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BAHRAIN GP

ROSBERG WINS AGAIN

As Hamilton suffers in first-turn crash



Lewis: "It was damage limitation again"

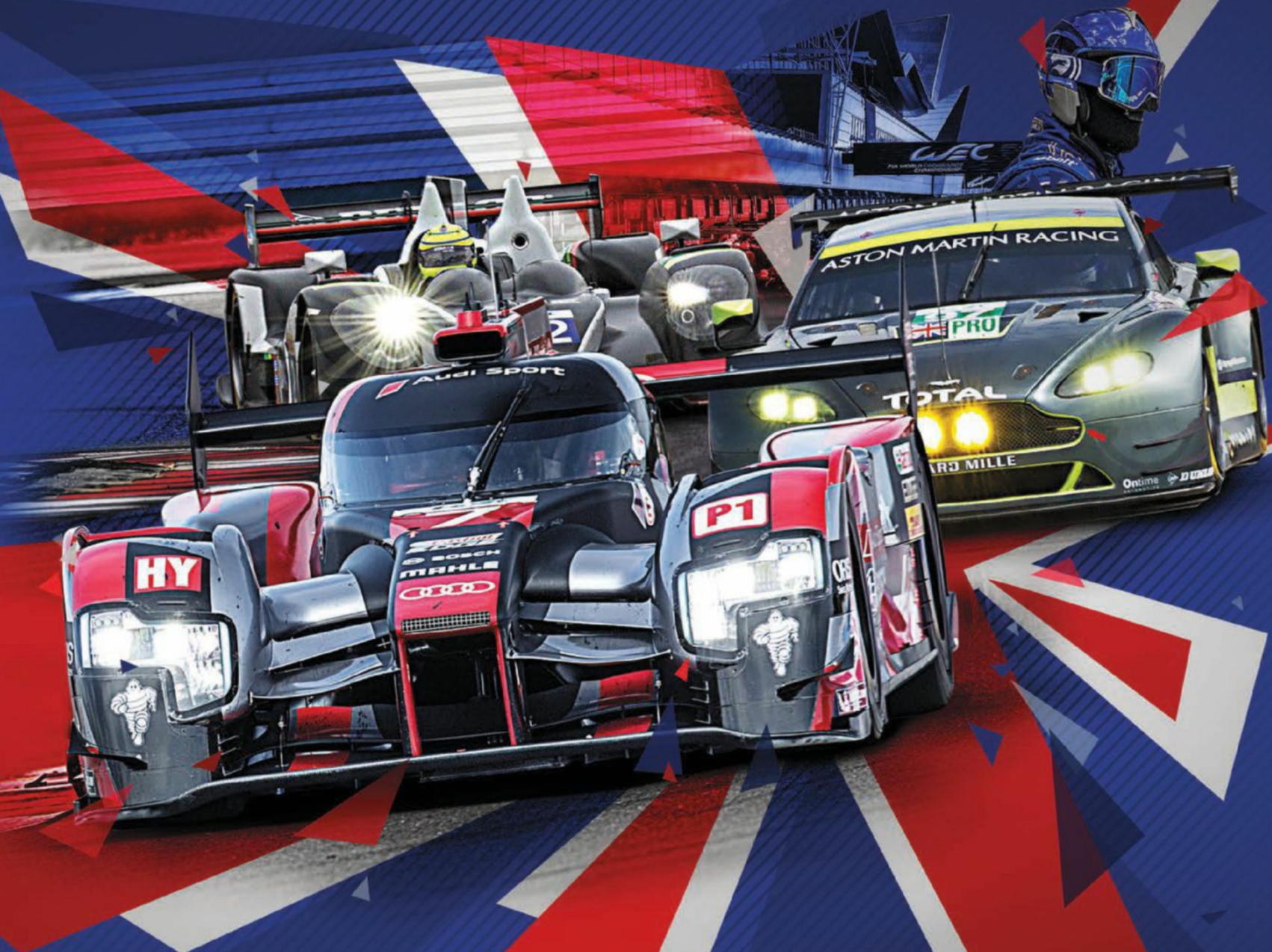


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Rosberg is making all the right moves

THERE WERE POINTS DURING THE 2014 SEASON WHEN Nico Rosberg seemed a more likely world champion than Lewis Hamilton. This happened when Rosberg was able to put real pressure on his team-mate, starting with the 'did he, didn't he' controversy of his visit to the Mirabeau escape road in qualifying for that year's Monaco Grand Prix.

While Hamilton has no real reason to worry – after all, he has taken pole position twice this year and been undone by what happened in the first seconds of the race – the significance of Rosberg's strong start to the season lies less in his 17-point lead than in the potential unsettling of the defending champion. Chances are, Hamilton will win the Chinese GP and close the gap, but every race that Rosberg's current winning streak is extended by ratchets up that pressure. Hamilton doesn't have many flaws, but the one most likely to help his team-mate is a weakness when on the back foot.

This is good news for interest in the season. Ferrari has been stronger than it looks this year, but is not on the level of Mercedes. So the best hopes for a genuine title fight reside inside the garage of the Silver Arrows.

And that's what F1 should be focusing on: the prospect of a title battle. Not, as is the case, this absurd situation where it's made a sudden change to the qualifying format, then showed alarming flat-footedness in not making the obvious change back.



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Moy/XPB Images; Ebrey/LAT

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Rosberg makes it five in a row

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor [@BenAndersonAuto](#)

XPBIMAGES





TWO RACES DOWN AND ALREADY IT LOOKS AS THOUGH FERRARI HAS

a mountain to climb if it wants to mount a serious challenge to Mercedes for the Formula 1 world championship. Mercedes holds a 50-point advantage in the constructors' race, and neither of Ferrari's chargers sits inside the top three in the drivers' standings.

Yes, Ferrari could have won against the odds with a better strategy call in Melbourne, but the SF16-H was still fundamentally slower than the Wo7 throughout the Australian Grand Prix. To win that race on what Sebastian Vettel called one of Ferrari's worst tracks would have been opportunistic, and it was ultimately an opportunity missed, but not merited on pace alone.

Bahrain would be different. A better indicator of where Ferrari stood in reality thanks to the Sakhir circuit being a "more normal" track than Albert Park, according to Kimi Raikkonen.

Except it wasn't much different, as it turned out.

Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg qualified one-two again, Ferrari suffered another engine failure, and though Raikkonen finished second here (for the second season in succession) he never really looked like a serious contender to beat Rosberg to victory.

But Ferrari was resolutely confident in defeat. It said without the suspected injector/valve failure that caused Vettel's engine to fail spectacularly on the formation lap, he would have been in for a "very good" race; that without Raikkonen's self-confessed finger trouble on the clutch at the start he was quick enough possibly to win it – which by implication means Vettel could have too.

"Kimi had a bit of a problem at the start and I think that penalised him quite a lot," said Ferrari team boss Maurizio Arrivabene.

"Maybe – and I underline maybe – he compromised the victory of the race. If you count, it's easy. I'm not inventing anything."

So was Ferrari right to be bullish? Was this yet another genuine opportunity missed? Or did Mercedes simply have too much in hand? As Rosberg put it, the start was "key". The championship leader made another strong getaway from the dirty side of the grid, while polesitter Hamilton fluffed his lines again and found himself relegated to second as the two silver cars descended on the first corner. Raikkonen's own poor getaway meant he slipped back from third (in the absence of Vettel, but fourth on the actual grid) to sixth at the first corner.

He gained a place back when the fast-starting Williams of Valtteri Bottas clattered into Hamilton as they turned in to Turn 1 – half spinning and severely delaying the Mercedes – but gradually recovered to second place over the first seven laps, which included what Ferrari team boss Maurizio Arrivabene described as a "brave" round-the-outside pass on Daniel Ricciardo's Red Bull at Turn 4.

But by the time Raikkonen had dispatched Ricciardo's RB12 (damaged after clouting Hamilton's Mercedes in the Turn 1 melee), repassed Bottas's hobbled Williams, and moved into second when Felipe Massa dived into the pits on lap seven of 57, Rosberg was 11.816 seconds up the road and realistically out of reach.



Clash between Bottas and Hamilton took the heat off Rosberg

Three times Ferrari attempted to destabilise Rosberg by pitting Raikkonen earlier than his rival, including for a short middle stint on super-soft tyres. Mercedes simply reacted by bringing Rosberg in shortly afterwards each time and fitting the same compound to cover Ferrari's attacks. Without a second Ferrari in the race, this was a straightforward challenge for Mercedes to meet.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff reckoned the 'undercut' to be worth around 1-2s in Bahrain, which explains why Raikkonen was able to get within nine seconds of Rosberg after the second round of stops – aided by a minor delay in Rosberg's release.

Following the final round of stops Raikkonen closed to within 3.806s, after Mercedes waited an extra lap to bring Rosberg in and Rosberg produced a rather pedestrian out-lap.

So it's easy to see why Arrivabene felt Raikkonen might have had a sniff without that poor start, but analysis of the respective pace Rosberg and Raikkonen showed across the four stints – discounting the first seven laps of the race Raikkonen spent bottled up in traffic – suggests Mercedes always had things under control.

Rosberg was 0.607s per lap faster on average over the four laps they did in clean air on used super-softs in the first stint, which is slightly exaggerated by the extra degradation Raikkonen would have suffered in traffic. But when both used super-softs again in the middle of the race Rosberg was still fractionally quicker on average – by 0.054s per lap – when you discount the two significantly slower extra laps he did to extend his stint slightly.

On the soft tyre each used for the majority of the race, Rosberg was 0.213s per lap faster on average over the 15-lap second stint and 0.171s per lap faster across the final stint, before he noticeably backed off over the final two laps to the finish. >>



Hamilton passes Grosjean early in his recovery drive...



...then dispatches Bottas for fourth a few laps later

ALL PICTS: XPB IMAGES



Even if you credit Raikkonen back an extra couple of laps to offset the fact that his final stint was longer, on account of his earlier stops, his average laptime over the final stint was at best estimate only 0.013s quicker than Rosberg's. By this stage Rosberg was clearly managing the gap to the end. "I was in control, we were managing the race, strategy-wise, pitstop-wise, taking our time, just bringing the race home," he said.

Perhaps more revealing was how Rosberg could really turn the screw if he needed to. When Raikkonen closed to within four seconds of the leader at the beginning of the final stint, Rosberg punched in a 1m34.482s lap – which stood as the race's fastest – to reassert control. The best Raikkonen could manage was nearly seven tenths slower than that.

Mercedes always seemed to have something in hand when needed. Ferrari trailed by around half a second after Friday practice, found itself behind by the same deficit after qualifying, and was down on pace in the race too.

Raikkonen was consistently quicker than Rosberg in the second sector, but Rosberg cancelled that out by being regularly faster in the first. Overall Rosberg still had the edge. Sure Ferrari was closer on average over long stints, but that's nothing new, and still probably wouldn't have been enough to challenge Mercedes even with a clean start. Ferrari still has to rely on somehow gaining track position to dictate terms.

The unknown factor in Bahrain was Vettel, who was 0.15-0.25s faster than Raikkonen in qualifying and would have started closer to the Mercedes than his team-mate had the engine not detonated. It's possible he could have applied a tad more pressure, but he never made the start, so really it's a moot point.

“For the first laps of his final stint Hamilton was quicker than Raikkonen”

Mercedes was simply faster here. Even more disconcerting for Ferrari is the pace Hamilton showed during his recovery drive to third. He fell back to ninth after that poor start, which he said was unrelated to the one he suffered in Melbourne and unrelated to the new rules surrounding reduced radio communication and clutch procedures, and the first-corner collision with Bottas, for which the Williams driver was penalised.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff estimated Hamilton's car was “almost a second down on downforce” thanks to the “substantial” damage done to the W07's floor in the impact, but Hamilton raced back up to third with relative ease despite this.

The team realised he wouldn't be able to recover further ground without a slice of luck, so switched the reigning champion on to the medium tyre at his first pitstop in hope that a safety car might bring the race back towards Hamilton.

“The interesting thing in the race is that the medium didn't work at all,” said Wolff. “We didn't expect that. Because the car was almost a second down on downforce we soon found out that there was no way of closing the gap to Kimi on the same tyre, so keeping him [Hamilton] out there would have given us a chance in case there was a safety car. That was the only chance of making second.”



XPBIMAGES

QUALIFYING



SBLONHAM/LAT

Grosjean was happy to fall in Q2

Hamilton's tyre choices for the remainder of the race matched the two cars ahead. He was quicker than both over an equivalent number of laps on the super-soft, before degradation set in, and was around seven tenths slower per lap on average than team-mate Rosberg during the final stint on softs.

For the first seven laps of his final stint he was quicker than Raikkonen and only fractionally slower than Rosberg, before dropping his pace substantially – suggesting either the car damage affected tyre life more than outright performance, or that his rivals were simply holding back, knowing the contest was over. >>

Ferrari had enough pace to beat Williams but not Mercedes



Raikkonen secured podium for second consecutive year

DUNBAR/LAT

“Qualifying wasn’t the same anti-climax it was in Australia”

AFTER THE FIRST RUNS IN Q3 IT LOOKED AS THOUGH MAYBE, JUST maybe, Ferrari had a shot at stealing pole position from Mercedes.

Nico Rosberg had broken into the 1m29s – by just over a tenth – and Sebastian Vettel trailed him by only a tad more than that, 0.168 seconds to be precise.

That's the sort of margin you can work with, not an impossible bridge to cross. Unlike in Melbourne Ferrari had enough tyres to mount a proper challenge, meaning 'elimination qualifying' wasn't the same anti-climax it was in Australia. But Ferrari did ultimately lack that last bit of extra pace when it mattered.

Vettel only found 0.053s on his final run, dropping 0.027s in the first sector but gaining 0.08s through the rest of his lap. A 1m29s lap just wasn't quite within reach.

“I was very happy with the first attempt and my second was more or less copy-paste,” said Vettel. “The car felt fantastic – there isn't one place where the car doesn't feel right.”

Lewis Hamilton was only fourth fastest after running wide at the final corner on his first run, but yet again he rose to the occasion when it really mattered. The 1m29.493s lap he set to take pole – smashing Michael Schumacher's 2004 circuit record by 0.646s – was a truly sublime display of controlled aggression.

“Of course there's added pressure when you make a mistake and don't complete the first lap,” said Hamilton, who struggled in the third sector on Friday but was fastest in all three during qualifying.

“It's like tennis players trying an ace the first serve; they can't try an ace on the second. Some of them do, but it's easier to take it safe and be a bit cautious. But I aced the second serve...”

Rosberg almost served an ace of his own, improving by more than three tenths on his second Q3 run, but Hamilton remained 0.077s clear as the session drew to a close.

“Lewis did his homework very well,” conceded Rosberg, who lost the bulk of that deficit in sector one. “My lap felt good and I was actually sure I was on pole.”

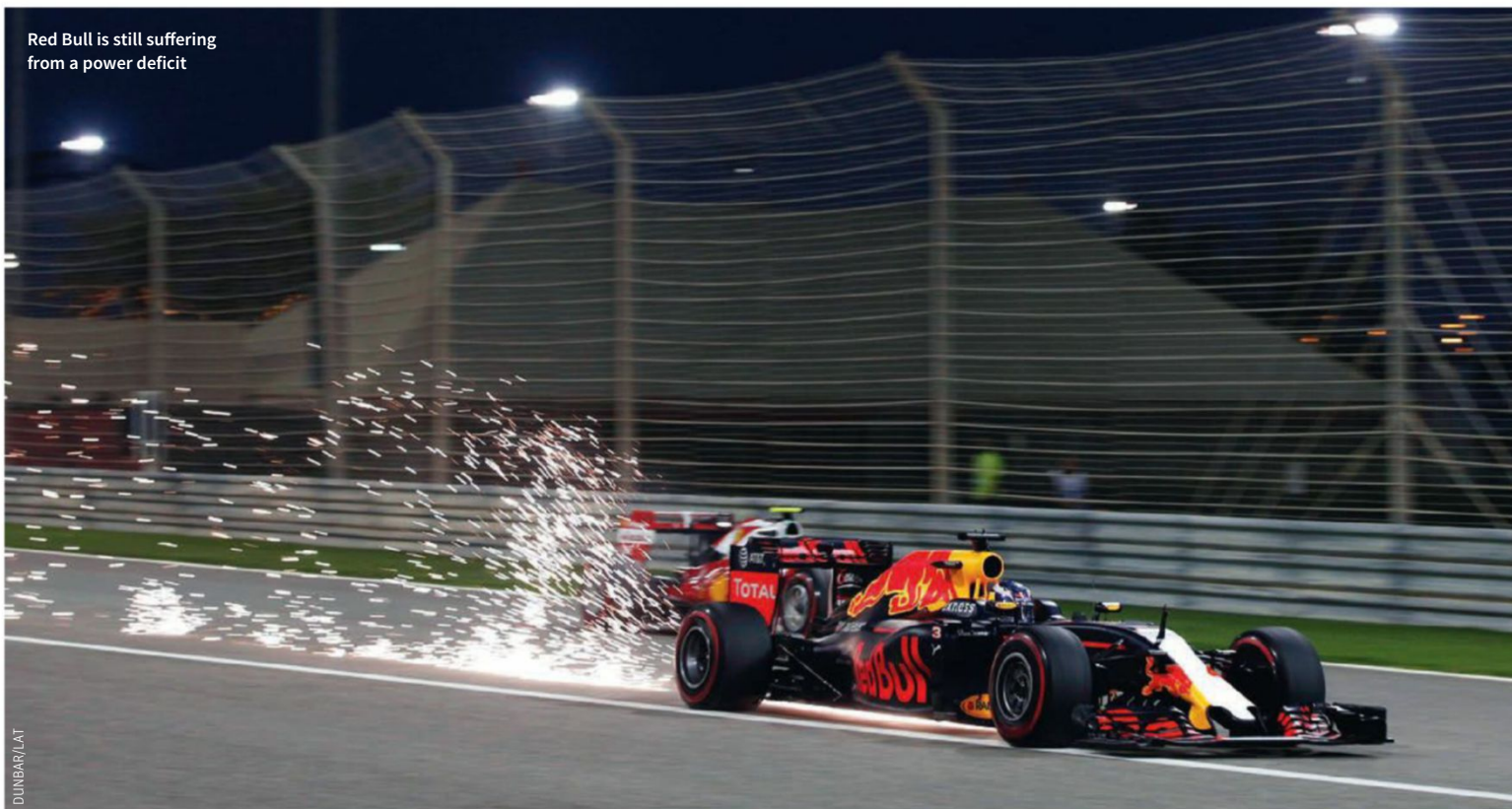
Kimi Raikkonen ended Q3 0.232s down on Vettel in the other Ferrari, after failing to improve on his second run thanks to more front tyre warm-up issues.

The rest of the Q3 runners only had sufficient time to complete single runs, thanks to the elimination format's bias against the slower runners, the best of which was Daniel Ricciardo's Red Bull – “on another planet” according to Red Bull stablemate Carlos Sainz Jr and nearly three tenths clear of the two Williamses.

Romain Grosjean's delight at seeing the Force India of Nico Hulkenberg beat him to the final Q3 spot highlights the inherent shortcomings of rules that effectively dictate the top eight cars must start the race on the wrong tyre.

The focus is naturally on the format, but this is another area that needs consideration. Deliberately trying to qualify further down the grid makes a mockery of the true aim of competitive sport.

Red Bull is still suffering from a power deficit

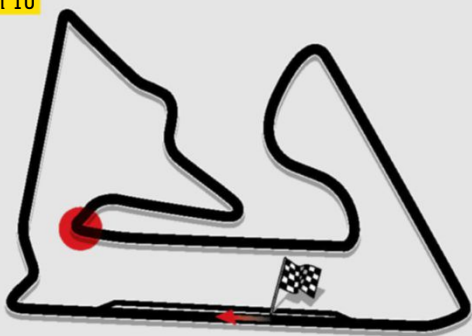


DUNBAR/LAT



“IT’S NOT QUITE A SCANDINAVIAN FLICK...”

Turn 10



AT FIRST GLANCE THE Sakhir circuit doesn't look like much – mostly sequences of low-speed corners punctuated by long straights. It certainly lacks Spa's raw speed appeal.

But looks can be deceptive. This track is its own challenge, and striking the correct balance between aggressive braking and good throttle reapplication in those slow turns – made trickier by the immense torque of the current turbo engines – is no easy task.

“Bahrain is a difficult place to get the right set-up,” says Lewis Hamilton. “This is

always a difficult track for me. We have to work hard to get the maximum out of the car.”

I wandered down to Turns 9 and 10 during first practice, perhaps the trickiest of those deceleration/acceleration challenges. There is a fast downhill approach, followed immediately by the sharp braking and tight turning of 10. The long back straight that follows punishes any mistakes.

Hamilton is one of the neater drivers through here, preferring a tight line. But he also locks brakes several times. Huge lock-ups from several drivers show how tricky it is to judge braking correctly.

Hamilton locks the inside front wheel on entry to Turn 10



DUNBAR/LAT

Watching the two Renault drivers is interesting. Their styles are quite different – Magnussen focusing more on entry speed while Palmer tries to stop his car earlier and pick up the throttle sooner.

Later, Palmer alters his approach and shows more commitment, but he can't quite

balance out his entry speed and throttle reapplication. There is a big lockup one lap, massive exit oversteer the next, then a much calmer (but clearly slower) effort.

Daniel Ricciardo has no such trouble, looking his usual elegant self. Disciplined, but also fast. But then he does

have less power to deal with than most.

Valtteri Bottas is far more aggressive – rotating the car so quickly that it sometimes looks as if he's using a handbrake. It's not quite a Scandinavian flick, but it's close...

BEN ANDERSON

“I guarantee you Nico wasn’t pushing from lap 10 and I bet you Kimi wasn’t pushing 15–20 laps from the end either,” said Hamilton. “Same for me.”

Hamilton is clearly still frustrated by a formula that prioritises efficiency over flat-chat driving. It seems that is presently giving him more cause for concern than the two bad starts he’s suffered.

“I’m not really worried about it,” he said. “The first one was clutch related and the second one was something else. It’s not entirely my fault but it’s [also] my reaction that cost the time. It’s something we’ll work internally on and fix for the next race. It’s not a big issue at all, but it has a domino effect. I actually had a good start once I got going.”

Mercedes is nevertheless calling in some expertise from parent company Daimler in an attempt to improve the clutch and make Hamilton more comfortable.

“We believe it’s more of a hardware issue than just a control electronics problem and you can’t solve that from one race to the other,” explained Wolff. “The collaboration with Daimler is around optimising the hardware and that needs a bit of time. I am not sure when we will have results.”

Hamilton also seems unruffled by failing to win either of the first two races of this season, while Rosberg has now won each of the last five grands prix they’ve contested. Hamilton knows the experience of winning the past two titles – particularly in adversity in 2014 – means he doesn’t need to force his hand.

“I feel really positive even though we’ve lost the first two races, because the foundation work I’ve been doing with my engineers and the communication is better than ever, so I know it’s going to come good,” explained Hamilton, who trails Rosberg by 17 points in this year’s title race already. “We’ve had two poles and we’re going to get more, because there are no real flaws in our procedure.

“This is a psychological game and I guess with age and experience I’m in the most solid place I’ve been psychologically. There’s very little, if anything, that can penetrate that. Nobody likes losing – we easily had the pace to convert to a win – so we

all feel the pain, but there’s a long, long way to go.”

That will also be some comfort to Ferrari, which still lacks those crucial tenths that would allow it to really put pressure on Mercedes. The early pattern already seems similar to last year – Mercedes with a

crucial few tenths in hand if the drivers execute properly in qualifying; Ferrari a bit closer in the races where tyre degradation and energy management play more of a role.

“We need to keep pushing because they haven’t shown what they are capable of yet,” cautioned Rosberg. “They’ve had so many mishaps which have cost them. We need to be careful because they are coming at us strong. We haven’t seen the real Ferrari yet.”

Maybe not. But if that is true the real Ferrari could do with turning up pretty damn soon, before this season becomes another two-horse Mercedes race. ❧

“Mercedes is calling in expertise in an attempt to improve the clutch”

TEE/LAT



Rosberg celebrated his fifth win in a row over team-mate Hamilton



RICCIARDO: RED BULL IS THIRD FASTEST

DANIEL RICCIARDO FIRMLY believes Red Bull has the third-fastest car in Formula 1, after scoring another fourth-placed finish at the Bahrain Grand Prix.

Ricciardo qualified ahead of both Williams drivers and finished only 15.805 seconds behind Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes, despite damaging his front wing after tagging the delayed W07 at the first corner.

Last year Ricciardo finished more than 55s behind the nearest Mercedes in Bahrain, and his Renault engine exploded as he crossed the finish line.

He feels improvements to the power unit and the RB12 chassis' strengths under braking and on turn-in have allowed Red Bull to pull clear of Williams and Toro Rosso.

When asked if he felt the team was now third fastest, Ricciardo replied: "Definitely. Behind the Williams at the start it was hard to overtake – I still feel they've got a chunk more power – but defending I don't think they were able to overtake me as quick.

"And when Lewis came through, the margin wasn't massive. But even with a perfect front wing, I don't think we're going to beat Mercedes and Ferrari at the moment."

Bottas punished for Hamilton clash

VALTTERI BOTTAS WAS HANDED A drive-through penalty and given points on his licence for colliding with Lewis Hamilton after the start of the Bahrain Grand Prix, but said he was simply trying to defend against attacks from behind.

Bottas has sometimes been considered a soft touch in wheel-to-wheel situations, particularly on the first laps of races.

After making an excellent start from sixth on the grid Bottas was up into third as the field headed into Turn 1 for the first time, and determined not to get out-muscled.

Bottas ended up out-braking slow-starting poleman Hamilton almost by accident, and the two collided as they arrived at the right-hand apex.

"To be honest I wasn't trying to pass him," Bottas told *Autosport*. "I was more focused on the cars behind and not to let anyone try to pass me. That's why I had to brake late.

"That has happened to me before, when I've been too conservative and someone has passed me either on the inside or outside.

"It just caught me out going into the corner how tight they were keeping the line, and how much they stopped their cars at the apex. I don't think they expected me to be there."

Hamilton described the clash as a racing incident and said that Bottas had no need to apologise for it.

"He came from a long way back, but these things happen," said Hamilton. "I left enough room for a car just in case, but I think he lost the back end."

Bottas continued in third after the clash, but eventually trailed home ninth.

Asked if he was surprised to get a penalty, Bottas replied: "I have to say I am a little bit, but I need to have a better look to see if really I need to look in the mirror and swallow my mistake."



Grosjean immediately bested Haas's best results in F1

Grosjean stars with 'crazy' race to fifth place

ROMAIN GROSJEAN DESCRIBED FIFTH PLACE IN THE Bahrain Grand Prix as "crazy" and the result of an "amazing performance" from his Haas team. The American team scored points on its debut in Australia with Grosjean sixth after benefiting from a red flag situation, but fifth in Bahrain was more impressive given it was achieved in normal conditions.

On Saturday Grosjean admitted he was pleased that Nico Hulkenberg pushed him down to ninth in qualifying because it was key to the team's race strategy.

Grosjean ran three stints on super-soft tyres before bolting on softs for the final stint, and that helped him keep clear of Max Verstappen's Toro Rosso in the closing laps.

"It's an amazing performance from all of us," said Grosjean, who lies fifth in the drivers' championship, three points clear of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel. "Sixth in Australia was a bit of luck, but fifth with a normal race is crazy.

"But we have to keep our feet on the ground and realise there will be days where things will be harder.

"Everyone is tired because of the amount of work behind the scenes to catch up on a lot of things, but these types of races are high reward for us.

"It's a dream debut and we have to use it as a morale boost."

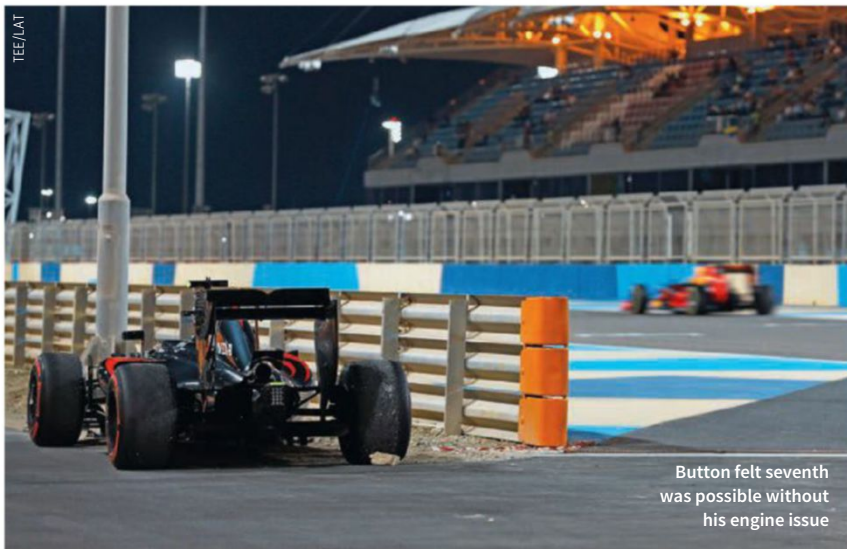
Team boss Gunther Steiner was pleased with the team's performance, but a second successive retirement for Esteban Gutierrez tempered his enthusiasm.

"We always said we could get points but we didn't expect fifth," said Steiner. "I'm not pleased about Esteban. We had a problem on the front left, we think it is something on the brake."

Gutierrez added: "Apparently one of the brake discs failed. What can I say?"



Bottas said he was defending, not attacking, into Turn 1



Button felt seventh was possible without his engine issue

‘Unbelievably unlucky’ Button rues retirement

JENSON BUTTON FELT HE WOULD have given McLaren-Honda a top-seven finish in Bahrain without the engine failure that stopped him after six laps.

Button was impressively fast in free practice and the improved MP4-31 looked potentially quick enough to make the top 10 in qualifying, but Button lost out after struggling for rear grip in Q2.

He started the race impressively, overtaking rookie team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne and closely following a

group of cars that included eventual fifth and sixth-placed finishers Romain Grosjean and Max Verstappen.

“I was saving loads of fuel and just cruising behind the two cars in front,” Button said. “Looking at those cars we were right behind, it’s quite painful.

“It was the best position we’ve been in for a while in outright pace. It’s unbelievable how unlucky we were.

“It’s bad luck and it’s got to stop. Niggly problems cost us a lot of points.”

VANDOORNE MAKES A POINT ON DEBUT

REIGNING GP2 champion Stoffel Vandoorne finished 10th on his grand prix debut in Bahrain, after a late call to replace the injured Fernando Alonso.

Alonso suffered rib injuries in his Australian Grand Prix crash and was ruled out from racing in Bahrain by the FIA the day before practice. McLaren’s

attempts to overturn the ruling failed.

Vandoorne qualified ahead of team-mate Jenson Button, despite only trying the MP4-31 for the first time on Friday, and drove well to bag the final point.

“He did a good weekend and didn’t put a foot wrong,” said McLaren racing director Eric Boullier.

Q&A

STOFFEL VANDOORNE McLAREN-HONDA RESERVE DRIVER



How do you feel to score a point on your debut?

It’s very satisfying. Since the beginning of the weekend I felt very confident in the car and comfortable that I could do a good job. I mainly focused on making sure operationally I didn’t do anything wrong. I think I more or less maximised the opportunity.

Talk us though the first lap

The first lap was pretty hectic. We know it’s a long run down to Turn 1 and everybody gets bunched up. I wasn’t in an ideal position, very close to hitting someone and there was debris flying left and right. And all through the first lap there was a lot of fighting going on. It could have been a bit better.

What advice did Fernando give you?

He was around all weekend to assist the team and push in the right direction. He was at all of the briefings, to help with strategy. He was a real help.

When do you expect to race in F1 again?

I’ve had a great chance to show what I’m capable of, but I see this as a one-shot and I’m grateful for the opportunity. I’ve already shown my ability in the past in other championships, but I think this weekend was a big test to just come in, without any testing and do a good job.



‘Disastrous’ race for Sainz after Perez clash

CARLOS SAINZ JR ACCEPTED AN APOLOGY from Sergio Perez after the Spaniard’s Bahrain Grand Prix was turned into “a disaster”.

Force India’s Perez ran into the rear of Sainz’s Toro Rosso on the second lap at the Sakhir circuit, causing damage that eventually led to Sainz’s retirement.

The collision triggered a puncture as well as damaging the floor and steering column.

With Sainz running at the rear of the field, and with no safety car to aid his cause, Toro Rosso opted to save engine mileage by retiring him.

“He [Perez] apologised because there was no question it was not the right thing to do at that stage of the race,” said Sainz.

“In the end the race was a disaster. There was no need to go for it like there is no tomorrow. I’m not happy.”

Perez went on to finish a lowly 16th after replacing his front wing, one place behind team-mate Nico Hulkenberg, who started eighth but also picked up damage on the first lap.

Force India deputy team principal Bob Fernley’s summary was succinct: “Pack up, go home and put it behind us as quickly as possible!”



A hit from behind caused this race-ruining puncture for Sainz

Massa bemoans Williams’ ‘wrong’ two-stop strategy

FELIPE MASSA RECKONS Williams simply got its race strategy wrong, after he slumped from second on the first lap to finish eighth.

Both Williams drivers made strong getaways, with Massa slotting in behind leader Nico Rosberg after Valtteri Bottas hit Lewis Hamilton at the first corner.

Massa had a reasonable

first stint on super-soft tyres, but fell away when he swapped to mediums as the team tried a two-stop strategy.

“Definitely we did not do the right strategy compared to the other teams,” Massa said. “I don’t believe we could have been on the podium, but it was possible to fight for fourth.”

“We just chose the wrong strategy. The pace of the car on the mediums was so slow. We couldn’t do anything.”

Williams ran a new nose and front wing on Massa’s car in Bahrain, after rushing it out in time for final practice, but he reckons the team will need more time to make it work given his struggles in this race.



