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HOW MCLAREN WENT FROM ALSO-RAN TO RED BULL BEATER

RICHARD MILLE



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Red Bull knew it would be caught



Last season McLaren went from having one of the slowest cars on the grid to escaping for wins. But there was plenty of work left to do. Now the team that dominated Formula 1 for much of the 1980s and '90s is properly challenging for world championships again for the first time in over a decade. **Andrew Benson** explains that competitive renaissance with the help of one of its architects.



BACK WITH A BANG

HOW McLAREN WENT FROM BETTER TO (NEARLY) BEST

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McLAREN IS
FINALLY BACK

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About to join Ferrari? Then a win at Monza will send the Tifosi wild




WELCOME TO THE FUTURE >>>>>

DO BELIEVE THE HYPE

When **Andrea Kimi Antonelli** won his first Formula 2 race this summer it set off a veritable stampede towards the press conference room. Why? Because Mercedes has thrown up such a barrier around its protégé that he's a tricky man to speak to. But now GP Racing can lift the veil of secrecy.

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THE FUTURE'S
BRIGHT PT1:
ANTONELLI



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE >>>>>

THE BEAR NECESSITIES

Despite a troubled second year in Formula 2 with a new car, **Oliver Bearman** has earned a seat in F1 with Haas - but as he explains, he's very much focused on the job of the future rather than celebrating his promotion.



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THE FUTURE'S
BRIGHT PT2:
BEARMAN



F1 PRO 02 Fernando Alonso's Valiant

ALONSO'S MANUAL OVER-RIDE

Aston Martin's limited-edition Valour wasn't quite racy enough for Fernando Alonso, so the company made a track-focused special to his brief. One thing he wasn't prepared to budge on: the manual gearbox.



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE >>>>>

ALONSO'S COMPANY CAR

That first moment you have the freedom of being alone is an absolute bliss. The feeling of being a moment in something as small as a car is something you can't shake. Being the second of the 10 cars in a race is something that I like to have more than anything else.

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ALONSO'S
COMPANY
CAR

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When you're Fernando Alonso and you want that perfect track car



Stuart
Codling
Editor



Powers of prediction

Confession time: this month’s cover feature has been a long time in the making. We’ve put it off at least once. Perhaps the long era of Red Bull dominance has rendered us punch drunk. When McLaren applied a major update to its MCL38 in Miami and Lando Norris immediately claimed his first grand prix win, it was still too early to say definitively that this venerable team, which hasn’t been a genuine title contender since 2012, was back in the game. Larger sample size required.

Subsequent rounds seemed to confirm that McLaren’s car-performance uptick was real, rather than a track-specific outlier. But from Canada onwards there were a series of slips twixt cup and lip. Indubitably we can now say McLaren has gone from also-ran to an occasional poacher of victories to bona fide Red Bull beater – indeed, we’ve enshrined it in 20-odd-point type on the cover.

Equally, while allowing ourselves to become properly excited about an actual championship battle for the first time since 2021, we can also permit a tut-tut and a harrumph that it isn’t closer still, since the guys from Woking have left rather too many points on the table in the second quarter of the season. Still, seven different race winners over the first half of the season is an encouraging statistic for a championship which has come to rely on the augmented reality of Netflix’s cod-documentary series *Drive to Survive* to expand its fanbase.

All long-running TV shows need to introduce

new characters and produce fresh storylines to sustain interest. Fortunately F1 doesn’t have to resort to the kind of absurdities that soap operas engage in when viewing figures dip or there’s regime change in the production office (although, with an American media corporation in charge, maybe we shouldn’t rule out a who-shot-JR moment). This month we bring the spotlight to bear on new talents being prepped for stardom by two of Formula 1’s biggest teams: Oliver Bearman, the Ferrari Driver Academy star whose next step up the ladder is a seat at Haas next year; and Mercedes protégé Andrea Kimi Antonelli, who has been quietly and at no little expense testing a 2022 Merc F1 car as team boss Toto Wolff ponders whether to promote him now or wait a little longer.

21 years ago, in our previous incarnation as *F1 Racing*, we put a very young Fernando Alonso and Kimi Räikkönen on the cover and duly announced: “You’re looking at the future of F1”. Each had only a single victory to their name at that point. Did we think both of them would enjoy 20-year careers in F1, though? That would certainly have exceeded our powers of prognostication...

GP Racing has a podcast!
Search for ‘Flat Chat with Codders’ in your podcasting platform of choice

Contributors



OLEG KARPOV
Oleg tries to unravel why Andrea Kimi Antonelli is so highly rated, and if he will indeed blag a Mercedes drive for 2025 (p48)



BEN HUNT
Autosport’s chief motorsport writer takes a look at another of F1’s young coming men, the Haas-bound Oliver Bearman (p56)



ANDREW BENSON
The BBC’s Formula 1 correspondent analyses the progress McLaren has made, in short order, to be back at the front of the grid (p38)



DAMIEN SMITH
Damien has delved into the fascinating story behind the Lotus 56B, the only gas turbine car ever to race – albeit briefly – in F1 (p72)

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Or perhaps that should be “Unwholly SH21”? Because to mark the 10th anniversary of our five-day chronometer movement, Calibre SH21, we’ve subjected it to open-heart surgery. Between The Twelve X (Ti)’s front and rear sapphire crystals, we’ve re-forged and skeletonised components with custom-made, diamond cutters. Then sculpted them to a precise, polished finish using re-programmed state-of-the-art CNC machinery. This industrial evolution extends to the outside with a 41mm case made from Grade 2 and Grade 5 titanium. Its top ring is rhodium. And it premieres a new micro-adjustable bracelet. When you find out how much it costs, we swear you’ll love it. (And maybe utter the odd expletive yourself.)

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christopherward.com







Three into one

Shooting across Turn 1 at the Hungaroring from a vantage point on the outside, you know from experience where the cars are likely to be... and where they're likely to make contact with each other. It's amazing how quickly

incidents evolve so I go for much higher shutter speeds at this point of the weekend. If anything happens there's a much bigger chance of capturing it sharply.

We knew it was likely to kick off here because overtaking has got more

difficult at this track recently, adding to the likelihood of a dramatic tangle at the first corner. Everyone says a race isn't won on the opening lap but that doesn't dissuade drivers from going for track position.



Photographer
Steve Etherington

Where Hungaroring, Hungary
When 3:02pm, Sunday
21 July 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
100-500mm lens, 1/1600th @ F11





Get that shot in the can...

This is the first time I've ever taken a picture while crouching over someone's toilet, but needs must. I was shooting on behalf of McLaren during the Hungary weekend, when Oscar Piastri took his first 'proper' win (the editor of this magazine describes sprint rounds, like the Indy 500s which counted towards the championship in the 1950s, as "statistically anomalous").

We had to do something special to mark Oscar's victory. His driver room was in the truck after the wind blew the roof off the McLaren motorhome, so it was pretty small. The mirror gives quite a pleasing effect but I had to crouch to avoid appearing in the shot...



Photographer
Glenn Dunbar

Where Hungaroring, Hungary

When 5:36pm, Sunday
21 July 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
24-70mm lens, 1/800th @ F2

That McLaren needs Spa treatment

There are lots of places to shoot Turn 1 at Spa-Francorchamps, which is good because the start is usually dramatic. I like this position and angle where you're on the outside of the corner shooting across and down. With a telephoto lens and a fairly big aperture it blurs a lot of the messier background elements so you can draw the eye towards the action. The risk you take is that some of the drama kicks off earlier in the corner.

A couple of years ago the organisers widened the run-off here but replaced a lot of the asphalt with gravel to deter track-limit gambling. Lando Norris just got it a bit wrong at the start here and slipped from fourth to fifth.



Photographer
Sam Bloxham

Where Spa, Belgium
When 3:04pm, Sunday
28 July 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
100-500mm lens, 1/1600th @ F7.1







Prelude to the sadness of King George

Being Mercedes' photographer I had access to parc fermé in Belgium and positioned myself in front of the 'P2' slot so I could capture the moment when George Russell pulled up to the 'P1'

board, leapt out, stood on the nose of his car and waved to the crowd in the grandstand behind.

Well, that was the plan, and it's what victorious drivers usually do. But I think George was

particularly excited about winning this race, because of his clever tactics. So he dismounted with the grace of Simone Biles and ran off towards his mechanics. Shame the win was struck off later.



Photographer

Sam Bloxham

Where Spa, Belgium

When 4:25pm, Sunday
28 July 2024

Details Canon EOS R3

24-70mm lens, 1/3200th @ F3.5





Hands across the divide

We don't get many opportunities to photograph the podium from above anymore, since modern tracks usually locate the podium away from the pit building or have it surrounded by VIP hospitality.

So I took this chance in Hungary since the whole garage/media centre building is soon going to be bulldozed and rebuilt as the track pitches for a contract extension beyond 2027. The nice Budapest light

also helps make a nice picture.

They had confetti cannons this year so I missed the sparkling wine shots, but the simplicity of Lando and Oscar shaking hands tells a story given what happened on track.



Photographer

Zak Mauger

Where Hungaroring, Hungary

When 4:36pm, Sunday
21 July 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
70-200mm lens, 1/1600th @ F2.8



OAKES IN, ENGINES OUT AT ALPINE

01 **There's nothing new about F1 teams** changing team principals – in recent years it's felt as frequent as football clubs sacking their managers. And as Chelsea begins the new Premier League season on its sixth in two years, Alpine is definitely heading towards that extreme.

A year after Otmar Szafnauer was ousted and replaced by Bruno Famin, a new man is taking over the reins at Enstone. And you could be forgiven for being surprised by the choice:

Oakes will become the youngest team principal in F1 and the third person in this role at Alpine in just over a year



Oliver Oakes has never worked at Enstone and has never held a senior position at any other F1 team.

However, that's not the most significant bit of news from the French manufacturer's team, as it has also decided to change its power unit supplier, abandoning its own engine programme in favour of a customer deal.

Just like a year ago, the changes were once again announced around the Belgian Grand Prix. It was at the official press conference that Famin confirmed his departure from the role he had inherited from Szafnauer, and it was he who also acknowledged – following reports in the media – that the team was gearing up to abandon the Renault engines developed at the Viry-Châtillon facility. The official announcement that Oakes would take Famin's place came a few days later.

This marks yet another shake-up at the top of the Renault-owned team at which some of the busiest employees are those tasked with etching names on office doors. Over the past few seasons a dizzying number of managers have come and gone, including Frédéric Vasseur, Cyril Abiteboul, Marcin Budkowski, Laurent Rossi and Szafnauer.

Oakes' best-known link to the world of Formula 1 was previously through Nikita Mazepin. The former Haas racer was managed by Oakes and the Briton's Hitech team was reportedly majority-owned by the driver's father. However, those links were severed shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Hitech, which has competed in the junior championships for the past decade, has since been trying to make its own way into F1, and threw its hat in the ring in the FIA tender last year. The project was to be funded by another businessman from the post-Soviet territories, Vladimir Kim, but Hitech's bid was ultimately rejected.

The Oakes example is not unique, since F1 is no stranger to bringing managers in from junior series. Christian Horner took up the role of Red Bull Racing team principal after having

run his own Formula 3000 team, Arden. Vasseur had enjoyed a successful career as the head of ART Grand Prix before moving to F1 with Renault. And shortly before that, the Enstone team had been led by Eric Boullier, who had been brought in from DAMS. Further back in history, when

OAKES HAS NEVER WORKED AT ENSTONE AND HAS NEVER HELD A SENIOR POSITION AT ANY OTHER F1 TEAM

Marlboro became disenchanted with McLaren's struggles in the late 1970s it turned to a successful Formula 2 team boss to engineer a turnaround: Ron Dennis.

Oakes will become the youngest team principal in F1. In the past, he won the world karting championship as a driver and was also part of the Red Bull driver development programme. His Hitech outfit is now present in a wide variety of junior

02 | SAINZ SAGA SORTED

Signed, sealed – delivery in 2026

03 | GOING ROUND IN CIRCLES?

Internal warfare triggers Audi moves

championships, including Formula 2 and Formula 3.

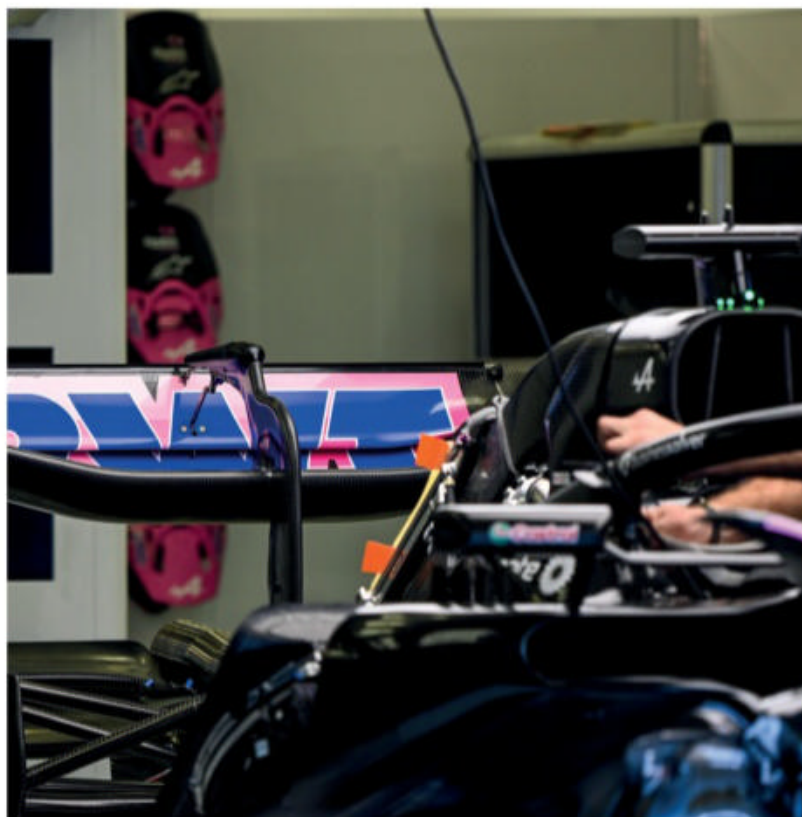
His Alpine appointment came against a backdrop of rumours about a possible sale of the team – and despite consistent denials from project managers and even Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo, the speculation continues. The news that Renault is ending its own engine project for 2026 seems to have done little to quell it.

Although there has been no official confirmation of the cancellation, those responsible for the project are no longer making a secret of it. At Spa, Famin explained that those working in Viry had been presented with a “new project” that would reallocate resources from the F1 engine programme to some new domains that would help the brand’s development.

“One of the consequences of this project, if it’s accepted,”

The engine project never really got off the ground in the hybrid era. The Renault Group is pulling the plug on 2026 in favour of a Merc customer deal

Famin will no longer be team principal and will take charge of Renault’s motorsport activities at Viry



PICTURES: MARK SUTTON; ALPINE

Oakes will take over at Enstone (above). Discussions with the workforce at Viry (below) delayed any engine announcement



Famin said, “would be then for the Alpine F1 team to buy a power unit instead of developing its own power unit.”

It’s rumoured that Alpine executives have been in pre-contract negotiations with Mercedes for a customer supply deal for several months, but no agreement can be signed until Renault resolves contractual issues with the Viry workforce, which could take some time due to strict French labour laws.

“We’re following all the mandatory steps, and there is no reason not to make it properly,” Famin noted. “One very important thing is in the project, which has been presented, every single employee will be offered a job. There is no redundancy at all. We are doing everything to make potentially a very difficult moment as less painful as possible. But we know it’s never easy, this kind of thing.”

Such a solution would potentially allow Renault to significantly reduce costs, by cutting expenditure associated with developing its own engine. Not only that but it could also help avoid a PR blow in case a Viry-developed engine for 2026 was uncompetitive. An added bonus could also be that a team with a customer engine deal would be much easier to sell. ►





WHY SAINZ SIGNED UP WITH WILLIAMS

02 F1's longest transfer saga of the year is now officially over. Carlos Sainz has finally put pen to paper and signed the contract offered to him by James Vowles. Williams will be the Spaniard's fifth team in Formula 1 after Toro Rosso, Renault, McLaren and Ferrari since his championship debut in 2015.

It's been six months since Sainz found out he was out of a job for 2025 following Ferrari's signing of Lewis Hamilton. Since then, Carlos and his managers have been hoping to find another top seat, but were ultimately left to choose from some less attractive options: Audi, which was initially the frontrunner for his services; Williams, which emerged as the favourite at the beginning of the summer; and Alpine, which entered the race at the last moment.

Sainz took a wait-and-see approach – not only to explore his options, but also in the hope he might receive an offer from one of the stronger teams. Ultimately this never came.

It has looked as if Mercedes boss Toto Wolff had already chosen his protégé Andrea Kimi Antonelli as the main candidate to replace Hamilton back in the spring. Red Bull, meanwhile, inexplicably opted to extend the contract of Sergio Pérez despite a lengthening string of shaky performances. The Aston Martin option fell away even earlier when the evergreen Fernando Alonso signed a contract extension that will keep him racing until the age of 45.

One explanation for Williams getting the nod is the ambitious planning of Vowles in terms of team development. He has repeatedly emphasised that the team's Dorilton Ventures backers are ready to invest as much as the project needs to return to the front in the long term. And the signing of

Sainz (above) has finally put pen to paper on a Williams deal. The signing is a good one for Vowles (below) as it shows the ambition of the team going forward



Sainz for Vowles is a useful message, not just to the backers but also to the team personnel, that Williams under him doesn't lack ambition. It's a strong statement indeed, given Sainz – a race winner this year with Ferrari – has picked a team which had recorded just four points before the summer break.

But it also must be pointed out that Sainz's choice was made for a dearth of strong alternatives. In Audi's case the most attractive part was the company's connection to his father – Carlos Sainz Sr is a Dakar Rally winner with the German brand – but on the F1 side, there's no denying the process of transforming the backmarking Sauber squad into a competitive works Audi team looks a difficult one. The outfit, currently branded as Stake F1 Team, didn't score a single point before the summer break, and there's no great reason to believe in a dramatic reversal of its fortunes in the coming years. Simply slapping an Audi logo on the cars won't fix the team's issues.

Alpine, meanwhile, is amid another management reshuffle, potentially followed by a course correction. Joining a team whose perspectives are so unclear would be a gamble. It's understood Sainz had been amenable to signing but only for one year, which would have kept his options open in the hopes of a better seat for 2026. That one-year offer was never made.

There was talk, too, of Williams dangling the offer of a one-year deal but Vowles scotched that, saying: "The message that it [the contract] was 2025 and 2026 and beyond didn't come from us. It came from Carlos. He wanted it to be abundantly clear to all of you and the world that he is committed and this is where he wanted to be."

NEWS IN BRIEF... NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...

INVESTIGATION



LIBERTY MEDIA CEO Greg Maffei (left) has announced that the company that owns Formula 1 is facing an official investigation by the US Department of Justice's Antitrust Division, over the legality of refusing Michael Andretti (right) and his proposed F1 team, Andretti Global, an entry into the championship.

RWANDA

Officials in Rwanda will be meeting Formula 1 chiefs in September to discuss a possible race in the East African country. Although a number of African countries have expressed interest in a GP, Rwanda's plans are believed to be advanced enough to warrant talks.

MORE SPRINTS?

Formula 1 CEO Stefano Domenicali hasn't ruled out increasing the number of sprint races to eight a year. He has also confirmed that reverse grids, whether that be a full grid, or a format similar to F2 and F3, is something that could be up for discussion again.

TESTING FOR 2026

The FIA has amended F1's sporting regulations to allow the testing of mule cars in preparation for 2026's technical regulation changes. 10 days of mule car testing will be allowed this year for teams to try and simulate the new cars that will be on the grid in 2026.

A FOUR-RING CIRCUS

03

There's another year and a half to go before Audi officially makes its debut in F1, but the German manufacturer is already one of the series' biggest newsmakers. In the middle of summer its F1 project underwent major managerial changes, with CEO Andreas Seidl and chairman Oliver Hoffmann departing. Former Ferrari F1 boss Mattia Binotto has taken the reins of preparing Audi's F1 debut, while Red Bull team manager Jonathan Wheatley will join him shortly.

While the poor results of the Audi-owned Sauber team this year have been a significant factor in the board's decision to wield the axe, it's understood internal conflict between Seidl and Hoffmann acted as an accelerant. Insiders suggest the two erstwhile project leaders had substantial disagreements over the next steps required. Seidl had been in place as CEO since the beginning of 2023, while Hoffmann was added to the mix earlier this year when recently installed Audi AG CEO Gernot Döllner removed him as chief technical officer of the car company.

A related factor, according to insiders, has been the slow pace of recruitment – Seidl and Hoffmann couldn't boast big-name signings. The biggest arrival connected to Seidl was James Key, with whom he'd worked at McLaren – and who ended up at Hinwil after being moved aside by the Woking team. When Carlos Sainz began to back away from signing, leaving a somewhat denuded menu of alternatives to partner Nico Hülkenberg for 2025, friction increased.

Binotto hasn't been involved in any F1 projects since his departure from the Scuderia a year and a half ago. Now, in the revised management structure of the Audi project, he has become its chief operating officer *and* chief technical officer, reporting directly to Döllner. This, interestingly, is similar to what his position was at Ferrari, where he was notionally in charge of car development as well as the race organisation.

Wheatley, one of Red Bull's most important figures in a stint spanning nearly two decades, will start work at Audi "by July 2025 at the latest", according to the company's press release.

It's been known that Wheatley has been seeking a promotion for some time now. At the start of the year, when Red Bull Racing found itself at the centre of a scandal related to the allegations against team principal Christian Horner, it was sporting director Wheatley who was being earmarked as a logical replacement if Horner's position proved untenable.

Wheatley will remain at Red Bull until the end of the current year, before embarking on "a period of gardening leave". It's understood that Audi remains in talks with Red Bull over shortening that period in order to allow Wheatley to join the project at the start of next year.



Binotto (above) will take up a similar role at Audi to the one he left at Ferrari. Red Bull Racing man Wheatley (below) will have to wait a while before joining him



IT'S BEEN KNOWN THAT WHEATLEY HAS BEEN SEEKING A PROMOTION FOR SOME TIME NOW

F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest motorsport

- Q1** Who was Romain Grosjean's team-mate at Haas in the team's first season in F1 in 2016?
- Q2** Which team and driver won the last world championship GP to be held in Germany?
- Q3** How many Argentinian GPs were held at the Autódromo Oscar y Juan Gálvez : 17, 20 or 22?
- Q4** True or false: Carlos Sainz will become the first Spanish driver to race for Williams?
- Q5** Mercedes claimed a 1-2 in the only Tuscan GP at Mugello in 2020, but who completed the podium and which team was he driving for?
- Q6** Who am I? I started 90 GPs from 2002 to 2008 for Jordan, BAR and Super Aguri, leading one GP and claiming one podium.
- Q7** Who were the two drivers involved in F1's last shared victory?
- Q8** What is Oscar Piastri's lowest starting position this season, excluding sprint races, and at which GP was it?
- Q9** In which position has Logan Sargeant finished the most this season, in five out of 14 races?
- Q10** Three drivers have claimed a total of 14 grand prix wins. Who are they?



1 Esteban Gutiérrez 2 Mercedes, Lewis Hamilton, 2020 Eifel GP 3 20 4 False (Marc Gené raced three times in 2003/04) 5 Alex Albon (Red Bull) 6 Takuma Sato 7 Stirling Moss/Tony Brooks (1957 British GP) 8 Ninth, Spanish GP 9 17th 10 Graham Hill, Jack Brabham, Emerson Fittipaldi

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; GLENN DUNBAR; ZAK MAUGER; SAM BAGNALL; MARK SUTTON; WILLIAMS; AUDI; RED BULL; MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE



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PICTURES  motorsport IMAGES

from being Alpine reserve driver to achieving a full race seat alongside Lando Norris, courtesy of very efficient management from Mark Webber, Mark's wife Ann and JAM Sports CEO Jason Allen. Webber met Ann when racing in Australia and she was key to him finding sponsorship and encouraging him to head to the UK at the age of 19 to build a fully professional career. His talent, combined with Ann's understanding of motorsport from early years on the media side, led to a gradual then ultimately a top-class climb up the ladder.

Piastrri moved to the UK just before his 15th birthday to compete in European karting, before finishing second in British F4 in 2017. In those early single seater years he switched between teams in different parts of Europe. A French team took him to his first major title in Formula Renault Eurocup in 2019 but it was Webber's group that was part of his move to Italian team Prema to compete in FIA F3 in 2020.

Born in Melbourne, Piastrri has other national backgrounds in his family history and Italy is a fundamental part of that; his parents lived there before moving to Australia and Oscar has already delivered some significant performances there. When fighting for honours in F3, the penultimate event at Monza was crucial. A penalty and tricky qualifying meant he started the first race of the weekend 15th but

finished third and took the series lead for the first time. In the second race he failed to finish but he held top spot into the final races the following weekend, also in Italy at Mugello.

It was a nail-biting finale with Piastrri failing to score in race one and finding himself tied for the lead with Logan Sargeant. Scoring just four points in race two when Sargeant got taken out early in the race, meant Italy had indeed helped him take the crucial F3 title.

Monza was significant the following year when contesting F2 as Oscar closed in another championship. Taking only his second pole of the year, scoring good points in the reverse sprint race and then grabbing his first feature race victory enabled him to extend his lead over Zhou Guanyu – which would continue to grow until the end of the season.

The upcoming Italian race will provide more inspiration for Piastrri, who became the 115th driver to win a GP. The confidence a win can inspire is a vital part of driver development. McLaren's request for Norris to hand back the lead in Hungary might have caused arguments – but was also a cooperative act to bring Oscar to the top of the game while understanding that team orders are a crucial element.

The chance for either McLaren driver to snatch the crown away from Max Verstappen this year is remote, yet the constructors' title is still on the cards by maintaining the impressive double act. For Piastrri, being in Italy offers another chance to be an Australian flying high.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ITALY TO AUSTRALIA'S LATEST WINNER

Australian racers in Formula 1 have been key characters from the early days when former Spitfire pilot Tony Gaze launched the connection in 1952 with four entries including Silverstone and Monza. Three years later, compatriot Jack Brabham made his F1 debut at the British GP and went on to become the only triple world champion from the other side of the world. Knighted in 1979, Brabham saw another Aussie take the title in 1980 as Alan Jones swept through the opposition in his Williams FW07B with sheer tenacity and determination.

