

F1 2025 Sainz confirmed at Williams

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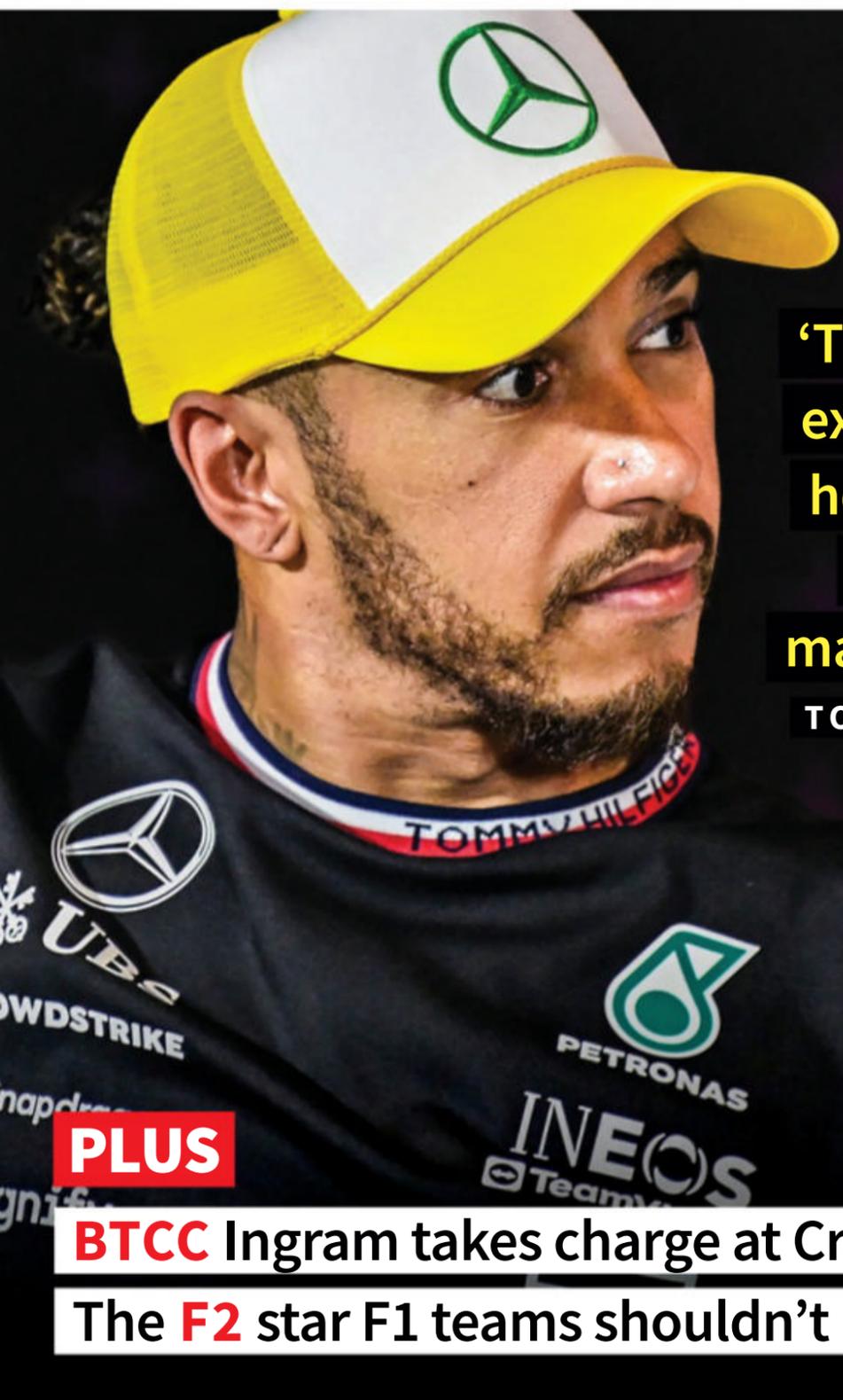
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BELGIAN GP