WEHRLEIN SHOWS MANOR IS IN MIX

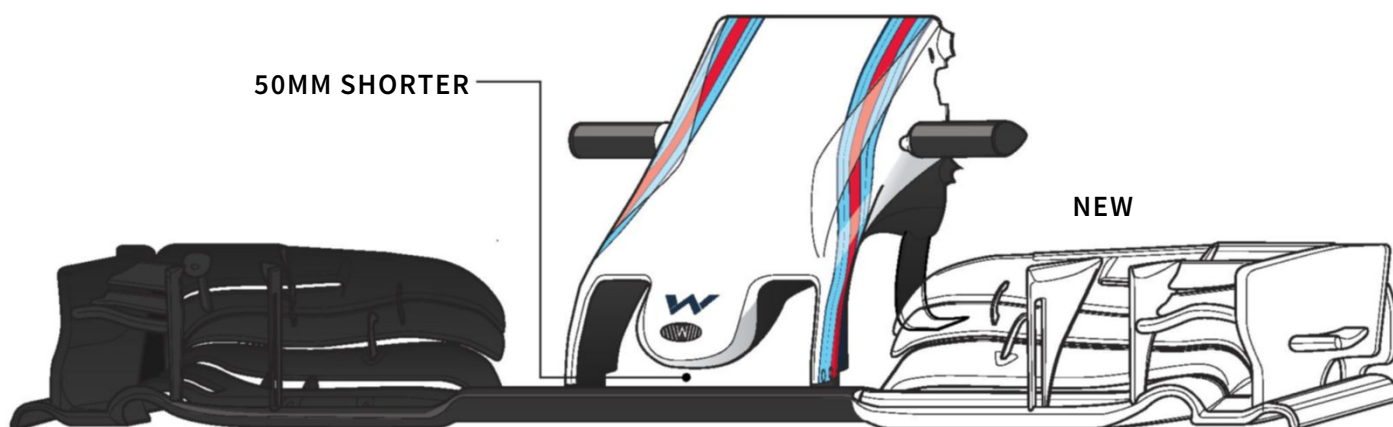
PASCAL WEHRLEIN WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PACE of his Manor-Mercedes after qualifying 16th and beating a Sauber and both Force Indias in the race.

The Force Indias were delayed by early incidents, but Wehrlein outpaced the Saubers and Renaults on merit in qualifying and split the Saubers in the race.

The Mercedes junior feels Manor is not far away from being a lower points contender.

“We were not far away, so that was very positive,” he said. “It looked good, but we still have the issue with tyre deg and we have to solve this.”

“This weekend was 100 per cent better than Melbourne. I felt more comfortable in the car and there is more to come.”



WILLIAMS SHORTENS ITS NOSE

As scheduled Williams brought an aero update to the car, with a new floor and brake ducts, and at the last minute a new nose and front wing assembly.

Only one example of the new front end made it to Sakhir. Massa tested it during Saturday free practice with positive results.

Firstly, the nose is shorter, in fact as short as the rules allow, so it is some 50m shorter than the 2015 nose. Generally the shape is the same, but the thumb tip is more rounded

and gains a stylized Williams logo as the cooling inlet. This is a 3D printed part bonded into the carbon fibre.

The space between the wing mounts is a little more open and the nose is generally shallower in depth, both to aid airflow under the car.

Making such a short nose does add some performance, but passing the crash test is a tough task. Williams has a unique front wing structure, with the side faces of the nose cone being thicker in cross

section and joined to the top and bottom, and ribs moulded on to the carbon fibre.

While the shorter nose may grab the attention, it is the front wing that's the major change to the car's aero.

The wing is an all-new design, following Mercedes' and Ferrari's lead with more emphasis on the airflow over the outer spans to push the wing's wake out around the front tyres.

The wing drops noticeably from the joint with the neutral



OLD

centre section and now forms five rather than four elements. It then splits into further elements towards the endplate. Helping turn the air is a new flag vane, which

gains a vertical slot near its leading edge.

Lastly, the strake on the endplate is reshaped to manage the airflow around the front tyre.

MCLAREN KEEPS PUSHING

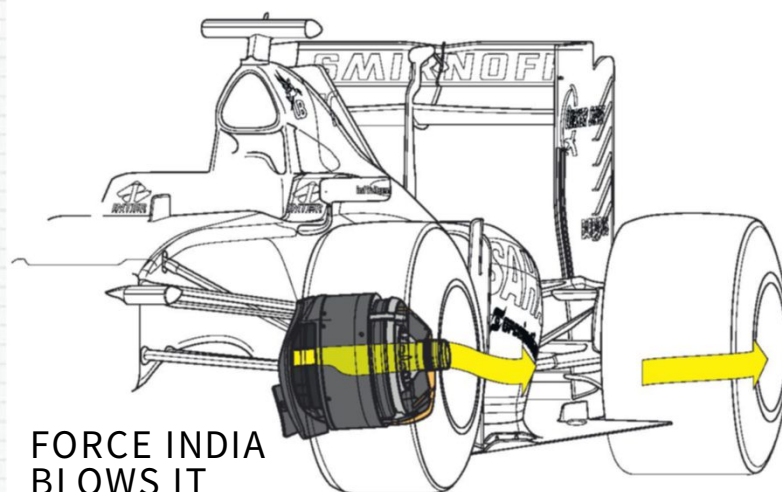
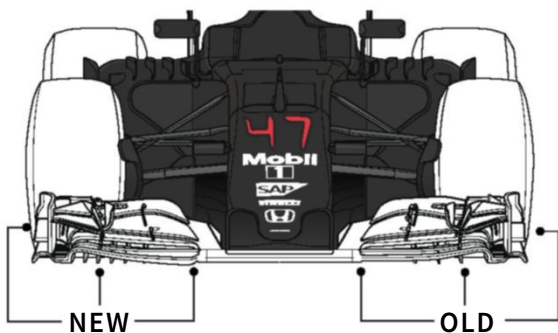
McLaren's relentless pace of development meant another highly updated front wing for Bahrain. It's different in many areas, although it uses elements of the old wing.

A key area of change is the joint to the centre section. The wing drops noticeably to create a steeper inboard wing section. Below the outer wing spans are extra underwing

fences; there are now five rather than three.

These direct air at the tyre, both when the wheels are straight ahead and steered, to minimise turbulence between the wheel and chassis.

There are also subtle changes to the endplate and cascade winglets. The small strake on the outside of the endplate has a new angle.



FORCE INDIA BLOWS IT

Force India surprised many by introducing a blown front axle, a solution already raced by several other teams. This directs air outwards, straight through an enlarged hollow front axle.

This airflow does little for cooling, but it works with the front wing to push the front tyre wake away from the car, to maintain a clean airflow to the rear.

This required new brake ducts, uprights, axles and

wheels to allow the larger diameter axle to fit.

The wheel design remains similar to the old one. Although I saw an unusual three-spoke wheel on Friday, this was just used for transporting the car.

RACE REPORT/RESULTS



Race results / 57 laps – 191.53 miles

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS
1	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes	1h33m34.696s	56	○●●●	1m17.921s
2	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	+10.282s		○●●●	1m15.199s
3	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+30.148s	1	○●●●	1m14.066s
4	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault	+1m02.494s		○●●●	1m16.051s
5	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	+1m18.299s		●●●●	1m21.953s
6	Max Verstappen	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	+1m20.929s		●●●●	1m16.533s
7	Daniil Kvyat	Red Bull-Renault	-1 lap		●●●●	1m13.304s
8	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●●	48.329s
9	Valtteri Bottas	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●●	1m10.423s
10	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda	-1 lap		○●●●	1m14.602s
11	Kevin Magnussen	Renault	-1 lap		●●●●	1m15.600s
12	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●●	50.138s
13	Pascal Wehrlein	Manor-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m17.202s
14	Felipe Nasr	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●●●	1m17.397s
15	Nico Hulkenberg	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●●	1m48.190s
16	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m19.911s
17	Rio Haryanto	Manor-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●●●	1m20.019s
R	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	29 laps-collision		●●●●	1m03.379s
R	Esteban Gutierrez	Haas-Ferrari	9 laps-brakes		●●●●	32.793s
R	Jenson Button	McLaren-Honda	6 laps-engine		●●●●	-
NS	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	0 laps-engine		○●●●	-
NS	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	0 laps-hydraulics		●●●●	-

Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Rosberg	1m34.482s	-	41
2	Hamilton	1m34.677s	+0.195s	43
3	Raikkonen	1m35.158s	+0.676s	39
4	Hulkenberg	1m35.188s	+0.706s	53
5	Nasr	1m35.360s	+0.878s	49
6	Wehrlein	1m35.448s	+0.966s	43
7	Verstappen	1m35.504s	+1.022s	49
8	Kvyat	1m35.678s	+1.196s	36
9	Ricciardo	1m36.064s	+1.582s	44
10	Perez	1m36.067s	+1.585s	39
11	Grosjean	1m36.095s	+1.613s	42
12	Vandoorne	1m36.121s	+1.639s	44
13	Haryanto	1m36.685s	+2.203s	47
14	Magnussen	1m36.730s	+2.248s	40
15	Bottas	1m37.077s	+2.595s	37
16	Massa	1m37.560s	+3.078s	31
17	Ericsson	1m38.003s	+3.521s	32
18	Sainz	1m38.408s	+3.926s	22
19	Gutierrez	1m39.341s	+4.859s	2
20	Button	1m39.427s	+4.945s	3

WEATHER Dry, dusk. Air: 22C. Track: 29C ● New ○ Used ● Ultra-soft ● Super-soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wets ● Intermediate

1992

Stoffel Vandoorne's point was the first scored by a Belgian driver since Thierry Boutsen in 1992

8

Kimi Raikkonen took his eighth Bahrain GP podium, but he has never managed to win

1900

Lewis Hamilton notched up his 1900th point in F1 – only Sebastian Vettel has more

1970

The last new constructor to score in its first two grands prix was March in 1970

5

Nico Rosberg took his fifth win in a row; he's only the eighth driver to achieve this

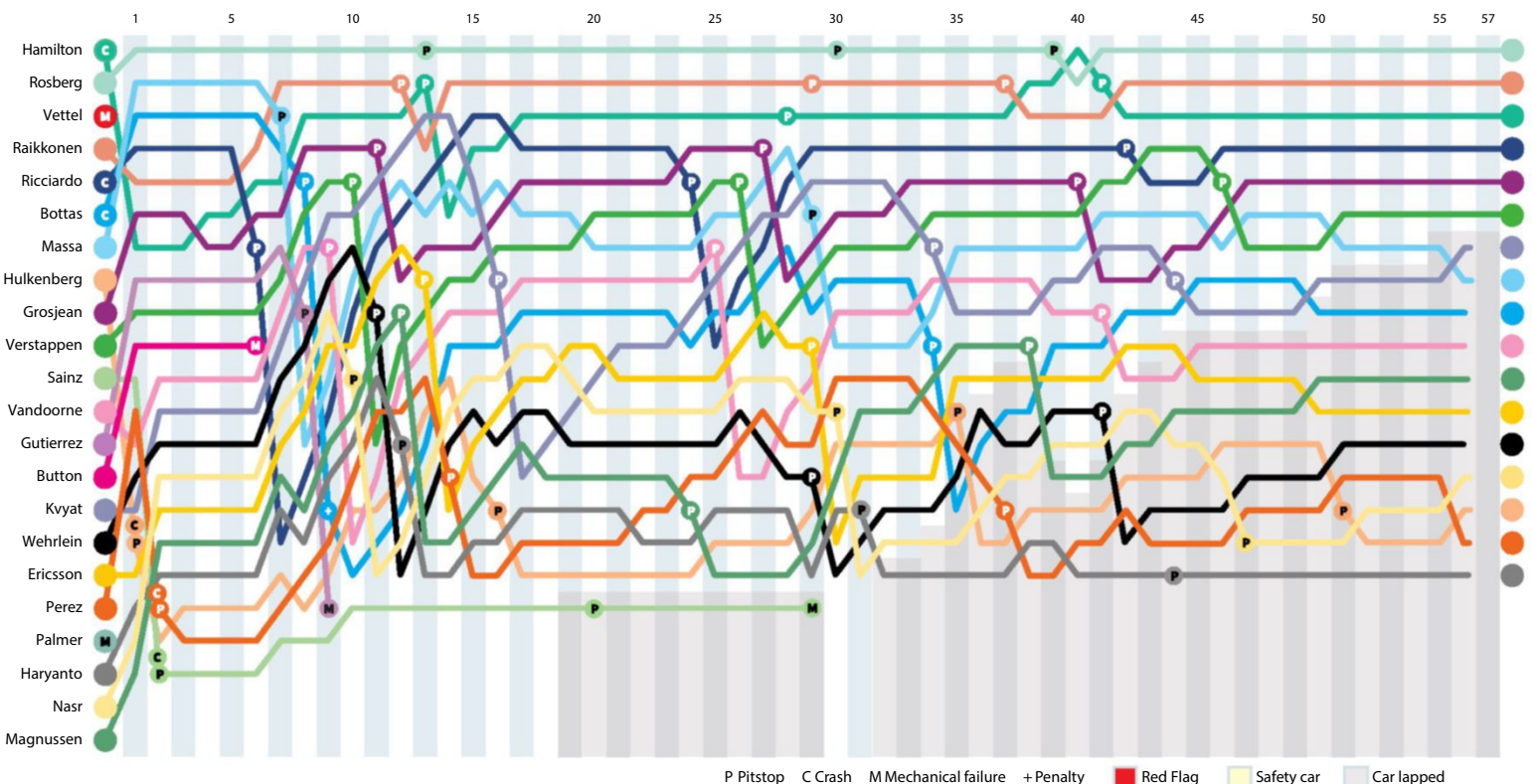
2000

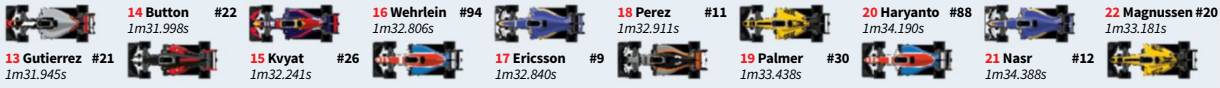
Daniil Kvyat completed his 2000th lap raced in F1 during the Bahrain GP

300

Red Bull driver Daniel Ricciardo notched up his 300th lap holding third place in F1

Lap chart / What happened, when





SEASON STATS

Qualifying 1 Qualifying 2 Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Rosberg	1m31.325s
2	Hamilton	1m31.391s
3	Ricciardo	1m31.403s
4	Vettel	1m31.636s
5	Bottas	1m31.672s
6	Raikkonen	1m31.685s
7	Sainz	1m31.716s
8	Verstappen	1m31.888s
9	Button	1m31.976s
10	Hulkenberg	1m31.976s
11	Grosjean	1m32.005s
12	Massa	1m32.045s
13	Gutierrez	1m32.118s
14	Vandoorne	1m32.472s
15	Kvyat	1m32.559s
16	Wehrlein	1m32.806s
17	Ericsson	1m32.840s
18	Perez	1m32.911s
19	Magnussen	1m33.181s
20	Palmer	1m33.438s
21	Haryanto	1m34.190s
22	Nasr	1m34.388s

WEATHER Dry, dusk. Air: 22C. Track: 28C

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m30.039s
2	Vettel	1m30.409s
3	Rosberg	1m30.535s
4	Raikkonen	1m30.559s
5	Bottas	1m30.931s
6	Ricciardo	1m31.122s
7	Massa	1m31.374s
8	Hulkenberg	1m31.604s
9	Grosjean	1m31.756s
10	Verstappen	1m31.772s
11	Sainz	1m31.816s
12	Vandoorne	1m31.934s
13	Gutierrez	1m31.945s
14	Button	1m31.998s
15	Kvyat	1m32.241s

WEATHER Dry, dusk. Air: 22C. Track: 28C

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m29.493s
2	Rosberg	1m29.570s
3	Vettel	1m30.012s
4	Raikkonen	1m30.244s
5	Ricciardo	1m30.854s
6	Bottas	1m31.153s
7	Massa	1m31.155s
8	Hulkenberg	1m31.620s

WEATHER Dry, dusk. Air: 22C. Track: 28C

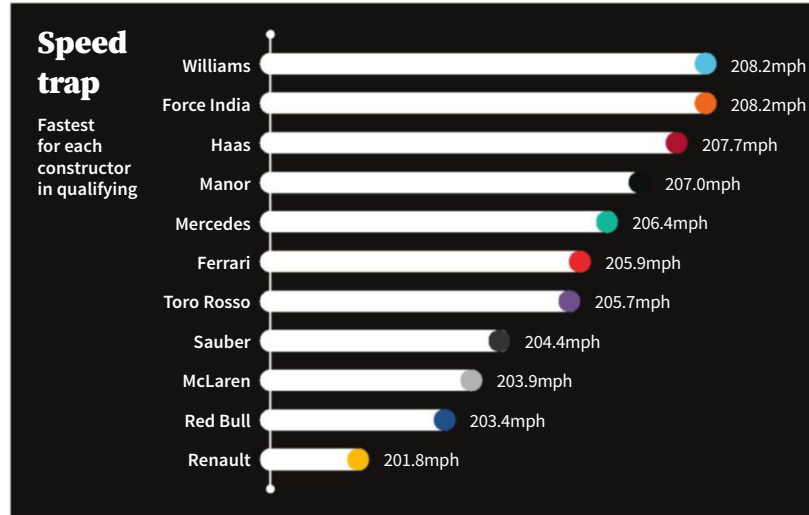
Race briefing

GRID PENALTIES

MAGNUSSEN Started from the pitlane after missing the weighbridge during free practice

RACE PENALTIES

BOTTAS Drive-through penalty for causing a collision with Hamilton



Drivers' championship

1	Rosberg	50
2	Hamilton	33
3	Ricciardo	24
4	Raikkonen	28
5	Grosjean	18
6	Vettel	15
7	Massa	14
8	Verstappen	9
9	Hulkenberg	6
10	Kvyat	6
11	Bottas	6
12	Sainz	2
13	Vandoorne	1
14	Magnussen	0
15	Palmer	0
16	Ericsson	0
17	Perez	0
18	Wehrlein	0
19	Nasr	0
20	Button	0
21	Haryanto	0
22	Gutierrez	0
23	Alonso	0

Constructors' championship

1	Mercedes	83
2	Ferrari	33
3	Red Bull	30
4	Williams	20
5	Haas	18
6	Toro Rosso	11
7	Force India	6
8	McLaren	1
9	Renault	0
10	Sauber	0
11	Manor	0

Wins

Rosberg	2
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Fastest laps

Ricciardo	1
Rosberg	1

Pole positions

Hamilton	2
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Qualifying head-to-head

ROS	0	2	HAM
VET	2	0	RAI
MAS	1	1	BOT
RIC	2	0	KVY
PER	1	1	HUL
MAG	0	2	PAL
VES	2	0	SAI
ERI	2	0	NAS
ALO	1	0	BUT
VAN	1	0	BUT
HAR	1	1	WEH
GRO	2	0	GUTI

Free practice 1 Free practice 2 Free practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Rosberg	1m32.294s
2	Hamilton	1m32.799s
3	Raikkonen	1m34.128s
4	Ricciardo	1m34.461s
5	Kvyat	1m34.541s
6	Hulkenberg	1m34.601s
7	Sainz	1m34.793s
8	Verstappen	1m34.860s
9	Grosjean	1m35.000s
10	Massa	1m35.006s
11	Vettel	1m35.073s
12	Bottas	1m35.174s
13	Gutierrez	1m35.309s
14	Button	1m35.440s
15	Magnussen	1m35.490s
16	Ericsson	1m35.728s
17	Wehrlein	1m36.371s
18	Vandoorne	1m36.392s
19	Nasr	1m36.719s
20	Palmer	1m36.939s
21	Celis	1m37.287s
22	Haryanto	1m37.714s

WEATHER Dry, cloudy, windy. Air: 22C. Track: 31C

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Rosberg	1m31.001s
2	Hamilton	1m31.242s
3	Button	1m32.281s
4	Verstappen	1m32.406s
5	Raikkonen	1m32.452s
6	Vettel	1m32.650s
7	Kvyat	1m32.703s
8	Bottas	1m32.792s
9	Ricciardo	1m32.870s
10	Massa	1m32.873s
11	Vandoorne	1m32.999s
12	Gutierrez	1m33.129s
13	Sainz	1m33.177s
14	Grosjean	1m33.384s
15	Perez	1m33.406s
16	Magnussen	1m33.447s
17	Hulkenberg	1m33.570s
18	Palmer	1m33.640s
19	Wehrlein	1m33.953s
20	Ericsson	1m34.224s
21	Nasr	1m34.477s
22	Haryanto	1m34.562s

WEATHER Dry, dusk, windy. Air: 20C. Track: 24C

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m31.683s
2	Raikkonen	1m31.723s
3	Rosberg	1m32.104s
4	Hamilton	1m32.160s
5	Bottas	1m32.675s
6	Grosjean	1m33.082s
7	Kvyat	1m33.113s
8	Gutierrez	1m33.337s
9	Massa	1m33.363s
10	Ricciardo	1m33.519s
11	Ericsson	1m33.569s
12	Magnussen	1m33.617s
13	Button	1m33.704s
14	Vandoorne	1m33.744s
15	Verstappen	1m33.778s
16	Sainz	1m34.003s
17	Nasr	1m34.013s
18	Hulkenberg	1m34.128s
19	Perez	1m34.281s
20	Palmer	1m34.424s
21	Haryanto	1m35.546s
22	Wehrlein	1m35.724s

WEATHER Dry, sunny. Air: 25C. Track: 36C

NEXT RACE

Chinese Grand Prix
April 17 2016, Shanghai

“Rosberg was nearly faultless”

Each driver's endeavour and success in Bahrain, rated out of 10

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

MERCEDES



8 LEWIS HAMILTON

Hamilton was struggling on Friday, in sector three particularly. The way he recovered to snatch pole, having messed up that sector again in Q3 initially, showed great resolve under pressure.

He loses marks for the fluffed start, but his recovery drive after the Bottas tangle was the best possible.



9 NICO ROSBERG

This was a near-faultless performance from Rosberg. He loses one mark because he couldn't hold on for pole despite having the advantage going into the second Q3 runs.

He made an excellent start to the race and the victory was his to lose once Hamilton and Bottas collided.

FERRARI



8 SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Vettel can only be marked on his qualifying performance, which seemed to be about the best Ferrari could expect, although perhaps he should have made more of his second run in Q3. The gap to Merc was not bridgeable so he wouldn't have been higher than third.

He failed to start owing to engine failure.



8 KIMI RAIKKONEN

Raikkonen equalled his best result since returning to Ferrari with another second place in Bahrain.

He gets marked down for blowing his second Q3 lap at Turn 1 (thanks to insufficient front-tyre preparation) and fluffing the start. Otherwise, he drove very well, and at least gave Mercedes something to think on.

WILLIAMS



7 VALTTERI BOTTAS

The highlight of Bottas's weekend was an impressive sub-1m31s Q2 lap. He went two tenths slower in Q3, but wouldn't have qualified any higher.

He tried to defend the places gained at the start, but ended up clattering into Hamilton. The subsequent drive-through penalty ruined his race.



6 FELIPE MASSA

Handicapped by the late arrival of the new, shorter Williams nose on Saturday and in qualifying he trailed Bottas by 0.002s despite having a theoretical one-tenth advantage via the upgrade.

He started superbly to get up into second place, but a two-stop strategy on the medium tyre was not the way to go.

RED BULL



7 DANIL KVIYAT

Qualifying was a disaster again and Kvyat was mystified he could not match Ricciardo's pace, despite feeling everything was “normal” in the car.

The race was better. He made an alternative strategy work with decisive overtaking, including hunting down both Williams drivers at the end.



9 DANIEL RICCIARDO

Ricciardo revelled in the braking power, stability and slow-turn prowess of the RB12 and used it to good effect. Carlos Sainz Jr thought Ricciardo was “on another planet” in qualifying.

The only blot was tagging Hamilton's Mercedes at Turn 1, which damaged a front wing endplate.

FORCE INDIA



5 SERGIO PEREZ

The car was good enough for the top 10 but Force India mistimed his second Q1 run. He loses marks for being off Hulkenberg on the first run in any case.

His race began well, but a collision with Sainz on lap two spoiled it. Perez tried to stretch to three stops, but lost out to Nasr and Hulkenberg on the last lap.



6 NICO HULKENBERG

Hulkenberg became a hero figure to Grosjean for stealing the final Q3 spot, but he deserves the credit for showing ambition and realising it.

He made a poor start, but damaged his front wing in the first-corner melee. He then ate through tyres in an attempt to recover the lost ground.

RENAULT



8 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Qualifying was irrelevant given the penalty he was hit with for missing the weighbridge on Friday, but he gets marked up for asserting himself over team-mate Palmer.

The Renault was more competitive in the race and he pulled off an aggressive strategy to beat both Saubers and Wehrlein's Manor.



6 JOLYON PALMER

Palmer struggled to find his rhythm at this track and was disappointed to qualify 20th. The 0.257s gap to Magnussen was also too big given Palmer had two runs in Q1.

The British rookie was another whose race was over before it began, thanks to a hydraulic problem that shut down some vital systems.



Grosjean had a superb weekend that ended up with fifth place

TORO ROSSO



9 MAX VERSTAPPEN

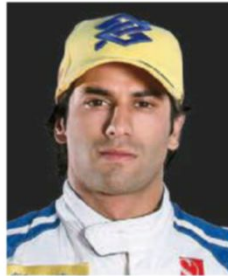
Apologised to Toro Rosso for his antics in Australia and delivered a performance more reminiscent of his rookie season. He lost out to Gutierrez on the first lap, but drove well. He was in a battle with Grosjean for fifth, and charged after the Haas on super-softs at the end, but just ran out of laps.



7 CARLOS SAINZ JR

Sainz was quicker than Verstappen in qualifying, but only in Q1, rather than when it counted in Q2. He lost out to Button and Gutierrez on the first lap, but had just repassed the McLaren when Perez came down the inside and struck his car. He soldiered on for a bit, but decided to retire to save engine mileage.

SAUBER



4 FELIPE NASR

Another tough race for Nasr, who had the same braking and handling problems as he had in Melbourne. He was 0.795s adrift of Ericsson on the first Q1 runs and wants to know why his chassis behaves so differently. He feels he doesn't have a proper weapon to fight with, but the team has found no clear reason.



7 MARCUS ERICSSON

He felt the car was handling well and called his qualifying lap "perfect", although he should have beaten Wehrlein's Manor. Ericsson said he lacked full power for the first three laps but still beat Wehrlein and team-mate Nasr. He used the medium tyre well at the end, but couldn't hold off Magnussen.

McLAREN



7 JENSON BUTTON

Set the third-fastest time in second Friday practice, but loses marks for being slower than his rookie team-mate in qualifying. His loss of rear grip was put down to tyre temperatures. He started the race really well, though, and was tracking Verstappen's Toro Rosso until his engine cut out.



9 STOFFEL VANDOORNE

Deserves huge credit for an accomplished F1 debut, having rushed back from Japan to sub for Alonso without having even tested the car before. Outqualifying Button at the first attempt was a real feather in Vandoorne's cap. The first lap was the only weak point – he was otherwise excellent.

MANOR



5 RIO HARYANTO

Overshadowed by his team-mate. He got ahead in final practice but only by running softer tyres, and a steering rack change before qualifying meant he was up against it. He qualified a second adrift of Wehrlein and was far behind in the race too, but achieved comparable pace over the last two stints.



9 PASCAL WEHRLEIN

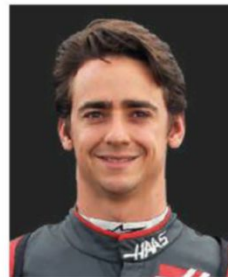
The undoubted star of qualifying, took 16th (Manor's best ever result in a fully dry session) and beat both Renaults and Ericsson's Sauber. He was gutted not to make Q2. Wehrlein struggled with tyre degradation in the race but enjoyed a feisty battle with the two Saubers and Magnussen's Renault.

HAAS



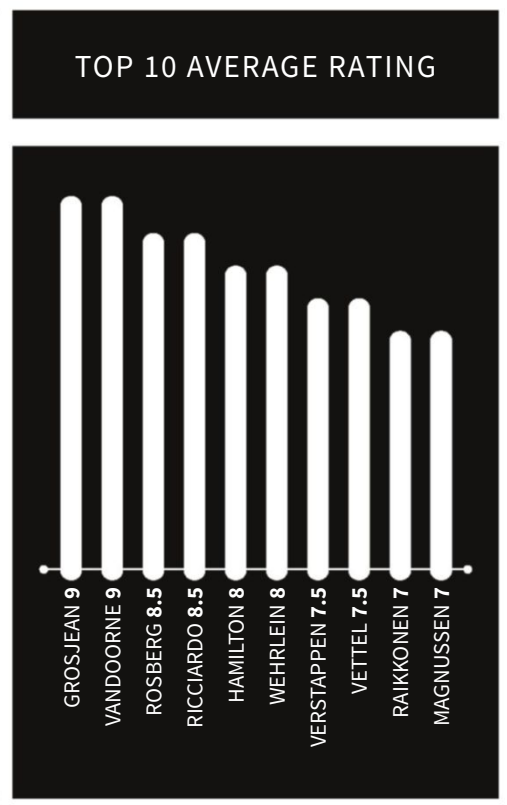
10 ROMAIN GROSJEAN

A flawless weekend for Grosjean, who beat both Toro Rossos in qualifying and took perverse delight in Hulkenberg knocking him out of Q3, which allowed Haas to start on new tyres. He made the most of that advantage to beat both Williams cars and Verstappen, despite a slow final pitstop.



7 ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ

Another case of what might have been, because Gutierrez was forced to retire with a failed front brake disc. He underperformed in qualifying, and was behind both Toro Rossos and Vandoorne's McLaren. He then made up for that on lap one, and wasn't much slower than Grosjean in the race until the car broke.



TEE/LAT



Alonso kept an eye on Vandoorne during the weekend

FORMULA 1

McLaren explains why

FERNANDO ALONSO PROVED TO BE ONE of the surprises of the Bahrain Grand Prix weekend, but not for the reasons he would have hoped. On Thursday, he was deemed by the FIA stewards to be not fit enough to participate as a result of his violent crash in the Australian Grand Prix two weeks earlier.

He had received medical clearance to fly to Bahrain and there was a feeling the odds were in favour of him being able to compete. Nevertheless, McLaren put Stoffel Vandoorne on standby, and although the team decided to let Vandoorne continue with his Super Formula test in Japan, it knew there would be sufficient time to get him to the Middle East if required.

When Alonso reported to the Bahrain circuit's medical centre to undergo assessment by the on-site doctors, those waiting outside for news were in for a long vigil. As a few minutes turned into half an hour and then an hour, it became clear that all was not well. And so it turned out. After 90 minutes, Alonso left and the FIA issued

a statement saying: "Two sets of chest CT scans were compared and it was decided that there was insufficient resolution of the signs to allow him to compete on safety grounds."

Vandoorne was called up, and Alonso carried himself well after the incident. Fielding the majority of the questions in the Thursday press conference, he spoke eloquently about the extent of his injuries and his feelings at being sidelined following a crash for the second time in 13 months. The crash had left him with broken ribs and a pneumothorax (minor lung collapse). But it transpired that the problem was not the pain level but the danger of further lung damage. "The risks are small but we all want zero risk," he said.

Rather than returning home to proceed with his recuperation, Alonso chose to remain and help Vandoorne get up to speed. He spent time talking to the Belgian in the garage after each run, played a role in debriefs and tried to learn as much as he could without being in the car.

On Friday, after practice, McLaren chairman



Australian shunt left Alonso with fractured ribs

S. BLOXHAM/LAT



FIA decreed that Alonso could not compete

it challenged FIA's Alonso call

Ron Dennis took the unusual step of asking the FIA to let Alonso race. That request was declined, and FIA president Jean Todt said there were no grounds for the stance to change as a result of the request because the doctor's decision was final.

In an attempt to explain why McLaren challenged the decision, racing director Eric Boullier told the media at a briefing on Saturday: "It's just a question of double checking. The process is not very clear, to be honest. There is just a will from us to make sure Fernando can race as soon as possible. It is not a question of challenging the FIA or the decision or whatever. It was more the question of making sure."

When asked if the request undermined Vandoorne and the FIA, Dennis – who was also present at the briefing – stepped in.

Over the course of the next five minutes,

“Two sets of doctors in Spain had cleared Alonso”

Dennis explained that two sets of doctors in Spain had cleared Alonso to drive and fly so they were surprised by the FIA's decision, especially as he said Alonso felt good and wanted to drive. He argued that the team should be responsible for judging its driver's fitness, similar to sports like football and hockey.

"We approached the FIA and said if we had a new scan taken this morning and this scan supported the position of the doctors five days later, would they then permit him to drive," he said. "They said no, it doesn't matter what the scan showed, he wouldn't be permitted to drive. We were doing what we felt was appropriate for the team. In the end, we respect the FIA. They've got the decision, yes or no. We live by it."

Former driver Johnny Herbert caused ructions when he said Alonso should retire because his

performance level has dropped. "I know personally you get to a certain point in your career and you start to go downhill," he said. "I don't think Fernando should come back."

Alonso did not take too kindly to those comments. While Herbert was on air in his role as a Sky pundit, Alonso strolled into shot, shook his hand and said: "I will not retire, mate. I was world champion. You ended up as a commentator because you were not a world champion." It was an embarrassing moment.

Alonso later returned home to continue his recovery. It is understood McLaren will have tests carried out in the days before China but it will only do a scan when appropriate to limit the amount of radiation Alonso is exposed to.

It is hoped the additional time out of the car will be enough for him to be fit to race in China. But the team knows the decision now lies in the hands of the Shanghai medical authorities, who will make their judgement next Thursday.

LAWRENCE BARRETTO

BRITISH GRAND PRIX

EGM CALLED OVER SILVERSTONE SALE

TWO VERY DIFFERENT bids for Silverstone will be laid before the membership of circuit owner the British Racing Drivers' Club at an extraordinary meeting today (Thursday).

The EGM has been arranged by the club board to obtain a mandate from members to pursue negotiations with Indian-owned Jaguar Land Rover to take a 249-year lease on the Silverstone site. That bid was countered on Monday night by one from Ginetta Cars boss and former BRDC director Lawrence Tomlinson to take over the Silverstone business.

The board's proposed deal is to lease the site to JLR, which is a subsidiary of Tata Motors, and retain its wholly-owned subsidiary Silverstone Circuits Limited. It believes that the majority of club members "want to retain an involvement in motor racing at Silverstone", according to club chairman John Grant.