Alan's last F1 race win was at Las Vegas in 1981 and it was 28 years before Mark Webber was able to celebrate a similar special moment for the land Down Under. His Red Bull win at the Nürburgring in 2009 was a key step towards him challenging for the title in 2010, when team-mate Sebastian Vettel snatched it away in the closing stages and Mark never came so close again. Having won for the last time at Silverstone in 2012, Webber took pole and



Piastrri was running comfortably inside the top 10 in his first F1 race at Monza in 2023, before Lewis Hamilton damaged his wing

finished second to Vettel at his final race in Brazil in 2013, effectively handing his role as top Aussie to Daniel Ricciardo, who joined Vettel at Red Bull and outperformed Seb the following season.

Despite race wins for Daniel, a battle for the title never came his way. Joining McLaren in 2021 yielded his last win to date at Monza that year, but a struggle to match Lando Norris led to his replacement by fellow countryman Oscar Piastrri. Oscar's success in Hungary made him Australia's fifth F1 winner and, while a shot at the title in 2024 is mathematically unlikely, his talent and calm nature provide enticing possibilities for the future.

Piastrri's mix of Australian and British links within the sport is one of the keys to his success. The move to replace Ricciardo at McLaren for 2023 came after a year out of racing when Oscar shifted



Tony Gaze was the first Australian to contest a world championship grand prix when he finished 15th at Spa in 1952



Jack Brabham was not only the first Australian to win a world championship GP but he also claimed three titles, in 1959, 1960 and 1966, before retiring in 1970



Third from 15th on the grid in the first F3 race at Monza in 2020 was crucial to Piastri's title aspirations



Manager Mark Webber and wife Ann (seen here chatting to Australian GP promoter Ron Walker in 2010) played a big part in getting Piastri to move over to Europe at a young age



Webber's Nürburgring win in 2009 was a turning point in his career but his only chance at championship glory came and went in 2010, never to be repeated



In 2021 Piastri's Monza performances went a long way to securing him the F2 crown, his second title in two years



UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

PICTURES **motorsport** IMAGES

average track. Couple this with following-car effects – and the fact drivers spend most of the race doing some form of tyre conservation – and one can see race lap times aren't necessarily worthy of inspection.

In qualifying one can assume maximum energy deployment, DRS will be used for all cars, and drivers are striving for maximum performance. Even this leads to difficulties. There's always an element of track evolution if climatic conditions remain constant. This makes it difficult to quantify the absolute performance of those eliminated in Q1 to the ultimate performance in Q3. In addition, with drivers striving for the absolute limit, it's unusual to achieve the perfect lap. There will always be some error, or a corner or braking point where

the driver will feel he could have found more. Perhaps most significantly, tyre preparation on the out-lap before the qualifying lap has a huge effect and, in a hectic Q1 session, it's not always easy for the driver to find the gap he wants to bring his tyres in perfectly to gain maximum performance through the entire qualifying lap.

Another factor, if one is to consider the actual lap time, is the nature of the track. Some cars perform better in a high-speed track than a street circuit, and others vice-versa. This can be partially understood by splitting the circuit into slow, medium and high-speed sectors as well as straights. A knowledge of the sensitivities of each sector to different performance factors can refine this. Unfortunately, only the teams have access to the simulations that allow fitting of a specific speed profile to assess this accurately, but some generalisations can help inform estimates. For example, an improvement of 10kW in engine power will generally improve lap time by a quarter of a second – although obviously less in Monaco and more in circuits like Suzuka. Equally, a car with good performance in high-speed corners will have better relative performance at Silverstone than Monaco.

So, having explained all the reasons why it's difficult to quantify relative performance accurately, what can we deduce from the first part of the season? The obvious is the huge gain in competitiveness made by McLaren and recent improvement from Mercedes. That both use the same engine isn't a factor since engine development is now frozen by ►

PUTTING A NUMBER ON THE BIGGEST GAINS

August's break was probably particularly welcomed by the teams. The first part of this record-length season was hectic to say the least – but, as they assembled in Zandvoort, how might they have assessed their performance over the previous months? The answer will vary from the delight of McLaren through the concern of Red Bull to the possible despair of Sauber.

The season opener in Bahrain suggested a degree of inevitability with Max Verstappen on pole by nearly a quarter of a second but at the same time the field was extremely close: the gap from first to last in Q1 was only 1.15%, or just over one second. However, the Red Bull 1-2 in the race didn't bode well for a season of surprises, and Saudi only reinforced the view. Max on pole by a similar amount, the field close in qualifying, but another Red Bull 1-2 led to an awful feeling of déjà vu.

Now I always preach that one should not draw conclusions from small samples of data and so it proved as the season progressed. It's a matter of record that while Australia brought a rare



After a dominant start by Red Bull, Ferrari, McLaren and Mercedes have all caught up to the reigning champions

retirement for Verstappen and a disappointing 5th place for Pérez, the Red Bull machine marched on and the record of 7 wins from the 14 races that led up to the break is a great achievement. Behind that headline, though, are several unexpected stories.

It's always difficult to determine absolute performance since so many external factors influence total lap time. In the race itself the engine mode, or more specifically the manner in which the hybrid electrical energy is harvested or deployed, has a major effect on lap time. So too does the use of DRS, which is worth up to one second on an

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Seven drivers from the four leading teams have managed to claim a win in the first 14 races of the season



It's not been a great first part of the season for Stake (Sauber), which started from a poor level of performance, and Aston Martin



When Red Bull followed a dominant 1-2 in Bahrain with the same in Saudi Arabia, the signs weren't good for a competitive season

regulation pending the new power units in 2026, so we can assume engine performance is a constant. The FIA itself has stated that while the Alpine engine lacks somewhat, the others are all relatively similar. The question is, have these two teams, and Alpine and Williams for that matter, improved or has Red Bull lost performance?

If we take Haas as a baseline, which is valid since it has maintained similar performance with minimal upgrades, we can see that the gap between Red Bull and Haas has remained constant while McLaren has moved closer to Red Bull by just over 0.25s and Mercedes just under this, Williams by about 0.1s and Alpine about half a second. Conversely, Ferrari and RB seem to have dropped back by a quarter second, Sauber by 0.15s, and Aston Martin by 0.35s. So

at the front we see definite improvements by the challengers. If we again consider generalised sensitivities, this time in aero, one might deduce that McLaren has gained around 11 points of downforce relative to Red Bull and Mercedes 9 while Ferrari has lost 9 points relative to Red Bull.

Even establishing these comparative numbers is difficult, the absolute numbers even more so. In other words, has Red Bull actually gained, say,

MCLAREN HAS MOVED CLOSER TO RED BULL BY JUST OVER 0.25S, AND MERCEDES JUST UNDER THIS

10 points and therefore McLaren 21? This is much more difficult to establish.

What's clear is that in 14 races we've seen seven different winners in four different cars and very strong comebacks from McLaren and Mercedes. In the last race before the break the first six finished within 10 seconds of each other with no interventions and different strategies. This alone all bodes well for the rest of the championship.

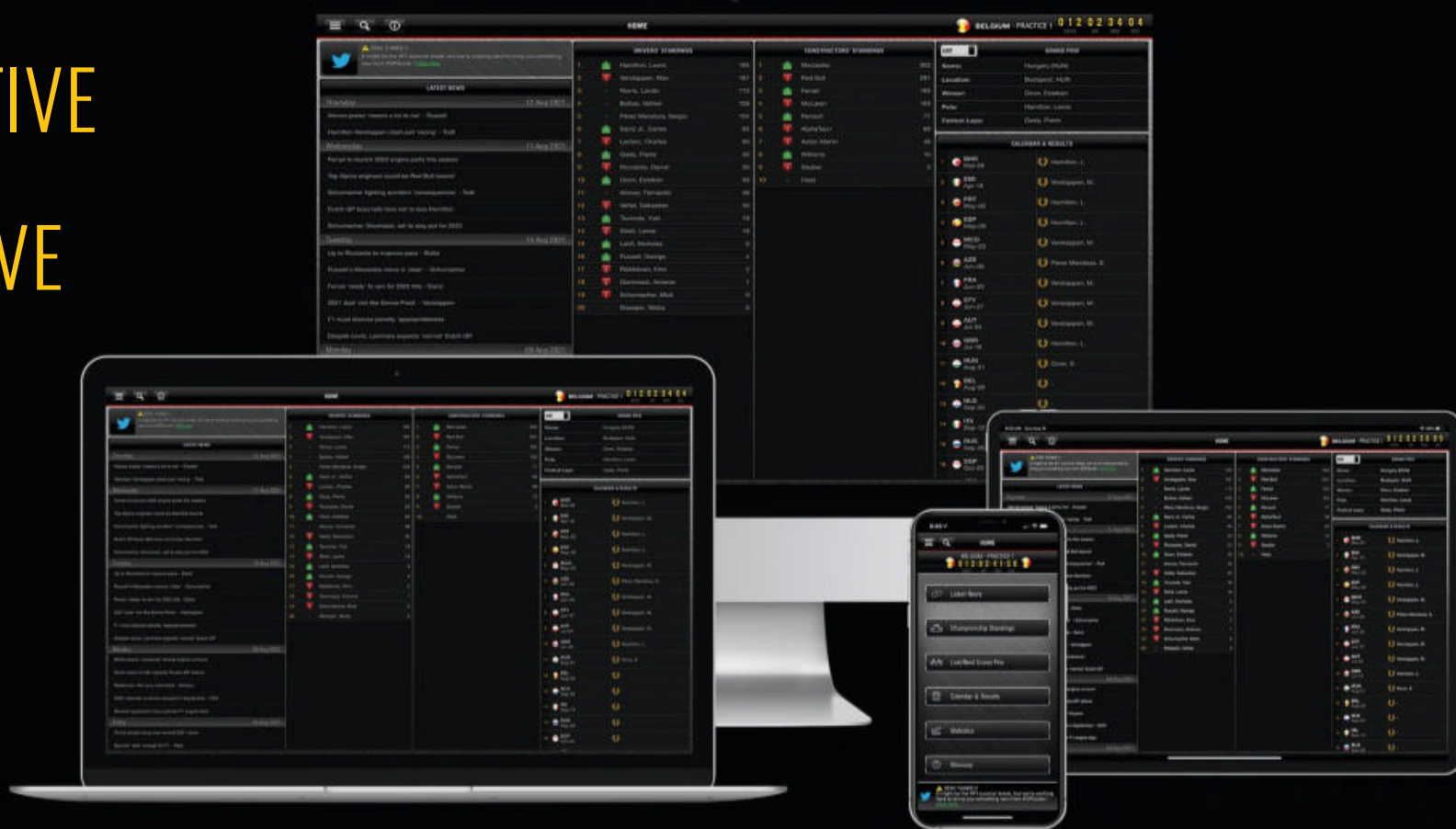


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11-13 October	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
2/3 November	British Truck Racing and Fireworks

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7/8 September	British GT and GB3 Championships
27-29 September	Bennetts British Superbike Championship

OULTON PARK – CHESHIRE

13-15 September	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
2 November	Stage Rally and Fireworks

SNETTERTON – NORFOLK

8 September	USA Snetterton 300
14/15 September	British Truck Racing
5/6 October	GT Cup Championship Finale
20 October	Modified Live

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17 November	Cadwell Park Stage Rally and Fireworks



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STRAIGHT TALK

MARK GALLAGHER

X @_markgallagher

PICTURES  motorsport IMAGES

McLAREN'S DRIVER ISSUE IS NOTHING NEW

“Ladies and gentlemen, could you please welcome on stage Formula 1 world champion Mr David Coulthard!”

The host was eager, she had read her briefing notes and given DC the big build up, then at the last minute elected to ad lib.

“Thanks for promoting me,” said DC graciously, adding, “however it was my misfortune to arrive at the peak of my career at the same time as Mika Häkkinen and Michael Schumacher, so I’m afraid that world championship title rather eluded me.”

The audience laughed, the host grimaced, and the event moved on. Yet, for a guy who won 13 GPs, including two victories at Monaco and at Silverstone, and finishing in the top three in the championship five times, it might have stung.

Talk to DC and he will confirm he enjoyed his time in Formula 1, the races he won and the lifestyle it created, yet he doesn’t avoid the question about that elusive world title. He cites two factors contributing to it staying out of reach.

The first, his decision to leave Williams for

McLaren, a move which the Contract Recognition Board initially blocked at end of 1994. The transfer from Didcot to Woking took a further year. He then watched as Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve picked up their titles at Williams in the following seasons.

The second was team orders, specifically McLaren’s decision to favour team-mate Häkkinen. At the 1997 season finale in Jerez, a race remembered by most for Michael Schumacher’s clumsy attempt to take Jacques Villeneuve out, DC was instructed by McLaren’s team manager Dave Ryan to let Häkkinen past. It wasn’t a request, and there was no agreement in place.

At the very next race, the opening round of the 1998 season in Melbourne, the same thing appeared to happen. On this occasion it was due to both a pre-race agreement between the McLaren pair that whoever led out of Turn 1 should win – plus a misheard radio communication which caused Mika to make an unnecessary pitstop.

Team orders were illegal at the time, so the Melbourne swap caused a furore which in turn prompted an FIA investigation – culminating in a WMSC statement that “any future act prejudicial to the interests

of competition should be severely punished.”

Listening to DC’s commentary during July’s Hungarian GP, it therefore came as no surprise that he was uncomfortable listening to the team orders discussion between Lando Norris and his McLaren race engineer Will Joseph. Recalling the events of that Jerez 1997 race, Coulthard admitted that, given his time again, he wouldn’t gift the victory.

“A win is a win.”

The only thing people ever recall is that some drivers are ruthless, selfish to the point of courting unpopularity, and not in the business of moving over for anyone – least of all team-mates.

Norris and Oscar Piastri are on the cusp of championship-winning careers. A pecking order has to emerge at McLaren and needs to be decided upon if it is to challenge for both drivers’ and constructors’ titles.

Lando has not spent five years honing his talent at McLaren, seeing off team-mates Carlos Sainz and Daniel Ricciardo, only to gift victories to Piastri, whatever the context. Nor has Piastri, managed by Mark Webber of ‘Multi-21’ fame, come this far only to become subservient to his English team-mate.

A decade after Mercedes wrestled with the problem of having two determined winners in its garage, McLaren faces the same management challenge.

If either Norris or Piastri doubts how best to handle it, a short conversation with DC should put them right.



Jerez 1997 just as Coulthard lets Häkkinen win. DC admits he wouldn’t be as obliging given the time again

THIS MONTH

Robin Fenwick

Chief Executive Officer, Right Formula

Making sponsorship work involves more than just placing a logo on a car. Right Formula is one of the largest agencies operating in the Formula 1 space, helping sponsors get bang for their buck through brand activations, events and hospitality as well as PR and communications. Founder Robin Fenwick is a 20-year industry veteran who learned his trade at McLaren, one of the pioneers in F1 marketing

CV

2009-present

Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Right Formula

2006-2009

Director of Sports Sponsorship, Hilton Hotels Worldwide

2003-2006

Partner Manager, McLaren Marketing

2002-2004

Account Manager, Octagon Marketing

2001

Account Executive, Benchmark Sport

GP Racing: How did you personally first get into the world of Formula 1?

Robin Fenwick: I've always been interested in sports, in particular rugby and cricket, and after university I worked for various sports marketing agencies including one that had an F1 contract. My first GP was at Monza – when Vodafone were sponsoring Ferrari – and that helped me to build connections. That led to a position at McLaren and it was quite a transition to go from rugby to working in a £300 million building designed by Sir Norman Foster. At that time McLaren had a huge marketing department and I was looking after title partner West, part of Imperial Tobacco.

GP: That was a golden era for tobacco sponsorship. Remind us of some of the activations West did at that time? A few appeared in this magazine, didn't they, such taking David Coulthard and a McLaren up into a weightless flight?

RF: Our goal was to ensure partners like Imperial Tobacco got the most from their programme, and they were probably the pioneers in terms of content creation, taking drivers to exotic destinations with great PR stunts. Yes, a weightless flight, Kimi Räikkönen heli-skiing in Verbier, Coulthard power-boating on Lake Como, Alex Wurz kite-surfing in Barbados – the list went on. It was a great time for promoting brands through F1.

GP: After McLaren, you worked as head of sponsorship at Hilton Hotels before establishing your own agency, Right Formula. Tell us how that came to fruition?

RF: One of Hilton's objectives at that time was to drive incremental revenue from the paddock and I had a broad range of relationships across F1. We also helped to expand the Hilton Honours membership programme, in addition to PR and communications and enhancing their brand perception. It was the right move for me to work with Hilton as that also allowed me to expand into other sports as well. But ultimately I wanted to set up my own business. Part of it was driven by eliminating subjectivity from sponsorship. There were a lot of other agencies doing good

INTERVIEW JAMES ROBERTS

operational work, but which weren't that strategic. I felt there was an opportunity to create a company that used data to guide decision-making, which could help a brand choose a sport, how they activated that relationship, measured the performance and then adapted their plan accordingly. Right Formula was established in 2009 and since then we've expanded to 120 people and recently opened an office in New York.

GP: What makes Formula 1 so attractive for brands?

RF: Whether you're a technology company, lifestyle brand or consumer product, F1 caters to both B2B and B2C objectives. It's truly global and has a calendar with very little down time across the year. Each brand is slightly different with what it would like to achieve. There are now around 300 in F1 and at Right Formula we work with a number who are partnered with different teams – including Hilton, SAP, IWC, ExxonMobil, MyProtein and a number of others – as well as global partners of F1 including Pirelli and Qatar Airways.

Some companies want brand awareness on an international scale, others are more regional. Other brands want to reach new customers – perhaps through the fan base – or they want to utilise the money-can't-buy experiences that F1 offers. That can include being on the grid before the start or enjoying a Pirelli Hot Lap around the track.

GP: Can you share some recent successful activations Right Formula has achieved in F1?

RF: Last year in Austin, we branded a monster truck with muscular arms in Williams colours for MyProtein and took it to the track with the drivers. It was a simple yet striking concept that generated significant media coverage. Another example is Hilton's activation at Silverstone, where we engaged fans and hosted events in the hotel overlooking the pitlane. We also did an activation in the campsite with Paris Hilton, which included giveaways and fan activities.

Another major activation was for Qatar Airways, where we combined their F1 partnership with their official deal with Padel. We hosted an event in Monaco, which featured 10 F1 drivers playing Padel, attracting significant media attention.



ALONSO'S MANUAL OVER-RIDE

Aston Martin's limited-edition Valour wasn't quite racy enough for Fernando Alonso, so the company made a track-focused special to his brief. One thing he wasn't prepared to budge on: the manual gearbox

WORDS STUART COOLING
PICTURES ASTON MARTIN

Company cars and their spec have long been a measure of self-worth for a particular type of person. For the travelling salesman fraternity and their ilk it was a matter of life or death what letters appeared alongside the model name on the bootlid, lest shame descend on the family when the car was in repose in the company car park or the homestead's driveway. GLX for someone with a glassy corner office and a seat in the boardroom already in sight. LX for the thrusting young executive on the up. L – or, worse, nothing at all – if, like Jack Lemmon's Shelley 'The Machine' Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the glory days are long past and all that's left is an Always-Be-Closing roast from Alec Baldwin. Third prize is you're fired...

Now imagine someone for whom the scribble on the bootlid is an irrelevance – and yet the prospect of a (barely) road-legal track car of which only 110 will be built, powered by a 705bhp twin-turbo V12, is... somehow lacking. No need to imagine. That person is Fernando Alonso.

"When we reviewed the list of things I would love to change," says Fernando, "they said OK, maybe it's better to make a full new car with a new name and we just make a limited edition.

"So, yeah, I said 'Why not?'"

Aston Martin's Valour, built to celebrate the company's 110th birthday (hence the otherwise arbitrary-sounding production run of 110 units), was announced at last year's Goodwood Festival of Speed. Despite the (estimated) £1million price tag, the entire allocation sold out within two weeks – although Aston generously left the online configurator up for a while longer to sate those of us who can but dream.

Its style is retro-clever without veering into restomod territory, clearly influenced by the likes of historic models such as the Vantage and V8 despite being moulded in carbonfibre rather than beaten from sheet steel. It's said to be an explicit homage to a 1970 DBS V8 – yes, the model driven by Roger Moore in *The Persuaders!* – which was heavily modified into a race car by the factory during the 1970s, eventually seeing service at Le Mans, where it was nicknamed 'The Muncher' by mechanics on account of its prodigious appetite for brake pads and tyres.

Another niche fact about the Valour: until Fernando Alonso came along with a wish list of modifications long enough to warrant a new production run under a different name, it was the only car ever to direct twin-turbo V12 power through a manual gearbox.

Hardened spec-watchers will have observed that the Valour's engine has seen service in another of Aston's limited-edition plutocrat specials, the DBS 770 Ultimate, where it output 770bhp; it had to be detuned for the Valour to avoid overwhelming the manual 'box. This will not have eluded Fernando's notice either, hence his request for more.

Thus the Valiant, built to Alonso's spec by the company's 'Q by Aston Martin' division in consultation with the Silverstone-based F1 team, benefits from a 29bhp uplift while maintaining the Valour's 555lb ft of torque. The manual gearbox, though, had to stay.

"I think that this is a collectible car – it's something I want to drive in five years' time, in 10 years' time, in 50 years' time, and have the feeling of how everything started, how my passion for driving road cars started when I got my licence," says Alonso.

What Fernando wants
Fernando gets: the beast
that is the limited-edition
Valiant, complete with
manual gearbox





Visitors to this year's Festival of Speed at Goodwood got to see the Valiant and Alonso in glorious action

“That first moment you have the freedom of being alone in a car and taking the highway or going to a restaurant or something on your own is something you don't forget. Having the manual with a V-12 car is something that I think has more appeal than having a normal automatic.”

The Valiant, as demonstrated by Fernando at this year's FoS in a colourway based on that of 'The Muncher', is more exclusive than the Valour on which it's based: just 38 will be built, at a retail price which is only disclosed to serious potential buyers with established wherewithal. This is an area of the industry which hasn't forgotten the lessons of the aubergine McLaren F1, lovingly colour-matched (after the company's special operations department scoured London's vegetable markets to obtain a variety of samples) to one selected by





For many at Goodwood Alonso – not a regular at the FoS – was as much of a draw as the car itself

a putative customer who then decided, when the car was ready, that he didn't want it after all.

Alonso's summary of his wish list was he wanted a "more extreme, race-car inspired version" of the Valour. So, along with the power uplift, the car went on a strict diet while gaining downforce-generating aero elements such as a multi-plane front splitter and a reprofiled rear end including a fixed rear wing and diffuser.

Losing weight is an expensive business. The super-rarefied sports car sector is one of those rare counter-intuitive zones where customers readily pay more for less. Arguably the first such car to make otherwise rational and deal-conscious individuals lose their heads was the Ferrari F40, with its Perspex windows and fabric door pulls. But think how much faster it went as a result of shaving off a few grammes!


While the Valiant's weight is as publicly unspecified as its price, Aston has revealed that it cut around 100kg from the Valour while following Alonso's mandate. Around 10% of that has come from swapping the battery for a lithium ion equivalent; elsewhere, the 3D-printed rear subframe is claimed to save 3kg with no loss of stiffness, while fabricating the torque tube from magnesium saves 8.6kg. The new 21-inch 'aero' wheels, riding on 275/35 front and 325/30 rear tyres, cut the unsprung mass by 14kg.

The stripped-out theme continues inside, where the new steering wheel has no switchgear mounted on it and the gearshift enclosure is cut away so some of the

mechanism is exposed. The touch-screen display in the centre console is about as small as is considered acceptable in this post-Tesla world.

"The normal answer is no at the beginning, but then the team is clever enough to find ways [to save weight]," explains Alonso. "The gear stick, to be exposed like that, initially was not possible because it was a big job, requiring change to a lot of the structures and things like that. But then now this is a nice feature. Some of the aerodynamic devices on the floor – the front splitter and the diffuser – were a challenge because for a road car you need to go over speed bumps.

"Some of those [elements] were a challenge, or there was a question mark if it was worth putting those into a road-legal car. But at the end, everything came alive and the result is more or less everything we asked for."

Fittingly, perhaps, given Fernando's importance to Aston, this isn't his only company car: by the time you read this, he'll have taken delivery of a Valkyrie in the F1 team's colours. As to that rather more pestilential element of having a company car – tax – we'll just have to assume he has people taking care of that... 

It was obvious from Alonso's demeanour at Goodwood that Aston Martin had nailed his requirements for the Valiant





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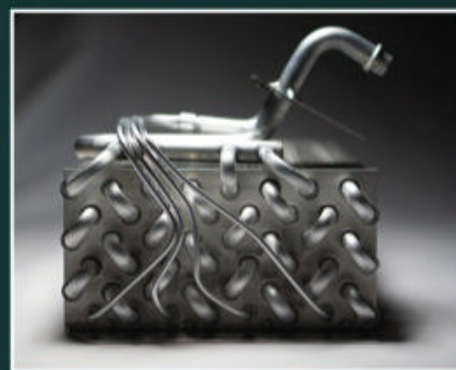
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The Formula Winter Series: A Hotbed for Aspiring Racing Talent



In the high-octane world of motorsport, the Formula Winter Series (FWS) has quickly established itself as a crucial stepping stone for young racing talent. Now in its third season, the winter Formula 4 racing series from promotor GEDLICH Racing showcases the raw potential of the Formula 4 cars powered by Abarth engines and built on Tatuus chassis. This series not only highlights the skill of emerging drivers but also their ability to adapt to competitive racing conditions.

An exclusive partnership with Pirelli and technical support by Autotecnica Motori, underscore the professionalism and technical precision required in this arena. After full starting fields of 38 cars in 2024's winter season, the FWS is looking forward to a fabulous 2025 season.

THE FORMULA WINTER SERIES: AN OVERVIEW

Launched to provide a competitive platform during the off-season, the Formula Winter Series fills a unique niche in the European motorsport calendar. The series takes place in Portugal and Spain during the winter months, allowing drivers to maintain their competitive edge and continue developing their skills when other championships are on hiatus. The FWS travels from the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve near Portimão to the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Spain in just under three months, attracting young and rising racing talent such as Bianca Bustamante and Lia Block, who also drive the all-female F1 Academy. The championship counts 4 rounds of 3 races each, including multiple practice- and qualifying sessions ensuring sufficient track-time. After the 2024 season's cooperation with Agrupación Deportiva F4 Spain, both promoters decided to split into two series for optimum preparation of teams and drivers. FWS will drive with Pirelli tyres and the F4 Spanish winter championship will continue its cooperation with Hankook.