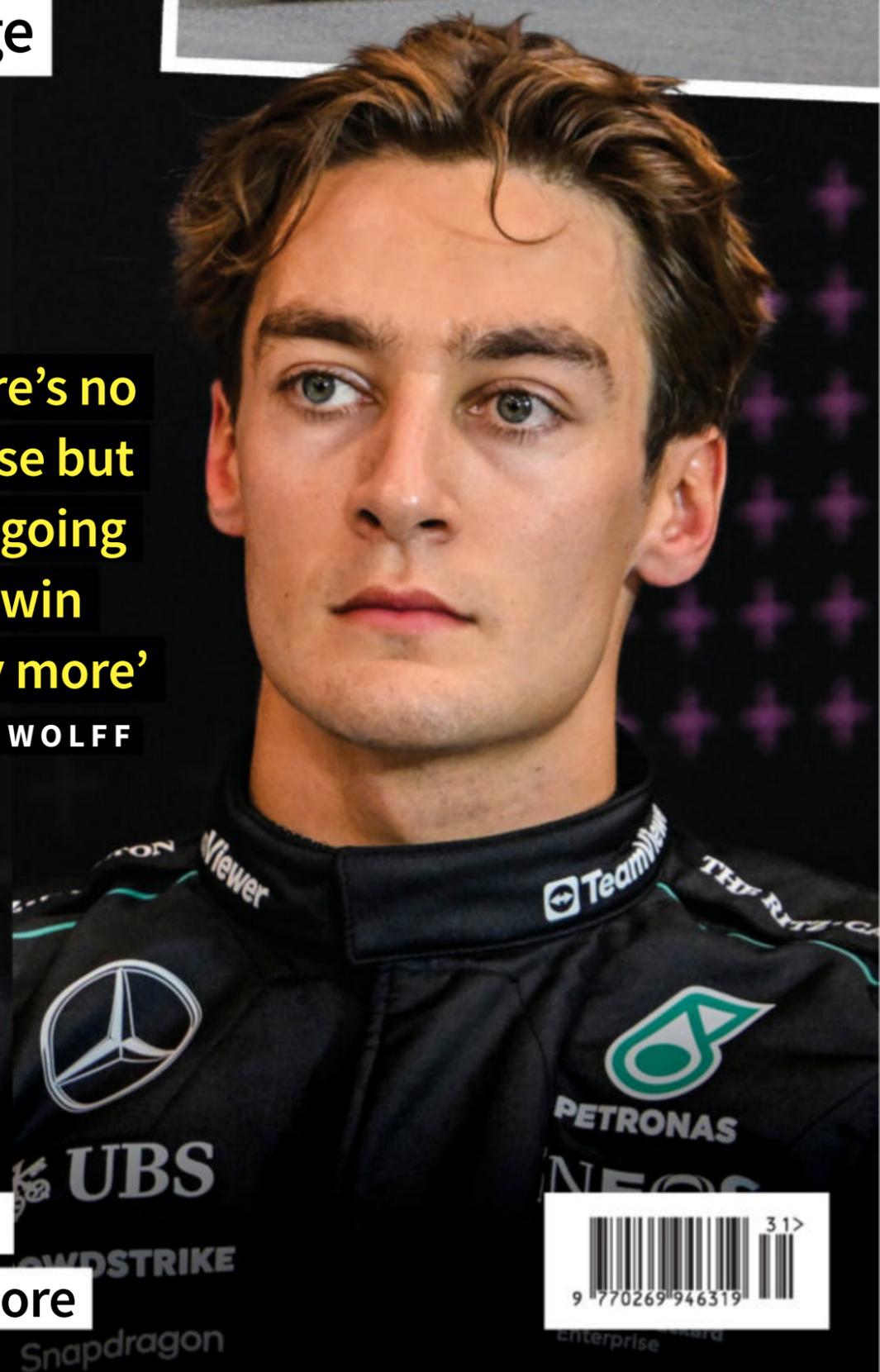
Hamilton wins Russell's race

Mercedes takes shock Spa victory
but disqualification robs George



'There's no
excuse but
he's going
to win
many more'

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PLUS

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SCAN ME



Another surprisingly good F1 race, shame about the afters

It's always disappointing when drivers lose victories through no fault of their own. George Russell's inspired call to switch to a one-stopper at last weekend's Belgian Grand Prix appeared to have earned him a surprise victory against team-mate Lewis Hamilton, only for his Mercedes to be 1.5kg underweight. Exclusion was inevitable.

Some have suggested that there should be a margin, or the penalty should only apply to the team, but Formula 1 squads would abuse either approach. In professional sport, competitors are looking for the tiniest of advantages, so the fewer grey areas the better. There was no suggestion of wrongdoing in Belgium, merely a mistake with clear consequences, and Mercedes rightly did not argue. It won't go down as one of Hamilton's best wins, but perhaps it can be seen as payback for the outrageous penalty that cost him at Spa in 2008.

As well as all our usual GP coverage, which starts on page 14, we take a look at the F1 driver market (p4), which has been very busy recently. Carlos Sainz heading to Williams could be a shrewd move for both, and Esteban Ocon at Haas will provide a stern challenge for 2025 F1 rookie Ollie Bearman. But we've now exhausted all our vaguely sensible theories for why Red Bull persists with Sergio Perez (p11).

F1 is now on its summer break, but we're not. Our 'half-term report', grading all the drivers, will be part of next week's issue (8 August), which will also include the Formula E season review and a celebration of the legendary Lancia Stratos as it hits 50. We'll also have our usual mix of specials and world motorsport coverage before F1 returns at Zandvoort on 25 August.



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PIT + PADDOCK



Albon (left) and Sainz will be team-mates at Williams

Sainz commits to Williams and Ocon moves to Haas as 2025 grid takes shape

FORMULA 1

Formula 1's 2025 driver market finally made substantial progress over the Belgian Grand Prix weekend as Carlos Sainz and Esteban Ocon announced their next moves, while Sergio Perez was handed a reprieve by Red Bull.

After losing his Ferrari seat to Lewis Hamilton for 2025, Sainz had been the key figure in F1's silly season for months as the highest-profile free agent on the market. Since the 29-year-old faced a key decision on his F1 future, he was keen to take his time and explore every avenue available to him. An early offer from Sauber/Audi was followed by talks with Williams and an eleventh-hour bid by Alpine, while Sainz (below) also did not want to miss out on

any unlikely opportunities opening up at Red Bull or Mercedes.