It argues that the JLR deal would allow it to reduce its financial vulnerability with a cash injection of £33 million to be made in staged payments, and retain the SCL business.

Tomlinson, who wrote to the club membership last week urging a no vote, believes the JLR deal would result in the club "having to protect rather than promote British motor racing".

He claimed that it would mean the BRDC would "retain all the risks", including servicing its debt and the financial burden of its ongoing deal with Formula One Management to host the British Grand Prix.

He also alleged that JLR's expansion plans would put the circuit at risk and, should the

grand prix be lost, SLC would be unable to diversify its business because it would only have control of the land within the national circuit.

Grant countered these and other arguments in a response to the membership.

"The board has tried to retain the SCL business while reducing the associated risks," he wrote. "The JLR deal would enable us to do this... it is more than enough to settle our debts and commitments."

Grant claimed that Tomlinson's point on JLR's expansion was incorrect, stressing that there would be "legally binding agreements that they will do nothing that would cause destruction of major events".

Tomlinson's deal is for an initial cash injection to match JLR's first payment and involves him taking on Silverstone's liabilities, which with the British GP contract amount to £15-20m. He would then pay £1m annually to lease the site and the SCL business.

The BRDC board has agreed that Tomlinson's proposal can be discussed at the EGM because, said Grant, it was "important for members to have all relevant information to inform their decision".

He explained that an exclusivity agreement with JLR meant that detailed negotiations around the new bid could not take place.

A mandate is still being sought to pursue the JLR deal and a yes vote would mean the board could conclude the sale of the lease without further authorisation from the club membership.

GARY WATKINS

F1's qualifying row continues

The system won't revert to how it was in 2015, but those involved at least agree it must change

A

POLITICAL GAME HAS BEEN PLAYED, WITH qualifying the football that has been kicked around and the Sakhir paddock the arena used for that purpose over the course of the Bahrain Grand Prix.

Following the debut of the much-maligned elimination format in Australia, it appeared certain a return to the old system, in place from 2006-15, would take place. A hastily convened team principals' meeting on Sunday morning in Melbourne led to the suggestion that the knockout set-up would be a one-hit wonder.

Four days later, after a meeting of the Strategy Group and subsequent vote of the F1 Commission, the unanimity that appeared to be in place in Australia – and required from the 26-man F1 Commission – had disappeared.

Despite being given a second chance, the elimination format proved no better in Bahrain, with McLaren team principal Eric Boullier going so far as to suggest it was "worse". The end to Q2 was certainly abysmal; just one car was on track in the final five minutes, with Force India's Nico Hulkenberg ousting Haas's Romain Grosjean from the top eight.

That might not seem too significant, but to give an appreciation of the ill-conceived nature of the format, Grosjean sat in his car wanting Hulkenberg to beat his time. In dropping out of the top eight, not only did it provide him with an extra set of tyres for the race, it also allowed him to plot his own strategy, rather than starting the grand prix on his Q2 tyres. That is one quirk of the system, and it paid dividends for Grosjean as he began the race on a set of new super-softs, providing a launchpad for his superb fifth place.

Off track, despite a meeting of the team principals, FIA president Jean Todt and F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone on Sunday morning, no consensus was reached on a way forward. The problem is that the team principals want to revert to '15, but Todt and Ecclestone are strongly opposed.

They say the elimination system was voted for by the teams, so there is no going back. The teams do not favour retaining this format, nor are they keen on Todt's hybrid proposal whereby Q1 and Q2 retain the knockout element, but with a time tweak, with Q3 using the 2015 set-up. It is understood Mercedes, McLaren and Red Bull were the teams primarily opposed.

So from an entrenched position came the proposal of the aggregate system, where a driver sets two hot laps in each session, and the aggregate time taken. The belief is that a driver has to do six perfect laps to guarantee pole, as any mistake could prove costly. The problem is the aggregate system was briefly used in '05, with one lap conducted on low fuel on Saturday, and the other on Sunday with a race fuel-load. It lasted all of six races before being scrapped.

Whatever the outcome of the latest vote, F1 has again got itself into an unnecessary political pickle.

IAN PARKES



S. BLOXHAM/LAT



ROBORACE

Driverless car revealed

THE AUTONOMOUS CAR THAT WILL BE used in the new Formula E-supporting Roborace series has been unveiled.

A lot of the visible detail is extraneous gadgetry to get the high-tech look that the series organisers were looking for. It appears to be straight off a sci-fi film-set.

Looking beyond the non-functional parts, it is clear there is a race car of quite clever design beneath.

With no driver, there is no need for a cockpit opening and roll structure, so the central core of the car is a long beam, which will presumably contain the electronics to provide the artificial intelligence to guide it around the track.

That said, there is little provision for cooling. The car will still require a substantial battery and electric motor for propulsion, suggesting this design is just a styling concept and not a fully working vehicle.

Aerodynamically, the car sports two key features: the enclosed wheelarches and the shaped underfloor. The pods wrapped around the wheels would serve as a drag-reduction aid and as a 'bumper' for unintended contact with other cars and the barriers.

The suspension – classic pushrod double-wishbone, providing a wide track for low-profile tyres on deeply offset wheels – is fully exposed, as are the inner and outer faces of the wheels, which would be a key source of drag, costing speed and battery energy through the race.

These pods are mounted by apparently superfluous fins with what appear to be ailerons on the trailing edges; these might be mere decals or allude to the "active aero" mentioned in the launch press release.

Wisely, the concept plans to exploit underfloor aero for its downforce. Without a clear view of the rear it's not obvious how this would be achieved, but a shaped ground-effect underbody is formed in the wider floor section under the chassis.

Another key aspect of the car's exterior is the space provided for livery. Without a driver's personality, the car itself will need to provide a degree of individuality to capture fans' attention, while also providing space for commercial branding.

The latter is clearly required for the investment in software developers and hardware to allow the car to qualify and race autonomously. It will have to cope not just with being fast around one lap, but also being strategic when overtaking or defending in a race situation.

While the chassis and aero design is obvious, the detail of powertrain is yet to be revealed. It will clearly be electric, and with what appear to be driveshafts on the front and rear ends, the car may have two motors for four-wheel drive.

The first race is still some way off, but already the prospect of seeing a grid of these machines set off to race around a city centre is exciting – driver or no driver.

CRAIG SCARBOROUGH

IN THE HEADLINES



CELIS MAKES FORMULA 1 DEBUT

Alfonso Celis Jr (above) made his grand prix weekend debut driving for Force India in Friday's first free practice session at the Bahrain Grand Prix. The Mexican replaced Sergio Perez, ending up 21st and five seconds off the pace, admitting a trip through the gravel made him take it easy.

F1 COULD HEAD BACK TO LAS VEGAS

Formula 1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone believes a grand prix in Las Vegas could be on the calendar as early as 2018 after confirming he is in talks with potential promoters for a new street race. Las Vegas staged two grands prix in 1981 and '82, in the car park of the Caesar's Palace casino.

RED BULL HALO ALTERNATIVE TRIED

Daniel Ricciardo and Daniil Kvyat both believe Red Bull's Formula 1 cockpit protection system to be a better design than the halo after recently trialling a mock-up. Ricciardo and Kvyat sat in a demo car complete with a model of the device (see *Autosport*, March 24) at the team's factory in Milton Keynes, giving a positive response.

ABT ACCEPTS BLAME FOR LOST VICTORY

The Abt Audi Sport Formula E team has taken responsibility for Lucas di Grassi being disqualified from victory in last month's Mexico City round. The team accepted it had made a mistake with its weight calculations.

TUNJO MAKES GP3 RACE RETURN

Colombian Oscar Tunjo will return to GP3 with Jenzer Motorsport this year. He won the sprint race in Austria last June at the Red Bull Ring driving for Trident, but dropped out for the final six events of the season.

ROSSITER TO SUB FOR KAFFER IN WEC

James Rossiter will return to the ByKolles privateer LMP1 squad for the opening two rounds of the World Endurance Championship. He will stand in for Pierre Kaffer, who is unavailable because of Audi commitments.

RACING ENGINEERING FAST IN TESTING

Racing Engineering duo Jordan King and Norman Nato topped last week's three-day GP2 test at Jerez. King (below) set a time of 1m24.429s on the morning of day two to end up two-tenths faster than his team-mate.





Q&A

OLYMPIC LEGEND
CHRIS HOY HEADING
TO LE MANS IN 2016



The six-time gold medallist started racing in 2013, and will drive an Algarve Pro Team Ligier in the 24 Hours

How ready are you for Le Mans?

Le Mans has been the goal for the last three years. Each year I hit a stage where things click and I make big progress. I drove the LMP3 at the Le Mans test day last year and felt like a fish out of water. I've got more experience now and I do feel ready.

How different to drive is the LMP2?

I prefer the prototype to something like a GT3. I find them more predictable. If you're driving a prototype on the limit, and correctly, it will do what you want. They move about and dance around, but you feel more connected to it.

Do you feel any pressure?

Yes, but it comes from me, not from what people expect. I'm used to competing at big events, so I'm used to the pressure from the media and the public, but I only feel the pressure from myself to do a good job. I don't want to be gifted a great seat because I'm a cyclist who's won some shiny medals.

Can you use any of your skills from cycling?

Absolutely. Half the fight in sport is mental, and there are skills that are transferable – like how to deal with stress and anxiety. Not getting overawed by situations is a big thing. Everyone has nerves and doubts, but you have to learn to deal with them beforehand and not let them affect your performance.

ROBERT LADBROOK

BGTS

Blancpain GT: the best of sportscars

SOME SAY IT IS THE BEST GT3 championship in the world. Some go further and suggest it offers the finest competition in any GT arena. And some make even bolder claims for the Blancpain GT Series, which kicks off this weekend with round one of its Sprint Cup segment at Misano.

Vincent Vosse, boss of the Belgian WRT Audi squad, might be biased as a frontrunner in the two Blancpain championships – sprint and endurance – but he believes that in 2016 it will offer the most competitive international motor racing anywhere in the world.

“Show me a championship – sportscars, single-seaters, touring cars or whatever – that has a higher number of potential winners,” says the Belgian.

A year ago, when *Autosport* asked whether Blancpain offered the best GT racing in the world, Aston Martin Racing boss John Gaw suggested that the racing lacked purity, which is why it couldn't be mentioned in the same breath as the WEC's GTE Pro class. That, he said, resulted from the number of cars and the high proportion – particularly in what was then known as the Blancpain Endurance Series – of amateur drivers.

Series boss Stephane Ratel referenced

this on the unveiling of the entry lists for the BGTS Sprint and Endurance Cups early last month. Entry lists that have “exceeded his wildest expectations” will bury that argument.

It is not the quantity of entries – 40 for the two one-hour sprints at Misano and 57 for the first three-hour Endurance Cup event on April 24 – that allow him to rebuff such suggestions. Rather it is the number of pro entries in both series, tallies which stand at 31 for sprint and 28 for endurance.

Ratel suggests that if there is a rival to the crown of “best GT series in the world” for BGTS, it is Super GT in Japan.

“You could argue Super GT is as good: particularly in terms of manufacturer support and drivers,” he says. “But you are talking about three manufacturers. We have 11 makes, and nine that are represented by professional line-ups.”

He also points out that Super GT is a two-class series for GT500 and GT300 machinery, the same argument he uses to trump GTE Pro in the WEC.

“The WEC is a prototype championship,” he says. “We are a one-class series: we only have one type of car. That makes our championship purer in terms of GT competition.”

GARY WATKINS



The Soulet/Soucek Bentley is among the frontrunning entries

BLANCPAIN GT LEADING ENTRIES

DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR
Laurens Vanthoor/Frederic Vervisch	WRT	Audi R8 LMS
Will Stevens/Rene Rast	WRT	Audi R8 LMS
Steven Kane/Vincent Abril	M-Sport	Bentley Continental GT3
Maxime Soulet/Andy Soucek	M-Sport	Bentley Continental GT3
Jeroen Bleekemolen/Stefan Rosina	Grasser	Lamborghini Huracan GT3
Alex Buncombe/Mitsunori Takahashi	RJN	Nissan GT-R Nismo GT3
Rob Bell/Alvaro Parente	Garage 59	McLaren 650S GT3
Maximilian Buhk/Dominic Baumann	HTP	Mercedes-AMG GT3
Bernd Schneider/Jules Szymkowiak	HTP	Mercedes-AMG GT3
Felix Rosenqvist/Tristan Vautier	ASP	Mercedes-AMG GT3
Stef Dusseldorp/Nicky Catsburg	Rowe	BMW M6 GT3
Alexander Sims/Phillip Eng	Rowe	BMW M6 GT3

Michelin opted to issue replacement rubber in Argentina



MOTOGP

Michelin tyre trouble

MICHELIN ACKNOWLEDGES THAT IT'S "very challenging couple of days" in Argentina is all part of its return to MotoGP after seven seasons away.

The paddock was full of praise for the French manufacturer following its first race in Qatar, a seamless event with race pace seven seconds faster than the 2015 season opener. That, however, followed three days of testing at the track a fortnight earlier.

The Argentinian Grand Prix was Michelin's first at a venue where it had not tested before – save for a single day with an early incarnation of its tyres following the '15 race – and not aided by the unique characteristics of the Termas de Rio Hondo circuit. The track is rarely used, compared with others on the calendar, and lap times in Friday's first practice session were three seconds slower than those recorded one year earlier, with dust spray still visible in the second session.

With more running, the surface gripped-up on Saturday, but during the fourth practice session – immediately before qualifying – Pramac Ducati rider Scott Redding suffered an apparent tyre failure through the high-speed Turn 6. The British rider was able to safely stop with a tyre that had remained inflated, but chunks of it littered the surface with parts of the Ducati's rear end.

Some of the debris struck Redding on the back and he likened it to "a gun-shot going off". The session was red flagged to clear the circuit, then again later for further

consultation. After a delayed qualifying session, the consensus was that Michelin would withdraw its medium-compound rear tyre, ruling that teams must race on the harder rubber.

Late on Saturday evening, Michelin announced that it would instead issue a fresh supply of medium rubber as the only rear tyres for Sunday, but from a different batch with a stiffer construction. An additional warm-up session was scheduled for Sunday morning so riders could learn the new tyres, but that was abandoned due to rain.

Organisers actioned plans for a flag-to-flag race if the weather was dry, in which riders had to change bikes (and therefore tyres) at the end of either lap nine, 10 or 11, with the race reduced from 25 to 20 laps. Rain held off and the circuit dried sufficiently for other back-up plans to not be called upon, and Michelin has started an investigation into the issue on Redding's bike that started it all.

"This has been a very difficult weekend for us, but it's all part of the learning process," said Piero Teramasso, manager of Michelin's two-wheel motorsport group.

"We have to take all the information and the positives from what was eventually a good race and move forward.

"We now head to Austin, which is again another new track, but we are ready for the task ahead and we will be doing all we can to ensure a safe and competitive race for all."

MITCHELL ADAM

IN THE HEADLINES

MERHI JOINS MANOR LMP2 SQUAD

Ex-Formula 1 driver Roberto Merhi has joined the Manor LMP2 team for an assault on the World Endurance Championship this year. He will share the squad's second ORECA-Nissan 05 with Matt Rao and Richard Bradley.

SCHNEIDER SET FOR FULL GT SEASON

Touring car legend Bernd Schneider will contest a full championship for the first time since retiring from the DTM in 2008 in this year's Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup. The 51-year-old will drive for the HTP Motorsport Mercedes squad alongside Jules Szymkowiak.

RATEL LAUNCHES NEW 'FRENCH' SERIES

A new international GT championship focused on France is to be launched by the Stephane Ratel Organisation in time for next season. SRO, which runs the Blancpain GT Series, has announced plans for a championship that would include five rounds in France and one each in Spain and Portugal. Ratel claims the series has been conceived to prevent the death of GT racing in France.

EVENS AND GIOVINAZZI IN ELMS

GP2 drivers Mitch Evans and Antonio Giovinazzi will make a one-off start in the European Le Mans Series at Silverstone later this month with the Franco-Russian SMP Racing LMP2 team. They will share the Nissan-engined BR Engineering BR01 with Sean Gelael.

MOTOGP EXTENDS RIO HONDO DEAL

MotoGP will continue to race at the Termas de Rio Hondo circuit for the next three years. The Argentinian venue was added to the calendar in 2014, and a three-year contract extension was confirmed last weekend.

CHILTON HITS OUT AT OVAL RIVALRY

Some IndyCar Series drivers "don't give a damn" and show their "stupidity" in short-oval racing, reckons ex-F1 driver Max Chilton. "It favours the stupidity of certain people. I'm new to taking and learning those risks," he said after finishing seventh on his IndyCar oval debut at Phoenix last weekend.

BELL LANDS ANDRETTI SEAT FOR INDY

Townsend Bell will drive Andretti Autosport's fifth entry in the 2016 Indianapolis 500. The 40-year-old has raced intermittently in IndyCar since 2004, with his best result fourth in the 2009 Indy 500.

KANAMARU TOPS FORMULA V8 3.5 TEST

Teo Martin Motorsport driver Yu Kanamaru (below) was quickest in last week's two-day Formula V8 3.5 test at Barcelona. He set a best time of 1m29.571s, just under two tenths faster than Arden Motorsport's Aurelian Panis, who had topped the slower first day.



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FEEDBACK

Why can't F1 admit it got it wrong?

Why are the idiot powers-that-be in Formula 1 incapable of simply saying, 'We got it wrong, qualifying was just fine the way it was, so we'll go back to it' rather than continue to ignore the wishes of the vast majority of teams and, I dare say, the fans who support the sport in the first place?

I loved watching the clock tick down and seeing who could pull a lap out of their hat as they crossed the line at the end of each session. Now we are treated to... absolutely nothing at the end, other than views of drivers strolling down the pitlane. And now they're talking of aggregate times? No thanks. Keep it clean and simple.

Other sports must be rolling on the floor with laughter as they watch (if they watch) F1's inability to make – and stick to – even the simplest decision. Oh, and how are those plans coming along for the technical changes for 2017? Pitiful.

Mac Rand
By email



But the racing's still good...

The Bahrain GP proved one thing: in terms of racing alone, F1 is in fine health.

The furore over the qualifying rules disguises the fact that ultimately when man and machine are left alone to the challenge of one lap against the clock and subsequently a full race distance, then that's when the sport works best. That alone is the essence of racing and any gimmicks designed to mix up grids only create a negative attitude and outcome.

The drivers and stakeholders rightly spoke out over the need to provide a show and with the move to pay-per-view and new regulations on the horizon, F1 should accede to the wishes of its key players and, most importantly, its fans.

Michael Brierley
Stalybridge, Cheshire

...and it's even better in MotoGP

How any motorsport fan cannot appreciate raw, close, exciting, no-compromise competition like MotoGP I fail to understand. Non-political

Qualifying failed to impress once again. Verstappen's sparring Toro Rosso was pretty spectacular, though

and uncomplicated; there is no DRS, downforce, pitwall interference or strategy calls, tyre-changing nonsense or waiting for a better opportunity.

These racers *race* from start to finish flat-out, just as *racing* should be. How can anyone not be impressed with such knife-edge skill on only two wheels?

First race of the year and the first four covered by 2.4 seconds. Last year's championship decided in the final race. Come on Valentino, at 37 is there another championship in you?

Richard Attwood
By email

Red Bull's got safety covered

As a purist, I believe single-seaters should remain open-cockpit. As a realist, cockpit covering is inevitable.

Looking at the Red Bull part-canopy (March 24, page 26), I really hope they consider using this rather than the halo, which makes the cars look like multi-million-pound flipflops.

I know safety trumps aesthetics, but surely the Red Bull version would offer more protection and better visibility overall for a driver anyway.

Michael Skeet
Southampton

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CORRECTION

In last week's WEC testing round-up (P+P, page 19) we said that the Jota-run G-Drive car was a Ligier. It is actually an ORECA 05.

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Change at the top

Nobody, it seems, has a good word to say about how Formula 1 is run, and yet none of the critics are willing to make hard choices

By Ian Parkes, Chief F1 Correspondent

[@ianparkesf1](#)

IT WAS ARGUABLY AS WITHERING A REMARK AS

Jean Todt has delivered during his time in office as FIA president. The issue on the table was the letter from the Grand Prix Drivers Association, which described Formula 1's governance as "obsolete and ill-structured". Formula 1 tsar Bernie Ecclestone, typically lacking subtlety, had suggested the drivers were nothing more than "windbags" doing the bidding of their team principals. Todt delivered his own cutting verdict during a media briefing in Bahrain lasting 68 minutes.

"With all due respect to the drivers," said Todt, "I'm not sure if you ask them how governance works, it would be doubtful they know. Maybe I'm wrong. Unless they have very specific advisors then they don't know what is the governance."

Although the letter was signed by GPDA chairman Alex Wurz and F1 world champions Sebastian Vettel and Jenson Button, the remaining 20 drivers – whether or not they were members – all agreed with its sentiments. Still, Todt may well have a point judging by the response of one well-known driver, who shall remain nameless, when asked who the driver member on the Formula 1 Commission is.

He didn't know. In case you are wondering, it's nine-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Tom Kristensen.

Some of the drivers must at least have a semblance of an idea, because they are right in declaring F1's governance to be poorly structured. Once an oligarchy in which Ecclestone and former FIA president Max Mosley were able to drive through most (if not all) of their desired outcomes, F1 is now more democratic – but too many of the voices are intent on playing political games and serving their own interests rather than working for the good of the sport. The Strategy Group is a case in point.

This body, which comprises Ecclestone, Todt, the 'big five' teams that have a permanent place at the table (Ferrari, Mercedes, Williams, McLaren and Red Bull), and the sixth-placed team from any given season, is intensely disliked. Those teams on the outside are infuriated by having no say in formulating regulations and policy. The counter-argument from those on the inside is that such input would only cloud matters. But even members of teams within the privileged circle have publicly criticised the Strategy Group.

There is certainly a perception that it has failed to implement any meaningful strategy for F1's future. Ecclestone, who it must be said has a vested interest in going back to the old ways, has often claimed that the only thing the Strategy Group ever agrees on is the date of its next meeting.

So why not do away with it altogether? Well, there is one particular reason why – or rather 40 million of them.

As Ecclestone reveals, it is in the FIA's best financial interests for the present arrangements to remain in place.

"I don't think they [the FIA] would [get rid of the Strategy Group] because we pay them 40 million a year to have that group," said Ecclestone.

It is a staggering sum of money, and one wonders whether Todt would give up such an amount for the FIA to become the sole regulator and legislator of F1, as he claims.

"The FIA should have complete control," Todt said during his briefing. That was swiftly followed by the caveat that the current bi-lateral agreements in place with the teams through to 2020 means the FIA's hands are tied.

"We cannot get out of this governance," explained Todt, suggesting that F1 is tied to the present arrangement by the Concorde Agreement, which runs until 2020.

Even as president of the FIA, Todt is currently almost powerless because of the number of other voices that have a say in determining the regulations. In theory the Strategy Group, in which he has input but not a casting vote, formulates and votes on plans that then go forth to that most abstruse of bodies, the Formula 1 Commission, to say yea or nay. The F1 Commission comprises a staggering 26 members,

with Ecclestone as its leader, and it also includes Todt, representatives of the 11 teams, as well as those from various sponsors, such as Rolex, as well as promoters and stakeholders.

Can you imagine a high-ranking official from Coca-Cola sitting on FIFA's executive committee and helping to determine policy simply because it is one of the sponsors of the World Cup? That is the power the man from Rolex has with F1.

If ever there were a particular branch of government ripe for a swathe to be cut through it, for its membership to be slashed by at least half to promote greater efficiency, then it is the F1 Commission. Like many aspects of the sport that have failed to adapt to, or acknowledge, the world in which we now live. This old boys' club needs to be dragged up to date.

But again, wanting change and trying to implement it is incredibly difficult. Todt could, given unanimous agreement, take the situation in hand, but he claims that he is not a dictator, and nor does he want to become one.

That means four more years of political bickering before the Concorde Agreement ends and a change of governance could possibly be made – and how likely is that? 🚩

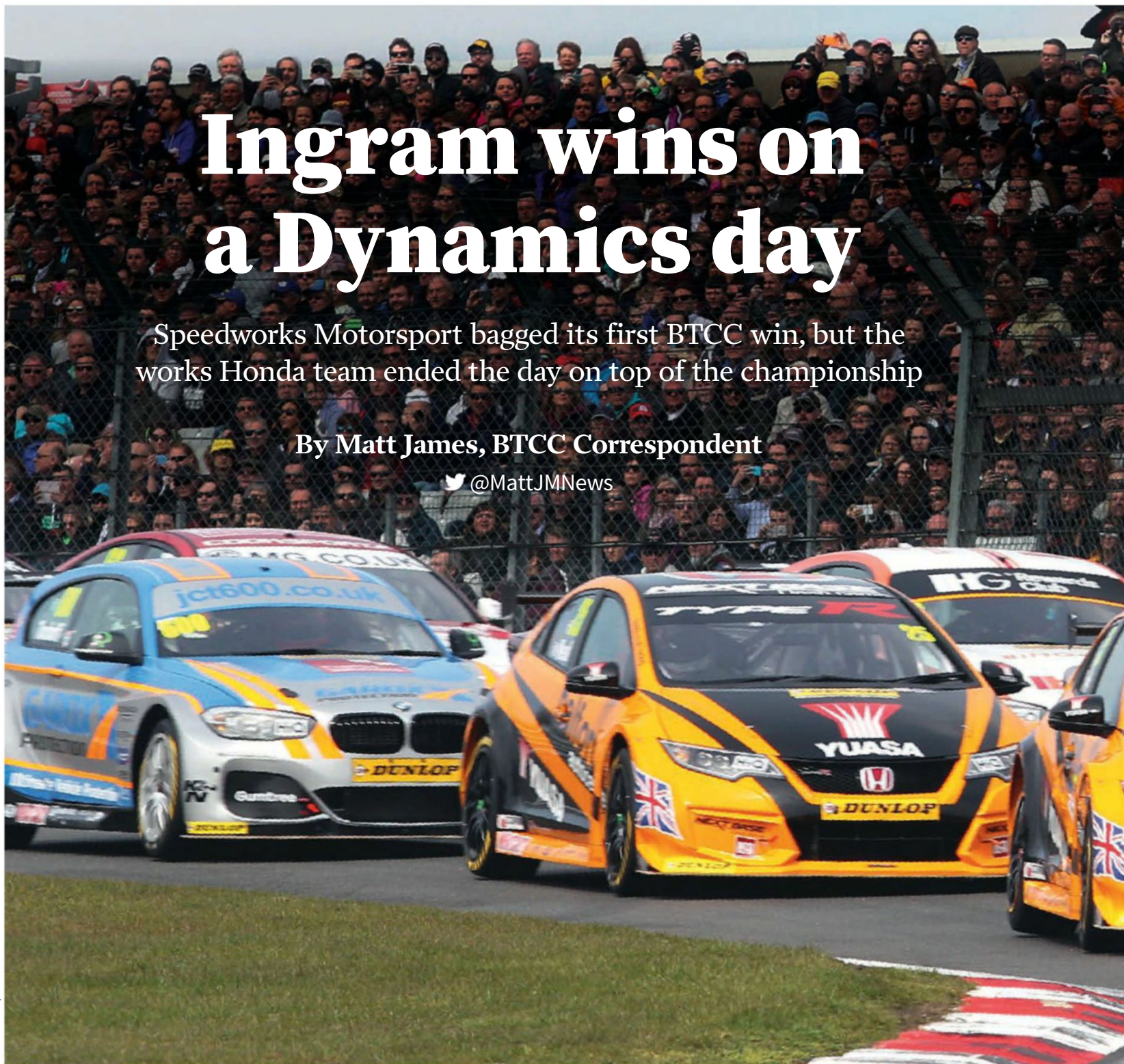
“The old boys’ club needs to be dragged up to date”

Ingram wins on a Dynamics day

Speedworks Motorsport bagged its first BTCC win, but the works Honda team ended the day on top of the championship

By Matt James, BTCC Correspondent

[@MattJMNews](#)



ALL PICS: EBREV/LAT

Seemingly, the more things change in the British Touring Car Championship, the more they stay the same. There were a great many unknowns at Brands Hatch on Sunday, such as new engines, new tyre compounds for the soft rubber and new control parts provided by RML. However, through it all, the factory Honda team walked away from the meeting with first and second in the standings.

There were some interesting subplots though. There was a popular maiden winner in the championship as Tom Ingram prevailed in the Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis in race one – from his career-first pole position – and there was joy for Adam Morgan in the reversed grid race three after a controlled drive.

Still, the day ended up all about the Honda duo of Neal and Shedden. They were still searching for the perfect set-up on the Type-R hatchback throughout free practice and that shows just what a journey these new parts

(subframe, steering and suspension) have been for everyone.

Shedden and Neal trailed Ingram across the line in race one, and then jumped ahead when the leader collided with Rob Collard in race two to cement Shedden's win. Unfortunately, there was a sting in the tail for the fully ballasted reigning champion in race three, when his soft-tyred hatchback picked up a puncture and it fired him into the Paddock Hill gravel trap after 20 laps.

Nonetheless, the mood from the team was upbeat, and Neal – who took fifth in the weekend's reversed grid finale – says

Ingram leads on his way to a first BTCC victory



there is even more to come. That should be worrying for the others.

Neal, who leads the table by five points from Shedden, said: "But this car is a work in progress and we are going to be unrelenting going forwards from here to Donington. We are going to be flat out trying to sort our own ship out really.

"It is so close in qualifying at Brands. Going to Donington with 75 or 66kg of success ballast on board, you are going to be flat out just trying to qualify in to the top 10 potentially. If you don't qualify in the top 10, it will be very hard to race your way into the top 10."

Joint team owner Barry Plowman gave a few more clues as to the areas the Team Dynamics crew will be focusing on.

"We are still having trouble with the heat generation in the engine bay, particularly when we are stopping on the start line," he allowed. "I don't think we could afford to have too many aborted starts this year."

Plowman said that the work done before the season, where Dynamics got its teeth into a proper testing programme for the first time in recent seasons, helped. There was no rush to build a new car as there has been in previous >>



SUBARU'S PROMISING START

LOTS OF ATTENTION HAD BEEN FOCUSED ON the new factory-backed Subaru Levorgs.

They had their first circuit running in a shakedown on the track on Friday afternoon and that was the first time three of them had even fired up. Initially, there were concerns about smoke trailing from the cars during the firing up process, but that was a result of oil getting in to the turbo and was quickly rectified.

Jason Plato, Colin Turkington, team principal Warren Scott and James Cole were basically enjoying a public test at Brands Hatch – although qualifying 11th for Turkington and the Northern Irishman's 12th-placed finish in race three were mighty efforts.

It was a highlight for the team, but just getting the cars to the finish had been the aim.

Plato explained the philosophy: "We are all trying different things in each of the races. It is as much about shutting down the avenues that we think are wrong, and working towards the avenues we think are right. I am excited by the basics of the car, but we have only scratched the surface. It is like we have all the ingredients for a great recipe, but certain flavours are drowning out the others right now. When we get the mixture right, it will be superb."

There was a problem with straight line speed and some temperature issues, but the team boffins are confident these can be solved.

Turkington explained: "The car was actually feeling quite good by the end of the weekend – I am enjoying driving it. More importantly, we know the areas to work on. We found speed in each of the three races. We have gone forwards and I am optimistic. We are all happy with the chassis, and I don't think it will be long before we are knocking on the door [of wins]."





years: early 2016 was all about working with a new engine, the new parts and plenty of test mileage.

“We looked at the situation with the new control parts from RML and we put our own ideas in to where we go set-up wise, and we have tried a lot of things,” said Plowman. “It also helps that we have got two good drivers who are on the pace. It makes it easier because you can go off in two ways with the set-ups and come back to a common point. That is what we did in free practice yesterday – Matt looked a fair bit better than Gordon until we merged set-ups at the end of the day to go in to qualifying, and you saw what Gordon did with it [second place].”

Shedden said he was pleased to get away from what has traditionally been

a bogey circuit for him, and he was looking ahead to venues that suit him better although he had a cautionary tale of his own: “We need to find a bit more engine performance, I will say that. The TOCA motor was very, very strong here at Brands Hatch and I don’t know how we are going to combat that one just yet.”

One man who was happy with the new RML parts and the potency of the TOCA BTCC engine was Ingram. He was imperious on Saturday to land his first pole, and then didn’t put a foot wrong on his way to victory in race one.

“That is a testament to all the work everyone has put in to testing and getting the most from this car,” he beamed.

Those smiles were quickly wiped off his face when he and Collard clashed

Ingram and Collard clashed in race two while battling for the lead of the race...

disputing the lead early on in race two. Perhaps Ingram could have been more circumspect when Collard got inside him on the run up to Druids on lap two, but the result was that Ingram was forced out with damage. A frustrating run from the back of the grid to 17th in race three – when he was also fined £500 for contact with Team Hard Toyota Avensis driver Jake Hill – was a sad end.

The happiest end was reserved for Adam Morgan and the Ciceley Racing Mercedes-Benz. He had plugged away through traffic in qualifying and some damage-inducing incidents in races one and two (ninth and eighth) to land a reversed-grid front-row start for the finale. He had picked the soft tyres, but managed their life brilliantly to land his third career victory.

WSR had a tempestuous weekend, which began when Sam Tordoff and Collard collided in race one in their BMW 125i M Sports. Although Collard finished sixth, there was ill feeling in the garage, and worse was to follow with Collard in race two with Ingram.

For WSR, it all ended on a high with Tordoff and new recruit Jack Goff scoring a two-three in the finale. Even that had been pulled off with a bit of intra-team gnashing of teeth. Team principal Dick Bennetts explains: “Tordoff was hunting down Morgan, but he knew there was no threat from Goff. We had been on the radio to them to tell them not to fight.

Morgan started the day in the lower reaches of the top 10, then won



ALL PICS: EBREVLAT



Then, with a couple of laps to go, Jack got on the radio and told us he thought he was faster. We had a headache there..." Nevertheless, they held station.

Series rookie Ash Sutton stunned in the Triple Eight Racing MG6. He lined up fifth and took fourth in race one – even pulling off a couple of strong overtaking moves along the way – and backed that up with sixth in race two. Nearly stalling at the start of the reverse-grid race thwarted his run.

Team-mate Josh Cook was with him all the way in race one and again in the sequel, only to be caught out by a patch of oil in race two and retire, but there is certainly serious potential here.

