

Max Verstappen Triple F1 world champion

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Max Verstappen is a force of nature – and so is Ash Sutton

Max Verstappen is a three-time Formula 1 world champion. And (whisper it), he was only born in 1997... Right, now that we're all feeling old, let's appreciate what a sensational talent he is, and what his and Red Bull's achievement represents.

It's 10 years since the excited chatter about the son of Jos Verstappen's impending first steps from a glittering karting career into cars. Scarcely has there been so much hype around a driver at that stage of their career, and never has it been more justified. You know the story – mega (if not title-winning) F3 season, signed at 16 for F1, impressive rookie campaign, fairytale first-time-out victory with Red Bull... and now this.

Many of us who feel old would prefer title number three to have been clinched on a Sunday at Watkins Glen rather than in the Qatari desert on a Saturday, before a tyre-regulated 'victory parade' in the GP itself. But those tyre dramas threw up their own quirks to the weekend, which included a sensational performance – and maiden F1 victory in the sprint race – for McLaren's Oscar Piastri. Alex Kalinauckas brings you the lowdown on p18.

One year after Verstappen's F1 debut, Ash Sutton took his first steps in the British Touring Car Championship. And, like the Dutchman, he has since become a force of nature in his own particular arena. Last weekend at Brands Hatch he drove his Alliance Racing Ford Focus to his record-equalling fourth crown, and achieved something rather special in the process. You can read all about that on p34.



MS

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Cover images

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PIT + PADDOCK

Marquez walks from Honda after 11 years, six titles

MOTOGP

Honda caused the biggest of MotoGP rider-market shocks last week when it announced a parting of the ways with Marc Marquez at the end of the 2023 season.

Marquez made his MotoGP debut with Honda in 2013 as the reigning Moto2 world champion. He finished third on his debut in Qatar, won second time out at the Circuit of The Americas, and went on to claim the world championship as a rookie, adding a second crown in 2014. He won four on the spin from 2016 to 2019, the last by a whopping margin of 151 points.

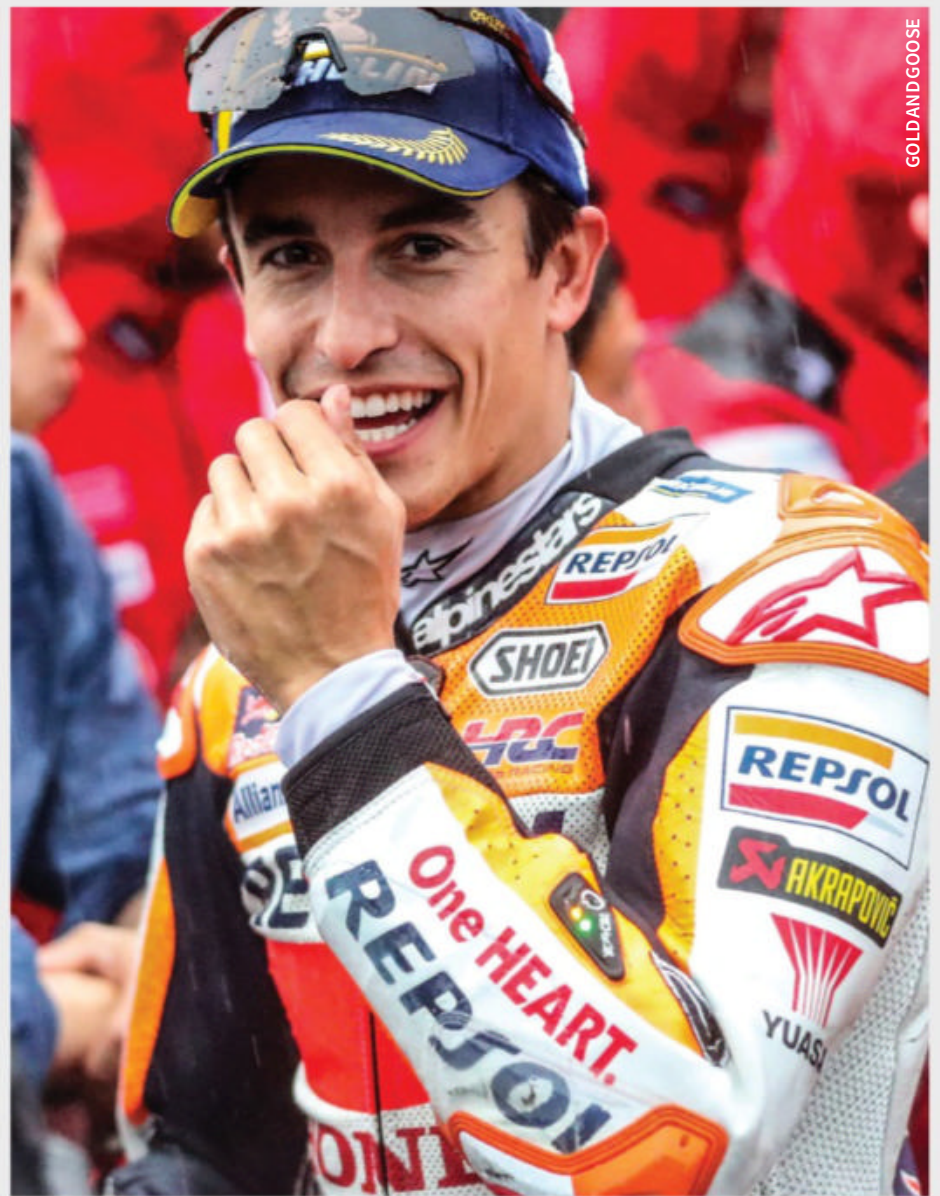
But Marquez's relationship with Honda has been on shaky ground all season, with the Japanese manufacturer struggling to turn around its uncompetitive RC213V package. At his nadir, Marquez crashed five times during the German GP weekend and withdrew from the Sunday race at a Sachsenring circuit where he had won every year in the premier class – including in 2021 while still recovering from the badly broken right arm that ended his 2020 campaign.

During the San Marino GP weekend last month, Marquez became heavily linked to a shock switch to Gresini Ducati. While he continually projected the party line that he had a contract for 2024 with Honda, the changes required for him to honour this did not materialise. Upon the announcement of his departure, Marquez branded his time at Honda as “unrepeatable”. As we went to press, he had yet to speak publicly about his decision. Gresini is also yet to announce his signing, which will be for one year aboard what is likely to be a 2023-spec Ducati.

Honda is also yet to announce what it will do to replace him, although Autosport understands that five-time race winner Miguel Oliveira is favourite. The Portuguese is contracted to RNF Aprilia, but does have an exit clause in his deal that would allow him to leave if a factory team offers him a berth. At present, it is unclear who would replace Oliveira at RNF Aprilia.

In other rider-market news, KTM parent company the Piaggio Group announced last week that Pol Espargaro would be moved aside for 2024 to make way for Moto2 championship leader and potential generational talent Pedro Acosta.

This ends a months-long rider logjam for which KTM had



GOLDANDGOOSE

struggled to find a resolution, with five riders signed for four seats. KTM had initially hoped to field two extra bikes in 2024, with Marquez linked to one. Acosta will be placed at GasGas-branded KTM satellite team Tech3 alongside Augusto Fernandez, who will remain for a second season.

In a press release, and later confirmed by Espargaro, the decision to move the eight-time podium finisher – who spent the first half of the 2023 season recovering from serious injury after an FP2 crash in Portugal – was made by mutual agreement.

Espargaro originally penned a two-year deal with KTM to return to Tech3 for 2023 after his nightmare Honda stint, and remained adamant – along with team-mate Fernandez – that he was safe for 2024. Espargaro will take on a test rider role in 2024 and will carry out a number of wildcard appearances for KTM.

LEWIS DUNCAN

➔ P17 OPINION



Marquez's younger brother Alex is racing for Gresini this season

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Tsunoda plays down Aston Martin connection

FORMULA 1

Yuki Tsunoda has quashed rumours that his strong Honda links could pave the way for an Aston Martin Formula 1 switch. He has instead reinforced his commitment to the Red Bull family and targets becoming Max Verstappen's team-mate.

Tsunoda has agreed a one-year contract extension with AlphaTauri for 2024. This

renewal of vows was announced just in time for the recent Japanese Grand Prix, the home race for himself and Honda, which provides financial support for his career. But the manufacturer will end its Red Bull ties at the end of 2025 to become the works engine supplier to Aston Martin, which may need to replace one or both of an ageing Fernando Alonso and

underperforming Lance Stroll. While Aston top brass have quietly approached Lando Norris and Charles Leclerc to lead the team, Tsunoda's name has remained in the mix.

But the 23-year-old has now worked to shut down those rumours. "Obviously, the main thing is I don't want Red Bull to misunderstand something, like for example that I'm just focusing now on Aston Martin

or anything," he said. "I'm at AlphaTauri, and I've been with Red Bull since I was 18 years old. So, I am now focusing to perform for Red Bull, not for Aston Martin. If I perform well, hopefully [Red Bull] consider me more and obviously, if I didn't I understand. But if I'm able to show my performance, I would like to have a bit more kind of rotation."

JONATHAN NOBLE

Sargeant call to come at end of season

FORMULA 1

Williams boss James Vowles has again tried to support under-pressure Formula 1 rookie Logan Sargeant by confirming that the team will wait until the end of this year before deciding who should partner Alex Albon in 2024. The Grove squad has the last remaining vacancy, but Vowles has publicly said that the seat is Sargeant's if he hits certain performance criteria.

"I suspect it'll be to the end of the season [when a decision is made]," explained ex-Mercedes strategy chief Vowles. "I think we've already committed to the direction of travel we're in. He has targets to hit, and it'd be wrong to go against that decision point. So, end of the year... The pace is there. That's the thing that we



wouldn't be able to fix or repair."

Sargeant's junior career was part-funded by Williams, but he's been costing the team dear with a recent spate of crashes. After a strong opening stint, he retired from last weekend's Qatar Grand Prix due to dehydration.

That leaves the American with five race weekends to prove he deserves a sophomore season. Felipe Drugovich could be an option for Williams, which is believed to have ruled out a loan deal on Merc reserve Mick Schumacher.

JONATHAN NOBLE



Pirelli beats Bridgestone for three-year F1 tyre extension

FORMULA 1

Pirelli has been awarded Formula 1's contract to supply tyres for the 2025-27 seasons after fending off a challenge from Japanese rival Bridgestone. The latest deal, which also covers the FIA F2 and F3 categories, includes an option for 2028.

This is expected to be Pirelli's final stint in the championship. It replaced Bridgestone for 2011 with a brief to consistently replicate the unpredictability of the 2010 Canadian Grand Prix that was sparked by cool temperatures and a patched-up track surface leading to massive graining.

The FIA opened the tender for applications this March. Pirelli and Bridgestone outlined their plans via detailed technical dossiers. Both gained approval from the governing body ahead of reaching a commercial agreement with FOM – not dissimilar to the process Andretti Global is attempting to navigate as it bids to form its new team. Bridgestone made a healthy financial offer but it's a case of 'better the devil you know', and F1 and Liberty Media have opted to stick with known quantity Pirelli. This has been approved by the FIA's World Motor Sport Council.

The agreement was complicated by sustainability requirements as F1 targets net-zero by 2030. As such, the tyres will be certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. This "ensures full traceability of forest-based materials along the supply chain and confirms that the plantations of the

forest-based components of the tyres are managed in a way that preserves biological diversity and brings benefits to the lives of local communities and workers, while fostering economic sustainability".

Confirmation of the new deal arrived on Tuesday, two days after Pirelli was moved to enforce 18-lap stints for the Qatar Grand Prix. This came after it identified microscopic tears in the tyre sidewalls caused by drivers running protractedly over new kerbs with raised edges.

Pirelli executive vice-president Marco Tronchetti Provera said: "Thanks to the impetus from Liberty Media and the support of the FIA, the sport is enjoying an extraordinary period of growth both in terms of audience and global expansion, increasing its following among younger generations as well.

"Our commitment to sustainability is equally strong, as proved by the FSC certification that will be introduced to our F1 tyres from next year. Being at the forefront of motorsport's pinnacle until at least 2027 adds another important value dimension to our company."

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem added: "Pirelli has demonstrated great commitment to producing tyres that meet the extreme demands of these incredible cars. Work will continue in the coming years to take further strides both in terms of performance and sustainability."

MATT KEW

\$20m spend rise for minnows

FORMULA 1

Formula 1's bottom four teams have been granted an extra \$20million on capital expenditure. This should help level the playing field under the restrictive cost cap, which has left the comparative minnows struggling to upgrade their infrastructure to match the baked-in advantage held by the biggest spenders of the previous laissez-faire era.

The FIA and teams have settled on a league table that effectively splits the grid into three divisions. For the top-tier performers – Red Bull, Mercedes and Ferrari – their CapEx allowance for the 2021-24 seasons has grown from \$45m to \$51m. Sources suggest that the FIA didn't want to give them any extra.

The middle set – McLaren, Alpine and Aston Martin – has a \$13m boost to \$58m. The bottom class of AlphaTauri, Sauber, Haas and Williams have been given scope for their budgets to climb from \$45m to \$65m. That represents a net gain of \$14m in spending relative to the big three players. But come 2029, all 10 teams will return to an equal footing and will be limited to a total \$36m.

Williams boss James Vowles, the most vocal advocate for a CapEx increase, said: "Some good news, from my perspective, anyway... There was agreement and good discussions taking place since February. We have CapEx to spend now. Not perhaps the \$100m I was looking for, but a good step in the right direction."

Unsurprisingly, Ferrari F1 chief Fred Vasseur was a little more sceptical. "I'm not very convinced," he said. "It's a no-end process. I think that we opened the door a couple of times to change the cost-cap regulations, and this is very dangerous."

ADAM COOPER



IMSA sabbatical for controversial Daytona winners

IMSA

Meyer Shank Racing, winner of the past two runnings of the Daytona 24 Hours, will not be continuing in the IMSA SportsCar Championship next year. But the reigning champion team insists it is only taking a year off from the GTP class and that it intends to return in 2025.

Officially, MSR is stepping aside from IMSA to concentrate on its IndyCar activities, where in addition to its two full-season entries it will add an extra Honda-powered car for the Indianapolis 500 in May. The Ohio-based team is known to have explored its options for 2024. What is clear, however, is that it wouldn't be maintaining its relationship with Acura that dates back to 2017. It started running the Honda brand's NSX GT3 in the GT Daytona class before moving to the Daytona Prototype international class in 2021.

Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti will expand to two Acura ARX-06 LMDhs next year. The deal announced in May was in



place last winter, before Shank's tainted victory at Daytona when it was found to have manipulated its tyre-pressure sensors. It is unclear whether the relationship with Shank could have continued: Acura has never run more than two cars since the start of its DPi programme in 2018.

"Making the decision to take a year away from IMSA was not an easy one by any means," said Shank. "Our guys live and breathe this team. For Jim [Meyer] and I, our main focus was getting our guys set and making sure they were all going to be OK,

which we were able to do.

"There are a lot of projects that we have going at the shop, and of course some of the guys will be helping with our growing IndyCar programme. The third Indy 500 entry for Helio [Castroneves, who is stepping down from a full-season drive] is a very big deal and I'm glad to have the right people in place. And then, when we need to prepare for the IMSA programme, we'll still have this great group together and ready to go."

GARY WATKINS



McLaren backs F3 king Bortoleto

FORMULA 1

Recently crowned FIA Formula 3 champion Gabriel Bortoleto appeared to be the one who had got away in a Formula 1 context. The Brazilian, 19 this weekend, was for a few weeks the only driver among the top seven in the F3 standings not to have an affiliation to a grand prix squad's junior programme. But now McLaren has put that right.

Bortoleto has joined IndyCar race winner Pato O'Ward, 2022 Le Mans winner and World Endurance champion Ryo Hirakawa, and Formula 4 star Ugo Ugochukwu in the Woking squad's Driver

Development programme following his breakout rookie F3 campaign.

"I've known him well since the beginning of his motorsport career and he's got all that is needed on and off track to be a star," said the programme's director, five-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Emanuele Pirro. "He also fits very well with our team culture at McLaren."

McLaren has also taken on Brando Badoer, the 17-year-old son of ex-F1 racer Luca, as what it describes as an 'Optioned Driver' on a one-year assessment. Badoer Jr currently sits sixth in the Italian F4 standings.

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McLaren closes on Le Mans return with United

WEC

McLaren is nearing a return to the Le Mans 24 Hours – not with a prototype in the Hypercar ranks, but with its 720S EVO GT3 racer. It has revealed a partnership with the United Autosports team to put two cars on the grid of the French enduro as part of a World Endurance Championship campaign in 2024.

The winner of Le Mans in 1995 with the F1 GTR has announced a partnership with LMP2 stalwart United, co-owned by McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown, in a bid for grid slots in the new LMGT3 class. Entries in next year's replacement for GTE Am are awarded to the manufacturer, which is then required to nominate

the team to represent it.

Entries in LMGT3 are likely to be oversubscribed, though last week's announcement of the McLaren/United tie-up suggests that at the very least they are being given an indication that there will be room for them. Priority will be given to manufacturers represented in Hypercar, which means Ferrari, Porsche, BMW, Lamborghini, Chevrolet and Lexus (the last two represented in the top class by Cadillac and Toyota respectively) are ahead of them in the queue. The possibility of an 18-strong LMGT3 class appears high at this point.

The announcement of a firm intent to take part in the WEC by McLaren and United is significant on multiple fronts. Not only would it bring the British sportscar

make back to Le Mans for the first time since 1998, but it would mean a continued presence in the WEC from United.

The Anglo-American team's involvement in the full series looked likely to come to the end with the demise of LMP2, and it announced in June that its WEC operation would effectively swap to the IMSA SportsCar Championship. Now it looks on course to remain in a series it joined in 2019-20, when it won the LMP2 class title at the first attempt and took honours at Le Mans to boot.

Entries close for the WEC next month, after which they will go before the selection committee of series organisers the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest.

GARY WATKINS

Sears champ Watson targets second year with PMR



BTCC

Newly crowned Jack Sears Trophy champion Andrew Watson says he wants to stay with the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra squad for his second British Touring Car Championship season in 2024.

The Northern Irish ex-sportscar racer led a five-way fight for the JST – for drivers who have never scored an overall BTCC

podium before the season – going into last weekend's Brands Hatch finale. He clinched it in the second race with a steady drive after an early collision “knocked the tracking out, and then we had power-steering issues”.

“It's been tough, the Jack Sears,” said Watson, who scored two overall podiums in his first season racing a front-wheel-drive car. “Every race, every lap we have been

thinking about it. That was my main goal and to get the job done is incredible.

“I'm starting to get the hang of touring cars. I'm happy with PMR. We're on the up but nothing's signed.”

Team-mate Mikey Doble's crash in race one, for which Stephen Jelley was given a grid penalty, wrecked his JST chances. He also hopes to be back and remains eligible for the class.

MARCUS SIMMONS



Cadillac sticks at one in WEC

WEC/IMSA

Cadillac has opted against expanding its attack on the full World Endurance Championship next year. It will again field a single V-Series.R LMDh in the Hypercar class alongside a continued two-car presence in the GTP class of the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

The General Motors brand has cited costs as the reason for not expanding its WEC attack to two cars, something it had insisted was a desire through this season.

“We’re going to have one car in the WEC for next year, mainly just due to some cost constraints of this platform,” said GM motorsport boss Mark Stielow. “GM, Chevy and Cadillac are fighting in a lot of areas, so we have to balance out and keep all of our children happy and clothed. You have to make tough decisions sometimes.”

Stielow conceded, however, that it would be “definitely better to have two cars”.

Cadillac has yet to confirm that Chip

Ganassi Racing will fly its flag for a second year running in the WEC. Stielow explained that it was still evaluating how it will undertake the programme and promised an announcement soon. Ganassi and Action Express Racing were confirmed as the IMSA teams, however.

Cadillac has also revealed an intent to enter extra V-Series.Rs in the blue-riband Le Mans 24 Hours WEC round in June. It seems likely that it will repeat this year’s three-car assault on the French enduro.

GM sportscar racing programme manager Laura Wontrop Klauser described 2024 as “a carry-over year that will allow us the opportunity to focus entirely on the car and understanding it better”.

Cadillac’s statement made no mention of drivers, although it has already been announced that Jack Aitken will step up from the endurance driver role at Action Express to a full-season IMSA seat alongside Pipo Derani.

GARY WATKINS

GROSJEAN TAKES LEGAL ACTION ON ANDRETTI SPLIT

INDYCAR

Romain Grosjean has taken legal action and filed for arbitration against Andretti Autosport, the team with which he has contested the past two IndyCar seasons.

The 37-year-old made a statement on social media acknowledging his departure from the team, recently renamed Andretti Global. He said that he “expected to continue racing with the fine people of Andretti Autosport in the coming years”, adding that he was “disappointed that is not being fulfilled. I am pursuing other options to continue my IndyCar career in pursuit of excellence.

“I have commenced an arbitration proceeding in Indiana against Andretti Autosport, seeking to protect my rights. I am represented by John Maley and Mark Owens of Barnes & Thornburg, LLP.”

Grosjean, who made 179 starts in F1, joined Andretti following a maiden IndyCar campaign with Dale Coyne Racing in 2021. But mixed results left uncertainty regarding his future, and he confirmed his exit from the team last month. Since then, he has admitted talks with other teams, including DCR.

JOEY BARNES



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POLAND IN WRC FOR 2024

Poland has rejoined the World Rally Championship for 2024. The country had been vying for a return since it lost its place on the calendar after the 2017 event due to repeated breaches of spectator safety. The rally's official launch in Warsaw was attended by Polish ex-Formula 1 and rally driver Robert Kubica, and will take place from 27-30 June.

GORNALL'S BTCC RETURN

British Touring Car Championship underdog squad Team Hard made one final tweak to its six-driver line-up for last weekend's finale at Brands Hatch, when James Gornall replaced Jack Butel. Gornall, who tested with Hard back in 2021, took that particular Cupra Leon's first points finish of the season with a 15th place. The 39-year-old has scored BTCC points in three of the past four seasons, despite contesting just eight race weekends in the series.

GOLDEN BROWN AT ESTORIL

Continent-trotting TCR racer Lewis Brown has scored a win in the tin-top category's Spanish series at former Portuguese Grand Prix venue Estoril. At the wheel of a Comtoy Racing Audi RS3 LMS, the Briton held off the sister car of Alvaro Garcia in the first race. Brown raced up to second place in the reversed-grid sequel, but Sergio Casalins, in another Comtoy Audi, kept him at bay for victory.

KING OF AUSTRALIA

British Porsche star Harry King took on Australia's legendary Mount Panorama circuit last weekend, and took a clean sweep of three wins (below) in the Carrera Cup Australia races supporting the Bathurst 1000. King, third in this year's Porsche Supercup, joined the EMA Motorsport squad for the event, and beat team-mate Harri Jones (who also ran alongside King in the Supercup this year, with Lechner Racing) home in all three races. Multiple Carrera Cup Asia and ex-Formula Master king Chris van der Drift scored a trio of third places.



CARRERA CUP AUSTRALIA



GT2 EUROPEAN SERIES The new Maserati GT2, based on the marque's MC20 sports car, made its race debut in last weekend's GT2 European Series finale at Paul Ricard. The car entered by LP Racing claimed pole position for race one and then finished second and seventh in the two races with Luca Pirri and Leonardo Gorini sharing driving duties. Head of Maserati Corse Giovanni Sgro said the marque "couldn't have hoped for a better debut" with the twin-turbo V6 racer, which was unveiled at the Spa 24 Hours in June. **Photo by Maserati**

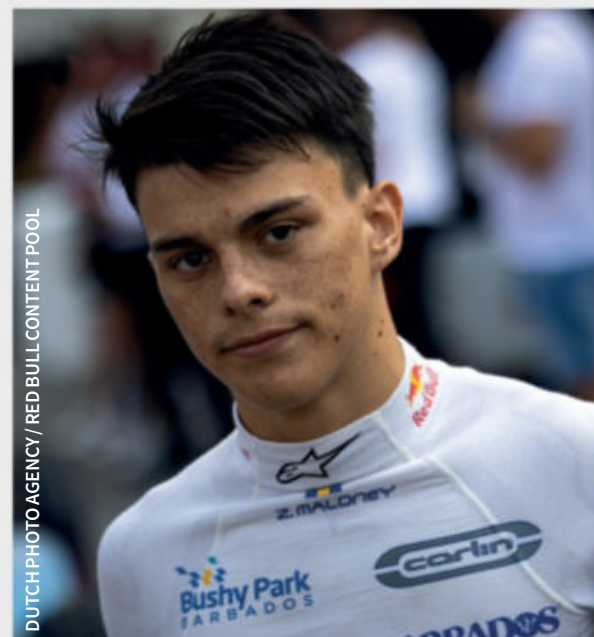
Maloney back to F3 for Macau GP

FORMULA 3

The closure of the Macau Grand Prix to international entrants from 2020-22 due to the COVID crisis meant that this year's return for Formula 3 was always likely to attract some drivers who had missed out on the Far East classic during that period. Sure enough, Rodin Carlin's Formula 2 podium finisher Zane Maloney is to return to F3, after finishing runner-up in the 2022 series, for a crack at the event.

The 20-year-old from Barbados (right) joined Rodin Carlin's line-up for last week's official post-season two-day test at Jerez, running alongside the squad's GB3 series leader Callum Voisin and its 2022 British F4 star Ugo Ugochukwu. Maloney is also taking part in this week's Barcelona test.

"It's such a challenging event and track, and it's great to go there with a driver who's familiar with the car," said Rodin Carlin deputy principal Stephanie Carlin. "We've got a good working relationship with Zane, and there's no doubt that he'll be able to lead the other drivers. He's got such a good record on street circuits [Maloney has qualified on the third row in Melbourne and Monaco in his rookie F2 season] and he's a fierce racer, so we think he'll be pretty strong."



DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

The Jerez test was topped by Prema Racing duo Dino Beganovic and Gabriele Mini. Ferrari junior Beganovic spent his rookie F3 season with the Italian squad, while Alpine protege Mini switched over from Hitech. They were joined at Prema by Briton Arvid Lindblad, who is an Italian F4 title contender with the squad.

Hitech tested Norwegian Formula Regional star Martinius Stenshorne alongside 2023 regular Luke Browning and Euroformula Open racer Cian Shields.

MARCUS SIMMONS

TOP FIVE



MASERATI MC12 DRIVERS

As Maserati returns to international GT racing, we hail the best drivers of its all-conquering MC12 GT1 car, which bowed out at the end of the 2010 season

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

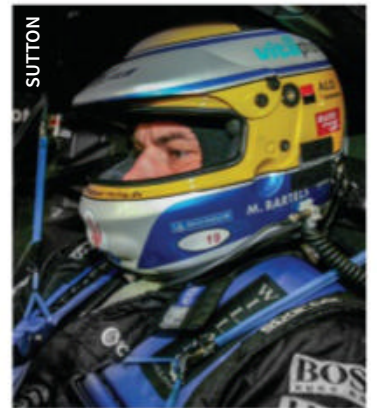
5 MIKA SALO Just the five MC12 race starts, but won three of them. His partnership with Andrea Bertolini yielded two wins and a second in 2004, another likely podium only prevented by a Dubai engine failure. Returned to join Thomas Biagi for Silverstone one-off in place of Michael Bartels in 2007, and looked like he'd never been away in consummate guest outing that yielded a crucial victory.



4 ALEX MULLER Somehow never won in an MC12, but Muller had pace in spades, as proven by four poles for Vitaphone in 2009. Denied victory at Adria by a penalty when the wrong wheels were fitted in the pits, and led at Spa until a wheel parted company. Blotted his copybook in a Hungary crash, but a partial 2010 with second-string Hegersport team was highlighted by a charge to second at Spa.



3 MICHAEL BARTELS Vitaphone Racing's boss won 14 races in MC12s between 2005 and 2010, second only to Andrea Bertolini. Every year he was paired with the Italian yielded a title, while a fifth was only denied in the courts in 2005 when Larbre's Bahrain exclusion was controversially overturned. The heavy lifting was done by co-drivers, but given his extra commitments Bartels could hardly be faulted.



2 THOMAS BIAGI Not as many wins (five) as Michael Bartels, but gets the nod for stepping into leading role at Vitaphone in 2007 and delivering the title solo after his boss missed races recovering from a kidney operation. A few wild moments (see Brno, Dijon 2006), but a winner in all three years he raced the MC12, each with different co-drivers, and crucially kept cool under pressure at Zolder 2007 finale.



1 ANDREA BERTOLINI The most successful driver in terms of wins (15) and joint most for titles (four) had to top this list. The MC12's main development driver took the car's first two wins in its original 2004 guise, then with JMB in 2005 was only denied the title by a Bahrain gearbox glitch. Champion every year he raced for Vitaphone, and even won a race in 2007 on inferior Pirelli rubber with Playteam.





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A blot on Hamilton's season

The clash between the Mercedes drivers in Qatar does not reflect well on the seven-time world champion, who's otherwise set a superb standard in 2023

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

In a huge warehouse across the road from Silverstone circuit, there sit some famously broken parts of modern Mercedes Formula 1 cars. Among the mammoth catalogue of almost every car part and piece of team kit the squad has produced at its Brackley base 10 miles down the A43 are scuffed sidepods from the W07s that sensationally collided on the opening lap of the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix at Barcelona. So too is the scarily scraped halo from the W12 ridden over by Max Verstappen during his crash with Lewis Hamilton at Monza in 2021.

Will Hamilton's broken right-rear wheelhub from last weekend's Qatar GP one day be proudly displayed along with these items? Or are the circumstances so different this time? Would it be a painful reminder of an abnormal period from a previously dominant Mercedes squad, unavailable for gawking from team guests and sponsors?

The question arises because there's a real chance that Mercedes could have forced a different outcome to last weekend's race at Losail. It could have knocked Max Verstappen at least away from the clear path to his 14th GP victory of 2023 for Red Bull. Perhaps Mercedes might even have won because, with no rear gunner thanks to Sergio Perez missing Q3 for a GP for the sixth time this season, Verstappen was vulnerable.