With both the Audi and Alpine projects undergoing significant changes in the background, Sainz settled on Williams as the best option left on the table, signing a deal that ties him to Grove for at least 2025 and 2026.

Williams is languishing in ninth in the 2024 constructors' standings as F1 heads into the summer break, but Sainz was convinced by team boss James Vowles's clear roadmap to bring the famous team back towards the front of the midfield.

"It is no secret that this year's driver market has been exceptionally complex for various reasons and that it has taken me some time to announce my decision," said Sainz on Monday. "However, I am fully confident that Williams is the right place for me to continue my F1 journey and I am extremely proud of joining such a historic and successful team. The ultimate goal of bringing Williams back to where it belongs, at the front of the grid, is a challenge that I embrace with excitement and positivity."

Sainz will join Alex Albon, who committed to the team until at least 2026 at the start of this season, in what Vowles called a "formidable" driver pairing. "Carlos joining Williams is a strong statement of intent from both parties," said Vowles. "Carlos has demonstrated time and again that he is one of the most talented drivers on the grid, with race-

winning pedigree, and this underlines the upwards trajectory we are on. In Alex and Carlos, we will have one of the most formidable driver line-ups on the grid."

Sainz's arrival means Logan Sargeant is heading towards the exit at Williams after two seasons, with the American struggling to hit the target of consistently matching Albon. It is also affecting Sauber's Valtteri Bottas, who was vying with Sainz for the same seats and might now find a home at Alpine or stay where he is.

Later on Monday, Red Bull decided to back Perez to turn his disappointing form around. Perez had started 2024 on the front foot, with several podiums alongside Max Verstappen, but his performances severely deteriorated from May onwards. Since the Miami GP, Perez has collected only 28 points compared to Verstappen's 141, with the Mexican dropping from second to seventh in the standings.

It is crucial to Red Bull constructors' championship aspirations for Perez to get out of his slump, with McLaren cutting its deficit to 42 points in Belgium. Team management, including principal Christian Horner and advisor Helmut Marko, gathered at the squad's headquarters in Milton Keynes on the Monday after the Spa round to consider their options, and afterwards Horner informed the factory staff that Perez would remain on board for the time being. Red Bull's options to replace Perez, who only signed a contract



BAGNALL/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Big changes in Sauber/Audi and Alpine F1 programmes

FORMULA 1

Audi CEO Gernot Dollner has made drastic changes to the German marque's Formula 1 programme, replacing team CEO Andreas Seidl and chairman Oliver Hoffmann with former Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto (right).

Seidl and Hoffmann faced the axe after getting involved in a power struggle behind the scenes, coupled with Sauber's disappointing lack of progress this year as it ramps up for Audi's full works entry in 2026.

Audi announced its F1 bid two years ago but, despite accelerating its full takeover of the Sauber group this year, its integration into the Swiss-based squad and its ability to attract talent has not gone as smoothly as hoped.

Binotto's wide-ranging responsibilities appear to be an effort by Dollner to give him full freedom to do what he thinks is best for the squad rather than being mired in boardroom politics. The Hinwil squad's current team representative Alessandro Alunni Bravi believes that Binotto joining the Audi F1 effort should therefore "change the speed" of its Sauber takeover.

"The targets are clear; to have full responsibility and efficiency in the decision-making process," said Alunni Bravi. "And I think the fact that Mattia having a clear leadership reporting directly to Audi AG CEO Gernot Dollner is an important sign of this new process, that will help us to even further accelerate this transformation."

Binotto, who was set to start today (1 August), is expected to bring in a team principal to report to him, and will also have to make a call on the identity of Nico Hulkenberg's teammate. Hulkenberg is joining from



AUDIAG

Haas, and with Carlos Sainz heading to Williams it has become more likely that one of Sauber's current drivers, Valtteri Bottas and Zhou Guanyu, remains on board.

Binotto joins Audi after a long career at Ferrari, where he grew into the role of the team principal in 2019-22.

Elsewhere in the midfield, Alpine is making further changes, with team boss Bruno Famin to step down during the summer break. Famin, who is the vice-president of Alpine's motorsport programme, was brought in on an interim basis to replace Otmar Szafnauer last July.

Famin will now return to a background role with the Renault-owned operation, which was announced during Friday's team principal press conference at Spa. Autosport sources have indicated that favourite to replace Famin is Oliver Oakes, the team principal of the successful Hitech F3 and F2 teams.

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P11 OPINION

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Perez remains at Red Bull

extension two months ago, were limited to RB duo Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda, and reserve Liam Lawson.

Meanwhile, Alpine exile Esteban Ocon also announced his next move on the Thursday of the Belgian GP, signing what was announced as a multi-year deal with Haas. Ocon will partner Ferrari junior and F1 rookie Ollie Bearman in an all-new line-up replacing Sauber-bound Nico Hulkenberg and Kevin Magnussen.

"I'm delighted we've secured Esteban Ocon's services for Haas," said team principal Ayao Komatsu. "I've obviously been aware of his talents for a long time. It was vital we had a driver with experience in beside Oliver Bearman next year, but Esteban's only 27 – he's still young with a lot to prove as well. I think we have a hungry, dynamic driver pairing."

Ocon has endured a fraught relationship with his current Alpine team recently and is happy to restart his career at Haas after being won over by Komatsu's plans. "This conversation started quite a long time ago and Ayao really convinced me," Ocon said. "They have very clear plans of improving and you can see that this year."

