach established another template, one followed by Lee McKenzie, Natalie Pinkham and Rachel Brookes.

But it was Brundle whose expertise and energy enabled the real upshift in TV presentation. As well as taking advantage of his driving experience to give the viewer a new level of technical insight, Brundle pioneered the pre-race grid walk, providing the illusion of intimate contact with Formula 1’s main protagonists.

F1 had breathed a temporary sigh of relief when Bernie Ecclestone negotiated the sale of a controlling stake in F1’s commercial rights for £1.4bn to CVC. Ecclestone’s long dictatorship, which had included the piecemeal disposal of stakes to various banks and media companies, appeared to be over. But **Donald Mackenzie**, CVC’s chairman and co-founder, had other ideas. Ecclestone was the man who knew how F1 worked, and so he stayed on as chief executive of the Formula One Group, still negotiating the lucrative broadcasting deals and generally running the show.

CVC’s stewardship would be marked by two phenomena. The first was a lack of new marketing ideas, particularly in respect of F1’s waning appeal to a young generation. The second was CVC’s use of F1 as, in the words of the *Guardian*’s Giles Richards, “a fruit machine that kept paying out.” Rather than following the normal private-equity practice of taking its profit and selling up after five years, CVC would keep tugging the handle and pocketing the payout for more than twice that span, while Formula 1 fretted about its future. 





UNDER

THE HISTORY OF WILLIAMS

NEW

PART 7: 2014-2020

MANAGEMENT

Martini sponsorship and Mercedes power yielded a brief flowering of promise before Williams slipped to the back of the grid again and the founding family decided enough was enough

WORDS DAMIEN SMITH

PICTURES



motorsport
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END OF THE LINE.

name reassuringly branded into the new and more equitable Concorde Agreement beside all its rivals. But is it still 'Williams' without Frank? Not really. Now 78 and not in the best of health, he hasn't run the team for years. But Frank remained its beating heart – until 3 September 2020, the Thursday before the Italian Grand Prix. Our last chapter of this wonderful, quirky, often

thorny odyssey coincides with a monumental – and monumentally sad – occurrence: Frank Williams has left the building.

But it didn't have to end this way for the great man and his daughter Claire, *de facto* team principal since 2013. At the dawn of this modern era, Williams had a golden chance to climb back to where it belonged at the sharp end of F1. And for a couple of sweet years the team took that chance – then threw all that good work away. What a missed opportunity.

Back then, Pat Symonds had unfinished business with Formula 1. The academically trained engineer had enjoyed a rich and fulfilling career at Toleman, which became Benetton in 1986, and was a core component in Michael Schumacher's twin world titles in the mid-1990s. When the team became Renault Pat repeated the feat with Fernando Alonso, ending a five-year period of Ferrari dominance. But the shame of 'crash-gate' from Singapore 2008, when Nelsinho Piquet spun out on purpose to help Alonso win, forced him into exile. The five-year ban was later

overturned by a French court and he made a low-key F1 return as a consultant to the small Marussia team. Williams, deep in its own self-inflicted doldrums, needed a calming hand of experience. It appeared to be a perfect match.

In 2013, at the end of the 2.4-litre V8 era, the team toiled to a depressing ninth in the constructors' standings. It was now eight years since the divorce with BMW and the 'indie' years had been a fragmented jumble that started with Cosworth power, followed by three years with Toyota V8s, a return to Cosworth and finally an anti-climactic reunion with old partner Renault. But now the team at least found stability in its supply – and by far the best power unit on the grid. Intense research, investment, preparation and sheer engineering excellence meant Mercedes-Benz would leave Ferrari and Renault embarrassed, picking sand from their teeth at the start of the 1.6-litre turbo hybrid era. Combined with new investment from Martini, a smart, high-profile sponsor with its own grand legacy in motorsport, Williams had the perfect cocktail to hit the ground running in 2014.

But the team's best season in a decade, by far, didn't fall together simply because Williams had landed the right power unit at the right time. When he joined in mid-2013, Symonds was taken aback at the scale of the task he faced, within a team that carried the open wounds of its painful fall. These were good people, many of whom had been at the team since the glory years when Symonds had been the enemy, but a lack of investment and a trenchant culture perhaps best described as the 'Williams way' had resulted in low morale, departments that blamed each other for shared failings, and practices that were off the pace of sharper rivals. Culture change cannot be delivered overnight. But a focus on methodical, logical engineering and strong organisation would begin a process of remarkable transformation.

The Austrian Grand Prix at the renamed Red Bull Ring, on the F1 schedule for the first time since 2003, was the scene of the breakthrough. Valtteri Bottas had endured a trying rookie season in 2013 but now, armed with the low-drag FW36 with all that Mercedes hybrid thrust, he was ready to fly. He'd been joined by veteran Felipe Massa, hungry for a fresh start after tough years as team-mate to Alonso at Ferrari. The Brazilian wasn't a cheap hiring, but with his favourite engineer Rob Smedley making the transition with him, here was a well-balanced line-up worthy of the team's pedigree.

In Austria, Williams would stun F1, not to mention the works Mercedes squad, by locking out the front row. The magnificent sight of the two Martini cars leading the field didn't last, but a team three-four, with Bottas scoring his first podium, was a welcome line in the sand.



The 2014 launch with Massa, Bottas, Martini sponsorship and Mercedes engines. It would be the team's best season in ten years

Massa after finishing second in Abu Dhabi in 2014. Bottas was third and this remains the team's most recent double podium





Austria 2014 and Massa leads Bottas after the pair had locked out the front row with the low-drag FW36. Bottas would finish third and Massa fourth

Williams was back and the cork had been popped.

At Silverstone, Bottas would charge from a disappointing 14th on the grid to finish second, passing a string of highly rated rivals to inherit the runner-up spot when Nico Rosberg's gearbox failed. Then at Hockenheim, Bottas drew praise for holding off Lewis Hamilton's charge from the back to claim another second. The slippery FW36 carried Massa to his first Williams podium at Monza and the pair finished the year both spraying rose water in Abu Dhabi. In all, nine podium finishes were racked up as Williams climbed a remarkable six places to be the third best team of the new era, ahead of Ferrari. In his sophomore season, Bottas served notice by finishing fourth in the drivers' standing behind only Hamilton, Rosberg and Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo. The only pity was the lack of a victory to cap a special year. But surely that would come. Wouldn't it?

It would not. On Claire Williams' final day as deputy team principal at Monza this year, she was presented with a nose and front wing assembly dating from Abu Dhabi in 2014, marked out as the last double-podium finish for the team (to date). Little did we know in 2015 the slip had already begun. The year was still a strong one for Williams, which repeated its third-place finish in the constructors' championship, this time

behind Ferrari and ahead of Red Bull. But 63 fewer points carried it to that result, with only a pair of podiums each for Bottas and Massa, fifth and sixth respectively in the drivers' standings. At Silverstone, Massa shot past the Merces on the front row to lead, with Bottas joining him in a Williams one-two for 15 glorious laps. But in a rain-affected race they faded to an eventual four-five finish. Progress had stalled along with investment, the constant bane of life in the indie ranks.

At this point a comparison with Force India comes into play. Here was another British indie, working out of smaller facilities at Silverstone but carrying a lower weight of expectation. Born from Jordan, which begat Midland and Spyker, the stability of its engineering staff belied the shifting face of the team's ownership, as is so often the case with apparently shape-shifting F1 entities. Now under Vijay Mallya's ownership and nurturing its own Mercedes relationship, Force India became a direct threat to Williams, with a front line featuring the accomplished Sergio Pérez and Williams old boy Nico Hülkenberg. And in 2016, the team outperformed its more illustrious rival, finishing fourth in the points and pushing Williams down to fifth. Bottas had just a single podium to his name, while Massa chose this underwhelming moment to retire as the team ►



The pairing of Bottas and Massa took Williams to third in the 2014 constructors' standings with nine podium finishes



For 15 fantastic laps at Silverstone in 2015 Massa and Bottas revived memories of Williams of old as they ran 1-2

Paddy Lowe (left) , with new investor Lawrence Stroll in 2017. Lowe’s appointment, from Mercedes, promised much but never delivered



THE MERITOCRACY
IN F1 WAS SPLITTING
INTO TWO: MERCEDES,
FERRARI AND RED BULL
IN ONE DIVISION, THE
REST IN ANOTHER. AND
AS THE GAP BEGAN
TO WIDEN, WILLIAMS
BEGAN TO DROWN



struggled to find consistency from Pirelli’s tricky tyres. The meritocracy in F1 was splitting into two: Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull in one division, the rest in another. And as the gap began to widen, Williams began to drown.

Pat Symonds was coming to the end of his three-year deal and could at least take personal redemptive satisfaction from the turnaround in fortunes, so much so that Claire Williams and CEO Mike O’Driscoll encouraged him to stay on. New investment from Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll offered an opportunity to catch the slip and

push on, and Symonds had embraced this, working on a project dubbed ‘3 to 1’ focused on taking Stroll’s privileged but talented son Lance from the nursery slopes to the pinnacle. That had gone better than expected. Why not stay on for more?

Then in December 2016, Symonds was called to a meeting. To his shock, he was out. Why? He really didn’t understand until it was confirmed that Paddy Lowe, once of Williams early in the Adrian Newey era, was switching from his senior role in the Mercedes success story to take technical charge at his old team, with a part-share in the company

Rookie Lance Stroll’s Baku podium was a rare highlight in a disappointing 2017 season as the team continued to slide down the order





Symonds (left) with Massa and Frank Williams. Surprisingly released at the end of his three-year deal, Symonds was replaced by Lowe

to complete the deal. If Symonds could take Williams from ninth to third, seemed the thinking, imagine what Lowe could achieve.

Among all this, Bottas was gone too. Nico Rosberg had grown into a fine grand prix driver since his own Williams days, but no one had really expected him to beat Lewis Hamilton over a season in an identical Mercedes. The effort to do

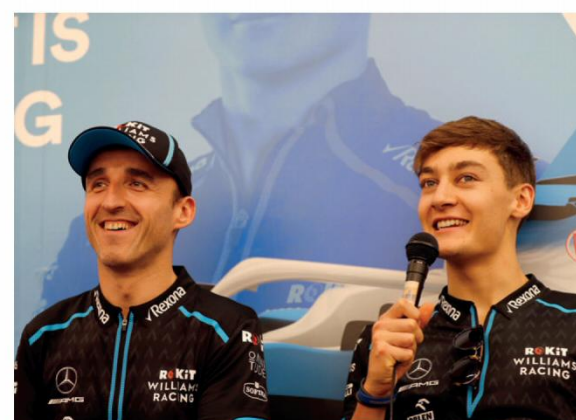
By 2018 Massa had finally gone and Sergey Sirotkin (left) joined Stroll and reserve driver Robert Kubica (centre). Only Kubica would be around a year later

so in 2016 took every ounce of his being. A surprise and deserved champion, he was done – and now one of the two best seats on the grid was empty. After the hostility that had boiled over between Rosberg and Hamilton, Mercedes needed a calm, quick and easy team-mate to slip quietly in. Bottas absolutely fitted the bill. He wasn't yet a race winner, but surely in a Mercedes that would soon change. But was he a world champion? We're still waiting for an answer to that one.

The transfer did at least give Williams some bartering power for better terms on its Mercedes power supply, and it also allowed Massa to about-turn on his retirement plans. He would be joined by rookie Stroll in 2017. But what was that sound? Could it be alarm bells? Such a line-up looked unlikely to equate to top three in the standings.

The team's 40th anniversary year, in which the FW designation sequence skipped past 39 and straight on to FW40, was hardly befitting of the landmark. From 138 points in 2016, the tally slipped to just 83, although Stroll's impressive podium finish at the inaugural Azerbaijan Grand Prix gave indication he was more than just a 'pay driver'. Fifth in the final reckoning was maintained, but for a man like Lawrence Stroll, being overshadowed again by Force India was never going to wash. Lowe needed to deliver, and soon.

Those alarm bells rang a little more urgently when for 2018 Williams signed Sergey Sirotkin beside Stroll, as Massa this time really did take his leave having missed out on adding to the 11 F1 victories he scored with Ferrari. No offence to Sirotkin, who offered more than a bag of roubles for his F1 shot, but the line-up was hardly about to leave the team's midfield rivals quaking in their Pirellis. Actually, forget midfield – the rot had properly set in by now: Stroll managed six points, poor Sirotkin just one, and inevitably key people paid the price. Chief designer Ed Wood ▶



Kubica's full return to F1 eight years after his rally accident, and the signing of George Russell, were good news stories in 2019...