Because its remaining tyre allocation added up to fewer

“There's a real chance Mercedes could have forced a different outcome to last weekend's race”

usable racing laps than Verstappen had available, Mercedes opted to start Hamilton on his new soft rubber since it believed that the benefit from grip at the start would outweigh the loss from a potential tyre offset later on. Track position would be useful. Mercedes couldn't follow this approach with George Russell, because he didn't have any new softs available. But the team did discuss potential racing scenarios at Turn 1 in its pre-race strategy meeting, and how it might go about best dealing with its drivers on their own different paths to the flag.

Yet none of what Mercedes hoped for ultimately came together thanks to the Turn 1 collision that put Hamilton out on the spot. And from the pitlane under the safety car to replace a left-front puncture he'd picked up in the shunt, Russell's pace was mighty as he charged from last to finish fourth.

Hamilton initially blamed Russell for their crash before accepting “full responsibility” once he'd seen the replay – he apologised to his team-mate and Mercedes' wider squad for the incident. It was eerily similar to Hamilton's clash with Fernando Alonso on lap one of last year's Belgian GP. As at Les Combes at Spa, he simply seems to have misjudged how much room his rival on the inside had, and put himself out of the race. That it's repetition of a poor error is one thing; that it sits alongside Hamilton's 2021 Imola and Baku offs and his sloppy moveover on Oscar Piastri at Monza last month is another.

It can be argued that such incidents are rather starting to pile up now as Hamilton's career stretches on away from its clear peak of performance, and these are starting to dent his well-earned reputation as a clean racer across the majority of his long F1 career. That survives, however, since this wasn't a deliberate foul or over-aggressive defence.

But perhaps the most frustrating thing about this incident for Hamilton is that it blots what has otherwise been an excellent 2023 campaign. Aside from the Monza penalty and his Spa sprint race clash with Perez (a racing incident wrongly penalised), Hamilton's consistency and assuredness has stood out brilliantly. Russell has pushed him close on pure pace – he leads their GP qualifying head-to-head 9-8 – perhaps closer than any other team-mate he's had in F1 since Alonso at McLaren back in 2007. But Hamilton has maintained the edge on long-run tyre management, with Russell still prone to going too hard, too early, in race stints.

Mercedes communications director Bradley Lord, facing the media post-race while team boss Toto Wolff recovers from recent knee surgery at home in Monaco, referenced “competitive tensions” between the Mercedes pair this year. He meant that their frustrations with lack of performance were motivating the team to try to recover, but it's not hard to hear this in their respective radio messages, such as after Hamilton's on-the-edge defence against Russell at Suzuka, and other close calls in qualifying in Spain and Belgium.

Mercedes really needs to need to sort this all out before it arrives at the upcoming events. Hamilton always goes well at Austin, while the Mexico and Brazil events could represent shots at victory for Mercedes. The team won at Interlagos with Russell last year, and the Latin American track layouts are much better suited to the W14 than are those of Qatar and Suzuka. Mercedes is privately targeting big results on ground where it has good form.

If their car can be in the lead fight, both Hamilton and Russell need to be flawless to beat Verstappen, particularly if Perez does end his current awful streak. ❄️

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Time is right for Aston Martin

A very particular and evolving set of circumstances set the stage for the famous marque's return to the top level of sportscar racing with its Valkyrie LMH

GARY WATKINS

It may seem strange that a programme revealed back in the summer of 2019 is finally going to make it into competition in 2025. Three years after Aston Martin pushed its Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar onto the back-burner, the gas has been whacked back up to 11. Yet it's perhaps not so strange when you understand how the stars have aligned to make this the right time for the British manufacturer to revitalise a project that will take it back to the Le Mans 24 Hours in pursuit of a repeat of its 1959 victory with the DBR1.

Aston's intent to bid for outright honours at Le Mans as part of a World Endurance Championship campaign with the Adrian Newey-inspired Valkyrie was announced on the eve of the French enduro four years ago. It was put on hold seven months later in February 2020. But development of the car never really stopped.

The machine designed to go to Le Mans effectively ended up becoming what Aston bills as the ultimate trackday car, the Valkyrie AMR Pro. That explains part of Aston boss Lawrence Stroll's explanation when asked the 'why now?' question at last week's launch. "Because we have this incredible Hypercar," was his opening gambit.

Any number of drivers who have sampled the AMR Pro have offered a similar sentiment about the car. "You know what?" they've mused. "It wouldn't take much to turn this into a racing car." What they should have said was "turn it *back* into a racing car".

The very reason that the original Valkyrie design, the work of Multimatic Motorsports over the second half of 2019, didn't end up as a race car is inextricably linked to why the AMR Pro is being turned back into one today.

The first iteration of the LMH was shelved in the wake of the announcement of the LMDh category at the 2020 Daytona 24 Hours IMSA SportsCar Championship curtain-raiser. Aston argued that the cheaper entree into the WEC allowed by the LMP2-based category had undermined the business case of selling Valkyrie LMHs to customer teams and collectors.

But the LMDh announcement, the key moment in the convergence process that allows the same cars to race on both the world stage in WEC and in IMSA in North America, is the very reason we're now banging on about a golden era of sportscar racing. It is why we will have nine major car makers racing in one or other or both series next year, and 10 from 2025 on Aston's arrival. This landscape is what has attracted Aston back to race in both arenas with the US-based Heart of Racing team. It is one that didn't exist in the early months of 2020. For all the euphoria of that day at Daytona, predictions of the golden era remained just that. Predictions.

The whole convergence process was about much more

than that single day at Daytona. There was a lot of hard work in the background that took the better part of 18 months to ensure that there could be a level playing field between LMH and LMDh machinery. Until that work was done, IMSA didn't finally sign off the participation of LMHs in its series.

Aston wants and needs to race against the same manufacturers with which it competes for road car sales. That's the likes of Porsche, Ferrari and Lamborghini. They

"The DNA has always been racing, has been in the blood of Aston Martin"

didn't confirm their participation until December 2020, February 2021 and May 2022 respectively. Put simply, it took a long time for the case for Aston to return to the pinnacle of sportscar racing to become a compelling one.

The early part of 2020 was also a time for change of Aston Martin. Stroll led the consortium that took over the marque. He, of course, took the Aston name back into F1 when he rebranded his Racing Point team, but he also has clear a vision for the company. He wants racing to be at the very heart of its culture and to feed know-how into its future road cars.

"I focused a lot more attention into the performance part of Aston Martin when I took over, hence the focus on the F1 team, hence the focus on this," said Stroll last week. "The DNA has always been racing, has been in the blood of Aston Martin and I wanted to carry that tradition louder, harder and faster."

To that effect, he set up Aston Martin Performance Technologies in 2021, which over time will be fully based on the same AMR Technology Campus opened in the summer as the F1 team. It is from AMPT that the Valkyrie LMH project is being masterminded. The establishment of AMPT is one of the building blocks of the new-look Valkyrie programme. Another is its relationship with Heart of Racing. Aston needed a partner, one that is making a financial contribution to get the Valkyrie on track.

As a small, niche even, manufacturer it needs to be a little more creative than mighty companies such as Toyota or Porsche. Exactly who is paying for what is obviously not in the public domain, but it needs to be said that the Valkyrie programme isn't chequebook racing as far as Aston Martin is concerned. Excuse the mix of metaphors, but a lot of water had to pass under the bridge for the Valkyrie LMH to come back on stream. 🍷

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Marquez makes his move

The six-time MotoGP king didn't want to leave Honda, but a Gresini Ducati makes sense for 2024. Now, will he soar again?

LEWIS DUNCAN

Mark it in your diaries. Wednesday 4 October 2023 – the day everything changed in MotoGP. Actually, Sunday 19 July 2020 is when the path that led Marc Marquez to his decision to quit Honda for 2024 truly began. Perhaps that's an oversimplification, but it's not unreasonable to think that, had he not badly broken his arm three years ago, the events of last week would likely never have come to pass.

Let's use something a bit more tangible to back this theory up. In August 2021, he told Autosport: "I think the pre-injury Marc could challenge for the title on this bike. I probably couldn't win as many [races] as in 2019, but I could fight for the world championship and be in the top three very often. And I think so for one simple reason: on the tracks where I haven't felt the physical limitation, or I've felt it less, I've been much better."

Marquez's injury-curtailed 2020-22 seasons forced Honda's motorcycle development to go in a direction that worked against him. In 14 rounds in 2023, he has just one grand prix podium, and took until round 10 in Austria to finally see a chequered flag on a Sunday. No confidence was offered when he tried the 2024 prototype Honda at the Misano test last month, while HRC proved unsuccessful in its recruitment of top European engineering talent to help break the Japanese ethos that has arguably stunted its growth.

“Moving has been the hardest decision of my life, guided by my head, *not* by my heart”

Naturally, a switch to Gresini on a year-old Ducati makes perfect sense. Except Marquez agonised over his decision. The frustrations of the bike and Honda's inability to react were one thing. But this was the team with which he has spent the past 11 years, won six MotoGP titles, 59 grand prix victories, 101 podiums and 64 poles. None of the crew who he considers family – not even crew chief Santi Hernandez, who has been by his side all the way – will go to Gresini with him because Ducati doesn't want any rival engineers to take a look at the motorcycle that is currently dominating in MotoGP before they potentially scarp off to other marques in 2025. That makes sense, because Marquez has only committed himself to one year at his new team to keep his options open for a time when all contracts come up for renewal.

This conflict was evident in a revealing social media post, but it only served to highlight what is truly driving him: "It has been the hardest decision of my life, guided by my head and courage, *not* by my heart," he began, before adding: "I have one thing clear – I want to try to be the best rider in the world again and for that I need to enjoy myself on the bike."

Will Marquez be competitive on a Ducati? Well, the version he will race currently sits 1-2 in the 2023 standings. Marquez's riding style has always centred around his ability to be strong on the brakes – a key strength of the Ducati. And there have been plenty of examples recently of riders making the most of a year-old package: Enea Bastianini won four grands prix in 2022 to earn a factory Ducati seat, while Marco Bezzecchi is third this season, just 54 points adrift in the championship with three wins. Tellingly, Bezzecchi shunned a factory Ducati ride with Pramac for next year to stay on a year-old bike with VR46. He wagered that he'd get on better in comfortable surroundings and on a motorcycle already dialled in.

Marquez's brother, Alex, switched from Honda to Gresini Ducati for 2023, enjoying a grand prix podium and sprint win, and made a convincing case for such a move to Autosport last month. "Much nicer than last year," he said. "I will say it like this: I never lost the motivation last year, but it's true that when you don't get results, when you don't get help from a factory, it's difficult to go [forward], especially when you are on a bike that has many problems. But from the first day on the Ducati, the feeling was nice, the feeling with the factory and especially with Gigi [Dall'Igna, Ducati team boss], who is a really clever guy, [and speaks] directly to the riders."

Many people are equating Marquez's move to Ducati to Valentino Rossi's arrival at the team when he departed from Yamaha in 2011. But Rossi was forced out of Yamaha by his emerging team-mate Jorge Lorenzo, and the motorcycle he took over was woefully uncompetitive. Marquez, by comparison, has calculated the risk and is entering an infinitely better situation in terms of machinery. His arrival at Ducati will undoubtedly upset the carefully crafted eco system of the Italian manufacturer. But that's the byproduct of fielding a generational talent: Ducati may not have had a hand in Marquez's decision, but it will be more than happy to deal with any problems of upset egos.

So, there's little doubt that Marquez will be fast on the Ducati next year and that his decision to leave Honda will inevitably be looked upon favourably. But I'll leave the final word on this to Cal Crutchlow, who rode with Marquez at Honda from 2015 to 2020: "I've always said if Marc goes on a Ducati, the rest may as well not turn up." ❁

RACE CENTRE

WEEK

ZERO

WEEK



Golden year:
Verstappen savours
the moment after his
14th win of the 2023
season

FORMULA 1

VERSTAPPEN'S CROWN AMID TYRE DRAMA

*Pirelli safety concerns shaped the race, but the
new three-time champion won anyway*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

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Russell focuses on Verstappen to his right as Hamilton powers up on the outside



M

ax Verstappen clinched his third Formula 1 world title in last Saturday's Qatar sprint race, then took his 14th grand prix victory of 2023 the following day. That all sounds rather predictable and perhaps it was, but an unexpected tyre issue and strong McLaren attack made the Qatar GP more interesting than some of Red Bull's wins this season.

This was not exactly how Pirelli would have wanted to spend the F1 race weekend preceding the announcement that it will remain as the championship's sole tyre supplier until at least 2028 (see p6). Instead of sitting comfortably on that news, it had to work with the FIA to ensure that there would be a Qatar GP at all in 2023, such was the concern over the tyres being able to withstand repeated, sustained impacts on the high-speed Losail International Circuit's newly installed 'pyramid' kerbs.

This was F1's biggest tyre drama since Indianapolis 2005. It was also a contest in which four drivers were physically unwell, and many more close to being so, such was the strain placed on their bodies by the heat, which did not really drop in the night-race setting thanks to rising humidity as darkness took hold, and those rapid corners.

Pirelli's Friday night analysis of tyres that had done more than 20 laps in the weekend's sole practice session had revealed that tiny separations in the sidewalls between the topping compounds and the carcass cords had started to crop up. When they were cut open, Pirelli could see that repeated impacts between the tyre sidewalls and the

5cm-high pyramid-shaped kerbs were causing the issue. It was felt that this would only get worse over the predicted longer stints, and so there was a risk of dramatic punctures.

A solution to paint the kerbs at Turns 13 and 14 80cm out onto the track was put into place ahead of sprint qualifying, with the drivers getting a 10-minute sighter session to adapt to the new lines. Then a further detailed tyre inspection after the 19-lap sprint race would determine whether the sidewall separation problem had been stopped, and the unprecedented measure of tyre-usage rules and stint lengths mandated by the FIA (which had been flagged as likely on Saturday morning) wouldn't be required.

But thanks to the sprint race's many spills meaning only 12 tours were completed at racing speed, the FIA and Pirelli decided "the tyre data available for analysis by Pirelli was insufficient to add to that already undertaken following [practice and Friday qualifying]". The sidewall separation had anyway been spotted on some of the analysed sprint race tyres. Therefore, it was decided that GP stint lengths would indeed be capped at 18 laps, with the distance already completed by used tyres also taken into account (ie, race stints on such rubber had to be under 18 laps by the number already completed, calculated including in/out tours in practice and qualifying sessions, but not reconnaissance laps to the grid).

This all meant a minimum of three stops in the GP was guaranteed and was communicated to the 10 team managers in a meeting held six hours before the race. With four hours to go before the 8pm start time, the plan was announced publicly.



The contact removed a rear wheel and left Hamilton beached



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

“HAMILTON’S GRIP ADVANTAGE PAID OFF, MEANING HE COULD EDGE ALONGSIDE RUSSELL AT TURN 1”

For polesitter Verstappen, things still looked rather straightforward given he had two new sets of tyres – mediums and hards – that could cover the full 18-lap stint maximum, plus two sets of used mediums capable of going 17 tours. That meant 70 laps of tyres for a 57-tour GP distance. This increased his options on strategy, while the six sets of used softs that Verstappen also had left over were never really a choice given how quickly they were wearing out here.

George Russell, alongside Verstappen on the front row, had the same two new sets of tyres, but with three used sets of mediums only capable of going nine, 13 and 13 laps. In third, Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton had the same new medium-and-hard duo, plus a new set of softs, and two sets of used mediums around the same age as Russell’s.

Back in sixth and 10th, the tyres and therefore pitstop timings for McLaren pair Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris looked very similar to Russell’s, although like Verstappen and Hamilton they had just two used sets of medium rubber available in addition to their single sets of new mediums and hards.

Why their potential and real strategies matter here, and for Verstappen last Sunday, is because of what occurred between the Mercedes drivers when the race got under way. The Black Arrows squad had opted to split its strategies and take the same used-mediums approach for Russell’s W14 for the start as Verstappen. Hamilton, meanwhile, would run those new softs. New mediums for the start weren’t really an option for the frontrunners because, although it would have meant running long on fresh rubber on a low-grip surface that therefore quickly grained tyres, the risk of an early safety car and potentially being pushed from the mandated three stops to four or more was just too high.

When the lights went out, Verstappen and Russell got away almost in unison, with the newly crowned triple world champion moving right quickly to cover off the Mercedes’ run to the inside of the long, right-hand Turn 1 hairpin.

Behind, Hamilton’s grip advantage of the softs paid off, meaning the seven-time world champion could edge alongside his team-mate on the run down to the corner. Russell jinked back left as they all approached the braking zone, where Hamilton was able to slam on the anchors latest of all and know his grip advantage would likely >>

QUALIFYING



SUTTON

There was a moment when the Qatar GP weekend felt utterly predictable, like many other weekends in this Red Bull-dominated season. It was when Max Verstappen blitzed to a 1m23.778s on his first run in Q3, after his team-mate Sergio Perez had been knocked out in Q2, undone by a Turn 5 track-limits violation.

The big curveball for the weekend was to come in the hours after qualifying, when Pirelli discovered the sidewall separation issue stemming from repeated, lengthy kerb strikes that so overshadowed the rest of the event. But on the second Q3 runs, with Verstappen sitting 0.527s clear of Lewis Hamilton in second, something rather remarkable happened.

The Dutchman found himself in the gaggle of drivers slipping off on the new low-grip Losail surface and had to abandon his final run. The problem, which occurred at Turn 4, came about because Verstappen had simply “tried to carry a little bit more speed into the corner and it just gave up on me”. “It’s the track surface,” he added. “As soon as you stress a little bit too much, it really snaps at you and you can’t correct it.”

The same issue, plus a particular problem generating rear tyre grip, had Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc really struggling through the fast, 90-degree Turn 5 right at the end of sector one and he wound up down in fifth behind Aston Martin’s Fernando Alonso. This pair were artificially boosted, because those immediately behind Verstappen had received a helping hand from Friday’s other big story: track limits.

Just as at Suzuka, McLaren was really Red Bull’s closest challenger on pure pace, thanks to the MCL60’s preference for higher-speed stuff. But, just as he had done

in Q1 and so spent much of the opening segment at the foot of the times, Lando Norris had slipped beyond track limits at Turn 5 on his first Q3 run and allowed Hamilton and George Russell to slip in behind Verstappen. On his second go, Norris ended up 0.3s back from the eventual pole time already posted by the pitlane-bound Verstappen, but again lost his effort – now for running wide out of the long Turn 10 left – and so wound up at the back of the Q3 pack in 10th.

That meant Russell ended up second after edging Hamilton by 0.09s on their second fliers in the final segment, with Hamilton abandoning his after a wild oversteer moment in Turn 7. Oscar Piastri, who had initially split the Mercedes pair at the chequered flag, also then lost his best time for a Turn 7 track-limits violation and so dropped from third to sixth. Piastri was only informed of the situation while he was being interviewed in parc ferme.

“As soon as you stress a little bit too much, the track surface snaps at you and you can’t correct it”

SPRINT RACE



Piastrì kept his pole and led at the start of an entertaining sprint

HONE

“I might just give the FIA five minutes first to make sure I’m actually on pole!” The impact of Oscar Piastrì’s deadpan witticisms have rivalled his immediate impression as a brilliant Formula 1 driver in 2023 – the Australian’s comment, following his Friday qualifying track-limits penalty, displaying amusing caution after securing pole for the sprint race. He’d done so after Lando Norris blew a lap that might have headed his McLaren team-mate were it not for a final corner off, while Max Verstappen ended up third after losing his best Q3 time and soft-tyre freshness to a Turn 5 track-limits slip.

The top three started the 19-lap sprint race on medium tyres, while

Mercedes’ George Russell and Ferrari pair Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc immediately behind plumped for the softs. At the start, Russell and the red duo simply tore past Verstappen and Norris – the Red Bull driver described their sluggish getaways on the harder, more difficult-to-fire-up but durable tyre, as being “eaten up” by the soft runners.

Piastrì “got a bit of a better launch than Lando and Max” and so was able to hold first place at Turn 1, where a Verstappen wobble eased Leclerc’s progress to fourth – before the Dutchman demoted Norris to sixth with a swoop at Turn 2. There, the race was neutralised by the safety car being called out after Liam Lawson had spun off.

“Russell’s graining soft tyres hampered him, and Piastrì was able to power back in front with a DRS run to Turn 1”

Piastrì initially held Russell at bay when racing resumed on lap three but, with his soft tyres generating temperature quicker, the Mercedes driver pounced at Turn 6 and he got past as Piastrì slid a touch wide on exit. Then the safety car appeared again so that Logan Sargeant’s Williams could be retrieved from the Turn 9 gravel – he too had lost it while struggling on the low-grip surface.

Russell had to wait until lap seven before restarting in the lead, which he did magnificently in dropping Piastrì through the Losail track’s high-speed sector three as the safety car headed for the pits. Russell therefore enjoyed an immediate 1.5s lead, which then reduced until lap 11 as graining soft tyres hampered him, and Piastrì was able to power back in front with a DRS run to Turn 1.

Then a third safety-car period was required when Esteban Ocon, Nico Hulkenberg and Sergio Perez tangled at Turn 2, as the latter two medium-tyred runners swamped the soft-shod Alpine. All were eliminated, with Perez’s exit confirming Verstappen’s 2023 crown even before he powered past Russell after the restart, having already nailed the now-struggling Ferrari duo.



Doing a Vettel: first F1 win for rookie Piastrì

TEE



Verstappen and team could celebrate early

MAUGER

do the rest – possibly even send him to the lead, with Verstappen set for the outside line for Turn 2. But neither Mercedes driver got there.

Hamilton simply came across and left Russell with nowhere to go, his left-front clipping and then breaking Hamilton's right-rear and sending the older Briton spinning out backwards into the Turn 1 gravel. He initially fumed that he'd been "taken out by my team-mate" on his team radio, before returning to the pits, seeing a replay and changing his mind. Hamilton ran across the track to start that process, in doing so reaching the inside of the circuit moments before Russell exited the pits on lap two, picking up a fine and reprimand. Russell had also spun because of their contact, fallen to last and emerged from the pitstop he'd taken under the ensuing safety car with that bonus set of used medium tyres fitted.

Russell would never be far from the race's remaining focus, since the safety car staying out until lap five of the 57 meant he was right with the pack for the restart. His pace for the rest of the contest was strong enough to have "been there with us", according to McLaren team principal Andrea Stella. That, paired with his committed overtaking moves, meant he rose to finish fourth, despite a surprise short final stint on the soft tyres nearly backfiring.

At the restart, Verstappen led Piastri – the Australian had "hit the brakes at the right time" at Turn 1 and watched "everyone else go off" as "the heavens kind of just parted way for me, and through to second I went". Easing Piastri's path at the same time as the intra-Mercedes collision was fourth-starting Fernando Alonso and fifth-on-the-grid Charles Leclerc sliding wide on the outside line at Turn 1, in the wake of the Hamilton/Russell shunt.

Verstappen nailed the restart so well that he headed onto lap five with an advantage of 1.1s. His tyres were five laps younger than Piastri's thanks to the running the Australian had already done on them, and Verstappen knew "what really made my race was that first stint, where I think we were quite strong and good on the tyres". As he ran confidently, Piastri dropped back to 2.9s in arrears before pitting on lap 12 – not quite the 13-lap maximum distance he was allowed to reach with his used starting mediums.

Piastri emerged in 13th and had to pass Liam Lawson, Kevin Magnussen, Lance Stroll and Valtteri Bottas, who had all pitted under the safety car, while Verstappen continued on until lap 17.

When things shook out and the safety-car stoppers had been overcome, Verstappen's advantage sat at 8.2s. This came down to 7.4s over the two laps past the Dutchman's first pitstop but, as his second stint played out in identical fashion over the same number of laps, he eked it out once again. In a similar way, Piastri's second stint, also on another set of used mediums, mirrored his first and he pitted on the race's 25th lap.

With Verstappen set to complete the full 17 laps he was allowed on his other remaining set of used mediums, here things really started to diverge. Piastri was fitted with his sole new set of mediums, while Verstappen took new hards at his second service. This was "past an



Russell put in a strong recovery to climb back to fourth by the finish

S BLOXHAM

"EVERYONE ELSE WENT OFF AND THE HEAVENS KIND OF JUST PARTED FOR ME AND THROUGH TO SECOND I WENT"

optimal strategy", as Red Bull team boss Christian Horner put it. And his team took that option because it reduced the risk of Verstappen being exposed on the hards should a late safety car be called.

This was proved when, while Piastri was still pushing on with the mediums, Verstappen's race took something of a hit with that white-walled rubber. This was because, according to Pirelli motorsport boss Mario Isola, not only were the "usually more resistant" hards suffering with graining – although to a much lesser extent than on the mediums used earlier thanks to the big track evolution factor, with more rubber going down – but that rubber was also taking an age to 'switch on'.

"It's not a matter of temperature," Isola mused on why that might be, given the 32C race ambient temperature – the Italian also needed to see Pirelli's post-race analysis before being able to commit to an answer. But Isola felt confident enough to speculate that, because the all-new surface here was "very smooth", mechanical grip was reduced – there was little in the way of asphalt roughness anywhere for the tyres to bite.

And, because of the bitumen sitting on top of the first new asphalt laid at this place since it opened in 2004, Isola was expecting "a bit more adhesive grip". But this didn't come to pass and contributed to the many slips and spills seen across the field all weekend. "If you go on the C1 [hard]," Isola concluded, "the adhesive grip is going >>



Piastri headed Norris after his sprint win and earned the 'hold station' call

SUTTON

TRACKSIDE VIEW



Daylight running highlights the barren nature of Losail

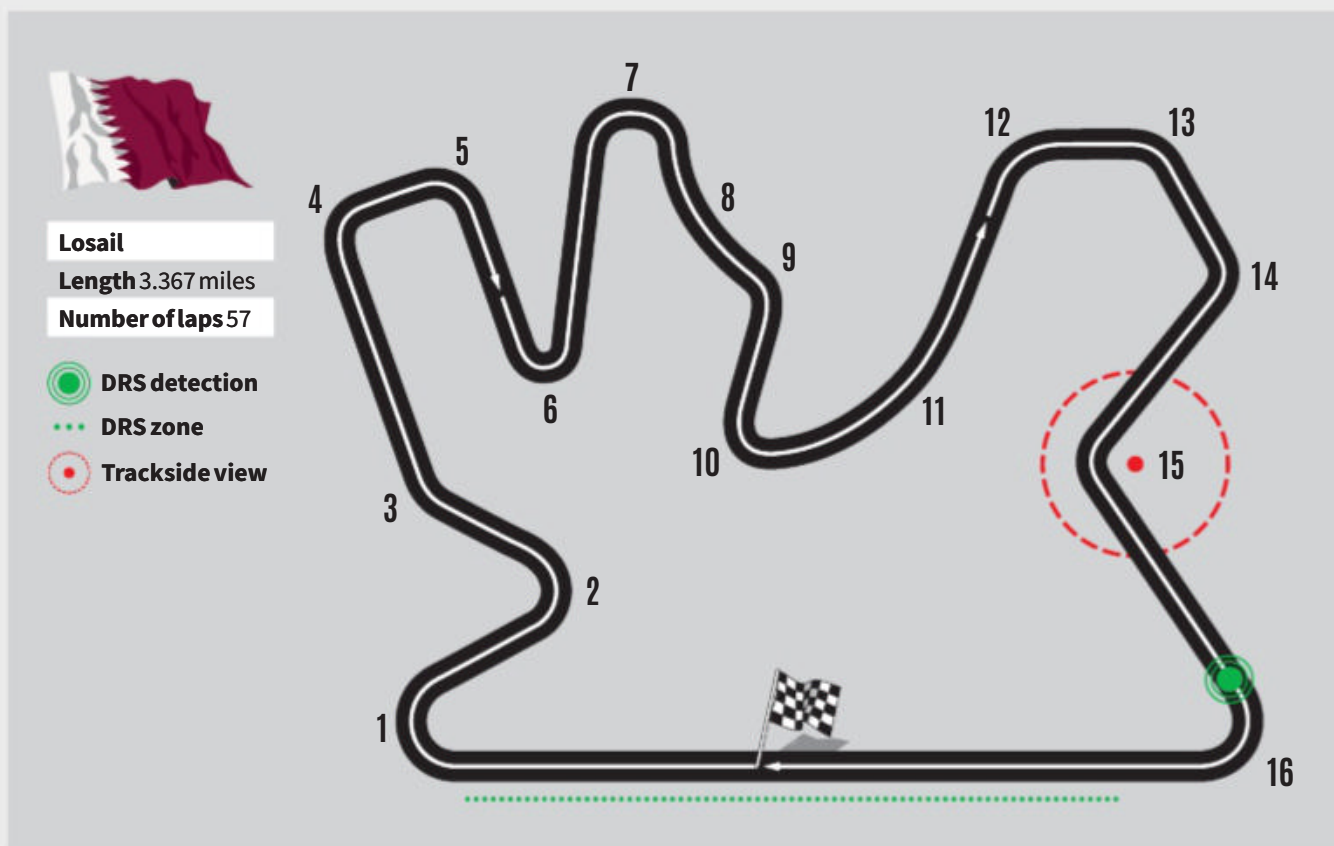
The Losail International Circuit has been revamped for its return to the Formula 1 calendar, with all new paddock and pits. But while fresh, differing colour flashes lining the edge of the facility's mammoth run-off areas are nice, it's still in essence a barren, unremarkable desert setting. Just like in 2021, the only feature of note is the nearby Losail Multipurpose Hall, looming large in the final sector.

So, who better to ask for advice on which of the near-identical fast corners to watch practice from than the drivers? "I do like the

"And this being a desert, it's intensely windy and sandy throughout the 60 twilight minutes we spend by the Multipurpose Hall"

high-speed section – Turns 14, 15," offers Alpine's Pierre Gasly. "The last sector I think is quite unique in the championship," says Fernando Alonso, who adds: "And hopefully not, but maybe the track limits..."

So then, into a minibus and off to Turn 15 – the slightly downhill, rapid 90-degree left-hander that forms the track's penultimate corner. Keeping sufficient tyre life after traversing the rapid,



triple-apex Turns 12-14 complex is the challenge here. The proceeding turns raise tyre-surface temperatures and lower grip, just when the drivers need it to chuck their machines in and have them stick through the equally fast Turn 15. They then need to avoid running too wide and dropping off the controversial big pyramid-shaped bumps beyond track limits on the kerbs (see page 26).

And this being a desert, it's intensely windy and sandy throughout the 60 twilight minutes we spend with the unimaginatively named Multipurpose Hall to our backs. This increases the Turn 15 challenge, and a few drivers are caught out early on.