PIRELLI PARTNERSHIP: A MARK OF EXCELLENCE

A key element of the 2025 FWS season is its exclusive partnership with Pirelli, one of the most respected names in motorsport tyre manufacturing.

This collaboration ensures that the series benefits from Pirelli's extensive expertise and high-quality racing tyres, like used in competitions such as the Rokit F4 British Championship and the F1 Academy.

Pirelli's involvement elevates the FWS by providing tyres that deliver consistent performance, excellent grip, and durability, crucial for the sometimes demanding conditions of racing. This partnership ensures drivers and teams the ultimate off-season racing platform, preparing them for future competitions where tyre management is a critical aspect of racing strategy.

COMPETITION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Formula Winter Series is renowned for its competitive spirit and its role in developing the next generation of racing stars. Each season, the series features a compact calendar of races held at some of Southern-Europe's most challenging and iconic circuits.

The series format is designed to maximize track time and competitive exposure. It typically includes practice sessions, qualifying rounds, and multiple races each weekend, ensuring that drivers get ample opportunity to refine their skills in various conditions. The emphasis on consistent performance across different tracks and weather conditions prepares drivers for the unpredictable nature of motorsport. However, the young driver's

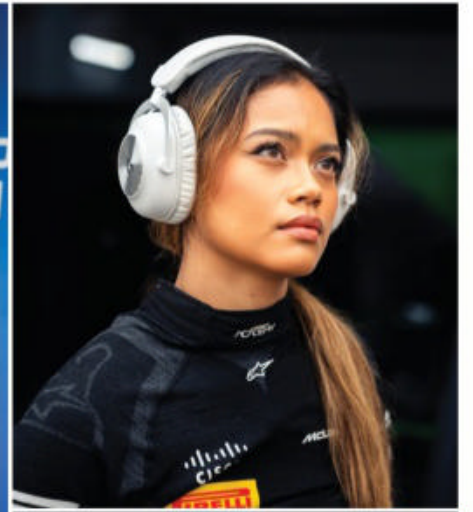
development doesn't limit to on-track activities. Promotor GEDLICH Racing ensures on-screen time for the young drivers too. Cooperating with Alpha Live, a British leading provider of live-streaming services, GEDLICH Racing makes sure to carry out interviews, exclusive insights as well as several other media-activities with the young talent, aiming to climb the motorsport ranks. Success in the FWS can open doors to higher levels of competition, as scouts and teams from more prominent series often look to the FWS for emerging talent.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

For aspiring drivers, the FWS offers more than just a chance to race; it provides a comprehensive education in the demands and nuances of professional motorsport. With each lap, each race, and each season, the Formula Winter Series contributes to the shaping of future champions, ensuring that the passion and skill required for racing excellence are nurtured and celebrated.

2025 DATES

30 JAN – 2 FEB	Portimão /P
13 FEB – 16 FEB	Valencia /E
27 FEB – 2 MAR	Aragón /E
6 MAR – 9 MAR	Barcelona /E



Last season McLaren went from having one of the slowest cars on the grid to scrapping for wins. But there was plenty of work left to do. Now the team that dominated Formula 1 for much of the 1980s and '90s is properly challenging for world championships again for the first time in over a decade. **Andrew Benson** explains that competitive renaissance with the help of one of its architects...





PICTURES
McLAREN AND
motorsport
IMAGES

BACK WITH A BANG

HOW McLAREN WENT FROM
BETTER TO (NEARLY) BEST



A

ANDREA STELLA ARRIVES for our interview with six pages of notes, and the thoroughness of preparation is obvious.

There are sections, with headings. They cover the areas McLaren's team principal figures we're likely to discuss. And there's a remarkable example of the emotional intelligence of the man who, since he took on his current role in December 2022, has masterminded McLaren's transformation from long-time midfielders to Formula 1 front-runners.

One of the questions planned was: "How do you go from better to best?" Stella has no way of knowing this. We're a fair bit through the interview when it's asked. Stella smiles and turns over a sheet of paper. "Look," he says, pointing at a section heading in his handwritten notes. "Better to best."

It's hard not to focus on Stella when looking for answers to explain McLaren's renaissance. Until this season, its last win was at the 2021 Italian Grand Prix, but that was inherited when title contenders Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen crashed together. The last time McLaren had been truly competitive was in 2012, several eras past.

In 2021, McLaren finished fourth in the constructors' race. It slipped back to fifth in 2022, at the start of the new regulations, which re-introduced cars with venturi-tunnel ground-effect designs to F1. And it was the failure of a mid-season upgrade package that year which persuaded Zak Brown, chief executive officer of McLaren Racing, that changes were needed.

When the team principal merry-go-round at the end of 2022 kicked into gear, with Frédéric Vasseur leaving Sauber to move to Ferrari to replace the ousted Mattia Binotto, Brown saw his chance. McLaren's then team principal, Andreas Seidl, had told Brown he would be leaving at the end of his contract period in 2025, to move to Audi in time for its entry to F1 as a works team in 2026. Brown decided to expedite the process. And the man he chose to replace Seidl was Stella.

The Italian, now 53, has been at McLaren since 2015, when he moved over from Ferrari at the same time as Fernando Alonso, for whom he had been race engineer at Maranello.

Stella joined McLaren as head of race operations, became performance director in 2018 and racing director in 2019, one of a triumvirate of bosses leading the team under Seidl. He was

made team principal in December 2022.

Since then, the transformation has been remarkable. Not just the performance on track, but for the honest, transparent and clear way McLaren personnel – especially Stella – have communicated to the outside world.

From faster to fastest

McLaren started 2023 admitting it had missed development targets with its new design. It would start the season further back than hoped, Stella said, but progress was coming.

Technical director James Key was removed shortly afterwards.

Come the Austrian GP around mid-season, the promised upgrade to the car was a revelation, transforming the team from lower midfield contenders to the head of the pack chasing dominant Red Bull. McLaren stayed there throughout the remainder of 2023, battling with Mercedes and Ferrari for the honour of being termed best of the rest. In Qatar, Oscar Piastri won the sprint race from pole position.

There was no obvious progress at the start of this season – Red Bull was initially still dominant, Ferrari had moved ahead and Mercedes slipped back, and McLaren was somewhere in between them. But again, it promised a step forward. And it came with a major upgrade for the sixth race of the season in

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COMMUNICATED TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD**





Since that win in Miami (left and right), the McLaren has, on average, been quicker than Red Bull in qualifying

Miami. It flicked a switch.

Suddenly, McLaren was up there with Red Bull. Lando Norris took his maiden victory around Miami's Hard Rock Stadium. It came with help from a Safety Car, but Norris and McLaren were definitely the fastest combination in the race. And they have been going toe-to-toe with Red Bull ever since.

McLaren was an average of 0.45s slower than Red Bull in qualifying in the first five races of the season. From Miami to the summer break, it was 0.046s faster, not counting the wet session in Spa.

What is the secret of this transformation? Brown is unequivocal in his response.

"The one-word answer would be Andrea Stella," Brown says. "Obviously it's a team effort, but he's led and driven the change. Andrea is the best racer I've ever been around.

"Andrea has done an amazing job of focusing the team, driving leadership. Obviously he's not designing the car, so I wouldn't want to not give credit to the other thousand people around him. But his leadership, that's been the single biggest change that's taken us from where we were at the start of '23 to where we are now."

Brown name-checks three key leaders – technical director, aerodynamics, Peter Prodromou; chief designer Rob Marshall; and Neil Houldey, technical director, engineering – and ▶



It's a long time since the team was genuinely at the sharp end of the grid. The last McLaren to be truly competitive was the MP4-27 back in 2012 (above)

Piastri's sprint win in Qatar last year showed the team was now battling to be the best of the rest behind Red Bull



says: “All these guys are doing an outstanding job, but under Andrea’s leadership.” But here’s the thing. Stella has been at McLaren for nearly 10 years. So the obvious question is, why has it taken so long?

Time’s arrow

“I can only answer for my portion of the stake,” Stella says. “What I’m doing now as team principal is just the derivation and evolution of what I was doing before, leading the race team or as a race engineer. It’s just an evolution, and at any stage I was trying to apply what I think is the fundamental approach in the context I could influence.”

What Stella means by that is that he was doing the best he could in the position he occupied at the time. He’s a respectful man, and as he didn’t have the wider authority to try to influence the fundamental structure and workings of the team, he didn’t try to. Once he did, as Brown points out, he acted fast, decisively and effectively.

“I don’t design the car,” Stella says. “I don’t produce the car. I don’t do the logistics – which have improved, by the way; even the logistics are much faster, much more racy, much more than we had before.

“I don’t do the marketing and multimedia and so on. Of all the key individual tasks and steps that are required, I’m not doing any of them. But at the same time, it requires to change a couple of key factors in this chain, and the chain may cascade like dominoes.

“So if Zak thinks I have been the key enabler, he has surely good reasons to say so. He is the most incredible businessman and strategic person I have ever met. So must have accurate judgements from this point of view.

“I answer in a different way because I can see I could have been the first trigger, but I was simply the first. If there are not 999 blocks after the first one, still the first one would just fall.

“So for me it’s in this sense of we’re all interconnected, and the talent and the capability and expertise were already in place, but for some reasons we might have missed some fundamental steps to get the dominoes to cascade.”

Those steps involved a restructure of the technical department, among them bringing back Prodromou, who had been sidelined away from car design under Seidl and Key, front and centre.

Flux vs dynamism

A renewed focus was put on the three fundamental pillars of car pace – aerodynamics, performance and engineering. There have been a couple of stabs at this, including the recruitment of David Sanchez from Ferrari to lead performance, and then his departure after just three months at the start of this year. The team remains in flux. Or dynamic, as Stella would put it.

“In general,” Stella says, “I would say you need to have a very good idea for what is the vision and culture for an F1 team that can compete at the front. And this needs to be shared with everyone. Everyone needs to understand the vision and the culture very deeply.

“But then the day you do it, you need to think: ‘What does

it mean for the organisation? And what does it mean for the kind of people we need in the team? What does it mean for how we make the players work together?’ And as soon as you do that, you actually have to accept that this is quite dynamic. The talent you have; how do you make the players work together? Do we need continued modification of the organisation?

“These aspects which are more tactical, they can vary pretty dynamically. Because F1 is very dynamic and the context evolves and the players you have available are not necessarily the players that can achieve a certain way of playing or working but they would be very good in another way. And this can evolve over time as people grow.”

The beginnings of Stella’s journey to McLaren team principal can be traced back to Alonso. They had worked together closely through all the twists and turns of Alonso’s tumultuous time at Ferrari. When the two-time champion left Italy to join McLaren-Honda, as it was at the time, Alonso never asked

Stella himself to join him there. But he suggested to McLaren that Stella was someone who could be a useful signing. McLaren approached Stella, and he decided a new challenge and a clean slate was exactly what he needed.

Whether or not Alonso had the perspicacity to predict Stella would rise to his latest heights, his insight into the qualities his former race engineer possessed was clearly keen.

“He’s an incredible person,” Alonso says. “First of all, a great engineer and a good team principal now. He’s a great man. People who are honest and do things with common sense, normally in life things will go well with them.

“Common sense will define Andrea Stella. He’s a great leader. And I’m not surprised that he’s doing an incredible job.”

Stella is too humble to talk himself up, but McLaren is well aware of what it has in a team principal who is an engineer who sounds like a philosopher.

But it’s not just his communication skills or his insight into what changes to make to turn the team around that impresses. It is the clarity and certainty under his leadership that really catches the eye.

One of the most striking aspects of McLaren’s revival has been how accurate it has been in its predictions as to when upgrades are coming and how effective they will be. Even Brown was a little concerned last year when Stella was predicting the Austria upgrade would mark a significant step forward, and yet it delivered even better than he predicted.

The same has been the case with the subsequent steps forward, which Stella compartmentalises as the Singapore 2023 upgrade, the 2024 car and then Miami.

Equally, whereas some rivals have introduced new parts that

ALONSO NEVER ASKED STELLA
HIMSELF TO JOIN HIM THERE.
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have not performed as expected, McLaren has been working on a second major upgrade for this season, but had not yet at the time of writing deployed it.

Who's better, who's best?

Stella says: "The accuracy came because we sort of understood what we needed to see in design across the various environments where you design your car to say: 'This will give us confidence that this will work at the track.'

"But one of the reasons it has become more and more difficult to develop these cars is that definitely they have started

WHY IS UPGRADING SO HARD?

The 2024 F1 season has been a story of upgrades – some of them working, such as McLaren's in Miami or Mercedes' series from Miami to Spain; some not, such as Ferrari's floor introduced in Spain.

And then there's Red Bull. Mercedes technical director James Allison opined he believed Red Bull's Imola upgrade had actually been a downgrade, a claim that team has rejected. Andrea Stella points out that Red Bull "have taken more development trackside so far in terms of physical parts delivered than us when you look at the [official] submission."

And yet Red Bull's competitiveness has slipped as others have moved forward faster. Or perhaps Red Bull has not moved forward at all.

Why is this? Stella says: "One reason it has become more difficult to develop the cars is that definitely these cars have now started to be pretty complex."

He won't say more. But essentially, the area under the floor – which drives the majority of downforce – is a multitude of interconnecting vortices that are extremely hard to simulate accurately.

Unless a team is absolutely confident it understands what is happening under the car, it's easy to introduce an upgrade that doesn't do what it expects. And from there it's very easy to get lost.

Stella said in Belgium: "We seem to be now in a condition to cash in some of the development we've accrued in the background and I would expect that for the second part of the season we would have at multiple times some new parts.

"In a way, I'm surprised we've been so competitive considering that from Miami onwards we haven't actually brought trackside many new parts. But there are some upgrades that will come in the second part of the season."



to become pretty complex [see sidebar above]."

Which brings us back to the question with which we started – how to move from better to best?

On the driver front, the team has no questions. Brown has long described Norris and Piastri as the best line-up on the grid, and sees no reason to divert from that opinion, even if neither are quite the finished article just yet. Quite the



Since the 2023 Austria upgrade there have, according to Stella, been three crucial steps. The first was a final raft of upgrades in Singapore last year



Brown remains convinced that his driver line-up of Norris and Piastri is the best on the grid



Step two was the design of the 2024 car even if, initially, it didn't seem to have brought the team any closer to 2023's runaway champions Red Bull



The third and final step was the upgrades the team took to Miami this year, which culminated in a long-awaited maiden victory for Lando Norris



opposite; this year has only strengthened his conviction.

Beyond that, McLaren as an organisation is still not at the level it wishes to be.

"What we've done at McLaren from a certain level to better is we identified the priorities and acted on them," Stella says. "But when you want to become the best, the interesting thing is that, when you're at a certain level, you almost don't see up to here [he indicates the highest level]. You just find some easy opportunities, priorities, and you go to a certain point."

"But the more you grow, the more you create a clear reference like the best. But the gap is smaller, and in trying to be the best, it has become more apparent what is next."

"The 'what next' for us is infrastructure. We have to keep adding capacity and capabilities. Tools – from a hardware and software point of view, we are behind. There has been a lack of investment for a long time. We are trying to compensate."


Stella lists the situations in which things have not always gone to plan this year – such as handling strategic choices in wet-dry races such as Canada and Silverstone, both of which were potentially winnable and can be seen as opportunities missed; or pitstops, in which he says "we have plateaued a bit".

"Where is the next step? There are many areas where we need to do a decent amount of steps forward," Stella says.

"What we call workflows – and I don't disclose what this is – we have many opportunities. We have all to be proven that we're going to do a good job for 2026, because the improvements we've made are in a continuity of regulations."

"There's another element, which is the high-level political. We've not been on the top for a long time and we weren't the most influential team necessarily. We don't want to be the most influential, but we want to have a voice. How do you do that?"

"And even the attention from the other teams has changed. And we're more exposed to the media, which by the way for me is such a problem. Because you create so many versions [of events] that you ultimately lead on to chaos. You can devalue the power of having a truth by adding three different versions of the truth. This creates polarisation; this creates violence."

"Like, even the season of McLaren so far, you highlight all the mistakes. Where is the assessment for the other teams? We are more exposed. If we were P8, no one would look at it. It uses capacity/energy that I would rather divert on our high priority and keep everyone focused." 

Andrew Benson is the BBC's Formula 1 correspondent



ZAK BROWN

McLaren's chief executive reveals the unexpected benefits and challenges of getting closer to the front – and of getting involved in some hard racing for victories...

Now you're running closer to the front in F1, have you noticed an impact elsewhere in the business?

Yeah, everywhere. From CVs coming in the door to sponsorship, we're doing awesome. Drivers' happiness, team morale, shareholder excitement, fans... everywhere. But we need to keep our feet on the ground. I like where we've come from because we've kind of earned it the hard way and I think it's made us more resilient and very proud of what we've done. And I actually think it's good that we went through the bad times because we know what that feels like, so we're going to work really hard to make sure we don't get back there. We're not taking anything for granted.

Are you looking to secure a title sponsor for 2025?

There's always scope, but I've been consistent from the day I started that I don't want to have all our eggs in one basket. If you look at our partner portfolio, we're not at risk of any one partner, if they were to leave, being detrimental to the business. When you have a title partner like some teams do, which is a disproportionate amount of your revenue, I think that's a dangerous place to be because if that title sponsor leaves and you don't replace them then you've got a big gap. So I like the approach we've taken. It needs to be the right brand, the right partnership. I'm very happy with what the race car looks like.

When you finally reach this healthy stage of competitiveness, is there a degree of frustration that the rules are changing again in 2026?

There's little bit of concern that it'll bring that out of balance. But F1's always been about developing technology, and these rules have been in place for the usual terms. So I think we have to stay true to what F1 is and hope the regulations the

FIA is coming up with, because they're still being massaged, get everyone closer together from the word go. Something race fans love about F1 is that it's a constructors' championship as much as it is a drivers' championship. Otherwise you run the risk of becoming IndyCar. There's nothing wrong with IndyCar but it's spec racing for the most part, F1 is about constructors.

Is there ongoing dialogue with the FIA regarding events back in Austria – and over driving standards, driving guidelines, track limits?

Yes. And the conversations are very healthy. I think the FIA recognise part-time, underfunded stewarding is not how you govern a full-time, very intense, very technical, very big racing series. It's not a reflection on the individuals that are stewarding, but to just show up and do this part-time as a favour isn't what we need, and I think there'll be changes to address it, to raise the professionalism and the investment in stewarding, which I think everybody universally welcomes.

Is there a danger of introducing more grey areas?

There was a lot of emotion about that weekend – it felt like many people expressing an opinion seem to be confusing the 'rightness' of a penalty

I LIKE WHERE WE'VE COME FROM BECAUSE WE'VE KIND OF EARNED IT THE HARD WAY AND IT'S MADE US MORE RESILIENT

based on the consequences, rather than the action itself.

I think you've got to be consistent with your application of the penalties regardless of the outcome. Because if you take the incident in Austria, the 10-second penalty, that could have been nothing more than just some tyre marks on each other's sidepods. As it happened it cost a race win or points but you can't dial up the penalty because that happens. You've got to penalise whatever the incident is. It does make you wonder how we went racing without any of this stuff for as long as we did and not have any of these controversies.

One of the challenges is that the teams collectively are guilty of creating a lot of these issues themselves by over-complicating what we want in race cars and what we want on regulations. Something will happen and then we'll spend an enormous amount of time getting into the detail and we don't necessarily think about the unintended consequences.

How is the team adapting to fighting closer to the front of the grid?

It's exciting, for starters. It's very enjoyable. It's a good stress, one you kind of like. I think the team's definitely up for it – when I'm on the pitwall, the tone of the team led by Andrea [Stella, team principal] and Randy [Singh], you wouldn't know if we're racing for the win or we're in 10th. I think that's what you want to see – there's no 'Oh my god, we're in the lead'. It's like business as usual. And there's a lot of race wins and championships inside McLaren. While it's a little bit newer to me, Andrea's been there, done that with one of the best drivers and best teams in the world, as have a lot of people inside McLaren.



DO BELIEVE THE HYPE

When **Andrea Kimi Antonelli** won his first Formula 2 race this summer it set off a veritable stampede towards the press conference room. Why? Because Mercedes has thrown up such a barrier around its protégé that he's a tricky man to speak to. But now *GP Racing* can lift the veil of secrecy...

WORDS OLEG KARPOV PICTURES  **motorsport**
IMAGES AND MERCEDES

A TWO-MINUTE VIDEO CLIP

recorded during one of the Prema Formula 2 team debriefs provides a fascinating insight into the world of Andrea Kimi Antonelli.

The Italian's engineer, Pedro Matos, makes fun of his driver's incredible ability to remember lap times. "Fastest lap, Silverstone, race one," he says. "2:01.2," Kimi replies. Matos chokes with laughter as he checks his screen. The FIA's official timing sheet on his monitor confirms: 2m01.267s. "Right, yeah, this one is easy," chuckles Antonelli's team-mate, Oliver Bearman (see p56).

"Remember when we did the race in Monza in F4?" Ollie adds, offering a real challenge from an event they both took part in back in 2021. "What was your lap time in quali?"

"You wanna know?" giggles Kimi. "Was that 52.9?"

"Let's check somehow." Bearman turns to Matos. Moments later, the answer is found. And, yes, it's 1m52.9s.

For most of the first half of this year, it was only these rare glimpses that gave the public a real sense of who this Italian teenager – upon whom Mercedes is pinning such big hope – is. The protective shell created by Toto Wolff's communications department was intended to shield the 17-year old from the intense media interest which followed the announcement that Lewis Hamilton would be joining Ferrari in 2025. It didn't take long for the opinionati to include Antonelli in a shortlist of potential replacements – then elevate him to the top of that list.

Not wanting to put any more pressure on the youngster who has won every championship since moving to cars, Mercedes has decided it's too early for him to be pecked at by the fourth estate. Early struggles in F2, where Antonelli was placed after Formula Regional, bypassing F3, meant he



Antonelli took a while to get used to Formula 2 but won for the first time at Silverstone and again in Hungary (above)

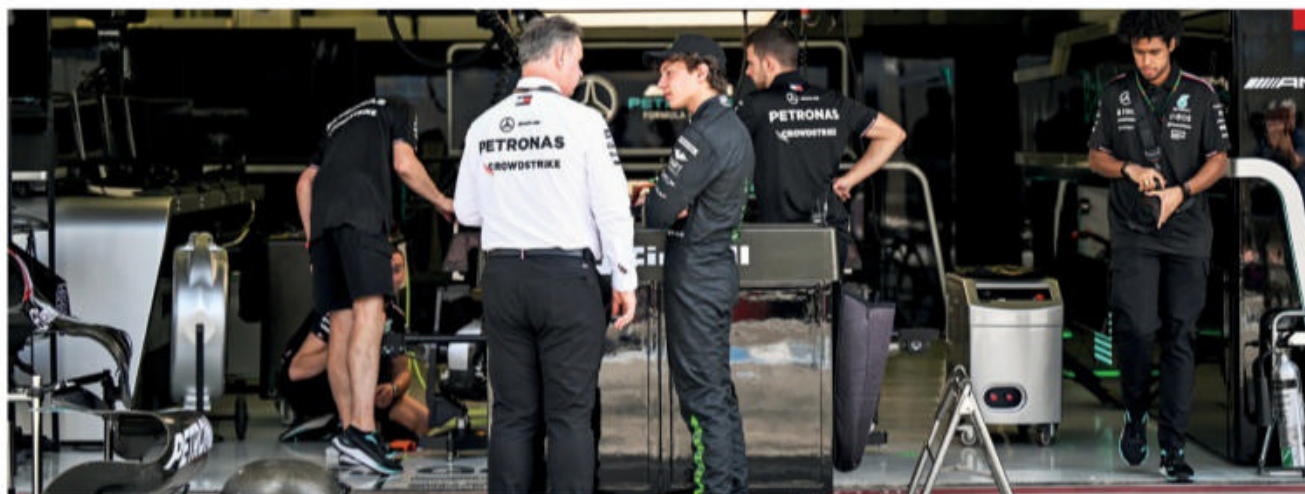


"Of course it wasn't my first interview with Kimi," says Roberto, who has known Antonelli since his karting days. "But it just confirmed the feeling I had a long time ago.

"The moment Kimi really impressed me for the first time wasn't at the track. It was at an end-of-season awards ceremony in Italy a few years ago. We were sitting at the same table and when we were talking I was just struck by a couple of things he said. 'There is no way this guy is 14,' I remember thinking. He was so analytical, he paid so much attention when he listened to you, the way he responded – it was as if he were 10 years older than he was. And I think when you read the interview, you can feel it too."

THE FIRST F1 TEST

"I was at Mercedes headquarters in Brackley," Antonelli told Chinchero of how he found out there was a special F1 test programme designed for him by Mercedes, "but I may not have fully realised it at the time. Then, during pre-season testing in Bahrain, they told me the dates and I said to myself: 'Well, you're really going to drive



As early as F1's pre-season testing in February, Antonelli could be seen hoovering up info in the Merc garage

didn't feature in any official press conferences until he claimed his first win, at Silverstone.

And it was only after Antonelli added another victory to his tally, in Hungary, that he sat down with our *Motorsport.com* colleague Roberto Chinchero for his first exclusive interview since he

was thrust into the F1 spotlight at the start of the year. All other requests – not only for interviews with Antonelli himself, but also with Mercedes executives, including Wolff's driver scout Gwen Lagrue, the architect of Kimi's career – have been politely but firmly declined.

an F1 car!' It was a very, very special moment because there was a day and a track written in black on white paper. Now I can say that these tests really help me a lot and give me the opportunity to grow and get familiar with F1."

It would be a stretch to describe the programme Mercedes offered Antonelli this year as 'unprecedented'. But certainly in recent years, given F1's de facto ban on testing with current cars, only Lance Stroll and Nikita Mazepin appear to have had such extensive programmes – and it wasn't the car manufacturers who funded them, but their fathers. Kimi's programme began with a private test at the wheel of the 2022 Mercedes car ▶

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THAT KIND OF MONEY AND
ORGANISE THAT KIND OF
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DRIVER TO WILLIAMS FOR
A COUPLE OF YEARS



in Austria in April, and then continued at other circuits, including Barcelona, Silverstone, Imola...

“After Lewis’s shock announcement, I wasn’t sure who Mercedes was going to take for next year,” says Chinchero. “I’ve been following the driver market almost daily this year and was surprised to see Mercedes wasn’t really entering into serious negotiations with drivers. And when I heard in Bahrain that Mercedes was planning a big F1 test programme for Kimi, I thought, ‘Oh my God, they are thinking about him for next year’.