...but the delayed appearance of the FW42 at pre-season testing definitely wasn't. Lowe took a leave of absence and never returned





There have been some improvements in 2020, highlighted by Russell's qualifying performances, in the early races. But there's still a long way to go

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and head of aero Dirk de Beer were gone by May, and Rob Smedley – once tipped by some for greater heights – left Williams and F1 at the end of the year. Somehow, from those promising podiums in 2014-15, the team had reverted to its pre-hybrid morass. No wonder Martini and then, more significantly, Lawrence Stroll bailed, taking his son and his millions to turn Force India into Racing Point and soon into Aston Martin. What on earth was going on?

Approachable, highly intelligent and easy to like, Paddy Lowe deserved his fine reputation after his years at McLaren and Mercedes. It was puzzling how badly Williams fared under his watch, and how it just got worse. In 2019 the new FW42 was late to start pre-season testing, and illegal when it got there. This was getting painful. Then when the car did roll, it was simply far too slow. Less than two weeks before the start of the new season, Lowe took a leave of absence. He wouldn't return. Was this simply a case of the wrong man in the wrong job? If so, it crushed his reputation. But all those years of experience and expertise... it would be a waste if he does not return to F1 in some capacity in the future.

What a time for Formula 2 champion George Russell to take his F1 bow. As for Robert Kubica, making a frankly miraculous comeback to F1 after almost losing an arm in a rally accident eight years earlier, he simply had no chance. Fortunes have at least improved this season with Russell

FOR HOW LONG WILL THE TEAM BE KNOWN AS WILLIAMS? JUST AS IT WAS WHEN FRANK STARTED, LITTLE IS CERTAIN OR REMAINS THE SAME FOR LONG IN F1

and another well-funded hopeful, Nicholas Latifi, leading the front line - despite the short-lived sponsorship deal with ROKiT hitting the rocks before the delayed 2020 season began. In terms of lap time percentage, no team has improved




more – but there's little credit in that, given how far Williams had fallen.

There was sadness but no surprise when Claire Williams announced earlier this year that new owners would be required to carry the team forward. The investment Dorilton Capital brings is desperately required and should be welcomed. As for Frank and Claire, they were never going to stay for long once the deal was banked. Right back at the beginning, the team had been formed precisely because Frank couldn't stand relinquishing control of his original operation to Walter Wolf in 1976. 'Independence' is the key word in Williams history.

So what do we make of Dorilton and what are the intentions of a private investment company buying a poorly performing F1 team? Of the three-man board, two are unknown quantities in F1 terms, but James Matthews has more relevance than simply being Prince William's brother-in-law. He was a convincing Formula Renault UK champion back in 1994 as Damon Hill was facing Michael Schumacher in Williams' most tumultuous season, before he turned to city trading. Matthews was also among a group of investors who supported Ralph Firman Jr in

Although she was asked to stay on by Dorilton, Claire Williams opted to leave and her last race with the team her father set up was Monza

his one and only F1 season with Jordan in 2003. Perhaps more significantly, he is the son of Dave Matthews, a successful saloon car racer in the early 1970s best known for surviving a huge shunt at Silverstone before becoming a successful entrepreneur. Everyone in motor racing knows everyone else, and it's likely Frank Williams and Dave Matthews moved in the same social circles. The choice of buyer could well have a strong personal connection.

All bets are off for what comes next. Will it be sold again, to another Lawrence Stroll? Or a car manufacturer? But which one? And for how long will the team be known as Williams? Just as it was when Frank started, little is certain or remains the same for long in F1. It won't be the same without him – of course it won't. But this ending was coming for years. As usual in this unhinged, mayfly world of motorsport, some will say it's not what happened in the past that matters most, but what happens next. That might be true. But even so, we'll never forget. 

NIGEL ROEBUCK'S FORMULA ONE HEROES

CLAY REGAZZONI

PICTURES  **motorsport
IMAGES**

BACK IN
1979 WE
DIDN'T HAVE...

post-race press conferences in

Formula 1, but sometimes there would be an informal ceremony, and they had one such at Silverstone, where the atmosphere was unusually emotional: Frank Williams was a winner at last, and everyone wanted to share his joy.

At first, he could barely speak. Then someone gave him a whisky, another a lit cigar, and Frank – a lifelong teetotaler and non-smoker – gamely sipped the one, puffed on the other. “Thank you, thank you so much,” he murmured, and there were tears in his eyes.

After a few minutes his driver came in, dabbing at his face with a towel, for the afternoon was warm. On the podium, in deference to the team’s Saudi sponsors, he had toasted victory with orange juice; now he looked ready for a swig of his boss’s scotch. He shook Williams’s hand. “Bravo, Frank,” he quietly said. That was the essential modesty of a man who had class to throw away. Clay Regazzoni had won a grand prix for the first time in three years, but uppermost in his mind was that this was Williams’s day.

It was very much an Indian Summer for Regazzoni, that season of 1979. After parting from Ferrari, he had passed a couple of years with Ensign and Shadow, and his F1 career looked to be effectively over. Then Williams called him.

“I remembered that in 1974 Clay won at the Nürburgring, which counted a lot with me,” Frank recalled, “and that when he’d last had a world-class car, in 1976, he’d driven everyone into the ground at Long Beach, and scored a lot of other points. Not the greatest driver in the world, but superb on his day, and our deal worked out very well. Clay was very different from most racing drivers, in that he was an absolute gentleman, who loved racing for its own sake. A totally adorable character.”

Although his season with Frank was a successful one – as well as winning the British Grand Prix, Regazzoni lost to Jody Scheckter at Monaco by less than half a second, made the podium five times, and finished fifth in the world championship – Clay knew by the Italian Grand Prix that he would not be staying for 1980.

Regazzoni rewarded Williams’s faith in him by winning the 1979 British GP



Regazzoni raced in Formula 1 for the love of it, even in those seasons when his machinery was not out of the top draw

“It’s happening to me again,” he shrugged. “I’ve got a good car in a team I really like – and they’re going to replace me with [Carlos] Reutemann, like Ferrari did...”

Indubitably Ferrari, for whom he drove for six years, was Clay’s spiritual home. He had arrived with a ragged reputation, blindingly quick but with a fearless tendency to live for the moment. After countless accidents in the junior formulae, though, he took to Formula 1 as if born to it. Although his first drive came only at mid-season in 1970, he finished third in the championship, and the highlight of the year was victory at Monza. Any mention of Clay Regazzoni – was ever there a more mellifluous name for a racing driver? – makes me remember that race in particular. On an extraordinarily highly-charged day, following the death in qualifying of world champion to be Jochen Rindt, Clay won what was only the fifth grand prix of his career, and did it after 68 laps of pure slipstreaming battle – no chicanes at Monza in those days. The wall of sound from the grandstand was unforgettable as he came out of Parabolica for the last time. “Ah, yes, to win at Monza with Ferrari... for me, that was the maximum – especially then. I won there again five years later, but it was easy – in 1970 I had to push very hard. Also, that car – the

312B – was my favourite. Not an easy car, but very competitive, and so beautiful...”

After Ferrari, for 1977 Regazzoni joined Ensign, moving at a step from one end of the F1 spectrum to the other. Clay, though, was never overly concerned with status. “I consider myself a good professional,” he said to me once. “If I have a big fault, it’s that I am not enough ambitious – I drive for me, sure, but also for the team and the public.”

If it was not a successful year, it was a happy one, the glamorous star blending in easily with Morris Nunn’s little outfit. It took time, though, to become familiar with a new lingo. “You want a cuppa tea?” he asked me one day in a dusty paddock. Then, calling Mo’s wife: “Sylvia, please put off the kettle...”

Knowing his time with Williams was coming to an end, I suggested that now, just past his 40th birthday, might be a good time to stop. He said it had never crossed his mind.

“You must understand that, for me, it’s not a matter of winning all the time – I am happy being part of F1. I love it the way Graham Hill did – they said he should have retired long before he did, but why, if he was enjoying it still?”

Thus, for 1980 Regazzoni returned to Ensign, and was running fourth in the Long Beach Grand Prix when he crashed at the end of Shoreline Drive: instead of slowing from 180mph for the hairpin, his car hurtled into the escape road. A barrier had been erected, closing it off, and this the Ensign struck, at colossal speed.

“When I pressed the brake pedal, there was no resistance – nothing. I had to lose speed, and changed down to third, then cut the engine. [Ricardo] Zunino’s Brabham was parked in the escape

“AH, YES, TO WIN AT MONZA WITH FERRARI... FOR ME, THAT WAS THE MAXIMUM”

CLAY REGAZZONI



road, and I hit it, then bounced into the barrier. For 10 minutes I lost consciousness, and then I remember terrible pain in my back...”


Clay soon knew he had to face the unimaginable. His spinal cord had been severely damaged, and he was paralysed from the waist down. Over the next two years he underwent many operations, and as his hopes of walking again were raised, then dashed, so he veered between euphoria and despair.

In 1985 Regazzoni began coming to grands prix again, as a commentator for Italian TV. During practice at Monaco I saw him watching at Casino Square, and several minutes went by before it dawned on me: he was *standing*, leaning against the barrier, stopwatch in hand. Later, I told him how moved I had been, and that great bandit smile spread across his face.

“For a long time, I felt very sorry for myself,” he said, “but when something like this happens, you move into a different world – a world you never thought about – and you feel ashamed. I remember Gunnar Nilsson talking about the children in his cancer hospital – how he had years of good life which they would never have.

“I am quite tranquil now – I have accepted that the miracle will not happen, but I can still drive my Ferrari Daytona, I have my driving school for handicapped people, and I can still go to races, be part of them. I don’t feel desperate anymore.”

Regazzoni was always a dignified man, as well as abnormally brave, and what he faced after that day in Long Beach put greater call on his courage than the 10 seasons of Formula 1 that went before. Perhaps, though, he was never destined to go quietly: in December 2006 he was killed on an icy autostrada near Parma.

“That was my friend Clay – flat out to the end,” lamented Mario Andretti that evening. “He was such a rare individual, always such fun to be with, a real racing purist without an enemy in the world. Let’s raise a glass to him...” 

Having started his F1 career with Ferrari in 1970, Regazzoni’s Italian GP victory that year came the day after Jochen Rindt was killed



FERRARI



NOW
THAT
WAS
A
CAR

No. 92

WORDS
STUART CODLING
PICTURES
JAMES MANN

412 T2

The last of
the Scuderia's
screaming V12s



John Barnard's second sojourn at Ferrari might have proved less fruitful in terms of innovation and his ongoing quest to build the perfect car, but it produced some of the most elegant cars of the 1990s (and one noticeably less so) as well as delivering a victorious send-off for the V12 engine in Formula 1. And there are some who believe that, in different hands, John Barnard's penultimate Ferrari, the 412 T2, might have been a championship challenger...

Barnard had been out of the Maranello orbit for just two and a half years when, in the summer of 1992, Niki Lauda began to phone him. Initially Barnard instructed his staff to tell Lauda he was out. Ferrari was at a low competitive ebb with the catastrophic F92A, and as a result the management



revolving door was spinning furiously. Luca di Montezemolo had assumed control and recruited Lauda as a consultant; soon Jean Todt would be hired from Peugeot and institute sweeping change, but for now Lauda worked his contacts book, approaching those he rated highly: Gerhard Berger to drive, and Barnard to superintend the technicalities.

The sticking point was that Lauda wanted Barnard's feet under a desk in Maranello, an arrangement Barnard would barely entertain. Having mulled the idea of assembling a team which could commute to Italy by private jet for the working week, returning at weekends, Barnard dug his feet in. In other circumstances the two sides would never have reached a compromise, but Lauda and Montezemolo were desperate for stardust, and Barnard had precious little other work coming in.

“THERE ARE SOME WHO BELIEVE THAT, IN DIFFERENT HANDS, JOHN BARNARD'S PENULTIMATE FERRARI, THE 412 T2, MIGHT HAVE BEEN A CHAMPIONSHIP CHALLENGER...”