As they're building up to speed on the all-new, super-smooth and low-grip track surface, huge gusts buffeting Autosport cause crosswinds and dramatic moments for Carlos Sainz and the following Aston Martin drivers 10 minutes in. Sainz has to wrestle his car right and shoots off the exit kerbs, while Lance Stroll lifts and more gently eases wide. Alonso keeps his AMR23 pinned through the wind, which means he's quicker than his team-mate but has to catch a massive rear wiggle hitting the exit

kerbs with his right-rear.

The wind and the errors ease – but are never far from recurring. We note how Max Verstappen is cutting the inside kerbs more than team-mate Sergio Perez, with only Alex Albon as aggressive on turn-in. We say aggressive, but overall it's more of a precise lean in – a reflection of how the long length of modern F1 machines reduces their visual nimbleness.

Just before a landing medical helicopter will blow enough sand to create an apocalyptic night-time scene to our left, over the exit kerbs late on Kevin Magnussen demonstrates the full risk of going too wide on exit here. The Dane saves the mid-corner oversteer, but audibly smashes his Haas's rear floor into the ground.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Wind whips up desert dust. New track surface adds to lack of grip



Engineer Gianpiero Lambiase joins Verstappen and Norris for soft-drink hi-jinks

down, you start sliding and you probably put less energy into the tyre and it takes more time [to heat up]. The risk is to overheat the surface, but the grip is still not there.”

All of that left Verstappen feeling “I lost quite a bit of time” in his third stint, which lasted until lap 51. By this point Piastri was experiencing the same warm-up struggle on hard tyres, having stopped on lap 43, but was about to be handed another gain on the leader. A first had come via Verstappen lapping seven cars, including that of his track-limits penalty-addled team-mate Sergio Perez, before his final stop. The second was an approximately two-second delay to Verstappen’s final stop for those new mediums, caused by the left-front hard being slow to come off.

Piastri’s deficit for the run to the finish therefore started at a much reduced 3.9s. But in truth, as Verstappen stroked things home risk-free, things for the McLaren rookie were really about the race behind.

Norris had experienced a night of battles – he gained from the Mercedes shunt to run sixth immediately (he also passed Bottas and Pierre Gasly on lap one before the safety car came out), then got stuck into Leclerc and Alonso, and had to overcut the Alpine of Esteban Ocon at the first round of mandated pitstops.

Norris felt early on he “had great pace” and this, plus the race circumstances coming to him, transformed what was possible on a weekend where he reflected he “should have fought for two pole positions and potentially two victories” had he avoided his repeated track-limits errors from qualifying.

By the start of the McLaren drivers’ fourth and final stints – Norris had run one and two laps longer than Piastri in each of his opening two spells on the used medium tyres, then started his stint on new hards one lap later – the gap between them was 2.5s. This came down



“THROUGH NO FAULT OF ITS OWN THIS WAS A RELATIVELY BAD DAY FOR RED BULL (ALTHOUGH IT WASN’T REALLY)”

to 2.1s on lap 46, but on the next tour McLaren decided to call off the potential intra-team fight before it had even started.

Norris queried “why? We have a gap and I’m clearly a lot quicker” in reply, but the subsequent insistence on lap 48 from the pitwall quelled his questioning. Anyway, he felt “the dirty air was quite a big struggle” here, especially when the drivers reached a 3s window behind another car.

Stella explained that Norris’s “challenge” to McLaren on the order was part of its process to “make sure we understand [the drivers’] point of view” to maybe change a decision. A big part of McLaren’s thinking here was Norris’s late-race puncture at this venue in 2021, which cost him fourth. “You don’t want to take this risk,” added Stella because, on a day when Mercedes, Ferrari and Aston Martin picked up just 30 points between them, McLaren had to bank the 33 on offer from second and third.

And so, Verstappen came home to win by 4.8s, with Norris 1.1s behind Piastri, having sat just out of DRS threat after being told he would not be permitted to launch an attack that might have netted a third successive second place. As a result, Piastri secured the best result of his young GP career, one day after becoming a sprint race winner (see page 22). Afterwards, Piastri said “with the three stops, it was basically flat out – 57 qualifying laps”. But had Verstappen been doing likewise?

“I do think we had a bit more pace in hand if we really needed it, but I don’t want to take anything away from McLaren”, he said, referencing engineer Gianpiero Lambiase’s instruction on lap 31 for him to raise his pace on his second set of used mediums.

Verstappen not pushing flat-out to make his safety car protection strategy work was why Stella said this unique race had “a flattering element” for McLaren. “[Red Bull] were on a strategy that loses time.”

But Verstappen also went further, concluding that the capped stint lengths “didn’t help us, our trend is normally long stints and looking after our tyres”. He added: “This didn’t work for us today. The stints were too limited.”

So, through no fault of its own, this was a relatively bad day for Red Bull (although of course it wasn’t really), and served as a handy illustration of exactly how good the team and Verstappen have been in 2023, now that it’s all over bar the shouting. ❄️



SBLOXHAM

LECLERC SALVAGES FIFTH ON MUTED DAY FOR FERRARI

Ferrari was forced to pin its Qatar Grand Prix hopes on Charles Leclerc when Carlos Sainz was unable to start the race due to a fuel system issue.

The Spaniard had qualified in a muted 12th, but the problems diagnosed on his Ferrari shortly before his recon lap to the grid nixed any hopes of a recovery. Leclerc said that concerns over those issues occurring on his own car forced him to take fewer liberties in the race, which yielded a solid if unspectacular fifth-place finish.

The Monegasque had to avoid the crashing Mercedes pair into the first corner and watch Oscar Piastri slip through the inside, and ceded places to Lando Norris and George Russell as they made their way through the order with faster machinery. Leclerc still beat Fernando Alonso to fifth, after the Spaniard made an unforced error across the gravel and narrowly avoided the Ferrari as he rejoined.

“I don’t think there was more we could have extracted from today’s race,” Leclerc explained. “Not really surprised with McLaren’s pace as they were super-quick, but for Mercedes to finish in front of us with a crash in lap one is surprising. We just lacked some pace; if you look at McLaren, we finished very far behind.”



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Drivers ill as heat takes its toll

The high heat and humidity at the Losail circuit led most of the drivers to conclude that the Qatar Grand Prix was one of the toughest of their careers, and the medical centre had to treat a handful of the field for heat-related issues in the aftermath.

Williams driver Logan Sargeant underlined the difficulties faced during the Grand Prix, and his eventual retirement from dehydration and heatstroke had been forecast a few laps prior when he complained of feeling unwell over the radio. Ambient temperatures ranged from 32-33C and, allied to the humidity of around 70%, left drivers having to flick their visors up to try to cool off, or to attempt to guide oncoming air into the cockpit with their hands.

After the race, Alex Albon had to visit the medical centre instead of the media pen to receive treatment, while Esteban Ocon vomited inside his Alpine during the race en route to finishing seventh. Lance Stroll struggled to get out of his Aston

Martin at the end without feeling faint, and other drivers revealed that their vision was becoming impaired by the effect of the heat upon them. This was magnified by the intense short-stint nature of the race, which became an unrelenting affair that the drivers were all too happy to see come to an end.

“It’s never a nice situation to be in, some people ending up in the medical centre or passing out – it’s a pretty dangerous thing to have going on,” stated McLaren’s Lando Norris. “But it’s not a point where you can just go ‘the drivers need to train more or do any of that’. We’re in a closed car that gets extremely hot in a very physical race. When you have people who end up retiring or in such a bad state, it’s too much for the speeds we’re doing. It is too dangerous.”

Next year’s Qatar race will be held later in the year on 1 December, which should mitigate any similar issues with excessive heat.

“I’VE WATCHED THE REPLAY AND IT WAS 100% MY FAULT AND I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY. APOLOGIES TO MY TEAM AND TO GEORGE.”

Lewis Hamilton ’fesses up to the Turn 1 clash with George Russell on X (formerly Twitter)



HONE



ALFA OVERTAKES HAAS WITH DOUBLE POINTS SCORE

Alfa Romeo got both cars into the points for the first time this season, which moved the Sauber-run team above Haas to eighth position in the Formula 1 constructors' championship.

Valtteri Bottas took the opportunity to stop under the early safety car following the clash between the two Mercedes drivers on the opening lap, which left him with a full 18-lap stint to complete on the hard tyre at the end. By then, the Finn was reeling in Esteban Ocon but ran out of time to make a move.

Zhou Guanyu stopped at the later end of each stint, necessitating a last-gasp stint on the soft tyre, and the Chinese racer got close enough to Pierre Gasly, Sergio Perez and Lance Stroll to make up ground once a litany of track-limits penalties were applied. This became ninth position after Perez took an extra five-second penalty for more track-limits indiscretions.

Perez nightmare continues amid track-limit penalties

Sergio Perez's late-race demotion thanks to multiple track-limits offences cost him only one point, but Red Bull felt that more was possible despite a pitlane start to the race.

Initial progress onto the cusp of the points eventually petered out and Perez was drawn into a battle with Lance Stroll and Pierre Gasly, with all three becoming afflicted by penalties through their close-quarters battles.

Perez has managed just five points in the past three races and, with no points forthcoming in Qatar's sprint race, is now only 30 ahead of Lewis Hamilton in the battle over second place in the drivers' championship.

"I think we really need to sit down with Checo because we know what he's capable of and he's not hitting that form at the moment," lamented Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. "We desperately need him to find that form to keep this second place

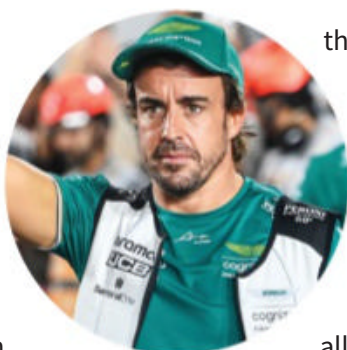


in the championship. So it was frustrating that he's only come out of the weekend with one point and I think, even starting from the back of the grid, there was an opportunity to score decently. You just need to sometimes sort of take your foot off, put it on the floor, stop the merry-go-round and just go back to basics. And that's what we'll do."



Q&A

FERNANDO ALONSO
ASTON MARTIN DRIVER



Was this harder than a Dakar Rally?

I had a test here with Nasser [Al-Attiyah] in August before Qatar and it was similar to today. Qatar always in this time of the year is quite extreme. In our case, I think for Lance [Stroll] and myself both of us struggled a little bit with temperature in the seat on the right-hand side. I got a burn in

the first 15 laps so I even asked on the radio if they could throw me some water or something at the pitstop, which apparently is not allowed. So yeah, it was quite extreme. But

nevertheless a couple of points, so good for the team. I felt more competitive this weekend than the last few events. Ninth in Monza, no points in Singapore, ninth in Japan (*Alonso was eighth at Suzuka - ed*), so I think a little bit better this weekend.

So one of the hardest races?

I think one of the hardest for sure. I think Malaysia, when we were racing in Sepang in the daytime, I remember those to be very extreme. I think Bahrain 2009 it was like 41 degrees, it was extremely hot, that one. And I think this one, so for sure in the top three.

Have you had seat issues before?

We have been dealing with some issues. Today was extreme.

Is it acceptable to race in these conditions?

It was a surprise, to be honest, because yesterday was not that bad in free practice. Maybe it was windy or something and today we missed that wind, that ventilation. It was extreme. We need to see if in the future there is any solution and in some extreme conditions we can agree on delaying the start or whatever.

Why did you go off?

I lost the car. It was my mistake. I struggled a little bit with on/off grip in the car at the moment. It was my mistake. Costly mistake, maybe one or two places, so hopefully next time is better.



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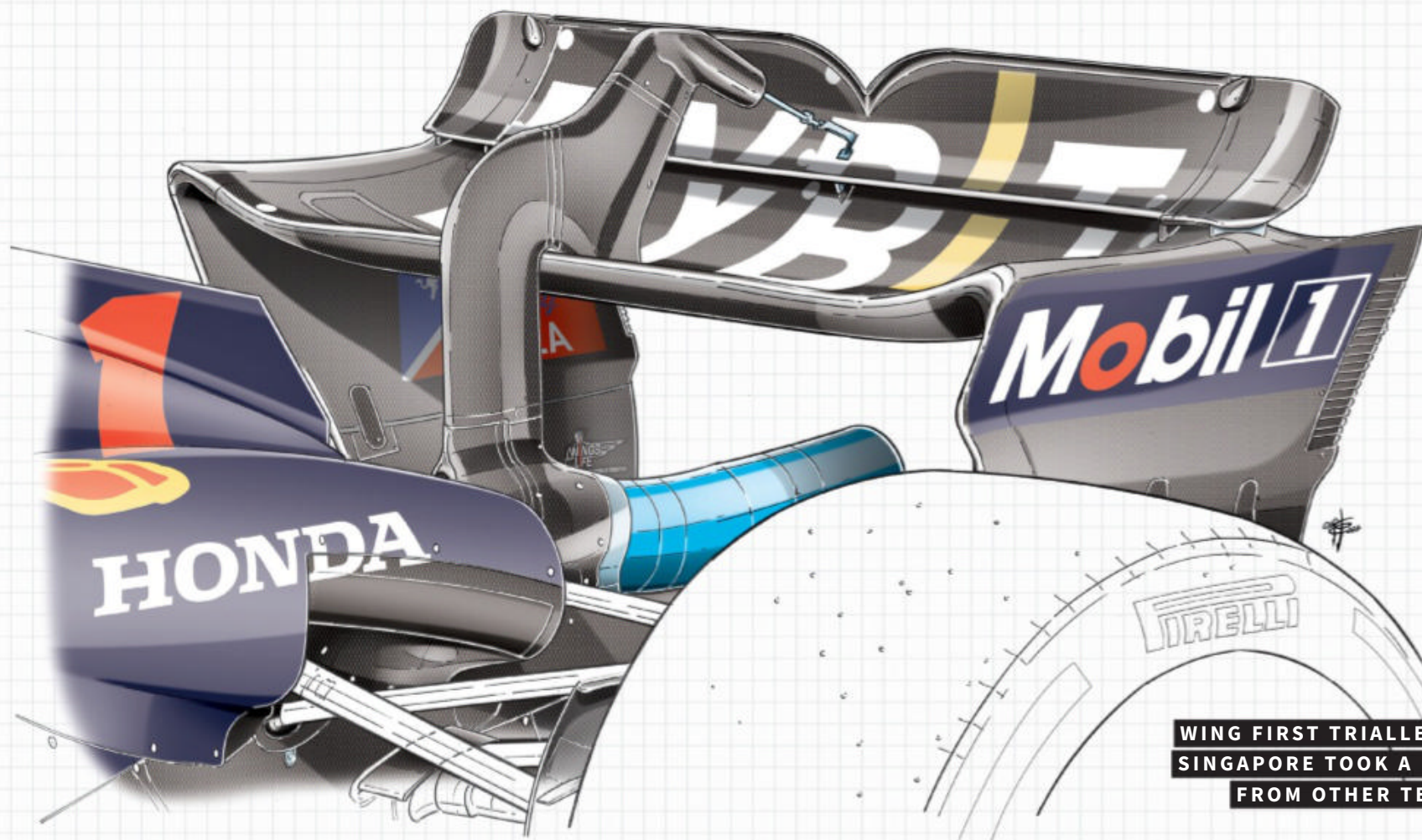
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DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



WING FIRST TRIALLED IN SINGAPORE TOOK A LEAF FROM OTHER TEAMS

RIVALRY'S INSPIRATION GIVES RED BULL WINGS

Although Red Bull turned its focus to 2024 some time ago, citing the impact of its penalty for transgressing the cost cap in 2021, the team has still found opportunities to make minor tweaks to its car to help preserve its margin over the rest of the field.

A number of teams this season have found ways to separate the

upper flap of the rear wing at the tips, with two metallic brackets ensuring its connection to the endplate can be preserved. Red Bull has followed suit, and the exposed tips will generate vortices as a result. This can expand the suction area behind the car, helping to link rear-wing performance with the floor and the beam wing.

The team initially trialled this design in Singapore last month, but a lower-downforce spec was used in Japan. The Singapore wing returned in Qatar with more to show for it, because the high and medium-speed corners required more mid-corner downforce.

"Taking inspiration from competitor designs, the end of the

flap element has a revised curl to the endplate, which offered more local load for this element for this particular upper wing design," Red Bull technical notes from Singapore explained. After leading the way in development for the past two seasons, it's nice to see that even Red Bull can learn something new...

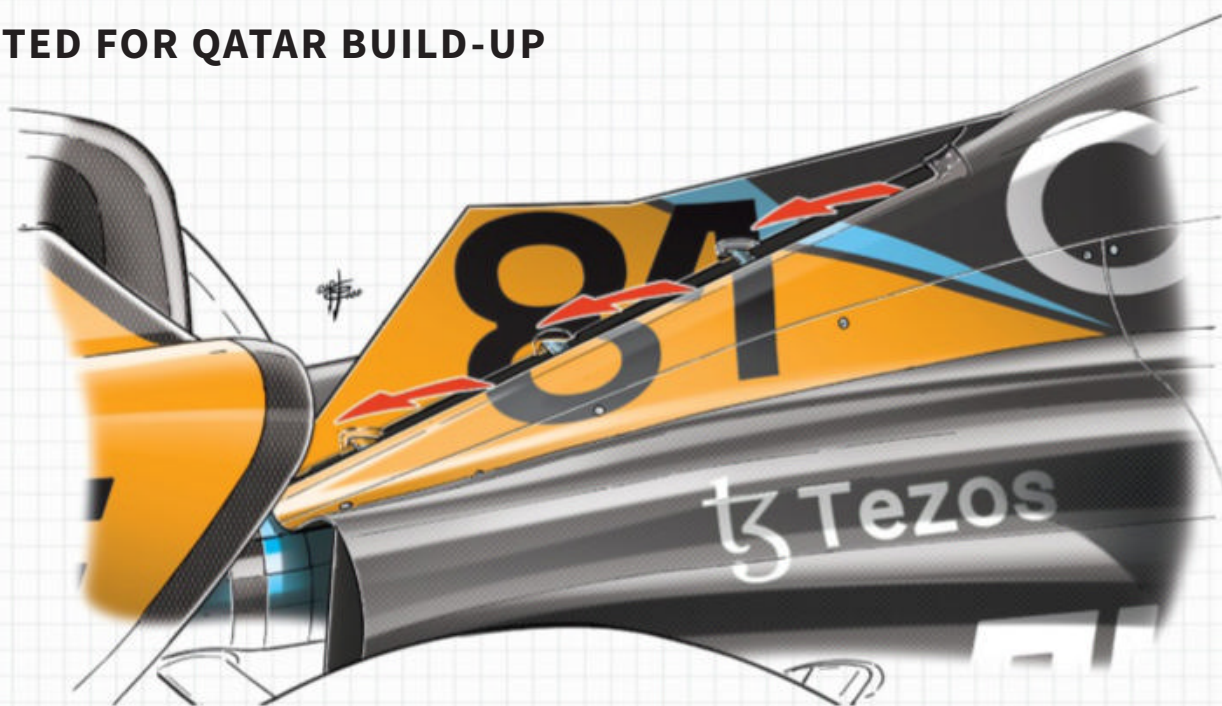
JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

COOLING SLOTS DECONGESTED FOR QATAR BUILD-UP

There were no new parts on the McLaren for the Qatar weekend, but the extreme heat and humidity prompted the team to open up its full array of cooling apertures to draw excess heat from within the bodywork. This included opening up the slots either side of the shark fin to the maximum (see arrows) to rush more hot air out of the car.

Small aerofoil profiles separate each slot to offer some conditioning to the expelled airflow. In terms of its overall development, McLaren demonstrated its turnaround in performance with Oscar Piastri grabbing victory in the Qatar sprint race, testament to the work that has been carried out to fix a once-wayward MCL60.

Team principal Andrea Stella explained that there would be only minor changes over the rest of the season, but with a view to next year's car, where the aim is to improve driveability for Piastri and Lando Norris: "For this year there



won't be many more upgrades, but we will try to solve this knife-edge balance. Most will come for next year's car, but we will have to wait until

February to actually see what kind of step we have been able to make."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

20 Perez #11 1m25.462s		18 Magnussen #20 1m27.046s		16 Stroll #18 1m26.345s		14 Hulkenberg #27 1m25.783s		12 Sainz #55 1m25.328s	
	19 Zhou #24 1m27.432s		17 Lawson #40 1m26.635s		15 Sargeant #2 1m26.210s		13 Albon #23 1m25.707s		11 Tsunoda #22 1m25.301s

FREE PRACTICE

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m27.428s
2	Sainz	1m27.762s
3	Leclerc	1m27.909s
4	Alonso	1m27.919s
5	Perez	1m28.016s
6	Tsunoda	1m28.027s
7	Hulkenberg	1m28.171s
8	Russell	1m28.336s
9	Piastri	1m28.380s
10	Norris	1m28.441s
11	Sargeant	1m28.550s
12	Albon	1m28.590s
13	Hamilton	1m28.679s
14	Stroll	1m28.690s
15	Ocon	1m28.732s
16	Gasly	1m28.821s
17	Bottas	1m29.041s
18	Zhou	1m29.106s
19	Lawson	1m29.238s
20	Magnussen	1m29.502s

RACE QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Verstappen	1m23.778s
2	Russell	1m24.219s
3	Hamilton	1m24.305s
4	Alonso	1m24.369s
5	Leclerc	1m24.424s
6	Piastri	1m24.540s
7	Gasly	1m24.553s
8	Ocon	1m24.763s
9	Bottas	1m25.058s
10	Norris	no time
Q2 11	Tsunoda	1m25.301s
12	Sainz	1m25.328s
13	Perez	1m25.462s
14	Albon	1m25.707s
15	Hulkenberg	1m25.783s
Q1 16	Sargeant	1m26.210s
17	Stroll	1m26.345s
18	Lawson	1m26.635s
19	Magnussen	1m27.046s
20	Zhou	1m27.432s

SPRINT QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Piastri	1m24.454s
2	Norris	1m24.536s
3	Verstappen	1m24.646s
4	Russell	1m24.841s
5	Sainz	1m25.155s
6	Leclerc	1m25.247s
7	Hulkenberg	1m25.320s
8	Perez	1m25.382s
9	Alonso	no time
10	Ocon	no time
Q2 11	Gasly	1m25.686s
12	Hamilton	1m25.962s
13	Bottas	1m26.236s
14	Lawson	1m26.584s
15	Zhou	1m26.546s
Q1 16	Stroll	1m26.849s
17	Albon	1m26.862s
18	Tsunoda	1m26.926s
19	Magnussen	1m27.438s
20	Sargeant	2m05.741s

WEATHER Sunny twilight then night, air 34-36C track 38-41C

WEATHER Night, air 32C track 34-35C

WEATHER Sunny twilight then night, air 36-37C track 42-45C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	433	1	1
2 Perez	224	1	1
3 Hamilton	194	2	1
4 Alonso	183	2	2
5 Sainz	153	1	1
6 Leclerc	145	2	1
7 Norris	136	2	2
8 Russell	132	3	2
9 Piastri	83	2	2
10 Stroll	47	4	6
11 Gasly	46	3	4
12 Ocon	44	3	4
13 Albon	23	7	4
14 Bottas	10	8	7
15 Hulkenberg	9	7	2
16 Zhou	6	9	5
17 Tsunoda	3	10	8
18 Magnussen	3	10	4
19 Lawson	2	9	10
20 Sargeant	0	11	10
21 de Vries	0	12	12
22 Ricciardo	0	13	13

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS
1 Red Bull	657
2 Mercedes	326
3 Ferrari	298
4 Aston Martin	230
5 McLaren	219
6 Alpine	90
7 Williams	23
8 Alfa Romeo	16
9 Haas	12
10 AlphaTauri	5

QUALIFYING BATTLE

DRIVER	POS	DRIVER	POS
Verstappen	15	Perez	1
Leclerc	10	Sainz	7
Hamilton	8	Russell	9
Gasly	10	Ocon	7
Norris	12	Piastri	5
Zhou	6	Bottas	11
Alonso	15	Stroll	2
Magnussen	5	Hulkenberg	12
Tsunoda	4	Lawson	1
Ricciardo	1	Tsunoda	1
de Vries	2	Tsunoda	8
Sargeant	0	Albon	17

WINS

Verstappen	14
Perez	2
Sainz	1

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	10
Perez	2
Leclerc	2
Sainz	2
Hamilton	1

FASTEST LAPS

Verstappen	8
Hamilton	3
Perez	2
Alonso	1
Piastri	1
Russell	1
Zhou	1

SPRINT RACE 19 LAPS - 63.81 MILES

POS	DRIVER	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRE	FASTEST LAPS
1	Piastri	35m01.297s	11	Mu	1m25.926s
2	Verstappen	+1.871s		Mn	1m25.604s
3	Norris	+8.497s		Mu	1m25.662s
4	Russell	+11.036s	8	Su	1m27.220s
5	Hamilton	+17.314s		Mu	1m27.968s
6	Sainz	+18.806s		Sn	1m28.644s
7	Albon	+19.864s		Mu	1m28.717s
8	Alonso	+21.180s		Su	1m28.717s
9	Gasly	+21.742s		Su	1m28.769s
10	Bottas	+22.208s		Mu	1m29.017s
11	Tsunoda	+22.863s		Mu	1m29.381s
12	Leclerc	+24.860s		Su	1m28.759s
13	Magnussen	+24.970s		Mu, Sn	1m29.560s
14	Zhou	+26.868s		Mu, Su	1m29.553s
15	Stroll	+29.523s		Sn, Su	1m29.536s
R	Hulkenberg	11 laps-accident dam		Mn	1m29.307s
R	Ocon	10 laps-accident		Su	1m29.388s
R	Perez	10 laps-accident		Mn	1m28.584s
R	Sargeant	2 laps-accident		Sn	2m03.562s
R	Lawson	0 laps-accident		Mu	no time

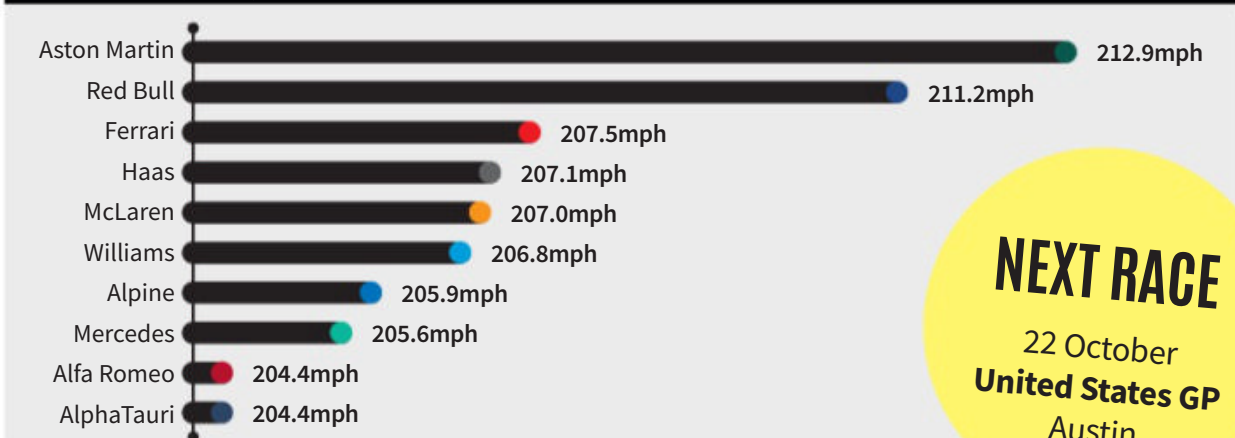


WEATHER Night, air 32C track 36-37C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 109.317mph
FASTEST LAP Verstappen, 1m25.604s, 141.605mph

SPRINT RACE PENALTIES
STROLL Five-second penalty for leaving the track without a justifiable reason multiple times
LECLERC 5s penalty for leaving track without justifiable reason multi times

SPEED TRAP (RACE)



NEXT RACE
22 October
United States GP
Austin

STARTING GRID



RESULTS ROUND 17/22 (57 LAPS - 191.76 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h27m39.168s	57	Mu, Mu, Hn, Mn
2	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+4.833s		Mu, Mu, Mn, Hn
3	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+5.969s		Mu, Mu, Mn, Hn
4	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+34.119s		Mu, Mu, Mn, Hn, Su
5	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+38.976s		Mu, Mu, Hn, Mn
6	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+49.032s		Mu, Mu, Hn, Mn
7	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m02.390s		Mu, Mu, Hn, Mn
8	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m06.563s		Su, Mn, Hn, Hu
9	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m16.127s		Mn, Hn, Hn, Sn
10	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+1m20.181s		Hn, Mu, Mu, Mn
11	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m21.652s		Mu, Mn, Hn, Mn
12	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m22.300s		Mu, Mu, Hn, Mn
13	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m31.014s		Mn, Mn, Hn, Hn
14	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+1.246s		Sn, Mn, Hn, Hn
15	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+8.958s		Mn, Mn, Hn, Hn
16	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+15.085s		Mu, Hn, Mu, Hn
17	Liam Lawson (NZL)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+27.108s		Sn, Hn, Hn, Mn
R	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	40 laps-physical		Mn, Mn, Hn
R	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	0 laps-accident		Sn
NS	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	fuel system		

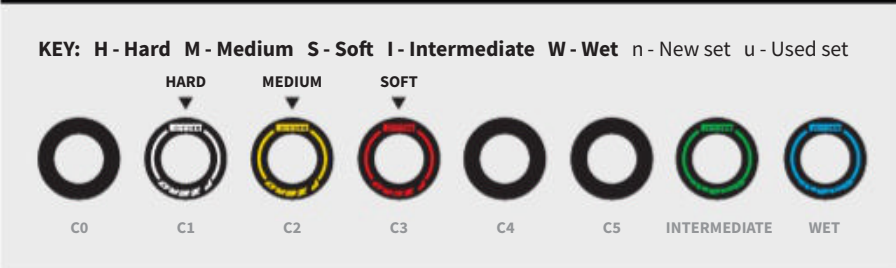
FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Verstappen	1m24.319s	-	56
2	Norris	1m24.842s	+0.523s	47
3	Piastri	1m24.921s	+0.602s	48
4	Leclerc	1m24.992s	+0.673s	57
5	Russell	1m25.770s	+1.451s	35
6	Alonso	1m26.045s	+1.726s	57
7	Perez	1m26.220s	+1.901s	50
8	Gasly	1m26.310s	+1.991s	49
9	Zhou	1m26.323s	+2.004s	54
10	Stroll	1m26.352s	+2.033s	55
11	Hulkenberg	1m26.444s	+2.125s	56
12	Ocon	1m26.450s	+2.131s	42
13	Bottas	1m26.652s	+2.333s	54
14	Albon	1m26.666s	+2.347s	57
15	Magnussen	1m27.067s	+2.748s	46
16	Lawson	1m27.113s	+2.794s	54
17	Tsunoda	1m27.174s	+2.855s	55
18	Sargeant	1m27.983s	+3.664s	31
-	Hamilton	no time	-	-
-	Sainz	no time	-	-