“You have to remember it is a huge cost. I don’t think you spend that kind of money and organise that kind of programme if you want to send your driver to Williams for a couple of years. Of course, nobody would confirm that. Toto always said to me, ‘No, it’s too early’ – but in my mind, if I’m the CEO, I only spend that money because I’m thinking big. I think Toto has had this idea since March or even February to put Kimi in Mercedes next year – not crazy, but a very brave idea.”

IN WOLFF’S FOLD

“In difficult moments I ask him for advice, I won’t deny that,” said Antonelli when asked about his personal relationship with Wolff, “and he always finds a way to give me confidence. I’ll give you an example: at Silverstone, after the disappointing qualifying in F2, I called him because it was a bit tough. We talked a lot and that conversation gave me back my confidence and the next day I won.

“IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS I ASK HIM FOR ADVICE, I WON’T DENY THAT, AND HE [WOLFF,] ALWAYS FINDS A WAY TO GIVE ME CONFIDENCE”



Antonelli’s first test for Mercedes came in Austria in April (above and below) and there have been a number of further runs

It was really nice to see him under the podium. I’m very happy with the relationship we have.”

It’s no secret Antonelli is almost a personal project of Wolff’s, and that their relationship goes further than that between the boss and an ordinary young prospect. It is Kimi, after all, who is helping Toto’s son Jack take his first steps in karting.

“I remember when Kimi was just starting out in single-seaters, I was very surprised to see how much attention Toto devoted to him,” says

Chinchero. “He was really involved in Kimi’s development process, I don’t want to say daily, but close to it – and I don’t think Fréd Vasseur, for example, follows [Ferrari juniors Rafael] Camara or [Dino] Beganovich or Bearman like that. That was really interesting because Toto isn’t new to this business. He’s a man with a lot of experience in motorsport, having managed drivers before Mercedes and even before his time at Williams. When you see how invested he is in Kimi, you understand that he thinks very highly of him.”

It’s often said that Wolff’s desire to bring Antonelli into F1 as early as 2025 is driven by the pain of an old wound sustained in the decade-old battle against Red Bull for Max Verstappen. Kimi and Max are similar in many ways. Both ‘grew up in motorsport’, since Kimi’s father Marco, although not a former driver, is a team owner.

“I saw a picture of a three- or four-year-old Kimi in the paddock,” says Roberto. “He knows the motorsport world, and this is a big advantage because you don’t need to learn a lot of things when you grew up in this environment. He often goes with his dad to races even if he doesn’t race himself – and not because he’s forced to do it. On the contrary, they even ask him to stay at home, but: ‘No, no, I want to go.’ And he’d be there with mechanics, with other drivers. It’s his world.

“He is a little bit like Max. He has his friends, he goes to the US with friends for a holiday and knows how to switch off from racing – so he probably doesn’t think about it 24 hours a day... But in terms of how focused he is on his goal he is a bit like Max, yes.”

A race many describe as one of Antonelli’s most impressive so far has a lot of similarities with Verstappen’s star turn in Brazil in 2016, when he made it to the podium after dropping to 16th ▶





TITANIUM & STAINLESS PERFORMANCE EXHAUSTS

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a handful of laps before the finish. Kimi's victory at Zandvoort last year was similar: from eighth on the grid, he was in a class of his own, choosing different lines to his rivals' on the wet track, sealing the Formula Regional title with a win, with one round to spare in the championship.

"When you read about that phone call in Silverstone, you have to remember one thing," says Roberto. "It was during the Formula 1 race weekend. Kimi was... I don't want to say 'depressed', but very down after qualifying, so he called Toto – and they spoke for half an hour on the phone. And Kimi really appreciated it, and it

was really important for him to see Toto under the podium next day when he won. Not every 17-year-old driver can rely on that support."

THE F2 STUMBLE

"I didn't plan on coming to F2 and winning everything," Kimi said to Chinchero. "I was always aware that the jump from Formula Regional would be very challenging and I was aware that I had a lot to learn, which I'm still doing. But as ready as I was for an initial learning phase, I have to say that the difficulties we had in


the first races took us by surprise. My personal goal was always clear: to improve race after race and to bring the team the best possible result. When you go through difficult times, I think you come out stronger in the end. I had a difficult period, but it was also nice to come back stronger, Silverstone and Budapest confirmed it."

Even though bypassing F3 was always going to mean needing a bit more time to adapt to F2, it's fair to say Antonelli's rookie campaign was far from impressive in the beginning. But by the middle point of the season it was also very clear that it wasn't just Antonelli struggling – it was his team, too. Prema, one of the strongest squads in junior series, suddenly had difficulty finding the right setup for the new F2 car. The results of Kimi's team-mate showed it, too – Bearman, who finished sixth last year, only made it to the podium for the first time at the end of June...

"Kimi was lucky, and he admits it, to have Bearman with him as team-mate," says Chinchero. "Nobody can question Bearman, because last year he won four races. So, that was a big advantage for Kimi. You see: OK, the car at the moment isn't good. So, for Kimi in that situation, there's only one way: 'What can I do? I have my benchmark, and it's Ollie. So, it is important for me now to get to his level and then see if the car will improve.'

"It was the first year he was struggling with the car. But now he understood how important it is, especially in the bad times, to be part of a group.

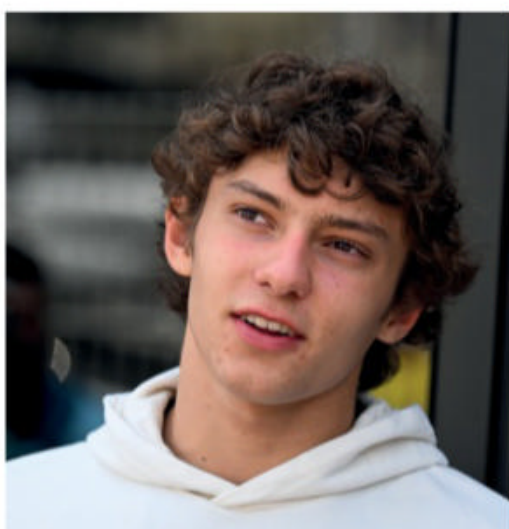
"When he won the feature race in Hungary, I saw some mechanics crying under the podium. Prema mechanics! When you see it, you understand how tough that time was for the team, which is so used to winning.

"But what impressed me is that he insists that he doesn't want to consider himself an F1 driver, until the day Mercedes announces something. 'I'm Formula 2 guy,' he says. 'I'm an F2 driver who had the opportunity to test an F1 car.'" 

FUTURE PERFECT

"I see it as a dream," Antonelli said when asked directly about his F1 prospects. "Some degree of worry is always there, the prospect of not being able to perform I think frightens everyone. My approach is to see it as a great opportunity to learn, grow and also enjoy the moment. I'm not afraid of being judged, I know Mercedes has a clear opinion about my potential. Already this season in F2 the championship didn't kick off in the best way but there were no negative thoughts"

It's been almost 20 years since an Italian



driver won an F1 race, and all four of the Italian drivers who have debuted in the championship in the 21st century have never finished on the podium. Understandably, there's a lot of excitement surrounding Antonelli's F1 future in the country.

"It's big," says Roberto. "It's really big. I've been working in motorsport since 1991, it's the first time I've seen an Italian driver who is doing something really special.

"He was very, very good in karting. It was then that Mercedes got him. But in the past, we already had a superstar in karting. Giorgio Pantano was really good – and so there was a big expectation. But it didn't materialise. But when Mercedes picked Kimi, people started to wonder, 'Hey, who is this guy? Why is Mercedes having an Italian in karting?' That was when he caught people's attention, and he always delivered since: he arrived in single-seaters and won everything in his first year, Italian and German F4, and then he won everything in his second year...

"And at that point you just say, OK, this guy isn't just good, he's probably special. When you hear him talk, you just know it."



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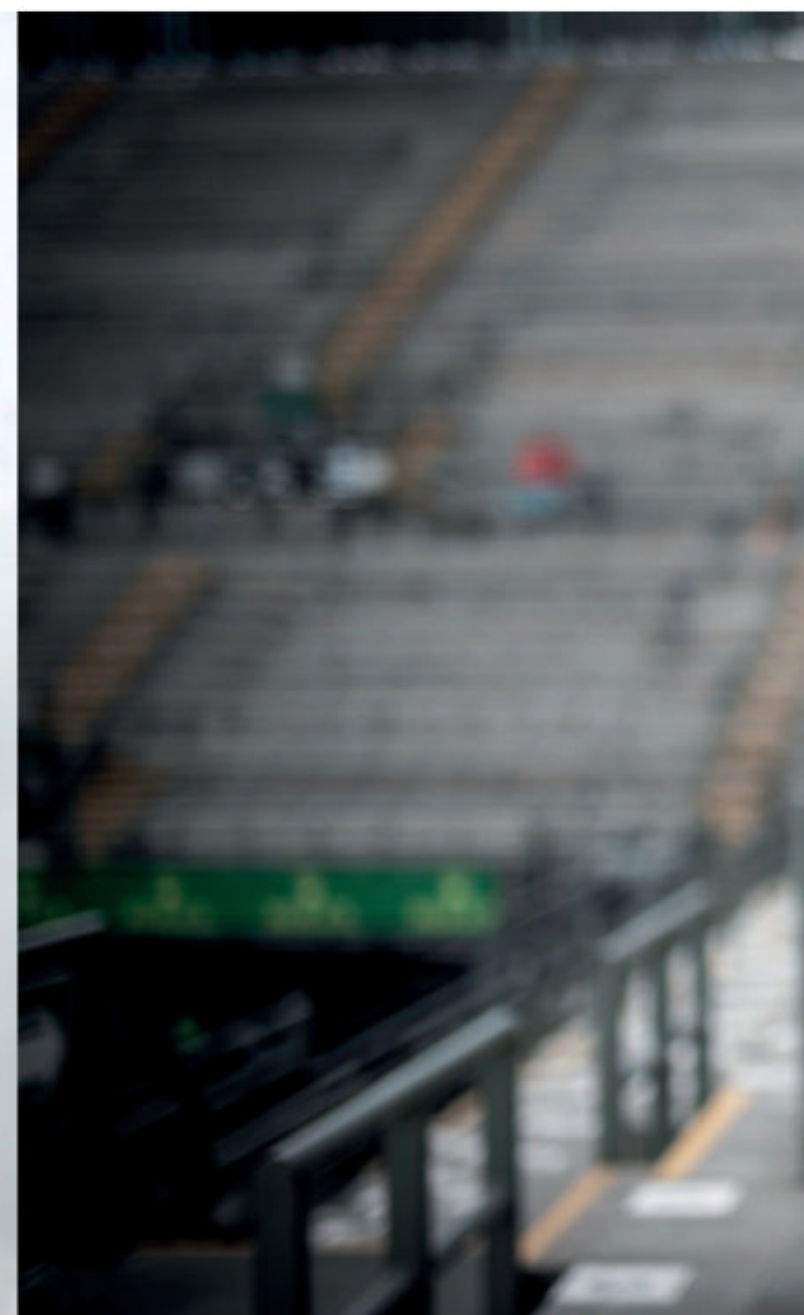
Despite a troubled second year in Formula 2 with a new car, **Oliver Bearman** has earned a seat in F1 with Haas – but as he explains, he's very much focused on the job of the future rather than celebrating his promotion...

WORDS BEN HUNT PICTURES  motorsport
IMAGES





■ In 2021 Bearman won the Italian and German F4 titles and also claimed a win and two poles in GB3



WHILE THE FORMULA 1 world has been whipping itself into a froth over the if-when-where of Mercedes protégé Andrea Kimi Antonelli's F1 debut, one of Ferrari's up-and-coming talents has been there, done that, and picked his race number. Oliver Bearman has already proved himself capable of racing an F1 car at one of the most challenging tracks on the calendar – and Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu reckons it's actually his new driver who has the potential to excite the establishment.

Bearman, pronounced as it's written (somewhere along the line it had been incorrectly distorted to Beer-man), will drive for Haas from next season, effectively on loan from Ferrari, where he is part of the driver academy.

The 19-year-old was born in London and grew up living in Chelmsford, Essex with his parents before leaving the King Edward VI Grammar School and moving to Modena when he was just 16 to join Ferrari's young driver programme. It's that move perhaps that accounts for his accent, which has an Italian twang to it, most unfitting for an Essex boy.

Bearman shot to prominence earlier this season as an 11th-hour replacement for Ferrari's

Carlos Sainz at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. Sainz underwent surgery for appendicitis on the Friday night and Bearman, who had taken pole position for the F2 race, was instantly called up to the main team.

What followed was a feel-good storyline, bar Sainz's discomfort from his operation, which provided F1 with a timely distraction. The headlines had been dominated by Red Bull's internal investigation into team boss Christian Horner and the subsequent fall-out with Max Verstappen's father Jos.

Bearman's promotion to Formula 1, albeit temporarily, lifted spirits as he defied the odds to deliver an astonishing performance on a notoriously difficult track which has no margin for error.

Even though Bearman only had FP3 to get up to speed in the new machinery, he still finished the session with the 10th quickest time and was just 0.698s behind team-mate Charles Leclerc. Bearman then came agonisingly close to reaching Q3 on his qualifying debut, missing out by just 0.036s. The following day, he finished the race in seventh place having made his way up from 11th on the grid, underlining his potential as a future F1 driver.

Bearman's first F1 outing was in Mexico last year (above). He has a seat for '25 and Antonelli (below, right) could yet follow

A QUESTION OF TIME

His achievements during his short time driving for Ferrari hadn't gone unnoticed. Ferrari boss Fréd Vasseur called it a "mega weekend" from Bearman, while Leclerc predicted "it's a matter of time before we see him permanently in F1". What followed were subsequent FP1 outings for Haas at Imola, Barcelona and Silverstone as he juggled his Formula 2 weekends with his F1 commitments, jumping from car to car in what has been a tricky F2 season to read. A new car for 2024 has shuffled the order and Bearman's Prema team had initially struggled for form on both his side of the garage and that of team-mate Antonelli.

Nonetheless, Bearman appeared a shoo-in at the Banbury-based team. Yet he had to wait until after the Austrian Grand Prix before finally putting pen to paper for 2025 and he faced the media at his home race at Silverstone for the first time as an F1 driver.



THE LOST BOYS

It would be wrong to say the Formula 2 model is completely broken, as we can see from the career progression of Oliver Bearman and Andrea Kimi Antonelli, but it's clearly not fully delivering on its remit as F1's feeder series.

Currently, the champion cannot stay for a second season to defend their title. The assumption behind this is they will move into F1 as a consequence of their victory. Only the 2022 winner, Felipe Drugovich, is racing in LMP2 and the 2023 champion, Théo Pourchaire, is competing part-time in IndyCar.

Let's also remember that the 2021 winner

Oscar Piastri spent a season on the sidelines before being signed by McLaren in a tug-of-war with Alpine and getting his chance in F1.

So what is causing the talent production line to clog up? It's not due to a lack of talent. The biggest problem is a lack of available seats in F1 and a reluctance for older drivers to move on. Teams are also guilty of sticking with a tried and tested driver too, since they're unable to complete enough testing days to properly assess talent. This is partly a consequence of F1 being cost-controlled, but also the belief that less testing makes for better racing because teams have less data.

As Bearman acknowledges, his time filling in for Sainz in Jeddah allowed him to showcase his skill to Haas and to convince the team to take a chance on him for 2025. Had he not been handed that opportunity, it's not a given he would have been selected. So perhaps the F2 rules need to be relaxed and allow defending champions to remain in the series, but also young driver tests need to be more widely available for teams to conduct a proper assessment of young drivers. It's clear that a few outings in FP1 is insufficient.

Bearman sat in the Haas motorhome and faced questions over his preparation for F1, his current season in F2, dealing with the media with laidback ease. "Honestly, until it was finally confirmed after the Red Bull Ring on the Sunday, because in F1 until you put a pen on a piece of paper, it's not really official," he said as he provided insight into when he learned he would be driving for Haas in 2025.

"I knew it was what we were working towards, and that we were pretty much getting there for a while. But you can never celebrate too soon, because F1 is a fast-moving world, and you're only as good as your last race. I was, of course, relieved when it finally came about and that was quite an emotional moment... I think my reaction is a bit less than maybe some people expect.

"I'm not as happy as maybe I should be, but it's just because it's another step in the journey. It's not the end, it's just the beginning. It's of course a dream come true, but I'm also looking at the future and looking at making this stuff as seamless as possible and making it my start."

It's this understated approach which has drawn Komatsu to consider Bearman as a worthy candidate to lead his team forward. The situation at Haas in the post-Guenther Steiner pantomime is looking more positive, since under Komatsu's leadership the team has climbed off the bottom of the championship table and is threatening in the midfield. But what is it that Komatsu precisely sees in the young British racing driver?

"He's got the most important thing in the paddock, speed," Komatsu tells *GP Racing*, "but in terms of him understanding the bigger picture,

"I KNEW WHAT WE WERE WORKING TOWARDS, AND THAT WE WERE PRETTY MUCH GETTING THERE FOR A WHILE. I WAS, OF COURSE, RELIEVED WHEN IT FINALLY CAME ABOUT AND THAT WAS QUITE AN EMOTIONAL MOMENT... I THINK MY REACTION IS A BIT LESS THAN MAYBE SOME PEOPLE EXPECT"

it's impressive, because he's a young guy, and when he drives for us in FP1, we tell him the team's objective for that week and to achieve that objective. We say 'this is your role, this is



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE >>>>>



your programme and what you need to achieve for the team as well as yourself and he is able to understand that very well.

“He understands how he can contribute to the bigger picture, which isn’t the case with all the young drivers. Sometimes you can tell them all those things and then they go out and try to set the quickest lap every single time. But you have to be a team player in F1, especially with limited testing programmes and opportunities. FP1 is an important session to provide what the team needs. Each driver is only driving a certain way, and if he knows the team’s objectives, that can help. So that was very impressive for somebody to understand that and execute that and be open about it.

“Also, before the event, his engagement with the team is very good – and after the event, his debrief after the learning is also very good and he’s able to provide the feedback we need.

“He’s very calm and very positive as well. So he can bring a good vibe to the team and make everybody welcome him. Some drivers are driven but can be negative and when it’s working, it’s OK when the results are coming – but when they aren’t, it can be draining. I’ve had some drivers like that who are massively talented, a really good driver and are hard-working but drive the team, not in the wrong way, but on the negative side. And Ollie is very positive so it’s uplifting and a positive factor.”

ALL RISE

Bearman’s rise has been so rapid that Komatsu admits he wasn’t aware of him much before he made his maiden F1 appearance, driving in FP1 at the 2023 Mexican GP for Haas. Taking over Kevin Magnussen’s VF-23,

Bearman ran through a programme testing the Pirelli C4 prototype tyres before being handed a set of softs to show what he could do. He posted P15 to become the quickest rookie from the five teams running drivers eligible for the session.

Bearman’s successful karting career brought him to Formula 4 in 2020, and he won both the German and Italian F4 championships at the second attempt the following year with Van Amersfoort Racing. Still only 16 at the time, he moved to BRDC F3 – now GB3 – driving for Fortec Motorsports and won once and took three second-place finishes in nine races. He finished the year being nominated for the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award and becoming a member of the Ferrari Driver Academy, prompting his move to Italy. In 2022, Bearman was promoted to F3 where he finished the season in third place driving for Prema behind the more experienced Victor Martins and Zane Maloney.

Podiums in successive feature races at Silverstone, the Red Bull Ring, the Hungaroring and Spa, plus two second places at the season

That calm performance in Saudi Arabia undoubtedly contributed to Haas opting for a young driver for 2025



Dropped in to replace Sainz in Jeddah at short notice Bearman did a fantastic job, including battling with his future team...

finale in Monza, forced Ferrari’s hand into moving him to F2 for 2023, again with Prema Racing but to partner Frederik Vesti. While it was a step up and Bearman initially struggled in Bahrain and Jeddah, there were signs of an improvement in Melbourne, where he finished seventh. Bearman would compete the double in the next race, winning both the sprint and feature races in Baku. He would win in Barcelona and Monza too on his way to finishing the season in sixth place.

But this season’s new new F2 car has stifled his progress, as it has with Antonelli, who has two wins to Bearman’s solitary victory in Austria, which Ollie registered before signing his contract with Haas for 2025.

Bearman has struggled for pace in the new F2 car and was involved in collisions in Sakhir, Melbourne and Silverstone. He had technical problems in Bahrain and at the Red Bull Ring, and crashed heavily enough in practice at Imola that it caused a red flag. However, those setbacks

haven’t dissuaded Haas, and Bearman is fully conscious that it was his time filling in for Sainz at Ferrari in Jeddah that showcased his potential.

“The race in Saudi probably put me where I am today,” he said at the British GP, “but I think my reaction is that I’m not someone who wants to dwell on this announcement [confirming his place in F1] but someone that wants to keep going, keep going forward. I just want to get to work now. Let’s not focus on being happy and enjoying it, but let’s focus on making the step as



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Bearman faces the media at the British GP (left) after news of his multi-year deal with Haas was formally announced (below left)

seamless as possible and getting that.

“I’ve given a bit of feedback on things that work well, things that work a bit less well. It’s more driver preference. I’ve done a lot of simulator days now with Ferrari, so I know what I want from systems. Right now, I just get what I’m given and that’s absolutely fine, but there’s definitely a few things that I would change for myself and it’s simply driver preference. It’s a bit early to say what I like about the car and what I don’t, but I do some work with them on the simulator and that’s also helpful to create a direction for the guys.”

Komatsu admits that Bearman’s performance in Jeddah was a considerable factor behind his decision to sign him, telling *GP Racing*: “It’s a very difficult circuit to jump in. It doesn’t forgive and I’m sure he knew he could have crashed the car, so to go straight into FP3 in Jeddah alongside Leclerc, knowing that he cannot crash

or be two seconds off, and to be able to deliver like that is very good”.

The key now for Haas is to ensure Bearman is up to speed and ready for next season where he will be partnered by Esteban Ocon, who joins from Alpine. The Frenchman comes with a reputation for not always being a team player, but Komatsu is hoping he will become the perfect foil for Bearman to drive the team forward.

“We will have done more simulator sessions with Ollie before he drives again,” says Komatsu. “We have an Abu Dhabi test too and he can spend some time in the factory. We have our simulator and design office in Maranello so he can see what next year’s car is looking like. But I’m not massively worried in that sense because you can see Ollie is good. The final thing is finalising the

“RIGHT NOW, I JUST GET WHAT I’M GIVEN AND THAT’S ABSOLUTELY FINE, BUT THERE’S DEFINITELY A FEW THINGS THAT I WOULD CHANGE FOR MYSELF AND IT’S SIMPLY DRIVER PREFERENCE”

CLOSE TO YOU

Haas’s technical partnership with Ferrari began before the team’s debut and was recently extended through to 2028 – killing off speculation that Toyota might return to F1 to supply the Banbury-based outfit.

This announcement came after the signing of Bearman, who arrived on loan from the Ferrari Driver Academy. The two organisations have enjoyed close ties throughout Haas’s time in F1, beginning with the team using as many Ferrari components as possible under the ‘listed parts’ regime. Latterly Ferrari assigned many design staff

to Haas in order to get them off the payroll for budget cap reasons.

The arrangement was a cost-effective way for a team to enter F1 but proved controversial at the time. Smaller teams complained that such a design process was contrary to the DNA of F1 itself, while larger teams feared Ferrari could use Haas as a guinea pig to circumvent strict testing protocols.

For Haas the situation makes perfect sense to draw on Ferrari’s technical expertise and resource and it also allows mutually beneficial access to the Ferrari Driver Academy.

Bearman follows the likes of Charles Leclerc, Antonio Giovinazzi and Mick Schumacher with Ferrari having footed the bill – and the time – to get the drivers up to speed to make it into F1. Ferrari’s programme has fared much better at delivering talent than Haas’s own driver development programme, through which the likes of Santino Ferrucci, Arjun Maini, Louis Deletraz and Pietro Fittipaldi have passed without securing a full-time drive.



crew and who is going to be working with him, and get him to work with that group.

“It’s not a step change like that. In some ways in January [when Komatsu replaced Steiner], I had to make certain changes. I did the minimum because if I did more, I was concerned about breaking it, which I cannot afford because this team was rock bottom. From that point onwards it was how we can improve and phase in changes.

“It is really looking at how we keep on improving and what’s the next thing we need. It’s not about this being my team now and I need to make changes, it’s about saying in 2024 we were performing this way, this is where we want to go in ’25, ’26 and ’27 and this is where we are and what do we need.

“By selecting a driver like Ollie, I can clearly see his potential and there will be questions like can we harvest that potential? Are we in position to do that for him and for us?

“The answer was 100% yes because with where we are as a team, improving and progressing, and where Ollie is, it’s in parallel and in sync. I’m convinced we can build together – so it’s not like I needed to make a change and put a young driver in. It was more about where we are, who he is, what he offers us and if it’s compatible and makes sense, then the answer is yes.”