Necessity therefore lubricated a deal which, in hindsight, was never going to work: Barnard could, as before, establish a research and design hub near his Godalming home while fellow returnee Harvey Postlethwaite, freshly recruited from Sauber's nascent team, fronted ongoing development in Maranello. "Trouble is," Barnard would later rue, "after a few months Harvey buggered off."

While trying to develop his own concept – which would become the 1994 412 T1 – from scratch, Barnard became embroiled in the in-season development of Postlethwaite's 1993 car, which itself was a fettled and (partially) debugged version of the F92A. It was a typical scenario for Ferrari at the time and, arguably, today: lack of success on track causes a panic which draws in all resources. Barnard began to receive stiffly worded faxes from the newly installed Todt bemoaning the state of play.

Despite the ongoing angst of 1993, Barnard delivered the stunningly beautiful and aerodynamically innovative 412 T1 for the following season. The ban on active suspension for 1994 worked in Barnard's favour, since Ferrari's system had never worked properly, and he was able to shape his concept on a blank canvas. Teams such as Williams, carrying over aero philosophies which had come to be dependent on hydropneumatic sleight-of-hand, initially stumbled.

Unfortunately, the key innovation behind the 412 T1's aero concept didn't work as expected – not because it was a bad idea but because it was imperfectly executed, owing to Ferrari's internal dysfunction. Inspired by the Spitfire aircraft's

FERRARI 412 T2

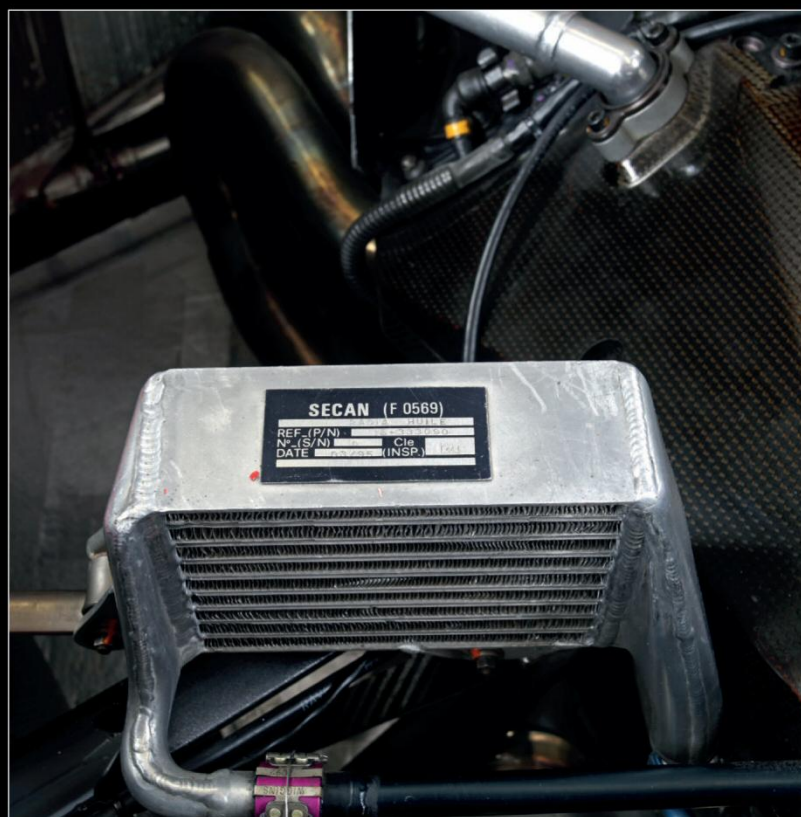
NOW
THAT
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No.92



cooling architecture, it used heat from the radiators to energise incoming air from a relatively small aperture, reducing drag.

The 412 T1's curvy shape was described in the Italian press as resembling "a pebble washed by the sea". Central to this work of art were the distinctively scalloped sidepods, bearing asymmetric water radiators: one sidepod accommodated a smaller unit alongside the complete oil cooler. But the car was bedevilled by cooling problems, and attention from the press – and management – focused on Barnard and those sidepods.

Much to Barnard's chagrin, Todt brought former Ferrari man Gustav Brunner back into the fold to modify the car ▶





at Maranello. Only after Brunner had reworked the design, fitting a new wing and bargeboards which in turn required a redesign of the sidepods, did the truth emerge: the engine department had got the plumbing wrong. Until then the belief was the apertures weren't big enough.

"About two-thirds of the flow was going through the small radiator and one-third through the big radiator," Barnard said in a 2010 interview with *Motor Sport* magazine. "They hadn't tuned the pipes on the engine to distribute the water, so we were struggling for cooling.

"We ended up chopping lumps out of the inlet to make it bigger and I remember flying to Canada with lumps of carbon in our suitcases to glue on to make the inlet bigger. It was all the bloody engine, which pisses me off to this day, frankly."

Of wider import was that half a season had been lost to politics and the blame game – exacerbated by Berger and Jean Alesi qualifying 1-2 for the German GP and Berger winning the race just after the car had undergone its B-spec surgery. The inevitable *post hoc* conclusion reached by the majority was that

FERRARI 412 T2

NOW
THAT
WAS
A
CAR
No.92

Barnard's design was flawed and Brunner had fixed it.

Even when viewed objectively, the cooling farrago was the kind of avoidable pitfall caused when a car is designed in one country and blueprints are faxed to another for assembly.

This revelation also arrived so late in the day that Barnard had already abandoned the advanced cooling setup in the 412 T2, design of which was already well under way. The focus on this car would be to tidy up the perceived flaws of the 412 T1 and cautiously advance some of the smaller innovations first seen on the 1994 car.

Among these were the adoption of flexures in the front suspension where the wishbones connected to the monocoque, a junction previously achieved via a ball joint. It saved weight and theoretically gave more consistent feel, since heat build-up during races tended to soften the joint. Berger liked the new system but Alesi, noting that no other car in the pitlane had it, took a dim view. Nevertheless, Barnard pushed on, specifying carbonfibre wishbones and flexures rather than a steel and titanium arrangement. This is now a standard design in F1.

The 412 T2 retained a transverse gearbox, following the principle of keeping as much weight within the wheelbase as possible. During 1994 Barnard had adopted titanium for the gearbox casing, and on the T2 designed a hybrid construction with the bellhousing – the area of the gearbox to which the suspension components are mounted – made from CFRP (carbonfibre reinforced polymer), drastically reducing mass.

Aerodynamically, Barnard's team also had to incorporate a number of mandatory features introduced by the FIA to reduce cornering speeds. In the wake of Ayrton Senna's death in 1994, the governing body reduced diffuser and front-wing endplate sizes, and introduced the underfloor 'plank', along with slots in the engine cover. For 1995 the regime adopted smaller front and rear wings, stepped underfloors, and higher sidepods and



“THE FOCUS ON THIS CAR WOULD BE TO TIDY UP THE PERCEIVED FLAWS OF THE 412 T1 AND CAUTIOUSLY ADVANCE SOME OF THE SMALLER INNOVATIONS FIRST SEEN ON THE 1994 CAR”



cockpit sides. Engine capacity was cut from 3.5 to three litres.

Poor reliability neutered much of the promise of the 412 T2 as the 1995 season evolved into a battle between Damon Hill in a Williams and Michael Schumacher in a Benetton. Ferrari occasionally got in the mix, and Alesi scored a memorable victory in Canada – his only grand prix win – but he also retired from, or was overtaken late on, while in winning positions in at least three other races. The writing was on the wall for the V12 engine: it had more moving parts to go wrong than a V10, more internal friction, and made no more power.


Even before the 1995 season began, new engine chief Paolo Martinelli had decided the future lay in a V10. Barnard was also considering his future, briefly entertaining an offer to return to McLaren. As Alesi took his maiden win in Montréal, rumours began to circulate of another seismic shift in F1: that Todt was wooing Schumacher to Maranello.

The world champion duly signed on the dotted line. He and Barnard would only briefly overlap – Todt had decided the design function must move to the Ferrari factory – but in a post-season test Schumacher got a taste of the car he'd just beaten. When the initial batch of V10 engines proved unreliable the V12-engined 412 T2 pictured on these pages was included in the truck to Estoril as a back-up.

Conditions, obviously, were different in winter, but it's believed Schumacher had a representative amount of fuel on board – and, within a handful of laps, he circulated the Portuguese track almost a second quicker than either Berger or Alesi had at the grand prix earlier that year. But Schumacher was diplomatic once Dictaphones were pressed under his nose.

“I cannot speculate on how many races I might have won if I had been at Ferrari this year,” he told the press. “That is not the point. But this car is very, very good.”

According to Barnard, it was a different story behind closed doors: “Jean and Gerhard always said the 12-cylinder was sensitive to throttle lift-off, almost as though there was a lot of friction in the engine, and as soon as you backed off it gave you a big anchor at the back and they didn't like that.

“But when Michael drove the V12 he was a second a lap quicker and said, ‘Oh, I could have won the championship much more easily with this car...’” 

RACE RECORD

Starts 17
Wins 1
Poles 1
Fastest laps 3
Podiums 11
Championship points 73

SPECIFICATION

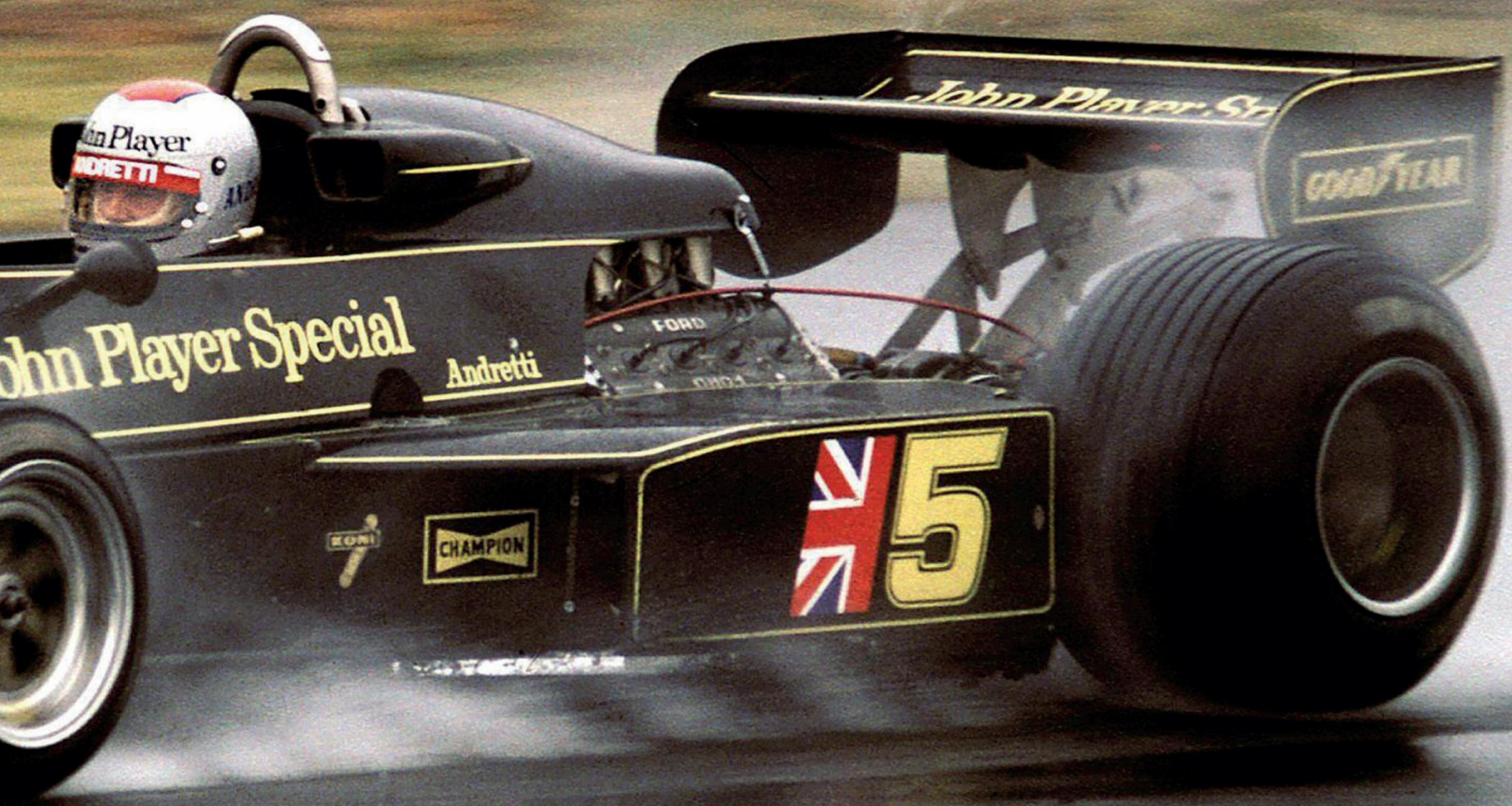
Chassis Carbonfibre monocoque
Suspension Double wishbones with pushrod-actuated torsion bars
Engine Ferrari 044 75-degree V12
Engine capacity 2997cc
Power 800bhp@16000rpm
Gearbox Ferrari six-speed semi-automatic
Tyres Goodyear
Weight 595kg
Notable drivers Gerhard Berger, Jean Alesi, Michael Schumacher