WEATHER Night, air 31-32C track 36-37C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 131.264mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 143.763mph

TYRES



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

PEREZ Required to start from pitlane after all power unit elements replaced

RACE PENALTIES

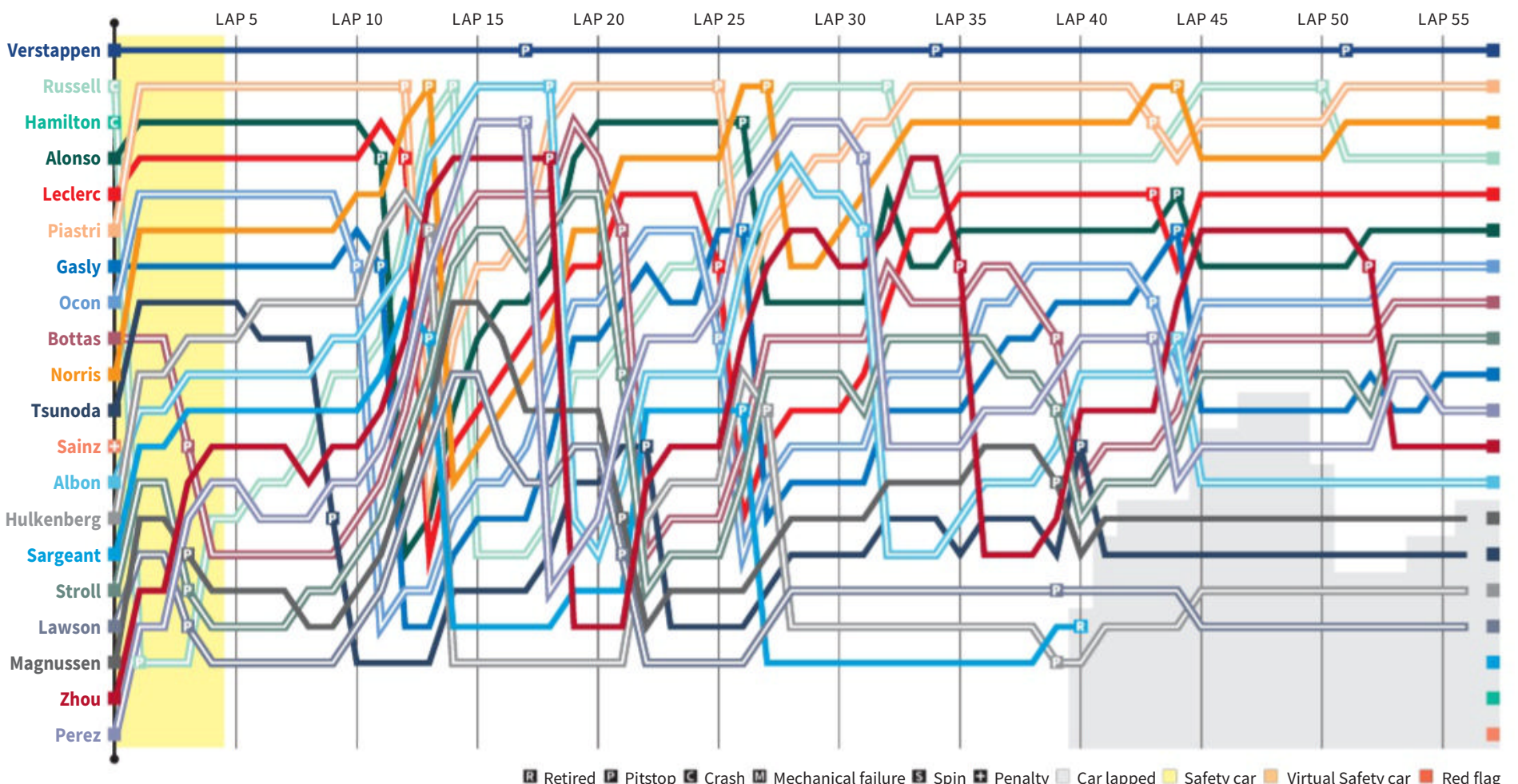
HAMILTON €50,000 fine (€25,000 suspended) for crossing the live track to return to the pitlane

HULKENBERG 10-second time penalty for incorrect starting location

STROLL 2x5s time penalties for leaving the track without a justifiable reason multiple times
GASLY 2x5s time penalties for leaving the track without a justifiable

reason multiple times
ALBON 2x5s time penalties for leaving the track without a justifiable reason multiple times
PEREZ 5s time penalty for leaving the track without a justifiable reason multiple times

LAP CHART

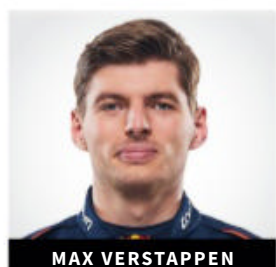


QATAR GP DRIVER RATINGS

F1 as a true meritocracy? Well, by our reckoning the top four in the grand prix certainly put in the best performances on a hot and difficult night

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

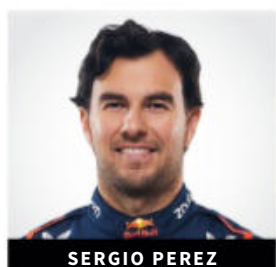
RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

9 Carted off into an untroubled lead after the first-corner clash between the Mercedes drivers, and never looked back. Had to pick up the pace in the second half to cover off McLarens, but was never really at full pelt. Felt mandatory stops dulled Red Bull's edge on tyre life, not that it changed much.

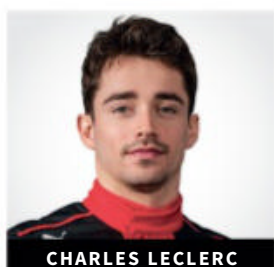


SERGIO PEREZ

Started **20th** — Result **10th**

4 Track-limits penalties giveth and taketh away. Perez was lucky that cars ahead had more than him. Dropped a further position following an added track-limits violation, so loses a further point. Started from pitlane, but made slow progress, dwarfed by Russell's efforts in inferior car.

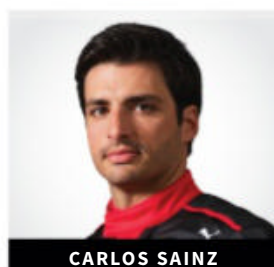
FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **5th** — Result **5th**

6 Got boxed in by crashing Mercs and couldn't capitalise into Turn 1. Took "more margin" with driving in light of Sainz's issue, but still surprised to finish behind Russell. Ferrari's comparative struggles for race pace ensured Leclerc had a lonely evening overall, with fifth really the best result possible.

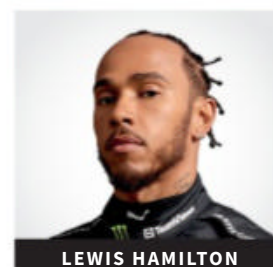


CARLOS SAINZ

Started **NS** — Result **NS**

N/A Withdrew from the race with a fuel-system issue, which could not be fixed in time to start the Grand Prix. He was set to start from 12th on the grid after a disappointing Friday qualifying, but had finished sixth in the previous day's sprint race from fifth on the grid ahead of team-mate Leclerc.

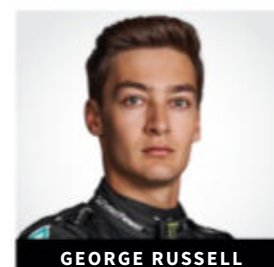
MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **3rd** — Result **R**

2 Had he left a couple more inches to Russell into the first corner, both could very well have made the podium. Took full responsibility after watching the incident back, only penalised for crossing a live circuit to make his way back to the paddock – that earned him a reprimand and fine.

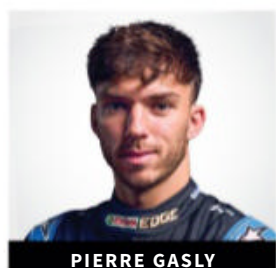


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **2nd** — Result **4th**

9 Had nowhere to go in the lap-one contact with his team-mate, and recovery drive was good. The bit was between his teeth to make up lost ground, but path to fourth was arguably greased by Alonso's off. Couldn't make a final duel with the McLarens happen on his soft-tyres stint and fell back.

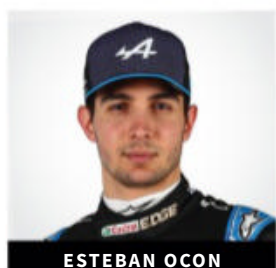
ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **7th** — Result **12th**

4 An early robust defence against Russell showed his willingness to battle, despite hybrid issues costing pace relative to Ocon. But track-limits penalties continued to rack up, and off-track overtakes at Turn 1 on Perez and Stroll ultimately cost positions in the long run as frustration crept into his driving.

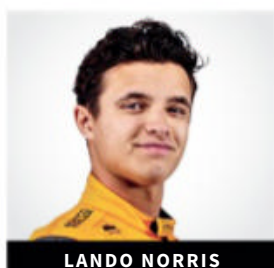


ESTEBAN OCON

Started **9th** — Result **7th**

8 Pressed on despite being sick early on. Leapfrogged Gasly and Norris at the start, and stabilised well in the points amid the flurry of pitstops. Moving past Bottas on track unlocked his seventh-place finish, and made concerted efforts to avoid track-limits violations after Austria penalty glut.

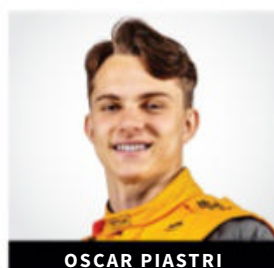
McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **10th** — Result **3rd**

9 Had more ground to make up than Piastri after qualifying, and did so with electric race pace. Tried to use speed as a bargaining chip to be allowed to pass his team-mate, but was told to hold station. Proved his point by carving into Piastri's advantage to sit about a second behind.



OSCAR PIASTRİ

Started **6th** — Result **2nd**

9 Looks at home in the leading pack. Glided through the first-corner skirmish to slip into second, and showed vastly improved race management over Suzuka to maintain position. Still fell short of Norris in ultimate pace, but did enough early on to gather a buffer so team-orders call fell in his favour.

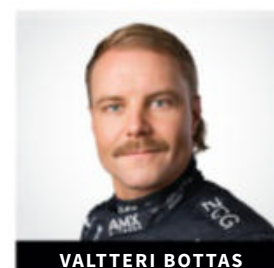
ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **19th** — Result **9th**

7 Made late pitstop work even if it had dumped him from sixth to outside of the points. Boxed clever at the end to ensure he hung with the penalty-encumbered drivers ahead to benefit. Pace on hard tyre was solid, leading to a series of moves to draw clear of the lower midfield after his final stop.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **9th** — Result **8th**

7 Strong qualifying laid foundations for points-scoring run. Was among those to go off strategy by stopping under the safety car, and made it work. Lost initial battle to Ocon, but could put the Alpine driver under pressure at the end, having taken the maximum latitude with pitstop timing.



ASTON MARTIN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **4th** — Result **6th**

6 Early podium contention and a run to fourth was undone by his own mistakes, and his gravel-hopping cost him places to Russell and Leclerc. Looked good when he got up to third after first turn, and put Piastri under pressure on safety-car restart. Appeared to back off after off-track excursions.

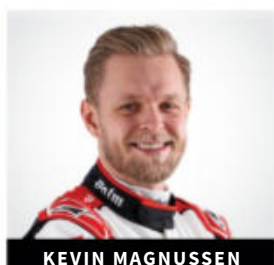


LANCE STROLL

Started **16th** — Result **11th**

5 A miserable weekend overall, but we're only grading him on his race. Off strategy, did a solid job working as Alonso dogsbody, but also showed grit in his battle with Perez and Gasly at the close of the race. Track-limits penalties eventually caught up with him, bumping him out of the points.

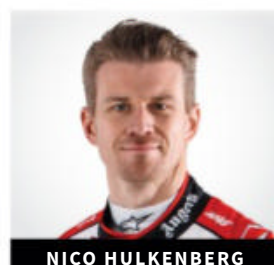
HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started **18th** — Result **14th**

5 One of the drivers to pit during the safety car, but pace on medium tyre was not special. Hard-tyre pace was better, but by then it was too late to do much. Like his team, he's pinning his hopes on extensive Austin updates for Haas to reclaim eighth in the constructors' standings.

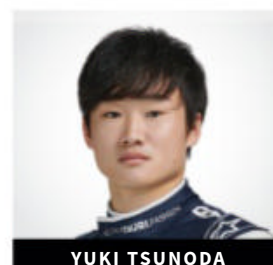


NICO HULKENBERG

Started **14th** — Result **16th**

3 Was excellent in the opening laps and fleetingly looked on for points, but started in wrong grid position after Sainz withdrawal. The 10-second penalty killed off any chance of points, and left him flailing around at the back. As Haas lost a championship position, this was severe brain fade.

ALPHATAURI



YUKI TSUNODA

Started **11th** — Result **15th**

5 Made up a hatful of places at start and battled well in opening stints, but both AlphaTauris went backwards with each pit phase. Seemed to overstress his tyres in on-track fights, which only accelerated that slide down the order, but the car was restricting progress.

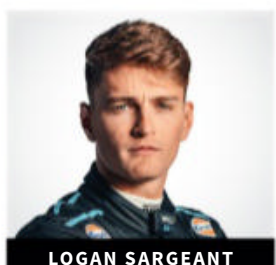


LIAM LAWSON

Started **17th** — Result **17th**

4 Started on soft tyres and always planned to make an early stop, but the safety car did little to help. Complained of stability issues throughout the race and opening hard-tyre stint was poor, which cost him later on. Addressed some of the arrears in the following stints, but the damage was already done.

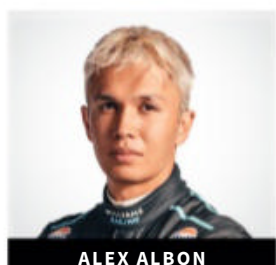
WILLIAMS



LOGAN SARGEANT

Started **15th** — Result **R**

5 Complained of feeling unwell during the race, and worsened to the point where he had to stop with extreme dehydration. Difficult to gauge extent of impact on performance, but was on Albon's tail before dropping down the order, suggesting he was on course for the cusp of points.

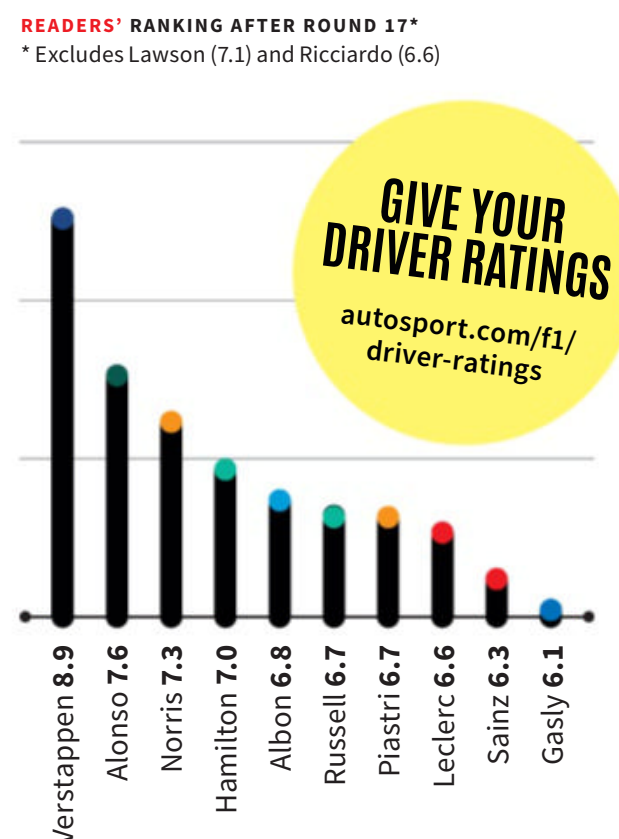
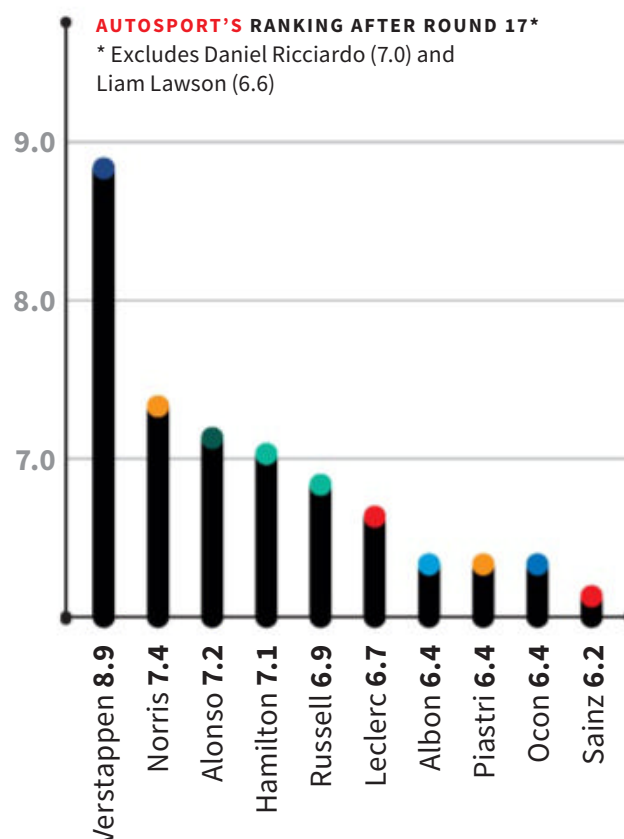


ALEX ALBON

Started **13th** — Result **13th**

4 Track-limits penalties made no difference to where Albon finished, as the early hope of points drifted away. But racking up those two penalties cost a higher finish, and Williams reckoned getting stuck behind the out-of-position Hulkenberg killed off early progress. Slid backwards thereafter.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



GIVE YOUR DRIVER RATINGS
[autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings](https://www.autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings)

BTCC

Scintillating Sutton makes BTCC history

It's not so much that he equalled the record of four titles; it's more that he became the first to do it in two very different ways

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP 

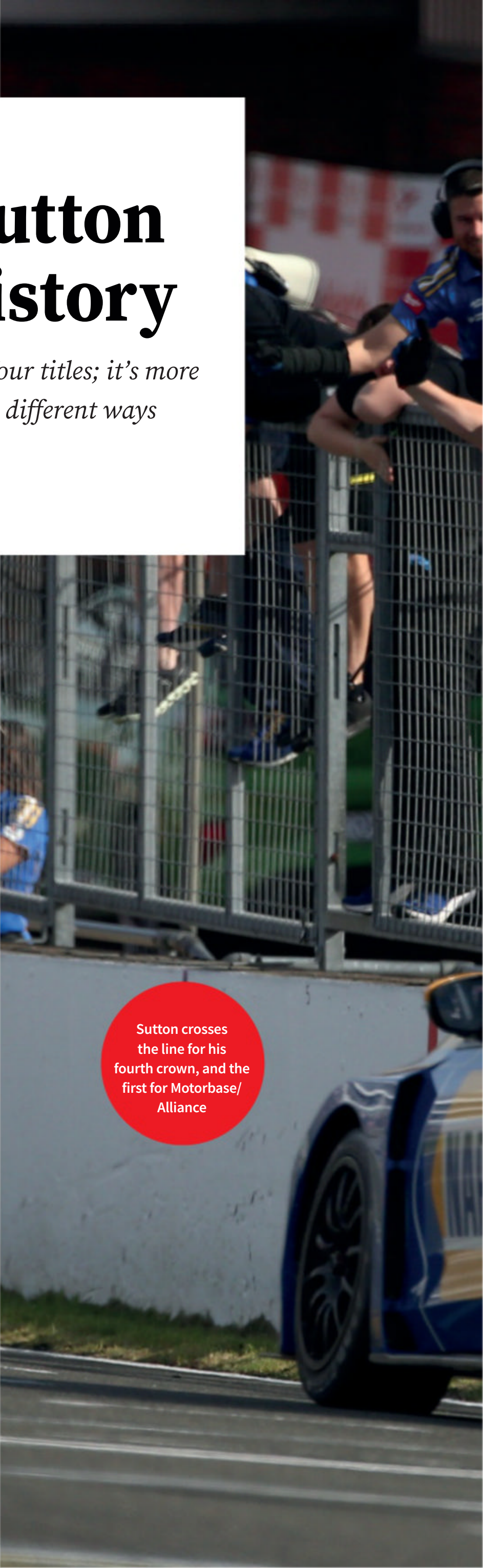
The crowning of Ash Sutton as British Touring Car champion for a record-equalling fourth time was a routine exercise at Brands Hatch last weekend. And this he achieved via victory in race one from his only title rival Tom Ingram. Yet for all his often phlegmatic disposition, the tears were flowing, his voice choking as if he'd snatched it in a final-race thriller.

This one means a lot to Sutton, and you expect it to be because, at the age of 29, he's already joined Andy Rouse and Colin Turkington in the exclusive club of quadruple BTCC kings. Not so. "I don't plan to leave it at four," he stated after getting out of his Ford Focus ST. Instead, it's because of the work that Alliance Racing, the new guise of Motorbase Performance, had put into a NAPA Racing-liveried car that, 12 months ago, he quite frankly never wanted to get into again. And it's because he's accomplished something that neither Rouse nor Turkington – or anyone else – has done.

"It's pretty surreal still at the minute," mused Sutton several hours later as the Alliance crew cranked up the volume on Neil Diamond while they disassembled their pit garage. "I think the biggest thing for me is being the only driver to do it in front-wheel drive and rear-wheel drive. That's the bit that's sunk in properly so far. But it's when I wake up tomorrow morning, a) with a headache, but b) not living a dream but reality, that's when I'll realise what we've achieved. This next week's going to be just soaking up everything we've done throughout the year, this weekend, and I just want to thank everyone who's been involved at the team."

It has, indeed, been a remarkable performance from Sutton and the team throughout 2023, and really it was only down to a couple missteps at the start of races that the championship wasn't all done and dusted by the time the circus arrived at the magnificent Brands Grand Prix circuit. Reigning, and soon to be outgoing, champion Ingram was 45 points adrift – pretty much equivalent to two race wins – in his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N. So the point for pole position, and the advantageous starting position that would guarantee, were crucial for Sutton's plans for wrapping it all up in race one and enjoying the rest of his day.

This he did in spectacular fashion. Sutton was already quickest just nine minutes into the half-hour session when George Gamble dropped his Toyota on the exit of Sheene Curve, and the red flags flew to enable barrier repairs. While some had taken a new set of soft Goodyear tyres for the start of the session, the impending champion had set his time on used softs. And, of course, as championship leader he was on the minimum hybrid allowance of just one second per lap. Bizarrely, after the resumption none of the leading positions changed; only Sutton improved to move himself further and further away. First he went quicker on a new set of softs, despite "a big moment on the grass at the back of the circuit at Hawthorn – I lost a couple of tenths". With a further two new >>



Sutton crosses the line for his fourth crown, and the first for Motorbase/Alliance

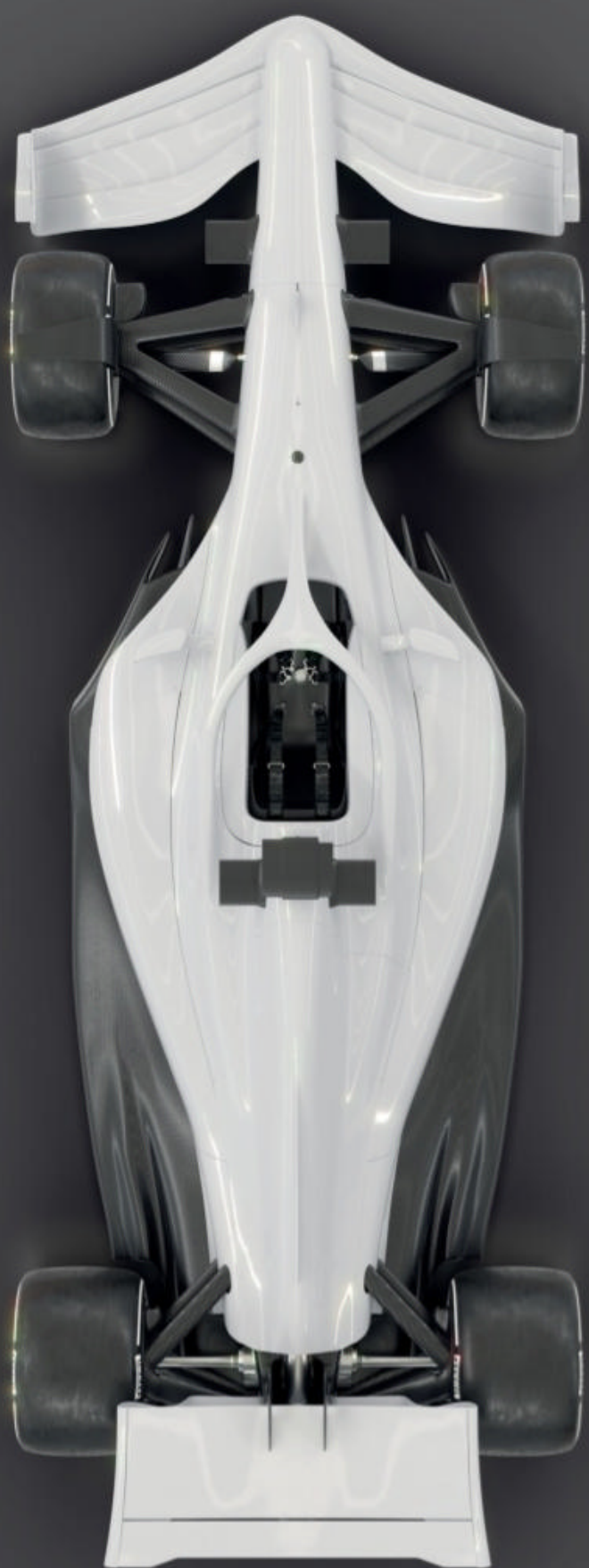
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Ingram, here leading
Rowbottom and Collard,
fell just short of Sutton

tyres bolted to the front, he went faster still. “I knew there was time on the table and I didn’t know what the others would do, so we had to go again,” he explained.

Ingram, on new soft tyres from the start and with three seconds per lap of hybrid, was third. “The car felt good but not stellar,” he reflected. “It’s doing everything you want it to but not any more than that. We still have a bit to find in qualifying spec but I feel that’s been the story of our year.” He was on a quick lap when the red flags flew: “I had to back out and the data said I was two tenths up. Would it change anything? Probably not.” Of the uneventful majority of the session, he pondered: “So much of the circuit was filled with gravelly shite. It’s created this layer of slippiness.”

In between the two title contenders was Rory Butcher in a welcome return to form, not only for the amiable Scot but also the Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla squad. What’s more, he’d set his time with used soft tyres at the rear. “It’s nice to go out without too much pressure to put a good lap in,” smiled a man who, in contrast to years past, was well out of title contention by the time of finals weekend. “It was one of those laps. I got it down first time and it was hard to replicate it.”

Butcher, then, could prove to be a fly in the title-fight ointment, but as soon as the cars rolled out to the grid such hopes began evaporating. Speedworks was playing the long game, saving the soft tyres for later and fitting mediums for this one; Sutton and Ingram, as you’d expect, were champing at the bit on softs.



Thompson (on grass) tries
interesting passing route on
fellow podium man Cammish



“Clean air helps here, but ultimately we had a car that could just keep going faster and faster”

Ingram used the extra grip – and a tighter line at Druids after Butcher had braved it out side by side with Sutton – to instantly get up to second place, then had a speculative stab at the leading Ford into Surtees. But then Sutton drew away. It’s become a trademark of his to use his single lap of hybrid allowance on the second tour to grab fastest lap and take the race by the scruff of the neck. This he did, with an eye-watering lap 0.335s quicker than Ingram, and over 1s up on everyone else. Now it was time to nurse the tyres, and make sure there was enough life in them should there be a late safety car. Which there was.

The green flags flew with two laps remaining, and Ingram still had a lap of hybrid available. But Sutton wasn’t worried; the maths had all been done. With the point for fastest lap in his pocket, even if Ingram got ahead they would be 44 points apart – the maximum available over the remaining two races, but with Sutton uncatchable on wins countback should the tallies be level. Ingram had another sniff at Surtees on the restart lap, then used his last remaining hybrid boost but to no avail.

“He definitely kept us honest,” recounted the new champion. “The opening lap he showed his nose at Turn 4 and we managed to rise above that one and just get our head down. The clean air helps here, plays a big part in it, but ultimately we had a car that could just keep going faster and faster. So once we got the fastest lap it was just a case of managing it. The benefit of going for fastest lap... even if Tom did beat me we still would win the championship, so the extra point was everything.” Ingram explained: “I tried to save some hybrid just on the off chance that there was a safety car, but the trouble is out the back, once you’re tucked up in the dirty air, it’s so difficult to do anything with it, so you end up almost having to just drive around and wear your tyres out.”

Now that the title was done and dusted, the pressure was off Sutton and he took his wins tally for the season to a remarkable 12 in race two, which, as Ingram remarked, was “almost copy-and-paste” of the opener. Of course, they were both now on medium tyres, and it’s possible that another late safety car – this time >>

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Hill has just passed
Cook to take the
win in the finale...



...Hmm, wonder why Cook's
fight with Jelley led to
rising engine temperatures

there was time for just one lap of racing at the end – saved another second place for Ingram. The Hyundai was beginning to look a little vulnerable to the Alliance Ford of Dan Cammish, who was on soft rubber, but whose chase was scuppered when team-mate Sam Osborne charged backwards into the Paddock Hill Bend tyre wall after contact with BTCC returnee James Gornall.