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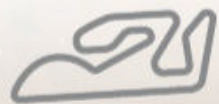
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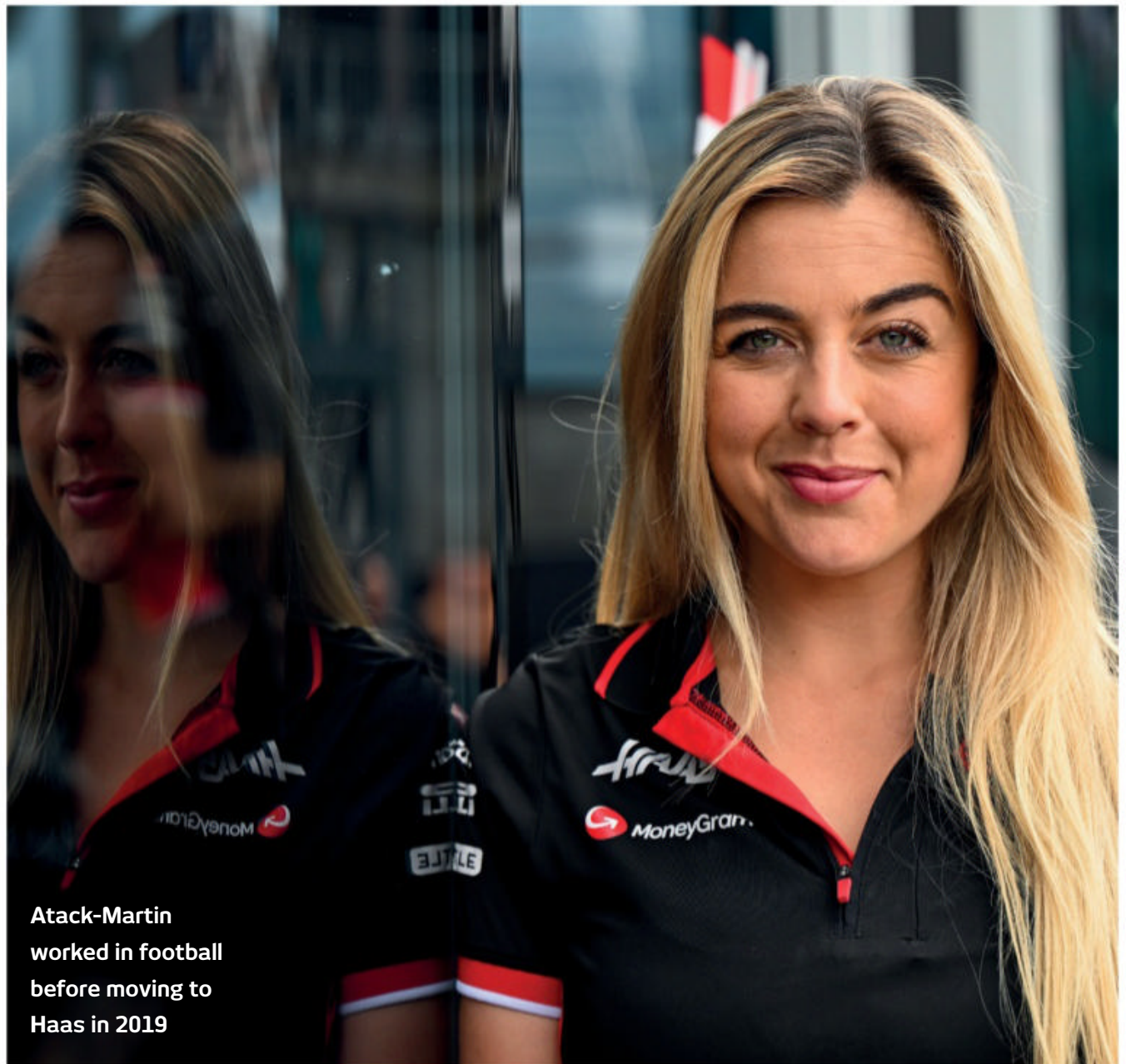


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THE TEAM
PHYSIO

It's not just the drivers who need a physiotherapist's services. Now the calendar has expanded to 24 races and pitstop execution has grown ever more critical to race outcomes, there's a need to manage human performance across the whole team. Haas physio **Faith Attack-Martin** explains the secrets of success

WORDS OLEG KARPOV
PICTURES SAM BAGNALL



Attack-Martin worked in football before moving to Haas in 2019

Nothing is trivial in Formula 1 – literally every aspect of a team's activities is geared towards performance and, given the rapid calendar expansion of recent years, the wellbeing of track personnel is now being given a great deal of attention. But while it's a well-known fact that each driver has a personal physiotherapist, few people realise that the professionals who look after the physical – and often mental – wellbeing of the team's mechanics have long been among the most important members of F1 teams.

At Haas that role is filled by Faith Attack-Martin, a specialist with a background in football – she previously worked at Leeds United – who joined the team five years ago and has been helping the team's mechanics do their job better ever since. Her remit is to make sure they stay fit and that nothing distracts them from their duties in the garage, whether it's helping with injuries or making sure they stay hydrated. It's her responsibility to oversee the choreography of each member of the team's pit crew, and she's often the one the team staff can turn to for advice on almost anything, from setting up a personal training programme to nutrition. And with a 24-race calendar, such a role has become increasingly important.

Faith's weekend at Spa was particularly challenging since the Belgian GP was the fifth race in a period of six weeks. By the start of the summer break not only had fatigue begun to take its toll, the number of injuries was mounting up. Here's how she dealt with it.

THURSDAY

08.30

Arrival at the track

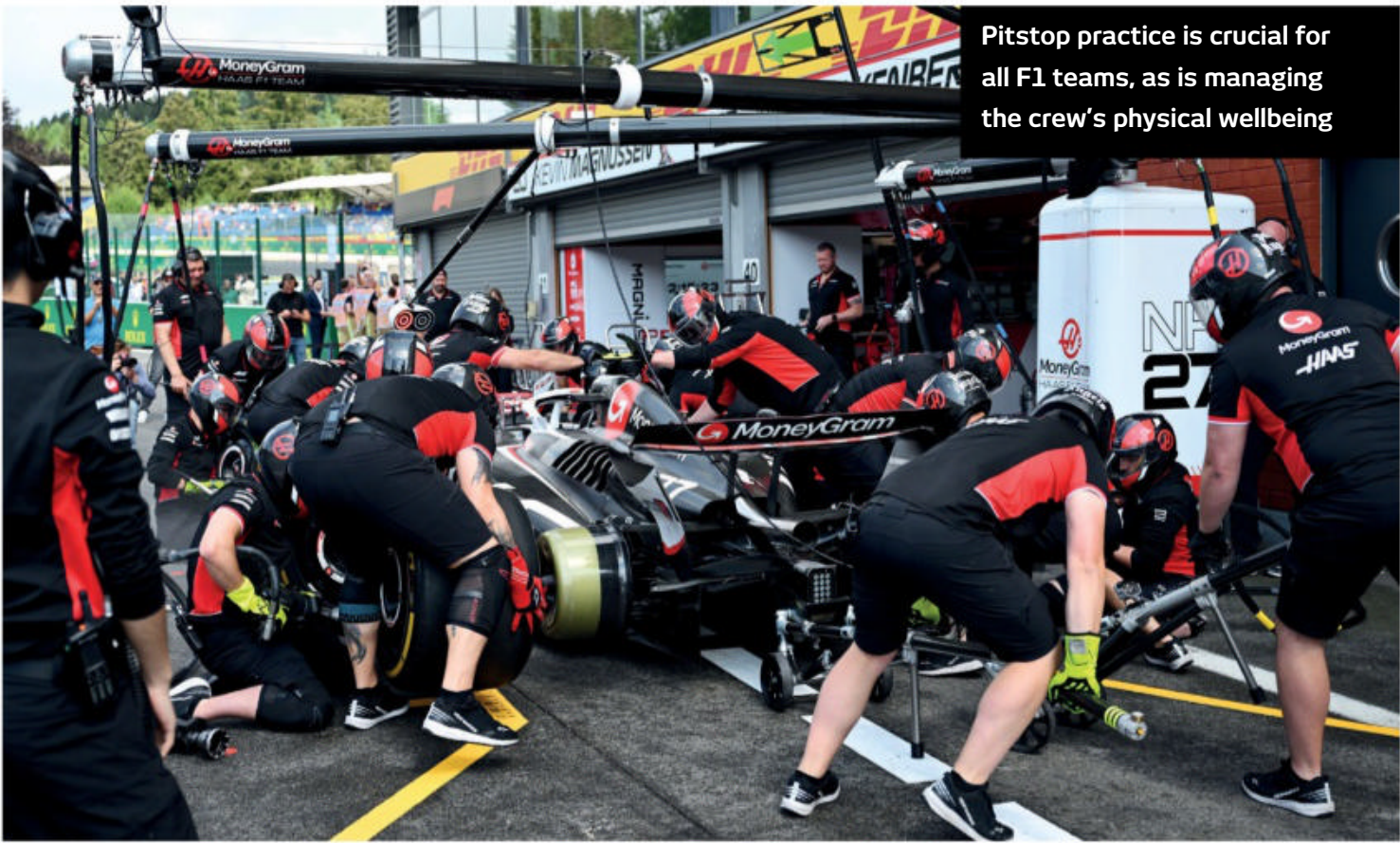
“Every day I start with a little walk around the garage, making sure I’ve seen everyone, said good morning and checked that nobody has any pressing issues. Spa is the last race before the summer break: we’re at a bit of a crescendo point – with five races in six weeks – where we typically see more injuries than usual, and most of them have to do with general fatigue.

“The lower back is always an issue. Repetitive strain injuries to the wrists are another fairly common thing, and they certainly come up more at this time of year. When we arrived in Belgium we had a number of mechanics with different injuries, one of which is a potential bulging disc, which makes the mechanic’s movement more difficult, so we’ve had to change his duties on the car.”

12.30

Pitstop meeting

“Pitstops are a big part of my job. Every Thursday we have a meeting with our team manager Pete [Crolla], number one mechanic Toby [Brown] and strategy engineer Faissal [Fdil] to plan the week in terms of pitstops.



Pitstop practice is crucial for all F1 teams, as is managing the crew’s physical wellbeing

“Sometimes I’ll pull out examples of what I want to feed back to the team during our usual Friday talk. One of the guys had some problems with an upper limb the previous weekend – so this needed to be highlighted with some solutions identified. I needed to give some background on what was happening and how it was affecting his work.

“We also had to make some changes to the mechanics’ pitstop positions, which was the first time this year. It’s partly to do with injuries and partly because we have some guys leaving after this race and new guys coming in. So the practice sessions at Spa were a bit different in terms of the crew.”

14.00

Treatments

“There’s no hard and fast rule about

when I do treatments but, when I see people in the morning, I’ll make a plan of when I might see those with injuries during the day. It’s often dictated by their schedule and I’m sort of at their mercy.

“But then, usually between lunch and pitstop practice, they come and see me in the truck. And it’s a good environment to assess them and get an up-to-date version of where they are. It’s all logged into a system – so we have medical notes and clinical records of what’s been done.

“I use a mixture of massage, mobilisation, manipulation and exercise rehab and it’s all based clinically on what I’ve assessed and what I’ve identified as a problem list with the person. That then determines what I do with them.

“And in between I also made sure that the guys in the garage had all their water bottles filled. It’s a very

simple, basic thing – filling water bottles doesn’t sound like much – but sometimes they just can’t leave the car. It’s less critical at Spa, but the week before in Hungary, for example, when we were battling with the temperatures, they needed to drink more – and I always have to make sure they stay hydrated and get their electrolytes.”

18.30

Pitstop practice

“Thursday evening is our first pitstop practice of the weekend. The scenarios are decided during the meeting before, but we start with more different ones on Thursday and then usually do fewer stops as the week goes on.

“This Thursday we did 12 runs. We practiced a double stack, a couple of nose changes, and we also did a procedure for the potential of a wet qualifying scenario. With rain expected on Saturday, it was particularly important to go through these procedures in practice.”

19.30

Track run

“Then we had an hour for exercise. Many members of the team run the track regularly.

“Part of my morning was organising the transfer for those who wanted to run the track in the evening, and then I walked the track with a few people who just wanted to decompress for the day.” ▶



Atack-Martin addresses the pitstop crew for both feedback and planning purposes

F1 UNCOVERED

FRIDAY

06.15

Training session

“In the morning we did a Tabata session in the hotel. I try to give them as much support as they need and provide them with opportunities. We don’t force it: it’s up to them to come and get it, but they have to know that it’s there. So if they want to do a session in the morning to build your strength – that’s on. If they want a one-to-one session with me in a gym in the evening, we book it. There’s almost no limit to what we can do. If they want a specific nutritional programme, we work with our nutritionist Dr Dan Martin and they can get a personalised plan. Similarly, our dedicated strength and conditioning coach, Andy Woolfenden, will provide remote programmes and training at the factory. Most people use some aspects of it. At this time of year we have to prioritise recovery and sleep hours – and Fridays are always very long days. Still, if someone wants a session in the morning, we do it.

“Once we’ve arrived and had breakfast, I check on everyone, especially guys who have ongoing problems. I prioritise seeing them first and again check how we can fit the treatment into their schedule.”

12.00

Team talk

“Before the pitstop practice on Friday, we get the whole crew together for a team talk. It basically provides two things. One is information. So it’s a feedback session and a planning session. But it’s also a chance to get the crew together and deliver a shared address. In a team culture, any kind of shared address, whatever it’s about, gives people a sense of togetherness. And that’s something that wasn’t happening before and something I wanted to implement. And I think it certainly tries to

empower them and give them a sense of ownership of their part of the job, particularly the pitstops.

“This week the conversation was split into three parts. The first bit was feedback from the last couple of events, as we also talked about adaptability. At Silverstone we had a good example of that – where the car didn’t stop in the box in the optimal way, but they still made a safe and clean stop. So with that example, I tried to pick out all the positives. Obviously there are times when you need to highlight the negatives, but again we try to do it in a more ‘this is the solution’ way

rather than ‘you did this wrong’ manner. Often we’ll pick examples of where the guys might have made a mistake – and talk about how we could do better. But I always make sure the guys are happy to be put in that spot, and I’d never do it without them knowing that it’s coming up.

“The second part was a bit of a wrap-up before the summer break, summarising all the stops we’ve done so far this year and where we are. Overall, we’re about 0.25s quicker than last year, which isn’t a huge amount, but it’s a steady improvement and a sign that we’re getting there. I think it’s no secret

that our equipment is not the most advanced across the pitlane but, with a stable crew and a bit more organisation around practice, we’re making progress. And one of the things I wanted to highlight is that we haven’t had any stops over five or six seconds – and that was a good thing to share. I think all those little things that we do add up, so you can actually see it now in the numbers and in the reduction of errors.

“And then the last part was to acknowledge that the summer break is coming up and to give them some strategies on – as crazy as it sounds – how to relax and recover. We’ve



Stretching exercises used to happen in the pitlane but have now been moved to the garage



got four big trips for the rest of the year with back-to-backs and triple-headers. So it's important that they get some good rest and recovery over the break."

12.30

Pitstop practice

"As we had a few changes within the crew, we used this session to try out new roles for a couple of guys. They each did half of the session in the positions we thought would be good for them. So we've got a good amount of data to analyse later, including comparisons with the guys

who have done those roles before.

"After practice we found time to sit down with both of them and go through the footage and the numbers. They've had a bit of experience in the past in different formulas doing the same job, but obviously it's not the same. The tyres are heavier and the pressure is different. When we choose people for each position, we take into account not only the physical aspect, but also their temperament, how they deal with pressure and even how they get on with the other members of the crew. If we're talking about one of the corners, for

"WHEN WE CHOOSE PEOPLE FOR EACH POSITION, WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NOT ONLY THE PHYSICAL ASPECT, BUT ALSO THEIR TEMPERAMENT"

example, the synergy between the wheel-off and wheel-on guys and the gunman is really important."

13.30

Free practice 1

"I'm in the garage during the session, making sure everyone has what they need and that their water bottles are filled. I have a pretty good

idea of what everyone likes now. When we're in places like Singapore, where it's super-hot and humid, hydration is crucial. On weekends like that, I'll keep a spreadsheet of who's had what in their bottle, so we can continue to manage the balance between electrolytes and water.

"During the gap between FP1 and FP2 I'll usually do treatments. But again, it depends on their ability to take some time off the car."

17.00

Free practice 2

"Normally, at the end of each session, when the car comes in, we always take the opportunity to do a tyre change – because that's the only time the guys can really practice properly. In our regular stop practice, the car is pushed in – whereas when it comes in live, it's more of a real representation of what they'll face in the race.

"After each session, I sat down with the guys who were new to the positions and went through the practice footage again. We've got five cameras in our setup and we went through it from the corners where they were both in new roles.

"Then there are a few hours before the curfew. It's a good time to manage my treatment notes. I still come back to the garage and have a bit of a presence to make sure everyone's OK. That is very important, especially at this time of year when people have spent so

much time on the road and in close quarters. Sometimes it's important for them to take five and have a chat. I don't offer counselling because I'm not a psychiatrist, but sometimes it's important to listen and show that you care. And anything I can offer that makes them feel a little bit better – I'll do that.

"The guys covered the car at 9pm and went out for a late dinner." ▶

SATURDAY

12.30

Free practice 3

“In FP3 we were back with the original crew, so the pitstops at the end of the sessions went pretty well, which you’d expect because it’s the main crew, so that was a reassuring moment.

“One of the things I look at in all the sessions is how the guys come out of the garage for the stops, as it gives me an idea of how they’re going to do it in the race. I want to make sure there are no obvious things or other people getting in the way. The setup is usually similar, but often depends on the garage layout. From FP1 onwards I’m looking for signs of overlap between the guys’ paths – and if there’s anything obvious, we’ll highlight it early on so that everything runs smoothly on Sunday.”

14.00

Treatments

“And then between FP3 and qualifying, I treated the tyre guys. We have two mechanics who are responsible for making sure we have the right tyres in the garage. It’s



a very physical job and qualifying is probably their most active and physically demanding part of the week, because if it’s a dry session, for example, there are a lot of tyre sets going on and off the car – and that means a lot of work.

“They’ve had some soft tissue work and some mobility work on their backs and shoulders, just to make sure they’re in optimum condition for qualifying. And then the other two treatments were some ongoing injuries we’re dealing with.

“It’s my fifth year with the team and I think over the years I’ve been here there’s been a lot more trust – and they’ve got into the habit of asking for help or assistance.

“Understandably, the mechanics weren’t familiar with the role of a physiotherapist, so it took time for them to get used to it. In football, players are used to having a physio from the age of eight or nine in

academies. It’s a role that’s a constant in their lives and they know what the person brings to them and there’s no barrier to accessing their skills. Whereas when I started here, almost nobody felt like they wanted to ask me anything because they didn’t want to bother me. Everybody kind of self-diagnosed themselves as ‘oh yeah, I’ve got this problem, but it’s OK, I’ll just carry on’. That’s fine up to a point but when you’re asked to do this job, which is so physical, with 24 races a year and all the travel involved, the role of sports science becomes a lot more important. As soon as that resonates with people and they know you’re there because you care for them, they’ll let you take care of them.”

16.00

Qualifying

“Then in qualifying, because of the

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changeable weather conditions, we were able to do some procedures we don’t always get the chance to do. We’ve done a lot of practice this year to make sure that operationally everyone knows what to do in situations where the car has to stay in the box for a while until there’s a better window on track in terms of conditions and position – and we haven’t really had a situation where we’ve had to do that until this Saturday at Spa.

“So, operationally everything went well.”

17.30

Pitstop analysis

“Then it was quite busy in the afternoon because at this point in the weekend we have quite a lot of footage to do the pitstop analysis of the corner groups. So on Saturday afternoon I usually sit down with some of the corner crews and just see if there’s anything that needs to be discussed. And this time there was a lot of discussion because we used guys who aren’t usually in the pit crew. So there was a lot of feedback for them.” ▶





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SUNDAY: GRAND PRIX



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12.30

Warm-up

“Every time we do a pitstop practice, we start with a warm-up. It’s changed a lot over the seasons I’ve run it. Originally I brought in what I knew from football, which is more of a dynamic exercise to get your heart rate up. But I’ve learnt that race team mechanics don’t need that! What we need here is to actually calm everything down. Normally they’re coming off their tools, there’s pressure because they’ve got to get the car ready for the race – so the warm-up has now become a time to put some space between being a mechanic and being a pit crew member.

“We used to do it in the pitlane. But they didn’t like it because they were in full view of the public and they felt a bit like puppets on show – so we’ve moved it back to the garage now. It’s calmer, it’s quieter.

“There’s a lot of stretching mixed in with a bit of breathing work, which some guys just don’t buy! But some do. At the end, when we do

our final stretch, I’ll just say ‘take a few deep breaths’ – because again, I want them to focus and bring their energy down a bit so that when they go out, it’s not frantic, it’s calm. We can see in the data that they do better when things are calmer.”

12.55

Final pitstop practice

“On Sunday mornings we always do a fairly limited number of stops, no scenarios, just a few normal stops, so we can get into a flow. And that’s obviously always with the crew that is going to be performing pitstops in the race itself – and always finishing on a clean, safe and fast stop so that you end on a good note with confidence.”

15.00

Race

“As soon as the grid is open and the cars go out, we start setting up the garage for the race. This involves

arranging the chairs according to where each member of the crew will sit. The aim of the seating arrangement is to make it easier when it’s time for a pitstop, so that the guys can come out of the garage as smoothly as possible. In the morning I print out a plan of what it looks like.

Then I make sure that on each seat there’s the helmet of the person who’s sitting in that seat and also their water bottle, again, so that when they come back from the grid they’ve got everything ready and they can be on standby in case of a very early pitstop.

“The pitstops during the race were safe and clean. That’s all we could have asked for from the crew this week. And that’s because we had several members of the team who were in different positions – so the guys weren’t doing their fastest stops or they weren’t really anywhere near their full capacity – but basically what we needed from a strategic point of view were safe, clean stops. And they were within the time that the strategy engineer

used to plan. As long as it’s not over that time, that’s our target.”

17.00

Packing up

“When the race is over, the job basically starts with packing up the garage – and everybody is involved in that process. My job in particular is to make sure that all the bottles and chairs are collected and all the kit is put away. So the guys get out of their race suits and put them in the laundry. And then I make sure all the helmet boxes have all the helmets in them before they’re locked away. The bottles get washed and everything gets packed away for wherever we’re going next.

“On this particular occasion in Spa I left early. We were catching the earliest flight out, so getting to the airport when you leave the track with all the traffic can be a bit of a nightmare – and in this case it was, but we managed to get a police escort out there! It was a bit stressful, but we managed to get there on time.”

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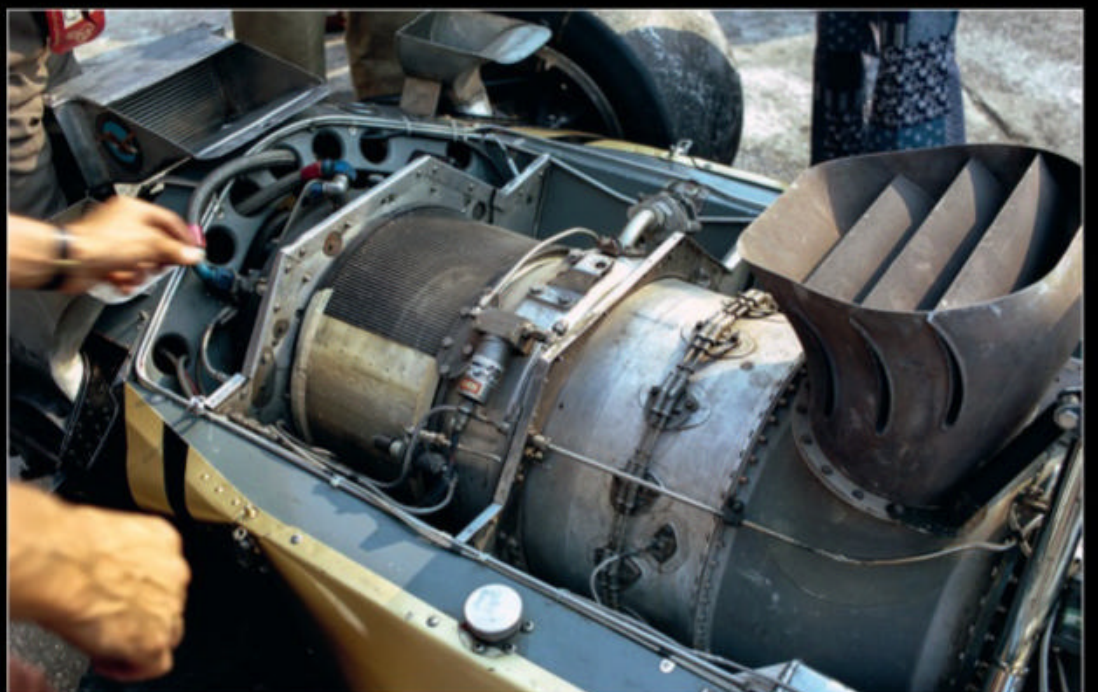
Emerson Fittipaldi hated it in period – but now thinks Hethel's daring turbine-powered, IndyCar-derived experiment could have been a grand prix winner...

NOW THAT WAS A CAR

No130

WORDS
DAMIEN SMITH
PICTURES
JAMES MANN

Pic to come



All in all, 1971 was a strange year for Team Lotus. It should have been all champagne and silverware given its potent cocktail: the great Lotus 72, not only arguably Colin Chapman's greatest Formula 1 car but a contender for the best from anyone, ever; young, ambitious Emerson Fittipaldi, already a winner following his astounding maiden-season breakthrough at just the fourth time of asking at Watkins Glen, 1970; financial security through its continuing (gaudy) support from Gold Leaf tobacco. Yet instead, the result was the first winless season for Lotus since 1959.

So was this car, the whooshing turbine-powered Lotus 56B, to blame for the alarming and unexpected drought? No, that's too trite. Even Fittipaldi has dismissed the notion Chapman's most 'out-there' innovation was a distraction. The problem, as is usually the way in Formula 1, was multi-faceted. First, it didn't help that Fittipaldi was derailed by a mid-season road accident – all in the wake of Jochen Rindt's terrible demise at Monza the year before that led to his ghoulish epitaph as F1's only posthumous champion. Meanwhile, the 72 – which had swept Team Lotus to its fourth constructors' world championship in the wedge-shaped model's maiden season – was briefly thrown off course by a fundamental F1 development: the introduction of slick tyres.

Unprecedented levels of grip shone an unforgiving light on the 72's too-flexible suspension. Chapman's chief designer, Maurice Phillippe, was forced into a redesign and by the time the 72 was back on track the season was more or less over.

As for the 56B, Fittipaldi's view on the car has mellowed. The two-time world champion and double Indianapolis 500 winner once described it as the worst he ever drove, yet he's also adamant it's worthy of respect, beyond its status as a

IT LOOKS ASTONISHING TODAY AND MUST HAVE APPEARED LIKE SOMETHING FROM ANOTHER PLANET WHEN IT WAS NEW

beacon for Chapman's always restless trademark desire for discovering the next big thing. "Potentially it could have been a winner," Fittipaldi asserts.

Unique in F1 terms, it looks astonishing today and must have appeared like something from another planet when it was new. A remarkable feat of engineering, nevertheless in sporting terms it's a mere footnote in the Lotus and F1 story – a car that started just three world championship grands prix, each with a different driver.

So why the B in 56B? Because first there was simply the 56, and it was designed solely to win the Indy 500. We can't think of too many other grand prix cars derived from an IndyCar rather than the other way round.

The story of turbine power dates back as far as the mid-1950s. Experiments were undertaken for Firestone tyre tests with a Boeing 502 turbine-powered Kurtis Kraft roadster in 1955, and a year later Boeing engineer Len Williams made



such a convincing case on how a turbine car could out-drag conventional Offenhauser power out of the corners that John Zink commissioned a turbine car for the 1961 Indy 500. 'Trackburner' was delayed until 1962, then fell 1mph short of qualifying, driven by Dan Gurney. Andy Granatelli, charismatic businessman, chief of the STP fuel additive company and an Indy 500 addict, took note.