FILIP CLEEREN



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Can changes help Alpine and Sauber move up the grid?

F1 decides against points tweak for 2025

FORMULA 1

Formula 1's points system will remain unchanged in 2025 after teams unanimously voted against proposed tweaks in the latest FIA F1 Commission meeting last week.

In April, several midfield teams started a push to revisit the series' long-standing points system handing out points to the top 10 finishers, because a split between the top and bottom five teams made it hard for them to score points. Some teams argued that extending the points-paying positions to the top 12, or even further down the field, would give the lower-end teams more to fight for.

A vote on the proposal was deferred to the next F1 Commission meeting, which took place in London ahead of last weekend's Belgian Grand Prix. With F1 2024's initial split between the top and bottom five no longer being in place, it was



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agreed that the points system would remain unchanged after all for 2025.

The Commission also agreed to increase the minimum weight allocation for the drivers from 80kg to 82kg "in the interests of driver well-being", with the minimum car weight increasing from 798kg to 800kg for 2025. It was also agreed that any costs relating to maternity/paternity leave, sick leave and team entertainment

will remain excluded from F1's cost cap.

In the meeting, which was attended by all 10 teams, F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali and FIA single-seater director Nikolas Tombazis, the FIA provided an update to the timeline finalising the 2026 regulations, with an extraordinary F1 Commission meeting on the subject set to take place on 2 October.

FILIP CLEEREN

Vandoorne and Hughes join forces at Maserati

FORMULA E

Ex-Formula 1 driver Stoffel Vandoorne and Briton Jake Hughes will race for the Maserati MSG Formula E team for the 2024-25 season.

Maserati MSG announced last week that it would be splitting with this year's partnership of Maximilian Guenther and Jehan Daruvala, before confirming on Monday that Hughes and Vandoorne would join the team for an undisclosed length of time.

Hughes joins after two seasons with McLaren, during which time he has shown impressive one-lap pace, taking four pole positions and his maiden Formula E podium this year in Shanghai. Prior to racing in the electric championship, Hughes was a reserve driver for the Maserati team under its previous



guise of Venturi.

"I'm over the moon to be joining Maserati MSG Racing," said the 30-year-old. "The success that the team has had, as one of the founding teams in Formula E, speaks for itself. On a personal level,

I have worked with the team previously, so I know them well and I'm looking forward to going back.

"I know that the season has only just finished but I honestly can't wait to get over to the HQ in Monaco and start working with the

engineers, get on the simulator and really get cracking with our prep for season 11. This marks the start of an exciting new chapter in my career, and I know that the best is yet to come."

Vandoorne joins after struggling to match the pace of two-time champion and team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne at DS Penske, registering just one podium in two years. The move means that the 2022 Formula E champion will remain within the Stellantis family.

"I'm excited to start working with the team," said the Belgian. "Although I haven't worked directly with them before, I know the team well, both from my time at DS Penske but also from my time with Mercedes, when we shared a powertrain with Venturi."

STEFAN MACKLEY



WRC Toyota will run special liveries on the cars of Kalle Rovanner and Sebastien Ogier for this week's World Rally Championship round in Finland. The Japanese marque will field an expanded five-car Rally1 line-up at the team's home event, with both part-time drivers Rovanner and Ogier competing alongside full-timers Elfyn Evans and Takamoto Katsuta, while rising star Sami Pajari will make his Rally1 debut at his home event. Rovanner and Ogier will run with special liveries inspired by the limited edition Rovanner and Ogier road-going GR Yaris models launched earlier this year. **Photo by Toyota Racing**

Ratel rules out GT World Challenge return to Saudi Arabia next year

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

GT World Challenge Europe will not return to Saudi Arabia next year. It has filled the TBA in its schedule with an end-of-season Endurance Cup round at Barcelona rather than at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit, but is not ruling out going back in 2026.

Series boss Stephane Ratel (pictured) explained in June that he was waiting until after this year's inaugural fixture on the Formula 1 street circuit in November before making a call. Now he has stated that the need to finalise the calendar has resulted in a firm date at Barcelona on 12 October.

"We needed to issue a calendar and

before we go back we need to race there to see how it goes," said Ratel. "It's kind of a street circuit with walls and we didn't want to announce something, have a Macau-style accident and be told by our teams that they don't want to go back. At the end of the day we are the coordinator of our teams' will."

Ratel explained that there is a desire for his organisation to return if the event is a success: "Motorsport has developed a lot in the Middle East and I think it is good for us to have a foothold there."

The 2025 GTWCE Sprint Cup round originally scheduled for Barcelona has been moved to Magny-Cours. Jeddah will host the 2024 finale on 30 November.

GARY WATKINS



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HWA developed the CLK GTR that topped the FIA GT Championship in 1997

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End of an era as Mercedes GT project goes in-house

GT3

Mercedes is ending a long-standing relationship with HWA and its forebears that has straddled the DTM, GT1, Formula E, Formula 3 and more. It has announced that its next-generation GT3 racer will be developed in-house.

Hans Werner Aufrecht's organisation was responsible for the development and service of the German manufacturer's first two GT3s, the SLS and the AMG GT3. Now, Mercedes has announced that the next car to continue the AMG tradition will be the work of a new in-house group known as Affalterbach Racing GmbH set up for the purpose.