Motorbase Performance will have trouble keeping a lid on its driver partnership, given the evidence of the weekend's finale. Andrew Jordan and Mat Jackson cannoned in to each other at the opening corner and that left a bitter taste in the mouth, but Jordan did leave the meeting fifth in the points after a fourth place snatched on the line in the finale.

Leaving the circuit fourth in the points was Aron Smith, in the Team BKR Volkswagen CC. He and the rookie team were superb all weekend. Smith was in the top 10 in qualifying, and landed an seventh, third and an eighth in the races. "That's fabulous when you consider that two weeks before the season, we didn't even know we were going to be here," said the Dubliner. 🌟

...which handed the Hondas a clear run to first and second

RESULTS ROUND 1/10, BRANDS HATCH, APRIL 3, RACE 1 (27 LAPS – 32.613 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Tom Ingram (GB)	Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis	23m44.664s
2	Gordon Shedden (GB)	Honda (Team Dynamics) Honda Civic Type-R	+2.284s
3	Matt Neal (GB)	Honda (Team Dynamics) Honda Civic Type-R	+3.925s
4	Ashley Sutton (GB)	MG (Triple Eight) MG6	+6.070s
5	Josh Cook (GB)	MG (Triple Eight) MG6	+6.423s
6	Rob Collard (GB)	WSRBMW 125i M Sport	+7.908s
7	Aron Smith (IRL)	BKR Volkswagen CC	+10.314s
8	Mat Jackson (GB)	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus	+11.720s
9	Adam Morgan (GB)	Ciceley Racing Mercedes A-Class	+13.495s
10	Jack Goff (GB)	WSRBMW 125i M Sport	+13.615s
11	Andrew Jordan (GB)	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus	+14.596s
12	Aiden Moffat (GB)	Laser Tools Racing Mercedes A-Class	+18.504s
13	Jake Hill (GB)	Team Hard Toyota Avensis	+18.769s
14	Jeff Smith (GB)	Eurotech Racing Honda Civic Type-R	+22.825s
15	Daniel Welch (GB)	Welch Motorsport Proton Gen-2 Persona	+24.456s

16 Sam Tordoff (GB) WSRBMW 125i M Sport, +24.640s; **17** Matt Simpson (GB) Speedworks Motorsport Honda Civic Type-R, +24.953s; **18** Andy Neate (GB) Honda (Team Dynamics) Honda Civic Type-R, +25.157s; **19** Martin Depper (GB) Eurotech Racing Honda Civic Type-R, +28.708s; **20** Michael Epps (GB) Team Hard Toyota Avensis, +29.142s; **21** Jason Plato (GB) Team BMR Subaru Levorg GT, +30.142s; **22** Stewart Lines (GB) Maximum Motorsport Ford Focus, +44.497s; **23** Mark Howard (GB) BKR Volkswagen CC, +49.253s; **24** Chris Smiley (GB) Team Hard Toyota Avensis, -1 lap; **25** James Cole (GB) Team BMR Subaru Levorg GT, -2 laps; **R** Colin Turkington (GB) Team BMR Subaru Levorg GT, 20 laps-damage; **R** Kelvin Fletcher (GB) Power Maxed Racing Chevrolet Cruze, 17 laps-accident; **R** Hunter Abbott (GB) Power Maxed Racing Chevrolet Cruze, 14 laps-accident; **R** Ollie Jackson (GB) AmD Tuning Audi S3, 13 laps-accident; **R** Rob Austin (GB) Handy Motorsport Toyota Avensis, 3 laps-accident; **R** Alex Martin (GB) Team Parker Ford Focus, 2 laps-accident; **R** Warren Scott (GB) Team BMR Subaru Levorg GT, 0 laps-propshaft

Winner's average speed 82.411mph. **Fastest lap** Goff, 48.720s, 89.253mph.

Qualifying 1 Ingram, 47.990s; **2** Shedden, 48.053s; **3** Neal, 48.101s; **4** Tordoff, 48.102s; **5** Sutton, 48.131s; **6** Cook, 48.329s; **7** Morgan, 48.358s; **8** Goff, 48.381s; **9** Jackson, 48.396s; **10** A Smith, 48.442s; **11** Turkington, 48.453s; **12** Collard, 48.473s; **13** J Smith, 48.516s; **14** Jordan, 48.556s; **15** Austin, 48.567s; **16** Depper, 48.620s; **17** Moffat, 48.653s; **18** Neate, 48.673s; **19** Hill, 48.772s; **20** Jackson, 48.884s; **21** Abbott, 48.892s; **22** Martin, 48.952s; **23** Plato, 49.065s; **24** Simpson, 49.078s; **25** Welch, 49.171s; **26** Epps, 49.242s; **27** Scott, 49.318s; **28** Smiley, 49.328s; **29** Cole, 49.403s; **30** Lines, 49.992s; **31** Howard, 50.119s; **32** Fletcher, 50.568s.

RACE 2 (26 LAPS - 31.405 MILES) 1 Shedden, 22m27.048s; **2** Neal, +0.848s; **3** A Smith, +3.132s; **4** Jordan, +4.165s; **5** Jackson, +7.176s; **6** Sutton, +8.647s; **7** Goff, +9.682s; **8** Morgan, +10.076s; **9** Tordoff, +10.395s; **10** J Smith, +10.588s; **11** Moffat, +11.829s; **12** Welch, +17.276s; **13** Plato, +18.462s; **14** Austin, +18.738s; **15** Abbott, +19.036s; **16** Collard, +20.873s; **17** Epps, +21.303s; **18** Simpson, +23.468s; **19** Cole, +23.840s; **20** Turkington, +24.678s; **21** Scott, +29.454s; **22** Depper, +30.440s; **23** Jackson, +30.865s; **24** Martin, +35.224s; **25** Fletcher, +37.381s; **26** Neate, +40.840s; **27** Howard, +45.944s; **28** Smiley, -2 laps; **R** Cook, 22 laps-accident; **R** Hill, 14 laps-fuel pressure sensor **R** Ingram, 2 laps-damage **R** Lines, 2 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 83.931mph. **Fastest lap** Jordan, 49.053s, 88.647mph.

GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1

RACE 3 (27 LAPS - 32.613 MILES) 1 Morgan, 23m49.834s; **2** Tordoff, +0.136s; **3** Goff, +0.449s; **4** Jordan, +3.832s; **5** Neal, +3.869s; **6** Collard, +4.192s; **7** J Smith, +4.195s; **8** A Smith, +5.702s; **9** Moffat, +6.391s; **10** Sutton, +10.862s; **11** Austin, +11.051s; **12** Turkington, +11.482s; **13** Abbott, +11.995s; **14** Cook, +14.512s; **15** Simpson, +15.098s; **16** Plato, +15.513s; **17** Ingram, +15.640s; **18** Cole, +16.124s; **19** Scott, +16.744s; **20** Welch, +17.406s; **21** Epps, +21.854s; **22** Jackson, +22.302s; **23** Hill, +23.947s; **24** Depper, +24.912s; **25** Jackson, +27.308s; **26** Neate, +32.593s; **27** Martin, +40.900s; **28** Lines, +45.226s; **R** Smiley, 23 laps-accident **R** Shedden, 20 laps-accident **R** Fletcher, 1 lap-accident **R** Howard, 0 laps-spin

Winner's average speed 82.112mph.

Fastest lap Morgan, 48.816s, 89.078mph.

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

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Neal, 43; **2** Shedden, 38; **3** Morgan, 37; **4** A Smith, 32; **5** Jordan, 32; **6** Goff, 31; **7** Sutton, 29; **8** Tordoff, 24; **9** Ingram, 23; **10** Collard, 20.

How di Grassi is winning Buemi's title

Victory in Long Beach helped Lucas di Grassi banish the memories of the previous race and revitalised his championship push

By Scott Mitchell, Features Editor

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Three weeks after losing victory and the Formula E points lead in Mexico City, Lucas di Grassi found himself facing a lot of questions in the build-up to Saturday's Long Beach ePrix. But as much as people chased a soundbite, really the only reaction to his Mexico exclusion that mattered was what he did on track. Having fallen 22 points behind Sebastien Buemi, di Grassi's response was key to the prospects of a two-way title fight developing as Formula E heads into the European leg of the season.

"In difficult moments, personality and experience come together," di Grassi mused. "It would have been very easy for me to throw in the towel and say, 'The championship is over, let's just come here for fun'. That's not the way I or the team work. We focused, we kept our mindset on the win."

A sound strategy, but di Grassi himself considered the Mexican race to be a one-off in terms of performance and still believes Buemi's Z.E.15 is better than his own Abt Schaeffler FE01.

Whether Renault e.dams really has a superior package is another question entirely. And at Long Beach, di Grassi reigned supreme. Buemi topped opening practice but Daniel Abt led the German team's charge in FP2, and it was Virgin's Sam Bird who started on pole for the second time this season having inherited top spot from Antonio Felix da Costa (see sidebar).

But di Grassi has rarely had sheer pace this season. He's started on the front row once in six races. Despite that grid disadvantage, his results on the road are three wins, two seconds and a third.

So it was no surprise when, having shadowed Bird in the early stages of the race, he hit the front with a perfectly executed move down the inside at Turn 5. Yes, the British driver's braking misjudgement at that same corner after the mid-race car swaps — one that resulted in the Virgin DSV-01 locking up and gently nosing into the tyres before rejoining in seventh — aided di Grassi's. But he also had to survive a late safety car and a three-lap sprint to the finish, holding off the quietly excellent Stephane Sarrazin.

The championship picture changed a dozen laps into the Long Beach race, because seconds before di Grassi's pass on Bird, Buemi pointed a loaded shotgun squarely at his foot. He had qualified seventh — Renault had fixed an issue on the braking system it believed was responsible for Buemi's lowly qualifying in the last three races, but his lap was conservative and hampered by an upshift problem — and he moved up to sixth with a fine move inside Abt at the final hairpin. But his attempt to repeat the >>

feat on Robin Frijns on lap 12 was the complete opposite in terms of execution and consequence.

Buemi hit the rear and mounted the Andretti Autosport car, breaking its rear wing and splitting his own front wing in two. Both continued – Buemi sixth, behind Abt, and Frijns eighth – but they received mechanical-failure flags within a matter of laps. Their races were over.

Everything about the race in Long Beach embodied the tenacity and consistency that is making di Grassi such an indefatigable title challenger and the occasional irrationality that is hampering Buemi's push.

"It's my fault obviously," Buemi said. "I could have passed him in the braking before at Turn 5, he had a big lift. But I should have waited. I was so much quicker at that point when the tyres started to work, that there was no need to pass him in a tricky place like that.

"Hopefully it's not going to happen again, and I'm sorry for him because he was doing a good race."

Buemi has been majestic at his peak this season but can be as frustrating to watch as he is frustrated with himself. It's difficult to argue that di Grassi's performances after the first six races merit anything other than the title. But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy, because while some think Long Beach lends itself to the idea that Renault has been pegged back, the reality is different.

First, it's important to clarify that Beijing, the start of the campaign, was an illusion. Renault's advantage there was not realistic because that circuit layout suited the characteristics of its set-up/powertrain combination. An advantage does remain but it's not as clear cut.

As mentioned earlier, a superior powertrain is not the same thing as a superior package. Di Grassi described the Z.E.15 as "the perfect car" but pointed out that a powertrain advantage can be countered by traditional racing elements: the driver, the set-up, the strategy.

In Long Beach, Buemi was comfortably quickest in the race. The raw pace is there. But it isn't coming together at the

moment. Niggling braking issues have hindered the Swiss driver in qualifying and it's possible the team has lost its way on how to get the most out of the car in low-speed corners as well.

Looking at the qualifying data from the last three races, the lead Renault is furthest down the timesheets in sectors with many slow-speed corners. It's a limited sample set of data but it does tally with the dip in form over the races in the Americas. There's also the tricky Long Beach layout to consider, because if the Renault's set-up is compromised in any way – and it's worth remembering one-day events do not allow for much intensive analysis during the long-haul phase of the season – the bumps of the legendary Californina track will not have made life easy. Just look at how a slightly perplexed Dragon Racing went from winning in Mexico to the lower reaches of the top 10, or how Mahindra tried new damper settings that fourth-place finisher Nick Heidfeld believes was key to him and Bruno Senna (who finished fifth) securing the team's best ever haul from a single event.

Combine that with a theory that the Long Beach layout favoured those with more gears in their 'boxes (Aguri and Andretti, both with five-speed season-one powertrains, and Mahindra, which has a revised four-speed, all enjoyed their most competitive showing this season), and it could explain why there was no massive advantage for Renault.

Why is that relevant? Because we're out of the long-haul phase. It's naive to think the Z.E.15 powertrain is anything other than fundamentally better than any of its rivals, and probably retains a two- or three-tenth advantage in normal conditions. Now the teams have the chance to strip the cars before the Paris race in three weeks time – an event for which Renault will surely come out in all-out-attack mode.

"The pace was there," Buemi pointed out. "I think we have some small issues going on but it's difficult because you only have one day when you arrive so you can't go into detail, you do the basics.



Frijns lost his rear wing in the assault by Buemi

"I think we need to work on all details to try to find the serenity and the performance. All in all I still think we can do it – we had a fantastic start, now we are having a hard time. But I think we have everything in place to come back."

It's only fair that the final word on Long Beach goes to one team. In Long Beach, redemption was spelled A-b-t. Daniel Abt securing third place, a breakthrough result after a difficult campaign, completed the team's resurgence after its nadir south of the border. The German was perplexed by his error at the end of the Mexican race that cost him fourth place, and understandably delighted to turn that around in America (a year on from claiming pole at the same venue).

Di Grassi was careful not to criticise the team over what happened to him in Mexico – and instead suggested the risk associated with aggressive weight calculations would continue to be taken as he and the team look to withstand the onslaught that will surely come in the European half of the campaign.

"Of course I always can do more," he said. "I can always improve as a driver but yeah the equipment, pace, reliability, pitstop – every race the team has done a fantastic job. We had one mistake which was Mexico, which was not a mistake – we were pushing the limits. Racing is about that.

"We will keep that mindset, we will keep pushing – run close to the weight and try to get any advantage we have. They [Renault] are beatable if they don't do a good job. We can beat them." ❄

Di Grassi (left) and Abt celebrate a double podium for the team





MAUGER/LAT



Antonio Felix da Costa has had a troubled season

DA COSTA'S DIFFICULTIES

ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA'S JOY AT SECURING his first Formula E pole position was short-lived in Long Beach. The Team Aguri driver was forced to start from last after one of his rear tyres was found to be 0.05 bar below the minimum pressure mandated by supplier Michelin, robbing him of a sensational qualifying result.

"I went through a big peak of anger," he admitted. "It's my name on the sheet and it's very painful. Finally I had the chance to compete for a race clean and it got taken away..."

Da Costa has garnered much sympathy of late. He has been one of the star performers of this season, but has little to show for it – the Portuguese is only 12th in the points, but would be in the top six if not for two lost podiums thanks to technical problems. And all this is being achieved with a season-one powertrain.

He was on course to score points in Long Beach after a strong drive through the field, but suffered a wishbone failure in the closing stages.

Aguri can't be blamed for that problem but it is unfortunate for da Costa that his efforts behind the wheel have come to nothing all too often, and the team must shoulder the blame for the tyre-pressure error. Whether it could do more to avoid reliability issues such as the race-ending problems da Costa suffered in Putrajaya and Buenos Aires is debatable.

"The team is going through a big transition," said da Costa in reference to the staff and team-ownership changes the team went through during the winter.

"We're a new team really and only this weekend did we get the people that will be with the team next year. At the moment, all these people coming in and out, mistakes happen.

"I can appreciate all the hard work, that we win together and lose together, but at the end of the day, it's very painful."

RESULTS ROUND 6/10, LONG BEACH (USA), APRIL 2 (41 LAPS - 54.290 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Lucas di Grassi (BR)	Abt Audi Sport Abt Schaeffler FE01	45m11.582s
2	Stephane Sarrazin (F)	Venturi Venturi VM200-FE-01	+0.787s
3	Daniel Abt (D)	Abt Audi Sport Abt Schaeffler FE01	+1.685s
4	Nick Heidfeld (D)	Mahindra Racing Mahindra M2 ELECTRO	+2.343s
5	Bruno Senna (BR)	Mahindra Racing Mahindra M2 ELECTRO	+4.968s
6	Sam Bird (GB)	DS Virgin Racing Virgin DSV-01	+5.229s
7	Jerome d'Ambrosio (B)	Dragon Racing Venturi VM200-FE-01	+6.735s
8	Loic Duval (F)	Dragon Racing Venturi VM200-FE-01	+8.057s
9	Simona de Silvestro (CH)	Andretti Autosport Spark SRT_01E	+10.505s
10	Mike Conway (GB)	Venturi Venturi VM200-FE-01	+10.900s
11	Nicolas Prost (F)	Renault e.dams Renault Z.E.15	+11.205s
12	Oliver Turvey (GB)	NEXTEV TCR NEXTEV TCR 001	+17.417s
13	Jean-Eric Vergne (F)	DS Virgin Racing Virgin DSV-01	-1 lap
14	Salvador Duran (MEX)	Team Aguri Spark SRT_01E	-1 lap
15	Robin Frijns (NL)	Andretti Autosport Spark SRT_01E	-1 lap
16	Sebastien Buemi (CH)	Renault e.dams Renault Z.E.15	-3 laps
R	Antonio Felix da Costa (P)	Team Aguri Spark SRT_01E	33 laps-suspension
R	Nelson Piquet Jr (BR)	NEXTEV TCR NEXTEV TCR 001	32 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 72.077mph. **Fastest lap** Buemi, 57.938s, 82.276mph.

Super pole 1 Bird, 57.261s; 2 di Grassi, 57.270s; 3 Sarrazin, 57.412s; 4 Heidfeld, 57.825s; 5 da Costa.

Qualifying 1 Bird, 56.821s; 2 Heidfeld, 57.129s; 3 di Grassi, 57.131s; 4 Sarrazin, 57.136s; 5 Frijns, 57.145s; 6 Abt, 57.151s; 7 Buemi, 57.189s; 8 Prost, 57.284s; 9 d'Ambrosio, 57.288s; 10 Senna, 57.383s; 11 Vergne, 57.496s; 12 de Silvestro, 57.696s; 13 Turvey, 57.952s; 14 Piquet, 58.015s; 15 Conway, 58.144s; 16 Duran, 58.417s; 17 Duval, 59.049s; 18 da Costa.

Championship 1 di Grassi, 101; 2 Buemi, 100; 3 Bird, 71; 4 d'Ambrosio, 64; 5 Sarrazin, 48; 6 Duval, 48; 7 Heidfeld, 39; 8 Prost, 38; 9 Frijns, 31; 10 Abt, 31.

MAUGER/LAT





Huff leads the opening race, with Lopez in the pack

Huff makes a winning

WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

PAUL RICARD (F)

APRIL 3

ROUND 1/12

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE Jose Maria Lopez?

That was the quandary facing his rivals and, perhaps more significantly, World Touring Car Championship bosses ahead of the start of the 2016 season. Two seasons of domination equalled two drivers' and manufacturers' championships for Lopez and Citroen, and two years of pain for proud engineering companies such as JAS Motorsport and RML – not to mention the reputation of the championship, which inevitably suffered as a procession of C-Elysees regularly swept to podium lockouts.

So a groan must have reverberated around the Paul Ricard paddock when Lopez secured the 15th pole of his WTCC career on the Saturday with a new lap record of Paul Ricard.

But there was a glimmer of hope as Tiago Monteiro managed to split Lopez and Citroen team-mate Yvan Muller for second in qualifying, and while Citroen also won the inaugural MAC3

time trial, which whether by design or accident was an entertaining addition, it was Honda's trio that stole the show on Sunday, kickstarted by Rob Huff's first victory since 2014.

Following changes to the championship's race formats – qualifying now determines the order for the lengthened second race, while the opening race runs with the top 10 from qualifying in reverse order – Huff had been due to start the first encounter from pole. But the exclusion of Thed Bjork, who was sixth on the Volvo S60 Polestar's qualifying debut, for failing a ride-height test instead promoted the Briton to ninth in the qualifying classification, so Lada's Hugo Valente – 10th as a result – then took up the reverse-grid pole.

No matter for Huff, though, who leapt away from the line and raced into the lead at Turn 1, with Citroen privateer Mehdi Bennani taking advantage of a slow getaway from Valente to run second in his Sebastien Loeb Racing C-Elysee.

Not once looking back, Huff stroked his Civic home to victory by 2.184 seconds – a margin that masked the ease with which he won.

It might not have held the same status as a main-race win but Huff, who hadn't been



start for Honda

entirely happy with his Civic 24 hours earlier, wasn't in the mood to nitpick.

"It's fantastic, what a result," he exclaimed gleefully. "To come to a new team and win the first race of the year is brilliant.

"We struggled yesterday. The boys worked tirelessly all night because we had a big vibration and the car was fantastic, it handled beautifully. I can't thank them enough."

Despite being powerless to challenge Huff, Bennani's second was a fine one. And, after Valente succumbed to Norbert Michelisz and Monteiro, he was the only non-Honda in the top four.

Valente stabilised himself to finish fifth, albeit with Lopez, no doubt saving his C-Elysee for the main attraction, on his tail in a subdued sixth. The Argentinian never looked completely on the pace, though he bided his time to pick his way carefully through the pack – and at least fared better than Muller, whose jump start landed him a drive-through penalty that dropped him out of the points.

“To come to a new team and win the first race is brilliant”

Round (race) one to Honda, resoundingly. How would Lopez, starting from pole, respond in the second? Rather well, as it turned out – though he would not escape without a fright.

Often a tame, cagey affair under the previous format when the race was the first of the two events, the 17-lap 'main race' was brought to life by a charging Monteiro, who backed up his qualifying performance with a late-race charge.

Lopez led off the line, with team-mate Muller slotting into second ahead of Monteiro who made a tentative start. The three stayed with each other in the opening laps, before Lopez gradually began to stretch a lead.

Sensing that Lopez was escaping, Monteiro knew he had to pounce on Muller to stand any chance of winning. With half an opportunity at the final corner on lap eight, he dived for the inside.

Smack. Contact forced Muller wide and through went Monteiro, who dragged team-mate Michelisz up to third along the main straight too.

Laying down a number of faster laps, Monteiro reeled in his heavier opponent (Lopez was carrying Citroen's fixed 80kg of ballast), and had caught the C-Elysee by the start of the final lap.

But as had so often been the case over the previous two seasons, Lopez rebuffed his rival's advances to hold on for victory by two tenths.

Michelisz completed the podium as Muller came home a distant fourth, while Nicky Catsburg equalled Lada team-mate Valente's opening race position with a solid run to fifth.

Not to be outdone by team-mate Monteiro, Huff made a remarkable recovery to claim sixth. Caught up in a chain reaction at Turn 1 started by Gabriele Tarquini, Huff recovered, catching and passing Valente on the final tour despite substantial damage to the rear of his Civic.

Lopez may have left France with the title lead, but he will also have been carrying the image of his dominance being properly challenged for the first time since 2014. On the evidence of the opening round, the WTCC's problems are well on their way to being solved.

JACK COZENS

 **P46 FULL RESULTS**



Cassidy leads, as Aron and Stroll go sideways. Amazingly, airborne Eriksson finished ninth

F3 2016 begins with a bang

FORMULA 3 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

PAUL RICARD (F)

APRIL 2-3

ROUND 1/10

THREE DIFFERENT WINNERS, TERRIFIC racing and a smattering of controversy kicked off the European Formula 3 season at Paul Ricard. But much of the weekend centred on a driver who didn't win at all, yet who could – or should – have taken victory in all three races and who left the Provence region with the series lead.

Nick Cassidy, in the eyes of many, gave one win away. He threw away another, and finally came within a missed gearshift of the last, and it was Lance Stroll, Callum Ilott and Maximilian Gunther respectively who benefited.

A win given away?

The controversy centred on the first race. Cassidy, despite being on the damper side of the track, surprised himself by beating poleman Stroll away at the start.

"All winter [in testing] I've had terrible starts but somehow I fluked this one," said the New Zealander. Across the line to start lap two, Stroll wafted past the sister Prema Powerteam car on the run into Turn 1, and from then on held a small gap to take his second European F3 win, setting fastest lap along the way.

It looked to most as though Williams F1 junior Stroll, whose father provides significant funding

to Prema, had benefited from some cooperation from his team-mate. And George Russell, the pundits' tip as the most likely title threat to Prema with the new Hitech squad, certainly pulled no punches after the race.

"I feel sorry for Nick a bit," he said. "To have to give the position up to Lance on the first lap of the first race is bad for the championship. It's a shame if things are going to pan out this way."

Cassidy claimed he had accidentally selected first at the second-gear final turn before the pit straight and that he hadn't got into the groove early enough, to which Russell responded: "He can talk about his mistakes but it's complete and utter rubbish."

Whether it really was team orders, only the folk at Prema know, but the perception had already cast doubt upon Stroll's achievement even before Russell's statement. Which is a great shame, because the Canadian's lap to set pole on a drying track was up there as perhaps the most impressive performance of the weekend. A bit of luck in track positioning meant he crossed the line just 0.2s before the chequered flag, at which point he was fastest. Despite running only one second behind team-mate Gunther on the road, Stroll was able to snatch back a pole that Cassidy held for a mere 10s, even though he lost 0.4s

behind the German in the middle sector.

If 2015 champion Felix Rosenqvist had done this, everyone would have been nodding sagely about what a maestro he was.

A win thrown away

Gunther grabbed a double pole from Russell in the dry second session. But when Russell's car failed to yield the required 1kg of fuel for the sample in post-session scrutineering – Hitech said it fell short by just 100g – he was chucked

to the back of the grid. Arguably at least one win went begging here. Russell had headed impressive rookie team-mate Ben Barnicoat for a Hitech three-four in race one, and the team's form surprised him on a circuit where it hadn't tested and where he hadn't expected to shine. "I'd just be happy with a few good points," he said after he climbed out of what transpired

to be a bereft-of-fuel Dallara.

Russell said his tyres were destroyed by halfway through the opening race, but his pace in the finale – after pitting to replace a front wing damaged by contact on lap one, ironically with Barnicoat – indicated that Hitech was right there. His lap average over the closing stages was faster than anyone else's.

Stroll had failed to get on it quickly enough

“I feel sorry for Nick a bit – it’s a pity if things pan out like this”

Ilott heads Zhou on way to victory



Gunther took his second F3 win



in qualifying on a circuit where the peak of the tyres is relatively brief, and his eighth on the grid left him vulnerable at Turn 1 in race two. The funnelling of the field was exacerbated by the tardy Gunther, who almost stalled at the start; Barnicoat was left with nowhere to go and collected Stroll, who tipped Joel Eriksson up onto two wheels, while Gunther was nerfed into Harrison Newey.

Now Callum Ilott was running second to Cassidy, and here was another story of the weekend. The talented Brit, on his first outing with Van Amersfoort Racing, had watched his car go up in smoke during Thursday's test with a fire that originated in the heat shield. T-Sport kindly leant the Dutch squad its spare ex-Spike Goddard/Julio Moreno weapon, and the VAR boys went almost without sleep as they built up a new car around the naked tub.

As drizzle fell, Ilott was refusing to budge out of Cassidy's mirrors when the leader made a mistake at the flat-out Signes right-hander. "I touched the white line, that put me on the blue lines, and they're covered in marbles. The tyres were really dirty," he said.

Ilott led, while Ferrari junior Guan Yu Zhou took second. A late safety car provided Cassidy with a reprieve and, in a one-lap sprint under increasing rain, he stitched up Motopark's promising F3 debutant with a cracking move.

A race nearly won

No mistakes this time for Gunther, who converted pole and led the last race throughout. Cassidy began to challenge in the closing stages, and entering the final corner he ducked to the

inside. With Cassidy partially alongside, Gunther turned in and the consequent bump knocked him wide. "There was a gap – I think he realised I'd go for it," said Cassidy. "Then there wasn't room and it ended up with me across the kerb to avoid him. I'm not upset about the result, but maybe a little more room would have been nice..."

Gunther took to the runoff, while Cassidy went down to first gear due to the slower speed to get acceleration – "I thought I had it won" – but the wheelspin this induced meant he couldn't grab second until it was too late. He could only smile ruefully at the irony bearing in mind what happened in race one...

Right behind them at the flag was another strong debutant, Motopark driver Eriksson, quick all weekend but falling short by 0.2s in one corner during qualifying. OK, Ilott's stall from third on the grid helped him, but the Swede set fastest lap and passed Ralf Aron and Mikkel Jensen, who was in the mix all weekend but whose Mucke car seemed to lack race pace. Still, Jensen defended fourth superbly from Stroll.

Also in Stroll's mirrors were VAR rookies Anthoine Hubert and Newey, before a late spin for Newey as they battled side by side put a late dampener on a promising weekend.

Add in third on the grid for race one from Red Bull-backed 16-year-old SMP Formula 4 champion Niko Kari and F3 has a lot of potential storylines from its slimline 21-strong field. This season won't just be about Prema.

MARCUS SIMMONS

P46 FULL RESULTS

IN BRIEF

VLN

Phoenix Racing Audi R8 LMS pairing Laurens Vanthoor and Christopher Haase won the VLN season opener on the road, but were demoted to second thanks to a 23-second penalty for a yellow-flag infringement. That gave victory in the four-hour race to the sister car of Frank Stippler and Anders Fjordback. Bern Schneider, Maro Engel, Adam Christodoulou and Manuel Metger were third in the Black Falcon Mercedes.

EUROPEAN TOURING CARS

There was no 'Fulin' around for Czech tin-top ace Petr Fulin as he took a double at Paul Ricard in a SEAT he only drove for the first time in Friday's test. Fulin stalked the Honda of Rene Munnich in the early stages of race one before passing him, while Peter Rikli took third in another Civic. SEAT-driving Kazakh Alexandr Artemyev held on for a spell in the reversed-grid race before Fulin got past, while Rikli won a scrap for second.

FRENCH FORMULA 4

Series sophomore Yifei Ye dominated the opening round at Paul Ricard. The Chinese took pole and beat his predominantly rookie opposition in all four races, albeit by gradually decreasing margins. Second place was taken in each race by Hugo Chevalier, while there was a brace of thirds apiece for American Michael Benyahia and one-off 2015 Ginetta Junior racer Tristan Charpentier.

AUSTRALIAN FORMULA 4

Brenton Grove and Jordan Love shared the Formula 4 wins in Tasmania. Grove won the opening race, his first in the category, after Will Brown and Love were taken out by Nick Rowe. Two second places and a third gave Brown overall honours for the weekend and the series lead.

NASCAR TRUCKS

Kyle Busch beat John Hunter Nemecheck by 0.425s to take his first truck victory at Martinsville. The race went into overtime after a late red flag, but Busch's strength at restarts meant he was not threatened.

MOTO2

Johann Zarco claimed his first win of 2016 in Argentina. Jonas Folger led early, but a mistake let polesitter Sam Lowes through, while Zarco also later found his way past Folger. Lowes led until the 13th of the 24 laps, when Zarco claimed first place. The French rider won by 1.347s from Lowes.

MOTO3

Khairul Idham Pawi became the first Malaysian rider to win a world motorcycle grand prix, in just his third Moto3 start. From seventh on the grid in greasy conditions, he built most of his eventual 26s victory margin in the first half of the race. Jorge Navarro finished second; Adam Norrodin crashed at the final corner, handing Brad Binder third.



Dixon joins legends on winning Ph

INDYCAR SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
APRIL 2
ROUND 2/15

THROUGHOUT ITS LONG HISTORY, PHOENIX International Raceway has been linked with the legends of the sport. The greatest driver in IndyCar history, AJ Foyt, won the inaugural race there in 1964. Since then, the greatest of all time have driven to victory at the 'Jewel of the Desert', including Mario Andretti, Michael Andretti, and Al and Bobby Unser. And let's not forget about Rick Mears, Johnny Rutherford, Gordon Johncock, Bobby Rahal... the list goes on.

So it's only fitting that in the first IndyCar race at Phoenix in 11 years, victory went to the best driver of his generation – and one of the greatest of all time – Scott Dixon.

Dixon dominated last Saturday night's race to score the 39th win of his IndyCar career. If you doubt his claim to the status of a great, that ties him with Al Unser for fourth on the all-time victory list and leaves Dixon just three wins away from Michael Andretti, third in career wins with 42. Mario Andretti is second with 52 and Foyt is at the top of the list with 67.

"It's mind boggling," said Dixon. "The numbers are great, and it sounds a bit strange when you hear the names that you're among on the wins list. I'm obviously very happy and excited about it, and just hope that we can build on it."

Dixon has long been notorious for his slow starts to the season. Although he has twice won the opening round of the season, the last time he won either of the first two races was back in 2008.

Since then, Dixon has usually come out of the blocks slow but built up to hit his stride mid-season. That pattern has often led to him winning the title.

But that trend was bucked at Phoenix. Dixon led a whopping 155 laps of the 250-lap race, which ended under caution after Manor Formula 1 reserve driver Alexander Rossi brushed the wall in Turn 4 with two laps remaining in his Andretti Herta machine.

"It's a good change-up," said Dixon of the different pattern. "This was the first victory at Phoenix for myself and the team, so it's a big milestone. We always say that if we could start the season a little bit better, it would make the end a little bit easier for us.

IndyCar officials chose a rules package for the cars that was high in downforce, and many of the drivers entered the race fearful that the result would be one-groove racing where it would be difficult to pass. That proved to be the case, as all three drivers who led were not passed on-track once they were in front.

Dixon knew he had a fast car at the start and moved his way up from sixth position as pokesitter Helio Castroneves led the first 39 laps of the race. But a cut left-front Firestone tyre forced Castroneves into

the pits. He eventually finished 11th.

"The bizarre thing is I wasn't even pushing," said Castroneves. "I was taking it easy and controlling the lead. I didn't have any indication of vibration and when I went into Turn 1 the car wouldn't turn. Then in Turn 2 the car wouldn't turn and it was too late. By the next lap, the tyre was gone. It was difficult to pass, but I was able to fight back to the top 11."

That put Penske team-mate Juan Pablo Montoya in the lead for the next 56 laps before he was also forced to make an unscheduled stop.

"I picked up a vibration and every time I followed somebody, it kept getting worse and worse," Montoya said. "I passed James Hinchcliffe and the vibration was unbearable and it just blew up completely."