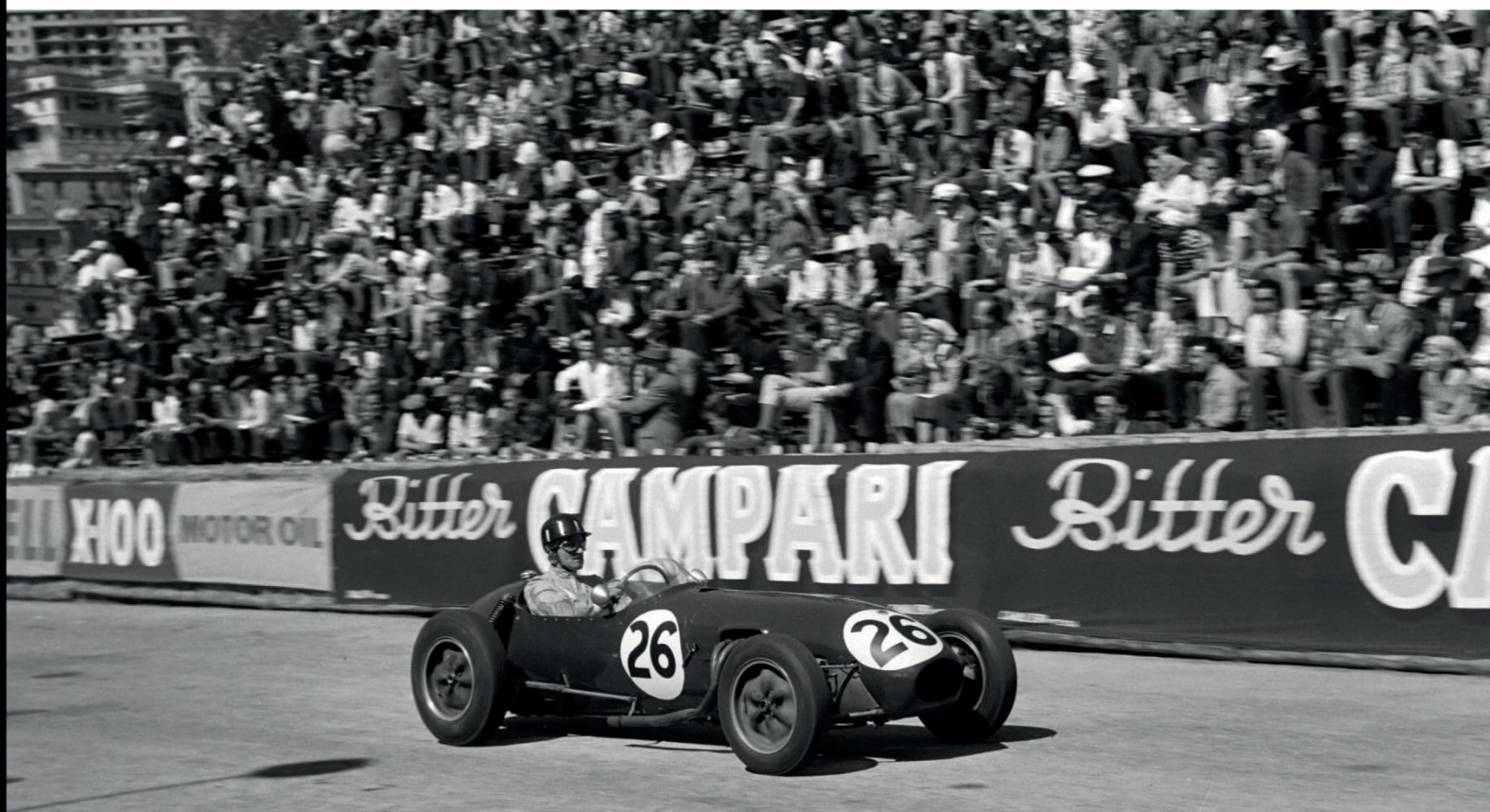
TEAM LOTUS

Relentlessly innovative and ultra successful,
Colin Chapman's team left its mark on Formula 1



▼ Mario Andretti gave the Lotus 77 a good send off at the 1976 Japanese GP. It was the second of his 12 F1 wins (11 with Lotus) and he would go on, in 1978, to become the team's final champion driver, using the breakthrough ground effect Lotus 78 and 79 cars





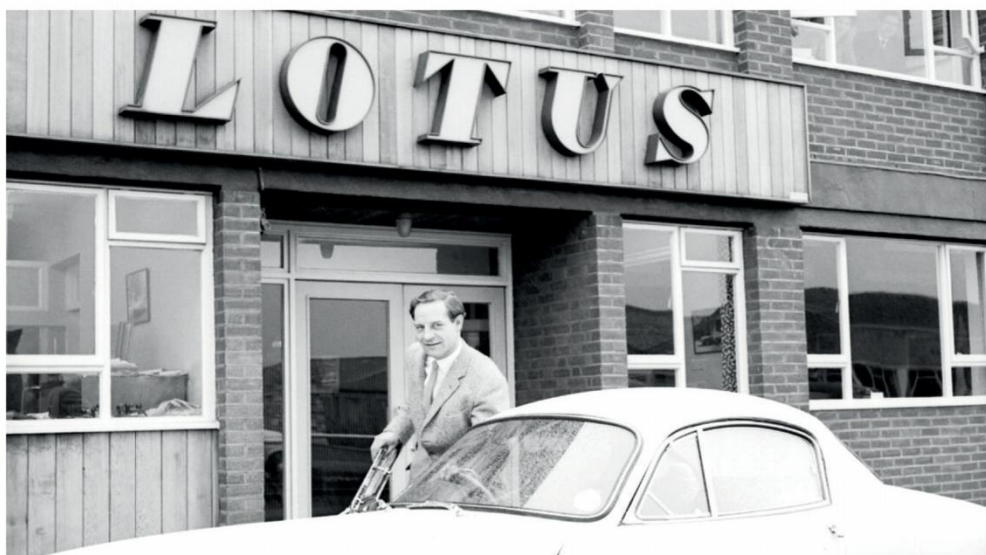
After he had started Team Lotus in 1954, separate from Lotus Engineering which he co-founded in 1948, Colin Chapman tried his hand at racing. Seen here in a Lotus 11 at Oulton Park in 1956, chatting to Stirling Moss, that year Chapman qualified for, but did not start, the French GP in a Vanwall. He also raced at the Le Mans 24 Hours



Team Lotus got started in grand prix racing with a pair of uprated F2 Lotus 12s at the Monaco Grand Prix in 1958, for Graham Hill (pictured) and Cliff Allison. It was also Hill's F1 debut, but he retired after 69 of the scheduled 100 laps with a broken halfshaft while Allison finished sixth



One of the perks of driving for Team Lotus in the 1960s was the company car that came with the job. Innes Ireland, who made his first world championship Formula 1 start with the team in 1959, was presented with a Lotus Elite in 1960 at the Cheshunt factory where the cars were manufactured





Jim Clark on his way to victory in the 1968 South African GP. Clark's name is synonymous with Lotus as all of the Scot's world championship F1 starts, wins, and two world titles were with the team. South Africa would be Clark's last F1 race before his death in a Lotus in an F2 race at Hockenheim



Innes Ireland's 'expression' of victory alongside a smiling Colin Chapman after the 1961 US GP at Watkins Glen. It was Team Lotus's maiden F1 win after four privateer successes by Stirling Moss for Rob Walker. Two weeks later Ireland was dropped in favour of Jim Clark



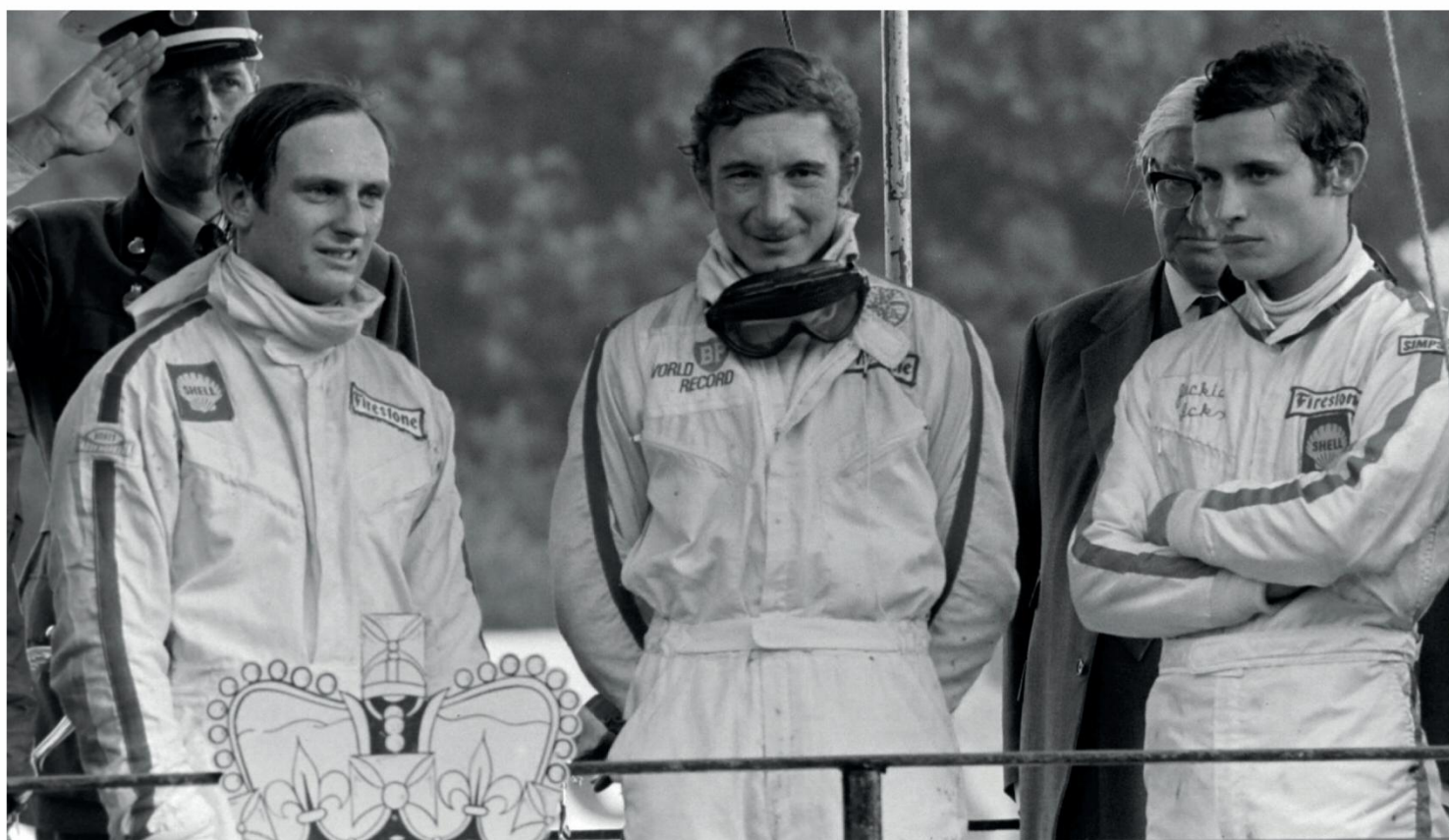
▲
Graham Hill's 1968 Spanish GP win was crucial for Lotus as it tried to recover from Clark's death, and the death of Clark's replacement, Mike Spence, in Indy 500 practice just five days earlier. Hill would go on to claim his second title