There is a twist, however. Affalterbach refers to the location of the new

organisation, which is also the hometown of HWA. It reveals something of the history of AMG, the sporting brand that Mercedes invokes for its racing exploits.

AMG was set up by Aufrecht in 1967 and made its name tuning Mercs. It was subsequently bought out by the manufacturer in two stages in 1999 and 2005, while HWA was established to continue the racing activities.

"Motorsport is part of the DNA of Mercedes AMG," said company chairman Michael Schiebe on last week's announcement. "In order to utilise our in-house expertise even more effectively, we've strategically strengthened the motorsport division with the new business unit at the Affalterbach site and set an important course for the future."

Exactly what Mercedes has planned for the future isn't clear. The C190 model Mercedes-AMG GT, on which the current GT3 is based, is no longer in production, while its replacement, the C192, is a 2+2 and, it is understood, not suitable for racing. For the moment Merc is only saying that the new racer will be "based on a derivative of the Mercedes-AMG GT family" and has set no timeline for its introduction.

AMG under Aufrecht raced Mercs before the manufacturer's official return to circuit racing in 1988, when it became one of the factory-supported teams to race the 190E 2.3-16 in the DTM. It subsequently developed Merc's DTM machinery, built the CLK and CLR GT1 racers of 1997-99, and ran Merc's FE cars for three seasons from 2019 to 2022.

GARY WATKINS

Cammish extends with Alliance to take on Sutton



BTCC

British Touring Car Championship ace Dan Cammish has secured a multi-year extension to his drive with the Alliance Racing-run NAPA Racing UK squad. The deal is understood to run until the end of 2026, bringing the Yorkshireman into line with four-time champion team-mate Ash Sutton.

Cammish has been a form man of late in the BTCC, with a run of seven podiums among 10 top-six finishes over the past 11 races in his Ford Focus ST. This has propelled him to fourth in the

standings, just 12 points adrift of Sutton.

"I'm consistently scoring points and consistently getting the job done," said Cammish after finishing second in the Croft finale last weekend. "This is how I nearly got it done before [when he almost won the 2019 title] – I kept scoring when other people weren't."

"I've made a massive step forward from last year [his second at the team alongside Sutton]. But it's amazing how your mindset changes. You go from wanting to keep Ash in sight to wanting to beat him!"

MARCUS SIMMONS

Cadillac has relied upon Alex Lynn and Earl Bamber in 2024



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Two-driver crews to be banned?

WEC

Two-driver line-ups in the Hypercar class of the World Endurance Championship could be outlawed for 2025. A rule change is under discussion in response to calls from some teams and manufacturers following the Ganassi Cadillac squad's decision to run just a pair of drivers in the six-hour races this season.

Pierre Fillon, president of WEC co-organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, has revealed that mandating three drivers is on the table for 2025. "We are thinking about that, but you will have to wait for an answer," he said without going into detail.

WRT boss Vincent Vosse confirmed that his was one of the teams to raise the issue. "I would like it to be clear in the rules how many drivers you have to run, whether that is two or three," he said. "Two drivers clearly offers an advantage in terms of track time and team strategy, but we choose to run three because that is how many drivers you need for the Le Mans 24 Hours, the biggest race of the year."

Sam Hignett (right), team principal of

the Jota team that will be taking over the Cadillac programme for next year in a move yet to be confirmed, suggested that the regulations should remain unchanged and the choice of two or three drivers left up to the teams. "Two drivers does offer an advantage for the six-hour races, there's no doubt about it," he said. "But you need to be ready for Le Mans, which is why we run three. It's the choice of the team and should be left that way."

For the moment the rules governing the composition of driving crews in Hypercar is free, with a stipulation that bronze-rated drivers are not permitted.

GARY WATKINS



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

LOLA FOR DI GRASSI

Lucas di Grassi has committed to the Abt Formula E team for next season, when the squad will use the Lola/Yamaha powertrain for the first time. Di Grassi's career in the all-electric championship has been synonymous with Abt. He has raced for the German squad over a seven-year period, which included winning the 2016-17 drivers' title.

PREMA PAIR GET PENALTIES

Prema's Formula 2 stars Ollie Bearman and Andrea Kimi Antonelli both picked up grid penalties at Spa last weekend that they will serve at Monza after the summer break. Bearman was punished with a five-place drop for causing the startline incident with Zane Maloney and Pepe Marti, while Antonelli was dealt five places for spilling dry ice pellets from his car on the formation lap. As he already had a suspended penalty over his head for the same offence at Silverstone, an additional five-place penalty was also triggered.

PRIAULX OUT OF IMSA DRIVE

Briton Sebastian Priaulx has parted company with the AO Racing IMSA SportsCar Championship Porsche team with which he is leading the GT Daytona Pro class points together with Laurin Heinrich. The team stated that his testing commitments with his employer, Multimatic Motorsports, precipitated the move. Priaulx will be replaced in the squad's Porsche 911 GT3-R by factory driver Julien Andlauer for this weekend's Road America round.