Montoya clawed his way back to ninth, but lost the points lead to team-mate Simon Pagenaud, who finished runner-up to Dixon and ahead of returning team-mate Will Power. After missing the first race of the season, Power is now up to 12th in the points and not giving up on the title.

"It's a long season," said Power. "Obviously for me it's just [about] finishing tonight, and we'll see as the season goes along. Just have fun with it – not really any pressure – and we'll see what happens in the end. I think I can crawl back."

While there was little excitement up front, there was plenty of passing further back in the pack. Ryan Hunter-Reay made some daring



Dixon leads the field home under a caution

Phoenix night

moves at restarts to climb the order, but the Andretti Autosport driver was doomed when he was in the pits twice under cautions.

There were six caution periods, including those caused by Luca Filippi's spin at Turn 2 and Carlos Munoz hitting the wall on the front stretch.

The only multi-car incident was between Josef Newgarden and Charlie Kimball, when the two Americans made contact with each other at Turn 1. They continued, with Newgarden finishing sixth and Kimball 12th.

Sebastien Bourdais was also having a fine run before he crashed at Turn 4 on Lap 146, the same corner that claimed Ed Carpenter late on, leading to the race finishing under caution.

In the pack that took the chequered flag at reduced speed behind the top three, Tony Kanaan was fourth followed by Graham Rahal.

Rookie Max Chilton was impressive in his first IndyCar oval outing with seventh. But this race was all about a driver whose rookie days are long behind him and whose record of achievement shows no signs of trailing off.

Appropriately enough, when Dixon arrived in Victory Lane, it was Foyt who presented the trophy. Even more appropriately, it was the AJ Foyt Trophy being passed from one great to another at this legendary venue.

BRUCE MARTIN

P46 FULL RESULTS



Kaiser took a lights-to-flag victory

Kaiser chief of the Lights

INDY LIGHTS
PHOENIX (USA)
APRIL 2
ROUND 2/11

KYLE KAISER TOOK A COMFORTABLE lights-to-flag victory on his oval-racing debut at Phoenix to make it three different drivers and teams to win in three 2016 races.

The Juncos Racing man stormed to a comfortable 1.3-second lead from pole position over Ed Jones and RC Enerson.

A yellow flag, caused by Hemin Choi spinning at Turn 4, reduced the lead at one-third distance, but Kaiser held the position at the restart to take the chequered flag one second ahead of Jones.

Dean Stoneman also impressed on his

oval debut by beating Andre Negrao to fifth place. But Zach Veach was the most spirited driver, charging through the field from his 16th starting spot to finish eighth on the series' return to Phoenix after a 10-year hiatus.

Reigning European Formula 3 champion Felix Rosenqvist couldn't match his race-winning prowess from St Petersburg – he dropped from 13th to 15th at the start, and finished last on the track, classified ahead of only non-runner Choi.

RESULTS

1 Kyle Kaiser, 90 laps in 36m57.9123s; 2 Ed Jones, +1.0088s; 3 RC Enerson; 4 Santiago Urrutia; 5 Dean Stoneman; 6 Andre Negrao. **Points 1 Kaiser, 81;** 2 Felix Serralles, 63; 3 Felix Rosenqvist, 53; 4 Jones, 50; 5 Enerson, 48; 6 Negrao, 47.

Oriola starts on the double

TCR INTERNATIONAL
BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT (BRN)
APRIL 2-3
ROUND 1/11

PEPE ORIOLA TOOK A CLEAN SWEEP OF victories in the TCR International opener on the Bahrain Grand Prix support bill.

He won't feel too secure leaving Sakhir, though, because even if the Craft Bamboo SEATs maintain the superiority they showed in Bahrain, he faces an intra-team title battle with James Nash.

Craft Bamboo's third driver, Sergey Afanasiev, took pole for Saturday evening's floodlit opener, but Oriola was ahead after a spectacular opening lap.

Only Gianni Morbidelli and his West Coast Honda was able to challenge the Craft Bamboo SEATs, the ex-Formula 1 driver

battling past Afanasiev and Nash for second.

Oriola and Nash had to come through from sixth and eighth on the partially reversed grid in Sunday's second race, and only hit the front late on after some fraught racing with the West Coast Hondas.

Kevin Gleason held on longest, but a clash with team-mate Morbidelli ended both their podium hopes. Stablemate Aku Pellinen was third before a jump-start time penalty handed the spot to Dusan Borkovic.

Reigning champion Stefano Comini's switch to WRT's new Volkswagen programme got off to a tough start, with poor straightline speed costing him pace. He took seventh in the opener despite a clash with Borkovic that skittled the Serbian into Gleason and the other WRT VW of Jean-Karl Vernay, then retired due to another incident in race two.

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Pepe Oriola (SEAT Leon TCR) 10 laps in 22m25.883s; 2 Gianni Morbidelli (Honda Civic TCR), +2.372s; 3 James Nash (SEAT); 4 Sergei Afanasiev (SEAT); 5 Aku Pellinen (Honda); 6 Dusan Borkovic (SEAT).
Race 2 1 Oriola, 10 laps in 22m36.458s; 2 Nash, +1.572s; 3 Borkovic; 4 Davit Kajaia (Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR); 5 Afanasiev; 6 Jordi Oriola (Opel Astra OPC).
Points 1 Oriola, 51; 2 Nash, 36; 3 Borkovic, 27; 4 Afanasiev, 27; 5 Morbidelli, 26; 6 Kajaia, 14.



Oriola beat Morbidelli

XPB IMAGES



Kyle Busch celebrates in style

Kyle Busch back on form

NASCAR SPRINT CUP
MARTINSVILLE (USA)
APRIL 3
ROUND 6/36

THE FIRST FIVE RACES OF KYLE BUSCH'S 2016 season have been solid without being spectacular; a brace of third places the best return from the reigning champion. So to lead 75 per cent of laps in a rampant victory is some way to get a title defence going.

AJ Allmendinger and Kyle Larson finished second and third respectively, while Austin Dillon and Brad Keselowski rounded out the top five. Jimmie Johnson proved unable to really hook up the restarts and subsequently finished ninth.

Matt Kenseth and Kevin Harvick initially looked set to complete the top three after running strongly. However, the fact they both finished outside the top 10 showed

exactly how quickly fortunes can go from good to bad at Martinsville.

Fortunes did change for Team Penske driver and polesitter Joey Logano. He faded throughout, and looks a shadow of the title contender he once was.

RESULTS

1 Kyle Busch (Toyota Camry), 500 laps in 3h17m02s; 2 AJ Allmendinger (Chevrolet SS), +0.663s; 3 Kyle Larson (Chevy); 4 Austin Dillon (Chevy); 5 Brad Keselowski (Ford Fusion); 6 Carl Edwards (Toyota); 7 Brian Vickers (Chevy); 8 Paul Menard (Chevy); 9 Jimmie Johnson (Chevy); 10 Ryan Newman (Chevy). **CHASE GRID 1 Johnson, 2 wins/216 points**; 2 Kevin Harvick, 1/220; 3 Kyle Busch, 1/215; 4 Keselowski, 1/178; 5 Denny Hamlin, 1/172; 6 Edwards, 0/206; 7 Joey Logano, 0/196; 8 A Dillon, 0/176; 9 Kurt Busch, 0/176; 10 Dale Earnhardt Jr, 0/172; 11 Martin Truex Jr, 0/150; 12 Allmendinger, 0/147; 13 Jamie McMurray, 0/143; 14 Matt Kenseth, 0/140; 15 Ryan Blaney, 0/132; 16 Chase Elliott, 0/131.

Van Gisbergen loses out

V8 SUPERCARS
SYMMONS PLAINS (AUS)
APRIL 2-3
ROUND 2/15

SHANE VAN GISBERGEN AND WILL Davison added to the five-strong list of drivers who have won V8 Supercars races in 2016 with victories at Symmons Plains.

After taking a classy win in the first race, van Gisbergen looked set to make it a double on Sunday until sliding off on oil with a handful of laps remaining. In the ensuing drama, reigning champion Mark Winterbottom followed him off the track, allowing both Davison and Craig Lowndes to streak past. Winterbottom recovered to take third but van Gisbergen was stuck, and failed to finish.

To add to the Triple Eight Red Bull team's woes, team-mate Jamie Whincup, who followed him home for second on Saturday, had already been off the road and was at the back of the field.

Davison's speed was no fluke. He finished third in the opening race and would have started the second from pole, had he not been penalised for baulking another car in qualifying. The win was a big boost to Tekno Autosports, which split with team manager Steve Hallam earlier in the week.

Rick Kelly and Scott McLaughlin each bagged a fourth place, although both also had one bad race, suffering brake and engine problems respectively. Chaz Mostert (Ford) and Garth Tander (Holden) both scored top-six finishes.

PHIL BRANAGAN

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden Commodore), 50 laps in 44m25.1871s; 2 Jamie Whincup (Holden), +0.9388s; 3 Will Davison (Holden); 4 Rick Kelly (Nissan Altima); 5 Craig Lowndes (Holden); 6 Jason Bright (Holden). **Final 2 1 W Davison**, 84 laps in 1h20m51.7031s; 2 Lowndes, +2.5702s; 3 Mark Winterbottom (Ford Falcon FG/X); 4 Scott McLaughlin (Volvo S60); 5 Chaz Mostert (Ford); 6 Garth Tander (Holden). **Points 1 1 W Davison, 417**; 2 Lowndes, 402; 3 Whincup, 393; 4 Winterbottom, 378; 5 Tander, 361; 6 James Courtney, 348.



Van Gisbergen won race one



Marc makes

MOTOGP
RIO HONDO (RA)
APRIL 3
ROUND 2/18

IF YOU EVER WANTED TO ILLUSTRATE A motorsport weekend "with a bit of everything", the second round of the 2016 MotoGP season in Argentina is probably a decent place to start.

In roughly chronological order, the weekend was defined by a circuit initially devoid of grip, a recovery from a struggling world champion whose race later finished with a rare fall, rule changes shaped by tyre problems and the threat of rain, a fight for the lead between two fierce rivals, bike changes, missed opportunities, team-mates colliding on the final lap and the winner falling over on the podium.

Little wonder that even before Sunday, when he won at Termas de Rio Hondo to take an unexpected championship lead, Marc Marquez had described proceedings as "strange".

On an extremely dirty circuit, last used in December, Honda set the pace in practice on Friday, as Jorge Lorenzo languished in 12th place. World champion Lorenzo regrouped to qualify on the front row of the grid alongside polesitter Marquez – who went off track three times in qualifying, including a sizeable turn-one crash – and Yamaha team-mate Valentino Rossi.

Lorenzo was supreme when it mattered in Qatar a fortnight ago, and there was an element of, "here he goes again" when he took the lead off



Marquez kept calm while others flapped

his mark in dramatic MotoGP race

the line, but it was short-lived. Overnight rain had again stripped the circuit of grip and Lorenzo never looked comfortable. He relinquished top spot on the first lap then fell down, out of and well behind the lead pack before crashing out of the race on the sixth lap.

That left Marquez and Rossi to fight it out, at the scene of their 2015 battle that started the feud that engulfed MotoGP last year, and still looms large. The pair slugged it out with Rossi sneaking past twice, but only for mere seconds.

For the first time since the Australian Grand Prix in 2013, a bike swap was mandated due to concerns over Michelin's rear tyres (see Pit & Paddock). When they headed to pitlane at the end of lap 10 in the shortened 20-lap race, Rossi was so close that he probably could have reached out and touched Marquez, if he wanted.

Marquez literally leapt onto his next bike – something Rossi joked he was too old to do – and gained a slight edge. He emerged with Tito Rabat, yet to stop, between himself and Rossi. That gave Marquez some breathing space and as Rossi struggled on his second bike, he pulled away by nearly three seconds on the first lap alone.

By the end of the race he was nearly eight seconds up, and duly took his first win of the year, before taking a tumble as he climbed onto the top step of the podium.

"I did my jump from one bike to the other one, maybe only gained half a second, one second, but on the track it is hard to gain one second," Marquez said of his somewhat

acrobatic bike swap. "With the first bike I tried to manage the rhythm of the race, because with bike number one I didn't feel good, but with the second one, I said, 'OK, now I will push 100 per cent'.

"When I went out from the box I did the fastest lap, and it was enough to open the gap."

Honda struggled massively during winter with the switch to control electronics, and still loses time accelerating. Somehow, Marquez leads the championship, admittedly after only two races, by eight points over Rossi.

"If you said to me, 'you would lead the championship' in February, when we were in Malaysia [for the first pre-season test], I would say to you, 'you are crazy,'" he admitted.

Rossi was puzzled that "for some reason with the second bike, especially with the second set of tyres, I didn't feel good". He finished second but really should not have, having been reeled in by Suzuki's Maverick Vinales and then Ducati pair Andrea Iannone and Andrea Dovizioso.

Vinales caught a wet patch at Turn 1 with three laps to go and crashed out as he sought his maiden MotoGP podium, two laps before the Ducatis found their way past Rossi, even if Iannone's initial attempt at the end of the back straight opened the door for his team-mate to sweep past them both and into second.

With the chequered flag in sight, Iannone then committed motorsport's cardinal sin. He ploughed into his team-mate, skittling both Ducatis. Dovizioso picked up his bike and ran it

over the line in 13th; Iannone didn't even bother and has been handed a three-place grid drop.

If the resultant podium finish for Rossi was unexpected, it's no wonder Dani Pedrosa called it his "luckiest day". Pedrosa was forced wide at the first corner by Iannone and was running 20 seconds behind the lead pack, without a great deal of pace, but inherited third.

Even beyond Vinales and Ducati's two Andreas, Pedrosa's position could have gone to a host of other, mostly satellite, riders. Cal Crutchlow was seventh when he fell on lap two, but still just about got back into the top 10 before crashing again close to home. Jack Miller was flying early and had moved from 15th up to sixth before exceeding the limit at Turn 1.

Scott Redding was also delayed early but fought his way back to pass Pedrosa and be pulling away from the Spaniard before losing power with five laps to go. That meant Pol Espargaro and Hector Barbera started the final lap behind Pedrosa, in sixth and seventh, but they left the road at Turn 10 and lost time when Barbera attempted a move.

So, it was Eugene Laverty who led the way for the satellite brigade in fourth place, easily eclipsing his previous best MotoGP result of 12th. The Irish rider started 17th and kept his nose clean, and was eighth at the start of the final lap. It was that sort of day and weekend.

MITCHELL ADAM

 P47 FULL RESULTS

RESULTS ROUND-UP

WTCC

ROUND 1/12, PAUL RICARD (F), APRIL 3

RACE 1 (16 LAPS – 38.187 MILES)

1	Rob Huff (GB) Honda Racing Team JAS Honda Civic WTCC	24m26.764s
2	Mehdi Bennani (MA) Sebastien Loeb Racing Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+2.184s
3	Norbert Michelisz (H) Honda Racing Team JAS Honda Civic WTCC	+6.737s
4	Tiago Monteiro (P) Honda Racing Team JAS Honda Civic WTCC	+7.911s
5	Hugo Valente (F) Lada Sport Lada Vesta WTCC	+12.554s
6	Jose Maria Lopez (RA) Citroen Total Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+12.955s
7	Thed Bjork (S) Polestar Cyan Racing Volvo S60 WTCC	+22.162s
8	Nicky Catsburg (NL) Lada Sport Lada Vesta WTCC	+23.708s
9	Tom Coronel (NL) ROAL Motorsport Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+24.892s
10	Gregoire Demoustier (F) Sebastien Loeb Racing Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+25.738s
11	Tom Chilton (GB) Sebastien Loeb Racing Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+26.249s
12	John Filippi (F) Campos Racing Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+26.908s
13	Yvan Muller (F) Citroen Total Citroen C-Elysee WTCC	+40.095s
14	Rene Munnich (D) Munnich Motorsport Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1	+42.417s
R	Gabriele Tarquini (I) Lada Sport Lada Vesta WTCC	6 laps-suspension
NC	Fredrik Ekblom (S) Polestar Cyan Racing Volvo S60 WTCC	6 laps-suspension
W	Ferenc Ficzá (H) Zengo Motorsport Honda Civic WTCC	0 laps
W	Daniel Nagy (H) Zengo Motorsport Honda Civic WTCC	0 laps

Winner's average speed 93.725mph.

Fastest lap Huff, 1m30.455s, 94.987mph.

QUALIFYING 3

1 Lopez, 1m28.950s; 2 Monteiro, 1m29.213s; 3 Muller, 1m29.262s; 4 Coronel, no time; 5 Catsburg, no time.

QUALIFYING 2

1 Muller, 1m29.263s; 2 Lopez, 1m29.434s; 3 Monteiro, 1m29.550s; 4 Coronel, 1m29.625s; 5 Catsburg, 1m29.669s; 6 Michelisz, 1m29.958s; 7 Bennani, 1m30.021s; 8 Ekblom, 1m30.221s; 9 Huff, 1m30.576s; 10 Valente, 1m30.612s; 11 Tarquini, 1m30.875s; 16 Bjork, 1m29.733s*.

* Excluded from qualifying.

QUALIFYING 1

1 Lopez, 1m29.345s; 2 Catsburg, 1m29.457s; 3 Muller, 1m29.765s; 4 Monteiro, 1m29.766s; 5 Tarquini, 1m29.900s; 6 Bennani, 1m29.967s; 7 Coronel, 1m29.991s; 8 Huff, 1m30.010s; 9 Ekblom, 1m30.109s; 10 Valente, 1m30.194s; 11 Michelisz, 1m30.208s; 12 Chilton, 1m30.315s; 13 Demoustier, 1m30.620s; 14 Filippi, 1m30.985s; 15 Munnich, 1m31.749s; 16 Bjork, 1m29.589s*.

* Excluded from qualifying.

RACE 2 (17 LAPS – 40.574 MILES)

1 Lopez, 25m53.030s; 2 Monteiro, +0.284s; 3 Michelisz, +3.111s; 4 Muller, +8.652s; 5 Catsburg, +9.814s; 6 Huff, +19.934s; 7 Valente, +21.792s; 8 Bennani, +22.130s; 9 Chilton, +22.389s; 10 Ekblom, +27.554s; 11 Coronel, +32.142s; 12 Filippi, +32.166s; 13 Demoustier, +35.629s; R Tarquini, 9 laps-accident damage; R Munnich, 5 laps-mechanical; R Bjork, 2 laps-electrical.

Winner's average speed 94.051mph.

Fastest lap Muller, 1m30.762s, 94.666mph.

GRID FOR RACE 1

Decided by qualifying, but with the top 10 reversed.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Lopez, 38; 2 Monteiro, 34; 3 Huff, 33; 4 Michelisz, 30; 5 Bennani, 22; 6 Valente, 16; 7 Catsburg, 15; 8 Muller, 15; 9 Bjork, 6; 10 Coronel, 4.



Muller and Monteiro's race-two battle ended with the pair clashing

EUROPEAN F3

ROUND 1/10, PAUL RICARD (F), APRIL 2-3

RACE 1 (25 LAPS – 59.667 MILES)

1	Lance Stroll (CDN) Prema Powerteam Dallara-Mercedes F316	34m39.947s
2	Nick Cassidy (NZ) Prema Powerteam Dallara-Mercedes F314	+0.769s
3	George Russell (GB) Hitech Grand Prix Dallara-Mercedes F315	+6.983s
4	Ben Barnicoat (GB) Hitech Grand Prix Dallara-Mercedes F316	+8.615s
5	Maximilian Gunther (D) Prema Powerteam Dallara-Mercedes F315	+9.202s
6	Joel Eriksson (S) Motopark Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+13.040s
7	Ralf Aron (EST) Prema Powerteam Dallara-Mercedes F315	+13.453s
8	Niko Kari (FIN) Motopark Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+16.613s
9	Harrison Newey (GB) Van Amersfoort Racing Dallara-Mercedes F316	+19.159s
10	Callum Ilott (GB) Van Amersfoort Racing Dallara-Mercedes F312	+19.718s
11	Pedro Piquet (BR) Van Amersfoort Racing Dallara-Mercedes F316	+20.747s
12	Alessio Lorandi (I) Carlin Dallara-Volkswagen F312	+20.967s
13	Mikkel Jensen (DK) Mücke Motorsport Dallara-Mercedes F316	+24.008s
14	Guan Yu Zhou (PRC) Motopark Dallara-Volkswagen F314	+24.465s
15	Ryan Tveter (USA) Carlin Dallara-Volkswagen F316	+27.726s
16	Sergio Sette Camara (BR) Motopark Dallara-Volkswagen F314	+34.218s
17	Anthoine Hubert (F) Van Amersfoort Racing Dallara-Mercedes F314	+34.428s
18	Raoul Hyman (ZA) Carlin Dallara-Volkswagen F315	+36.478s
19	Nikita Mazepin (RUS) Hitech Grand Prix Dallara-Mercedes F315	+45.829s
20	Li Zhi Cong (PRC) Carlin Dallara-Volkswagen F314	+53.879s
R	Arjun Maini (IND) T-Sport Dallara-ThreeBond F316	7 laps-plastic bag/overheating

Winner's average speed 103.273mph.

Fastest lap Stroll, 1m22.271s, 104.436mph.

QUALIFYING 1

1 Stroll, 1m24.218s; 2 Cassidy, 1m24.299s; 3 Kari, 1m24.466s; 4 Russell, 1m24.489s; 5 Barnicoat, 1m24.545s; 6 Jensen, 1m24.574s; 7 Sette Camara, 1m24.593s; 8 Gunther, 1m24.629s; 9 Eriksson, 1m24.681s; 10 Lorandi, 1m24.884s; 11 Aron, 1m24.938s; 12 Newey, 1m25.026s; 13 Hubert, 1m25.067s; 14 Hyman, 1m25.113s; 15 Piquet, 1m25.119s; 16 Zhou, 1m25.148s; 17 Tveter, 1m25.198s; 18 Mazepin, 1m25.737s; 19 Maini, 1m25.950s; 20 Li, 1m28.098s; 21 Ilott, 1m25.394s*.

* Grid penalty.

RACE 2 (23 LAPS – 54.894 MILES)

1 Ilott, 35m14.289s; 2 Cassidy, +1.247s; 3 Zhou, +1.840s; 4 Jensen, +2.461s; 5 Sette Camara, +4.408s; 6 Lorandi, +4.534s; 7 Tveter, +5.094s; 8 Hubert, +5.098s; 9 Eriksson, +5.222s; 10 Hyman, +5.669s; 11 Russell, +5.845s; 12 Mazepin, +6.855s; 13 Maini, +7.620s; 14 Piquet, +9.762s; 15 Li, +15.533s; 16 Kari, +18.238s; R Aron, 18 laps-lost wheel; R Stroll, 1 lap-accident damage; R Gunther, 0 laps-accident; R Barnicoat, 0 laps-accident; R Newey, 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 93.467mph.

Fastest lap Cassidy, 1m22.230s, 104.488mph.

QUALIFYING 2

1 Gunther, 1m20.881s; 2 Cassidy, 1m20.983s; 3 Jensen, 1m21.035s; 4 Aron, 1m21.164s; 5 Eriksson, 1m21.167s; 6 Ilott, 1m21.177s; 7 Barnicoat, 1m21.207s; 8 Stroll, 1m21.251s; 9 Hubert, 1m21.436s; 10 Newey, 1m21.603s; 11 Sette Camara, 1m21.623s; 12 Mazepin, 1m21.623s; 13 Zhou, 1m21.816s; 14 Lorandi, 1m21.843s; 15 Kari, 1m21.876s; 16 Hyman, 1m21.915s; 17 Tveter, 1m22.204s; 18 Piquet, 1m22.643s; 19 Li, 1m23.037s; 20 Maini, 1m22.453s*; 21 Russell, 1m20.898s**.

* Grid penalty.

** Excluded from qualifying.

RACE 3 (25 LAPS – 59.667 MILES)

1 Gunther, 34m25.863s; 2 Cassidy, +0.251s; 3 Eriksson, +1.312s; 4 Jensen, +10.128s; 5 Stroll, +10.827s; 6 Hubert, +11.062s; 7 Aron, +13.574s; 8 Zhou, +14.300s; 9 Lorandi, +17.326s; 10 Mazepin, +20.103s; 11 Barnicoat, +21.664s; 12 Ilott, +22.546s; 13 Hyman, +22.798s; 14 Newey, +26.584s; 15 Kari, +29.884s; 16 Maini, +32.971s; 17 Li, +42.422s; 18 Russell, +1m06.659s; 19 Sette Camara, 23 laps-front wing; R Tveter, 20 laps-steering; R Piquet, 2 laps-suspension.

Winner's average speed 103.977mph.

Fastest lap Eriksson, 1m21.740s, 105.114mph.

GRID FOR RACE 3

1 Gunther; 2 Cassidy; 3 Ilott; 4 Jensen; 5 Aron; 6 Stroll; 7 Eriksson; 8 Hubert; 9 Newey; 10 Sette Camara; 11 Barnicoat; 12 Mazepin; 13 Zhou; 14 Lorandi; 15 Hyman; 16 Kari; 17 Tveter; 18 Maini; 19 Piquet; 20 Li; 21 Russell.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Cassidy, 54; 2= Stroll & Gunther, 35; 4 Ilott, 26; 5 Eriksson, 25; 6 Jensen, 24; 7 Zhou, 19; 8 Russell, 15; 9 Barnicoat, 12; 10 Hubert, 12.

Dixon celebrates his first Phoenix IndyCar victory



LePAGE/LAT

INDYCAR

ROUND 2/15, PHOENIX (USA), APRIL 2 (250 LAPS - 255.500 MILES)

1	Scott Dixon (NZ) <i>Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	1h49m38.3855s
2	Simon Pagenaud (F) <i>Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+0.6825s
3	Will Power (AUS) <i>Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+1.7264s
4	Tony Kanaan (BR) <i>Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+1.9589s
5	Graham Rahal (USA) <i>Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Dallara-Honda</i>	+2.5272s
6	Josef Newgarden (USA) <i>Ed Carpenter Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+2.7457s
7	Max Chilton (GB) <i>Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+2.9914s
8	Sebastien Bourdais (F) <i>KVSH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+3.9491s
9	Juan Pablo Montoya (CO) <i>Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+4.4548s
10	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA) <i>Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda</i>	+5.2143s
11	Helio Castroneves (BR) <i>Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+8.0324s
12	Charlie Kimball (USA) <i>Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	+9.3366s
13	Marco Andretti (USA) <i>Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda</i>	+10.0918s
14	Alexander Rossi (USA) <i>Andretti Herta Autosport Dallara-Honda</i>	+13.0555s
15	Takuma Sato (J) <i>AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda</i>	-1 lap
16	Conor Daly (USA) <i>Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda</i>	-1 lap
17	Mikhail Aleshin (RUS) <i>Schmidt Peterson Motorsports Dallara-Honda</i>	-2 laps
18	James Hinchcliffe (CDN) <i>Schmidt Peterson Motorsports Dallara-Honda</i>	-2 laps
19	Jack Hawksworth (GB) <i>AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda</i>	-4 laps
20	Luca Filippi (I) <i>Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda</i>	-7 laps
21	Ed Carpenter (USA) <i>Ed Carpenter Racing Dallara-Chevrolet</i>	195 laps-accident
22	Carlos Munoz (CO) <i>Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda</i>	116 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 139.821mph.

Fastest lap Kanaan, 19.7379s, 186.403mph.

QUALIFYING

1 **Castoneves**, 192.324mph; 2 **Kanaan**, 191.511mph; 3 **Montoya**, 191.366mph; 4 **Kimball**, 191.220mph; 5 **Carpenter**, 190.780mph; 6 **Dixon**, 190.376mph; 7 **Newgarden**, 190.094mph; 8 **Chilton**, 189.972mph; 9 **Power**, 189.749mph; 10 **Pagenaud**, 189.654mph; 11 **Andretti**, 189.071mph; 12 **Hunter-Reay**, 188.966mph; 13 **Aleshin**, 187.998mph; 14 **Rossi**, 168.939mph; 15 **Bourdais**, 186.544mph; 16 **Filippi**, 185.514mph; 17 **Hawksworth**, 185.046mph; 18 **Daly**, 184.261mph; 19 **Rahal**, 179.770mph; 20 **Sato**, no time; 21 **Munoz**, no time; 22 **Hinchcliffe**, no time.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 **Pagenaud**, 83; 2 **Dixon**, 79; 3 **Montoya**, 74; 4 **Hunter-Reay**, 56; 5 **Kanaan**, 54; 6 **Castroneves**, 53; 7 **Rahal**, 44; 8 **Aleshin**, 43; 9 **Sato**, 43; 10 **Chilton**, 39.

MOTOGP

ROUND 2/18, TERMAS DE RIO HONDO, APRIL 3 (20 LAPS - 59.726 MILES)

1	Marc Marquez (E) <i>Honda</i>	34m13.628s
2	Valentino Rossi (I) <i>Yamaha</i>	+7.679s
3	Daniel Pedrosa (E) <i>Honda</i>	+28.100s
4	Eugene Laverty (IRL) <i>Aspar Ducati</i>	+36.542s
5	Hector Barbera (E) <i>Avintia Ducati</i>	+36.711s
6	Pol Espargaro (E) <i>Tech3 Yamaha</i>	+37.245s
7	Stefan Bradl (D) <i>Aprilia</i>	+41.353s
8	Bradley Smith (GB) <i>Tech3 Yamaha</i>	+50.709s
9	Tito Rabat (E) <i>Marc VDS Honda</i>	+50.983s
10	Alvaro Bautista (E) <i>Aprilia</i>	+1m01.388s
11	Aleix Espargaro (E) <i>Suzuki</i>	+1m08.868s
12	Michele Pirro (I) <i>Pramac Ducati</i>	+1m18.987s
13	Andrea Dovizioso (I) <i>Ducati</i>	+1m33.419s
R	Andrea Iannone (I) <i>Ducati</i>	19 laps-accident
R	Cal Crutchlow (GB) <i>LCR Honda</i>	19 laps-accident
R	Maverick Vinales (E) <i>Suzuki</i>	17 laps-accident
R	Scott Redding (GB) <i>Pramac Ducati</i>	15 laps-lost power
R	Loris Baz (F) <i>Avintia Ducati</i>	12 laps-vibration
R	Jorge Lorenzo (E) <i>Yamaha</i>	5 laps-accident
R	Jack Miller (AUS) <i>Marc VDS Honda</i>	3 laps-accident
R	Yonny Hernandez (CO) <i>Aspar Ducati</i>	2 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 104.699mph.

Fastest lap Marquez, 1m40.243s, 107.246mph.

QUALIFYING 2

1 **Marquez**, 1m39.411s; 2 **Rossi**, 1m39.786s; 3 **Lorenzo**, 1m39.944s; 4 **Pedrosa**, 1m40.011s; 5 **Dovizioso**, 1m40.198s; 6 **Iannone**, 1m40.272s; 7 **Vinales**, 1m40.375s; 8 **Barbera**, 1m40.524s; 9 **Crutchlow**, 1m40.528s; 10 **Espargaro**, 1m40.654s; 11 **Espargaro**, 1m40.708s; 12 **Smith**, 1m40.893s.

QUALIFYING 1

1 **Smith**, 1m40.552s; 2 **Espargaro**, 1m40.715s; 3 **Baz**, 1m40.744s; 4 **Redding**, 1m40.750s; 5 **Miller**, 1m40.881s; 6 **Bradl**, 1m40.897s; 7 **Laverty**, 1m40.990s; 8 **Pirro**, 1m41.116s; 9 **Rabat**, 1m41.157s; 10 **Bautista**, 1m41.611s; 11 **Hernandez**, 1m41.692s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 **Marquez**, 41; 2 **Rossi**, 33; 3 **Pedrosa**, 27; 4 **Lorenzo**, 25; 5 **Dovizioso**, 23; 6 **Espargaro**, 19; 7 **Barbera**, 18; 8 **Laverty**, 17; 9 **Smith**, 16; 10 **Vinales**, 10; 11 **Espargaro**, 10; 12 **Bradl**, 9; 13 **Bautista**, 9; 14 **Rabat**, 8; 15 **Redding**, 6; 16 **Pirro**, 4; 17 **Miller**, 2.


MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 **Yamaha**, 45; 2 **Honda**, 41; 3 **Ducati**, 33; 4 **Suzuki**, 15; 5 **Aprilia**, 12.