▶
A happy Jim Clark has just won his second world championship after victory in the 1965 German GP. It was the Lotus driver's sixth win of the season and, thanks to only the best six counting, made a perfect score for Clark, as he had missed Monaco GP to compete in – and win – the clashing Indianapolis 500



▲
One of Colin Chapman's less than successful innovations was the Lotus 56B, powered by a gas turbine Pratt and Whitney engine. A development of the Indy 500 Lotus 56, the car appeared three times in 1971 with a best finish of eighth in the Italian GP





Four-wheel drive was another experiment that didn't pay off for Lotus. Graham Hill refused to race the car, and although the Lotus 63 qualified for seven races in 1969, including this appearance with Mario Andretti in the US GP that year, it failed to reappear in 1970



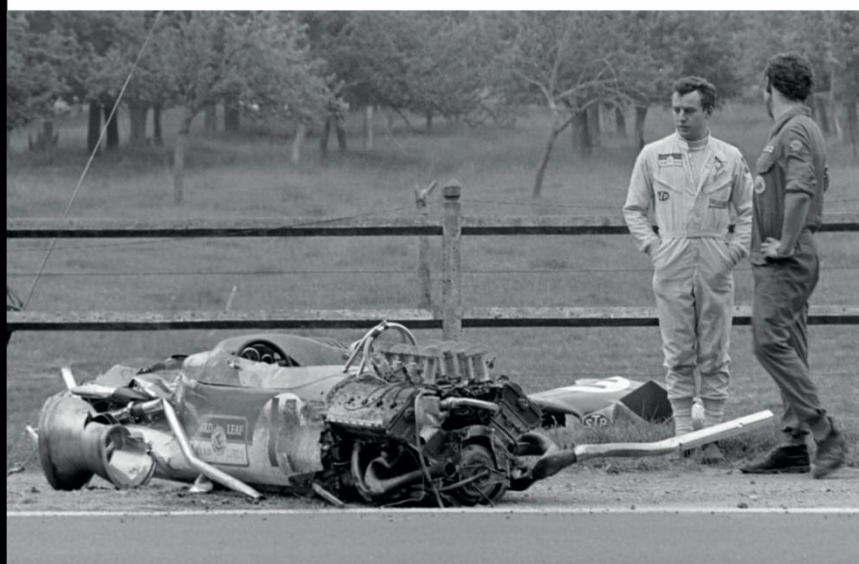
Even though Team Lotus was scrapping for championships and wins in the 1960s, Chapman still sold cars to privateers, and Jo Siffert (centre) used a Rob Walker-entered Lotus 49B to win the 1968 British GP. It was the last private entry to win an F1 GP



Mika Häkkinen (left) was almost at the end of his first season with Lotus when this picture of the Finn with Michael Schumacher was taken at the 1991 Portuguese GP. Häkkinen had to endure another uncompetitive year with Lotus before his switch to McLaren



Jackie Oliver stares at the remains of his Lotus 49 after a practice accident at the 1968 French GP. Oliver, who had been drafted in as Graham Hill's team-mate three races earlier following the death of Jim Clark (and then Mike Spence) was, unsurprisingly, unable to start the race



When this picture was taken, at the season-ending Australian GP in 1994, the debt-ridden Team Lotus – no longer owned by the Chapman family – had recently been sold to David Hunt, brother of 1976 world champion James. The team was eventually wound up in early 1995



Peter Warr (left) and Colin Chapman chat to Emerson Fittipaldi during practice for the 1972 US GP. Fittipaldi had been crowned world champion two races earlier, and this was despite the team still using a variant of the Lotus 72 which had first been introduced in 1970





Nelson Piquet picked the wrong time to join Lotus when he moved from Williams for 1988. The 1987 champion started with two podiums but his only other one came at the end of the season, after he recovered from this spin in Australia to finish third. It was the team's final rostrum



British drivers Derek Warwick and Martin Donnelly (pictured here at Monza) formed a patriotic line-up for the team in 1990. Sadly, with the Lotus 102 powered by the heavy and thirsty Lamborghini V12 engine, it was a struggle for the pair throughout the season



Jochen Rindt has a smoke in the pits during the 1970 Austrian GP meeting, with wife Nina ready to record times when he goes out, and Lotus team boss Chapman in the foreground. Rindt retired from this race, on home soil, and it would be his last F1 start. Killed in Italian GP practice, he remains F1's only posthumous champion





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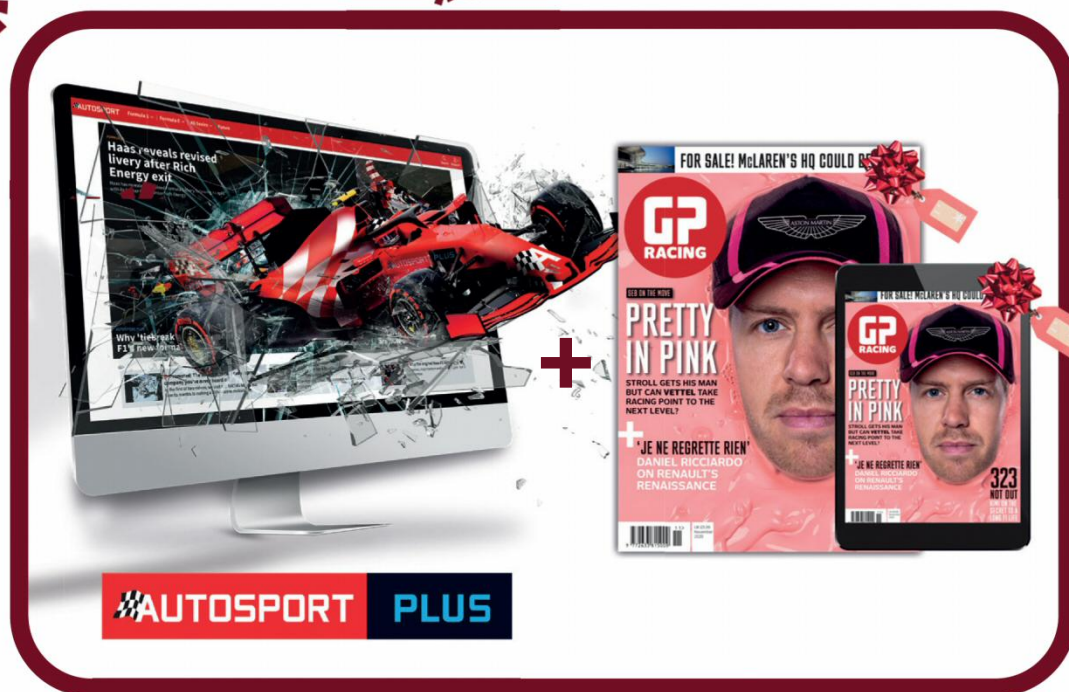
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 10

THE RUSSIAN GP
IN 3 KEY MOMENTS

1 Would Bottas have won even without Hamilton's penalty?

Valtteri Bottas operates with typically Finnish reserve – *sisu* – even when delivering a four-letter riposte to his critics during the slow-down lap after snatching victory from his usually unbeatable team-mate, Lewis Hamilton. Said critics might venture that Valtteri's win at Sochi was of the inherited variety, after Lewis incurred a 10-second penalty for two separate practice-start infringements – but was that really what happened here?

Bottas qualified third for the Russian GP, 0.652s off polesitter Hamilton and 0.089s down on Red Bull's Max Verstappen. In similar circumstances, at other venues, Bottas has permitted the tiniest register of disappointment to flit across his poker face and infiltrate the otherwise measured timbre of his voice. But not here.

"There are some question marks," was Valtteri's considered take on a Q3 in which he admitted to not getting his tyres up to temperature in his first run, but then could not account for his second run continuing to fall short of his team-mate's pace. This was his biggest qualifying deficit of the year – and at a circuit at which he usually has the edge over Hamilton.

Uniquely on the F1 calendar, Sochi disfavours the front-row occupants: there's a long drag to the first meaningful corner, and second is on the dirty side of the track. P3 offers a tow from the leading two cars, plus a clean line – as Bottas demonstrated three years ago when he swept to victory from third on the grid. But if this was Valtteri's gameplan all along, he sure wasn't saying so...

Hamilton had used Pirelli's soft-compound tyres to go through Q2 while Bottas ran mediums, and at the start of the race Hamilton's softer rubber gripped up better, enabling him to maintain an edge to the first braking zone. Bottas, already past Verstappen, braked a little too deeply (he later attributed this to being hit on the visor by "a huge bee or something" as he was picking his braking point) and slotted in behind Hamilton.

So while Hamilton had track position, Bottas had the tyre advantage – and this would likely have proved decisive, even without Hamilton's penalty. The world champion knew he was under investigation before the start, but confirmation of the two 5s penalties – to be served at his pitstop – hit him hard. He had, after all, been told by the team his choice of practice-start location – right at the end of the pitlane, where the surface more



At a track he likes, Bottas was overjoyed to claim his second win - inherited or not – of 2020

PICTURES: ANDY HONE; MARK SUTTON; STEVE ETHERINGTON

accurately matches that of the grid – was fine.

Hamilton’s long stop at the end of lap 16 dropped him to 11th place, requiring a combative slog over the remaining two thirds of the race to elevate himself to third at the chequered flag. Bottas instantly lifted his pace and stayed out another 10 laps before stopping – which would have given him the upper hand over Hamilton anyway. Verstappen, faster than Bottas in Q3 on Saturday, had no answer on Sunday – his Honda engine consistently ran out of battery deployment on the straights, costing him 0.6s per lap according to a team radio message.

2 Ferrari helps and hinders the ‘Pink Mercedes’

Once top-three material, now firmly in the midpack, Ferrari had a part to play in the battle for ‘best of the rest’ honours, though not in the manner it might have preferred. A handful of aero updates to the SF1000 elevated its performance slightly – but not enough to prevent both Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel being eliminated in Q2, Leclerc qualifying 11th and Vettel crashing out of the session on his way to 15th.

Leclerc then biffed Racing Point’s Lance Stroll into the wall at Turn 4 (and almost collected Leclerc) on the opening lap, eliminating him from the race. Stroll might have been further up the grid – team-mate Sergio Pérez started fourth – but for a technical issue which sidelined him before his second run in Q2. Leclerc was able to continue and made the best of his offset strategy, running long into the race after starting on mediums, to finish a distant sixth.

On the opening lap Pérez fell behind the Renaults of Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon, who appeared to be underlining Renault’s recent improvement in form. But their relatively early stops to get off the soft tyres – on laps 15 (Ricciardo) and 18 (Ocon) – left them bottled up behind Vettel, who completed 30 laps on mediums before stopping. Pérez ditched his softs on lap 20 and was able to get out ahead, finishing in fourth



Vettel’s race pace on the medium tyres held up the early stopping Renaults and aided Pérez

place, 7.829s behind Hamilton.

Ricciardo was able to salvage fifth place despite picking up a 5s penalty for not observing the correct rejoining procedure at Turn 2 after venturing over the ‘sausage kerb’ while passing Ocon after their stops. Ricciardo upped his pace enough to be classified 10s ahead of Leclerc.

3 Momentum builds for Turn 2 change

The layout of Sochi’s Turn 2, the track’s first proper braking zone and a key overtaking spot, came under fire after a string of incidents and penalties. Drivers who overshot the boundary kerbs had to rejoin via a narrow passage demarcated by the wall on the left and polystyrene blocks on the right.

The whole arrangement is an inelegant compromise to prevent drivers cutting the apex kerbs, and made for chaotic scenes. In the race, Max Verstappen went straight off at the start and briefly lost position to Daniel Ricciardo after threading his way through the escape passage.

Then, in Verstappen’s wake, Carlos Sainz misjudged his similar trajectory and clouted the wall, crashing out, as George Russell narrowly avoided the carambolage in his Williams. Ricciardo and Alex Albon were handed penalties for rejoining the circuit incorrectly later in the race. “It’s one of the worst corners on the calendar,” said Russell.