PANIS GETS WIN BACK

Panis Racing has been reinstated as the victor of last month's European Le Mans Series round at Imola. The French entrant's TDS-run ORECA-Gibson 07 driven by Charles Milesi, Arthur Leclerc and Manuel Maldonado dropped to fifth as the result of a post-race 35s penalty after the first-named was adjudged to have sped up too quickly after a full course yellow. The penalty has been rescinded after a review of the evidence by the stewards.

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Perez reprieve great for McLaren?

The team in orange is closing on Red Bull, so the decision for Sergio Perez to remain as Max Verstappen's team-mate could have a big impact on the constructors' battle

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Did Alex Albon's early braking at Les Combes late in Q2 at the Belgian Grand Prix save Sergio Perez's Red Bull and Formula 1 career? Perhaps it was the time shipped by the Williams driver at Pouhon too that cost that 0.003-second difference, enabling Perez to progress and eliminating Albon in 11th position.

From his narrow escape, Perez went on to impress many by qualifying third with only used intermediate tyres left to deploy in Q3. That was only impressive in isolation, however. Had Perez done what Max Verstappen showed was possible with Red Bull's RB20 masterpiece-turned-problem-child in getting through qualifying to that point on ageing inters, then he wouldn't have been beaten to 'pole' by a slower Ferrari.

Red Bull had two cars that had the potential to win at Spa and neither did. Verstappen's race-winning chances disappeared when an electrical issue on a new Honda power unit seven weeks earlier in FP2 at the Canadian GP did for an internal combustion engine. That, the compression of the field and an advancing dirty air problem meant a third successive sensational Spa fightback wasn't possible this time. But he still topped qualifying for a fourth year in a row. Perez not only failed to do that, but he put in a race performance that exposed how much peril there is over Red Bull's position in the constructors' championship.

Christian Horner, Helmut Marko and co met at Red Bull's

“Red Bull had two cars that had the potential to win at Spa and neither did”

sprawling industrial estate-turned-'campus' base in Milton Keynes on Monday. Alone, that's not unusual. Every team is cramming in as much work as possible before the two-week summer shutdown mandated by the rules kicks off this coming Monday.

But Red Bull had signposted that it would decide on whether or not to keep Perez – 2025 contract carrot long meaningless – over the 2024 summer break. And, by extension, either promote Daniel Ricciardo back to its main team or possibly ditch him from RB altogether. The decision did not take long to leak out: both Perez and Ricciardo are staying put, with their current squads.

The massive pressure on Perez came via the understanding that Red Bull could effectively cancel his contract due to a 100-points-gap-to-Verstappen break clause coming into effect after Spa. That Perez had arrived there 141 points behind his team-mate and with

a maximum of 26 on the table showed the scale of his task to save his drive. But, inexplicably given what happened last Sunday, Red Bull opted to stick, when twist was by far the better option.

Immediately, Perez got beaten and almost bullied out of second place off the line by Lewis Hamilton's monster start from third. And from there he couldn't keep up with the eventually winning Mercedes, nor Ferrari polesitter Charles Leclerc, and got overcome by Oscar Piastri, George Russell, Verstappen (from 11th on the grid), Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz.

There is a mitigating circumstance of sorts in that Perez's lowly 19th place in the speed trap that follows Raidillon suggests that his complaint of being “very slow on straights” had merit. This could be explained by a battery deployment issue. But at the same time, better traction with tyre treatment in a tricky tyre-management race can lead to big straightline speed discrepancies. Here it's worth recalling Lance Stroll's angst with Aston Martin in Japan (and again on Sunday). Red Bull, with all its data, chose not to tell reporters about a car problem after the race. Instead, Marko said Perez “completely collapsed”.

But Red Bull has now granted Perez another reprieve. He got the fastest lap bonus point last weekend, and what Horner describes as his “great team player” factor is valued inside the squad. But at McLaren's current rate of scoring (an average of 30 since Miami in May, versus 21 for Red Bull), and with 42 points currently separating the two teams, Red Bull is set to be caught in the constructors' championship at the Singapore or United States GPs.

And while Red Bull faces a tricky task to deliver the performance step Verstappen was expecting with last month's Hungaroring upgrades that ultimately underwhelmed the world champion, McLaren is expecting a stream of developments to come for the rest of the year.

How that raises expectations of a 2021-style title battle coming next year. And 2021 is another important point regarding the choice to keep Perez – because him missing a critical 15% of Valtteri Bottas's points that year cost Red Bull the constructors' crown that is once again in peril in 2024. That prestige goes along with millions in prize money and important bonuses to team staff.

The Milton Keynes summit is over and Perez is staying. But as he'd already been given a theoretical new contract boost in June and not got any better – and that was a proper strategy gambit from Red Bull – there's no reason to expect this choice to have a different impact. Therefore, if Red Bull can't improve the RB20 and McLaren keeps coming with its brilliant (if currently error-prone) driver line-up, it shouldn't be a shock if the constructors' is blown. Then, Red Bull will only have itself to blame. ❄️

➔ P14 BELGIAN GP REPORT



Spa and the driver managers' role

The Belgian Grand Prix's previous position in the calendar would traditionally kick off serious manoeuvres for some of motorsport's canniest operators

TREVOR CARLIN

Spa: a short three-letter word yet the longest lap in modern-day Formula 1 and, with Monza, the longest-standing grand prix, too. Decades before F1 was born or thought of, Belgian Grands Prix were being run at Spa, the first in 1925, won in an Alfa Romeo on the original 9.31-mile road course by the great Antonio Ascari (father of the equally great Ferrari double world champion Alberto Ascari). The first world championship-status F1 grand prix at Spa took place in June 1950, over an only slightly shortened circuit of 8.825 miles, and was won by the even greater Juan Manuel Fangio, also in an Alfa Romeo. Spa has lost little of its character and drama over the past 74 years, despite its having been halved in length during that time. In a word, it is still awesome.