“I was just getting into that ‘I can have you now’ gap,” said Cammish, “but after the safety car I just didn’t have enough.” Amid the celebrations of team leader Sutton’s title, it’s been a rough time for the tall Berkshire-domiciled Yorkshireman, who has had a rotten run of luck. So much so that, after qualifying sixth, he explained: “I’ve had such a bad run I just didn’t want to crash it. There was definitely more time to be had.”

Cammish joined Sutton, Ingram and a cast of other miscreants in an absolutely crazy battle in the reversed-grid finale. This was high-intensity racing, followed by a fair few drivers being invited to the TOCA bus to explain their misdemeanours. First Cammish was shoved aside at Graham Hill Bend by the Team Hard Cupra Leon of the feisty Bobby Thompson. Then, a couple of laps after the restart following an early safety car, Ingram and Sutton came together on Cooper Straight, and the Ford was sent off the circuit and into a Kwik Fit advertising board, which wrapped itself around the radiator. Eventually the board freed itself and fluttered skywards before attaching itself to the Hyundai of Ingram’s team-mate Tom Chilton, whose engine was cooked as a result!

“If I’m honest that is proper touring car racing,” enthused Sutton. “Unfortunately we were just on the receiving end, me and Tom got hooked, there was a big chop from him – whether it was intentional or not it doesn’t matter. I’m gutted we didn’t quite make

the progress we wanted to. The sign got stuck to the radiator, water temps shot through the roof, air charge, so I had to box, but luckily another safety car bunched us all up.” Ingram pleaded ‘not guilty’: “That last race was one of the best of the year! You always expect there to be a bit of chaos and a bit of carnage, and that’s exactly what it was. I got up the inside of Ash coming out of Graham Hill Bend, Ash then came across, caught my right rear, which turned me into him. It was just one of those annoying things.”

Ingram eventually got up to fourth late on, displacing the Alliance Ford of Dan Rowbottom – the bearded Midlander qualified fourth and was a strong contender all weekend – with a peach of a move into Paddock with three laps remaining, which meant the Hyundai star was the top medium-tyred runner. But up front something very special had been happening among the leading soft-shod trio...

On his home circuit, the track he loves most, Jake Hill had been disappointed to qualify eighth in his West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport, one spot behind team-mate Turkington. He’d raced well to sixth in the opener, then suddenly slowed on the run to the finish line in the sequel, letting Thompson through for fifth in what looked suspiciously like a bid to be in the frame for reversed-grid pole. “Sudden misfires are a real pain...” he grinned with all the sincerity of a kid who’s just fired an elastic band at a teacher who’s turned their back to write on the blackboard.

“Rowbottom’s wheelspin caused enough tyre smoke to make you think you were at Santa Pod”

When Rowbottom’s wheelspin from the front row caused enough tyre smoke to make you think you were at Santa Pod, Hill found himself chasing the sister BMW of Stephen Jelley and Josh Cook’s One Motorsport Honda Civic Type R, who were in a ferocious battle for the lead. Cook was mystified and down in the dumps following an off-the-pace qualifying and race one, but engine tweaks from the Honda motor gurus at Neil Brown Engineering improved things; Jelley had also been in strife, given a three-place grid penalty for the inadvertent whack that sent Mikey Doble’s Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall into the barrier at Stirling’s in race one, which caused the safety car.

Now they were at it, trading the lead, Cook grabbing it, but alarmingly high engine temperatures from grass in the radiator >>

leaving him vulnerable to Jelley grabbing it back. Into the high-speed Westfield they raced; Jelley went to the outside of the Honda, and suddenly Hill was there on the inside. Cook tried to move across to block the Laser Tools-liveried BMW. No problem: Hill kept his foot planted, took to the grass with all four wheels in the minor kink that follows, and shouldered up the inside into Dingle Dell.

Hill did have to explain that one in the TOCA bus, and it was track-limits *cause celebre* Ricky Collard, who was part of the warring bunch behind, who hailed the move. “That was 100% track limits and I’m not being funny but... what a great move;

“That was 100% track limits and I’m not being funny but... what a great move; fricking awesome!”

it was fricking awesome!” he grinned. “How much fun was that race... It was proper gloves-off touring car racing.” Hill, who then kept runner-up Cook and Jelley at a safe distance to take the victory, bubbled: “I’ve done that move many a time – not on two people mind you. I saw an opportunity and went for it. Josh pushed me towards the grass, and I might have taken a little bit more than I needed to but I didn’t want to hit him. Then I just had to look after the left-rear tyre and nurse it home.”

Collard made it home in sixth to complete a strong day, which peaked with fourth in race two, and make up for Speedworks Toyota team-mate Butcher’s disastrous fortune. Butcher was enjoying a tremendous fight for third in the opener with the superb Thompson, whose car control on the GP loop was something to behold all weekend, when a left-front puncture – “I think there was a slight impact on the rim, a kerb-strike or something potentially” – forced



him off the road at Sheene and into the pits. Butcher was up to 12th, in with a chance of reversed-grid pole, in race two when another puncture struck on the final lap due to contact.

Butcher’s strife allowed a happy Thompson a fully merited first BTCC podium in a non-reversed-grid race, and Hard’s plucky Essex racer had enjoyed the fight: “I love Rory – he’s one of the drivers I get on best with on the grid and it was a real battle. Shame he got the puncture.”

But the *real* battle was won by Sutton. “I feel that Ash has been a worthy champion by an absolute country mile this year and they deserve everything they’ve had,” acknowledged the approving Ingram. “They can enjoy it, and hopefully we can have the same again next year, just role reversal!” ✨

[P68 BTCC SUPPORTS REPORT](#)

THE TITLE RACE THAT WENT DOWN TO THE WIRE

The big prize – the BTCC drivers’ crown – was done and dusted. But it was nip and tuck for the manufacturers’ title going into the final race. Could the Alliance Racing Fords add this one to Ash Sutton’s glory and the teams’ award as NAPA Racing, or would there be consolation for the West Surrey Racing-run BMW squadron?

WSR’s Colin Turkington had enjoyed a

strong run from seventh on the grid to fourth on soft tyres in the opening race. He then got a good start to the follow-up, only for some nerfage with Bobby Thompson and Dan Cammish at Druids to have the most bizarre of consequences. “The right-rear of my car got run into and I got snap oversteer,” sighed the Northern Irishman. “And in that snap oversteer my hands got crossed up and

I knocked the engine map switch into cooldown mode. By the time I got into go mode again, I was rear-ended.”

Poor Ronan Pearson was unsighted and struck the BMW, Michael Crees in turn had nowhere to go and his Cupra hit the Hyundai, and all three cars were out on the spot.

Turkington had work to do in the finale and ran strongly to finish 10th, but it wasn’t enough. He fell two positions short of claiming the title for BMW, and WSR folk were furious: the hybrid had failed. “I was making progress but I felt like it was taking two laps to pass someone instead of potentially one,” he reckoned, adding that without the hybrid bereavement he’d likely have grabbed the positions he needed.

Not that this crown wasn’t a moving target... Cammish’s Ford had got shoved down from seventh to ninth at Surtees on the penultimate lap by the BMW of Adam Morgan, doing his best for the WSR team. “I pulled up next to Colin after the race and gave him a wave to say, ‘That didn’t work!’” laughed Cammish. “That race got out of hand and I’m glad to be standing here.”



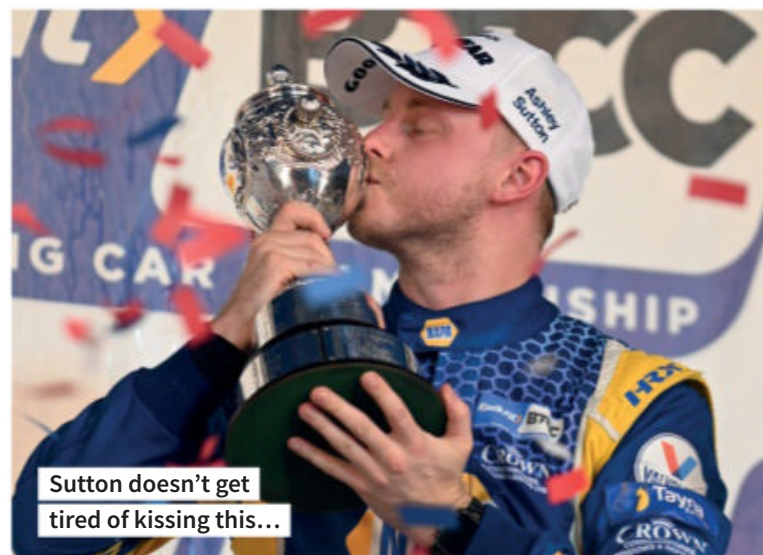
RESULTS ROUND 10/10, BRANDS HATCH (GBR), 8 OCTOBER RACE 1 (18 LAPS – 43.79 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (S)	29m41.888s
2	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (S)	+0.603s
3	Bobby Thompson (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (S)	+2.236s
4	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (S)	+2.933s
5	Dan Cammish (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+4.569s
6	Jake Hill (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (M)	+4.839s
7	Dan Rowbottom (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+6.428s
8	Stephen Jelley (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (M)	+6.617s
9	Ricky Collard (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	+6.783s
10	Adam Morgan (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (M)	+7.263s
11	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (M)	+8.350s
12	Josh Cook (GBR)	One Motorsport / Honda Civic Type R (M)	+8.537s
13	Tom Chilton (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (S)	+8.550s
14	Andrew Watson (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (S)	+9.118s
15	Dan Lloyd (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	+9.760s
16	George Gamble (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	+10.657s
17	Dexter Patterson (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	+11.059s
18	Sam Osborne (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+11.207s
19	Jade Edwards (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	+12.681s
20	Ronan Pearson (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (M)	+13.493s
21	Daryl DeLeon (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	+15.467s
22	Nick Halstead (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (M)	+16.939s
23	Rory Butcher (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	-1 lap
24	Michael Crees (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	-1 lap
R	Aiden Moffat (GBR)	One Motorsport / Honda Civic Type R (M)	14 laps-boost pipe
R	Mikey Doble (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (M)	11 laps-accident
NS	James Gornall (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon (M)	

Winner's average speed 88.48mph. **Fastest lap** Sutton 1m30.244s, 97.06mph.

(S)=soft tyres; (M)=medium tyres

QUALIFYING 1 Sutton 1m29.823s; 2 Butcher 1m30.076s; 3 Ingram 1m30.130s; 4 Rowbottom 1m30.149s; 5 Thompson 1m30.153s; 6 Cammish 1m30.188s; 7 Turkington 1m30.191s; 8 Hill 1m30.321s; 9 Doble 1m30.333s; 10 Morgan 1m30.348s; 11 Jelley 1m30.443s; 12 Collard 1m30.530s; 13 Watson 1m30.579s; 14 Pearson 1m30.617s; 15 Taylor-Smith 1m30.652s; 16 Cook 1m30.667s; 17 Chilton 1m30.717s; 18 Lloyd 1m30.761s; 19 Patterson 1m30.817s; 20 Moffat 1m30.831s; 21 Osborne 1m30.834s; 22 Gamble 1m31.036s; 23 DeLeon 1m31.084s; 24 Crees 1m31.304s; 25 Gornall 1m31.446s; 26 Edwards 1m31.515s; 27 Halstead 1m32.175s.



Sutton doesn't get tired of kissing this...

GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1, with three-place grid penalty for Jelley relegating him to 12th.

RACE 2 (18 LAPS – 43.79 MILES)

1 Sutton (M) 33m48.982s; 2 Ingram (M) +0.703s; 3 Cammish (S) +0.921s; 4 Collard (S) +1.699s; 5 Thompson (M) +3.328s; 6 Hill (M) +3.579s; 7 Cook (M) +3.678s; 8 Rowbottom (S) +4.093s; 9 Jelley (M) +4.462s; 10 Lloyd (S) +4.886s; 11 Moffat (S) +6.503s; 12 Chilton (M) +7.247s; 13 Morgan (M) +8.108s; 14 Patterson (M) +8.640s; 15 Gornall (S) +8.938s; 16 Doble (M) +9.147s; 17 Edwards (S) +9.273s; 18 Watson (M) +10.597s; 19 Butcher (S) +12.560s; 20 Halstead (M) +13.324s; R DeLeon (M) 15 laps-loose undertray; R Osborne (S) 13 laps-accident; R Gamble (S) 10 laps-flapping bodywork; R Taylor-Smith (M) 9 laps-damage; R Turkington (M) 0 laps-accident; R Pearson (M) 0 laps-accident; R Crees (S) 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 77.71mph.

Fastest lap Sutton 1m30.643s, 96.64mph.

GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2, with top nine reversed.

RACE 3 (18 LAPS – 43.79 MILES)

1 Hill (S) 31m34.278s; 2 Cook (S) +1.278s; 3 Jelley (S) +1.794s; 4 Ingram (M) +4.032s; 5 Rowbottom (M) +5.356s; 6 Collard (M) +6.951s; 7 Lloyd (M) +7.914s; 8 Morgan (S) +8.361s; 9 Cammish (M) +8.714s; 10 Turkington (M) +8.896s; 11 Patterson (S) +8.968s; 12 DeLeon (S) +9.275s; 13 Sutton (M) +10.179s; 14 Doble (S) +10.292s; 15 Butcher (M) +10.406s; 16 Pearson (S) +10.811s; 17 Osborne (M) +16.671s; 18 Watson (M) +17.760s; 19 Gornall (M) +19.571s; 20 Halstead (S) +19.956s; 21 Taylor-Smith (S) -1 lap; R Edwards (M) 8 laps-accident; R Gamble (M) 8 laps-accident; R Chilton (M) 7 laps-Sutton-savaged Kwik Fit sign on radiator/engine; R Thompson (M) 7 laps-alternator; R Moffat (M) 0 laps-accident; NS Crees.

Winner's average speed 83.23mph. **Fastest lap** Hill 1m31.446s, 95.79mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Sutton 446; 2 Ingram 400; 3 Hill 372; 4 Turkington 312; 5 Cook 268; 6 Cammish 253; 7 Rowbottom 226; 8 Collard 217; 9 Morgan 199; 10 Butcher 173.



...even if the series sponsor may not have been too happy with him

Despite the winning margin, various issues meant it was a nervous run to the flag



BATHURST 1000

Departing Van Gisbergen delivers commanding 'Great Race' victory

The NASCAR-bound Kiwi, sharing his Triple Eight Chevy Camaro with Richie Stanaway, kept it together to enjoy the biggest winning margin in almost a quarter of a century

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

PHOTOGRAPHY HORSBURGH/EDGE 

Just when it looked like Shane van Gisbergen would depart Supercars without a parting shot, he landed the ultimate blow by winning the Bathurst 1000. The reigning Mount Panorama winner came into the 'Great Race' as a genuine unknown. Twelve months ago he was the overwhelming favourite. But this time, between his dislike of the Gen3 platform, the distraction of his impending NASCAR move and the rise of Erebus Motorsport, he was merely among the favourites. And probably not at the top of the list.

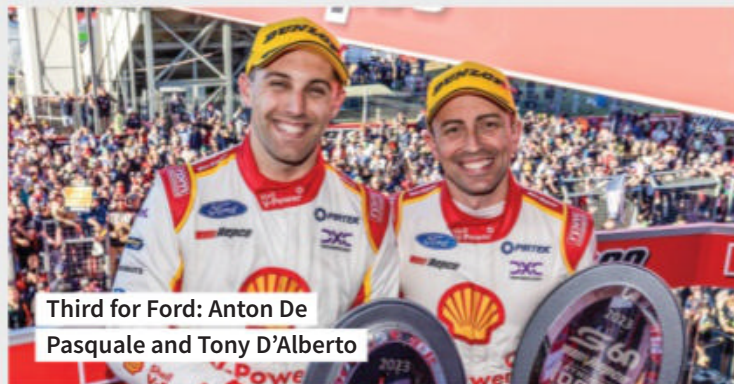
The first three days of the race meeting supported that theory perfectly. The Triple Eight Chevrolet was never far from the top, but it was far from a force to be reckoned with. That was in contrast to the Erebus Camaro piloted by series leader Brodie Kostecki and David Russell. As has been the case more times than not this season, Erebus rolled its cars out of the truck and right into the

set-up window. On Thursday, the team's Will Brown led the way in first practice, with Kostecki third, just over 0.1 seconds behind. In the dedicated co-driver practice on Thursday evening, Russell went quicker than Brown had earlier in the day to go fastest.

On Friday Kostecki was third fastest in practice three, before putting 0.6s on the entire field in practice four as attention turned to qualifying runs. It was an ominous sign and, as expected, Kostecki delivered when it counted, sealing provisional pole with ease. His job was helped by Brown making a critical error on his first run, nipping a brake into Griffins Bend and clouting the wall. He limped the car back to the pits and his crew got it repaired enough to get back out on track, but not enough for Brown to be able to get it into the Top 10 Shootout. Mind you, van Gisbergen only just snuck into the Shootout as well. The Kiwi was outside the top 10 as the session drew to a close, but a last-gasp effort –



NO CHANCE TO CLEAR THE AERO



Third for Ford: Anton De Pasquale and Tony D'Alberto

The weather fitted the mood perfectly on the Wednesday before the Bathurst 1000. Among the gloomy clouds and their unrelenting rain, there was a tense, bitter atmosphere hanging over the paddock. The clock was ticking down to the first practice session. And the Ford teams didn't know what aero specification their cars would be running.

For weeks Ford had been lobbying to make more parity-related aero changes to the Mustang. Between its own CFD and on-track work, the Blue Oval determined that changes to the spotlight cheeks on the front bar, returning the rear wing to its pre-July position, and running a wider wing element without a gurney would improve the Mustang and give it a fighting chance against the Camaro. The issue, however, was that the parity threshold hadn't been officially triggered, like it was after Darwin. Ford was under the impression that Supercars could still force the changes through. But, as both sides prepared to get the lawyers involved, it became clear that Supercars didn't have that power without a parity trigger. For the changes to be approved, the Chevrolet teams had to agree to them. And that was never going to happen.

As the sun set on Wednesday evening, the Ford teams lost hope that the new aero bits – which were ready to be fitted to the cars – would get the green light. By Thursday morning, just hours before practice one, Ford conceded defeat and announced that the Mustangs would race as they were.

It was far from a whitewash, with six Mustangs making the Shootout and Ford pairings filling positions three to six in the race. At the same time, there was no point when anyone in a Ford felt like they had a shot at actually winning the race.

Changes to the Mustang for the Gold Coast or Adelaide are still on the table, but any real ground in the bitter parity battle is unlikely to be made until the cars head to the US at the end of the year for wind-tunnel testing.



Van Gisbergen was looking a lot happier by Sunday evening

and a hell of a tow down Conrod Straight from James Courtney – snuck him through. The tow was so good that GPS data clocked van Gisbergen at 300.5km/h (186.7mph), the first time a Supercar has officially cracked the magical 300.

On Saturday the Triple Eight car finally topped a session for the first time, except it wasn't van Gisbergen. Instead it was Richie Stanaway in the second co-driver session. Broc Feeney in the sister Triple Eight Chevy was then fastest in practice six, but with the Erebus cars not far behind.

The Shootout went to script too. Van Gisbergen never looked entirely in the game, his 2m04.997s only good enough for sixth on the grid. Feeney was that bit sharper, and set Kosteci a decent time to chase down, a 2m04.755s. Running last meant Kosteci had the best of the track conditions, but the worst of the low evening sun. Erebus made a crucial error in the moments before his lap,

sending the car out with a used tear-off on the windscreen. As Kosteci fired down the front straight to start his flier, the sun burst through his pitted windscreen and, for a moment, he couldn't see. He missed his braking marker on the way into Hell Corner, which forced him wide on the exit, dropping his right-rear wheel over the back of the kerb. Suddenly he was almost 0.1s down on Feeney at the first split. But both car and driver were in such superb form that it didn't matter. By the end of the second sector he was more than 0.3s up. The margin to Feeney as he crossed the line was the best part of 0.5s.

Based on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, it felt like it could be a two-horse race on Sunday between Kosteci/Russell and Feeney/Jamie Whincup. And the early indications were that this was indeed the case. Whincup got the jump on Russell at the start and the two co-drivers settled into a rhythm at the front, easing >>

away from James Golding's PremiAir Racing Chevy and a fast-starting Stanaway. That left the Triple Eight garage very nervous about a potential double-stack, given the longer fuel fill times with the Gen3 cars. So, a decision was made to bring Stanaway in for his car's first stop nice and early. It proved to be the call that decided the race. Not long after the car had been through for its service, Kevin Estre buried his Grove Racing Mustang in the sand at Hell Corner. Out came the safety car and in came the leaders. Van Gisbergen, now in the #97, didn't need to stop and filtered up to second, behind Dylan O'Keeffe who had taken over the

“Feeney was able to close to within five seconds. But the showdown never happened”

PremiAir Camaro from Golding.

As soon as the race restarted, van Gisbergen charged past O'Keeffe and into the lead. Feeney followed him through, but was now crucially behind his team-mate. And this meant that when the safety car was called for a second time, six laps later, he was the one who had to double-stack. It wasn't game over for Feeney and Whincup, but the job suddenly got a lot harder. Their attention turned to loading up on fuel, in the hope of having an advantage later in the day.

Stanaway, meanwhile, jumped back in the #97 during this caution, but found himself running second after being jumped in the stops by KostECKI. In the stint that followed, the Triple Eight Chevy looked a match for pace with the Erebus version for the first time all weekend, despite it being a co-driver in Stanaway up against a primary driver in KostECKI.

Stanaway shadowed KostECKI across the stint before they both pitted for a third time on lap 63. This time it was Triple Eight that was slicker in the pits, Stanaway getting out ahead of Russell, who returned to the seat of the Erebus entry. They stayed in that order, separated by about a second, for the next eight laps, until James Moffat fired his Tickford Mustang into the wall at the Dipper. Out came the safety car for a third time, and in came most of the field, including Stanaway, but excluding Russell. Stanaway was able to get back out in fifth, and with plenty of fuel under his belt compared to Russell. Within a handful of green flag laps, Stanaway was back on Russell's bumper. It was in that moment that the chances of KostECKI and Russell winning effectively died. Their Camaro didn't have its immense car-speed advantage in race trim, and the Triple Eight car was much better placed on fuel.



Van Gisbergen and Stanaway weren't out of the woods entirely, though. Despite a second double stack, their team-mates were still in the game and, when van Gisbergen had a soft brake pedal after a stop, Feeney was able to close to within five seconds – and he was facing a shorter final stop. But the showdown never happened. Instead, with 24 of the 161 laps remaining, Feeney found himself unable to change gears. Earlier in the race, the Triple Eight wildcard entry had broken the gearshift tower. Now the #88 had done the same thing. Feeney cut a devastated figure after pulling into the garage, the failure also costing him dearly in the title fight.

With Feeney out of the running, and the Erebus challenge too far back, all van Gisbergen had to do was get through the last stint. Between the threat of another gearshift tower failure, van Gisbergen's ongoing gripes with the feel of the Gen3 steering package, and crazy amounts of rubber building up in the splitter, it was a nervous run home. But van Gisbergen got there, 20 seconds ahead of KostECKI and 33 seconds clear of the Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang of Anton De Pasquale and Tony D'Alberto. It was the biggest winning margin for a Bathurst 1000 in 24 years, which, coincidentally, was also the last time two New Zealanders teamed up to win the Great Race (Greg Murphy and Steve Richards).

While disappointed with second place, it was a very positive result for KostECKI in terms of his title charge. After coming through the two big-points endurance races with a pair of second places, he now sits 131 points ahead of van Gisbergen with just two rounds – and 600 points – to go. With Brown and Jack Perkins finishing eighth at Bathurst, Brown is now 390 points behind his team-mate. And Feeney will have to make up 408 points if he's to run down KostECKI at the season-ending Adelaide 500. ✘



Ford's 3-4-5-6 result headed by De Pasquale/D'Alberto



Polesitting Erebus crew of Kostecki/
Russell had to be content with second

RESULTS BATHURST 1000, AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS ROUND 10/12, MOUNT PANORAMA (AUS), 8 OCTOBER (161 LAPS – 621.553 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Shane van Gisbergen (NZL) Richie Stanaway (NZL)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	6h07m07.4957s
2	Brodie Kostecki (AUS) David Russell (AUS)	Erebus Motorsport Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+19.9326s
3	Anton De Pasquale (AUS) Tony D'Alberto (AUS)	Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang GT	+33.0567s
4	Chaz Mostert (AUS) Lee Holdsworth (AUS)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Ford Mustang GT	+42.8327s
5	David Reynolds (AUS) Garth Tander (AUS)	Grove Racing Ford Mustang GT	+49.0605s
6	James Courtney (AUS) Zak Best (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang GT	+56.9839s
7	Bryce Fullwood (AUS) Dean Fiore (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+58.0307s
8	Will Brown (AUS) Jack Perkins (AUS)	Erebus Motorsport Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+1m02.9565s
9	Jack Le Brocq (AUS) Jayden Ojeda (AUS)	Matt Stone Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+1m13.8983s
10	James Golding (AUS) Dylan O'Keeffe (AUS)	PremiAir Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+1m15.8046s
11	Matthew Payne (NZL) Kevin Estre (FRA)	Grove Racing Ford Mustang GT	+1m19.4882s
12	Tom Randle (AUS) Garry Jacobson (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang GT	+1m22.9787s
13	Tim Slade (AUS) Jonathon Webb (AUS)	PremiAir Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+1m44.0830s
14	Nick Percat (AUS) Fabian Coulthard (NZL)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Ford Mustang GT	+1m48.1040s
15	Cameron Hill (AUS) Jaylyn Robotham (AUS)	Matt Stone Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	+2m03.7188s
16	Will Davison (AUS) Alex Davison (AUS)	Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang GT	+2m04.9219s
17	Scott Pye (AUS) Warren Luff (AUS)	Team 18 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	-1 lap
18	Declan Fraser (AUS) Tyler Everingham (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang GT	-1 lap
19	Aaron Love (AUS) Jake Kostecki (AUS)	Blanchard Racing Team Ford Mustang GT	-1 lap
20	Kai Allen (AUS) Simona de Silvestro (CHE)	Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang GT	-1 lap
21	Jack Smith (AUS) Jaxon Evans (NZL)	Brad Jones Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	-4 laps
22	Macauley Jones (AUS) Jordan Boys (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	-12 laps
23	Broc Feeney (AUS) Jamie Whincup (AUS)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	-19 laps
24	Craig Lowndes (AUS) Zane Goddard (AUS)	Triple Eight Race Engineering Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	-20 laps
R	Mark Winterbottom (AUS) Michael Caruso (AUS)	Team 18 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	160 laps
R	Todd Hazelwood (AUS) Tim Blanchard (AUS)	Blanchard Racing Team Ford Mustang GT	156 laps
R	Cameron Waters (AUS) James Moffat (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang GT	70 laps
R	Andre Heimgartner (NZL) Dale Wood (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Chevrolet Camaro ZL1	68 laps

QUALIFYING TOP 10 SHOOTOUT

- 1 **B Kostecki** 2m04.2719s;
- 2 **Feeney** 2m04.7549s;
- 3 **Waters** 2m04.7775s;
- 4 **Golding** 2m04.8155s;
- 5 **De Pasquale** 2m04.9156s;
- 6 **van Gisbergen** 2m04.9971s;
- 7 **Reynolds** 2m05.1512s;
- 8 **Payne** 2m05.2696s;
- 9 **Mostert** 2m05.8309s;
- 10 **W Davison** 2m06.4174s.

QUALIFYING

- B Kostecki** 2m04.6644s;
- Golding** 2m04.8133s; **De Pasquale** 2m04.9667s; **Waters** 2m04.9909s;
- Feeney** 2m05.0524s; **Reynolds** 2m05.0830s; **van Gisbergen** 2m05.1823s; **Payne** 2m05.2090s;
- Mostert** 2m05.2177s; **W Davison** 2m05.2851s; 11 **Randle** 2m05.3799s;
- 12 **Pye** 2m05.4419s; 13 **Heimgartner** 2m05.4700s; 14 **Hill** 2m05.4895s;
- 15 **Le Brocq** 2m05.5074s;
- 16 **Courtney** 2m05.5107s;
- 17 **Brown** 2m05.5581s; 18 **Slade** 2m05.5844s; 19 **Winterbottom** 2m05.7995s; 20 **Goddard** 2m05.8511s; 21 **Fullwood** 2m05.9406s; 22 **Hazelwood** 2m05.9547s; 23 **Percat** 2m06.0197s;
- 24 **Jones** 2m06.2170s; 25 **Allen** 2m06.2417s; 26 **Love** 2m06.5312s;
- 27 **Smith** 2m07.1711s;
- 28 **Fraser** no time.

CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1 **B Kostecki** 2447; 2 **van Gisbergen** 2316; 3 **Brown** 2057; 4 **Feeney** 2039;
- 5 **Mostert** 1900; 6 **Heimgartner** 1680; 7 **De Pasquale** 1572;
- 8 **Le Brocq** 1553; 9 **Waters** 1550;
- 10 **Fullwood** 1506.

Winners' average speed 101.581mph. Fastest lap **Brown** 2m07.5431s, 108.967mph.



HARRELSON/NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Allmendinger's good at turning right... Here he leads Busch and Elliott

Allmendinger puts the playoff stars in the shade

NASCAR CUP
CHARLOTTE (USA)
8 OCTOBER
ROUND 32/36

AJ Allmendinger may not be in the NASCAR Cup playoffs, but that did not take away from the importance of his win last Sunday at the Charlotte 'roval'.

The former Champ Car race winner had only two Cup victories – both of which also came on road courses – in 425 career Cup starts, and has had a rocky 2023 season with Chevrolet team Kaulig Racing. But he got his reward after deftly navigating five restarts in the final 31 laps and fighting off

a challenge from top playoff driver William Byron in his Hendrick Motorsports Chevy.

Allmendinger could be heard crying over his team radio during the cool-down lap. While he completed his initial interview on the frontstretch, he walked through the gate and into the grandstands to celebrate for several minutes with a throng of fans.

The uncertainty surrounding Allmendinger's future in the Cup series likely also weighed on his shoulders in the moment. While he is returning to Kaulig Racing next season, it remains unclear whether he will compete in the Cup or the second-tier Xfinity Series.