Carlos Sainz got it completely wrong as he tried to correct his lap-one error at Turn 2

RESULTS ROUND 10

SOCHI / 27.9.20 / 53 LAPS



1st	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1h34m00.364s
2nd	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	+7.729s
3rd	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+22.729s
4th	Sergio Pérez	Racing Point	+30.558s
5th	Daniel Ricciardo	Renault	+52.065s*
6th	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+62.186s
7th	Esteban Ocon	Renault	+68.006s
8th	Daniil Kvyat	AlphaTauri	+68.740s
9th	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri	+89.766s
10th	Alexander Albon	Red Bull	+97.860s*
11th	Antonio Giovinazzi	Alfa Romeo	+1 lap
12th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+1 lap
13th	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	+1 lap
14th	Kimi Räikkönen	Alfa Romeo	+1 lap
15th	Lando Norris	McLaren	+1 lap
16th	Nicholas Latifi	Williams	+1 lap
17th	Romain Grosjean	Haas	+1 lap
18th	George Russell	Williams	+1 lap

Retirements		
Carlos Sainz	McLaren	0 laps - accident
Lance Stroll	Racing Point	0 laps - collision

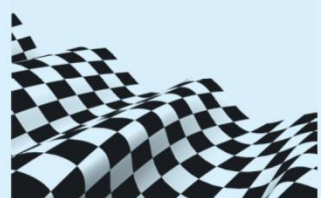
Fastest lap	
Valtteri Bottas: 1m37.030s on lap 51	

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED				
Hard (C3)	Medium (C4)	Soft (C5)	Inter	Wet

CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Sunny	30°C	40°C

DRIVERS’ STANDINGS			
1 Hamilton	205pts	12 Ocon	36pts
2 Bottas	161pts	13 Vettel	17pts
3 Verstappen	128pts	14 Kvyat	14pts
4 Norris	65pts	15 Hülkenberg	6pts
5 Albon	64pts	16 Räikkönen	2pts
6 Ricciardo	63pts	17 Giovinazzi	2pts
7 Leclerc	57pts	18 Magnussen	1pt
8 Stroll	57pts	19 Latifi	0pts
9 Pérez	56pts	20 Russell	0pts
10 Gasly	45pts	21 Grosjean	0pts
11 Sainz	41pts		





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 11

THE EIFEL GP IN 3 KEY MOMENTS



1 Bottas hands Hamilton his Schumacher-equalling win

Lewis Hamilton matched Michael Schumacher's record of 91 Formula 1 victories by winning a race that was a microcosm of the 2020 season: Hamilton stroking it home to stretch his dominant championship lead further; Max Verstappen giving game but ultimately vain chase in the improving but still inferior Red Bull; and Valtteri Bottas left ruining the consequences of yet another disappointing result.

This was Bottas' race to lose after a commanding performance in qualifying, which put him on pole position by more than a quarter of a second. This was his first pole since the 70th Anniversary weekend at Silverstone, only his third of the season, and by his biggest qualifying margin over Hamilton since the 2019 US Grand Prix.

Bottas looked ready to build on that comfortable victory in Russia last time out. Even after another tardy start Bottas showed impressive resolve to retake the lead from

Hamilton exiting Turn 1, forcing his way inside at Turn 2 having briefly lost out as both cars understeered wide at the first corner.

For his part, Hamilton – whose weekend was disrupted by a Mercedes mechanic testing positive for COVID-19 – was impressed by this forceful driving, the likes of which we haven't really seen between Mercedes team-mates since the Nico Rosberg days (minus the contact).

"I tried to give as much room as possible and then he was in my blind spot," said Hamilton. "He did an amazing job. I remember coming out of that corner thinking, 'Good on you man, I'm impressed'."

Bottas looked nailed-on to win, but starting lap 13 of 60 his lead suddenly disappeared in a cloud of brake smoke. "I think it was mainly the drizzle," Bottas explained. "It was a really sudden lock-up. It was a mistake, but also tricky conditions."

Bottas felt there were still "opportunities" to win, despite the major flat spot on his right front

Pirelli forcing an early pitstop, but precautionary early retirement following a malfunction on his new Mercedes engine made that academic. Team boss Toto Wolff suspected an MGU-H problem, but track engineering director Andrew Shovlin pointed to a suspected "electronics issue". Whatever, it leaves Bottas needing a "miracle" to stay in title contention.

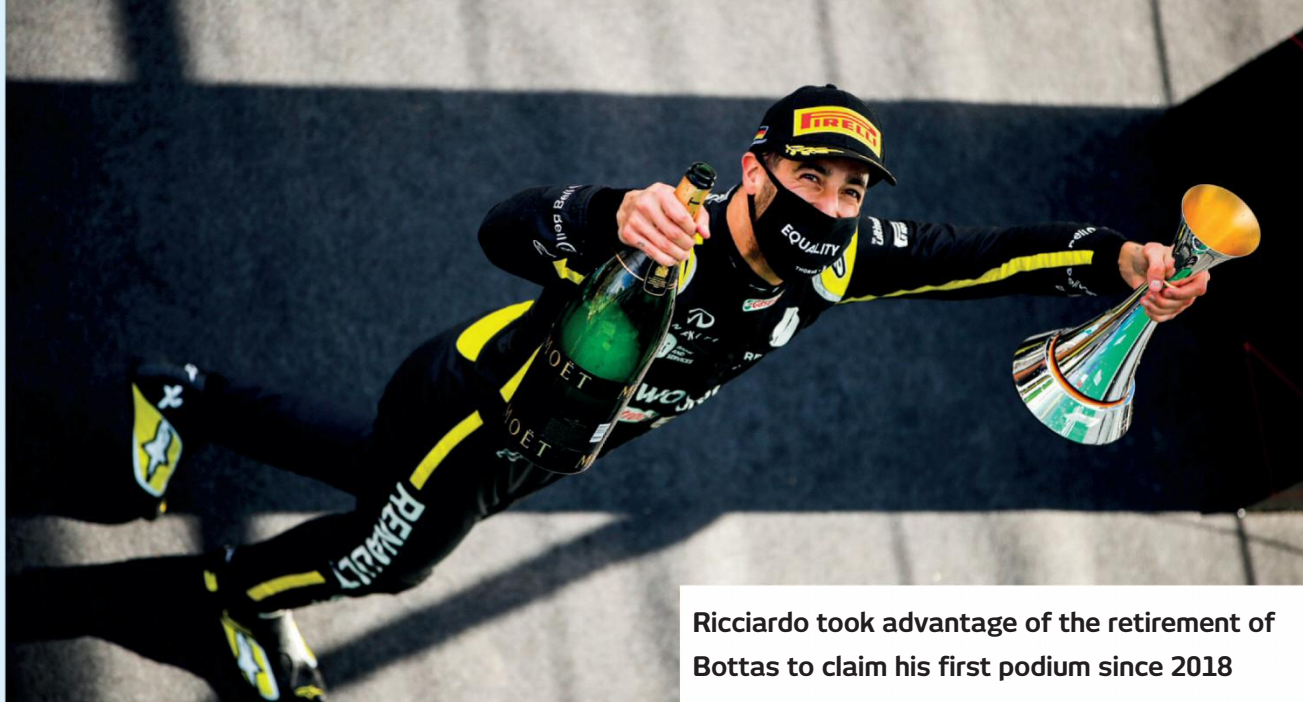
Maintaining tyre temperature was always going to be a major challenge in sub-10C conditions, on a surface barely hotter than 16C. Verstappen kept Hamilton honest as they left the rest for dead, but Max couldn't capitalise on the late-race Safety Car restart. Christian Horner put the difference down to Mercedes' innovative DAS system, but was nevertheless encouraged by his team's progress here, the RB16 featuring updated rear suspension.

But it's too little too late, really, and Mercedes already has one eye on 2021 – as should Bottas, now the 2020 championship looks all but lost.



Hamilton received a 2012 Michael Schumacher helmet as he equalled the German's win tally

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; GLENN DUNBAR; ZAK MAUGER; MARK SUTTON



Ricciardo took advantage of the retirement of Bottas to claim his first podium since 2018

2 Ricciardo puts Renault back on the podium at last

The misfortune that befell Bottas, coupled with Charles Leclerc's Ferrari again being unable to carry strong qualifying form into the race, and Alex Albon enduring another disappointing outing for Red Bull, allowed Daniel Ricciardo to give Renault its first podium since the 2011 Malaysian GP.

Ricciardo was encouraged to qualify sixth on a high-downforce circuit, traditionally a weakness for Renault. He immediately passed Albon at the start, before despatching Leclerc on lap nine with a Fernando Alonso-esque 'switchback' pass exiting Turn 1, which Ricciardo completed by driving boldly around the front-tyre-graining Ferrari at Turn 2.

With Bottas, Albon (radiator), Esteban Ocon (hydraulics) and Lando Norris (exhaust) all eliminated by problems, and Carlos Sainz struggling with McLaren's update package, Sergio Pérez was the only threat to Ricciardo's podium ambitions. At one stage, Racing Point informed Pérez he was lapping as quickly as Hamilton and closing on Ricciardo at a rate of 0.7 seconds per lap, but the Safety Car neutralised this emerging contest.

"I feel we've been knocking on the door," said Ricciardo, who thanks to this gets to pick a tattoo for Renault team boss Cyril Abiteboul. "Particularly the last four to five races we've been so close. The rear of the car has picked up a lot of downforce, so that's given us drivers confidence to nail the

throttle and get off the corner better. It was around Silverstone, I think, we had a few updates and were able to find more ease in setting the car up.

"Last year we, at times, could be very fast or well outside the top ten. Now we're able to sit in that sweet spot and the performance is there. It's proven now: we've done it on low downforce, high downforce circuits. It's a good package and we have confidence for the remainder of the season."

3 Super-sub Hülkenberg scores again

The high rate of attrition allowed Racing Point 'super-sub' Nico Hülkenberg to bag four points for finishing eighth in Lance Stroll's car, despite Nico qualifying without practising after Stroll's late withdrawal on Saturday morning.

Friday practice was cancelled due to poor weather, and Stroll was then taken ill just before Saturday's final session. Team principal Otmar Szafnauer revealed Stroll had been feeling unwell since Russia, but his condition worsened in Germany and he couldn't "get off the toilet long enough to get in the race car".

Hülkenberg, who was due at the Nürburgring anyway for TV work, was recalled. Understandably, with no prior running in the heavily updated RP20, he qualified last, but running at reduced pace in the race – which all cars do to manage tyres and fuel – Hülkenberg made steady progress into the top ten.

Team-mate Sergio Pérez braced himself for a "painful" day in the championship after qualifying ninth, but showcased Racing Point's improved car with a strong drive to fourth in the race.

"We pulled together all the updates that we planned to do into a significant update for the car," explained technical director Andrew Green. "That included front wing, front brake ducts, floor, rear wing endplates, and you can see the sidepods, bodywork – that was the aerodynamic aspect.

"And on the rear suspension, we did a lot of work on the internals, and the way the suspension works, to give us more flexibility and more options on the rear suspension set-up, and also a change to the steering system as well. All of those updates came between Mugello and Russia."



Hülkenberg subbed for Stroll this time and managed a superb eighth despite starting last

RESULTS ROUND 11

NÜRBURGRING / 11.10.20 / 60 LAPS



1st	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1h35m49.641s
2nd	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	+4.470s
3rd	Daniel Ricciardo	Renault	+14.613s
4th	Sergio Pérez	Racing Point	+16.070s
5th	Carlos Sainz	McLaren	+21.905s
6th	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri	+22.766s
7th	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+30.814s
8th	Nico Hülkenberg	Racing Point	+32.596s
9th	Romain Grosjean	Haas	+39.081s
10th	Antonio Giovinazzi	Alfa Romeo	+40.035s
11th	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	+40.810s
12th	Kimi Räikkönen	Alfa Romeo	+41.476s
13th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+49.585s
14th	Nicholas Latifi	Williams	+54.449s
15th	Daniil Kvyat	AlphaTauri	+55.588s

Retirements

Lando Norris	McLaren	42 laps - exhaust
Alexander Albon	Red Bull	23 laps - radiator
Esteban Ocon	Renault	22 laps - hydraulics
Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	18 laps - engine
George Russell	Williams	12 laps - collision

Fastest lap

Max Verstappen: 1m28.139s on lap 60

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE



AIR TEMP

9°C

TRACK TEMP

17°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Hamilton	230pts	12 Ocon	36pts
2 Bottas	161pts	13 Vettel	17pts
3 Verstappen	147pts	14 Kvyat	14pts
4 Ricciardo	78pts	15 Hülkenberg	10pts
5 Pérez	68pts	16 Giovinazzi	3pts
6 Norris	65pts	17 Räikkönen	2pts
7 Albon	64pts	18 Grosjean	2pts
8 Leclerc	63pts	19 Magnussen	1pt
9 Stroll	57pts	20 Latifi	0pts
10 Gasly	53pts	21 Russell	0pts
11 Sainz	51pts		





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 12

PORTUGUESE GP

Autódromo Internacional do Algarve
23-25 October 2020



PICTURE: MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDRIDGE

THE MAIN EVENT

The Autódromo Internacional do Algarve

was conceived with the distant possibility of holding a Formula 1 race in mind. But when F1 cars arrived for the first time to test there back in December 2008, little over a month after the circuit opened, who could have foreseen that it would be another 12 years before they would lap it in anger?