My first visit to Spa as a team owner was back in 1997 for the then annual British F3 race – which to be honest was far from being our finest hour. We qualified a lowly 26th and finished 23rd with our sole driver Henry Stanton. It turned out to be Henry's last race – and ours, too, for a while.

Nonetheless, we returned to Spa in 1998, again with a single entry, this time for Narain Karthikeyan, albeit with a 1997-spec car, not the latest 1998 car that had suspension and aero updates to increase overall grip. However, as luck would have it, our skinny car turned out to be perfectly suited to Spa's long straights, and Narain's amazing car control kept us in the game in the twisty middle sector. He qualified a brilliant fourth, which he then converted to a superb third in the race, giving Carlin Motorsport its very first of our 1200-plus podiums. Yes, you read that right: 1200! We went on to enjoy great success at Spa, notching up plenty of wins in many different series, and it remains a favourite track of mine.

Owing to the timing of the F1 race in the past – early September – Spa traditionally used to kickstart the F1 'silly season': in other words, the period in which drivers and driver managers are seen sneaking in and out of various trucks and hospitality units, holding secretive talks about the following season.

The most famous such cloak-and-dagger negotiations occurred over the 1991 Belgian GP, for a 22-year-old hotshot, Michael Schumacher, was taking part in his very first F1 grand prix. That famously intrepid F1 wheeler-dealer Eddie Jordan had taken a gamble on putting the German rookie into the car vacated by prison-bound Bertrand Gachot, and the result was a fairytale story for Jordan because Michael qualified seventh, which was an incredible feat. However, things went downhill rapidly (pun intended) when Michael's clutch expired at the start, leading to a retirement on lap one. Also unbeknown to Jordan, Willi Weber, Michael's manager, had been in discussions with Flavio Briatore,

the team principal of Benetton F1, and had agreed a deal for the young superstar to join Benetton with immediate effect.

It was a swift and smart move – a high-profile example of the work of a clever and well-connected driver manager securing the best possible outcome for his client. Willi definitely knew how many beans made five, but the first superstar driver manager was Julian Jakobi, who at one time looked after Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost. I am sure his diplomatic

“As motor racing has moved forward, driver managers have become ever-more important”

skills were extremely tested at times!

As motor racing has moved forward over the years, driver managers have become ever-more important. At one time they used to operate only in the higher echelons of the sport, but today you find them throughout the feeder series as well, and even in karting. While some are glorified guardians or helmet carriers – call them what you will – others truly make a difference to drivers' careers.

The father-and-son combo of Dave and Steve Robertson were the boldest in their day, not only finessing Jenson Button into F1 with Williams after just one season of Formula Ford and one season of British F3, but soon afterwards also securing Kimi Raikkonen an F1 seat at Sauber after just a part-season of Formula Ford and just one campaign in Formula Renault UK.

In today's world the best driver managers nurture and guide their proteges up the increasingly tricky junior racing ladder, a great example of which is the work done by the guys at ADD Management, especially Mark Berryman (who is often confused with Lando Norris's dad on TV by the way) and Fraser Shearer (who raced karts against Lewis Hamilton).

ADD has successfully helped many drivers and of course the jewel in their crown is currently Lando Norris. They have not only negotiated his deals but have also driven him to become the best he can be. He has huge natural talent but, in addition to what God gave him, he has been kept grounded by the no-nonsense attitude of ADD, especially Mark. He does not let Lando get away with anything, and that is why, as we saw yet again at Spa last weekend, he is so hard on himself when he does not win: being second is just not acceptable to him when he has equipment good enough to be first. ✨

YOUR SAY

I reject this entitlement to a win simply because one driver makes a better start than the other; it shouldn't be decided at the first corner

DOMINIC MALVERN

McLaren's Hungarian own goal

An observation from the Hungarian Grand Prix. A lot of people seem to be ignoring that Oscar Piastri, having out-driven Lando Norris on the first part of the race, lost all his buffer falling off at Turn 11 and almost throwing the lead away. Had he not done this, his six-second advantage over Lando Norris would have made McLaren's pitstops much easier!

Apart from the slower start (where he found himself sandwiched), Lando drove a faultless race. I reject this entitlement to a win simply because one driver makes a better start than the other; it shouldn't be decided at the first corner, and things evolve during the race.

It's a pity that McLaren strategists didn't feel confident enough to pit Oscar before Lando (for the second stop) because I think Lando demonstrated unbeatable pace in the last third of the race (that 6s gap would likely have turned into at least 8s had he not been checked) and he probably would have caught Oscar on track legitimately (he was only 1.5s behind at the stop), which would then give the team another headache over whether or not to let their drivers race each other.

Either way, I'm sad to say that even in the midst of triumph, McLaren committed an own goal by not giving their main title challenger the chance to score maximum points, which I really hope does not come back to bite them!