The turbine headaches revolved around wheelspin and throttle lag, both getting on the gas and coming off it. In terms of wheelspin, two-wheel drive with hard, narrow tyres was tough to overcome – which is why Granatelli's shift towards four-wheel drive changed the game. Stirling Moss sparked the revolution, with tales of his all-wheel driven Ferguson P99 in which he'd won the non-championship 1961 Oulton Park Gold Cup – itself a unique feat in F1. At first 4WD was a wheelspin solution for Granatelli's Novi V8 power. The subsequent Ferguson-built P104 Novi V8s ran at Indy between 1964 and 1967, by which time Granatelli had latched on to turbines. And he came a \$6 gearbox bearing failure away from winning racing's biggest prize with one.

The STP Paxton turbo car was the Lotus 56's forerunner. Designed by Englishman Ken Wallis and built by Granatelli's brothers Joe and Vince in Santa Monica, California, it was powered by a Pratt & Whitney ST-6 industrial version of the PT-6 turbine built by United Aircraft of Canada. The ST6B-62, as it was dubbed, delivered 550bhp at 6230rpm, although



power reduced as air temperatures rose. At five feet long, yet weighing in at only 260lb bare, the turbine required a novel side-mounted installation. Too late for 1966, the Paxton was an odd-looking contraption – but it proved its worth in the summer of love. Parnelli Jones led most of the race in 1967, until the infuriating gearbox bearing failed barely 10 miles short of the chequered flag. Still, Chapman was inspired and, encouraged by Granatelli, waded in with the Lotus 56.

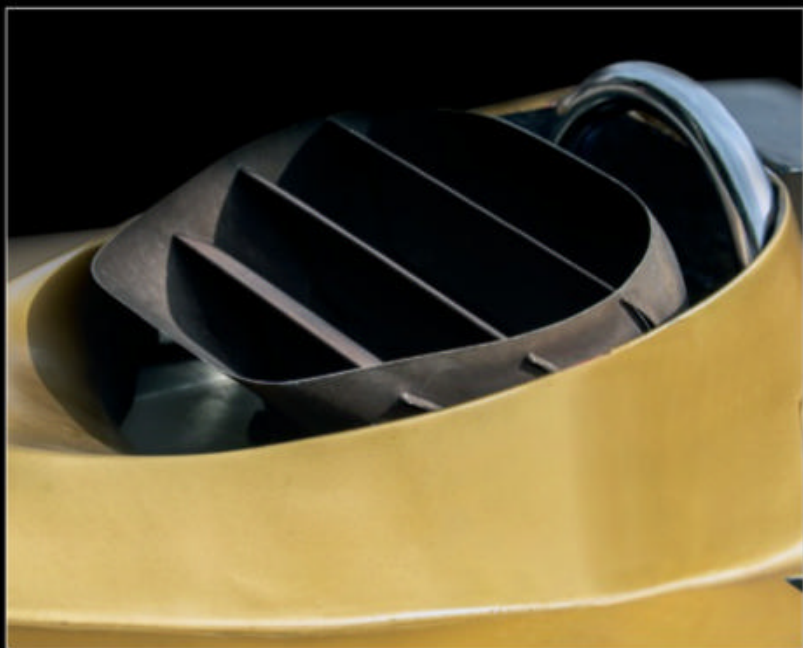
But the regulators always frowned on turbines, which is what ultimately made this power source a cul-de-sac at both Indy and later in F1. In Indianapolis, the USAC rules committee had been spooked early on by another turbine racer, the Jack Adams Aircraft Special, featuring a GE T58

LOTUS 56B

engine fitted in the nose of a 1961 Watson roadster. It had 1350bhp on acceleration, hit 200mph and handled terribly (if at all). That led the rules committee to limit turbine power to around 600bhp, among other restrictions. It didn't stop the Paxton's Indy near-miss in low temperatures in 1967, so USAC took further action to limit the whoosh factor. Granatelli took legal action – and lost. But by now Chapman had the bit between his teeth.

The regulatory skirmishes didn't diminish the Lotus 56's potency, at least in 1968. Culled of ultimate power, it represented a victory (of sorts) for chassis handling. Maxed out on top speed along Indy's main straightaways, Chapman and his ally Phillippe understood their turbine racer's speed ▶





through the turns could make all the difference. Just as well. Once United Aircraft had responded to USAC's measures, by removing two of the engine's three axial compressor stages preceding the main centrifugal compressor, power had been reduced to 490bhp – compared with the 600-700bhp of the turbocharged Drake-Offenhauser 2.8-litre engines.

The key now was to ensure the 56 cut through the air – and stuck itself to the track. That's where the wedge shape concept came from, which Phillippe then adopted for his epochal 72. Lotus was already grappling with an uncomfortable reality that its cars sat lowest when they were stationary, thanks to aerodynamic lift. The wedge shape was designed to compress the car into the road. Sitting beside the ungainly Paxton, the 56 looked ultra-modern, imposing, sleek – and fast.

Now the Pratt & Whitney turbine was slung out back in conventional fashion rather than tagged on the side. Given the dimensions of the turbine, that made the Type 56 long – 14ft 2in from nose to tail compared with the 12ft 6in of Jim Clark's 1965 Indy-winning 38. Never mind. Extra body length just increased scope to chase the new elixir: downforce.

The monocoque hull was formed around a large, low and light 16-gauge aluminium-sheet tub, with initially kerosene fuel cells fitted within the side pontoons – although gasoline was found to improve throttle response. A box structure at the front housed the steering, front-drive cross shaft, brakes and suspension, while at the rear a massive fabricated bridge arched over the rear drive unit and oil tanks. The car featured identical suspension members all round, with fabricated double wishbones actuating inboard coil/damper units by top cantilever arms. The brakes were massive: 10¼in diameter Girling ventilated discs which were 1¼in thick, the calipers clamping from underneath in a bid to keep the centre of gravity as low as possible. Power was delivered to each wheel through Lotus-Ferguson half-shafts, then transmitted through same-sized tyres developed specially by Firestone. The Ferguson centre differential, located offset to the left, originally promised a symmetrical 50/50 torque split until it was decided a 45/55 bias to the rear was preferable. Steel torsion shafts fed ZF spiral-bevel final drives at both ends. The car weighed in at 1350lbs – 400 less than the Paxton. Very Lotus.

The Type 56 was launched to general astonishment at Hethel with a demo by Graham Hill in mid-April 1968 – by which time Lotus's world had been turned on its head by Clark's shocking death at Hockenheim on 7 April. The Scot



LOTUS 56B

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THE TYPE 56 WAS LAUNCHED TO GENERAL ASTONISHMENT AT HETHEL WITH A DEMO BY GRAHAM HILL IN MID-APRIL 1968

had been due to race a 56 beside Hill, and now intriguingly Jackie Stewart was listed to take his place. Stewart in a Lotus? A wrist injury sustained in a Formula 2 crash in Spain scotched that possibility. A narrow escape, as it turned out. Instead, Mike Spence, who'd driven for Team Lotus in F1 as team-mate to Clark in 1964-65, took the drive.

Back in March the car's initial tests had resulted in modest speeds limited to 161mph, which would have missed the qualifying cut for the 1967 race. But come May Spence began to find his groove. On 3 May, Parnelli Jones rejected a repeat campaign in the Paxton which, thanks to USAC, was now deemed uncompetitive. On the same day Spence lapped at 164.239mph. Progress. Four days later, on 7 May, he was up to 169mph consistently, with a best lap at 169.555mph.

Then late in the afternoon Spence was called upon to shake down the 56 entered by Granatelli for Greg Weld. Running high on to some dust at Turn 1, Spence attempted to kiss the wall at a mild angle. The Lotus struck almost broadside, lost its right-side wheels and sustained very little damage to its hull. But the front wheel hurtled back and hit Spence directly on the head. He died four and a half hours later in hospital

without having regained consciousness.

It was all too much for Chapman. "I am filled with grief at the loss of my long-time friend and associate Jimmy Clark, and the additional loss, just a month later to the day, of Mike Spence," he announced. "As an understandable result I want nothing more to do with the 1968 Indianapolis race. I just do not have the heart for it."

Granatelli pressed on regardless. Weld was stood down, while Hill was joined by Joe Leonard and Art Pollard to maintain a three-car campaign. The 56 set a record pace through the turns and Indy's short chutes, even if it ran out of power on the main straightaways. Leonard secured pole at 171.559mph (compared with 168mph for Mario Andretti a year earlier), with Hill second and Pollard on row four.

But in the race there was more near-miss heartbreak for ►





Granatelli. Hill lost a wheel and crashed out, but Leonard appeared destined for victory – until lap 192 of 200. Following a yellow flag, both Pollard and Leonard slowed with identical snapped fuel pump driveshafts. Lotus had made them from steel, but Pratt & Whitney – angered by the change – insisted Granatelli switched back to the phosphor-bronze shafts used in the aircraft industry. They were claimed to be fail-safe.

Indy's turbine adventures were at an end. Hostile to the whooshing threat, the National Championship Car Owners Association petitioned USAC for further turbine limitations and more restrictions were pushed through for 1969, then for 1970 both 4WD and gas turbines not made purely for automobile use were banned in all USAC competition.

Still, Chapman kept the faith. Turbine power had come a hair's breadth from Indy glory, not once but twice in successive years. Could the concept be adapted to work on road courses, and for F1? The thought took hold when Hill turned a rapid pace in a Type 56 in a post-Indy 1968 USAC round at Mosport.

The problem was slowing for tight corners and then overcoming throttle lag on exits. The turbine required a disconcerting style of maintaining a consistent throttle even through the turns, hence the need for those mighty brakes – and a huge brake pedal. Chapman – a dog with a bone, as usual – commissioned Pratt & Whitney to produce a 3-litre equivalent of its Indy turbine to fit F1. For a US company with no interest in European racing, it was never a priority, hence the delay before the Type 56B was eventually wheeled out. To Chapman's delight, the engine was ready by the end of 1970.

The first turbine F1 car made its debut in Fittipaldi's hands at the non-championship Brands Hatch Race of Champions in the spring of 1971, while Reine Wisell and Dave Walker gave 56B further outings at the British and Dutch Grands Prix. The turbine's whistle and whine was a novelty among the shrieks of Cosworth DFVs and V12s, but after Monza – where the car ran in a striking gold and black livery in the hands of Fittipaldi, the experiment ran out of gas.

"The turbine was another of Colin's incredible projects," says Fittipaldi today. Although more than half a century ago his initial excitement at the sight of the thing quickly turned to fear on first contact at Hethel. John Miles, respected for his test and development capabilities, had headed out first in freezing conditions, with Fittipaldi entranced to hear tyre scrub over engine noise. Then Miles lost the brakes heading for the hairpin, went straight over the fence and into the fields beyond. Upon his return, a pale Miles wished Emmo the best of luck with his run.

"It had these huge brakes, calipers and pads, because the engine always continued, unlike a conventional engine," says Fittipaldi. "I had to brake the car *and* the engine. When the power came, big acceleration. The problem was working

LOTUS 56B

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with the throttle delay on the turbine. I had to hold the brake and power against each other because there was this delay on the turbine. That was the most difficult thing and it took some time. We always tried to cut the injection of fuel. The delay in the beginning was a second and a half, two seconds. You had to calculate looking into the corner when to put the power on. But yes, if we had continued the development it could have worked."

Fittipaldi felt that potential first time out at the Race of Champions, although in the race it bottomed out badly at Brands and that broke the rear suspension. Wisell ran as high as fifth at Oulton Park for the Gold Cup, before a tyre burst and damaged the suspension again. Fittipaldi was back in the 56B for the International Trophy and qualified on the front row at flat-out Silverstone, but again suffered suspension trouble early in the

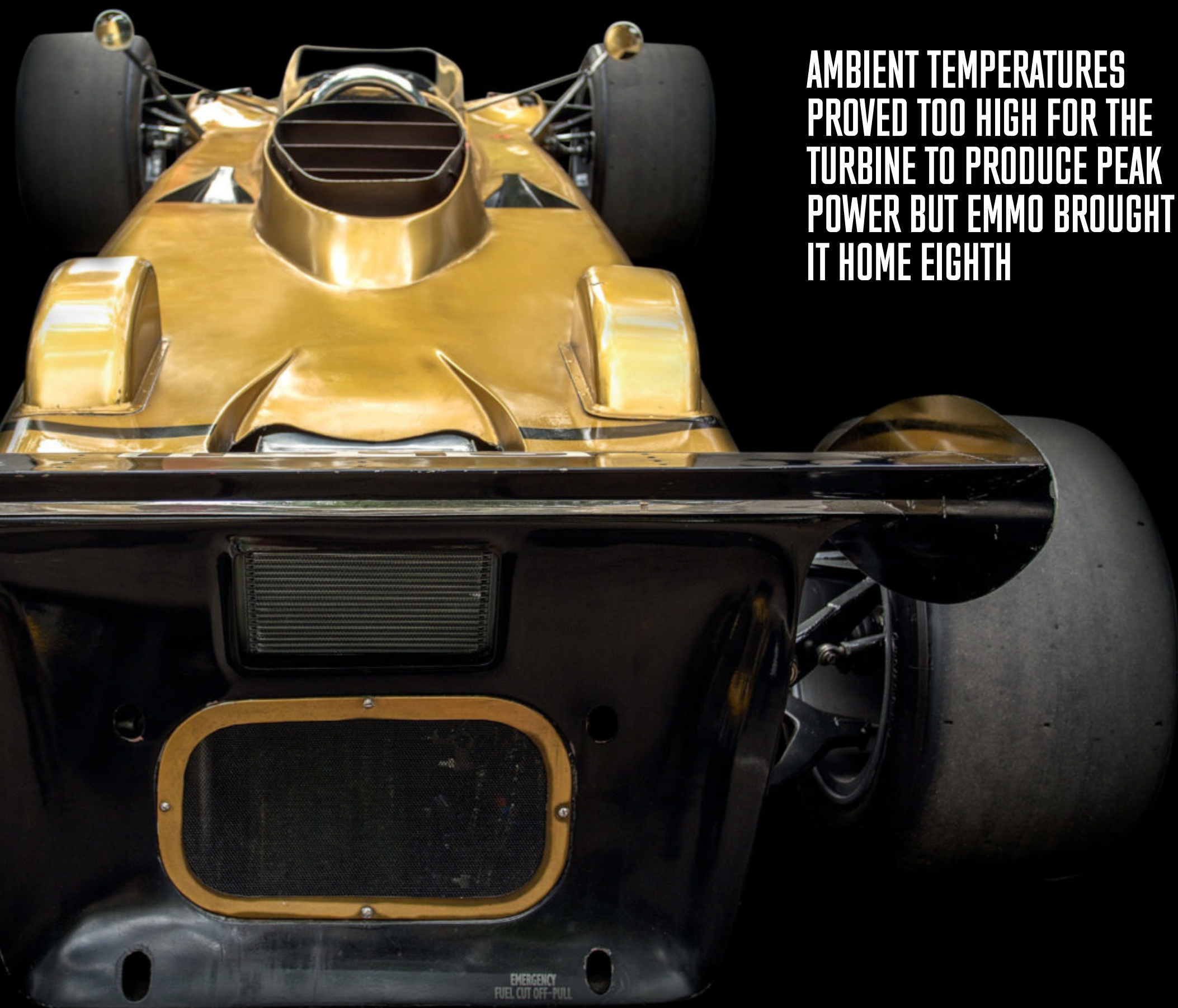


first heat. Still, it finished third in the second.

Walker was entered for the Rindt Memorial at Hockenheim in June. High inter-turbine temperatures at Silverstone had led to an engine rebuild back in Canada, but during practice at the German circuit it broke up and Walker's entry was scratched. A replacement was sourced for the Dutch GP and at Zandvoort Walker was up to 10th from the back of the grid when he lost the car on the brakes at Tarzan. Wisell was in for the British GP, but 56B lost power and he was unclassified.

At the end of the summer Lotus wheeled its turbine racer back out for the other flat chat GP, at Monza. Fittipaldi was back in, under an entry named World Wide Racing in the wake of Italian legal ramifications a year on from Rindt's death. Ambient temperatures proved too high for the turbine to produce peak power, but Emmo brought it home eighth.


The new gold and black colour scheme was a sign of things to come. "The gold colour was a test for John Player Special," explains Fittipaldi. "They didn't know if it was going to be



AMBIENT TEMPERATURES PROVED TOO HIGH FOR THE TURBINE TO PRODUCE PEAK POWER BUT EMMO BROUGHT IT HOME EIGHTH

black or gold. But gold didn't look good on TV so they decided to go black." One of F1's most evocative liveries, JPS black and gold would adorn the Type 72s from 1972.

Type 56B signed off back at Hockenheim at the Preis der Nationen Formula 5000 race a week later. Fittipaldi stuck it on the front row and finished second after setting fastest lap. "I raced it at Hockenheim against the F5000s and I was leading the race," he recalls. "It was really good. We knew it had potential. Colin injected more fuel into the turbine, it was giving a lot of fire behind my head... When I put the power down, big flames."

But that was it for turbine power. F1 followed USAC's lead and banned it. At Team Lotus, full focus was trained on the 72 and something of a fresh start for the next season, when Fittipaldi was crowned as the then-youngest world champion. The whoosh had been silenced. But for those who saw 56B race, it will never be forgotten. 

RACE RECORD

Starts 3
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Pole positions 0
Fastest laps 0
Championship points 0

SPECIFICATION

Chassis Aluminium monocoque
Supension Double wishbones with inboard coil springs/dampers
Engine Pratt & Whitney STN76 gas turbine
Power 500bhp
Gearbox Manual single-speed direct drive, four-wheel drive
Brakes Steel discs
Tyres Firestone
Weight 600kg
Notable drivers Emerson Fittipaldi, Reine Wisell, Dave Walker

BERND MAYLÄNDER



10 THINGS I LOVE



Formula 1's Safety Car driver on viticulture, fine dining, and glaciers



FC Stuttgart

I like football, but I mainly follow the German league and my club is Stuttgart. It's been challenging the past few years, when we went down to the second division, then up again, then down and up again, and last season we finished second in the championship ahead of Bayern. I'm friends with some of the old players, like Hansi Müller, and we meet up from time to time.



Being a dad

Family is always at the top of my list, although it's not easy with my job and many other projects to spend as much time with them as I would like. I've got two boys, they're twins, and I try to do all sorts of things with them. They do a lot of sports, they play handball and also tennis – and I try to be involved in their activities as much as I can.

Mountain biking

I'm not young enough to run anymore, but I like to be outside, in nature, so mountain biking is something I really enjoy. You can see a lot, you can find amazing tracks and it's also fun – because you can jump, you can go fast...



Social media

I mainly like to follow other people and also explore the world, see the places I'd like to visit. My business partners are always pushing me to do more myself: "Bernd, you need to take more pictures and post them." I'm not the type of guy who runs around taking selfies with everyone. But I like following other people.



Glaciers

I like skiing. I'm a big fan of snow and I love glaciers. Almost every day I check the weather and see how much snow there is in the mountains – it's easy to monitor this with webcam images these days. I love to go to the mountains myself. It's a great feeling, to realise how small you are when you see the world from the top.

Camping

It's a relatively new thing for me, but for the past couple of years most of my holidays have been camping. When we travel for F1 we usually stay in hotels, which are very good, so it was really nice to try something different. We did it once as a family and we really liked it. First in a small camper, then we rented a bigger one – and last Christmas I bought a really big one from a friend of mine. And it's great. You're in the countryside, it's great for kids and the dog is happy. And now I've even decided to go to Monza in my own camper.

PICTURES: BERND MAYLÄNDER; MOTORSPORT IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK



GT racing

I'm a racing fan and GT is my passion. I follow it and watch a lot of races. It is a different world to F1 – and of course the Nürburgring 24 Hours is one of my favourite races.



Wine

When I was young I didn't really like wine – I think that's true of a lot of people, but especially as an athlete I didn't even taste wine until probably my late twenties. So it was much later that I started to like it. But even though my grandparents owned vineyards, I never thought about getting into the business. It was more of a coincidence when I was invited to a charity event and met some people with whom we came up with the idea of launching my own line. We basically created a new brand with my name – and sold about 500 bottles at 50 euros each in one evening. But it took a couple of years before we actually made my own range, the Bernd Mayländer wine. We started with three different wines, all from the same grape sort – and it was launched, believe it or not, on the day of the Abu Dhabi race in 2021. It's not a big business. I work with an old traditional vineyard and we just have a couple of shops – and an online distribution. But it's a nice hobby.

Tasting menus

The perfect way to spend a night out with my wife is to go to a special restaurant. We like star restaurants, where you have seven, eight, nine courses – the portions are small, but you try a lot of different things during the evening. And it usually takes several hours to go through the whole menu. I think it's a great way to relax, talk and enjoy good food. These restaurants aren't cheap, but we like to do it at least a few times a year.



Business

As well as wine, I'm involved in a number of other projects. I'm an ambassador for Mercedes AMG, do some events with Aston Martin, and I'm a partner of Dekra, a company involved in testing, inspection and certification of cars. Safety has become a big part of my life, so I'm involved in a lot of campaigns. It's important to remind people safety must come first, so we raise awareness: if it's common to wear a cycle helmet in Germany, it's still not common in many countries – and I like to be part of campaigns to raise standards. I also have my own line of sunglasses, developed with a company called Glorify – their glasses are unbreakable, which is great for sports because it can protect you from potential injuries.

JODY SCHECKTER

Still Africa's only world champion, it's 45 years since he claimed an emotional title at Monza in Ferrari red

Scheckter's rise to F1 was rapid. He arrived in the UK at the end of 1970 and in 1972 was handed his debut by McLaren in the US GP at Watkins Glen. In an old-spec M19A he qualified eighth and ran as high as third before he finished ninth, and there were finishers classified to 18th...





The peak of Scheckter's time at Wolf was the Monaco GP in 1977. He claimed a second win from the first six races to lead the championship by seven points from Niki Lauda. The four consecutive retirements that followed, however, scuppered any chance of the title



Scheckter had been retired from racing since the end of the 1980, but in May 1984 accepted a drive in the Nürburgring Race of Champions. The Mercedes AMG event was held to celebrate the opening of the new GP track and was won by Ayrton Senna, with Scheckter seventh



A four-time winner with Tyrrell, Scheckter took a risk when he left for Wolf, a one-car operation formerly run by Frank Williams, for the 1977 season. The move paid off spectacularly when he won the first race of the season, the Argentinian GP, in a Harvey Postlethwaite-designed WR1





After retiring at the end of 1980, Scheckter initially took on some media work as a pitlane reporter for US TV network CBS. He remained friends with his former colleagues at Ferrari, who tried to persuade him to 'try out' the team's new turbocharged 126 C2 for size in early 1982

Scheckter and Ferrari team-mate Gilles Villeneuve ahead of the 1979 Italian GP. They started third and fifth but would finish first and second, split by under half a second. Scheckter wrapped up the drivers' title with this win and Ferrari claimed the constructors' crown

It's safe to say that Scheckter wasn't a fan of Tyrrell's six-wheeled car, the P34. He loathed it and would later say the car was "a piece of junk". Ironical then that he took the car's only win, at the 1976 Swedish GP at Anderstorp, where he was followed home by Patrick Depailler's similar car





▲ 1974 was Scheckter's first full season in F1, driving for Tyrrell after a handful of races in 1972 and 1973 for McLaren. In his seventh race for the team, the Swedish GP, Scheckter dominated proceedings along with team-mate Patrick Depailler to claim his maiden F1 win

▼ Son Tomas sits in the 1979 title-winning Ferrari 312T4 in late 2000. The car formed part of Jody's personal collection until he sold them all in May. Tomas and Toby, sons from his first marriage, both raced, partly funded by the sale of a firearms company set up by Jody after he retired



▲ After winning the world title in 1979 Scheckter naturally stayed at Ferrari but the defence of his title proved to be a nightmare. The Ferrari 312 T5 was awful and Jody only scored two points all season. After the final race of the season at Watkins Glen he decided to call it a day...



In 2019, 40 years on from clinching his world championship, Jody was reunited with his title-winning car on track at Monza, the scene of his triumph. It was the first time he'd driven the circuit since the 1979 race and he gave the Tifosi a peek into the past on all three days of the GP



Scheckter's relationship with the British GP was complicated. In 1973, at Silverstone, he caused a multi-car pile up but won in 1974 at Brands Hatch. At Silverstone again, in 1975, his Tyrrell was one of six cars to spin off causing an early end to the GP, but he was still classified third...





Scheckter got an early look at the Ferrari 312 T4 that would propel him to championship glory at the car's launch, at the team's Maranello factory, in November 1978. Alongside Jody is the car's designer, the legendary Mauro Forghieri



Just has he had done at Wolf and Tyrrell, Scheckter would win in his first season at Ferrari. He won the 1979 Belgian GP at Zolder by over 15 seconds from Jacques Laffite (Ligier) to kickstart his title campaign



After two top 10 finishes in his home race in 1973 and 1974 Scheckter, driving a Tyrrell 007, took over the lead of the 1975 race at Kyalami after three laps with Carlos Reutemann (Brabham) close behind. Scheckter held on to be the first and only South African to win the race



In 1996 Scheckter started Laverstoke Park Farm in Hampshire, mainly as a hobby to feed his family with quality food. That enterprise quickly expanded to 2,500 acres and became one of the country's leading organic farms before closing down at the end of 2023



MAURICE HAMILTON'S ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Given his imminent move to Ferrari, Lewis Hamilton is clearly as perplexed as he is delighted by Mercedes' recent return to winning form. What might happen if he gets to stand atop the podium on the Scuderia's home turf, Monza?

PICTURES  motorsport
IMAGES



Prost leads Senna at Monza in 1989 (above). The Frenchman, already signed for Ferrari for 1990, went on to win and inexplicably decided to throw the trophy to the Tifosi (below)



THE FIA PRESIDENT SHOULD brace himself at Monza. Particularly if Lewis Hamilton wins. Mohammed Ben Sulayem (MBS) wouldn't want a repeat of Alain Prost's podium antics in 1989 not long after the McLaren driver had announced he would be joining Ferrari for the following season.