Audi's response to the Porsche supremacy

The name of the R18 e-tron quattro remains the same, but the 2016 car is an aggressive step in the LMP1 manufacturer battle

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

 @gazza_sportscars

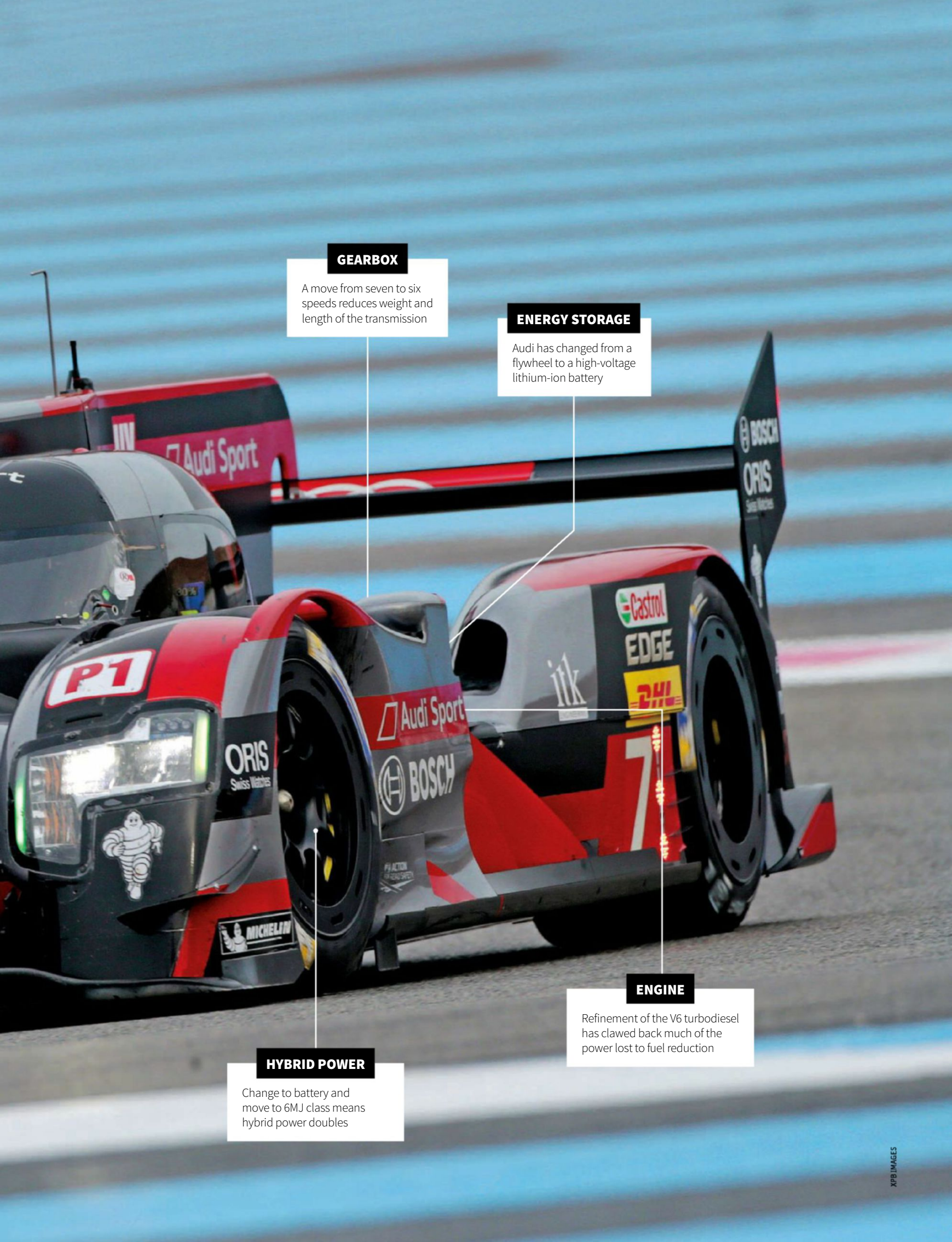
CHASSIS

Monocoque has been moved backwards to allow more airflow through the car

AERO

Radical aero thinking is designed to exploit underfloor in the name of efficiency





GEARBOX

A move from seven to six speeds reduces weight and length of the transmission

ENERGY STORAGE

Audi has changed from a flywheel to a high-voltage lithium-ion battery

HYBRID POWER

Change to battery and move to 6MJ class means hybrid power doubles

ENGINE

Refinement of the V6 turbodiesel has clawed back much of the power lost to fuel reduction

Audi's fastest time in the Paul Ricard test was almost 1.4s off Porsche



Audi went radical with the low-drag version of last year's Audi R18 e-tron quattro that raced from last May's Spa round of the World Endurance Championship. Or at least that's what we thought until the unveiling of its latest LMP1 hybrid. The car's predecessor looks positively old-fashioned compared with the machine with which the German manufacturer is aiming to recapture the world-championship crowns and score a 14th victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The latest in a line of cars stretching back to 2011 to carry the R18 type number is a reaction to a revision of the LMP1 rulebook for 2016. A reduction in the per-lap fuel allocation of 10MJ measured over a lap of Le Mans – or approximately 7.5 per cent – has taken Audi down the radical route. “It is all part of a drive for ever greater efficiency,” says Audi Sport head of engineering Jorg Zander.

That super-slim, super-high nose and cab-backward layout are part of aggressive aerodynamic thinking to retain the downforce levels of the second iteration of last year's R18 – known as the “low-drag” rather than “low-downforce” – without an increase in drag. The idea, developed in the Sauber Formula 1 windtunnel, is to create what Zander calls “a smooth flow of air” through the car to attack the underfloor and rear diffuser.

“We are trying to generate more downforce from underneath the car,” he explains, pointing out that this has a lower penalty in terms of drag than that from the rear wing. “Vortices must be avoided, because this costs energy. The smaller the space the monocoque occupies in this area, the larger the clearances for low-loss airflow.”

That explains why the monocoque has been shifted rearwards, though not as much as the proportions of the new car might suggest, and the front portion upwards.

“We've moved the forward template [of the cockpit area] backwards and moved the monocoque further backwards than before, but not by exactly the same amount,”



explains Zander. “This means the driver is in a slightly different position to before.”

This aero treatment has significant packaging implications. Zander says making the changes to the new monocoque at the same time as moving up to the 6MJ hybrid category (from 4MJ) was the biggest challenge faced by the design team.

The move to 6MJ has required a switch to a lithium-ion battery – now used by all three of the WEC LMP1 manufacturers – from the flywheel employed since 2012. The battery is by nature bigger and heavier than the previous technology, while Audi has upgraded the front-axle motor generator unit (MGU) from last year's 200kW to 350kW, or 268bhp compared with 496bhp. (An upper limit of 300kW has been applied for Le Mans this year on safety grounds.)

The 350kW figure is more than double the 150kW Audi claimed for the first R18 hybrid back in 2012.

Joest Audi team had “a hell of a challenge” over the winter



XPB IMAGES

“The forward part of the monocoque is, of course, quite small, hence you have less space to package things,” says Zander. “The MGU on this level of power has, quite obviously, to be bigger and the battery system requires more volume. The packaging was a hell of a challenge.”

Zander reveals that this challenge also included maintaining a front-biased weight distribution at the same time as moving the monocoque backwards. “The hybrid system helps to some extent because it’s heavier, but the weight isn’t exactly where you want it.”

Those implications of moving the monocoque back stretch right to the rear of the car. The all-new R18 has a six-speed gearbox rather than the seven of its predecessor, because it’s shorter. “The gearbox was another element we had to look at in terms of the overall package,” he says.

Achieving the minimum weight of 878kg – which now includes the inboard camera and the fuel sample mandated for post-race scrutineering – was part of the challenge for a manufacturer that estimates its four-litre turbodiesel V6 is 40kg heavier than the petrol engines of rivals Porsche and Toyota. The new gearbox was part of that strategy – because a six-speed is lighter as well as shorter – as was a move from electrical actuators to central hydraulics to control the car’s systems.

“It’s lighter, but also smaller, and powers the relevant flows to the individual actuators – gearshift, clutch, the steering and some on the engine,” reveals Zander, who puts the weight saving at approximately four kilos.

This strive to reach the minimum weight offers a partial explanation of why Audi has stuck with a single energy-retrieval system – a front-axle KERS – rather than opting for the maximum of two, and moved up one hybrid class to 6MJ rather than trying to match Porsche and Toyota by running at 8MJ.

Zander admits Audi looked into having a second KERS on the rear axle, as used by Toyota, and an exhaust-driven recuperation system like Porsche’s. They would, however, both have “weight implications”. >>

Audi behind, but catching up

AUDI ADMITTED AT the official WEC test at Paul Ricard late last month that it would have liked to have been further down the road with the development of the new R18 e-tron quattro. But what it also said was that it was catching up fast.

The latest R18 ran for the first time at Paul Ricard in November, though Audi has been at pains to suggest that this was merely a shakedown.

This meant it got its 2016 contender out on track before its rivals, but any headstart was undone by a disappointing test at Sebring in early December.

Audi hasn’t gone into details, but there was a fire and the damage required a new monocoque to be flown in for the test to be completed. Audi confined its testing to

its Neustadt research and development facility in January and wasn’t scheduled to run again until early February at Paul Ricard, but reliability concerns forced it to revert to last year’s

“The car may not be bulletproof going into the season”

car to undertake tyre development with Michelin.

“The reaction to Sebring was that we had to work and develop in certain areas; certainly we still had some work to do on the hybrid systems,” says head of engineering Jorg Zander.

“When you find issues, you have to take time to develop

counter-measures. It is quite a normal process.”

The new Audi resumed track testing in Bahrain in February before another outing at the Motorland Aragon circuit in Spain.

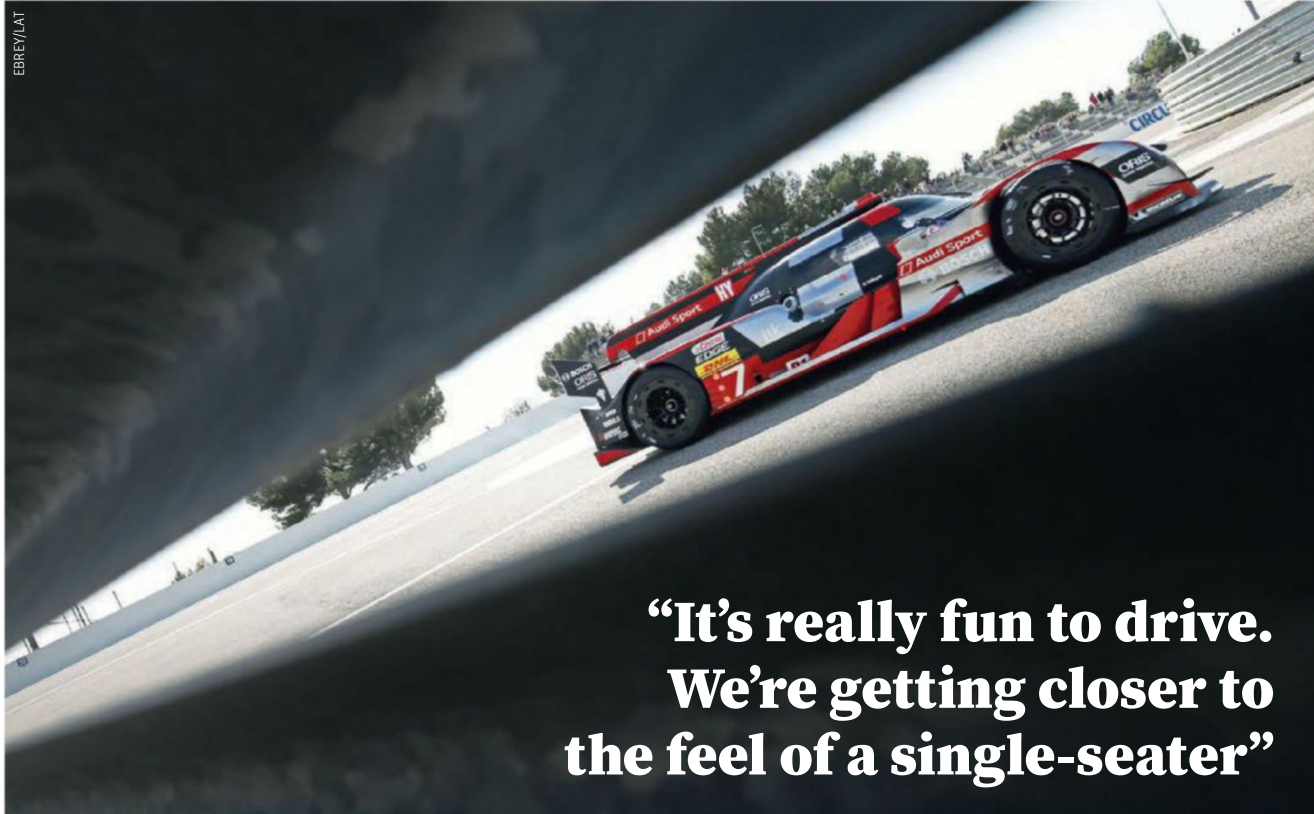
“We were running quite well in Bahrain and again at the test afterwards,” says Audi Sport Team Joest boss Ralf Juttner.

“I have the feeling we are catching up quite well, but after a winter that wasn’t the best in terms of quality running, you always suspect you will never gain back the lost time.”

Juttner is confident that come the Silverstone WEC opener on April 17, Audi will have a quick car. And a reliable one, too, although it “may not be as bulletproof going into the season as the cars we’ve had in some seasons”.



XPB IMAGES



**“It’s really fun to drive.
We’re getting closer to
the feel of a single-seater”**

“I think 6MJ is the best class for a diesel,” he says. “An 8MJ diesel would lead to a configuration that probably wouldn’t meet the minimum weight. It would also compromise the car in terms of weight distribution.”

The strategy of moving up a megajoule class includes the switch to a high-voltage battery, which according to Zander is “similar but not the same” in technology to that used by Porsche to win last year’s WEC. This will allow for a bigger punch out of the corners – the battery can store 2MJ of energy rather than the 800kJ of the flywheel.

“The earlier you accelerate your car the faster you can go over a certain distance,” explains Zander. “Delivering the power on a lower level or delivering it at a later stage will ultimately be less efficient.”

The big question is whether Audi can retrieve and deploy the maximum amount of energy allowed by the regulations. This is 6MJ at Le Mans and a percentage thereof for other tracks calculated by dividing the circuit length by that of Le Mans and multiplying it by a factor of 1.44. That multiple means the energy that can be deployed per kilometre is greater at the eight Formula 1 tracks that make up the rest of the WEC calendar, than at Le Mans.

The new Audi will be allowed to deploy 4.03MJ of hybrid energy around the 3.67-mile Silverstone Grand Prix circuit. That’s almost exactly two thirds of the energy permitted over the Circuit de la Sarthe at Le Mans, a track that is more than double the length at 8.47 miles.

The British track – with its fast, flowing sequences and relatively few big braking points – will be “most challenging” for Audi, according to Zander.

The suggestion that last year’s R18 wasn’t able to deploy the maximum energy allowed to it in the 4MJ class at some tracks isn’t denied. “Good question, possibly,” is his response.

“With a single MGU you are closer to the limit of recuperating the energy that’s required,” he explains, “but considering the whole season, and in particular Le Mans, we think it is the most non-compromised solution.”

That raises the question of whether Audi will need to adopt a strategy of forced recuperation – by lifting-off on the straights – to achieve its targets. Zander won’t be drawn on this one. “I wouldn’t want to say if we will do

this; that is something we are still learning about at the moment,” is his reply.

The move to 6MJ means Audi is able to proclaim that the new R18 is more powerful than its predecessor, even with a two-fold reduction in fuel, courtesy of both the regulation tweaks and its jump in hybrid class. It claims to have been able to claw back much of the power loss associated with the lower fuel limit.

The 120-degree single-turbo V6, which dates back to 2011 and the first, non-hybrid R18 TDI, has been further refined. Audi hasn’t gone into details, but it’s talked about a lighter and more efficient Garrett turbocharger. The capacity remains at the four litres that it was enlarged to for 2014.

“The idea is to maintain power with reduced fuel flow and I think we have achieved that to a great extent,” says Zander. “We are still dealing with about 380kW [514bhp] for this engine, which is a very good result.”

The 2016 power figure – which compares with the 583bhp quoted by Audi for last year’s R18 – proves that the car’s “concept is still sound” in what will be its sixth season, according to Audi Sport engine boss Ullrich Baretzky.

There have been some struggles for Audi over the winter (see page 51), but the drivers have a clear enthusiasm for the latest R18 e-tron quattro, reliability concerns aside.

“Last year we had a great car, but this year’s is an improvement in every direction,” says 2013 WEC champion Loic Duval. “We’ve taken a big step in terms of the hybrid power, but it’s also really fun to drive. We’re getting closer and closer to the feel of a single-seater with these cars.”

Those reliability issues encountered over winter testing mean the German manufacturer isn’t hiding the fact that it may not be as well prepared as it rivals at this stage of the game. It completed fewer laps than the new Porsche and Toyota at the official WEC test at Paul Ricard last month, though part of the reason was a problem with a small chassis insert related to a safety mechanism that couldn’t be repaired properly at the track.

“I’m asking people to understand that this car is a completely new beast, and a much larger step than between 2014 and ’15,” says Zander. “It is all-new technology, and the more complexity involved, the more issues you will find.” ❦

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Energy Recovery System (ERS) Engineers - required to support trackside activity and factory tests.

We are looking for experienced Engineers who currently have exposure to Formula 1 ERS systems as well as trackside experience.

The role will be based in Milton Keynes and will require frequent race travel.

Design Engineers - required to support the ESS team.

We are looking for Designers with exposure to one or more of the following areas: Composites, ESS, ERS, Battery System, Cooling System, High Voltage (electrical components), rotating parts.

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In its plan to continuously develop the team for 2016 season, Scuderia Toro Rosso has the following vacancies available:

Model Maker - ref. "11-16"

Working within the Model Shop of our Wind Tunnel facility in Bicester you will assist in model preparation, assembling and model changes in support of wind tunnel testing sessions. A minimum of 3 years of experience as a model maker in a high level of motorsport, preferably F1, is required, together with a good knowledge of Microsoft Windows applications and some experience using CAD software. The successful candidate must be expected to work under pressure to meet critical deadline and at the same time to reach high quality standards with strong motivation. Flexibility, problem solving, and good organisational and communicational skills are essential. You will be required to work on early and late shift rotation and occasionally on night shift.

The position is based in Bicester (UK).

Composite Design Engineer - ref. "12-16"

Working within our Design Office and under the direction of Chief Designer Composite & Structures, your primary responsibilities will be to undertake the concept scheming, designing and detail specification of various composite components such as: front and rear wings, chassis & impact structures and bodywork. Your duties will also include specifying and detailing production and assembly tooling, jigs and testing fixtures within the NX CAD and TeamCenter environments. The ideal candidate will have an Engineering degree, and a strong composites design experience within the Motorsport/Aerospace industry. F1 Experience, prior use of NX will be an advantage.

The position is based in Faenza (Italy).

Strategy Engineer - ref. "13-16"

Working within the Vehicle Performance Department, in the Strategy Group, you will be asked to manage the race strategy related data analysis and prediction models, in order to support race engineering analysis. The role will also require to work closely with Race Engineering, Simulation and Software Engineering groups in order to lead the integration of the designed models with the current tools, implementation, tests and data analysis. The ideal candidate has a degree in Mathematics, or Engineering strongly oriented to modelling and simulation. Experience in simulation and modelling environment is required and a previous experience in similar roles in Motorsport would be an advantage. Candidates should also demonstrate a strong ability to program using MATLAB. The successful candidate should have excellent problem solving skills and a proven ability to work under pressure, with a minimum of supervision, to the highest levels of accuracy and quality. A flexible approach to working hours and weekend working is essential, together with a very good knowledge of English and the availability to travel worldwide if required.

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Charlie Butler-Henderson will defend his Mini Challenge crown with support from Mini

Factory backing for champion Charlie

REIGNING MINI CHALLENGE champion Charlie Butler-Henderson will defend his title as part of a new factory-backed team.

Butler-Henderson, who took seven wins on his way to the Mini title last year while running with the Oakfield Motorsport team, will front the new Mini UK VIP Customer Support Team in the F56 JCW class. He has also become a Mini UK ambassador.

Butler-Henderson is the second driver to receive backing from Mini UK, following Dakar Rally driver Harry Hunt.

"I'm massively excited to be coming back to the Challenge this year and to be representing Mini UK is an honour," said Butler-Henderson, who had his first test in his new F56 JCW machine at Oulton Park last week.

"The championship will be really hard work this season. I tested with the Mini UK team recently and the car feels brilliant, but the change to Dunlop tyres [from Pirelli] for this year means everybody will have to revise their setups and driving styles as getting heat into the new tyres is tougher.

"I'm not surprised the numbers are up this year. The F56 cars are great – they're fast, pop flames out the back and are great fun to drive."

F56 entry boom

Butler-Henderson headlines what is set to be the largest top-class entry for the Mini Challenge for almost a decade, with 32 new F56 JCW cars committed so far.

The new-generation 255bhp two-litre turbocharged cars were introduced to the championship last year, with 16 turning out for the opening race at Donington Park. That figure grew to 19 by the final round at Snetterton.

Mini Challenge promoter Antony Williams said: "Interest in the F56 cars in particular has been amazing. Introducing a new car is always a risk but I think we've struck the right balance between power, drivability and cost. The cars are set-up to be pointy and tend to oversteer more than understeer, so they're a hoot to drive and appeal to front- and rear-wheel drive graduates.

"We opted to fit a pure motorsport ECU, which allows drivers to do their



Butler-Henderson tested new machine at Oulton Park last week

own diagnostics and make it easier for privateers to run cars so we have a wide range of professional teams, arrive-and-drive packages and privateers."

So far the Mini Challenge's Cooper Class has attracted 16 entries, with the older R56 JCW cars having seven drivers signed up. The championship will also feature a new Open Class for this year, allowing modern racing Minis from series such as the Scottish Mini Cooper Cup or older Challenge cars to race.

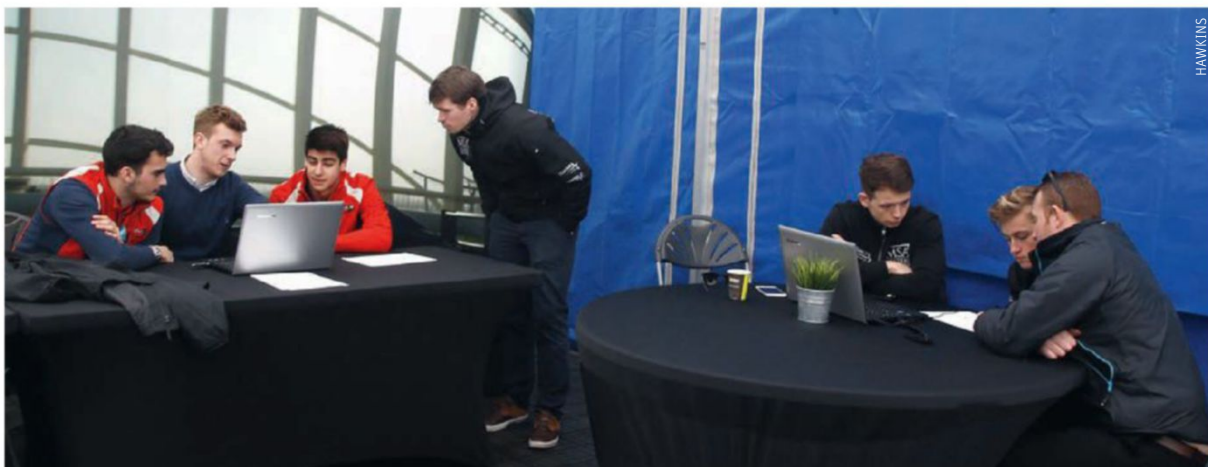
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CLIO CUP

PRICE AND BUSHELL GIVEN BMR BACKING

LEADING TOURING CAR squad Team BMR will support Pyro drivers Mike Bushell and Josh Price in the Renault UK Clio Cup this year.

The factory Subaru team had already been confirmed that Senna Proctor, who stepped up into Clios with Pyro for this season after a year in Ginetta Juniors, would be racing as part of BMR's development programme but that has now been increased to three cars.

Reigning champion Ashley Sutton raced with Pyro and BMR last year.

"Hopefully we will build a good relationship," said 2014 Clio champion Bushell. "I had a difficult season in the British Touring Car Championship last year but this could help me to return."

Price made his Clio debut at the end of last season, and both drivers ran towards the front at Brands Hatch last weekend. Bushell achieved a race-two podium while Price took a best result of seventh.

MSA FORMULA

F4 pole data to be shared

MSA FORMULA DRIVERS WILL BENEFIT FROM open data-sharing sessions this year after a successful trial at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Britain's FIA Formula 4 category trialled the new driver-training scheme in Kent last weekend where the data trace from the fastest car in qualifying was made open to all drivers to analyse against their own during one-to-one debriefs with an MSA Academy coach.

GP3 race winner and 2015 Force India Formula 1 test driver Nick Yelloly and MSA Academy member Jake Cook

were on hand to compare drivers' data with that recorded by poleman Petru Florescu.

"The coaching sessions have been very successful so they'll continue all season," said MSA Formula championship manager Sam Roach.

"MSA Formula is a learning category, so allowing drivers to see their data traces overlaid with the fastest car in a session highlights what they could do better and helps them improve. It's pretty unique as I can't think of many championships that operate a data-sharing programme."

CARRERA CUP

Cammish puzzled by Brands track limits penalty

REIGNING PORSCHE Carrera Cup GB champion Dan Cammish questioned the penalty that cost him victory in the opening round of the season at Brands Hatch last weekend.

The Redline driver finished first on the road but was handed a five-second penalty for exceeding track limits, which dropped him to second behind GT Marques' Dino Zamparelli.

Overnight rain combined with damaged cars dropping fluid meant track conditions were tricky.

"I think I had a bit of a raw deal," said Cammish. "If it was dry then it would be fair

but the track was wet and a car was putting down fluid. As the leader I was the first to come across it each time."

Cammish made up for the disappointment by claiming a lights-to-flag race two win.

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Davies seals late Supercup return with TCR

MARK DAVIES MADE HIS RETURN TO THE GINETTA GT4 Supercup with the TCR team at Brands Hatch last weekend, three years after he last raced in the series.

Davies finished sixth in the standings in 2013 with one win, having previously won the G50 Cup class a year earlier. He said the deal, which is for the entire 2016

season, was completed just a few days before the opener.

"A week ago my dad said, 'look, TCR have brought a deal,'" he said. "Between us, me, my dad and my business just about got there with a budget."

Davies scored a best result of sixth across the three races at Brands Hatch.



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McMullan to return in Van Diemen

REIGNING NATIONAL FORMULA FORD 1600 champion Jonny McMullan will return to the series this year, driving a brand new Van Diemen for Oldfield Motorsport.

Last season McMullan competed in the Motorsport Ireland Bernard Dolan-run Van Diemen LA10.

McMullan is only confirmed for the first round at Oulton Park on April 9 at the moment, but wants to contest a full season.

“I’ll definitely be doing Oulton and after that it’s round by round,” he said. “I’m trying to get the budget to do the full year so I can try to win the championship and get the Mazda Road to Indy shootout prize. I’ve been trying to get to America for a while and this is a good prize.

“I’m looking forward to get back racing. I haven’t tested the car before so I will be getting in at the deep end.”



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IN BRIEF



SPORTCAR DRIVER JONES TO HISTORICS

Former British GT4 frontrunner Declan Jones will move into historic racing this year with a 1964 MGB Roadster. Jones (pictured above left) plans to race the ex-works MGB in selected historic events across the course of the season, including the HSCC Gold Cup at Oulton Park and the support races at the Spa 6 Hours.

BAILEY AND SCHULTZ TO CONTEST GTC

GTO champions Paul Bailey and Andy Schultz will return to the GT Cup this year, swapping to the GTC class. It will be a return to action for Bailey after a crash in a supercar rally in Malta last October when his Porsche Spyder spun into spectators, injuring more than 20 people.

KARTING GRADUATE OPTS FOR FIESTAS

Karting graduate Samuel Oram-Jones will contest his first full season of car racing after stepping up to the BRSCC Ford Fiesta Championship this year. Oram-Jones, 18, handled a two-litre Fiesta ST model for the 23 Racing team in the opening rounds at Snetterton last weekend.

DISABLED DRIVERS PLAN LAUNCHED

An initiative to help disabled drivers gain experience on track has been launched. Spinal Track aims to introduce disabled drivers to motorsport. The organisation was set up by paralysed racer Nathalie McGloin and race and rally driver Andrew Bayliss.

DE LA ROSA TEAM ENTERS SPANISH F4

An entry led by former Formula 1 driver Pedro de la Rosa will take part in the inaugural Spanish F4 championship season next year. Drivex, run by de la Rosa and Miguel Angel de Casto, was one of three teams announced by Spanish F4 championship organisers. MP Motorsport will also join the series.

STRONG GRID FOR FIRST TOURING 24H

New Silverstone 24 Hour organiser Creventic was pleased to have a grid of 42 cars for the first edition of its new Touring Car Endurance Series and plans to expand the category next year.



READ

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

White’s mad dash yields class victory

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP stalwart Colin White scored a class win from last on the grid at Brands Hatch despite a late arrival, having raced in the Dunlop Prototype Series at Silverstone earlier that day.

White, who took no part in qualifying as a result, said that his drive in a Ginetta G57 at Silverstone had been part of an effort to attract new entries to the series.

“Trying to do the two was very difficult to go from one to the other as they are such different types of cars, but it was good fun,” he said. “I thoroughly enjoyed it.

“[Silverstone] was all about trying the cars out and trying to entice more people to do it, so they can build a good class up and do a whole series.”

White was able to race at the Kent circuit after Ginetta

chairman Lawrence Tomlinson – who won both Prototype races – helped out with transportation.

“Lawrence gave me a ride down in his helicopter so that was really nice of him,” he continued. “We did a *Top Gear* thing with a friend [who] drove in a Nissan GTR and we went in the helicopter.”

White scored a further two class wins.



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ALFA ROMEO CHAMPIONSHIP

Hollywood guest stars in Alfas

TV STAR-TURNED-BRITISH GT DRIVER Paul Hollywood made a guest appearance in the opening rounds of the Alfa Romeo Championship at Snetterton last weekend.

Great British Bake Off star Hollywood joined the series to gain signatures on his

race licence ahead of sharing a Beechdean Motorsport Aston Martin Vantage GT4 with Jamie Chadwick in the final three British GT rounds. He took a best finish of 12th in race one in his 156 before retiring from race two because of a broken throttle cable.

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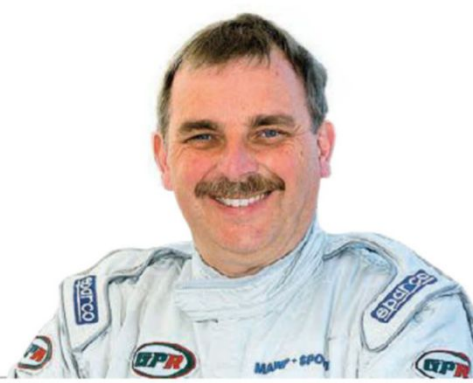


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Bolton wanderings, Oulton and Silverstone

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

TIME WAS WHEN MOTORSPORT FOLK COULD JUMP into their cars early on the morning of an event knowing, given a fair wind, when they would reach the venue. Not now. Interminable roadworks and incidents demand that leaving the previous day is de rigueur if you have any distance to cover on Britain's overcrowded roads. Unless there is a convenient cross-country route, I normally allow an extra hour for trips of up to 125 miles and pro rata thereafter.

If six and a half hours from Bournemouth to the M6's Oulton Park junction last Friday seemed excessive, another 90 minutes to Bolton – home of Chevron cars – when plans changed was tedious. Thank you to the visionaries who launched a convoy of three over-wide vehicles into the usual Thelwall Viaduct mayhem to add to everybody's misery. Surely 0400 would have been better call? Splashing back to Cheshire in relentless spray was a doddle by comparison.

The joy of my trip was a wonderful social evening with long-standing club racing pals, 1987 Monoposto champion John Bradshaw (NW FF1600 champ turned Porsche and GT Cup racer Tom's father) and fellow Super Saloon aficionado Dave Taylor. Former Chevron fabricator Taylor built the unique Chevrolet-powered Ford Cortina Mk3 using F1 ISO Marlboro (Williams) running gear in the '70s and latterly rebuilt the Mick Hill-originated Trojan-based Beetle V8 – raced later by Jim Clark's cousin Doug Niven and Jeff Wilson – from a derelict hulk.

Bradshaw, whose Road and Race Restorations business in Manchester has earned its reputation among the country's foremost automotive body repairers (with a coveted Porsche endorsement among its prestigious awards), shares my love of Chevron and Argo cars, having owned several. John is

now rediscovering historic racing in a Lotus Elan, with his lad. A quicker 26R clone is on the stocks.

From high on the wild moors overlooking Bolton – where I could envision Brian Redman testing a Chevron B8 on the spectacular and unforgiving roads in 1968 – The Toby Inn at Edgworth was the perfect hostelry for racing reminiscences over an excellent dinner. I headed back to Oulton, where many of Derek Bennett's sensational cars were successfully debuted, for Saturday's 750 Motor Club meeting.

Maybe expectations were too high in the RGB paddock following the pre-season build-up, but driving standards need focus before the circus regroups at Brands Hatch in three weeks. The field has grown to record size (although the front-engined class appears to have waned again) and speeds are rising, but the shunts which caused two red flags and, ultimately, race two's cancellation, were disappointing.

Defending champion Scott Mittell's new MC-53 had every body panel savaged and sustained suspension damage as an innocent party in the second. Father Ian, who designed the car and with Scott built two and a half over the winter, faces a mammoth task to repair it. He remained philosophical: "When you start in the danger zone it can happen. If the ignition wire hadn't broken Scott would have been clear of it."

Halfway home, under cover of darkness, I made my one-stop strategy at Silverstone, grabbing a welcome coffee in the BRDC while sampling the Hankook 24 Hours atmosphere. It was very wet, nonetheless the big field was charging round. The snapshot reminded me of the 2005 Britcar race in which Mike Wilds, Ian Flux, Andrew Frankel and I drove a near-standard Mazda RX-8 to 17th overall and a close second in class. Another abiding memory. 🍷



ALBONE SHOWS SPIRE-HONDA PACE

Although his day ended pointless, Billy Albone underlined his RGB title credentials by claiming pole for Saturday's season-opener at Oulton Park in his new low-line Honda-powered Spire GT3S. The 2014 Formula 750 champion slid off while leading race one and sustained further body damage in a scrappy start to the second.



LYONS LANDS JARAMA Gpc DOUBLE

Putting a Sebring 12 Hours disappointment behind him, Michael Lyons won both Group C races at last weekend's Jarama Classic in his Momo Gebhardt C91 in the first round of the Peter Auto era. Martin O'Connell (Chevron-FVC B19) triumphed in CER1 and led CER2 before retiring Sandy Watson's DFV-powered B23.



ZOLDER START FOR FIA MASTERS F1

Belgium's Loic Deman (Tyrrell 010) starts favourite for victory when the FIA Masters Historic Formula One championship opens at Zolder this weekend. It's a decade since the three-litre cars spanning 1971-83 graced the period GP track. The 24-car field includes '99 Spa Six Hours winner Pierre-Alain France debuting a stunning Ligier JS11/15.

CLIO CUP APRIL 2-3

(Almost) brothers in Clio arms

PAUL STREATHER FIRST SHOWED HIS potential when he almost won his second ever race in the category last year. Now he has proved that wasn't a fluke result by winning the season-opener.

Streather admitted he was under some pressure to match 2015's eye-catching performance and he certainly did that in a typically close Clio Cup race.

The Finesse driver went around the outside of fellow front-row starter Daniel Rowbottom into Paddock Hill Bend to take the lead. There was soon more drama with Rowbottom catching the kerb on the inside and spinning across the pack. He was collected by Dan Zelos and ended a race full of promise in the gravel.

Streather meanwhile built a small lead over series returnee Lee Pattison (Cooksport), while former champions Paul Rivett and Mike Bushell squabbled behind. Bushell made a move on the WDE Motorsport driver at Clearways but this was under yellow flags and he was handed a grid penalty for race two.