Kyle Busch ended up third in Sunday's

race in his Richard Childress Chevy, but it wasn't enough to keep him in the playoffs. The two-time champion was one of four drivers, along with Brad Keselowski, Bubba Wallace and Ross Chastain, to be eliminated at the cut-off point for the final eight to progress into the next three races.

Ty Gibbs was fourth in the race and Joey Logano rounded out the top five.

Byron, Tyler Reddick, Chris Buescher, Martin Truex Jr, Denny Hamlin, Christopher Bell, Kyle Larson and Ryan Blaney will kick off the semi-final round of the playoffs this Sunday at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

JIM UTTER

Scheider halts Kristoffersson run

WORLD RALLYCROSS
KILLARNEY (ZAF)
7-8 OCTOBER
ROUND 4/5

The World Rallycross Championship resumed in South Africa following its lengthy hiatus owing to the July fire at Lydden, with all the competitors now piloting identical RX2e machinery. While Johan Kristoffersson, bidding for his sixth title, took victory on Saturday, ex-DTM king Timo Scheider scored an emotional triumph on Sunday to ensure that the championship will go down to next month's finale in Hong Kong. Kristoffersson, Kevin Hansen and

Scheider shared the heat wins on Saturday. Kristoffersson then dominated his semi-final and made good his escape in the final to evade the drama behind. A clash between Ole Christian Veiby and Timmy Hansen allowed Scheider to nip past both, but the real beneficiary was Kevin Hansen, who had already taken his joker lap, enabling him to leapfrog this trio and claim the runner-up position.

Scheider didn't have a great start to the action on Sunday. The German, relatively inexperienced in the ZEROID X1 spec car, got a puncture in the first heat but won the other two and then beat Kevin Hansen in his semi-final. The same pair then finished 1-2 in the final, although Hansen had to



Scheider took the win on Sunday

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fend off Kristoffersson, who was "completely sleeping" at the start. Klara Andersson finished fourth, but a penalty for contact dropped her behind Timmy Hansen. Kristoffersson has a handy 36-point advantage over Kevin Hansen, with Scheider also in title contention.

Sixt car higher for WRT BMW squad at Indy

**INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
INDIANAPOLIS (USA)
7 OCTOBER
ROUND 4/5**

Sheldon van der Linde, Philipp Eng and Dries Vanthoor took a commanding victory for Team WRT at the Indianapolis 8 Hours in a race that BMW dominated, albeit failed to convert to a 1-2 finish thanks to a costly incident for Augusto Farfus.

The Belgian squad took charge of the race in the opening hour, with the orange Sixt-liveried BMW taken into the lead by Eng while Farfus followed into second place. WRT's day appeared to turn when the leading car was ordered to serve a drive-through penalty for a stint time violation approaching the race's halfway point. This dropped it to fourth place, with the sister car of Farfus, Maxime Martin and Charles Weerts taking over the lead ahead of the pair of factory-backed Mercedes-AMGs from GruppeM Racing and Craft-Bamboo Racing.

A storming drive back up the order from Vanthoor and Eng allowed WRT to regain its 1-2 running order, just in time for Farfus to make a costly error



BMW's were on top at Indy. Here the winning car leads the pack

in traffic. The Brazilian made contact with the Triarsi Competizione Ferrari, sending Onofrio Triarsi into a spin while it inflicted left-front suspension damage to the BMW that took 12 laps to fix. The M4 GT3 eventually rejoined, with Farfus, Martin and Weerts finishing 17th overall.

Even though it was now one car down, WRT had no trouble remaining ahead of the chasing pack, going on to win by nearly a minute over Maximilian Gotz, Raffaele Marciello and Jules Gounon. Maro Engel, Luca Stolz and Daniel Juncadella finished third.

In GT World Challenge America, RS1 Porsche duo Eric Filgueiras and Stevan McAleer were joined by Klaus Bachler to lock up the Pro championship, while the Pro-Am title went the way of George Kurtz and Colin Braun. Joined by Nolan Siegel in their Riley Mercedes, Braun and Kurtz overcame a three-point deficit in a tightly fought battle with the Wright Motorsports Porsche of Adam Adelson and Elliott Skeer to take the class victory and the championship. Adelson and Skeer, who had called upon IndyCar star Callum Ilott for the race, dropped back with a left-front puncture.

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WEEKEND WINNERS

NASCAR CUP

CHARLOTTE (USA)

AJ Allmendinger
Kaulig Racing (Chevrolet Camaro)

WORLD RALLYCROSS

KILLARNEY (ZAF)

Race 1 Johan Kristoffersson
Race 2 Timo Scheider

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE INDIANAPOLIS (USA)

Sheldon van der Linde/Philipp Eng/
Dries Vanthoor
Team WRT (BMW M4 GT3)

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS BUENOS AIRES (ARG)

Race 1 Gabriel Casagrande
A Mattheis Vogel (Chevrolet Cruze)
Race 2 Matias Rossi
Full Time Sports (Toyota Corolla)

NLS

NURBURGRING (DEU)

Frank Stippler/Christopher Mies
Scherer Sport PHX (Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II)



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IMSA

WINNER TAKES IT ALL

Four cars from as many different manufacturers are split by 38 points heading to IMSA's Petit Le Mans finale this weekend – not much when there are 385 up for grabs...

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES





CADILLAC NARROWLY LEADS THE WAY

**ALEXANDER SIMS/
PIPO DERANI**
ACTION EXPRESS RACING
CADILLAC V-SERIES.R
POINTS 2460 (1ST)
WINS 1

Action Express heads to Road Atlanta with an excellent chance of a sixth IMSA SportsCar Championship title in 10 seasons. Its 2021 champion Pipo Derani and Alexander Sims lead both the regular points and the four-round Endurance Cup with third driver Jack Aitken, who rejoins the duo this weekend as the inaugural season for the GTP class's hybrid cars draws to a close.

Yet Sims feels “somewhat surprised honestly that we are leading the championship going into the last round”. The Briton, who after one season in the top division will rejoin Corvette Racing next year to campaign its new Z06 GT3.R in GTD Pro, concedes “we’ve left a lot of points on the table in quite a few races”.

At July’s Mosport round, where Sims set fastest lap, “things fell apart strategy-wise” to end up seventh, while shunting on cold tyres in the warm-up at Road America compromised a race they would start from pole. “We had to put a spare rear end on that we didn’t have time to do set-up on – it was rear toe out and odd bits like that, so that was that race gone,” Sims laments. A brake issue then scuppered first practice at Indianapolis last time out, putting AXR on the back foot to require a fightback from eighth to fourth.

“It’s probably just the reality for most if not all of us up and down the pitlane with the new cars that we just haven’t been able to execute a good solid weekend every time,” Sims says,

“It’s the first time that I’ve come into the last round with four people so close on points”

adding that “consistency wouldn’t be something I associate with our season so far”.

Sims acknowledges that there’s been “a bit more adjustment” to GTP than he anticipated, specifically citing struggles with overworking the tyres “for too many races before it really sunk home that I needed to adapt my driving”. But his Formula E expertise has “helped me when talking with the engineers and developing systems on the car”, and given him insights he could impart to Derani “to use all the possibilities of the car to his advantage”.

The team’s only victory to date came, Sims admits, in “fortuitous” circumstances at Sebring (above), when in the closing stages the tangle between Mathieu Jaminet and Filipe Albuquerque also eliminated Felipe Nasr, boosting Aitken from fourth to the lead. Further podiums at Laguna Seca and Watkins Glen have contributed to AXR’s haul, but Sims knows its grip on the lead is tenuous given the “ridiculously close” points situation.

Victory for any one of the top three crews at Petit Le Mans would give them the crown, while the crew of the #25 BMW could also claim the title by winning with their top three rivals finishing third or lower. As such, Sims is taking nothing for granted.

“It’s the first time that I’ve come into the last round of the championship with four people so close on points,” points out Sims, a GTLM class winner at Petit with BMW in 2017. “It’s anyone’s to win, because IMSA racing is like that. You start the race with the grid in one order and you can bet that by even half distance it’s reordered hugely. But I would have taken a lead going into the last race, even if it was by a minute margin, at the start of the year.”



CAN THE BRIDESMAIDS FINALLY DO IT?

**FILIPE ALBUQUERQUE/
RICKY TAYLOR**
WAYNE TAYLOR RACING
WITH ANDRETTI
ACURA ARX-06
POINTS 2457 (2ND)
WINS 0

Is this the year when the bridesmaid becomes the bride? Runners-up in each of the past two seasons, Filipe Albuquerque and Ricky Taylor are three points shy of the summit and have every chance of claiming the first IMSA title for Wayne Taylor Racing since Ricky and brother Jordan's

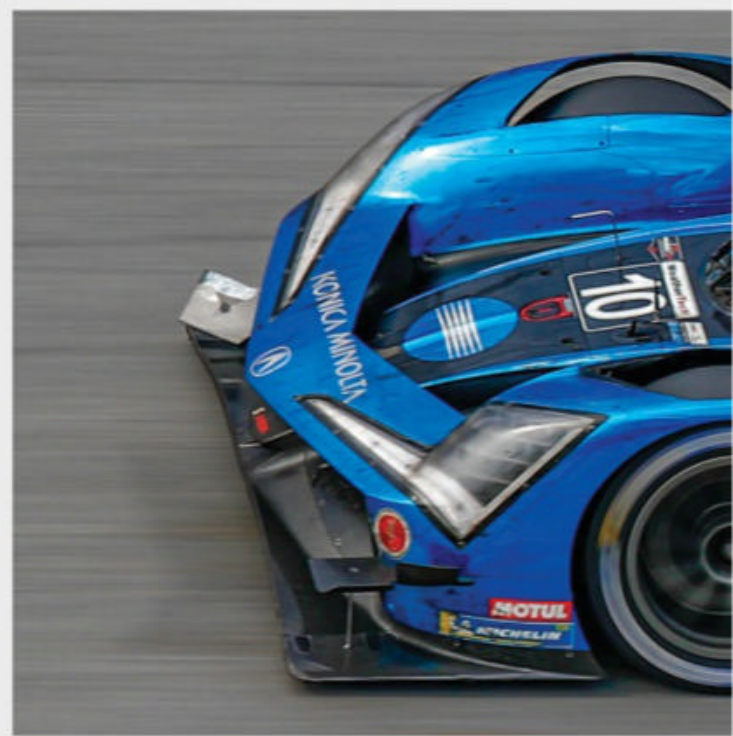


dominant 2017 campaign. Ricky Taylor has since become a double champion thanks to his Penske-run Acura campaign in 2020, but his fellow two-time Daytona 24 Hours winner Albuquerque is still waiting for his first (although he does have the consolation of the Endurance Cup mini-series from 2021).

Finding himself back in the same situation a third year running "adds a pressure" to get it done, the Portuguese admits, after Taylor's unsuccessful final-lap lunge on Felipe Nasr's Action Express Caddy in 2021, and Albuquerque's innocuous touch with a GT car while chasing Tom Blomqvist's Meyer Shank Racing Acura in 2022 incurred suspension damage.

"People tell me, 'At the third one you get it', but it doesn't mean that we get it," Albuquerque points out. "It's just another year and it can possibly be that I finish fourth even. Racing is not about deserving, it's about doing it."

Joined again this weekend by third driver Louis Deletraz, Albuquerque (left) knows that a first win of the season at Petit Le Mans – scene of WTR victories in 2014, 2018 and 2020 – couldn't be more timely. Valuable points were lost at Sebring in March, when WTR was classified fourth after



Albuquerque's bid for the lead ended in disaster, and likewise at Long Beach where Taylor found the Turn 1 wall after his ill-fated move on Mathieu Jaminet, with seventh the unrepresentative result. There was disappointment too at Watkins Glen, where a loose wheel and brake issues forced retirement when Albuquerque believes "we could go for the win".

Acura's only wins this year have been scored by reigning champion MSR, WTR following the





GALSTAD

pink car home at Daytona and Mosport, although the 200-point deduction for Blomqvist and Colin Braun at the former, after MSR was found to have manipulated tyre pressure data, has effectively counted them out of title contention.

Albuquerque notes that Mosport is “exactly that combination of bumpy track and really high speed” where the car thrives, but says he’s unsure what to expect from Road Atlanta with opposition who weren’t as quickly on top of

their packages now up to speed.

“The performance in the beginning of the year, it seemed like we were good everywhere,” he reflects. “As we go along, it was evolution for everybody. A good example is BMW; they started a little bit behind and now they are there with a great pace. By now we can expect great results from everybody.”

Ultimately Albuquerque well knows that WTR has the ingredients to get the job done.

And an asset that could play a decisive role is its new-for-2023 alliance with Michael Andretti’s IndyCar squad. “The engineers have access to more help in case they need it,” Albuquerque explains, citing how Andretti’s group “had way more experience than us going to Indianapolis and they gave us some heads up”.

“The group of people that we have, we are doing a great job,” he adds. Now for the tricky part: “We need to seal it.”

THE PORSCHE PAIR COMING ON STRONG

**NICK TANDY/
MATHIEU JAMINET**
PORSCHE PENSKE MOTORSPORT
PORSCHE 963
POINTS 2455 (3RD)
WINS 2

From the eight rounds to date in which GTP cars have participated, Porsche has the best hit rate with three wins, including a brace in the most recent two races. That explains why Nick Tandy says “confidence is high” in the Penske camp going into Petit Le Mans.

Last time out at Indianapolis, the Briton and Mathieu Jaminet led a team 1-2 over Road America winners Felipe Nasr and Matt Campbell, following up the Tandy/Jaminet breakthrough win for the 963 in Long Beach. But Tandy reasons that the championship could already be out of sight had it not been for a confluence of circumstances that have cost healthy points.

Tandy was on a charge at Daytona before gearbox failure spelled retirement. Victory at Sebring with Dane Cameron – whose place as third driver will be taken at Petit by Laurens Vanthoor – slipped away with the late multi-car crash, but the one that really stung was Watkins

Glen (left). Jaminet had ambushed Connor De Phillippi’s BMW in the closing minutes, but the 963’s front skid wear was fractionally outside the legal tolerance and it was relegated from first to ninth. Tandy also points to a “freak puncture” at Road America that denied “at least a top two, if not a win there”. Instead, they finished seventh.

“It does go to show that we’ve always been in and around the front of the pack,” Tandy recounts. “We could have so easily been coming into this weekend just needing to start the race to bag a 10th-place finish to seal the championship. But that would be boring, wouldn’t it?”

Tandy, three times a Petit Le Mans class winner, including that famous outright victory in the GTLM Porsche 911 RSR in atrocious conditions in 2015, cautions that “we’re still going to Atlanta with a lot of unknowns”. He points out that the 963 “seems very strong in the braking zones of heavy braking corners, which Atlanta doesn’t really have a lot of”.

But in its favour, Tandy believes, is that his #6 crew has been “particularly strong” in race execution all year, after building on experience “in effectively all the different classes” aside from LMP3. Now in his eighth season of IMSA, Tandy (whose CV also counts

LMP1 and LMP2 stints in the World Endurance Championship) is the most experienced of the line-up, all of whom have collected accolades in the GT ranks. Jaminet and Campbell scooped last year’s GTD Pro title and were joined by 2018 and 2021 Prototype champ Nasr to win the class at Daytona in 2022.

“We have experience of how to go racing in this series,” Tandy asserts, “and other relevant knowledge of the different class structures and how the racing interacts with each other, which is definitely an advantage to have.”

Another advantage is the luxury of having two WEC factory cars to exchange information with. Tandy acknowledges “we’re effectively doubling our learning” on unlocking performance, after largely focusing on reliability work pre-season. He stresses there’s not “any fundamental thing that we’ve found” in terms of hardware or software, but notes that the organisation has “improved massively” at optimising its processes in liaising with Weissach. Now that the focus has switched from working on the car’s weak points to honing its strong suits, Tandy believes “we probably found more of a gain” to give Penske a shot at following up its 2007 and 2008 Petit successes in LMP2 with the RS Spyder.

THE LATE BMW BLOOMERS

**NICK YELLOLY/
CONNOR DE PHILIPPPI**
BMW TEAM RLL
BMW M HYBRID V8
POINTS 2422 (4TH)
WINS 1

Given the M Hybrid V8 only rolled out for the first time in late July last year, it was always likely that BMW's long-awaited return to prototype racing would take longer to reap rewards than its rivals'. A hybrid system fault on its #25 car just one hour into the Daytona 24 Hours, which took over two hours to repair and consigned it to finish 131 laps down in 48th overall, suggested a long season lay ahead. But the turnaround since has been remarkable, with the Rahal Letterman Lanigan operation firmly in title contention in its first season of prototype racing.

While the #24 BMW of Augusto Farfus and Philipp Eng has borne the brunt of reliability issues, the #25 crew of Connor De Phillippi and Nick Yelloly moved into the frame with an unrivalled haul of five podiums, including the programme's first win at Watkins Glen in late June. That tally kicked off at Sebring, where Yelloly avoided the carnage ahead to claim second, though admits "we didn't have the outright speed to challenge" the winning Action Express Cadillac at the final restart.

But after that "big uplift", Long Beach was the turning point where Yelloly says "we started to show we were in the right direction". From fourth on the grid, "our first decent qualifying", the #25 BMW set the fastest lap and ended up second after Ricky Taylor's late crash, regaining the position De Phillippi had lost with a trip down the escape road that dropped



LEVITT

"You don't always win when you cross the finish line first. You've got to be legal"

it back from the eventual victory fight.

RLL was unable to test prior to a disappointing Laguna Seca round in May, but that didn't prove a hindrance at Mosport, where Yelloly and De Phillippi followed the two Acuras to third. Learning on the fly has been a theme of the year – unlike Porsche and Cadillac, BMW hasn't been able to benefit from another car running in the WEC, but will do next year when WRT arrives in the top class. And with GT stalwart RLL a newcomer to GTP, whereas its rivals at least have recent DPI experience "so they could guesstimate slightly better as to where they need to be with spring rates and stuff" early on, Yelloly has been

impressed by its rate of improvement.

That was confirmed at the Glen, which Yelloly explains was "the first time we'd really shown good pace out of the box". This year's Spa 24 Hours winner admits it was frustrating to lose out on the road, but points out that he deliberately kept off the kerbs for the entirety of his triple stint to ensure the car would be safe on ride height. "You don't always win the race when you cross the finish line first," he declares. "You've got to be legal."

De Phillippi's early crash at Road America was a costly setback, but third last month at Indianapolis as the best non-Porsche has given the team confidence for Petit, where third driver Sheldon van der Linde will rejoin the fold. Yelloly feels that Road Atlanta's high-speed nature should suit the BMW package and, after a recent test "went relatively smoothly", says he's "confident that we should be in and around the mix". Should RLL pull it off, it would cap off one of the year's best feel-good stories.



GALSTAD



WHAT IMSA DEBUTANT BUTTON SHOULD EXPECT

There's no shortage of subplots to follow as the IMSA season draws to its close. Although the GTD crown has already been settled in favour of Paul Miller Racing BMW drivers Bryan Sellers and Madison Snow, while the GTD Pro and LMP3 championships will be wrapped up by Jack Hawksworth/Ben Barnicoat (Vasser Sullivan Racing Lexus) and Gar Robinson (Riley Ligier-Nissan) respectively once they start the race, the LMP2 title is finely poised between the identical TDS Racing and PR1 Mathiasen Motorsports ORECA-Gibsons.

Mikkel Jensen and Steven Thomas lead Paul-Loup Chatin and Ben Keating by just 20 points as the last-named bids to add a second crown of a decorated 2023 campaign in which he won the World Endurance Championship's GTE Am crown and his class at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

With all five classes in action,



the track is going to be very crowded, which will ensure that IMSA debutant Jenson Button has no time to catch his breath in the JDC-Miller Motorsports Porsche 963. "Traffic is going to be a nightmare," says BMW's Nick Yelloly. His Acura rival Filipe Albuquerque adds: "You never have two laps exactly the same. I can't wait to see his face after his double stint!"

Button will be making his first

appearance in a high-downforce prototype since November 2019, when he drove SMP Racing's BR Engineering BR1 LMP1 car in the Shanghai World Endurance Championship round. But even with his years of familiarity with hybrid systems from Formula 1, Button will still have a fair bit to get used to on his GTP bow alongside Mike Rockenfeller and Tijmen van der Helm. Not least bringing the Michelin tyres up

"YOU CAN QUITE EASILY LOSE 10 SECONDS ON AN OUT-LAP BEING TOO CAUTIOUS"

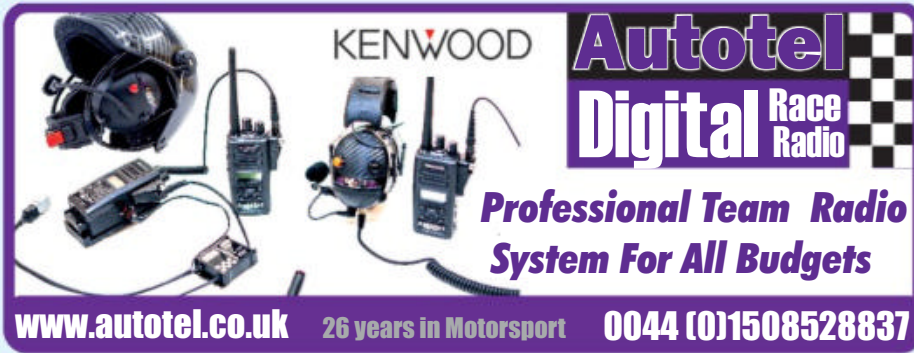
to temperature from cold.

"We have grip once they warm up, but it's super-sketchy when we leave the pits," explains Nick Tandy. "You can quite easily lose 10 seconds on an out-lap being too cautious, or destroy a tyre, of which we have a limited allocation, in three corners."

But in Button's favour, Tandy believes, is that the 963 has been configured to be "as intuitive as possible" for customers to hit the ground running with, as evidenced by JDC-Miller mixing it with the works cars by twice finishing fourth.

**PETIT
LE MANS
REPORT**
19 October
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Gamble and Ellis in for **British GT finale**

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Sharp blunts Macintyre's bid

Kiwi secures British F4 title at Brands Hatch decider



BRC plans major revamp for next year



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Ellis to join Cottingham for title decider

BRITISH GT

DTM race winner, Daytona 24 Hours class victor and Mercedes factory racer Philip Ellis will partner British GT Championship points leader James Cottingham at the Donington Park season finale next weekend in place of the previously slated Phil Keen.

Keen had been due to compete in the title decider alongside Cottingham in 2 Seas' Mercedes-AMG GT3 in place of regular driver Jonny Adam, who has a clashing European Le Mans Series commitment. But the Anglo-Bahraini squad has now slotted in Anglo-Swiss-German Ellis, a works Mercedes

driver since 2021, to fill the role alongside Cottingham, who holds a 13-point lead.

While Ellis has represented Mercedes across the continents, he has never raced in British GT.

Cottingham said: "Mercedes-AMG have reached out to provide one of their drivers for the final round, to give us the best possible opportunity to push for the best possible result at Donington. They want to make sure no stone is left unturned, so it's exciting to be working with Philip. I'm grateful to Mercedes for their support, which underlines how seriously they see the British GT championship."

GAMBLE IN AT PADDOCK

Former McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Tom Gamble is to make his British GT return with Paddock Motorsport at Donington. The 21-year-old will partner series regular Kavi Jundu for the two-hour race on 22 October in the team's new-for-2023 McLaren Artura, in place of Tom Rawlings.

"I've done a lot of development work with the Artura GT4, but this will be the first time I've had the chance to race it, so that will be really good fun," said the factory McLaren GT racer, who made a one-off appearance in British GT in 2019 aboard a Century Motorsport-run BMW M6 GT3.

Wilmot to return to TCR UK to honour Kirby

TCR UK

Andy Wilmot will return to the TCR UK grid for its season finale at Brands Hatch next weekend in memory of Dan Kirby, who died last month.

Former British Touring Car driver and Volkswagen Cup champion Wilmot was Kirby's business partner at Trade Price Cars and managed their BTCC team, as well as racing

alongside him in TCR UK. Wilmot has raced sporadically this year, competing in two TCR UK rounds, including at Silverstone in August in the Cupra Leon in which Kirby started the season. He will again drive this car, run by Rob Boston Racing, and will carry Kirby's livery and race number.

"It's been a difficult time for me, having lost a friend,



business partner and teammate in such a cruel way, and I want to take the chance to remember Dan in the best way I can," said Wilmot.

"Racing with his number,

and with a tribute livery on the car that he originally raced earlier in the year, means I can give him the send-off that I feel he would have wanted."

MARK PAULSON

Modern-day Group C car nears fire-up

GROUP C

An aerospace and military vehicle engineer is building a modern-day road-legal Group C sports-prototype after being inspired by attending the Le Mans 24 Hours as a child.

Mark Sparrow has designed the Tertre Rouge Racing Car himself and has carried out much of the construction work, aside from some help from a local machining firm and Andy Robinson building the chassis.

The car meets the latest Motorsport UK and FIA safety specifications but is designed to the Group C regulations. It is due to weigh in at 950kg and will be powered by a five-litre Mercedes twin-turbocharged engine.

Sparrow has used his mechanical engineering background to design each of the components to tiny tolerances to ensure the best possible fit, and is now aiming to have the



Mechanical engineer Sparrow has designed Tertre Rouge car himself

engine fired up on the car for the first time by the end of this year.

“The seed was planted in 1989,” Sparrow explained. “My dad had been over to watch the 1988 Le Mans and saw Jaguar win and he took me over the next year so I could watch Jaguar win again [but the Big Cat was defeated by Sauber-Mercedes]! I remember getting shoved through to the front row just as the engines erupted at the start. Ever since then, I’ve been doodling Le Mans cars and then I trained as a mechanical engineer and got to the point where I had the time, money and space to begin the project.”

Sparrow has primarily worked as an engineer in the defence industry after graduating from university just as the Afghanistan war was beginning, but did study race car engineering. “There’s quite a big difference between a tank and a Le Mans car but there are a few things I’ve taken through!” he

said. “If you’re designing something for a military vehicle, they’re expecting 40 to 50 years of service from that component or supplier, so when I select parts for my race car I’m making sure they’ll last a long time.”

Sparrow has been building the car around his day job and, although he first started on the designs in 2008, it was only four years ago that work began in earnest. “Once I put fuel in it and the engine starts, it stops being a project and starts being a car then,” he added.

Once the Tertre Rouge is running and some testing is completed, Sparrow wants to “prove it’s a race car and it’s not just a car for trackdays” and regards the British Endurance Championship as a potential series to contest. He has also designed the car in a way that incorporates the latest safety features so he can try to get it licensed for public roads.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Sparrow aims to have engine running by the end of 2023



L-r: Fitz-Simon, Richards and Hibberd starred at Mugello

Fitz-Simon seals Lurani Trophy title

FORMULA JUNIOR

Another resounding double victory for Horatio Fitz-Simon at Mugello last weekend has confirmed him as the 2023 Lurani Trophy Formula Junior champion.

On his debut at the Italian F1 circuit, Fitz-Simon qualified the ART Car Club’s Lotus 22, repaired by Michael Hibberd Motorsport since

its Castle Combe spill, on pole and reset the lap record in his dominance.

Both podiums were locked out by MHM-run cars, Clive Richards and Andrew Hibberd leading the chase on Saturday and finishing in the opposite order on Sunday in sister Lotus 22s. Hibberd fought off Roberto Tonetti (Brabham BT6). Race two was red-flagged on lap one after Saturday’s class D

winner and overall title contender Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk3) collided with a spinning Brabham.

The Lurani Trophy concludes at Jerez in a fortnight. Before then, Fitz-Simon will endeavour to add the UK title – he, Michael Hibberd (Lotus 20), Alex Morton (Condor S2) and Nic Carlton-Smith (Kieft) will slug it out at Silverstone this weekend.

CARLO PRINGLE



CAN-AMS TO GOODWOOD Can-Am cars have been revealed as the first of the special demonstrations at next year's Goodwood Members' Meeting. It is expected that up to 25 of the iconic sports-racers will grace the Sussex circuit at the 13-14 April event – including examples from McLaren, Porsche and Shadow – 50 years on from the end of the original championship. The race content for the meeting has already been revealed and includes a special Ken Miles Cup contest to celebrate 60 years of the Ford Mustang. **Photograph by Motorsport Images**

BRIAN BUTLER

Three-time MG Cockshoot Cup champion Brian Butler died last weekend after fighting cancer for the past two years. He was 62. The Yorkshireman began racing at the age of 50 and went on to win the Cockshoot Cup for the first time in 2017. He added further titles in 2020 and 2021, his final year of racing in which he recorded seven class wins from eight races in his MGF.

NEW GINETTA ENTRIES

A number of drivers are joining or moving up the Ginetta ranks for the season finales at Donington Park next weekend. Ginetta Junior podium finisher McKenzie Douglass is stepping up to a G56 in the GT Championship with Fox Motorsport, while Blake Angliss is back with Xentek Motorsport after winning four races on his other outings. Elsewhere, karter Thomas Ingram Hill joins the Junior grid with R Racing.

O'BRIEN HEADS F3 FIELD

Michael O'Brien heads a strong entry for this weekend's MKM Building Supplies-supported Historic One-Litre Formula 3 double-header at Silverstone, driving the Speedsport Brabham BT21B in which champion Samuel Harrison is unbeaten this term. Jon Milicevic is a welcome returnee in his sister car. The British contingent is joined by Italian Enrico Spaggiari (ex-John Miles Lotus 41X) and Swedish former champion Leif Bosson (ex-Sten Gunnarsson Brabham BT28). The inaugural Julia O'Brien Trophy, put up by her husband Mike, awaits the winner on aggregate.

CTCRC TITLES TO BE DECIDED

Four Classic Touring Car Racing Club championships are set to be decided at Donington Park this weekend. Just a single point separates Ross Craig and Gary Prebble at the top of the Pre-'03 Touring Car standings, while Guy Connew (below) holds a similar advantage over Jack Robinson in the Jaguar Challenge. Three drivers remain in contention in the Pre-'83 and Classic Thunder categories, currently led by 10-time champion Stephen Primett and Nick Vaughan.



Class champion Gauthier-Thornton targets step up to top CSP1 division

CLUBMANS SPORTS PROTOTYPE

Clubmans Sports Prototype class champion Mathieu Gauthier-Thornton aims to step up to the top-tier CSP1 division next year after fighting back to clinch his first car racing title.