Money, as ever in F1, proved to be the crunch point – the original owners couldn't afford the sanctioning fee. Neither could they keep the circuit in business, despite generous tax breaks and discounted rent. The track is now effectively state-owned and is a popular venue for track days as well as an occasional host of GT and motorcycle races. After a prolonged courtship it will also host a MotoGP round following the cancellation of several events in that championship.

The original track surface was good enough to warrant FIA Grade One certification but a fresh layer of high-grip asphalt has been applied in advance of the Portuguese Grand Prix. The new surface is expected to



be just as abrasive as its predecessor, which is why Pirelli is bringing the hardest compounds in its family. The track layout is reasonably fast and flowing in places, though not nearly to the same extent as Mugello, and it packs plenty of elevation changes into its compact layout.

All this energy will put a lot of heat through the treads, so expect tyre management to be a key theme

of the weekend. Pirelli will also bring prototype 2021 rubber, to be tested during Friday's second practice session.

KEY CORNER: TURN 1

There's a sharp dip at the end of the main straight, just before the 100m board for Turn 1, and a sausage kerb inside of the apex acts as a wing-breaking deterrent to anyone looking to take liberties with the inside line.



RACE DATA

Circuit Autódromo Internacional do Algarve

First GP 2020

Number of laps 66

Circuit length 2.891 miles

Longest straight 0.602 miles

Race distance 190.65 miles

Pirelli compounds C1, C2, C3

TIMETABLE

Friday 23 October

Practice 1 11:00-12.30

Practice 2 15:00-16.30

Saturday 24 October

Practice 3 11:00-12.00

Qualifying 14:00-15.00

Sunday 25 October

Race 13:10

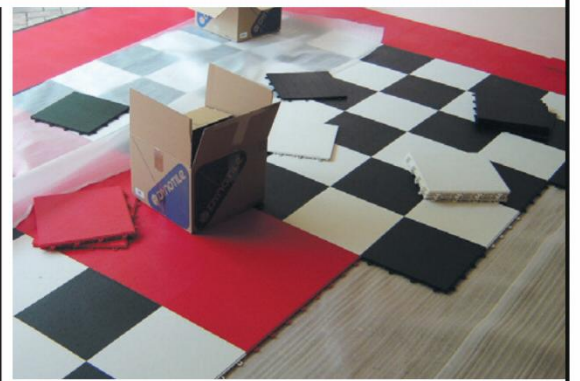
Live coverage Sky Sports F1

Highlights Channel 4

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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13

EMILIA ROMAGNA GP

31 October-1 November 2020
Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari

PICTURES: MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE. ILLUSTRATIONS: ALAN ELDREDGE



THE MAIN EVENT

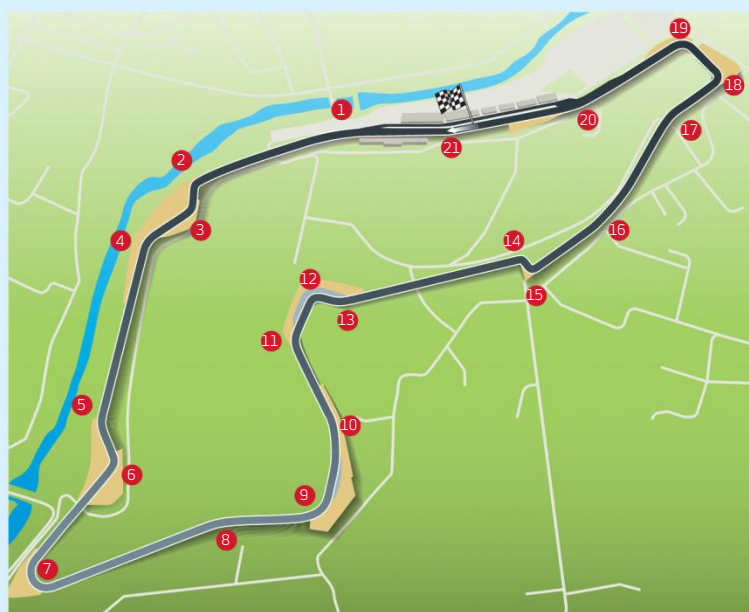
Truth be told, Formula 1 fell out of love with the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari on 1 May 1994. While the San Marino Grand Prix soldiered on for another 12 editions after Ayrton Senna's tragic accident, the magic had departed, though the track was modified to improve safety and the tifosi dutifully continued to pack the house while Michael Schumacher was in his Ferrari pomp.

Certain aspects of the track and its facilities continued to grate with the teams and the FIA, so it was dropped from the 2007 calendar and never reinstated despite more layout amendments and the construction of a new Hermann Tilke-designed pit complex (the combined expense of which bankrupted the owners). Several changes of owner later, the track has FIA Grade One certification again and has regularly been touted as a potential replacement for Monza as the home of the Italian GP.

The circuit is now 50m shorter than when it last held a grand prix, owing to the removal of the Variante Bassa chicane which used to precede the pit straight. A new chicane bearing that name has been built opposite the pit complex but is only used for motorcycle races.

Knowing how and when to ride the kerbs was the key to a fast laptime here, even after the kerb heights were reduced ahead of the 2006 race. The compressed nature of the event this year – it's taking place over two days, with just one practice session – means there will be very little time for the drivers to become acquainted with the track's quirks and secrets.

KEY CORNER: TURN 12 It's not necessarily the angle or the camber, or the plunge downhill afterwards, which make Acque Minerali tricky – it's the blind entry over a crest, which has caught out drivers as great as Alain Prost...



RACE DATA

Venue Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari

First GP 1980

Number of laps 63

Circuit length 3.050 miles

Longest straight 0.223 miles

Elevation change 121 feet

Race distance 192.03 miles

Lap record 1m20.411s

Michael Schumacher (2004)

F1 races held 27

Pirelli compounds C2, C3, C4

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Saturday 31 October

Practice 09:00-10.30

Qualifying 13:00-14.00

Sunday 1 November

Race 12:10

Live coverage Sky Sports F1

Highlights Channel 4

THE WINNERS HERE...



2006

Michael Schumacher
Ferrari



2005

Fernando Alonso
Renault



2004

Michael Schumacher
Ferrari



2003

Michael Schumacher
Ferrari



2002

Michael Schumacher
Ferrari



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14

TURKISH GP

13-15 November 2020
Istanbul Park

THE MAIN EVENT

Another unexpected returnee to the calendar thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, Istanbul Park evokes mixed feelings in the F1 community. Drivers love the challenge, particularly the roller coaster ride that is track designer Hermann Tilke's grand conceit: the high-speed, multi-apex, 180-degree Turn 8. Photographers, on the other hand, loathe it because it presents very few opportunities to capture interesting images – they're not allowed anywhere near Turn 8, for instance. For the TV viewer, the smoothness of modern HD on-boards rob the hallowed corner of the sensations it inflicts upon the participants.

Still, this is a decent track, and one that a select few of the present drivers will remember, for it last hosted a grand prix in 2011. Lack of political will scuppered what had started out as a government-backed prestige project: ticket prices were too much for the locals, who stayed away, leading the promoter to go bust. Bernie Ecclestone bought the facility in 2007 after just two editions of the Turkish GP but did little to promote the race thereafter, and sold it to a Turkish car hire company in 2013. It's been used for track days and driver training ever since.

The 2020 race has a lot to live up to because that final Turkish Grand Prix in 2011 was a true classic. Just four races into the Pirelli era, teams were still getting to grips with tyres whose performance had been designed to 'fall off a cliff' as a gimmick (dreamed up by Ecclestone) to increase the drama. It certainly delivered in that regard: 80 pitstops and plenty of overtaking all through the field.

KEY CORNER: TURN 8 The proliferation of bumps as well as apexes of this long left-hander made it a stern test of driver skill and bravery as well as car downforce. But will it be too easy for modern machinery?



RACE DATA

Venue Istanbul Park**First GP** 2005**Number of laps** 58**Circuit length** 3.314 miles**Longest straight** 0.447 miles**Elevation change** 150 feet**Race distance** 192.25 miles**Lap record** 1m24.770s

Juan Pablo Montoya (2005)

F1 races held 7**Pirelli compounds** C1, C2, C3

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 13 November**Practice 1** 08:00-09.30**Practice 2** 12:00-13.30**Saturday** 14 November**Practice 3** 09:00-10.00**Qualifying** 12:00-13.00**Sunday** 15 November**Race** 10:10**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1**Highlights** Channel 4

THE WINNERS HERE...



2011

Sebastian
Vettel
Red Bull

2010

Lewis
Hamilton
McLaren

2009

Jenson
Button
Brawn GP

2008

Felipe
Massa
Ferrari

2007

Felipe
Massa
Ferrari



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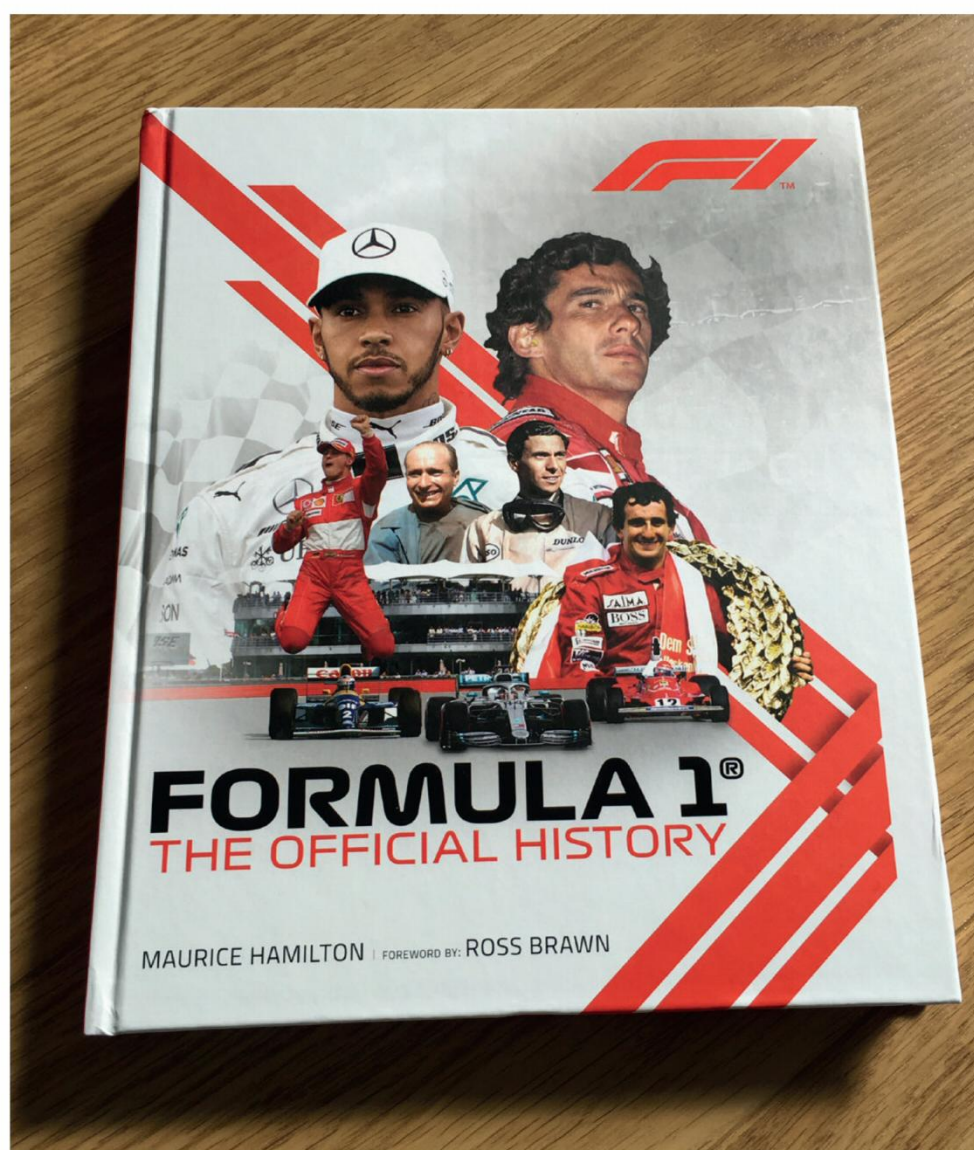
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[f1store2.formula1.com/gifts & accessories/home & office\)](http://f1store2.formula1.com/gifts%20%26amp%20accessories/home%20%26amp%20office)

Former *Guardian* Formula 1 correspondent and frequent *GP Racing* contributor Maurice Hamilton has been a busy chap this year, having composed a new biography of Niki Lauda as well as this, a history of the world championship's 70 years. Presented in large-format hardback and officially endorsed by Formula 1, it is a lively and well-illustrated romp through the decades, covering all the bases without getting bogged down.