Prost was severing a relationship with a team that brought him 29 wins and three world titles. Ron Dennis had shown great faith in Alain by offering a McLaren seat for 1984 a matter of hours after the Renault driver had been blamed (unfairly) for losing the 1983 championship. Twelve months later, Prost was neck-and-neck with McLaren team-mate Niki Lauda, the Austrian winning the title by half a point. Prost collected it at the end of the next season. And the year after that. He did it again in 1989. And yet here he was, leaving McLaren for arch-enemy Ferrari. Prost and Dennis remained on reasonable terms – until Monza, when the relationship crashed and burned spectacularly and publicly.

Prost was leaving because he wanted to race Ayrton Senna in a rival team and not as the Brazilian's crash-mate. That relationship had become toxic, not helped by Senna trying to ease Prost into the Estoril pitwall at 175mph. Alain would then contribute to a collision at Suzuka by clumsily shutting a door Ayrton was coming through whether Prost liked it or not.

By comparison, Hamilton and George Russell

may be playground pals, but this could develop an edge. The last thing Lewis needs is a reminder that the Mercedes W15 has become competitive enough to form the basis of a car that might be capable of winning an eighth world championship had he stayed on board for 2025.

If nothing else, Hamilton's win at Silverstone unexpectedly exposed a vulnerable vein successfully hidden since Abu Dhabi 2021. Victory for Lewis at Monza would obviously be very nice – but who knows what effect this might have on an increasingly perplexed psyche? I mean, look what it did to Prost – a calm and rational man not

normally given to post-race emotional displays.

Prost had arrived at Monza in September 1989 a few days after revealing he was about to become a 'Ferrarista'. The news that he was ending a six-year association was not helped by the thought that Prost would be taking McLaren's secrets to its greatest rival. Then he went and won the race. Okay, Prost may have been helped by Senna's leading McLaren coming to a smoking halt coated in oil that really ought to have been inside the Honda V10. But that was a minor detail as far as the Tifosi were concerned.

They swamped the track in their customary

feverish manner and saw the man on top of the podium as one of theirs. Prost had won the race for them and not for McLaren. They called his name. In a moment of uncharacteristic impulse, Alain leaned over the railing and dropped the trophy into the willing hands of disbelieving fans. Dennis, on the podium to represent McLaren, was incredulous. It was written into every McLaren driver's contract that trophies became the property of the team. There were no exceptions. In a fit of pique, Dennis flung the winning constructor's cup at Prost's feet and stormed off.

"It was not premeditated," recalled Alain many years later. "I had just signed with Ferrari. I had won the race and thousands of people were in front of me and all around. To be honest, I don't know what happened. Giving them the cup was like a sort of present. But Ron was so upset... so upset. I could understand this later on. But when you have tough years like this and tough relationships, you sometimes lose your judgement. I'm talking about myself, not anybody else. You do things from your heart. You don't know what you're doing. For Ron, the trophies were very important because they represent the history of the company. So you had this and the fact that we were in Italy, he was losing a driver to Ferrari and that driver had won the race. I can understand his upset. But I did not do it on purpose. Of course, we could never get the trophy back. Years later, I had a copy made and presented it to Ron at the McLaren factory."

Should Hamilton finish first at Monza, he is unlikely to indulge in such munificence for the benefit of what will undoubtedly be an adoring crowd. But who knows what he might do with the winner's medal presented by Mohammed Ben Sulayem. MBS had been briskly dismissed by Lewis in the Silverstone parc fermé when



If Ferrari-bound Hamilton, who last won at Monza in 2018 (below), is in the same mood as Prost was in 1989, one of Ben Sulayem's 'gold medals' could be launched into the crowd...



DENNIS FLUNG THE WINNING CONSTRUCTOR'S CUP AT PROST'S FEET AND STORMED OFF

proffered cringeworthy congratulations by the same hand that had brushed the Abu Dhabi episode under the Place de la Concorde carpet. Here was further evidence that the 2021 championship wound runs deep and fuels Hamilton's desire to claim a record-breaking eighth title. But with Ferrari?

The wisdom of the move was questioned during a press conference at Silverstone. Would Hamilton have made the same decision had the Mercedes been as competitive at the end of 2023 as it is now? An uncharacteristically curt 'Yes', followed by a forced smile and obvious disinterest

in the remainder of proceedings, suggested the question had already crossed his mind. It's quite the conundrum for Lewis going into Monza: he wants to win in front of the Tifosi – but needs to see a competitive Ferrari driver (or two) up there with him, just for peace of mind going forward.

Prost had no such worries. There was a Ferrari driver (Gerhard Berger) alongside in 1989. Prost's cup was running over, both metaphorically and physically – to the horror of his boss. The worst that can happen this year is for Lewis to toss MBS's gold faux Olympic medal into the crowd – and for someone to throw it back.



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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13

THE HUNGARIAN GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS

1 Team orders controversy overshadows Piastri's maiden win

The Hungarian Grand Prix was an historic occasion. Not only was it McLaren's first one-two for over three seasons, it was also the first GP won by a driver born this century. But the nature of how Oscar Piastri registered his maiden win will be remembered longer than the statistical achievement.

The reality is that Lando Norris was ordered to let his McLaren team-mate past, but only after increasingly desperate entreaties from his race engineer, Will Joseph, to be a good team player. For a long time it looked as if Norris would disobey the instruction – one period of silence even prompted a 'radio check' instruction from Joseph to establish whether Lando could hear him – but with two laps to go he eventually relented. The circumstances rather cast a pall over Piastri's victory and brought the spotlight back onto McLaren's race management – especially the sequencing of the final pitstops which led to Norris taking the lead from his team-mate before being prevailed upon to hand it back.

An important factor in much of the seemingly aberrant decision-making up and down the grid

was the difficulty of overtaking at the Hungaroring. Even with DRS on seemingly every section vaguely resembling a straight, the past two or three editions of this grand prix have been redolent of the 1980s. From pole, Norris made another poor start (similar to Spain, with an imperfect shift into second) and was passed by his team-mate into Turn 1 despite making a ruthless chop across Piastri's bows. He then had to contend with Max Verstappen looming on the other side of him. Norris lost the race at this moment.

Piastri led initially from Verstappen – though the manner of Max's pass on Norris, by running very wide at Turn 1 and then chopping straight back on at barely abated speed, drew the attention of race control. This led to the first of many feisty radio exchanges as Verstappen refused to give the position back, claiming Norris had forced him off (not so; Norris clearly had nowhere else to go, given the presence of the other McLaren on the inside).

"Our recommendation is you let this go, we can talk about it later," said Max's race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase, in the knowledge that a penalty was imminent.

Before capitulating Max huffed: "OK, so you can just drive people off the track then? You can tell the FIA that's how we're gonna race from now onwards – just driving people off the road."

In the final stops McLaren pitted second-placed Norris first and, with a powerful undercut, he emerged ahead of Oscar with 22 laps of the race remaining. "Re-establish the order at your convenience," said Joseph to Norris, who then appeared to interpret this command quite liberally, hammering his Pirellis to extend the lead.

What followed was pure soap opera and it played out unedifyingly on the broadcast as Joseph repeatedly tried to negotiate a swap of positions, reminding Norris both of the instruction and the unnecessary stress he was subjecting his tyres to in the high-energy Turns 4 and 11. Lando's replies were laced with sass as he lobbied to be allowed to keep the lead.

Joseph's final pitch elicited the response the team wanted: "Lando. There are five laps to go. The way to win a championship is not by yourself, it's with the team. You're going to need Oscar and you're going to need us. If there is a late Safety



McLaren's decision to pit Norris first, instead of leader Piastri, meant Oscar's maiden GP victory only came after a lot of fraught radio messages

PICTURES: GLENN DUNBAR; MICHAEL POTTS



There were smiles all round at the customary post-race team shoot, but imagine the faces had Norris not handed the place to Piastri...

Car, it's going to make this very awkward [because no overtaking is allowed]. Please do it now."

Afterwards there was an acknowledgement that the team had, in Norris's words, "made things way too hard for ourselves". The decision to pit Norris first was the right thing to do, since Lewis Hamilton had stopped relatively early (on lap 40) for his final set of tyres and was chipping away at the gap between him and Lando. Meanwhile Red Bull was trying to build a tyre offset for Verstappen by delaying his final stop. Pitting Norris first avoided him potentially losing track position to the Mercedes and then coming under attack from Max late on if he struggled to re-pass Lewis.

A slip at the final stop was all it would have taken and, in team boss Andrea Stella's words, "I don't want in a race like today that the responsibility goes to the pitcrew."

Thus the decision to preserve a McLaren 1-2 and re-establish the order later. But it looked different viewed through the prism of emotion rather than logic.

"Things always go through your mind because you've got to be selfish in this sport at times," said Norris after the chequered flag. "You've got to think of yourself. I'm also a team player, so my mind was going pretty crazy at the time."

2 Did the 'right' driver win?

When Oscar Piastri crossed the line he became only the fifth Australian to win a world championship F1 race after Jack Brabham, Alan Jones, Mark Webber and Daniel Ricciardo. He did so with none of the hysteria or wailing emotion which drivers have been known to show on such occasions.

Piastri, 23, is a remarkably laid-back fellow, and his obvious talent is why there was such a wrangle two summers ago to hire him.

After helping secure McLaren's first front-row lockout since Brazil 2012, Piastri managed to pull out a five second lead over his team-mate at the Hungaroring. But on lap 34 he ran wide at the high-speed Turn 11 and the margin fell to 1.5s. He made another mistake after his final pitstop when he dropped a wheel in the gravel on the exit of Turn 12.

As outlined above, McLaren had solid reasons to pit Norris first and then employ team orders to restore the previous running order after Lando benefitted from the undercut. But it's always difficult to ask a driver to give up position – see

further down the grid, where Aston Martin's drivers fell out after Fernando Alonso gave way to Lance Stroll so he could attack the driver in front, then Stroll refused to give the place back when that attack failed.

While McLaren's call was the best decision to achieve the 1-2 for the team – and the 43 points which enabled it to leapfrog Ferrari for second in the constructors' championship – such obvious stage management obviously played badly in the grandstands and the wider fan community. Imagine, though, the outrage if McLaren had left the drivers as they were. While this scenario, too, had compelling logic – Norris is Verstappen's closest challenger in the drivers' standings and would have been closer still but for team and driver fumbles in recent races – it would have poisoned the well of intra-team relations. As a multi-billion-dollar high-stakes global business, the world championship has moved far beyond the era of amicable gentlemanliness exhibited when Peter Collins handed his car over to Juan Manuel Fangio, sacrificing his own title chances, in the 1956 season finale.

Or do echoes of that remain?

"I had full trust in everyone in the team, including Lando, that [the switch] would happen," said Piastri. ▶



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13



PICTURES: SAM BLOXHAM; ZAK MAUGER; ANDY HONE

Verstappen was getting increasingly frustrated behind Hamilton when he went for an ambitious move into Turn 1 on lap 62

3 If you can keep your head while all around are losing theirs

Another perspective on Max Verstappen's supposed sleep deprivation-induced stropiness is that rancour was in evidence up and down the grid rather than being confined to the cockpit of the number one car. Perhaps the reality is that scheduling five races over six weekends has resulted in a punishing travel and working schedule which has put previously harmonious relationships under strain.

The last time McLaren finished first and second (at Monza 2021), the race was marred by a collision between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen. History repeated itself in Hungary when the pair made contact at Turn 1, on lap 62, while battling for third place.

"He moved under braking!" squawked Max, prompting his normally ice-cool engineer to respond: "I'm not going to get into a radio fight with other teams, Max. It's childish on the radio, childish."

Hamilton was racing without the company of team-mate George Russell, who had been

eliminated in Q1 (parenthetically, Russell was also in the grip of grumpiness, initially telling the team "this is on me" before publicly roasting Mercedes for sending him out too early in the partially wet session and without enough fuel). Despite his own loudly voiced misgivings about tyre choice, Lewis had undercut Max for third place at the first stops and then crept close enough to Norris to worry the McLaren pitwall.

He then enraged Max with some tough but fair defending as the Red Bull came back at him on fresher tyres late on. Frustration then got the better of Max as he sent a late lunge up the inside at Turn 1, arriving fully locked up as Hamilton went for the apex. Lewis went on to claim his 200th podium while Max survived his hard landing to finish fifth.

Another beneficiary of this incident was Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who drove a quietly excellent race. In stark contrast to the chafing and effing and blinding going on elsewhere, Leclerc's race engineer encouraged his charge with praise throughout for managing his tyres perfectly. Had the two McLarens taken each other out, Prost-and-Senna-style, and the Hamilton-Verstappen contretemps worked out differently, Charles would have been a candidate for the win.

4 All we hear is radio ga-ga

There is a small, dark room inside Formula 1's TV operations centre at Biggin Hill, near London. Within, it's the responsibility of two people surrounded by monitors to listen to every single radio message being transmitted between pitwall and cockpit of the 20 drivers. Anything interesting is forwarded to the director, who decides whether to broadcast it to a worldwide audience.

One of the two 'radio message' employees is responsible for transcribing the audio and, on a visit to Biggin Hill, *GP Racing* once asked whether he would consider adding an 'f' to the beginning of an asterisked-out word, the better to understand which expletive was being shouted.

There were no ambiguities in Hungary as Max Verstappen turned the airwaves blue with almost continuous expletive-laden rants at his long-suffering engineer, Gianpiero 'GP' Lambiase. The complaints included, but were not limited to, Red Bull's apparent capitulation to race control after the Turn 1 incident; the brakes on his RB20,

its understeer balance and the effectiveness of its newly installed update package; and a race strategy which sacrificed track position in order to build a tyre offset at the end of the race. Afterwards, Max was unapologetic at the language used and, indeed, said that those critical of his behaviour “can all fuck off”.

There were those who felt Verstappen’s tetchiness and scrappy race were consequences of sleep deprivation after he stayed up until 3am sim racing and then arose early for more. Perhaps, but he’s also sim raced at night and won comfortably ‘for real’ afterwards. More likely he was frustrated by events which he perceives as outside his control; in adding performance to the RB20, Red Bull has lost some of the benign nature which characterised the car’s predecessors. It’s harder to set up, has a narrower optimal window, and doesn’t like bumpy circuits or those which require a lot of kerb-hopping to find a lap time. The Hungaroring was therefore not ideal from that point of view – and neither was the understeer balance which had to be dialled in to preserve the rear tyres.

5 Are we cool, Daniel?

For a second consecutive weekend the embattled Sergio Pérez did his career few favours by crashing out of Q1, and speculation began to mount about the existence of a performance clause in his contract that would enable Red Bull to show him the door during the summer break.

Aside from the hovering presence of reserve driver Liam Lawson, the most obvious candidates as replacement are those in the junior team, RB, and the situation there is anything but clear cut. Yuki Tsunoda also suffered a big shunt in qualifying. When Yuki suggested it would be “weird” if he wasn’t in contention for a seat in the



Verstappen was unhappy with his car at the Hungaroring and his grumpiness over the radio was patently evident to all

A-team, Red Bull’s consultant Helmut Marko urged the Japanese driver to “wait and see”.

But what of Daniel Ricciardo? He too was feeling the pressure after the Hungarian Grand Prix. A poor strategy ruined his race and he was upset afterwards: “On the in-lap I was waiting for ‘Sorry, we fucked up.’ And I didn’t get it,” said Ricciardo. “So that made me even more angry.”

Starting from ninth, Daniel was jumped by Alex Albon and Kevin Magnussen on the opening lap as they enjoyed the benefit of softer tyres. But both of them pitted on the sixth lap to get off them – while, inexplicably, RB called Ricciardo in to cover them off. A driver of his experience should probably have refused (he claims that it was a very last-minute call). This left him in a DRS train with no hope of regaining a points-paying position.

Meanwhile Pérez, from 16th on the grid, drove what team boss Christian Horner described as his “strongest race since China” to seventh place.

Ricciardo’s race did nothing to further his claims on Pérez’s Red Bull seat but the Australian felt let down by RB on strategy



RESULTS ROUND 13

HUNGARORING / 21.07.24 / 70 LAPS



1st	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	1h38m01.989s
2nd	Lando Norris	McLaren	+2.141s
3rd	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+14.880s
4th	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+19.686s
5th	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	+21.349s
6th	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+23.073s
7th	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+39.792s
8th	George Russell	Mercedes	+42.368s
9th	Yuki Tsunoda	RB	+77.259s
10th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+77.976s
11th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+82.460s
12th	Daniel Ricciardo	RB	+1 lap
13th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+1 lap
14th	Alex Albon	Williams	+1 lap
15th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+1 lap
16th	Valtteri Bottas	Stake	+1 lap
17th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+1 lap
18th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+1 lap
19th	Zhou Guanyu	Stake	+1 lap

Retirements		
Pierre Gasly	Alpine	33 laps/hydraulics

Fastest lap	
George Russell	1m20.305s on lap 55

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED

Hard (C3)

Medium (C4)

Soft (C5)

Inter

Wet

CLIMATE

AIR TEMP

TRACK TEMP

Sunny

33°C

48°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	265pts	11 Hülkenberg	22pts
2 Norris	189pts	12 Tsunoda	22pts
3 Leclerc	162pts	13 Ricciardo	11pts
4 Sainz	154pts	14 Bearman	6pts
5 Piastri	149pts	15 Gasly	6pts
6 Hamilton	125pts	16 Magnussen	5pts
7 Pérez	124pts	17 Albon	4pts
8 Russell	116pts	18 Ocon	3pts
9 Alonso	45pts	19 Guanyu	0pts
10 Stroll	24pts	20 Sargeant	0pts
		21 Bottas	0pts





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14

THE BELGIAN GP
IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS



Russell's one-stop strategy looked to have paid off, much to Hamilton's chagrin, but when George was stripped of the win, the spoils went to Lewis



PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; SAM BLOXHAM; ZAK MAUGER

1 Mercedes match goes to extra time

Lewis Hamilton was clearly perturbed he'd finished less than half a second behind Mercedes team-mate George Russell in the Belgian Grand Prix. From the near-perfect race he'd just executed, you could sense he felt injustice that he hadn't just taken win number 105.

"The car came alive and I was really surprised to, firstly, get into the lead and then be pulling away," said Hamilton, who has found an extra gear since his brilliant Silverstone win. "I felt fully under control and I've not had that for years. I had plenty of pace and tyres... and it just didn't end up as planned."

He very nearly sat in the middle, winner's high chair in the pre-podium green room. And was silent as he watched the replay of race highlights unfold on the screen. You could imagine his mindset: *Why hadn't I one-stopped as well? The tyres felt good. Why had the team chosen to put George on that strategy when pre-race, three stops were discussed? Why couldn't I get past him in the final laps?*

Two hours after the chequered flag, Hamilton was given the victory, as Russell's Mercedes was discovered to be 1.5kg underweight. *Was that why he was faster than me?*

In the early stages it was Hamilton who had made the running from third on the grid, passing Sergio Pérez's Red Bull and then Charles Leclerc's Ferrari while Russell languished in fifth behind the McLaren of Oscar Piastri. The big unknown was tyre degradation, since various areas of the track had been resurfaced and bad weather had curtailed practice. Russell switched from medium-compound Pirellis to hards at the end of lap 10, while Hamilton did the same the next time around to guard against a possible undercut from Leclerc. Lewis had already reported that his tyres were beginning to grain.

So the race proceeded according to Pirelli's prognostication that it was a definite two-stopper – until, on lap 27, Russell radioed his engineer to "think about one stop." In clear air, the degradation on the hard tyre was much less than Friday's running had indicated. Russell likened it to driving on the simulator, where he was in a groove, lapping at a quick pace in clear air. As others made their second stops he naturally inherited track position.

On the giant Jumbotron positioned at the bottom of Eau Rouge, George was monitoring the gaps to his two-stopping rivals. They weren't catching him. It was initially a gamble, since none of the other frontrunners had followed suit. And after 44 hard-fought laps, it seemed to have been the right call. Behind the two Mercedes, McLaren's Oscar Piastri was closing in fast. All three crossed the line separated by 1.173s. It was the closest non-Safety Car finish between the top three for eight years.

"The grip was improving, but I was still questioning why nobody else did it," admitted Russell. "I thought I must be missing something as everyone was still peeling into the pits."

Pirelli explained after the race that it had expected a much bigger pace difference between the two compounds, but track evolution put the hard on par with the medium. Its greater resistance to graining added up to a decisive advantage and opened the door for the one-stop strategy.

It was quite a turnaround for Mercedes after a less-than-satisfactory Friday. With rain forecast for Saturday, it decided to row back on a number of changes – including the new floor it had brought to Spa. It also made a mechanical change to the setup



Piastri was in with a shout of a second consecutive victory but an error at his second stop (below) didn't help his cause



another decent score. But could Piastri have won?

Like Russell, Piastri found additional pace when running in clear air, lapping up to a second faster than he had prior to his second stop. The difference, though, was that Piastri was in contention for the win and his strategy was optimum for that mission. Russell couldn't afford another stop since it would put him back where he'd been in the opening laps – behind the McLaren.

The only issue for Piastri was he lost two seconds on his second stop when he overshot his marks and hit his front jack man – who took it in his stride. Oscar was stationary for 4.4s and, since the total race time between the top three was so marginal, this gave rise to speculation that he might have been able to challenge Hamilton harder without the delay. He had also lost time – a second a lap, he reckoned – running behind Leclerc early on.

Trusting the weather forecasts for dry conditions on race day, McLaren persisted with lower-downforce rear wing settings on Saturday, accepting a sub-par performance in qualifying as a trade-off for better speed on race day. However, as Norris also found when out of position, overtaking wasn't as easy at Spa as in previous years – especially now the DRS zone between Raidillon and Les Combes had been reduced by 75 metres.

Although Norris outqualified Piastri, he wasn't as comfortable with his car across the Spa weekend. He also scuppered his chances of a podium when he ran wide at La Source on the opening lap.

He picked up understeer as he accelerated out of the corner and dropped his left-hand wheels onto the gravel, falling from fourth to seventh as the pack approached Eau Rouge. Thereafter, he was out of contention. It isn't the first time Norris has made a mistake off the line or into Turn 1 this year and will want to improve his starts for the remaining 10 races of the season. Maybe Zak Brown should offer another motivational wager? ▶

which helped cure the understeer in sector 2.

But the one-stop may have contributed to Russell's disqualification. When weighed after the race, his W15 was on the 798kg limit. Once 2.8 litres of fuel had been drawn from the tank to provide the mandatory sample it weighed 796.5kg.

Mercedes assured the stewards it was a genuine mistake but, in the absence of missing bodywork items, there were no mitigating circumstances to head off disqualification.

"We expect the loss of rubber from the one-stop was a contributing factor, and we'll work to understand how it happened," said trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin. "We won't be making any excuses, though. It is not good enough and we need to make sure it doesn't happen again."

Pirelli confirmed tyres can shed around a kilogramme of weight over the course of a stint – which is why engineers remind their drivers to 'pick up' spent rubber on their way back to the pits (not possible at Spa, where the cars don't do another lap after taking the flag). Although it's worth noting Fernando Alonso, who finished eighth on a one-stopper, didn't suffer the same legality issue.

"We have to take disqualification on the chin,"

said team boss Toto Wolff. "To lose a 1-2 is frustrating and we can only apologise to George, who drove such a strong race."

Hamilton did take win 105, but it was a bittersweet victory.

2 McLaren is still in the ascendant

McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown was seen wearing a papaya-coloured mohawk wig on race day of the Belgian GP. This was the result of a wager with Hungary winner Oscar Piastri. After adding a second tattoo to his arm, following Lando Norris's first victory in Miami, Zak admits he needs to stop having bets with his drivers.

It says something about the team that after a relatively poor weekend by recent standards it still out-scored Red Bull. Having obtained more points than any team over the last eight races, and with 10 consecutive podiums, the second for Piastri (and fifth for Norris) after Russell's disqualification was



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14



Ad eaqui quas est, tempore ptatquoditi berovit, sa quidebisquo eumendi tatur, nihilitat expliam, quae. Daes dem quatecatem ulpa

Pérez was only seventh in a race supposed to be crucial to his Red Bull future, but has been told his seat is safe for the rest of the year

PICTURES: ZAK MAUGER; SAM BLOXHAM; ANDY HONE

3 Losing the penalty shootout

In the past two seasons, Red Bull has chosen Spa as the ideal venue to take a grid penalty in exchange for adding new gearbox or power unit parts to the pool and 2024 was no different. Max Verstappen ran a new engine and took a 10-place grid penalty, so his pole time netted him 11th on the grid. An impressive Charles Leclerc inherited P1.

Alongside Leclerc on the front-row was the beleaguered Sergio Pérez. And here was a golden opportunity for the Mexican to display some of that fortitude when he finds himself on the ropes. He'd done enough in qualifying to squeak into Q3 – by just 0.003s – and this was a chance to redeem himself in the wake of increasing pressure.

Unfortunately, Pérez did himself no favours and slipped backwards throughout the race. He pitted on the penultimate lap to fit new tyres for the fastest-lap point. That option falls onto the driver who has no chance of catching the car in front (in this case Carlos Sainz) and is miles ahead of the car behind (Alonso). The proverbial no-man's land.

Given the performance convergence across the top teams, Verstappen was realistic about not achieving a hat-trick of Spa wins this year. Sunday was a case of damage limitation. The team had also decided to run with extra wing, in a bid to preserve tyre life while battling in the 'dirty air' midfield.

Lando Norris's poor start contributed to him falling behind Max in the pitstop sequence and Verstappen was delighted to have been classified ahead of his nearest points rival. Across the line just 1.3 seconds covered the battle for fourth place as Leclerc just about held off Max and Lando for the final stint. Before they arrived on the Ferrari's rear wing, though, Norris had been unable to capitalise on the advantage conferred by his lower-downforce setup.

As for Pérez, his seventh place – three places behind Max – was a difficult performance to find merit in. Speaking to Sky Germany after the race, Red Bull's consultant Helmut Marko said: "Sergio had the opportunity to take a good result from second place. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. In the last stint, he completely collapsed. What looked so positive in qualifying unfortunately didn't materialise in the race."

On the Monday after Spa, his drive at Red Bull

was confirmed secure for the remainder of the year. Keeping Checo is an easy option. But deciding to part with him isn't a difficult decision either.

4 Ferrari disappointed with outright pace

The Belgian GP was probably Charles Leclerc's best performance since his Monaco win. After a brilliant qualifying, where he inherited pole after Max's grid drop, the Ferrari man held off both Verstappen and Norris to take fourth on the road (which became third with Russell's disqualification).