The successful sim racer took part in the Nissan GT Academy in 2015 before stepping into real-life competition in Clubmans two years ago after winning a prize drive. Gauthier-Thornton impressed in a shootout organised by former Clubmans champion Alex Champkin, and almost won on his debut. It was only a late deal that got him on the grid this season, and his campaign got off to a frustrating start when he missed all three races at the opening Silverstone event due to engine woes on his Phantom P94.

"I wasn't anticipating I would be doing

this year and it was a last-minute thing," said Gauthier-Thornton. "Leading up to the year, I had been spending a lot of time on the simulator as that was what I expected was going to be my focus.

"I missed the three races at Silverstone so it was a disappointing start, but the team worked really hard to get the car running again. I came back at Anglesey and won all four races."

He continued that momentum for the rest of the year and clinched the CSP2 title at Brands Hatch last month. "It's great to reward all the hard work from the team and trust they put in me," he added.

Now Gauthier-Thornton is eyeing a step up to more powerful machinery: "My goal is to have a go in the top-class car and see if I can put something together to have a go at the championship overall."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



JOY RICHINGS

STEVE JONES

SMITH TARGETS FULL-TIME SEASON AFTER VICTORIES

MINI CHALLENGE

Former Mazda MX-5 star Sam Smith plans a full season in the Mini Challenge next year after making a winning return at Brands Hatch last weekend.

The Hybrid Tune driver suffered a huge crash with Dan Zelos approaching Redgate in the Donington Park opener and was forced onto the sidelines while he recovered until Silverstone last month. But after taking ninth in the first race, he withdrew from the rest of that weekend.

“I just wasn’t ready,” said Smith (below). “A lot of people were asking how I was and I just didn’t feel comfortable. The team have really helped me mentally and I had a reset for this weekend.

“Antony [Williams, promoter], Rhea [Beauchamp, championship manager] and Chloe [Meadows, parts manager] from the series have all been so supportive – without their motivation I probably wouldn’t be stood here [as a double Brands race winner].”

Another back on the grid in Kent was 2020 champion Nathan Harrison, who secured a best result of fourth on his return with Excelr8 Motorsport.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Trackrod Rally
Yorkshire is one of several events dropped

Two new rallies join BRC calendar in bid to bolster falling numbers

BRC

The British Rally Championship has undergone a revamp for 2024, including a reworked calendar and new title sponsor.

In a bid to reduce costs and try to boost falling entries, the championship is set to remain on the UK mainland and will hold six rounds, with seven points-scoring opportunities available.

This includes an equal split of asphalt and gravel rallies, with two new events in the form of the closed-roads North West Stages and Severn Valley Stages, which will open the season on 22-23 March and 13 April respectively.

The season is then completed by the Jim Clark Rally (24-25 May), Grampian Forest Rally (9-10 August), Rali Ceredigion (31 August-1 September, which will also count as two point-scoring opportunities with the opening day counting as one score and the

final day as the second) before the season ends on the Cambrian Rally (26 October).

Events to drop off the calendar next season include the Malcolm Wilson Rally, Ulster Rally, Trackrod Rally Yorkshire and the Belgian Ypres Rally.

BRC championship manager Reece Tarren said: “Fitting in events has always been a challenge and we are sad to lose some staples from the championship.

“Ensuring we don’t have two high-cost rounds in close proximity has been a stringent consideration and we have listened to feedback from both existing and prospective competitors about the dynamics of the BRC calendar. I truly believe this is an exciting new chapter of rallies which offers our competitors an unrivalled challenge in 2024.”

The calendar revamp coincides with a new headline partnership with braking manufacturer Probite.

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BALDWIN REMEMBERED The Mini 7 Racing Club honoured Peter Baldwin at Silverstone last weekend following the seven-time Miglia champion's death in August. Baldwin's family, including son Gareth who had raced his car in recent years, joined current and past racers for a pitlane gathering to remember Baldwin and other recently lost club members including three-time Miglia champion Myk Cable, who died earlier this year. Fittingly, the on-track action included Miglia class victories for two of Baldwin's proteges, Rupert Deeth and Phil Bullen-Brown.

Photograph by Mark Paulson

CAPACITY GB3 GRID

Jack Sherwood and Patrick Heuzenroeder will make their GB3 Championship debuts for Chris Dittmann Racing and Elite Motorsport respectively this weekend when the single-seater series visits Zandvoort for the first time. Sherwood joins after racing in both GB4 and British Formula 4, while Heuzenroeder has also raced in the latter category this year. It takes the GB3 grid capacity to its maximum of 26 cars in the Netherlands.

BLAKELEY BACK IN GB4

Formula 1 Esports world champion Lucas Blakeley will return to GB4 with KMR Sport at the Donington Park season finale on 21-22 October. The 22-year-old Scotsman made his slicks-and-wings debut in the series with the team at Snetterton in June, twice finishing seventh, and has had a number of outings in National Formula Ford. Also joining the GB4 field at Donington will be single-seater rookie Dan Hickey, who will race with Fortec Motorsport.

MEEKE'S CARLISLE OUTING

Kris Meeke will contest the Carlisle Stages on 20-21 October as part of his build-up for the Roger Albert Clark Rally in November. The former World Rally Championship ace and co-driver Noel O'Sullivan will use a Ford Escort Mk2 from Wales Motorsport on the Carlisle event in preparation for the five-day marathon. Meeke will get the chance to drive the car competitively in the dark on the event, which opens with two stages in Kielder forest.

'PINK PIG' LIVERY

Porsche Carrera Cup GB driver Josh Malin ran a special 'Pink Pig' livery (below) on his car for the Brands Hatch finale last weekend, as part of the ongoing celebrations of the manufacturer's 75th birthday. The Century Motorsport driver took two podiums to end the year third in the standings, despite not returning to the series until after the first two weekends. Alongside a win for James Kellett, he also helped Century to secure the teams' title.



Kumho BMW Championship joins the CSCC ranks for 2024

KUMHO BMWs

The long-running Kumho BMW Championship is moving across from the British Automobile Racing Club to the Classic Sports Car Club next season.

The series has suffered a fall in entries this year after the Minis that had bolstered grids in recent campaigns joined the new Mini Challenge Clubsport division. There were talks for Kumho BMW to join the BARC's Classic Touring Car Racing Club fold, but these were unsuccessful and led to drivers' representative Jason West – who is taking over from Trevor Ford, after 22 years operating the championship – striking an agreement with the CSCC.

"BARC have been amazing to the Kumho championship over the years, especially this year," said West. "With the

Minis going to do their own thing, our numbers dropped but BARC really stood by us and supported us financially.

"It was a case of finding a home that is really professionally run and has good driving standards and it all fell into place. At one point, we had over 50 cars racing and two grids so it's been massively successful and Trevor's done a great job over the years. I'm just really keen to get it back up to its former glory."

West believes that switching to a one-day format will prove popular, and both he and CSCC director David Smitheram are optimistic that some of those fielding BMWs in New Millennium and Slicks Series might be attracted by the CSCC's half-price entry discount for those entering second races.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Numbers have fallen away this year without the Minis





The status of a championship

With a growing number of drivers dipping in and out of categories during a season, could fewer point-scoring competitions be held and series increasingly favoured?

STEPHEN LICKORISH

One of the many decisions those organising a national racing category need to take is whether to run it as a series or a championship. Some clubs traditionally prefer to administer championships, while others enjoy the greater freedom that operating series brings – but there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer in terms of which is best. Yet it is a question that’s in the spotlight for those in charge of MG Car Club categories that are in the process of finalising new homes for 2024 following the club’s decision to end its long history of organising race events. For instance, earlier this month, the MG Trophy was confirmed as joining the Classic Sports Car Club fold, in a move that enables it to retain championship status – the first of several championships joining the CSCC, which has previously avoided point-scoring competitions.

An argument in favour of championships is that they give something for drivers to aim and fight for across the course of a season. Competitors could be more likely to have a greater engagement with the category if there is something meaningful at stake. Those chasing a championship are more likely to commit to every round – the holy grail for organisers – and that is especially helped if there are multiple classes, so plenty for drivers up and down the grid to fight for.

But that very same positive can also easily become a negative.

“The problem is that, when there is a championship at stake, it can lead to rows in the paddock”

Should a driver quickly fall out of championship contention over the opening few events, then they may still head elsewhere over the rest of the season. And, while being crowned a champion brings prestige, the average club racing title winner is not going to receive a career-changing prize. The Pre-’83 Touring Cars champion is very unlikely to suddenly find themselves on the British Touring Car grid, for example. The other problem – which is, depressingly, seen time and time again even at a humble club level – is that, when there is a championship at stake, it can lead to rows in the paddock. Whether it’s over an aggressive move or the perennial accusations of cheating, a championship can very easily turn sour. That, obviously, can still happen in a series but, with a generally more relaxed atmosphere and no season-long prize on the line, it is less likely.

The most significant advantage for organisers opting for a series is the increased flexibility that it allows. The individual coordinator or club has more freedom and control to run the category how they want rather than being governed by more rigid regulations required to receive championship status from Motorsport UK. One example of this concerns the calendar. Should some extra track time at an event become available, it would be far easier for a series to put on an additional contest or run a longer race than a championship – which would have to consult competitors and gain governing body approval.

Then it is also important to consider the ever-growing trend of drivers being far less loyal to one particular category or organiser. Exacerbated by the pandemic, many clubs are reporting far greater numbers of competitors dipping in and out of a class rather than sticking with it throughout a campaign. This could be for a variety of reasons, including the cost-of-living crisis forcing some drivers to cherry-pick a few favourite events, or busy club drivers not having the time to commit to a full season or even individuals preferring to stick to their local or favourite circuits rather than follow a category as it heads around the country. All of these factors play into preferring a series – which perfectly suits those unable or unwilling to stay the course.

Despite this anecdotal shift, it is interesting to look at the most popular categories in terms of average entries across 2022. Of the 10 largest fields, remarkably, it is an even split of five each between series and championships. Low-cost endurance series like C1 Race Series, EnduroKa and Roadsports are all in that group of categories attracting 36 cars or more last season, but established championships like the British Racing & Sports Car Club’s Mazda MX-5 Championship and Supercup and 750 Motor Club’s Club Enduro are among the point-scoring divisions in that top 10. It will be interesting to see if things are so evenly split in 2023’s figures, especially now the financial squeeze in the UK has really started to bite in some quarters.

Ultimately, those 2022 statistics show there is no easy answer to the question of whether going down the championship or series route is best. Instead, it very much depends on the unique circumstances for each class, with the nature of its races, the cars and demographic of the drivers all playing their part. Some organisers, like the 750MC, prefer to start new ideas as a series to see if there is sufficient interest and potential to then commit to a full-blown championship. And, if the trend for drivers handpicking a few events to contest continues, then it could well be that more and more come to the conclusion that a championship is no longer the best option. But, right now, it remains a tough decision for long-standing MGCC categories as they ponder their future. ✨

Caudwell's Cobra is king of the Super Sprint

SILVERSTONE
EQUIPE SUPER SPRINT
7 OCTOBER

Brian Caudwell dominated Saturday's Equipe Super Sprint at Silverstone, winning every race he started in his 1965 AC Cobra.

Caudwell was challenged early in the red final (for the fastest driver/car combinations) by Martin Reynolds in his Ford Mustang Mach1, but avoided the chaos to take a strong win and ensure he was undefeated across his four races, the early series of heats determining which final each driver would contest.

"Perfect is an understatement," beamed Caudwell. "The whole day the sun has shone, no accidents, no incidents, it's been a fabulous day and I've loved the format. In those early laps [Reynolds] kept me honest, but I noticed his tyres went horribly off after a couple of laps so I knew that it would be difficult for him to keep up."

It was a tougher day, however, for Graham Moss, who drove his namesake Stirling's Lister-Jaguar Knobbly. Moss qualified second fastest out of all 76 entrants but spun in the first heat, which demoted him out of the most competitive cars.

After winning his second race, Moss then suffered a fuel issue and had to start from the back of the grid of a slower heat. He needed to finish eighth to have any hope of returning to the top of the field and, in a spectacular drive across 10 laps, Moss won the race.

In the red final, Moss failed to get a good start and then had to take avoiding action following Frederic Laurent's spin into Brooklands. After dropping to the back, he performed impressively to finish ninth.



Reynolds's Mustang briefly threatened but there was no stopping Caudwell

"Every time I went out after qualifying something happened," he rued. The fuel pump packed up, so I had to sit out a race and do a slower one. However, it was a fantastic day with lots of overtaking. I'm very proud of the car and it was very nostalgic. I have a photograph of Stirling Moss in this car at this track and here I am, crossing that line, same chequered flag."

David Wenman won the the green final in his Morgan +4 after taking the lead on lap four from the MGB of Lewis Saunders, while in the slowest (orange) final, race leader John Pearson received a 10-second penalty for a false start that demoted him to sixth and gave John Alexander the win in his Austin-Healey 100M.

The BCV8 series supported the Super Sprint and ended its season in a championship showdown between MGC driver Andrew Young and MGB GT V8 ace Neil Fowler. Both contests awarded double points, creating high stakes for both drivers.

After each won their class in a calm first race, both Young and Fowler lost

position on the opening lap of race two. Fowler quickly regained the lead, while Young struggled to overtake Steve Wells in his MGB GT V8.

In a bold move on the inside of Copse, Young regained the lead while Wells spun off, which brought out the safety car. The race restarted with four minutes to go and, despite Fowler's best efforts to bunch up the field, Young held onto the class win, which gave him the championship by one point. "I'm very lucky to have won the championship again and I feel quite humbled it was so close," he smiled. "I didn't know I had won it until I had come in. All I had to do was score the maximum points I could and hope it was enough."

HAMISH BAILEY

WEEKEND WINNERS

EQUIPE SUPER SPRINT

Races 1, 4 & 7 Brian Caudwell (AC Cobra)

Race 2 Neil Fisher (MGB Roadster)

Race 3 John Pearson (MGA)

Race 5 Jack Rawles (Austin-Healey 3000)

Races 6 & 8 Graham Moss

(Lister-Jaguar Knobbly)

Race 9 Garry Townsend (Ford Lotus Cortina)

Orange Final John Alexander

(Austin-Healey 100M)

Green Final David Wenman (Morgan +4, below)

Red Final Brian Caudwell (AC Cobra)

BCV8s

Races 1 & 2 Neil Fowler (B GT V8)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



Young took the BCV8 title by the narrowest of margins

Sharp lands decisive blow to seal F4 title

BRITISH F4

Tensions were running high at the start of the Brands Hatch British Formula 4 weekend with just one point separating season-long rivals Louis Sharp and Will Macintyre. Would it be another nailbiting and controversial decider like in the rain of 2020, when Zak O'Sullivan and Luke Browning entered the event with their scores level?

The warm sunshine took one variable out of the mix, and Sharp calmed any nerves further by securing a crucial double pole in qualifying – all the more important given how tricky it can be to pass around the Grand Prix layout.

Rodin Carlin driver Sharp duly converted his pole into a sixth win of the season in the opener, making a great launch and then never really being challenged by Deagen Fairclough after an early safety car. "It's a dream start to the weekend with qualifying on pole and a win," reckoned Sharp. "The main thing was I needed to beat Will."

The Kiwi certainly did that, with Macintyre taking third after passing his Hitech team-mate Jimmy Piszcyk into Surtees on the first lap, but unable to



From the moment Sharp took double pole, he was title favourite

attack Fairclough. That result, which did not change despite the top four picking up penalties for weaving on the way to the grid, increased Sharp's advantage to 13 points and meant he could be slightly more relaxed in the reversed-grid second contest.

But there was certainly nothing cautious about Macintyre's approach, a supreme move around the outside of both Fairclough and Gabriel Stulp at Hawthorn demonstrating that. But with Fairclough nipping back ahead of Macintyre at Surtees after a brief caution period, Macintyre had to settle for seventh in a race won by Josh Irfan (Rodin Carlin). Sharp took 11th, and was still well-placed to land the spoils.

And, although JHR's Fairclough rocketed

away from the line to take the final win, Sharp held second and kept Macintyre at arm's length throughout a race lacking any real excitement.

Not that Sharp cared, he was just delighted to seal the honours. "It means everything – all the hard work and sacrifice has paid off," he said. "It's been a year of ups and downs and some of the highs have been very high and the lows very low, but massive thanks to the team – I still can't believe it's happened!"

The weekend may have lacked some of the drama of previous years, but Sharp was a worthy winner after having the edge over single-seater rookie Macintyre when it really mattered.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Gearbox leak fails to stop Zelos taking second crown

MINI CHALLENGE

It was just as well that Dan Zelos made sure of his second Mini Challenge title in the opening Brands Hatch race, since gearbox oil that started pouring onto his windscreen forced him to pit in the second contest and could have created a nervy finale.

Zelos started second but briefly fell behind Spencer Stevenson on the first lap of race one before surging back ahead into Surtees. Stevenson tried again at Druids but slid wide, and Zelos then stayed clear of nearest rival Will Orton to take the crown.

"It's a bit surreal to be winning on a Saturday," said Zelos. "Two years ago,

it went down to the final lap! It feels amazing and Excelr8 Motorsport deserve it. Last season was a tough year for me and the team so it's great to bounce back."

Zelos did close right in on leader Sam Smith, but the Hybrid Tune driver held firm to take his first win since a huge crash at the opening Donington Park weekend left him on the sidelines (see News).

Smith also topped the twice-shortened second race after a close scrap with Zelos (before his pit visit) on the opening lap. Behind, Orton and 2022 champion Sam Weller had a great fight for second, with Orton prevailing to finish in the middle of a Hybrid Tune podium lockout.

There was an end-of-term feel to the finale, in which Smith charged from fourth to lead before being inadvertently nudged into the Druids barriers by Weller – who, in turn, battled past fellow former champion Nathan Harrison at Westfield to triumph.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Second place in the opener was enough for Zelos to triumph

Warhurst wins the Cayman battle

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

It may have been one of the closest title battles heading to Brands Hatch, but two further wins to add to the hat-trick he scored last time out at Silverstone propelled Joe Warhurst to Porsche Sprint Challenge GB glory with a race to spare.

The Team Parker teenager found some sensational form at just the right time and



Another two wins helped Warhurst seal the glory

backed up his Northamptonshire success with a lights-to-flag victory in the Kent opener. With main rival Steve Roberts only guiding his Redline-run Cayman to fourth, it put Warhurst in a commanding position.

But a safety-car period in race two put Roberts right onto his rival's tail, although Warhurst was able to resist the pressure to take another win and seal the title.

"It means everything – I've worked so hard," enthused Warhurst. "If you told me at Donington that I would win the next five races, I wouldn't have believed you. Steve was right on me at the restart. Towards the end he really started to close in and I was starting to sweat!"

The only slight disappointment of Warhurst's wonderful weekend was that he failed to make it a second treble. Roberts dived ahead on the inside at Sheene on the third lap of the shortened finale to at least end the year on a high.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Smalley ends the season on top

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

With the overall title already decided, Adam Smalley, James Kellett and Robert de Haan tried their best to put on a show in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB finale.

Polesitter de Haan did not get the best of starts to the opener and lost out to Century Motorsport duo Kellett and Josh Malin. But the Richardson Racing driver was immediately on the attack, passing Malin at Druids and storming past Kellett at Surtees. Yet the Dutchman ran wide on the exit and Kellett dived back ahead.

De Haan was unable to retaliate over the next few laps, and the race was then neutralised when Jake Giddings was turned into the Surtees barriers. This

brought out the safety car and, with the barrier damaged and the timetable already delayed, green-flag conditions did not return, giving Kellett a fifth win of the year.

Champion Smalley later pulled clear from the reversed-grid pole while de Haan was on a charge. "The next thing I know, I was looking at the sky!" said Smalley. "My front splitter had fallen off and went under the car. I was losing a second a lap and just wanted to hold on."

He was caught by de Haan, who nosed ahead across the startline going onto the final lap. But Smalley was aware his rival had a track-limits penalty so was still able to finish the year with a flourish.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Smalley heads the field to finish season with a flourish

RACE RESULTS

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Race 1 (13 laps) 1 Louis Sharp; 2 Deagen Fairclough +1.076s; 3 Will Macintyre; 4 Jimmy Piszcyk; 5 Kanato Le; 6 Patrick Heuzenroeder.

Fastest lap Fairclough 1m24.729s (103.38mph).

Pole Sharp. **Starters** 18.

Race 2 (13 laps) 1 Josh Irfan; 2 Jack Sherwood +0.678s; 3 Isaac Barashi; 4 Freddie Slater; 5 James Higgins; 6 Fairclough. **FL** Fairclough 1m25.686s (102.23mph). **P** Barashi. **S** 19.

Race 3 (15 laps) 1 Fairclough; 2 Sharp +2.433s; 3 Macintyre; 4 Piszcyk; 5 Gabriel Stilp; 6 Aqil Alibhai. **FL** Fairclough 1m24.932s (103.13mph). **P** Sharp. **S** 19.

Points 1 Sharp 384; 2 Macintyre 371; 3 Fairclough 296; 4 Dion Gowda 226; 5 Piszcyk 220; 6 Higgins 217.

MINI CHALLENGE

Race 1 (13 laps) 1 Sam Smith; 2 Dan Zelos +0.389s; 3 Will Orton; 4 Sam Weller; 5 Nathan Harrison; 6 Bradley Gravett. **FL** Orton 1m36.142s (91.11mph). **P** Smith. **S** 20.

Race 2 (7 laps) 1 Smith; 2 Orton +0.383s; 3 Weller; 4 Harrison; 5 Oliver Meadows; 6 Nelson King. **FL** Orton 1m35.881s (91.36mph). **P** Smith. **S** 20.

Race 3 (13 laps) 1 Weller; 2 Orton +4.895s; 3 Meadows; 4 Harrison; 5 Gravett; 6 Zelos. **FL** Harrison 1m36.620s (90.66mph). **P** Harrison. **S** 19.

Points 1 Zelos 862; 2 Orton 810; 3 King 650; 4 Meadows 643; 5 Joe Tanner 598; 6 Gravett 573.

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Race 1 (13 laps) 1 Joe Warhurst; 2 Matthew Armstrong +2.366s; 3 Marc Warren; 4 Steve Roberts; 5 Robert Cronin; 6 Callum Davis. **FL** William Jenkins 1m32.605s (94.59mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 17.

Race 2 (12 laps) 1 Warhurst; 2 Roberts +0.830s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Max Coates; 5 Cronin; 6 Warren. **FL** Cronin 1m32.272s (94.93mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 17.

Race 3 (9 laps) 1 Roberts; 2 Warhurst +0.188s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Coates; 5 Armstrong; 6 Cronin. **FL** Warhurst 1m32.649s (94.54mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 16.

Points 1 Warhurst 240; 2 Roberts 227; 3 Coates 211; 4 Armstrong 202; 5 Jenkins 183; 6 Ethan Hammerton 175.

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Race 1 (13 laps) 1 James Kellett (below); 2 Robert de Haan +0.650s; 3 Josh Malin; 4 Adam Smalley; 5 Oliver White; 6 Hugo Ellis. **FL** Malin 1m27.158s (100.50mph). **P** de Haan. **S** 23.

Race 2 (17 laps) 1 Smalley; 2 Malin +1.365s; 3 Kellett; 4 de Haan; 5 Charles Rainford; 6 White. **FL** Smalley 1m27.113s (100.55mph). **P** Smalley. **S** 23.

Points 1 Smalley 141; 2 Kellett 102; 3 Malin 75; 4 Rainford 68; 5 Matty Graham 60; 6 de Haan 55.



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Jordan, chased by Thompson and Billison, won the Mini Se7en title



Mini, Mazda and Fiesta titles decided in thrillers

SILVERSTONE BRSCC 7-8 OCTOBER

Spencer Wanstall and Joe Thompson triumphed in the Mini Se7en battles on Silverstone's International circuit last weekend, but it was Mike Jordan who took the championship.

After polesitter Connor O'Brien's engine expired early in the opener, Wanstall traded the lead with Thompson and Ross Billison, while Jordan kept a watching brief. As Thompson passed Billison into the Club chicane for the final time, Wanstall

kept out of reach to secure victory at the track where he rolled last year.

Borrowed cylinder head installed for Sunday's sequel, O'Brien's reign as champion ended with another retirement when a plug lead came loose. It also halted Wanstall's improved fortune at the circuit as he spun avoiding O'Brien and was then collected by Nick Swift, making a one-off appearance in the Jo Polley car.

With the championship sealed on Saturday, Jordan's shackles were off, and he led into Abbey on the last lap. But that invited Thompson to draft back past on Hangar Straight, leaving Jordan second.

"I timed that a little bit wrong," said Jordan, "but it was a great way to end the championship – really enjoyed it." Billison completed the podium again, while new Mini Miglia champion Aaron Smith managed a pair of sixth places in a borrowed Se7en.

In Smith's absence, there was a new winner in the Miglia races – and it wasn't a Miglia! Craig Edgecombe took advantage of the straightline speed of his Libre-class car – debuted in August's Fastest Mini in the World race – to twice overcome the Miglia field and score a double victory. The three fastest qualifiers were eliminated from Saturday's race when Ben Colburn's car spun under braking for Stowe and collected Kane Astin and Rupert Deeth.

The trio made rapid progress from the back on Sunday before Astin's oil pressure ballooned; Deeth eventually bested Colburn for Miglia class honours, with Saturday's winner Phil Bullen-Brown third in class.

Albert Webster ended his first season of senior racing with a fourth Fiesta ST240 race win and the championship title. Rival Alastair Kellett exerted pressure by taking pole and streaking away in the opener, but Webster towed back in and moved ahead into Abbey. Kellett immediately retaliated at Farm, but contact pitched the Irishman wide and left him swamped by Simon Horrobin and Zach Lucas. Horrobin's stout



Noller took maiden wins in the Mazda MX-5 Championship

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MICK WALKER

WEEKEND WINNERS

MINI SE7EN

Race 1 Spencer Wanstall
Race 2 Joe Thompson

MINI MIGLIA

Races 1 & 2 Craig Edgecombe (Libre)

FIESTA ST240

Race 1 Albert Webster
Race 2 Alastair Kellett

FIESTA ST150

Races 1 & 2 Sam Watkins

MAZDA MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jack Noller
Race 3 Thomas Langford

MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP

Race 1 Aidan Hills
Race 2 Patrick Fletcher
Race 3 James Cossins

MAZDA MX-5 CLUBMAN

Races 1 & 2 Jordan Pimley

MODIFIED FORDS

Races 1 & 2 Jason Davies
(Sierra Sapphire Cosworth)

CLUBSPORT TROPHY

Scott Parkin (Audi TT CR)

CITYCAR CUP

Races 1 & 2 Stuart Bliss (Toyota Aygo)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



Kellett just missed out on ST240 glory



Parkin's Audi won in Clubsport Trophy



Davies faced off against Cockell in Modified Fords

defence kept Kellett at bay while Webster escaped to victory.

Worse was to come for Kellett as the battling trio were adjudged to have eased off insufficiently for waved yellow flags. Kellett's resulting points deduction effectively put Webster out of reach. Determined to end the year on a high, the 2016 champion charged from eighth on the grid to a six-second win as John Cooper held off Webster for second.

As Webster celebrated, Kellett was left to ponder what might have been without others' involvement and had Saturday's race gone the full distance – as Webster suffered a driveshaft failure after the early chequered flag.

The ST150s thrilled with a first-race podium trio covered by 0.5s. Sam Watkins won from fifth on the grid ahead of Dan Robinson and guest driver Shanel Drewe, who set fastest lap as she recovered from getting shuffled back from her front-row start. Watkins escaped for a more dominant victory in race two, featuring a repeat podium. Sam Beckett steered clear of trouble for sixth and eighth positions that sealed the championship crown.

The lead pack of Mazda MX-5 Mk1s diced throughout their three encounters, rarely covered by more than a second. The first brought a maiden win for Jack Noller, but only after Thomas Langford was demoted to fourth for completing his

pass of championship contender Adam Sparrow on the Stowe run-off. Noller then earned another win in race two after Ted Bradbury – second in the opener – copped 15s of track-limits penalties, with Sparrow's hopes hit by his own 5s penalty.

Working with AB Motorsport team-mates Bradbury and Luke Pullen, Langford made a decisive pass on Noller mid-race in the finale and somehow kept out the baying pack for the remainder. Fifth, fourth and seventh places were more than enough for an emotional Steve Foden to clinch the championship as, with a healthy points lead coming into the weekend, he adopted a cautious approach, largely shadowing the leaders.

Aidan Hills arrived at Silverstone in a similar position in the MX-5 Supercup for Mk3 models but wasn't quite as cautious. He even managed to win the opener, despite a tired engine, after Patrick Fletcher's mistake at Stowe cost him the buffer he'd started to build. Fletcher made amends by leading throughout race two with Sam Heading following him home, while Hills inherited third thanks to 15s of track-limits penalties for team-mate (and title rival) James Cossins.

Race three's top-eight grid reversal enlivened the early stages, as Fletcher looked set to double up after giving Cossins the shoulder as he took the lead at Stowe in the second half. But Fletcher

eventually fell to fifth in the frantic action as Cossins won from Tom Griffiths, as Hills in sixth secured the championship.

Jordan Pimley won both MX-5 Clubman races but a pair of podium finishes sealed the title for Matt Fletcher.

The Modified Ford series finally got its much-anticipated match-up between Oulton Park double winner Jason Davies and the dominator from previous years, Dave Cockell, who has fought mechanical woe this season. Davies drew first blood, planting his turbocharged Sapphire on pole, but Cockell catapulted his four-wheel-drive Escort ahead. The pair exchanged the lead for a couple of laps before Davies got a slight break and capitalised.

Victory was more comprehensive for the Welshman in the sequel as Piers Grange's Millington-powered Escort Mk2 completed the podium. Piloting his Sierra RS500 – complete with new Robb Gravett tribute livery – for the first time this year, Dave Matthias was third in the opener.

Scott Parkin overcame the fast-starting Phiroze Bilimoria to win the Clubsport Trophy mini-enduro. With handling slightly awry, Bilimoria dropped behind Parkin prior to pitting, then the Volkswagen Scirocco expired when its wheelnuts sheered shortly afterwards, leaving Parkin well clear as his fellow Audi TT competition wilted.

MARK PAULSON

GT Cup battles rage between Audi/McLaren

**SNETTERTON
MSVR
7-8 OCTOBER**

Hugo Cook's Audi R8 GT3 came out on top of the first two GT Cup races at Snetterton last weekend, cruising to a comfortable lights-to flag victory in the sprint opener.