Seventy years is a lot to get through in 272 pages (including

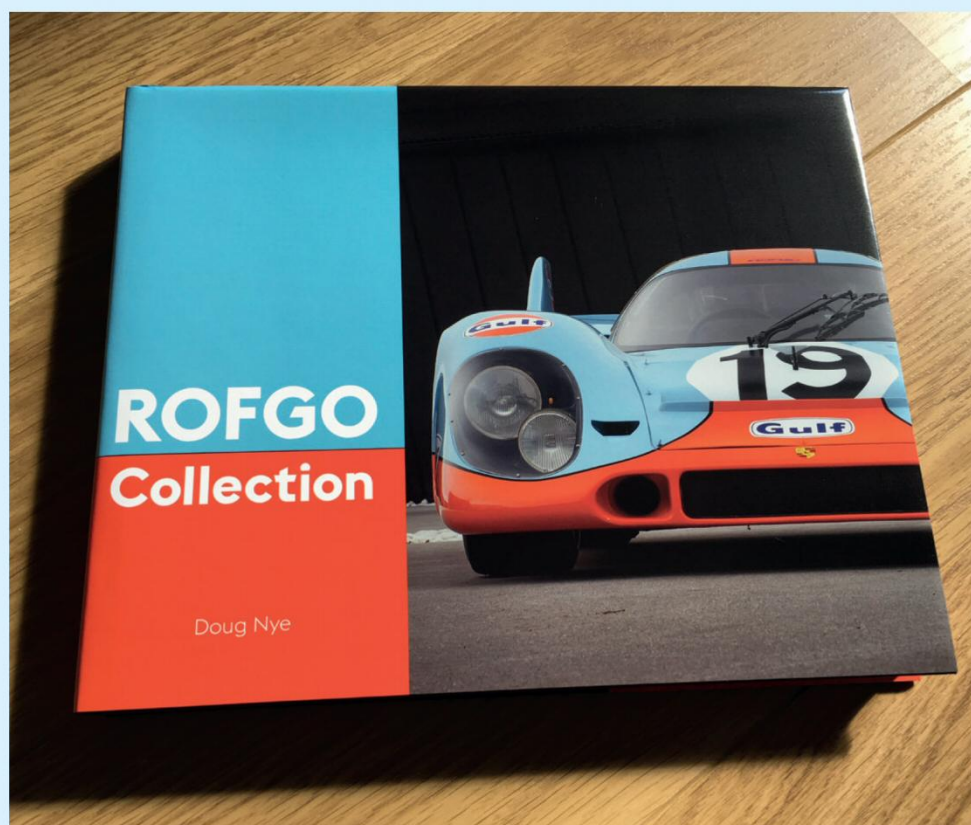
credits and indices), and it's a credit to Mo's discipline that he shifts through the gears thematically rather than chronologically. Instead of reciting the events year by year, he picks up the major themes or personalities of each decade and interweaves their stories seamlessly. You might get to the end of this book not knowing what colour shirt Farina was wearing when he won the British Grand Prix, but you'll have a great feel for how F1 has grown into one of the world's biggest and best-loved spectator sports.



ROFGO COLLECTION

Price £75

porterpress.co.uk



Weighing in at over 2kg, this new hardback may require you to shore up your coffee table. The subject matter may sound somewhat niche, but it makes for a delightfully eclectic work: in his youth, German businessman Roald Goethe fell in love with the Ford GT40s and Porsche 917s racing in the evocative Gulf Oil colours and resolved to own them.

Having made his fortune he set about attaining that goal, with the assistance of renowned race car dealer Adrian Hamilton (son of 1953 Le Mans winner Duncan). The results are catalogued here, with individual histories of each car compiled by

eminent motoring historian Doug Nye. As such it is authoritative as well as a delight to behold.

The range of cars stretches from the aforementioned Fords and Porsches to more modern machinery raced at Le Mans by Goethe himself in period. It also features two notable F1 cars: McLaren M23-4, originally raced by Jacky Ickx, Peter Revson and Emerson Fittipaldi among others; and Tyrrell 007/4, raced by Patrick Depailler in 1974. The latter is presented in the Scuderia Gulf Team Rondini colours in which it contested a handful of grands prix in 1976, driven by Alessandro Pesenti-Rossi.

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omologatowatches.com

British boutique watch brand Omologato is renowned for its motorsport-inspired timepieces, and in January 2021 it's teaming up with SRT Racing to contest the infamously challenging Dakar Rally (in which Fernando Alonso finished 13th this year). To celebrate this venture the company has released this special Dakar timepiece.

A 42mm diameter matt black dial with three sub-dials is enclosed in a water-resistant (to 10m) stainless steel case and flat sapphire glass cover with an anti-reflective coating. The strap is made from silicon rubber and available in black, orange, khaki and navy.



RACING RED BAG AR

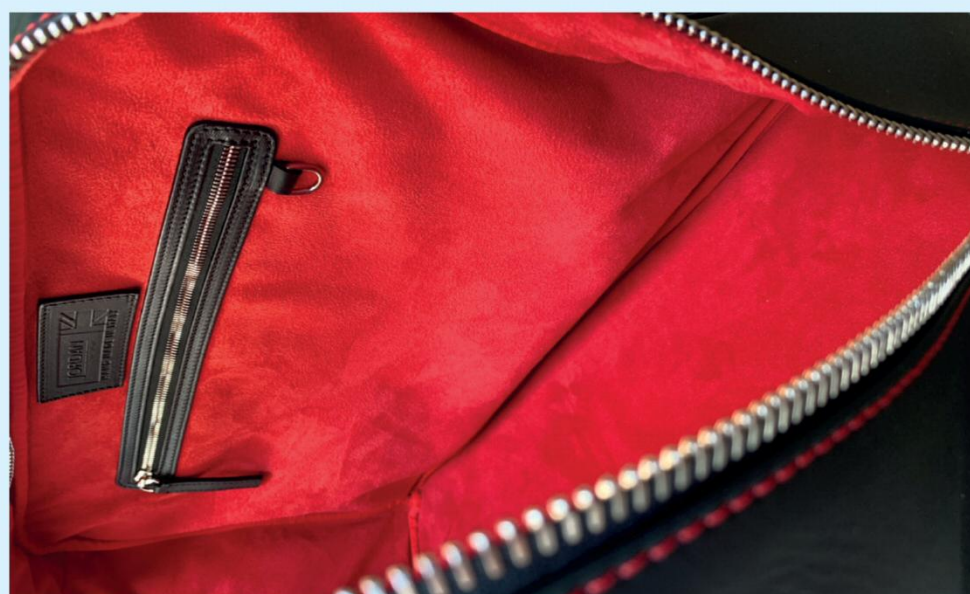
Price £795

jordanbespoke.com

2020 may not have been a vintage year in many regards, but it is the 110th anniversary of Alfa Romeo as well as the 70th birthday of the Formula 1 world championship, and to that end Jordan Bespoke has crafted a celebratory item of high-value luggage. Hand-made in workshops in Tuscany, these bags are finished in smooth Italian leather, set off with racing red stitching and straps and

featuring Alfa's quadrifoglio badge, a practice of the company's racing team dating back to the 1923 Targa Florio. Attention to detail extends to the handles and shoulder straps, which use 1960s seatbelt webbing.

The interior is finished in red and features a photograph of Juan Manuel Fangio in action in the 1950 Monaco Grand Prix for Alfa Romeo. The picture is from Alfa's own archives.





FINISHING STRAIGHT

THE FINAL LAP

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IMAGES**

A LITTLE BIT OF BOTHER IN BRAZIL

Another pillar of the Bernie Ecclestone era is about to be demolished by Formula 1's owners. Three years after booting 'The Bolt' into a 'chairman emeritus' non-role, Liberty Media has taken the axe to one of Bernie's favourites: yes, Interlagos is about to become 'venue emeritus' of the Brazilian GP in favour of a freshly deforested parcel of land in Rio de Janeiro.

The plans, in motion since last year, come freighted with controversy owing to their environmental impact and the high-profile involvement of Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, a man who occupies a space in the political spectrum to the right of Attila the Hun.

Interlagos, whose contract ends this year, has become a problem for Liberty because, as with Monaco, the promoter pays nothing to host the race. Since Bernie's departure, other race promoters have taken the opportunity to try for a better bargain – and São Paulo's sweet deal, we understand, has become the proverbial stick

with which disgruntled promoters attempt to beat F1 boss Chase Carey and chums. Word is that F1 negotiated an offer of \$20million from Interlagos, but that is dwarfed by the \$65million the Rio promoter is willing to stump up.

Bolsonaro jumped the gun by saying in 2019 that Rio would replace São Paulo on the calendar in 2020 – the Rio circuit isn't even built yet. But that might be about to change. This month our colleagues at Motorsport.com in Brazil received a leaked letter from Carey to Rio's governor saying an agreement had been reached for F1 to race in Rio, subject to the track being approved by state

It could be the end of the line for Interlagos as a grand prix venue, if the new Rio circuit gets approval



environmental authorities.

Given the 70,000 trees on or around the proposed site, there was a predictable explosion of outrage. Silence reigned only in that small but usually noisy constituency of Brazilian racing drivers who have lent their support to Bolsonaro, and who have business interests in the field of environmentally friendly transport. No strangers to the microphone, these individuals could not be persuaded to venture an on-the-record opinion on the subject...

For all the claims that mitigations will make the proposed circuit net carbon neutral, steamrolling the last patch of green space in the greater Rio metropolitan area isn't a good look for F1, given the rights holder's much-trumpeted commitment to be net zero carbon by 2030. The world champion certainly isn't amused.

"I heard that it's potentially going to be sustainable," said Lewis

Hamilton. "But the most sustainable thing you can do is not tear down any trees, particularly in a time where we're fighting a pandemic, and there continues to be a global crisis around the world."

The official spin is that this is a brownfield site – a disused military base no less – that a substantial proportion of the foliage is untenable, and that for the site to be redeveloped in any form the trees would have to be removed anyway.

In a statement the race promoter made assurances that all trees destroyed will be mitigated by plantings elsewhere. Anyone who has ever had any dealings with property developers and their ilk will be painfully aware of how empty such promises tend to be without proper enforcement. Given the involvement of Bolsonaro, known both within and without the country's borders as "the Brazilian Donald Trump", this enforcement is unlikely to be forthcoming.

F1 might be navigating choppy waters, financially speaking – but to get involved in this project is tone-deaf at best, even if there happens to be 65 million reasons for doing so as opposed to 20 million. Especially when the proposed circuit looks like a pound-shop version of Bahrain...

**"THE MOST
SUSTAINABLE
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LEWIS HAMILTON

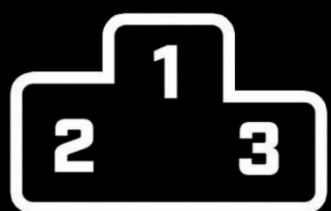
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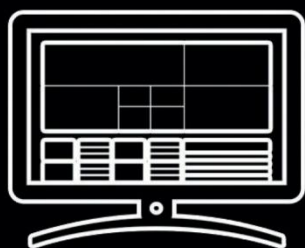


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