In contrast, team-mate Carlos Sainz couldn't get enough heat into his inters for his qualifying run and started the race in seventh. From there the team put him on an alternate strategy as one of only two drivers to start the race on the hard tyre (Zhou Guanyu in the Stake was the other).

It meant Sainz enjoyed seven laps in the lead of the race, but he made a mistake on lap 16, running wide on the exit of Stavelot and losing three seconds. In hindsight he should have probably stayed out and gambled on a one stop, but



Spa represented a much better performance for Leclerc but his Ferrari didn't have the race pace to capitalise on pole position

ultimately he pitted twice and wound up sixth.

At least there was some good news on the day after the race for Carlos. His future is now secure with Williams from next year.

5 All change, please

There were more driver developments at Spa, as Frenchman Esteban Ocon was confirmed as a Haas driver for next year. The good news had a positive effect on his performance at Spa as he outclassed his compatriot Pierre Gasly.

Competing in Alpine's one-off livery to promote the upcoming *Deadpool & Wolverine* film (a

reminder here, that actor Ryan Reynolds is an minority investor in the team) Ocon reached Q3 and took Alpine's first points since Austria with ninth place. Gasly was complaining of an overheating issue and a lack of straight-line speed and could manage only 13th.

As well as a new look on-track, in the Spa-Francorchamps paddock, Alpine also unveiled a brand new motorhome. Its predecessor was venerable indeed, having started out as Toyota's in 2002. So this was a long overdue replacement. Speaking of which, the team is preparing to welcome its third team principal in 12 months, as Bruno Famin confirmed he would step away from his current role at the end of August and focus solely on the goings-on at Renault's Viry-Châtillon HQ in Paris.

Ocon confirmed in Spa that he was leaving Alpine for Haas. The French team has also announced yet another new team principal



RESULTS ROUND 14

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS / 28.07.24 / 44 LAPS



DSQ	George Russell Mercedes	1h19m57.040s
1st	Lewis Hamilton Mercedes	+0.526s
2nd	Oscar Piastri McLaren	+1.173s
3rd	Charles Leclerc Ferrari	+8.549s
4th	Max Verstappen Red Bull	+9.226s
5th	Lando Norris McLaren	+9.850s
6th	Carlos Sainz Ferrari	+19.795s
7th	Sergio Pérez Red Bull	+43.195s
8th	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin	+49.963s
9th	Esteban Ocon Alpine	+52.552s
10th	Daniel Ricciardo RB	+54.926s
11th	Lance Stroll Aston Martin	+63.011s
12th	Alex Albon Williams	+63.651s
13th	Pierre Gasly Alpine	+64.365s
14th	Kevin Magnussen Haas	+66.631s
15th	Valtteri Bottas Stake	+70.638s
16th	Yuki Tsunoda RB	+76.737s
17th	Logan Sargeant Williams	+86.057s
18th	Nico Hülkenberg Haas	+88.833s

Retirements

Zhou Guanyu Stake	5 laps/electrics
-------------------	------------------

Fastest lap

Sergio Pérez 1m20.305s on lap 55

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Sunny	23°C	43°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen 277pts	11 Hülkenberg 22pts
2 Norris 199pts	12 Tsunoda 22pts
3 Leclerc 177pts	13 Ricciardo 12pts
4 Piastri 167pts	14 Bearman 6pts
5 Sainz 162pts	15 Gasly 6pts
6 Hamilton 150pts	16 Magnussen 5pts
7 Pérez 131pts	17 Ocon 5pts
8 Russell 116pts	18 Albon 4pts
9 Alonso 49pts	19 Guanyu 0pts
10 Stroll 24pts	20 Sargeant 0pts
	21 Bottas 0pts





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15

DUTCH GP

23-25 August 2024
Zandvoort

PICTURES: SIMON GALLOWAY; STEVEN TEE; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDREDGE



THE MAIN EVENT

Arguably the only racing circuit to feel the effects of the wind off the North Sea – we reckon Snetterton, Cadwell Park, Croft, Knockhill and Padborg Park are a bit too far inland – Zandvoort nestles among the dunes adjoining the Zuid-Kennemerland national park. The town with which it shares a name was a fishing village until the tourist trade discovered it in the 19th century. In World War II it was cleared and partially demolished as part of Nazi Germany's Atlantic Wall to fortify the coastline from France to Norway.

While street races had been held in town before the war, the access roads behind the coastal fortifications (built by forced labour provided by the French puppet government) was the perfect not-quite-blank slate on which to build a racetrack. 1927 Le Mans winner and *Autocar* sports editor Sydney 'Sammy' Davis was engaged by the Dutch national auto club as a consultant and Circuit Zandvoort was born. It held GPs between 1950 and 1985 until reappearing in 2021.

2023 RACE RECAP

Two bursts of rain defined the race. Sergio Pérez looked to have redeemed himself for qualifying seventh when he took the lead, having pitted for intermediates at the first sign of rain on the opening lap. Those who delayed were punished as the downpour proved more intense than expected.

But polesitter Max Verstappen retook the lead when the track dried and Pérez stayed out too long hoping for another shower. More rain did arrive later – enough to prompt a red flag, after which Max motored to victory.

KEY CORNER: TURN 3

Named after the early Zandvoort manager and legendary circuit designer John Hugenholtz, this looping corner is banked – which gives drivers at least two distinct racing lines through it.



RACE DATA

Venue Circuit Zandvoort
First GP 1952
Number of laps 72
Circuit length 2.646 miles
Race distance 190.504 miles
Lap record 1m11.097s
Lewis Hamilton (2021)
F1 races held 33
Winners from pole 15
Pirelli compounds C1, C2, C3

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level Medium
Cooling requirement Medium
Full throttle 61%
Top speed 192mph
Average speed 133mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 23 August
Practice 1 11:30-12:30
Practice 2 15:00-16:00
Saturday 24 August
Practice 3 10:30-11:30
Qualifying 14:00-15:00
Sunday 25 August
Race 14:00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights Channel 4

THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2022
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2021
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



1985
Niki
Lauda
McLaren



1984
Alain
Prost
McLaren



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 16

ITALIAN GP

30 August-1 September 2024
Monza

RACE DATA

Venue Autodromo Nazionale di Monza
First GP 1950
Number of laps 53
Circuit length 3.599 miles
Race distance 190.586 miles
Lap record 1m21.046s Rubens Barrichello (2004)
F1 races held 73
Winners from pole 25
Pirelli compounds C3, C4, C5

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level Low
Cooling requirement Medium
Full throttle 75%
Top speed 220mph
Average speed 157mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 30 August
Practice 1 12:30-13:30
Practice 2 16:00-17:00
Saturday 31 August
Practice 3 11:30-12:30
Qualifying 15:00-16:00
Sunday 1 September
Race 14:00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights Channel 4

THE MAIN EVENT

Europe's largest walled park is a legacy of French occupation of northern Italy, commissioned by Eugène Rose de Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson. Fortunately it was completed in 1808, before Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo signalled the end of the first French Empire. The royal palace within the grounds predates the park and was later occupied by the house of Savoy when Italy was united and declared a kingdom in 1861.

Just four months elapsed between the start of work on Monza's circuit and its official opening in September 1922. In an era when most racing took place on public roads, Monza was just the third permanent racetrack to be built. We hesitate to say 'completed' because Monza has been a work in progress ever since – the banked section was quickly deemed too dangerous, abandoned, then rebuilt in the 1950s and abandoned again, while the road course has sprouted chicanes to control top speeds.

2023 RACE RECAP

Carlos Sainz thrilled the passionate Tifosi by annexing pole in his Ferrari as runaway championship leader Max Verstappen dipped a wheel into the gravel on his fastest quali lap. But come race day the normal order was restored, despite a wait after Yuki Tsunoda's AlphaTauri broke down on the formation lap, delaying the start.

Despite a stout defence by Sainz, Verstappen quickly got by and was never headed again except during the pitstop cycle. His 10th consecutive win broke the previous record of nine held by Sebastian Vettel.

KEY CORNER: TURN 7

The second Lesmo corner, slightly banked, is the arbiter of speed down the back straight at Monza and has now become a key area to attack in the new ground-effect era.



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2022
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2021
Daniel
Ricciardo
McLaren



2020
Pierre
Gasly
AlphaTauri



2019
Charles
Leclerc
Ferrari



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 17

AZERBAIJAN GP

13-15 September 2024

Baku City Circuit



PICTURE: ANDY HONE. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDRIIDGE



RACE DATA

Circuit Baku City Circuit

First GP 2016

Number of laps 51

Circuit length 3.730 miles

Race distance 190.169 miles

Lap record 1m43.009s

Charles Leclerc (2019)

F1 races held 7

Winners from pole 2

Pirelli compounds C3, C4, C5

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level Low

Cooling requirement Medium

Full throttle 61%

Top speed 220mph

Average speed 130mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 13 September

Practice 1 10:30-11:30

Practice 2 14:00-15:00

Saturday 14 September

Practice 3 09:30-10:30

Sprint 13:00-14:00

Sunday 15 September

Race 12:00

Live coverage Sky Sports F1

Highlights Channel 4

THE MAIN EVENT

Azerbaijan's location on the west coast of the Caspian Sea has led to geographic disagreement over whether it is in Europe or Asia, one stirred up by the first race held in Baku being named the European GP, flushing out pedants everywhere. Whatever side of the debate you fall on, its location makes it windy. Which is handy, given one of Baku's signature features is a flag the size of a football pitch, suspended from the world's second tallest flagpole (it was the tallest when erected, but another size-conscious nation employed the architect to build a bigger one elsewhere).

The track combines a high-speed section – which beats Monza for top speeds – with a technical layout through the city streets and UNESCO-listed old town. There's no margin for error here so races are often incident-filled.

2023 RACE RECAP

In the last event held here before Baku was moved to a later slot in the calendar, this was the scene of the first sprint weekend of the 2023 season. Charles Leclerc topped the order in qualifying and the sprint shootout but was overhauled in both by Red Bull's Sergio Pérez.

In the sprint, Leclerc held off Pérez's team-mate Max Verstappen to hold second place but in the grand prix he had to settle for third, 21s in arrears. Max might have won but for unfortunate pitstop timing – he came in for new tyres a lap before Nyck de Vries shunted and brought out the Safety Car, handing Pérez a cheap stop. After this round Checo was just six points behind Max in the championship and thought he was in with a shout...

KEY CORNER: TURN 1

An epic hard stop at the end of a maximum-speed straight, this isn't the slowest corner on the track – so it's exceedingly tricky to judge the right entry speed and angle.



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023

Sergio

Pérez

Red Bull



2022

Max

Verstappen

Red Bull



2021

Sergio

Pérez

Red Bull



2019

Valtteri

Bottas

Mercedes



2018

Lewis

Hamilton

Mercedes



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GA 22£40,000	IO WWW£10,500
JN 3£65,000	I2 X£95,000
KII£250,000	X 300£45,000
I KBC£65,000	2 XB£85,000
282 LC£19,500	

A	AMY 65H£5,500
50 A£100,000	765 ANN£6,000
65 A£105,000	333 AS£18,000
A I58£33,000	I AXS£22,500
A 363£33,000	B
200 A£65,000	BAD 6E£8,500
GA55 ALX£1,500	BAJ 2£8,500
ALH 1£86,500	BAK 3E£7,500
ALX 2S£8,500	BAR 8IO£5,500
P90 AML£3,500	I55 BD£12,000
J500 AML£1,800	30 BG£25,000

6 BMH£15,000	33 GBD£13,000
MI BMH£1,250	77 GBD£12,000
W300 BMW£950	GG 2930£3,750
7 BPM£7,500	SIO GMX£300
2000 BU£5,500	GRX I£25,000
P9 BUY£1,500	I GTD£35,000
C	X2 GTD£1,300
I CAX£25,500	GUI 90£3,600
CDS I2£11,000	I GXX£28,000
2 CFG£18,500	H
CIO NOR£24,000	HA24 LLE£2,500
I975 CS£6,500	HD 700£9,000
CSE 289£2,500	H60 HEM£1,800
D	HD 700£9,000
DA17 REN£4,800	HEI2 CUT£4,800
DES 88£11,500	HNP 308£3,300
DES 2M£8,500	HNS II£25,000
DS 5I6£5,600	J
DS 8921£3,500	I974 JF£7,500
DUB 4IB£13,000	JH 58£40,000
E	JHB 50£12,500
80 EL£10,500	JJI9 JJJ£2,500
EIO TTT£2,500	JOP IP£3,500
F	JLT 93£9,800
FFI9 FFF£3,500	K
FJ IO£30,000	90 KA£55,000
52 FJH£10,500	32 KAY£12,000
J80 FMC£1,500	8 KBC£9,500
I FNN£18,800	X23 KDA£750
G	444 KDP£4,200
I7 G£125,000	KHA IN£35,000
I6 GA£19,500	55 KXA£4,500
I04 GA£8,500	L
250 GC£12,500	L4 BEL£11,500
3 GEO£36,500	LBG I4£6,500
GEI2 ERD£6,500	LES I68£5,500
38 GG£35,000	LI36 RTY£6,500
I GGX£17,500	LL11 LLM£950
II GGX£9,500	LOS 10£8,500

LOT 22£35,000	MAC 440£10,500
LYN 554Y£4,500	212 MAC£11,500
LYN 8IM£4,000	MAR I4X£40,000
M	2546 MD£4,500
MAC 440£10,500	996 MH£19,500
212 MAC£11,500	727 MJS£8,000
MAR I4X£40,000	MOR IX£9,500
2546 MD£4,500	MXI 52£1,500
996 MH£19,500	N
727 MJS£8,000	II66 NC£5,500
MOR IX£9,500	S330 NCK£700
MXI 52£1,500	NED 5N£3,500
O	HI NFO£1,000
60 OA£35,000	NO20 RTH£4,500
OEX 2£13,000	NRK 9£6,500
OEX II£11,500	P
I6 OLD£45,000	50I PD£10,500
I ONY£45,000	PHC 9£9,500
DI00 OOO£16,000	PHK 769£1,300
OEX 2£10,500	PIL 2003£950
OEX II£11,500	EIO PLA£900
L8 OOO£3,500	X6 PPD£700
OOO IX£12,800	

PTS I6£6,000	X50 RAH£1,600
R	RAW 777£8,500
X50 RAH£1,600	T600 RBJ£750
RAW 777£8,500	B3 RCC£1,000
T600 RBJ£750	RCH 85M£4,000
B3 RCC£1,000	REJ 3£10,800
RCH 85M£4,000	T22 RPB£950
REJ 3£10,800	I965 RR£18,000
T22 RPB£950	RR I00£185,000
I965 RR£18,000	RR20 RRR£2,800
RR I00£185,000	RRX I£55,000
RR20 RRR£2,800	RXX I£38,000
RRX I£55,000	44 RYR£5,500
RXX I£38,000	S
44 RYR£5,500	42I S£24,000
S	75I SA£9,000
42I S£24,000	N7 SAS£3,500
75I SA£9,000	J88 SAS£1,800
N7 SAS£3,500	SBJ 2£18,000
J88 SAS£1,800	SBJ I56£3,400
SBJ 2£18,000	3500 SE£11,000
SBJ I56£3,400	S7 SGO£1,500
3500 SE£11,000	A9 SGS£1,200
S7 SGO£1,500	SJ 2000£8,800
A9 SGS£1,200	TI2I SLY£750
SJ 2000£8,800	50 UND£125,000
TI2I SLY£750	V6 SOP£2,500
50 UND£125,000	SPY III£25,000
V6 SOP£2,500	X20 SXY£750
SPY III£25,000	T
X20 SXY£750	2222 TB£8,500
T	TEL 777£10,500
2222 TB£8,500	THT 775£3,500
TEL 777£10,500	U
THT 775£3,500	XIO UUU£700
U	X20 UUU£700
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P23 WRD£850	I4 WRT£10,500
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HOW TO WIN A GRAND PRIX

Author Bernie Collins

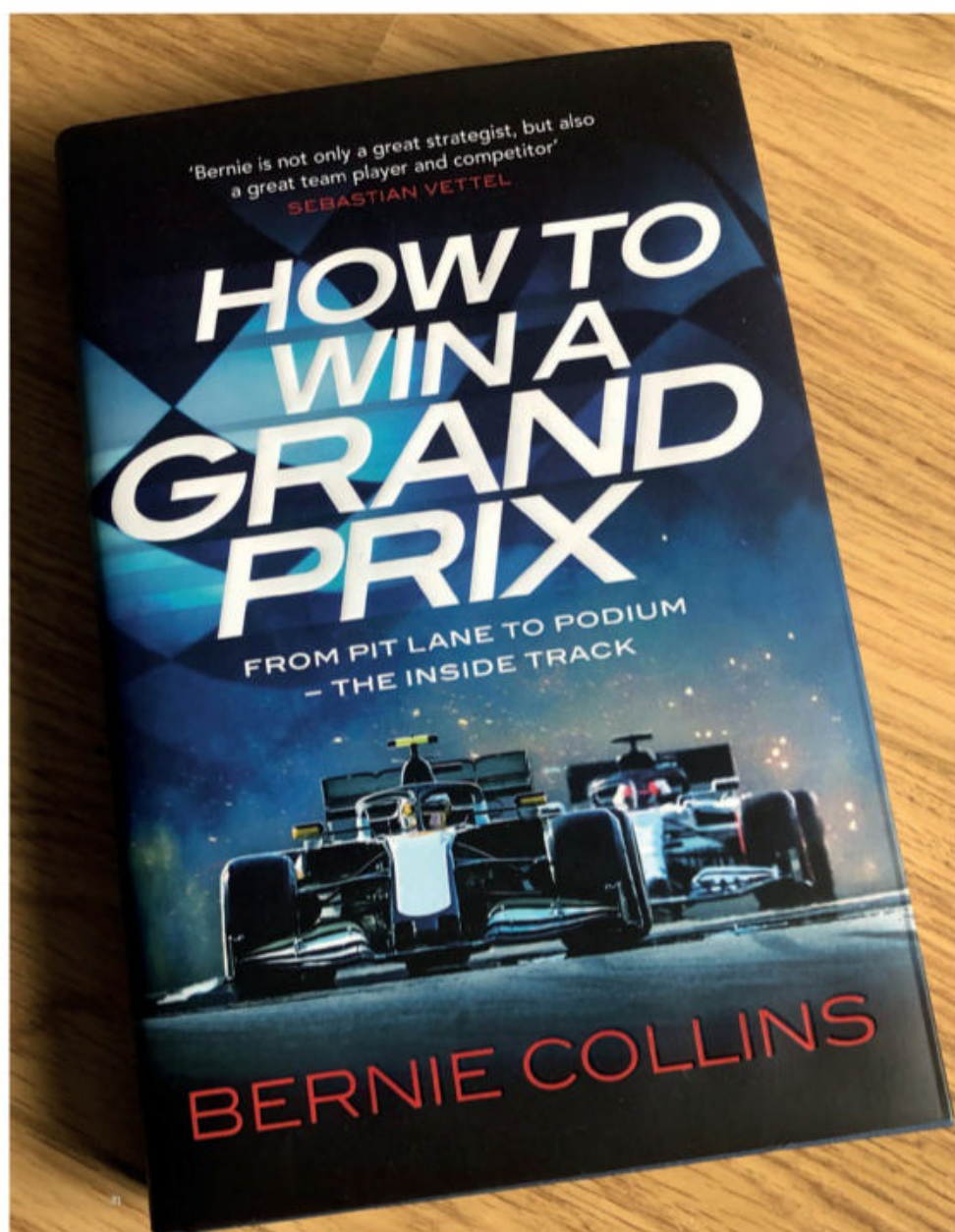
Price £22

quercusbooks.com

Sky Sports F1 subscribers will now be familiar with the County Fermanagh accent of Bernie Collins, formerly performance engineer to Jenson Button, latterly head of race strategy at Aston Martin. This book, written with *GP Racing* columnist Maurice Hamilton, is an intriguing mix of autobiography and race-engineering manual.

The journey from school through Formula Student to a first job with McLaren is threaded through with important life and career lessons –

indeed, it's fascinating to see how some competitors always seem to come armed with bigger and better tools, even in Formula Student. And there are intriguing insights into the subtle differences between F1 outfits, right down to how they managed their laundry. The meaty end of the book is the explainer of how F1 works, from designing the cars to managing them through a GP. It's highly pressurised and exhausting – as Collins explains when she reveals why she chose to leave the team environment...



BUFFALO TRACE BOURBON

Price from £21

buffalotracedistillery.com

Former Haas team principal Guenther Steiner was propelled to fame by his expletive-laden outbursts captured on Netflix's hit *Drive to Survive* show, and is now a personality in his own right with a second book on the way.

Since leaving Haas, Steiner has also become a brand ambassador for the American whiskey brand Buffalo Trace – which, like him, describes itself as “perfectly untamed”. The name alludes to the paths carved by buffalo herds as they roamed through the wilderness – paths which led American explorers and pioneers

to new frontiers.

In the UK the distillery's wares – which include the ‘standard’ Kentucky Straight Bourbon whiskey and Guenther's favourite, and the longer-aged Eagle Rare – are readily available online.

Earlier this year the company also opened a shop in London's Covent Garden where, during a recent personal appearance by Steiner, *GP Racing* was able to ratify the Straight Bourbon tasting notes: “Pleasantly sweet to the taste with notes of brown sugar and spice that give way to oak, toffee, dark fruit and anise.”



INSIDE OSCA

Author Carlo Cavicchi

Price £95

evropublishing.com

Officine Specializzata Costruzioni Automobili wasn't a name which tripped readily off the tongue in period but OSCA, as it was known, was founded by people who couldn't practically use their own family name. Bindo, Ernesto and Ettore Maserati were three of the four brothers who had run their eponymous car company before financial difficulties forced them to sell out to the industrialist Adolfo Orsi in 1937. They remained as employees before striking out on their own a decade later, initially

in a Bolognese shed.

The company is best remembered for its sportscars and road-going GTs, but it did produce a number of single-seaters for customers including Louis Chiron, who contested a handful of championship GPs in his OSCA 20. This history is lavishly illustrated, with a great many rare images, and features first-hand recollections from the likes of Maria Teresa de Filippis, for whom OSCA provided a stepping-stone to becoming the first woman to race in F1.



ASTON MARTIN F1 LEGO

Price £49.99

lego.com

Apparently the Brick Fest Live festival at the Birmingham NEC over the late-May bank holiday was a bit of a bust. Wipe away those memories with something you can do at home: assemble this officially licenced 'Speed Champions' Aston Martin Safety Car and AMR 23 set. We were delighted to learn that it was

designed by a man going by the name of Dan Squirrell.

Once assembled, the 564-piece kit measures more than 4cm high, 19cm long and 7cm wide. It comes with two mini figures; should you have difficulty identifying them, remember that if the Safety Car is leading the F1 car then the driver is probably Lance Stroll.





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MAX SHOULD TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT ONE MORE TIME

When Max Verstappen crossed the finish line in his RB19 at Suzuka last year, winning by 20 seconds over the next non-Red Bull car, few minds in Formula 1 might have imagined that, come the summer break, the 2024 season would have the widest race victory success spread in 12 years. Except, it seems, within Red Bull itself.

The team stunned F1 with the big changes to the upper aerodynamic surfaces of the RB20 compared with its illustrious predecessor. Its early season form – which should have been a clean sweep but for Verstappen's brake exploding and Sergio Pérez putting in the first of many underwhelming displays in Melbourne – suggested all were going to be carried before once again. But inside that sprawling Milton Keynes

case within Red Bull at the season's start?

Verstappen's head being turned towards a new squad (Mercedes) well before his expected current contract end in 2028 really happened, after all. So, the questions now become: was he agitating for an exit because, in addition to everything else that was going

on within Red Bull's management war, he really feared this wasn't the best place to be for much longer? Or was it that he hoped to beat impetus into car improvements given what he'd felt in the initial miles of the RB20's life? After the public criticism Verstappen delivered with unrelenting dressage-trainer-whipping sting in Hungary – when Red Bull's biggest in-season development package so far didn't deliver the gains he clearly wanted – we can see how that's a tactic he favours.

And there's now a very real possibility McLaren can overhaul Red Bull in the 2024 constructors' championship. This is given just how fast the orange squad was catching up after its Miami upgrades

worked so well – where in the sapping swamp heat your humble columnist was stunned to see just how much the MCL38 now looked like a Red Bull creation, sans the high-waisted cooling gulleys of the RB20 – and that it apparently has plenty more development ideas yet to deploy. All around Pérez imperilling a constructors' crown he's already cost Red Bull once, in 2021, by failing to get near Verstappen's points total. And now there's apparently no suitable replacements from a seemingly subdued and inconsistent driver stable.

Verstappen is too good to lose the drivers' title with such a big pre-summer-break points gap. But he's making mistakes taking the RB20 to limits he didn't need to find with the RB19. The rest are finally back with him. Although of course while congratulating McLaren, Mercedes and (to a lesser extent) Ferrari for finally getting things right-er, we should be castigating them for being so far off in late 2022 and in all of 2023 – during which F1 endured such tedium when the current excitement was possible all along.

"We expected the opposition to come earlier," Red Bull technical director Pierre Wache sagely noted back in July.

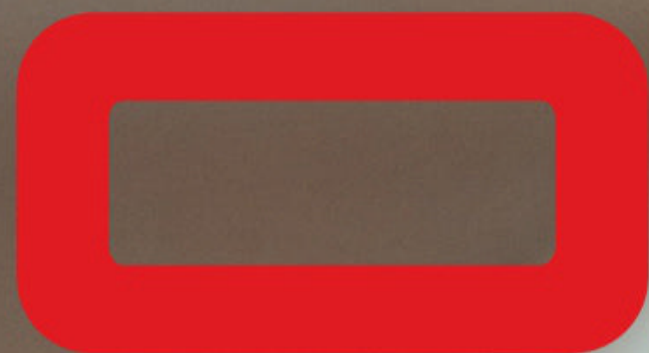
So, Red Bull knew all along. That doesn't make it the bad guy. If anything F1 should be thanking this massive drama factory for helping make 2024 so interesting after all.



Now other teams have caught Red Bull up, Verstappen has had to push the RB20 much harder

industrial-estate-cum-'campus', we now know that Red Bull had already realised its 2024 challenger hadn't made the gains its designers were predicting in high-speed corners. It had improved in lower-speed stuff but, like the RB19, this year's machine still hates kerbs – a big problem given F1's penchant for cash-stuffed city venues.

And so, faced with the dawning possibility of actual competition in 2024 as rival squads had the chance to catch up, which they duly took, perhaps this is a new dynamic to read into all the melodrama that surrounded a very sad and serious



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