With Rowbottom and Zelos's cars proving tough to shift, the safety car was called, which closed up the top four. They never separated after that. Even a bit of rain failed to spread them out.

Streather made a good restart and controlled the race to the flag, keeping a small gap over brother-in-law Pattison.

"That was hard," said the winner, "the rain and safety car weren't to my liking."

Rivett managed to re-pass Bushell but was unable to challenge Pattison as the top four were separated by less than a



second at the flag. With Bushell unable to make the podium, it was the first race not to feature a Pyro car in the top three since 2014's penultimate encounter.

Race two followed a similar pattern as the same four drivers were again the class of the field. The first corner was less dramatic this time, and poleman Pattison was able to maintain his advantage, while Streather repeated his race-one manoeuvre to jump Zelos, who qualified an impressive third but later dropped down the order.

Streather then made his first mistake all weekend as he ran wide four laps later and gifted a place to Bushell.

The 2014 champion set about passing Rivett, which allowed Pattison a small breathing space. Bushell made repeated attempts but Rivett always had an answer, even when Bushell tagged him into a lurid slide on the pit straight.

This meant Pattison was able to hang on for an impressive win – Cooksport's

Streather leads the field away as polesitter Rowbottom (far right) is one of a number of drivers caught out

maiden triumph – from Rivett, Bushell and Streather.

"To come here and get a first and a second, I'm over the moon," enthused Pattison. "I didn't come back to just make up the numbers!"

One driver who was expected to be challenging those four was Ant Whorton-Eales. He had qualified on pole for both races but was demoted to last after being found to have non-complying brakes. He stormed through the field to finish eighth and sixth.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

RESULTS

RACE 1 (23 LAPS) 1 Paul Streather; 2 Lee Pattison; 3 Paul Rivett; 4 Mike Bushell; 5 Charles Ladell; 6 Max Coates. **FL** Ant Whorton-Eales.

RACE 2 (19 LAPS) 1 Pattison; 2 Rivett; 3 Bushell; 4 Streather; 5 Ladell; 6 Whorton-Eales.

FL Whorton-Eales. **POINTS 1 Pattison, 60;** 2 Streather, 54; 3 Rivett, 53; 4 Bushell, 45; 5 Ladell, 40; 6 Whorton-Eales, 36.

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB APRIL 3

Cammish win pushes the limit

IT TOOK 13 RACES FOR DAN CAMMISH TO BE beaten by Dino Zamparelli last year, as he dominated the series. This time he was defeated in the very first race, albeit in controversial circumstances.

The Redline driver had crossed the line first, but a five-second track-limits penalty dropped him behind GT Marques racer Zamparelli, who had hounded him throughout.

"I don't know what to make of that," said the surprised victor. "I was trying to put pressure on him but he did a really good job."

Cammish had safely negotiated the lapped traffic but pushing the track boundaries cost him dear, while Tom Sharp was five seconds further back in third.

Normal service was restored in the second race as Cammish returned to the top step of the podium. A clash with a Pro-Am2 driver didn't halt his progress and he managed to build a larger gap over Zamparelli this time.

However, all eyes were on the battle behind as there was a tremendous fight for third. Initially Stephen Jelley had the advantage but Tom Sharp tried his best to usurp him.

Their tussling allowed Tom Oliphant to pounce as he snuck ahead of a delayed Sharp into Clearways on lap eight.

Despite Oliphant's best efforts, Jelley held third with Oliphant, Sharp and Charlie Eastwood all less than a second behind at the finish.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



RESULTS

RACE 1 (32 LAPS) 1 Dino Zamparelli; 2 Daniel Cammish; 3 Tom Sharp; 4 Charlie Eastwood; 5 Tom Oliphant; 6 Stephen Jelley. **FL** Zamparelli.

RACE 2 (33 LAPS) 1 Cammish; 2 Zamparelli; 3 Jelley; 4 Oliphant; 5 Sharp; 6 Eastwood. **FL** Zamparelli.

POINTS 1 Cammish, 40; 2 Zamparelli, 40; 3 Sharp, 28; 4 Jelley, 26; 5 Oliphant, 26; 6 Eastwood, 24.

Cammish was the class of the field again, but scored only one win after a race-one penalty

Fielding stars in rain-hit thriller

IT'S AMAZING THE DIFFERENCE A bit of rain can make. Drizzle before the start of the second MSA Formula race, along with a 50 per cent reversed grid, proved to be the perfect recipe for a thrilling affair.

To begin with, the drivers scabbled around on slicks on a greasy track but as the rain intensified the red flag was thrown.

This allowed everyone to change to wets and set up an eight-minute dash. Arden's Rafael Martin initially led but it wasn't long before he slipped down the order as Jamie Caroline (Jamun), James Pull (Carlin) and Sennan Fielding (JHR) came to the fore. The trio battled relentlessly and went three abreast across the pit straight with Caroline and Pull making contact, damaging Caroline's front wing, which enabled Fielding to claim the advantage.

His vast experience enabled him to rise to the front and fend off Caroline and Pull to the flag.

"That was fun and hectic," smiled

Fielding. "I'm really happy to win but I don't think anybody knew what was happening!"

Caroline enthused: "I'm living the dream. I still had the grip with the damaged wing."

His damage was nothing compared to Zane Goddard's. The Aussie lost his rear wing in the frenetic fighting behind but still claimed fourth ahead of Martins in an incredible race.

The other two dry contests were dull in comparison. Carlin's Petru Florescu scored lights-to-flag wins in both from team-mate Max Fewtrell in the first and Luis Leeds in the finale.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

RACE 1 (22 LAPS) 1 Petru Florescu; 2 Max Fewtrell; 3 James Pull; 4 Luis Leeds; 5 Sennan Fielding;

6 Jamie Caroline. **FL Florescu. RACE 2 (9 LAPS)**

1 Fielding; 2 Caroline; 3 Pull; 4 Zane Goddard; 5 Rafael Martins; 6 Fewtrell. **FL Fielding.**

RACE 3 (26 LAPS) 1 Florescu; 2 Leeds; 3 Pull; 4 Martins; 5 Alex Quinn; 6 Fewtrell. **FL Leeds.**

POINTS 1 Florescu, 50; 2 Pull, 45; 3 Fielding, 35; 4 Fewtrell, 34; 5 Leeds, 32; 6 Martins, 28.



Fielding coped best in changing conditions to win

EBREY

Wrigley leads as spoils shared

A CHAOTIC THIRD GINETTA GT4 Supercup race finally separated title favourites Jamie Orton and Tom Wrigley, who had each taken a win in the opening two contests.

The third reversed-grid race was won by Will Burns, who took his first ever Supercup win in his third year competing in the series.

Burns' victory came after Carl Boardley spun out of a comfortable lead on lap 11 and was confirmed when the race was stopped five laps early after a heavy crash between Fraser Robertson and John Wall.

Wrigley leaves Brands with an eight-point lead over Burns because Orton, who had held Wrigley at bay to win the opening race, finished 11th in the finale after he was tapped into a spin by

Tom Hibbert at Clearways on lap 19.

Wrigley made a poor start in race three but charged to third. That would have been second but his pass on Reece Somerfield was reversed when results were counted back after the red flag.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

RESULTS

RACE 1 (18 LAPS) 1 Jamie Orton; 2 Tom Wrigley; 3 Rob Wheldon; 4 Will Burns; 5 Robert Gaffney;

6 Carl Boardley. **FL Orton. RACE 2 (23 LAPS)**

1 Wrigley; 2 Orton; 3 Burns; 4 Boardley; 5 Reece Somerfield; 6 Mark Davies. **FL Orton.**

RACE 3 (19 LAPS) 1 Burns; 2 Somerfield; 3 Wrigley; 4 Tom Hibbert; 5 Callum Pointon; 6 Wheldon.

FL Hibbert. POINTS 1 Wrigley, 91; 2 Burns, 83; 3 Orton, 79; 4 Somerfield, 62; 5 Wheldon, 56; 6 Gaffney, 50.

Middleton emerges top of Junior battle

"IT'S BEEN AN AWESOME WEEKEND - THE SECOND race was one of the most intense races I've ever competed in," enthused Stuart Middleton after he emerged from a typically frantic Ginetta Junior meeting with the points lead.

The Douglas Motorsport driver followed up his second place in race one with victory in the second, but the two contests contained markedly different battles for first.

In race one, Middleton, Dave Wooder and William Tregurtha engaged in a three-way fight for the win throughout the 15-lap encounter. Middleton had secured pole position in qualifying but lost out to Tregurtha as the pack charged through Paddock Hill Bend and up to Druids on lap one.

However, the HHC Motorsport driver was demoted to third just two laps later as Middleton slipped back into the lead at Paddock and Wooder followed him past Tregurtha at Druids.

Wooder seized the lead with a bold move at Clearways that shuffled Middleton backwards just seconds before the safety car was deployed to recover the stricken Charlie Fagg, who was stuck in the gravel on the exit of Paddock.

At the restart, Tregurtha seized the lead with a dramatic lunge on Wooder at Druids and he held on to win from Middleton, who edged Wooder into third at Paddock on lap 12.

In the second contest, Middleton raced into the lead from second then mounted a race-long rearguard action that forced him to "do about six things at once."

Wooder, who like Middleton had passed polesitter Tregurtha on lap one, made several attempts to overtake but despite constant pressure had to settle for second.

Tregurtha tried to join the battle at the front but his efforts to pass Wooder left him vulnerable to repeated attacks from Daniel Harper and Cameron Roberts.

On the final lap, Lewis Brown grabbed the final spot on the podium as the HHC Motorsport driver, who had risen from 14th on the grid, seized his chance at the last corner when Tregurtha pushed Roberts wide and held on during the run to the line.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

RESULTS

RACE 1 (15 LAPS) 1 William Tregurtha; 2 Stuart Middleton; 3 Dave Wooder; 4 Max Bird; 5 Tom Gamble; 6 Cameron

Roberts. **FL Middleton. RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Middleton;**

2 Wooder; 3 Lewis Brown; 4 Roberts; 5 Tregurtha; 6 Daniel

Harper. **FL Brown. POINTS 1 Middleton, 67;** 2 Wooder, 56;

3 Tregurtha, 55; 4 Roberts, 40; 5 Brown, 34; 6 Gamble, 34.



Middleton took a race-two win after second in race one

EBREY

ALL PICTURES: READ



SILVERSTONE
CREVENTIC 24 HOURS APRIL 1-3

Rollcentre crew battles back for second win in Silverstone 24H

TEAM ABBA WITH ROLLCENTRE Racing came through from the back of the grid to win the 24 Hours of Silverstone, using the same chassis that won the Britcar 24 Hours in 2012.

The BMW M3 V8 driven by Richard Neary, Martin Short, Charles Lamb and Darren Cox (entered under the pseudonym Richard Roberts) had failed to set a lap in qualifying due to a driveshaft failure. However, it made good progress up the timesheets in the first half of the race, as bright sunshine turned to heavy rain at nightfall. Due to their team-mates' inexperience in the wet conditions, which made the already poor visibility considerably worse, Neary and Short drove back-to-back stints throughout the night, rising into the podium positions as light returned and the rain mercifully ceased.

Short was the first to switch to slicks under Code 60 – "I thought of Jenson Button because he's a dice-roller and he usually gets it right!" – and quickly began to reel in the second-placed Red Camel SEAT once racing resumed. It quickly became clear that slicks were the way to go, but while the front-wheel drive SEAT TCRs struggled to get their rear tyres up to temperature, the BMW continued uninhibited.

However, even with its performance advantage in the greasy early morning, it was far from a foregone conclusion that

Rollcentre would be able to catch the Team Bleekemolen SEAT of Sebastiaan Bleekemolen, Dennis de Borst, Melvin de Groot and Pim van Riet. The SEAT squad had led the race for 15 hours straight and was managing a four-minute buffer when van Riet suddenly slowed on the Hangar Straight with an engine failure.

Neary inherited a lead the BMW would never lose, despite the threat of rain returning in the final hour when Cox was at the wheel. For Short, it was a particularly momentous occasion – victory in the first all-touring car encounter coming 11 years after winning the inaugural Britcar 24 Hours in a Mosler MT900R.

"There's something about the body that when things are going well, it produces the right hormones to give you the energy to do the job, and I think we all had that"

The Red Camel SEAT was best of the TCR contingent, a full three laps behind the winner, ahead of the Memac Ogilvy Duel Racing SEAT which had led the opening lap in Phil Quaife's hands. Quaife's team-mate, Ramzi Moutran, was fortunate to survive a grassy moment at Chapel while lapping the D1-winning BMW in the closing stages, before wisely settling for third.

Fourth overall went to the class-winning A3 Peugeot 208 GTi of Team



Factory-backed Peugeot 208 finished first in class despite controversial noise violation penalty

Altran, but it could have been an even better result had they not been made to spend half an hour in the pits on Sunday morning when Race Control deemed the car to be in violation of noise regulations, much to the bemusement of Sarah Bovy, one of its driving quintet.

"It's very frustrating because every single second we had on our competitors we won on the track, so seeing the car stopped like that for something we didn't understand is very difficult," she said. "After 16 hours, how is it possible that our car doesn't conform anymore?"

After much negotiation and fiddling with the exhaust, the car Bovy shared with Britain's Bradley Philpot, Guillaume Roman, Thierry Blaise and Stephane Ventaja was eventually allowed out of the



ABBA Rollcentre team recovered from back of the field start to claim Silverstone 24H victory

pits again, but any hopes of an outright podium had been lost.

The Altran squad was joined on the A3 podium by the Scangrip Racing BMW E92 335i, which employed a similar strategy to Rollcentre by alternating between Danes Morten Dons and Frederik Nymark during the night. Third in class went to the Synchro Motorsport Honda Civic Type-R of Martin Byford, Alyn James and Daniel Wheeler. Both cars had benefited from the demise of Team BRIT's Volkswagen Golf, driven by injured ex-servicemen, which had been eighth overall and second in class before a gearbox failure.

Richard Abra and Mark Poole teamed up with Barwell Motorsport boss Mark Lemmer and Timur Sardarov to win the Cup1 class, their success masterminded from the garage by British GT Championship regular Joe Osborne.

The JJ Motorsport BMW M235i lost 10 laps when Lemmer was hit at Luffield and broke a steering arm, but enjoyed a trouble-free run thereafter to add to Abra and Poole's outright victories in 2012 and 2013.

Elsewhere, the battle for the A2 class victory went down to the final lap, as Wayne Shen's Mark III Renault Clio beat the Mark IV model of Christian Rytter to the line by just 0.8 seconds after 24 hours of racing.

JAMES NEWBOLD

SUPPORT ROUND-UP

THE GINETTA G57 MARKED ITS DOMESTIC DEBUT with a pair of one-two finishes as the all-new Dunlop Prototype Series got under way at Silverstone.

It seemed only appropriate that pole-starting Ginetta Chairman Lawrence Tomlinson would have the honour of taking the car's first overall win in race one, but he had to work for it. Alex Kapadia made the better getaway and pulled out a 17-second gap. However, co-driver Paul Spencer had to return to the pits when he felt the belts loosening on his HANS device. This left Tomlinson to finish almost a minute clear of the identical machine of Paul White, who wrested second away from Craig Dolby's Riley at Brooklands with little more than seven minutes remaining.

Tomlinson doubled up in race two, although his winning margin of 4.2 seconds over Chris Hoy and Michael Munemann wasn't an accurate reflection of his dominance. After clearing a fast-starting Dolby, Tomlinson went toe-to-toe with Kapadia in the early exchanges and resumed the lead following the stops. The gap stood at more than 40 seconds when he elected to slow down to avoid doing another lap and risk running out of fuel. Hoy, who had shown race-contending pace in race one after joining two laps late, gamely hung on to the leading pair during the first stint and handed over to Munemann in third, which soon became second as Spencer got up to speed. White then completed a

Ginetta clean-sweep of the podium in third, despite reporting a few skirmishes with backmarkers.

Confusion reigned at the start of the HRDC COYS Trophy race when a Jaguar MK 1 stalled in the mid-pack, with drivers unsure whether the race had started. After a brief safety car intervention, John Spiers' TVR Griffith led father-and-son duo Mike and Michael Whitaker in another TVR, but a spin for Spiers at Vale meant the Whitakers were poised for victory heading into the penultimate lap. However, when their rear suspension broke, Spiers was the chief beneficiary. He said: "It's my first ever win, it's a sunny day on the GP track at Silverstone, life doesn't get much better than this." Despite a final lap in excess of three minutes, Whitaker Senior narrowly held on for second from Roberto Giordanelli's Lister.

In the Super 7 Inter Series, it was a weekend of contrasting fortunes for Danny Killeen. In the first race, he took a straight-forward lights-to-flag victory from Paul Thacker, while Andy West, Justin Armstrong and Paul O'Reilly provided an entertaining battle for third. There was to be no repeat for Killeen in Race Two when his driveshaft snapped on the way to the grid, allowing Thacker a clear run to victory ahead of O'Reilly. West again prevailed in a close battle for third ahead of Simon Cassidy and John Whitehouse, with the three separated by just 1.1 seconds at the flag.



Ginetta's Tomlinson won both prototype races in a G57

RESULTS

HANKOOK 24H SILVERSTONE (512 LAPS) 1 Richard Neary/Martin Short/Charles Lamb/Richard Roberts (BMW M3 V8); 2 Ivo Breukers/Rik Breukers/Bert de Heus (SEAT Leon Cup Racer); 3 Phil Quaife/Sami Moutran/Nabil Moutran/Ramzi Moutran (SEAT Leon Cup Racer); 4 Guillaume Roman/Thierry Blaise/Stéphane Ventaja/Sarah Bovy/Bradley Philpot (Peugeot 208 GTI); 5 Jan de Vocht/Thomas Piessens/Erik Crabbe/Wim Meulders/Johan van Loo (BMW 120D); 6 Mark Lemmer/Timur Sardarov/Richard Abra/Mark Poole (BMW M235i Racing Cup). **Class winners Breukers/Breukers/de Heus; Roman/Blaise/Ventaja/Bovy/Philpot; Vocht/Piessens/Crabbe/Meulders/van Loo; Lemmer/Sardarov/Abra/Poole; Wayne Shen/John Shen/Francis Tjia (Renault Clio Cup III). **Fastest lap** Neary. **Pole** Bob Herber (BMW E90 M3). **DUNLOP PROTOTYPE SERIES (BOTH 29 LAPS) 1 Lawrence Tomlinson (Ginetta G57); 2 Paul White (Ginetta); 3 Craig Dolby (Riley MkXXII T DC); 4 Osman Yusuf (Radical SR8); 5 Paul Spencer/Alex Kapadia (Radical); 6 Michael Munemann/Chris Hoy (Ginetta). **CW** Yusuf.****

FL Kapadia. **P** Tomlinson. **RACE 2 1 Tomlinson;** 2 Munemann/Hoy; 3 White; 4 Dolby; 5 Spencer/Kapadia; 6 Yusuf. **CW** Spencer/Kapadia. **FL** Kapadia. **P** Tomlinson. **HRDC COYS TROPHY (15 LAPS) 1 John Spiers (TVR Griffith); 2 Mike Whitaker/Michael Whitaker (TVR Griffith); 3 Roberto Giordanelli (Lister Chevrolet); 4 Mark Williams (AC Cobra); 5 James Thorpe (Ford Mustang); 6 Chris Clarkson (Ford Falcon Sprint). **CW** Giordanelli; Thorpe; Augusto Perfetti (Porsche 911S); Brian Small (Ashley MG Midget); Gavin Watson (Alfa Romeo Giulietta Ti); Hyett-Avill (Ford Lotus Cortina); Francis Slevin (Alfa Romeo Giulia Ti Super); Glenn Mason (Austin A35 Academy). **FL** Mike Whitaker. **P** Whitaker/Whitaker. **SUPER 7 INTER SERIES (BOTH 12 LAPS) 1 Danny;** 2 Paul Thacker (R300); 3 Andy West (R300); 4 Justin Armstrong (R300); 5 John Whitehouse (R300); 6 Paul O'Reilly (R300). **CW** Phil Jenkins (SS); Hugo Araujo (G). **FL** West. **P** Killeen. **RACE 2 1 Thacker;** 2 O'Reilly; 3 West; 4 Simon Cassidy (R300); 5 Whitehouse; 6 David Briault (R300). **CW** Adam White (SS); David Saraiva (G). **FL** Thacker). **P** Killeen.**



DONINGTON PARK
MGCC APRIL 3

Consistent Cole spoils Bray comeback

MULTIPLE MG TROPHY CHAMPION
Chris Bray admitted he felt rusty as he climbed back into the cockpit of his ZR 190 for the first time in over a year.

Two action-packed and enthralling races soon corrected that situation as the MG season started with a bang at Donington Park, but the superb Doug Cole prevented 2009, '12 and '14 title-winner Bray from marking his comeback with a victory.

Cole was content to sit behind polesitter Bray in race one, as the number two car built a comfortable lead early on after an explosive start. But Cole bided his time, clawed his way back into contention, and the lead was soon changing hands every lap as the pair squabbled and jostled around every turn.

Behind was an equally intriguing battle for third as series newcomer Lee Sullivan fought Paul Luti and Fergus Campbell in the B class. As with the action up front, the trio swapped places frequently.

However, just as the race was about to reach a thrilling finale, Sam Ray's left-front wheel came off at the Old Hairpin and his ZR 170 flew into the gravel trap. A red flag ended the action prematurely and, after some discussion, the win was awarded to Cole and third place to a jubilant Sullivan.

Despite the disappointing end, fans only had to wait a number of hours for round two, and it did not disappoint.

This time, Cole did not want to sit around in second for long and quickly got past Bray. But the veteran seemed to have the faster car as he hounded his rival at every turn.

Cole's defensive display was outstanding, though, and he continued to thwart Bray into Redgate, when it looked certain the polesitter was about to fly past. Sullivan, again, took third.

While Bray could not celebrate his comeback with a win, Jason Simm had no issues as he powered to a convincing victory in the Cockshoot Cup.

Simm, who missed last season, started on pole but lost his lead to the fast-starting TF LE 500 of Phillip Standish.

Simm got past quickly and regained the lead, but his expected race rival Gary Wetton had less success.

It took him three more laps to get his ZR 190 through at the Old Hairpin, but by that time Simm had disappeared.

Further back, Carl Chadwick was lucky to escape with limited damage to his Midget when he spun and thumped the barriers at the exit of the chicane.

Helen Waddington was less fortunate as her heavy collision with Ian Wright knocked her out of the race and caused the second red flag of the day.

In the MG Cup, Thomas Halliwell got his season off to a flyer with two wins in his ZR, with James Darby and Paul Eales completing the podium both times.

A fascinating four-way scrap, which also included Richard Wilson, was the highlight of race one as the four jostled for position on the opening lap.

Halliwell clearly had the faster car, though, and he dived down the outside of Darby along the main straight.

However, he then jinked to the inside and completed a stunning move to take the lead. He won by over 20 seconds.

Bray (2) led twice on MG Trophy comeback, but was thwarted on both occasions by Cole

In race two, Halliwell was even more dominant as he grabbed the lead on lap one from Eales and commandingly drove into the distance.

In the revamped one-class Metro Cup, Ben Rushworth led from start to finish for a convincing win in his Rover 100 ahead of Mike Williams' Rover Metro and Andrew Ashton's Rover Metro GTI.

Williams and Ashton enjoyed a close battle for second for the majority of the race until Ashton's steering column broke during the final laps.

He slowed, enabling Lee Connell and Oliver Hood to catch him, but their intense battle over fourth allowed Ashton to preserve a big enough gap and hang on to his podium finish.

Despite changing his car prior to the meet, Brian Arculus won in the Iconic 50s Sports Cars & FISCAR race by a commanding 17 seconds from Graham Coles. Arculus was due to race in an Alfa Romeo Giulietta SVZ but the late change made no difference, as he got past Coles on lap two and raced clear to win in his Lotus Elite.

The veteran racer made it a superb double later on with victory in the Equipe GTS. An early pitstop seemed to hurt him but he took advantage of Rob Cull's retirement and held off David Beresford's B Roadster.

Elsewhere, James Dunkley drove faultlessly on his way to victory in the MG Midget/Sprite Challenge, from Edward Reeve and Richard Wildman. Dunkley took the lead from the start and won by 16 seconds.

CHARLIE BENNETT

RESULTS

MG TROPHY (12 LAPS) 1 Doug Cole (ZR 190); 2 Chris Bray (ZR 190); 3 Lee Sullivan (ZR 170); 4 Fergus Campbell (ZR 170); 5 Paul Luti (ZR 170); 6 Jake Fraser-Burns (ZR 170). Class winners Sullivan, William Payne (ZR 160). **Fastest lap** Cole. **Pole** Bray.

RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Cole; 2 Bray +5.760s; 3 Sullivan; 4 Luti; 5 Robin Walker (ZR 190); 6 Campbell.

CW Sullivan, Payne. **FL** Cole. **P** Bray.

COCKSHOOT CUP (11 LAPS) 1 Jason Simm (ZS 180); 2 Gary Wetton (ZR 190) +7.635s; 3 Phillip Standish (TF LE 500); 4 David Morrison (Midget); 5 Ray Collier (ZR 170); 6 Howard Hunt (ZS 180).

CW Morrison, Adam Key (F VVC). **FL** Simm. **P** Simm.

MG CUP (BOTH 14 LAPS) 1 Thomas Halliwell (ZR);

2 James Darby (B GT); 3 Paul Eales (B GT); 4 David Thompson (ZR 170); 5 Richard Wilson (B Roadster); 6 Clive Jones (B Roadster). **CW** Darby, Eales.

FL Halliwell. **P** Dan Ludlow (ZS 180).

RACE 2 1 Halliwell; 2 Darby; 3 Eales; 4 Wilson; 5 Thompson; 6 Shaun Holmes (C GT). **CW** Darby, Eales.

FL Halliwell. **P** Ludlow.

METRO CUP (14 LAPS) 1 Ben Rushworth (Rover 100); 2 Mike Williams (Rover Metro); 3 Andrew Ashton (Rover Metro GTI); 4 Lee Connell (Rover Metro); 5 Oliver Hood (Rover 100); 6 Richard Garrard (MG Metro Turbo). **FL** Williams. **P** Rushworth.

ICONIC 50S SPORTS CARS & FISCAR (14 LAPS)

1 Brian Arculus (Lotus Elite); 2 Graham Coles (MG A Coupe); 3 Jonathan Smare (Lotus Elite); 4 Bob Lines (MG A); 5 Glenn Tollett (MG A Sebring); 6 John Reeve (MG A). **CW** Coles, Tollett, Nick Ashman (MG TC). **FL** Arculus. **P** Smare.

EQUIPE GTS (26 LAPS) 1 Brian Arculus (Lotus Elite);

2 David Beresford (MG B Roadster); 3 Pete Foster (Triumph TR4); 4 Craig Taylor (MG B Roadster); 5 Henry Rice (MG B Roadster); 6 Jonathan Smare (Lotus Elite). **CW** Beresford, Taylor. **FL** Brian White (Triumph TR4). **P** White.

MIDGET/SPRITE CHALLENGE (15 LAPS) 1 James

Dunkley (Midget); 2 Edward Reeve (Midget); 3 Richard Wildman (Midget); 4 Stephen Collier (Midget); 5 Carl Chadwick (Midget); 6 Robin Lackford (Austin Healey Sprite Mk 1). **CW** Wildman, Lackford.

FL Dunkley. **P** Dunkley.



Arculus starred in Lotus Elite in FISCAR and Equipe GTS (pictured) races

WALKER

KIRKISTOWN 500MRCI APRIL 2

Byrne gets to see the other side of the Motorsport Ireland Van Diemen

OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF SEASONS, JAKE Byrne has become pretty familiar with the Motorsport Ireland 'young driver' Van Diemen.

In the hands of prize drive winners such as Niall Murray and Jonny McMullan, the green and yellow machine has been part of the opposition to Byrne's efforts in his family-run Ray, but at Kirkistown Byrne began his own 'prize drive' year and did so in style with a win in distinctly unfriendly conditions.

Morning qualifying had been almost dry and Alan Davidson grabbed pole with Byrne alongside, but the rain had come by the time the first FF1600 race got underway and Byrne wasted no time in getting his nose ahead. His task was made easier on lap three when James Roe tangled with Davidson at Fishermans, the pair ending up undamaged but immovable at trackside. Noel Robinson and Jordan Dempsey brought their Van Diemens home in the podium positions.

Conditions were even worse for race two, but Noel Robinson was undeterred as he returned to winning ways to lead Davidson over the line with Byrne third. Not a surprise result, perhaps, but an astonishing race if only because despite the monsoon conditions, all seventeen starters finished undamaged.

A first Kirkistown visit by some of the Historic FF2000 brigade provided two entertaining races. In race one victory went to Matt Dunne's Royale RP27 after the similar car of Davy Walton reversed out of the lead and into the tyre barrier at the chicane. Fraser Collins' Lola 580 and Iain Rowley's unique Penfold completed the podium. Dunne led the second race for a while too, before a hard-charging Tom Smith arrived from the back of the grid and swept by. Dunne placed second despite a last-lap lunge from Collins, which sent him into the tyres at the Hairpin. Third spot went to Stephen Gardiner's Reynard instead.

A large field of Fiestas provided their usual frenetic action, although the first race ended after just six laps when red flags flew after cars became stranded in the trackside mud. Adrian Finnegan was leading newcomer Daniel Conlon at the time, while water polo star Eorann O'Neill took third. Appropriately in the conditions she also set fastest lap.

Finnegan won the second race too, but not before it had been red-flagged and restarted following an incident at the hairpin. Jonny Forsythe and Conlon took the places. However, some of the midfield antics in zero visibility were hard to credit.

Dan Polley took the main Formula Vee encounter in Luke O'Hara's 'lowline' Sheane, beating early leader Colm Blackburn across the line by less than a second. James Jones took third in his Sheane.

In the earlier race for 'B' and 'C' championship honours, Joe Power proved victorious in his Leastone ahead of the Sheanes of Anthony Cross and Shane McBride.

Roadsports races at Kirkistown have been dominated of late by Jim Larkham's Radical, and

he led both encounters this time, but on both occasions conditions caught him out and others benefited. Race one went to Paul Conn's Crossle 47S ahead of the similar car of John Benson with Mark Francis third in his 1-litre Locost. Race two was much wetter. Paul Thompson's 1-litre Stryker emerged from the gloom ahead of Francis, with Larkham a soggy third.

Max Drennan was victorious ahead of Alan Mackay in the two concurrent races for Global Lights.

RICHARD YOUNG

NORTHERN IRELAND FORMULA FORD 1600 (14 LAPS) 1 Jake Byrne (Van Diemen LA10);

2 Noel Robinson (Van Diemen JL012K); 3 Jordan Dempsey (Van Diemen RF00); 4 Stephen O'Connor (Van Diemen RF90); 5 Mike Todd (Mondiale M84S); 6 Chris Paul (Van Diemen RF97). **Fastest lap** Byrne.

Class win David Nicholl (Reynard FF89). **Pole** Alan Davidson (Mondiale M89S). **RACE 2 (12 LAPS)**

1 Robinson; 2 Davidson; 3 Byrne; 4 Dempsey; 5 James Roe (Van Diemen RF00); 6 Ryan Campbell (Reynard FF89). **FL** Davidson. **CW** Robinson; Davidson; Todd & Hayes Harlow. **P** Davidson.

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD 2000 (14 LAPS) 1 Matt

Dunne (Royale RP27); 2 Fraser Collins (Lola T580); 3 Iain Rowley (Penfold 001); 4 Stephen Gardiner (Reynard SF80); 5 Stuart Olley (Delta T79); 6 Jon Randall (Crossle 31F). **FL** Dunne. **P** Davy Walton (Royale RP27).

RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Tom Smith (Royale RP27);

2 Dunne; 3 Gardiner; 4 John Coinway (Van Diemen RF82); 5 Rowley; 6 Randall. **FL** Smith. **P** Walton.

FORD FIESTA ZETEC (5 LAPS) 1 Adrian Finnegan;

2 Daniel Conlon; 3 Eorann O'Neill; 4 Trevor Roberts; 5 Stuart Agnew; 6 Paul Stewart. **FL** O'Neill. **P** Jonny Forsythe. **RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Finnegan;** 2 Forsythe; 3 Conlon; 4 S Agnew; 5 Thomas Agnew; 6 Mark Stewart. **FL** S Agnew. **P** Forsythe.

FORMULA VEE A CHAMPIONSHIP (11 LAPS)

1 Dan Polley (Loh-Sheane FV98) 2 Colm Blackburn (Leastone JH002); 3 Jones; 4 Power; 5 McBride; 6 Cross. **FL** Polley. **P** Blackburn.

FORMULA VEE B CHAMPIONSHIP (9 LAPS)

1 Joe Power (Leastone JH002); 2 Anthony Cross (Sheane FV10); 3 Shane McBride (Sheane FV98); 4 James Jones (Sheane FV10); 5 Gavin Buckley (Sheane FV99); 6 Paula Moore (Leastone JH004). **FL** Moore. **P** Buckley.

ROADSPORTS (13 LAPS) 1 Paul Conn (2.0 Crossle 47S); 2 John Benson (2.0 Crossle 37S); 3 Mark Francis (1.0 Locost Honda); 4 Jim Larkham (1.5 Radical PR06) 5 Richard Francis (1.0 Westfield Honda); 6 Paul Thompson (1.0 Stryker Honda). **CW** M Francis. **FL** Benson. **P** Larkham. **RACE 2 (11 LAPS)**

1 Thompson; 2 M Francis; 3 Larkham; 4 Conn;

5 R Francis; 6 Graham Moore (1.0 GMS Hnda).

CW Larkham. **FL** Larkham. **P** Larkham.

GLOBAL GT LIGHTS (12 LAPS) 1 Max Drennan;

2 Alan Mackay; 3 Ivor Miller; 4 John Murphy. No other finishers. **FL** Drennan. **P** Drennan.

RACE 2 (11 LAPS) 1 Drennan; 2 Mackay; 3 Mark

Braden; 4 Conor Farrell; 5 Miller; 6 Murphy.

FL Drennan. **P** Drennan.