The McLaren 720S GT3s of Tom Roche and Ian Loggie occupied second and third throughout, as Marcus Short's Mosler MT900 and Dan de Zille's Ferrari 488 completed the top five. Sixth finally went to Paul Bailey's Lamborghini Huracan after a great duel with Jay Shepherd's Lotus Evora.

Simon Orange's McLaren led the first half of the longer race two, with Sacha Kakad initially second in the Cook Audi. Loggie ousted Short's Mosler for third into Agostini on lap three, before taking second from Kakad at Brundle six laps later.

European GT4 driver Tom Emson took over from Loggie and led from the pitstops but Cook reeled him in and finally claimed the win into Brundle three laps from home. Orange/Roche retained third from Short and brother Morgan, with the Lamborghinis of Patrick Collins/Marcus Clutton and Bailey/James Dorlin next up.

Sunday's sprint race became processional from the start, with Emson taking a comfortable win. Kakad held onto second throughout, but had to withstand a strong challenge from Orange until the flag. Morgan Short's Mosler was a solitary fourth, as de Zille's Ferrari and Charlotte Gilbert's Lamborghini followed.

The first half of the final was also uneventful as Loggie, Orange, Kakad, de Zille, Gilbert and Collins all held station. But Roche emerged as the new leader after taking over from Orange, while Emson had Cook chasing him down in the battle for second. The places remained unchanged on the road, with Orange/Roche the victors, but Loggie/Emson picked up a track-limits



penalty that dropped them to third. Collins/Clutton were fourth, despite a stop/go penalty for a short pitstop, and Sam Neary claimed fifth with Gilbert on the last lap, ousting the de Zille Ferrari. Two further GTO podiums, meanwhile, were enough for Bailey to secure the overall title.

There was plenty of action in the first Porsche Boxster Cup race, with newly crowned champion Jonathan Lovell in a race-long duel with Mike Thompson. Lovell managed to regain the lead on the last lap, but a track-limits penalty gave the win to Thompson. Perry Darling snatched third from Faye Noble-Evans on the final tour, with Wayne Gregory a close fifth and Sarah Thomson sixth after a spin at Oggies.

Lovell soon shook off his rival in race two and, with Thompson pitting after six laps, Gregory was left in a solitary second from Darling. Noble-Evans claimed fourth from Thomson on the final lap.

Jack Parker proved to be the man to beat in Legends. He led most of heat one but,

when it came down to a last-lap sort out, Ben Higgins just held on to win, from Chris Needham and Luke Simmons, with Parker fourth – all covered by just 0.381 seconds.

Parker managed to break away early on in heat two and he held on to win this time. There was a train of cars for third, with Simmons and Will Gibson almost in a dead heat for what became second as Oli Schlup slipped back to seventh on the last lap.

Saturday's final was run on Sunday morning following a circuit power cut and initially it was a break at the front by Robin Fountain and Tyler Read, until Higgins towed the chasing pack into contention. With three laps to go, Higgins hit the front and claimed the win from Read and Simmons. With Fountain a late retirement, Schlup claimed fourth.

Parker and Read tried to break early in Sunday's first heat, but Higgins caught and passed them both on lap four of six. It was still anyone's race as they started the last tour, but Parker just held on, with Read, Simmons and Schlup line astern at the flag, as Higgins's machine had faltered.

Gibson and Needham had an early duel in heat two until Parker caught up and split them on lap three. Parker then took charge for his third win of the weekend, with Gibson just defying Andy Bird for second.

There was little to split Fountain and Simmons in the final before Needham and Higgins both joined in. Needham and Simmons then split again, with the latter claiming victory on the line by just 0.127s over Needham, with Higgins close in third from a more distant Gibson.

PETER SCHERER





Cook's Audi R8 GT3 took two GT Cup victories over the weekend

WEEKEND WINNERS

GT CUP

- Race 1** Hugo Cook (Audi R8 GT3)
- Race 2** Sacha Kakad/Hugo Cook (Audi R8 GT3)
- Race 3** Tom Emson (McLaren 720S GT3)
- Race 4** Simon Orange/Tom Roche (McLaren 720S GT3)

BOXSTER CUP

- Race 1** Mike Thompson (below)
- Race 2** Jonathan Lovell

LEGENDS CHAMPIONSHIP

- Races 1 & 3** Ben Higgins
- Races 2, 4 & 5** Jack Parker
- Race 6** Luke Simmons

PORSCHE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

Mark McAleer (997)

Z CARS & PRODUCTION GTI

- Races 1 & 2** Henry Riley (VW Golf)

BELL SPORT CHALLENGE

- Races 1 & 2** Andy Christopher (Ferrari 488)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Seb Morris's climb up the motorsport ladder has made him a well-known name in the national paddocks, but only recently has he started to appear regularly on the UK scene again.

The 2017 British GT champion and ex-Bentley factory driver has been competing in the GT Cup, supporting Charles Dawson with RAM Racing in a Mercedes GT4.

"As I had no confirmed drive last year, I worked hard with the family company and it kept me focused, but I kept looking for drives," said Morris. "Tim Sugden [RAM team boss] paired me with Charles at RAM Racing and he is a total newcomer in his first proper year of racing, but our target is to do the British GT Championship with him."

At Snetterton, the pair claimed two thirds and a fourth in the GTH class, but were disqualified from the second race after Dawson collected another car.

For Morris, competing back in the UK means he is racing on tracks where he began his career, having spent two years in Ginetta Junior with Hillspeed, winning the overall title in 2011 before moving onto Formula Renault with Fortec.

"I won the Winter Series [in 2012 with Fortec] and was third in the main championship, before going into BRDC F4 with Hillspeed where I was second in the 2013 championship," he said.

He followed his single-seater hopes for another two years, in Formula Renault and finally GP3 with Status Grand Prix in 2015. "During that year I didn't get anywhere and began to lose confidence, then Stuart Parker got in touch and offered me a drive in British GT in 2016, with Rick Parfitt in a Bentley," said Morris. "We had a number of pole positions that year, but made too many mistakes."

Only one win came in 2016 but it



launched them into a more successful second year with the Bentley, taking four podiums from 10 races, including three wins, which helped crown them GT3 champions.

"For 2018 I stayed at Parker with the Bentley, but we raced abroad as a Pro-Am in Blancpain with Derek Pierce," said Morris. "I started that year with the Sunoco prize drive at Daytona [24 Hours] in a Cadillac. It was a huge opportunity for me and the car was amazing. I handed it over to Mike Conway in third place and we led the race, but it broke overnight. Still one of my fondest memories, though."

He made a one-off return to British GT with Parfitt, too, before rejoining the series in 2019 with a Bentley, but run by JRM, as well as outings in Blancpain and Intercontinental GT with M-Sport and Parker. He was part of the factory Bentley team again in 2020, racing mainly abroad, but it proved to be the last year with the British manufacturer. "I had worked hard and done all I could, maybe more than I should have, but I had to start looking elsewhere," he said.

He raced a variety of cars in different championships during 2021 and had some Porsche Carrera Cup GB outings last term before finding his place in the GT Cup.

PETER SCHERER



Morris has been racing for RAM in GT Cup



Sixth and second were enough for Corson at Knockhill

JIM MOIR

Corson holds on for back-to-back Scottish C1 titles

KNOCKHILL
SMRC
8 OCTOBER

Sam Corson held his nerve brilliantly during a tense final event of the year to successfully defend his C1 Cup title as the Scottish Motor Racing Club season came to a close at Knockhill last weekend.

For a while, it seemed as though Corson's grasp on the crown might have slipped after a brush with a backmarker in the closing stages of the opening race dropped him behind chief rival Dan Martin. But a measured drive in race two to second place, ahead of Martin, was enough to earn the SMRC Esports graduate back-to-back titles. "I knew that, if I finished ahead of Dan,

then it would be fine in terms of the championship," said Corson post-race.

Like much of Scotland's central belt, heavy rain and fog affected the day, with qualifying cancelled and the grids set by championship order following a delay of nearly two hours. Corson therefore started from pole and led the early stages of race one, restarted following a multi-car incident at Leslie's on the first lap. Martin held position from second on the grid, but got a tankslapper and spun into the gravel. Behind, Murray Scott and Katrina Gray made contact, causing Gray to roll, while Kenny Dock took the total of stricken C1s to four.

With Martin relegated to the back of the grid, Corson led again at the restart, this

time from Ralph Sturrock. Several drivers took turns at the head of the field, but it was James Hitchen who surged through from fourth to take the win, while Corson could only manage sixth after his near-miss with a lapped car. "I think they got a bit spooked by a car going around the outside and me going to the inside, and they've just turned in and collected me," said Corson, who finished one spot behind Martin. "That's racing, it's club racing and not professional, so these things happen."

Corson and Martin lined up alongside each other on the grid for the second race, the title battle now down to a three-point gap. A great start took Corson into the lead, but he was demoted by Sturrock, who claimed a popular maiden win. Martin's race went south early on and he was never in a realistic position to take the fight to Corson, eventually finishing sixth.

Scottish Mini Cooper Cup veteran Oly Mortimer rolled back the years to take his fourth one-make crown. In his first full season since 2015, Mortimer put one hand on the title with class victory in the opener, before all but securing it with third in race two, won by Robbie Dalgleish.

A 25-point lead into the full-reversed-grid final race of the day meant Mortimer merely had to finish to be crowned, but the Edinburgh driver made sure there was no debate by taking another win in a contest shortened by two laps due to a torrential downpour. "I've been racing at Knockhill for over 25 years, and I have never driven in conditions as bad as those in the final race," said Mortimer, who headed home



Mortimer braved torrid weather to claim title

JIM MOIR

WEEKEND WINNERS

KNOCKHILL

SCOTTISH C1 CUP

Race 1 James Hitchen

Race 2 Ralph Sturrock

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP

Race 1 Craig Blake (R53)

Race 2 Ashleigh Morris (R53)

Race 3 Oly Mortimer (Cooper)

SCOTTISH FIESTA ST CUP

Race 1 Gerry Hendry

Race 2 Broddy Orr

SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS & SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Graham (Triumph TR8)

For full results visit: beta.speedhive.com

PEMBREY

BRITISH TRUCK RACING

Races 1 & 3 Ryan Smith

Races 2 & 6 Stuart Oliver

Race 4 David Jenkins

Race 5 Bradley Smith

MG OWNERS' CLUB

Races 1, 2 & 3 Steve McDermid (ZR 170)

PICKUP TRUCKS

Race 1 Dale Gent

Race 2 Reece Jones

Race 3 Matt Simpson

WELSH SPORTS/SALOON CARS

Races 1 & 2 Chris Everill (Ginetta G55 GT4)

Race 3 Andrew Williams (Mazda RX-8)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

impressive German teenager Finn Mache, with Jack Irvine third.

Jamie Blake wrapped up the R53 title with a pair of second places in the first two concurrent races, which were won by brother Craig and Ashleigh Morris, who was making her first Mini start in four years.

After being stripped of on-the-road victory in the opening Scottish Fiesta ST Cup bout for a technical infringement, Liam McGill produced a scintillating display from the back of the grid to secure another title.

McGill had taken race one at a canter, with Gerry Hendry edging out Broddy Orr for what would eventually become the victory by a mere 0.06 seconds in an exciting drag to the line. Both Hendry and Orr were suddenly catapulted back into title contention after McGill was chucked out, but McGill charged through from the back of the grid to finish second while Orr – son of SMRC veteran George – took a well-deserved maiden win.

Andrew Graham cruised to a pair of Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons victories in his Triumph TR8, first beating newly crowned champion Alastair Baptie's Fiat X1/9 and then Barry Eastaugh's MGB.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

British Trucks take centre stage on visit to Wales



PEMBREY BARC 7-8 OCTOBER

The British Automobile Racing Club's final 2023 visit to Pembrey served up a feast of entertainment as the British Truck Racing Championship took centre stage for the penultimate time this year.

The return to South Wales for six blockbuster races, one of which was rescheduled from Thruxton due to timetable constraints back in July, captivated the bumper trackside crowd, although it did generate a number of red flags.

Ryan Smith's pursuit of an unprecedented eighth consecutive Division 1 title remains on course after he powered his Daimler Freightliner to two race wins. Any chance of him lifting the coveted crown will have to wait, because Smith could do nothing to stop his chief title protagonists Stuart Oliver, David Jenkins and Bradley Smith from all triumphing.

In Division 2, NAPA Racing UK's Paul Rivett maintained his sensational run of form by once again almost completing a clean sweep to move to within one

point of the top of the leaderboard. Rivett was perfection personified in five of the six races as he charged to victory, with John Powell tallying a win of his own to keep his title hopes alive.

William Sharpe wrapped up the overall MG Owners' Club title, despite the best efforts of outgoing double champion Steve McDermid. Sharpe arrived at Pembrey with a healthy margin at the top of the standings, and produced a trio of measured drives to class podiums in his Midget to secure the crown. McDermid, meanwhile, did his best to take it down to the wire by triumphing overall in all three encounters in his ZR 170.

The destiny of this year's Pickup Truck title will be decided at Brands Hatch next month after Dale Gent, reigning champion Reece Jones and one-time British Touring Car race winner Matt Simpson each snared a victory.

Concluding the weekend's action were three races from the Welsh Sports/Saloon Car Championship, where the spoils were shared between Chris Everill's Ginetta G55 and Andrew Williams's Mazda RX-8.

CHRIS ASHBY



Cooper climax can't deny Fisher the title

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC
7 OCTOBER

Luke Cooper did all he could to thwart Felix Fisher's Formula Ford title defence, but the factory Swift ace's fighting victory in Saturday's Grand Finals opener was insufficient, with Fisher's TM Racing Ray in his slipstream. "You work years for a first championship, then two come along at once," grinned Fisher.

With pressure off, the equally stunning sequel was academic, Cooper making it four wins to Fisher's six. Ben Mitchell also forged Richard Hudson-Evans's Van Diemen past Fisher to cement third in the table, fastest lap his final flourish. Young American Jack Sullivan impressed with a close fourth.

The contest for 1990-95 cars went to race two after Sam Street came back to pip fellow Swift SC92 driver Nathan Ward first time out. Street, who needed another win with fastest lap to deny Ward, fell off at Quarry, unbeknown to his rival. "I got past Sam but spent the rest of the race looking in my mirrors," said Ward, proud of his fourth title in the car built for him by Kevin Mills during



Fisher was beaten to the final wins but still took the crown

2020's COVID-19 lockdown.

The resident GT championship was also a two-horse race between class winners Jamie Sturges (VW Golf TCR) and Alan Hamilton (Westfield), which went to the wire. Sturges had a clean run to his second crown, but had to race every inch of the way for a one-point margin over Hamilton, vexed by two split driveshaft gaiters.

Series debutant Angus Fender won both races stylishly in dad Neil's bellowing 660bhp Dodge Viper V10, but pursuer Keith Butcher trailed his Lamborghini Huracan after fading in the opener. Quintuple race winner Doug Watson's Ferrari 488 Challenge fell during

qualifying when all five left-rear wheel studs sheared. Newcomer Tom Walpole (Ariel Atom) and Dylan Popovic (Ginetta-Chevrolet G50) chased Fender in race two.

Neven Kirkpatrick completed his defence of the Super Mighty Minis championship with second to brother David first time out, after Steve Rideout – who took the chequer – fell to fifth with a 10-second jumped-start penalty. Rideout rode out triumphant later from Neven, David and Stuart Coombs, lapping the fourth-to-sixth placed Mighties as the flag fell. Among them, Olly Samways did just enough for seasonal honours despite Ben Butler's dominance on the day. Suzy Inch and Paul Ogborn shared the

Traynor's stall proves key to Lockwood's MR2 success

OULTON PARK
750MC
7 OCTOBER

The Toyota MR2 Championship went down to the final laps at Oulton Park last weekend with Adam Lockwood and Shaun Traynor equal on points after Traynor won the first race from Lockwood.

Four-time champion Traynor struggled for grip early in the opener and both he



Victory in the finale gave Lockwood title honours

and Lockwood had some work to do to pass Neil Stratton, but they later pulled clear once they stopped holding each other up.

Race two was the decider, with Traynor and Lockwood starting first and second. It looked like Lockwood would walk away with the title and his first win when Traynor stalled on the line, but Traynor pushed valiantly through the field to get back into contention, especially finding a way around Stratton. In the end, it was Lockwood's day as second-placed Traynor could not get close enough to attack.

Excitement among the Locosts was of a different variety. The championship had already been won by Craig Land, but an extremely close four-car group was battling for race-one honours. David Martin put himself at the front at exactly the right time, leading Jack Lynas and Angus Gough home, the trio separated by 0.1 seconds. Tom Parker had been part of the pack for most of the 15 minutes, but a last-lap off meant he dropped to eighth.

Martin won again in the sequel, which was disrupted by a red flag after two first-lap accidents that took seven cars out of the restart. Parker was a close second, with Bradley Horsnell not far behind.

Chaos of a different kind upended the first F1000 race's results. Thomas Gadd won following a messy restart after a Code 60; he saw the green flag before the four drivers in front of him, sending him flying into the lead. He had to avoid the erstwhile leaders, still sticking to 60km/h, which caused consternation in the paddock. Matthew Higginson had led for most of the race but had to settle for second, ahead of a charging Robert Welham. Murfie Aldridge earned his maiden win in race two, after also getting caught out by the opener's Code 60. He quickly progressed through the reversed grid and built up a large lead. Welham was second after fending off Higginson and Dan Gore.

The first 750 Formula race yielded a fairly straightforward win for Ed Pither

OLLIE READ



Kirkpatrick was another driver to retain their title

OLLIE READ

other podium steps.

Adam Prebble outran Rob Ellick's misfiring Audi TT turbo for a Saloon double in his Vauxhall Astra. James Keepin sealed the ultra-close season-long MG ZR fight in Class C, twice beating Lee Waterman as a broken alternator stopped James Blake initially. Champion Mike Good's Vauxhall Corsa went nowhere in the opener when a driveshaft snapped.

Sam Stride and his shrill Honda Civic were first-time winners in the Hot Hatch bout. Shaun Goverd (Citroen AX) and Tony Cooper (Civic EK) trailed behind him, after Geoff Ryall's Peugeot 106 shed a wheel. Novice Olly Kingston earned

Driver of the Day plaudits after audaciously re-passing George Walker for BMW Mini glory by 0.222s.

Piloting the only F3 Cup class car, George Line was haring towards a second Tiedeman Trophy Monoposto walkover when his ex-Carlin Dallara F308's gearbox failed on the final lap, handing victory to Jason Timms's screaming Suzuki-powered F301.

Luca Staccini Anzanello's fifth victory made him Hyundai Coupe Cup series top gun. Mark Ridout later staved off Jonny Rockett and the Italian as the curtain fell on Castle Combe's 2023 season.

MARCUS PYE



Martin was a double winner but faced stern test in opener

RACHEL BOURNE

in his PRS, before 2023 champion Peter Bove produced an exciting recovery drive in race two. Bove, in his Darvi, slipped back from a good lead after a small grassy excursion at Hislops, but pushed his way through the lead battle that had ensued between Jake Doherty's SS/F, Steve Boother in another Darvi and David Reid's Racekits Falcon. Reid challenged Doherty strongly on the last lap, but Doherty held firm behind Bove. Pither had to retire on the first lap following contact at Old Hall.

Formula Vee concluded with a perfect

weekend for champion Matthew Hyde in his appropriately named AHS Dominator. His two straightforward wins were the latest in a run of 10 Vee victories. Craig Bell (AHS Dominator) was second both times.

The 116 Trophy spoils went the way of Matthew Highcock, who qualified down the order due to a penalty incurred at Silverstone. He was let through with the leaders during a lengthy safety-car period and, once ahead, held his advantage until the end.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER

WEEKEND WINNERS



OLLIE READ

CASTLE COMBE

CCRC FF1600

Races 1 & 2 Luke Cooper (Swift SC20)

CCRC GT

Races 1 & 2 Angus Fender (Dodge Viper Competition, above)

CCRC MIGHTY MINIS

Race 1 David Kirkpatrick (Super)

Race 2 Steve Rideout (Super)

CCRC SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Adam Prebble (Vauxhall Astra turbo)

CCRC HOT HATCH

Sam Stride (Honda Civic EP3)

MONOPOSTO TIEDEMAN TROPHY

Race 1 George Line (Dallara-VW/Spiess F308)

Race 2 Jason Timms (Dallara-Suzuki F301)

BARC HYUNDAI COUPE CUP

Race 1 Luca Staccini Anzanello

Race 2 Mark Ridout

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

OULTON PARK

TOYOTA MR2s

Race 1 Shaun Traynor (Roadster)

Race 2 Adam Lockwood (Roadster)

LOCOST

Races 1 & 2 David Martin

F1000

Race 1 Thomas Gadd

Race 2 Murfie Aldridge (below)

750 FORMULA

Race 1 Ed Pither (PRS 1b)

Race 2 Peter Bove (Darvi 88P)

FORMULA VEE

Races 1 & 2 Matthew Hyde (AHS Dominator)

116 TROPHY

Matthew Highcock



RACHEL BOURNE

For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Jota Sport Zytek Z11SN was LMP2 class winner at Le Mans in 2014



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From the kitchen table to Le Mans glory



BOOK
POWERED BY GIBSON - FROM F1 TO LE MANS: THE STORY OF GIBSON TECHNOLOGY
Mark Cole; RRP £40

“Hand on heart, it’s plug and play – you can almost forget the engine, because reliability-wise we’ve never had a failure, whether with the Ligiers or ORECAS. The quality across the engines has been quite remarkable.”

When you consider the amount of racing that United Autosports has done in LMP2 since Gibson Technology was appointed as the category’s sole engine supplier in 2017, the quoted testimonial from its team boss Richard Dean in a new Porter Press book written by Mark Cole is worth taking a moment to reflect on.

True, the 4.2-litre GK428 V8 LMP2 engine has been gradually pegged back to ensure that the heavier and slower Hypercars that replaced LMP1 remained at the top of the endurance racing pyramid. From 600bhp in 2017, they have been restricted to 527bhp in this year’s World Endurance Championship while running at 40bhp below capacity in the European Le Mans Series. But you simply can’t argue with the

faultless reliability record of an engine heralding from Repton in Derbyshire that has covered over four million kilometres in competition.

Although it has only existed in its current Gibson Technology guise since 2014, after Continental bought out the electronics arm of the company previously known as Zytek, the long and fascinating history from its formative years as a supplier of engine management systems to teams in Formula 1 and Formula 3000 is certainly worthy of closer inspection.

Founded by Bill Gibson, Zytek became an engine servicing specialist after taking over Alan Smith’s company, then designed and built its own engines and, after Reynard collapsed, purchased assets that allowed it to become a chassis manufacturer too. Two of its cars won the LMP2 class at Le Mans with Greaves (in 2011) and Jota (in 2014) also using Nissan engines assembled at Repton, while in 2017 it came close to winning the 24 Hours outright with Jota.

With a foreword from Christian Horner, whose Arden team used Judd-based engines built and serviced by Zytek throughout a successful F3000 tenure that put him on Red Bull’s radar in F1, the book features in-depth interviews with key players. Gibson himself explains the thinking behind the Zytek name was

because it was “short and snappy, and it would be on the final page of the phone book!”

Operations director John Manchester opens up on his pride at beating Toyota with Rebellion and Alpine using Gibson’s GL458 4.5-litre LMP1 engine and the logistical challenges that have resulted from LMP2’s recent popularity, while Zytek’s chassis history is covered by interviews with managing director Trevor Foster – who reveals Gibson was unwilling to invest in a new prototype to the new coupe regulations without orders already in place – and chief engineer Tim Holloway, a key player in Zytek’s 2005 successes against Audi in the Le Mans Endurance Series.

As long-standing figures in the Zytek story, interviews with Dean (at one point a company director after Ginetta bought a 40% stake) and Jota’s boss Sam Hignett (who fielded customer Zyteks from 2004 to 2016) also form standalone chapters, while a highlight is a chapter grouping together interviews with several loyal employees.

Another triumph of the 128-page hardback is its imagery, with a lavish selection of over 150 photographs from key points in its history, among them Gibson’s kitchen table production line from the days when the company was called Electronic Racing Aids, through to present day factory shots. There’s plenty for anoraks to cherish too, not least the inclusion of a chassis history for its 15 prototypes, and the index of results for its racing engines in sportscar competition up to the end of 2022.

Stories of underdogs punching above their weight are commonplace in motorsport, but few have as many diverse strands to them as Gibson’s. It’s entirely fitting therefore that its tale has been given the hardback treatment.

JAMES NEWBOLD



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

MotoGP

Indonesian Grand Prix
Round 15/20
 Mandalika, Indonesia
15 October
TV Live TNT Sports 2, Sun 0730
TV Highlights ITV4, Mon 2000

Formula Regional European

Round 9/10
 Zandvoort, Netherlands
14-15 October
TV Livestream YouTube, Sat 1420, Sun 1430

GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup

Round 5/5
 Zandvoort, Netherlands
14-15 October
TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 1245, Sun 1215

Super GT

Round 7/8
 Autopolis, Japan
15 October
TV Livestream Motorsport.tv, Sun 0515

IMSA SportsCar

Round 11/11
 Petit Le Mans, USA
14 October

TV Live ViaplayXtra, Sat 2330

NASCAR Cup

Round 33/36
 Las Vegas, USA
15 October
TV Livestream Viaplay, Sun 1900

NASCAR Xfinity

Round 30/33
 Las Vegas, USA
14 October
TV Livestream Viaplay, Sat 2000

UK MOTORSPORT

GB3 Championship
 Zandvoort, Netherlands
14-15 October
TV Livestream gb-3.net

Croft CSCC

14 October
 Classic K, Future Classics, Modern Classics, Morgan Challenge, New Millennium, Open Series, Swinging 60s, Tin Tops, Turbo Tin Tops

Oulton Park BARC

14 October
 Caterham Graduates (Sigma 135, Sigma 150, Sigmax), CNC Heads Sports/Saloon, Kumho BMW, Superkarts

Donington Park BARC

14-15 October
 BEC, Britcar Trophy, CTCRC

(Pre-'66, Pre-'83, Pre-'93/ Pre-'03/BOSS, Thunder/Jaguars), JSCC, Mini Challenge Clubsport
TV Livestream via barc.net

Silverstone HSCC

14-15 October
 70s Roadsports/Historic Roadsports, Aurora Trophy/Classic F3, Classic FF1600, Guards Trophy, Historic F3,

Historic FF1600, Historic FF2000, Historic Formula Junior, Historic Touring Cars/Modsports & Special Saloons

Snetterton BRSCC

14-15 October
 Audi TT Cup, BMW Compact Cup, C1 Endurance, CMMC, Evolution Trophy, Zero Prototype Series

Mondello Park MPSC

15 October
 BOSS Ireland, Fiesta ST, Fiesta Zetec, Irish Legends, Irish Strykers, Mini Junior Challenge, SEAT Supercup

British Rallycross Championship

Round 5/6
 Dreux, France
14-15 October

[autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/ RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Qatar Grand Prix review

Max Verstappen clinched his third Formula 1 world title during the Qatar Grand Prix weekend, finishing second in Saturday's sprint race, then celebrated the achievement by going one better and winning Sunday's grand prix.

But the event was overshadowed by a tyre trouble saga and gruelling hot race conditions that left many drivers unwell and were declared "too dangerous" by McLaren's Lando Norris.

With talking points aplenty, Martyn Lee is joined by Matt Kew in Qatar, along with Jake Boxall-Legge and Haydn Cobb to discuss all of the fallout from Losail.



MotoGP Indonesian GP



Silverstone HSCC

STEVE JONES

GOLD AND GOOSE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Polesitter Rubens Barrichello gets no further than the Turn 1 gravel trap at the start of the 2002 Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, his Ferrari's missing rear wing and roll-hoop camera

indicating the skyward trajectory just taken by the Williams of Ralf Schumacher (whose front wing is just visible at the top of the image), in the first impact of a demolition derby that results in eight cars being eliminated.

Determined not to be one of them, Kimi Raikkonen employs evasive manoeuvres on his McLaren debut, and what follows is a fine recovery drive culminating in a third-place finish – the Finn's maiden podium.



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Nissan Skyline GT-R R32

I grew up in the PlayStation era – even to this day I play *Gran Turismo*. The Nissan Skyline was always my dream car, and it's the favourite of those that I've driven."

British Touring Car Championship star Jake Hill was probably never going to choose the NGTC Volkswagen CC as the machine that gets his mouth salivating. But alongside the competitive weaponry he's more recently taken to 12 BTCC race wins, there's a whole squadron of historic exotica he has raced or tested. It's Ric Wood's recreation of Kazuyoshi Hoshino's 1990 All-Japan Touring Car title-winning Skyline GT-R that tops them.

"I'm lucky enough to own a Skyline, and my love for them just grew further, despite them being a massive pain in the arse!" he laughs. "But nonetheless, Ric's race car is just insane. The Group A era is my favourite of touring cars anyway, and I think there's no more famous Japanese Touring Car than the Calsonic Skyline. Yes, it's not the original, but my God it's as close to it as you can get. I absolutely love it, and it's one of my favourite racing cars full stop, it really lights my fire.

"I first got the offer to drive it at the Oulton Park Gold Cup in 2019. I jumped in it for qualifying. It was still plagued with some issues – it was a fairly new project for Ric then, but I'll never forget my smile when I drove it out of the pitlane.



"In 2020 we did the Goodwood SpeedWeek when there were no fans. We did a one-lap time attack on the circuit, and we finished sixth overall and top touring car, and that's really what put me and the Skyline on the centre stage.

"Later on I drove the HKS Skyline – same thing, just different livery – at the Festival of Speed in 2021, and I drove the Calsonic car this year at the Festival of Speed. I've raced it a couple of times with Ric, like at Spa, and it's a project that's a real privilege to have been involved with."

Hill also rates the Chevron B26 he races with Simon Watts, plus an ex-Tommy Byrne Ralt RT3 he tested in 2019: "I was definitely born in the wrong era, that's for sure. The 1990s were great – I love that era of cars. They're my favourite Le Mans cars, my favourite F1 cars, and definitely my favourite touring cars."

MARCUS SIMMONS



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- 8/9/10 Mar Barcelona /E - Race days (tbc)

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