OULTON PARK
750MC APRIL 2

Cutmore makes his mark to beat new machines

FOLLOWING MUCH INTER-MARQUE hype, with new Spire and Mittell chassis promising to reset the parameters of pace, three-time runner-up John Cutmore won the most eagerly awaited season-opener in 750 Motor Club Road-Going Bike-engined (RGB) championship history on Oulton Park's Island Circuit on Saturday.

Frustratingly winless since he took both of last April's Brands Hatch openers in dramatic circumstances, the Suffolk builder stayed cool while new factory Spire team-mate Billy Albone – quickest by a whopping 2.66s in wet qualifying – snatched defeat from the jaws of victory through an impetuous schoolboy error.

Class debutant Albone, 2014's 750 Formula champion, was six seconds ahead and going away on lap three when he outbraked himself at Hislop's. Rather than zig-zag through the plastic block 'chicane' on the old circuit and re-enter at Knickerbrook, Billy unfathomably opted to traverse the soggy grass to rejoin, succeeding only in running over his nosecone.

Albone could only watch from the adjacent marshals' post as Cutmore staved off Al Boulton (Spire), who survived a moment of his own but kept second ahead of 2013-14 champion Matthew Higginson, who aced the front-engined split in his well-developed and brilliantly driven AB Arion.

Defending titlist Scott Mittell's day started badly, when a loose ignition wire hobbled his new Mittell MC-53's Suzuki engine, leaving him 29th. The Hampshireman scorched to fourth, but with race two's grid based on second-best practice times was faced with having to do it again.

Boulton made a flying start this time, but Albone's patched-up car



was ahead when a three-car mid-pack incident between Lodge and Deer Leap brought out red flags. Albone was caught napping at the restart and as Boulton shot ahead was eighth (with Mittell 14th) half way round lap one.

It all went wrong for Mittell when he dived past Paul Rogers' Contour at Old Hall on lap two, only for Andrew Nelson (MNR GM2) to drop two wheels on the grass ahead of them then nail Mittell amidships as he rejoined, firing Scott's car backwards into the barrier, without personal injury. With time running out the race was voided.

Mark Higginson scored a splendid maiden victory in the Civic Cup in his FN2 model having narrowly fended off Jon Peerless who got the better of autograsser Mark Grice, more used to a twin motorcycle-engined Mini pick-up than his Japanese machine.

Top qualifier Carl Swift started from the pitlane after a frantic radiator change but recovered to fourth. The 1600cc cars left later, from a sub-grid, Dave Buky triumphing over early leaders Chris Coomer and Ben Sharpe, who were split by Antony Turner at the chequer.

Andrew Gaugler scored his maiden victory in the reversed-grid sequel, keeping his smart Yellow Speed car ahead of Swift, whose attempt to pass at Druids

Cutmore was pleased to break winless streak

mid-race was robustly thwarted. James Griffith beat Peerless to third once they had shrugged off a jostling quartet.

Classic Stock Hatch graduate Mervyn Beckett held the early 1600cc advantage, but Coomer shot through to defeat Buky by 0.2s, with Sharpe and Turner third and fourth.

Honours were split between Clive Hudson (Eclipse) and first-time winner Rob Johnston (Cyana) after two cracking Sport Specials contests. Top qualifier Johnston did most of the chasing, but beaten by 0.09s in the slippery opener memorably snatched retribution in the subsequent dash photo-finish.

Cheshire autograss champion Phil Cooper was delighted to finally add his name to Bikesports's winning alumni, the Radical PR6 driver's speed and consistency seeing off the challenge of former Jade racer Alan Hogg, breaking a seven-year sabbatical in the ex-Tim Gray Spire GT3.

Cooper and Darcy Smith (Radical SR4) led a seven-car train in the dry second stanza, in which Philip Knibb – forced to miss race one by driveshaft failure in qualifying – powered his 1500cc Radical SR3 onto the tail of Cooper's 1340cc machine. Joe Stables drove father Richard's PR6 superbly to a close third, with fastest lap.

The 5Club Mazda MX-5s attracted the day's largest grid. BRSCC championship convert Sam Smith put last year's dominant driver Ben Short under enormous pressure in race one, with Will Blackwell-Chambers on his back bumper.

The day's finale was riddled with drama. A first-corner shemozzle forced a stoppage, after which Smith's "brake failure" at the Island hairpin cannoned Short into WB-C, wrecking the latter's right rear corner. Adam Bessell and Roger Chesneau duly outsmarted Kris Greatrex – who with brother Jason



Cooper took his Radical PR6 to a comfortable first Bikesports win

RESULTS

E36 M3 RGB (9 LAPS) 1 Jon Cutmore (Spire GT3S);

2 Alastair Boulton (Spire GT3); 3 Matthew Higginson (AB Arion S2); 4 Scott Mittell (Mittell MC-53); 5 Paul Rogers (Contour RGB09); 6 Tim Hoverd (AB Hovercraft T2A). **Class winner** Higginson.

Fastest lap Albone. **Pole** Albone.

CIVIC CUP (8 LAPS) 1 Mark Higginson; 2 Jon Peerless;

3 Mark Grice; 4 Carl Swift; 5 Luca Diella; 6 James Griffith. **CW** Dave Buky. **FL** Swift. **P** Swift.

RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Andrew Gaugler; 2 Swift;

3 Griffith; 4 Peerless; 5 Grice; 6 Daniel Howard.

CW Chris Coomer. **FL** Grice. **P** Simon Deaton.

SPORT SPECIALS (BOTH 9 LAPS) 1 Clive Hudson

(Eclipse SM1); 2 Rob Johnston (Cyana Mk2); 3 John Moore (Arrow 2); 4 Matthew Booth (MK Indy RR); 5 Adrian Cooper (Procomp LA Gold); 6 Anton Landon (Cyana Mk2). **CW** Moore; Martin Buckland (STM Phoenix). **FL** Johnston. **P** Johnston.

RACE 2 1 Johnston; 2 Hudson; 3 Cooper; 4 Booth;

5 Paul Collingwood (Eclipse SM1); 6 Landon. **CW** Mark Hextall (Westfield SE); David Roberts (Cyana MX500R).

FL Johnston. **P** Johnston.

ROC BIKESPORTS (12 LAPS) 1 Phil Cooper (Radical

PR6); 2 Alan Hogg (Spire GT3); 3 Joe Stables (Radical PR6); 4 Doug Carter (Radical PR6); 5 Richard Wise (Spire GT3); 6 Gary Paterson (Radical SR3). **CW** Wise. **FL** Hogg.

P Cooper. **S** 11. **RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Cooper; 2 Philip Knibb (Radical SR3); 3 Stables; 4 Darcy Smith (Radical SR4); 5 Carter; 6 Wise. CW** Knibb. **FL** Stables. **P** Cooper.

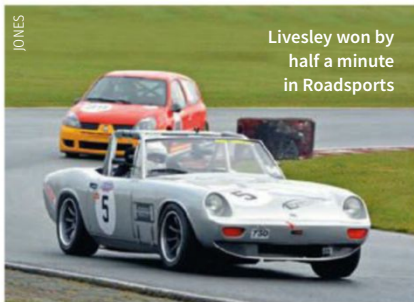
5CLUB RACING MX5 CUP (BOTH 9 LAPS) 1 Ben Short;

2 Sam Smith; 3 Will Blackwell-Chambers; 4 Kris Greatrex; 5 Adam Bessell; 6 Roger Chesneau. **FL** Smith. **P** Short. **S** 32. **RACE 2 1 Bessell; 2 Chesneau; 3 Smith; 4 Greatrex; 5 Jason Greatrex; 6 Sebastian Fisher.**

FL Bessell. **P** Short.

ROADSPORTS (25 LAPS) 1 Alec Livesley (Jensen-

Healey); 2 Steve Hewson (Peugeot 106 GTI); 3 Allan Gibson (Lotus Exige); 4 Peter Isherwood (BMW E46 M3); 5 Darren Langeveld (Renault Clio); 6 Andy Marston/Brett Evans (BMW E46 M3). **CW** Hewson; Langeveld; Bryn Hawkins. **FL** Livesley. **P** Livesley.



Livesley won by half a minute in Roadsports

had sandwiched them after the melee — for memorable maiden podiums.

A drying track levelled the Roadsports enduro, polesitter Alec Livesley chasing Steve Hewson's speedy Peugeot 106 until the mandatory stops, before powering his Jensen-Healey to victory. "I was sideways on the straights before the circuit came to me," said Livesley.

The tussle for third saw Allan Gibson (Lotus Exige) eventually find sufficient grip to displace Darren Langeveld's nippy Renault Clio.

MARCUS PYE



Sayell savours end of long Jedi wait

AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF ENDEAVOUR, ROBERT Sayell took his maiden outright victory in the opening Formula Jedi race. He beat pole-winner Michael Watton to the first corner before fighting off his rival, who ended up spinning at Murrays.

Dan Clowes inherited second place, with Paul Butcher next while Zachary Anderton raced through the field for fourth. Sayell's late charge in the sequel narrowly failed to dislodge Clowes, while third-placed Bradley Hobday was comfortable ahead of the squabbling Kristian Prosser and Butcher.

Richard Styryn's chase of Ed Hayes paid off with a late pass exiting Murrays, securing victory in the Toy Tires Porsches opener, which was shortened due to Garry Lawrence and Garry Goodwin inadvertently parking at Hamilton's. Hayes' race-long chase of Styryn in race two paid off as Styryn ran low on fuel and slowed, while Gerry Taylor held back a determined James Coleman to maintain third. Styryn led Brundle in the reversed-grid third race, while Richard Avery kept Coleman at bay until the latter spun at Coram on the final lap promoting Hayes to third. Pip Hammond completed a 924 hat-trick.

Roger McMahon had to squeeze by fast-starting Chris Oxborough, who stopped on the last lap at Montreal with a jammed throttle, to win the first Alfa Romeo race. Leading TwinSpark Cup racer Tom Hill was elevated to second in the process. In the return match Oxborough was able to hold off McMahon with greater speed on the straights, while in the TSC category Hill triumphed once more.

Two well-judged passing moves from Alan Henderson at Riches dispatched Tom Roche and James Blake-Baldwin on consecutive laps to ensure the perfect start to his defence of the Mazda MX5 SuperCup title. Blake-Baldwin escaped for the victory in race two, with Jonathan Greensmith unable to keep up with Henderson over the final laps.

A dominant display ensured Elliot Wilson was never headed in the opening Fiesta Junior race, while all eyes were focused on the progress of Sikandar Hussain, who started last before impressively carving his way to fifth place. Wilson eased to a double later on; James Waite and Carlito Miracco squabbled over second, which went to the latter, while Roan Quinn made it to fourth from the back of the grid.

In the Mk1 Mazda MX5s, multiple champion Tom Roche proved uncatchable as Oliver Allwood could only watch the leading car disappear. The fast-starting Simon Baldwin completed the podium. Roche repeated the feat in race two, while second place went to Baldwin by inches, having drafted past Allwood on the run to the flag.

In the Group B race, Jack Warry held off the persistent Patrick Collins, while Bryn Griffiths won a race-long dispute for third with Kevin Brent.

After Sam Priest had tagged the back of Nick Sanderson on the opening lap of the senior Fiestas,

for which he was later penalised, Aaron Thompson took advantage to lead the race. He was later briefly unseated by Priest, before reasserting himself. Priest made no errors in race two, taking a dominant victory, while Kevin Stirling nearly pipped Thompson for second on the run to the line.

LEWIS BEALES

FORMULA JEDI (BOTH 11 LAPS) 1 Robert Sayell;

2 Dan Clowes; 3 Paul Butcher; 4 Zachary Anderton; 5 Jason Dixon; 6 Kristian Prosser. **Fastest lap** Sayell.

Pole Michael Watton. **RACE 2 1 Clowes; 2 Sayell;**

3 Bradley Hobday; 4 Prosser; 5 Butcher; 6 Stuart Abbott.

FL Clowes. **P** Clowes.

TOYO TIRES PORSCHES (5 LAPS) 1 Richard Styryn

(Boxster); 2 Ed Hayes (Boxster); 3 Gerry Taylor (Boxster); 4 Richard Avery (Boxster); 5 Nick Hull (Boxster); 6 Angus Archer (Boxster). **Class winner** Pip Hammond (924).

FL Hayes. **P** Styryn. **RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Hayes;**

2 Styryn; 3 Taylor; 4 James Coleman (Boxster); 5 Avery; 6 Alex Stocker (Boxster). **CW** Hammond. **FL** Styryn. **P** Styryn.

RACE 3 (9 LAPS) 1 Styryn; 2 Avery; 3 Hayes; 4 Coleman;

5 Taylor; 6 Garry Lawrence (Boxster). **CW** Hammond.

FL Styryn. **P** Lawrence.

ALFA ROMEO CHAMPIONSHIP (BOTH 9 LAPS) 1 Roger

McMahon (147 GTA); 2 Tom Hill (156); 3 Andy Hancock (156); 4 Stephen Potts (156); 5 James Browning (147); 6 Richard Stevens (145). **CW** Hill. **FL** McMahon.

P McMahon. **RACE 2 1 Christopher Oxborough (75 V6);**

2 McMahon; 3 Ray Foley (147 GTA); 4 Hill; 5 Hancock; 6 Potts. **CW** Foley; Hill. **FL** McMahon. **P** McMahon.

MAZDA MX5 SUPERCUP (8 LAPS) 1 Alan Henderson;

2 Tom Roche; 3 James Blake-Baldwin; 4 Jonathan Greensmith; 5 Liam Murphy; 6 Alex Preston. **FL** Roche.

P Blake-Baldwin. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Blake-Baldwin;**

2 Henderson; 3 Greensmith; 4 Murphy; 5 Will Chappell; 6 Jack Harding. **FL** Blake-Baldwin. **P** Henderson.

FIESTA JUNIOR (7 LAPS) 1 Elliot Wilson; 2 Carlito

Miracco; 3 James Waite; 4 Harry Gooding; 5 Sikandar Hussain; 6 Jack Davidson. **FL** Wilson. **P** Wilson. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Wilson; 2 Miracco; 3 Waite; 4 Roan Quinn;**

5 Gooding; 6 Lochlan Bearman. **FL** Waite. **P** Wilson.

MAZDA MX5 GROUP A (BOTH 9 LAPS) 1 Tom Roche;

2 Oliver Allwood; 3 Simon Baldwin; 4 James Harris; 5 Michael Fisk; 6 Richard Breland. **FL** Roche. **P** Roche.

RACE 2 1 Roche; 2 Baldwin; 3 Allwood; 4 Fisk; 5 Paul Tucker; 6 Clive Powles. FL Roche. **P** Roche.

GROUP B (7 LAPS) 1 Jack Warry; 2 Patrick Collins;

3 Bryn Griffiths; 4 Kevin Brent; 5 Michael Close; 6 Russ Lindsay. **FL** Warry. **P** Ivan Leary.

QUAIFE FIESTA CHAMPIONSHIP (9 LAPS) 1 Aaron

Thompson (ST); 2 Jamie Going (ST); 3 Simon Horrobin (ST); 4 Kevin Stirling (ST); 5 Alfonso Skriczka (ST); 6 Nick Sanderson (ST). **CW** Alastair Kellett (Zetec S); Peter Dendy-Sadler (Si); Kieran White (Zetec). **FL** Samuel Priest.

P Priest. **RACE 2 (7 LAPS) 1 Priest; 2 Thompson; 3 Stirling;**

4 Horrobin; 5 Nathan Edwards (ST); 6 Skriczka. **CW** Kellett; Dendy-Sadler; White. **FL** Priest. **P** Priest.



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RESULTS

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP (ALL 9 LAPS)

1 Vic Covey Jr; 2 Hannah Chapman; 3 Ian Munro; 4 Des Wheatley; 5 Paul Bell; 6 Jock Borthwick. **Fastest lap** Daniel Dreelan. **Pole** Covey Jr. **RACE 2 1 Covey Jr;** 2 Munro +1.210s; 3 Dominic Wheatley; 4 Bell; 5 William Blake; 6 Brandon Walsh. **FL** Borthwick. **P** Covey Jr. **RACE 3 1 Blake;** 2 Dylan O'Donnell +0.125s; 3 Borthwick; 4 Bell; 5 Dominic Wheatley; 6 Covey Jr. **FL** Covey Jr. **P** O'Donnell.

SALOON AND SPORTSCARS (12 LAPS)

1 Ian Donaldson (Mitsubishi Evo 9); 2 Colin Simpson (Marcos Mantis); 3 Paul Brydon (BMW M3); 4 Mark Dawson (SEAT Leon Cupra); 5 Phil Dryburgh (Ginetta G50); 6 Graham Robertson (BMW E46 M3). **Class winners** Simpson, William Robson (Ford Focus RS), Charlie Fraser (Westfield). **FL** Donaldson. **P** Adam Kindness (Subaru Impreza). **RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Dryburgh;** 2 Brydon; 3 Dawson; 4 Scott Tollan (Escort Cosworth); 5 Robertson; 6 Robson. **CW** Tollan, Robson, Fraser. **FL** Donaldson. **P** Donaldson.

BMW CHAMPIONSHIP (15 LAPS) 1 Greig

Sutherland; 2 David McNaughton; 3 Cliff Harper; 4 Gary Clark; 5 Neil MacInnes; 6 Lee Elrick. **FL** Harper. **P** Sutherland. **RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 McNaughton;** 2 Clark; 3 Harper; 4 Elrick; 5 MacInnes; 6 Steven Goldie. **FL** McNaughton. **P** Sutherland.

FORMULA FORD 1600 (BOTH 12 LAPS)

1 Jordan Gronkowski (Van Diemen JL012K); 2 Neil MacLennan (Ray GR09); 3 Jamie Thorburn (Ray GR15); 4 Matthew Cowley (Van Diemen JL13); 5 Sebastian Melrose (Ray GR14); 6 David Thorburn (Ray GR15). **CW** Matthew Chisholm (Van Diemen RF92). **FL** Gronkowski. **P** Gronkowski. **RACE 2 1 MacLennan;** 2 Jamie Thorburn; 3 Gronkowski; 4 Melrose; 5 Cowley; 6 Chisholm. **CW** Chisholm. **FL** MacLennan. **P** Gronkowski.

CLASSIC SPORTS AND SALOONS

(BOTH 12 LAPS) 1 Harry Simpson; 2 Raymond Boyd (Porsche 911); 3 Stan Bernard (Porsche 911); 4 Alex Montgomery (MGB GT V8); 5 Jimmy Crow (Ford Escort); 6 Ian Daltrey (Alfa Romeo Alfusud). **CW** Boyd, Montgomery, Crow, Daltrey. **FL** Tommy Gilmartin (Morgan +8). **P** Simpson. **RACE 2 1 Simpson;** 2 Boyd; 3 Gilmartin; 4 Bernard; 5 Montgomery; 6 Crow. **CW** Boyd, Gilmartin, Crow, Daltrey. **FL** Gilmartin. **P** Simpson.

SCOTTISH LEGENDS (8 LAPS) 1 David

Hunter; 2 John Paterson; 3 Billy Wait; 4 Ivor Greenwood; 5 Ross Marshall; 6 Pino Palazzo. **FL** Paterson. **P** Stewart Black. **RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Paterson;** 2 Hunter; 3 Marshall; 4 Black; 5 Greenwood; 6 Palazzo. **FL** Paterson. **P** Paterson.

FINAL (10 LAPS) 1 Paterson;

2 Hunter; 3 Marshall; 4 Greenwood; 5 Black; 6 Palazzo. **FL** Paterson. **P** Billy Wait.

FORD FIESTAS (9 LAPS) 1 Wayne Macaulay

(Fiesta ST); 2 Peter Cruickshank (Fiesta ST); 3 Kevin Whyte (Fiesta ST); 4 Jim Deans (Fiesta XR2); 5 Steven Gray (Fiesta XR2); 6 Stephen Ward (Fiesta ST). **CW** Jim Deans (Fiesta XR2). **FL** Macaulay. **P** Macaulay.

RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 Macaulay;

2 Cruickshank; 3 Whyte; 4 Ward; 5 Gray; 6 Deans. **CW** Gray. **FL** Macaulay. **P** Macaulay.



Ex-champ Covey Jr storms back to Cooper Cup brace

FORMER CHAMPION VIC COVEY JR RETURNED to the Scottish Mini Cooper Cup and found himself in the thick of the action after taking pole position for the first race.

Hannah Chapman made the better start and led the first eight laps, but Covey then got a better run out of Scotsman on the final lap and bravely ran side-by-side through Butcher's to grab the lead and the win. The drama continued at the hairpin as Ian Munro made a late attempt to grab second, but Chapman defended.

At the start of race two Chapman and Munro made contact, with Chapman coming off worse as she spun down the hill at Duffus.

This created enough of a gap for Covey to scamper into a one-second lead over Munro, which he held to the flag. Dominic Wheatley emerged at the head of a four-car battle for third that went down to the wire, resolved only at the final corner.

The top eight was reversed for race three and newcomer Dylan O'Donnell did a sterling job to maintain the race lead until the last corner when William Blake pounced to take the win.

Reigning Saloon and Sportscar champion Ian Donaldson immediately took advantage of the difficult wet conditions in his Mitsubishi to grab the lead from Adam Kindness in his Subaru. Kindness, who had started on pole, continued to slip back and retired on lap nine. Colin Simpson took second, but it was Paul Brydon who provided the entertainment on his way to third place having started last.

With drier conditions for race two, Simpson made the better start and led the first six laps but

was called in with smoke pouring from his Marcos. Donaldson survived a high-speed off down the hill at Duffus before suffering a blown engine soon after taking the lead. Having just inherited first place, Kindness also suffered an engine problem and retired. With broken cars littering the track, the race was red-flagged and Phil Dryburgh won.

Greig Sutherland headed David McNaughton from lights to flag in the first BMW Compact race to score his first win. McNaughton fought back in race two and briefly grabbed the lead on lap four. They were joined by Gary Clark and Cliff Harper until lap seven when Sutherland collided with a backmarker and retired. Thereafter, McNaughton settled into a rhythm and pulled away for his first victory.

Jordan Gronkowski looked the most confident in the wet conditions of the first Scottish Formula Ford race, coming home three seconds clear of Neil MacLennan. However, MacLennan finished the weekend at the top of the standings after taking the win in the dry race two as Gronkowski slipped back to third behind a spirited Jamie Thorburn.

Harry Simpson dominated the Classic Sports and Saloons races after Tommy Gilmartin spun off in race one. Despite starting at the back, Gilmartin finished third in race two, while Raymond Boyd performed consistently to take two seconds.

Reigning champion John Paterson took two wins in Legends despite the best efforts of David Hunter, who won the first heat. Wayne Macaulay dominated both Fiesta races, although the highlight was a spirited battle for second between Peter Cruickshank and Kevin Whyte in race two.

JONATHAN CRAWFORD

WHAT'S ON

A dose of virtual reality

YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THE NEW Sky Formula 1 deal that takes the sport from 2019-24 exclusively on pay-per-view in the UK, but the broadcaster may have some surprises in store.

A couple of weeks ago, Sky announced it would be launching a new studio producing virtual reality content. The technology creates a 360-degree video by taking the traditional TV format and multiplying it so the viewer can see what's all around them. To watch it, you just need a headset, into which you slot your phone, and an app.

The broadcaster was at Barcelona testing to film VR content with Williams and a special version of *Ted's Notebook*. The latter will allow the viewer to walk with Ted Kravitz as he roams the pitlane and speaks to drivers in the paddock, right in the thick of the action.

"You've seen shots of the garage before, you've seen shots of that car before, but you've never had the feeling of being in that car," says Sky Sports producer Steve Smith. "You get the feeling of being behind the scenes and being part of that media scrum. This is building on our appetite for new technology, also building on the fact that people's viewing habits are changing."

Having tried the headset, it certainly feels like you're in the paddock, with the



ability to look at anything you want. You are, of course, constrained to where the camera is filming – you can't just wander into the Williams motorhome and grab a Martini from the Terrazza bar.

At times it can be hard to determine where you need to look. With TV it's quite easy, since you're fixed on one frame, whereas with 360 you find it

Rapidly evolving VR tech can place the viewer in the midst of the pitlane action

difficult to decide what's important.

"We know how to tell traditional stories so well that you're never going to get a better way to watch a football match than the way we shoot football matches," says Sky's VR director Richard Nockles. "So sticking a 360 camera on the side of a football field is never going to give you that same sort of detail that you get from viewing it traditionally on TV?"

This is perhaps where the concept starts to appeal more as a second-screen viewing experience. Much like the timing-screen apps on our phones, it seems Sky's VR headset could be a gateway into providing viewers with a 'red-button'-type service, which they can access as the action unfolds live.

Practice, for example, could be more interesting for viewers if they could watch the cars trackside, as Martin Brundle points out how each driver approaches a corner.

Much like 3D broadcasts, the challenge



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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube WEBBER TRIES TO HOLD OFF ALONSO

Search for: F1 Classic Onboard: Bahrain 2004

As the dust (or should that be desert sand?) settles on this year's Bahrain Grand Prix, those missing the aural delights of the three-litre V10 era should check out Renault's Fernando Alonso hunting down and passing a feisty Mark Webber, doing his utmost in his Jaguar, during the 2004 race.



A headset, a phone and an app are all that's needed for 360 vision



CLASSIC F1: CHINA 2007

SKY SPORTS F1
Monday 1600

This race is infamous for McLaren's tyre blunder, which led to Lewis Hamilton ending up in the gravel trap in the pit entry while seemingly on course for a world championship in his rookie year. But there's plenty of other things to enjoy in this dramatic grand prix.



INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

BLANCPAIN GT SPRINT CUP

Rd 1/5
Misano, Italy
April 9-10
WATCH ON TV
Live: BT Sport ESPN, Sunday 0730

MOTOGP

Rd 3/18
Austin, Texas, USA
April 10
WATCH ON TV
Live: BT Sport 2, Sunday 1445

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Rd 7/36
Texas Motor Speedway, USA
April 9
WATCH ON TV
Live: Premier Sports, Sunday 1800

SUPER GT

Rd 1/8
Okayama, Japan
April 10

comes with producing live content. Sky is focusing on the post-production element, because of the amount of work that goes into stitching the different pieces of footage together. However, the scope for live 360 is still on the horizon as the platform grows.

"It's been worked on very hard," says Sky's head of VR production Neil Graham. "I was with a couple of companies in San Francisco last week and they are producing cameras that can stitch and output that live, so that will come soon."

There's a fear that VR will become the next gimmick that TV companies will push onto consumers. But the concept offers an intriguing glimpse of a more immersive experience, which plays on the advent of social-media engagement and helps viewers feel as though they are participating in the event as opposed to sitting in their living rooms.

RORY MITCHELL

UK MOTORSPORT

OULTON PARK BRSCC

April 9
FF1600, Honda VTec, Minis, Production GTi

ROCKINGHAM BRSCC

April 9-10
Pickup Trucks, Kumho BMWs, Hyundai Coupes, Historic Touring/Classic Saloons, Pre-1983 Touring Cars, Pre-1993 Touring Cars, Pre-2003 Saloon Cars, Pre-2005 Production Touring Cars, Blue Oval Saloons,

Thunder Saloons, Classic VW, Historic Thunder Saloons, BVC8, Thoroughbred Sports

BRANDS HATCH

BRSCC
April 9-10
Caterham Roadsport, Caterham Tracksport, Caterham Supersport, Fun Cup, BMW Compact Cup, 500cc F3, Touring Greats, HRDC Academy, HRDC A Series

SNETTERTON CSCC

April 9-10
Ford Pumas, Jaguar Saloons, Tin Tops, Swinging Sixties, Future Classics, Magnificent 7s, Modern Classics, Classic K, New Millennium, Open Series

CIRCUIT OF IRELAND RALLY

April 9-11
European Rally Championship, British Rally Championship







THE ARCHIVE

Mike Hawthorn stops for a 'rapid' change of rear Englebert rubber for his Ferrari Dino 246 on his way to second place in the 1958 Italian Grand Prix.

LAT Photographic

THE BUCKET LIST

VISIT THE
SHELSLEY
WALSH
HILLCLIMB



WALDER

DISCIPLINES HAVE FLOCKED TO THE HILLCLIMBER'S HOLY GRAIL, SHELSLEY Walsh, Worcestershire's temple of speed, since August 12, 1905, when Ernest Instone and passengers (!) ascended the 1000-yard course in 77.6 seconds on a 35hp Daimler. Gravel soon gave way to a sealed surface, but the farm track's contours remain identical, making it the world's oldest operational motorsport venue. Since August 2008 the outright record has stood at 22.58s to Martin Groves in a bespoke 3.5-litre Gould-NME GR55B single-seater.

The first thing that strikes newcomers to Shelsley (as habitués refer to it) is how steep and narrow it is. Hewn into a forested fold in the picturesque Teme Valley, it rises 328 feet. The second is raw speed. Through explosive acceleration and phenomenal downforce the quickest cars cover the first 64ft inside two seconds, hit 140mph before Bottom Ess and towards 150mph blasting across a meadow to the finish.

The Midland Automobile Club's jewel hosted the second round of the inaugural RAC British Championship in 1947, won by champion-elect Raymond Mays who had also been nigh on invincible pre-war in ERA R4D. Alongside Prescott (near Cheltenham), Bouley Bay on the island of Jersey and Northern Ireland's Craigtantlet, Shelsley has been on the calendar ever since.

Mays was a pioneering car builder in the '20s, taking on and beating Basil Davenport's fiendishly fast GN Spider, but the quest to reach the summit ever quicker has seen extraordinary and ingenious 'Shelsley Specials' developed in every era. Yet you can still compete in classes for road-registered saloons and sports cars.

Get a taste of this compelling and exacting sport – whose kings include triple World Touring Car champion Andy Priaulx – by booking a Driving School day. **WARNING:** a basic car will hone your skills against the clock initially, but a pukka racer may become an aspiration when the bug bites. Co-drive with a friend to halve the investment! 🍷

MARCUS PYE

The iconic Shelsley Walsh hillclimb attracts some of the most eclectic entries in British motorsport

AT A GLANCE

Where 12 miles NW of Worcester, off the B4204
When Seven Speed Hillclimbs, May-September; Driving Schools (April 19, May 17, June 14, August 9 this year – contact the MAC on 01886 812211 or www.shelsley-walsh.co.uk

for brochure and availability); monthly Breakfast Clubs and socials
Cost Driving Schools £185; Speed Hillclimb competitor entries £133-£137 per day (MAC members £123-£127);

nominal charge for Breakfast Clubs
Key tip Arrive early to fully experience the unique paddock ambience and history before runs begin. Then head for the spectacular Bottom Ess vantage point



LAT



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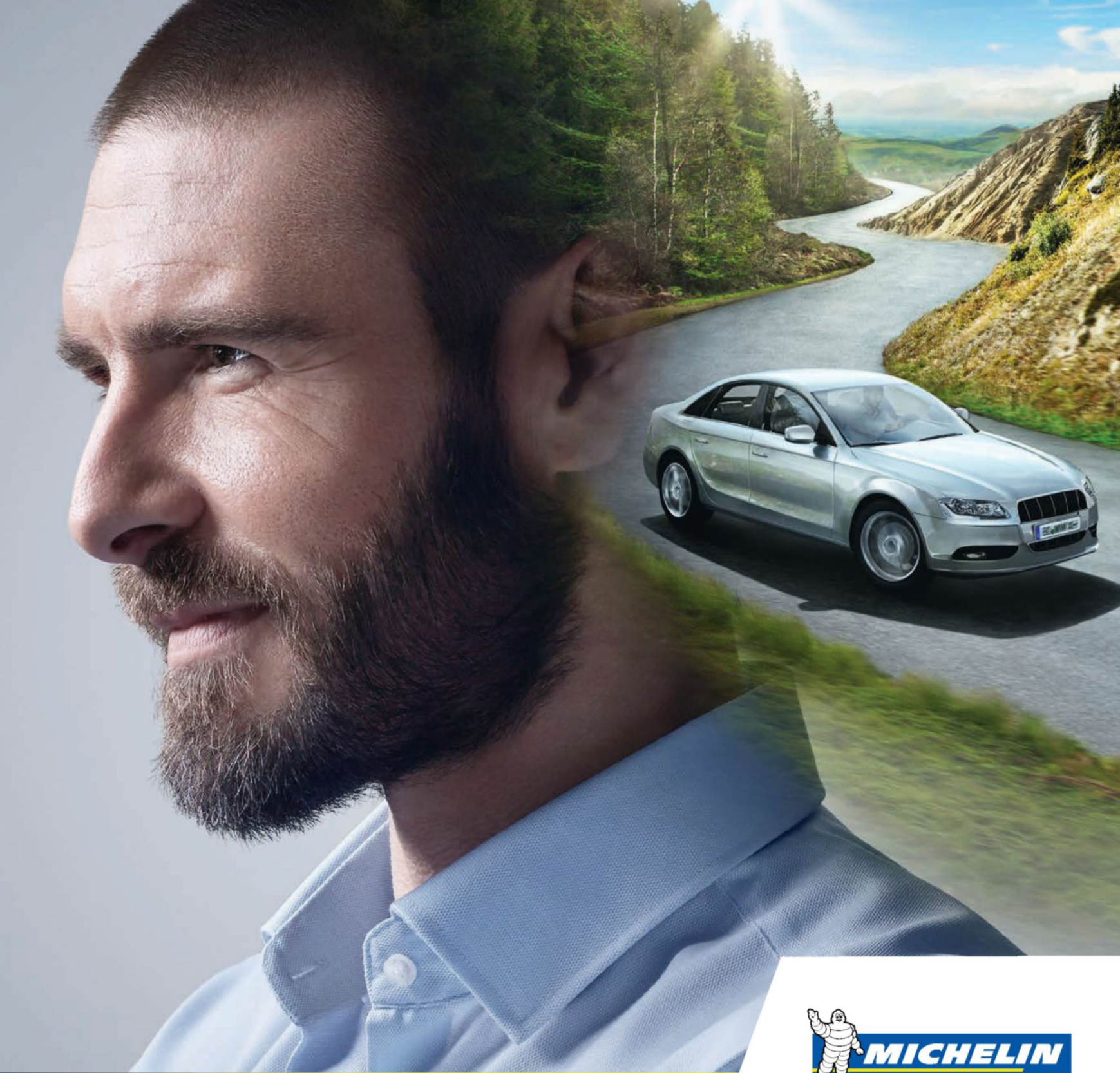


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