Dominic Malvern
Conwy, North Wales

All over at the start

If Lando Norris didn't give up the win but "lost it off the line", then we might as well stop at the end of lap one and call it a result...

Ed Goodhugh
By email

An uncomfortable watch

I found the Hungarian GP an uncomfortable watch – yet another race ruined by strategists, who in my view should be dispensed with. These people appear to be taking over the sport completely; they are overthinking and overcomplicating everything they do.

The manipulation of races and the reliance on these strategists is in my view undermining the sport and McLaren's credibility. Also, communication between driver and pitwall is excessive.

Alistair Cameron
London

Fighting Turkington's corner

I feel massively aggrieved for Colin Turkington following his clashes with Ash Sutton in race two and Tom Ingram in race three at the BTCC meeting at Croft. Colin has been to date one of the fairest drivers to compete in the BTCC, but got nerfed across the corner by Sutton in race two, then ushered into the barriers by Ingram in race three, both events ruining his chances of a decent points score. Seemingly, both Sutton and Ingram have gone unpunished.

Turkington certainly seemed to adopt a more aggressive approach to race three, probably due to Sutton's action going unpunished in race two, as this style would appear to be how you pass in BTCC nowadays. So, come on Alan Gow, get a grip, otherwise it's back to the 'push to pass' days of Jason Plato and Matt Neal followed by 'fisticuffs' in the paddock afterwards.

Nigel Dawson
By email



HAVE YOUR SAY GET IN TOUCH

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RACE CENTRE



Russell parks up ahead of Hamilton, but elation for Mercedes is shortlived



FORMULA 1

HAMILTON INHERITS RUSSELL'S SURPRISE WIN

McLaren and Red Bull were the favourites at Spa, but a remarkable Mercedes effort secured a 1-2 – until after the race...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

SBLOXHAM

“Y ep.” George Russell’s mind, it seemed, was made up. A few laps after planting the seed of a one-stop strategy into his engineers’ heads, the idea was put to him after a few more laps circulating on the hard tyres. He barely needed to calculate it. The degradation was lower than expected, his Mercedes’ lap times were still competitive, and he felt completely comfortable on his current set of white-walled Pirellis.

And, at that juncture, it was well worth the gamble. Russell had passed Sergio Perez for fourth place, but did not look to be on for anything more than that if he’d stuck to a conventional two-stopper; Max Verstappen was likely to undercut him, and he would also have been vulnerable to Lando Norris’s advances. Problem was, he’d have to go a long way on his hard tyres if he was to dodge a second stop; he’d called in at the end of lap 10, and so he’d have to coax them around the Spa circuit for a full 34 laps to get to the end. No bother, Russell thought.

Although Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton was breathing down his neck at the close of the race, Russell managed to nail his corner exits through La Source to ward off a DRS-affected overtaking move on the Kemmel Straight, also leaving Stavelot with enough speed in reserve to ensure Hamilton could not attempt a dive into the Bus Stop chicane. It appeared that Russell, through his own strategy call borne from his read of the tyres throughout the race, had played this to utter perfection. And, for his part, he had.

“The tyres, the car felt really good,” Russell waxed lyrically. “I got into this groove, and especially when I got into the lead, there were no backmarkers in front, no other cars in front, and it kind of felt like driving on a simulator.

“I was looking at the gap to Lewis and the rate he was catching me. And I just thought there’s no reason why we can’t stay out here and do this one stop and try and make it work.”

Yet minutes after Russell left the press conference, beaming ear to ear with the satisfaction that he’d called his own fortune, an FIA-emblazoned email dropped into the inboxes of the paddock’s personnel. The content would have wiped the smile from his face. His car was found to be underweight by 1.5kg after the fuel was drained out of it for the mandatory sample.

When the FIA put Russell’s car on the scales after the race, it already sat at the 798kg minimum weight limit. When the fuel was subsequently drained of 2.8 litres, there were two problems: one, that there were still a few glugs left in the tank; and two, the car was



POTTS



Hamilton stakes his claim to second place into La Source...

TEE



...before outragging Perez and setting his sights on polesitter Leclerc

“I THOUGHT THERE’S NO REASON WHY WE CAN’T STAY OUT HERE AND DO THIS ONE STOP AND TRY TO MAKE IT WORK”

somewhat below the minimum weight. Disqualification beckoned.

It was a shot to Mercedes’ bow, one that it did not have an answer for. There was no missing bodywork or chunk of displaced ballast that could offer a 1.5kg smoking gun. The team had simply miscalculated – and with it, had unravelled Russell’s assertive opportunism in one fell swoop.

There were two theories that prevailed: that Mercedes had failed to calculate for tyre pick-up since Spa does not feature a cool-down lap, and that Russell had worn away 1.5kg extra of tyre by one-stopping. These barely stack up: Hamilton did not suffer the former issue, and other one-stoppers did not encounter the latter.

The most egregious aspect of Russell’s disqualification was that it completely took the shine away from the Silver Arrows’ miraculous turnaround in form, after completely missing the mark with its Friday set-up (see page 25). The team concluded FP2 with scant

hopes of a podium finish on Sunday, let alone a provisional 1-2.

And yet, Mercedes consequently overshadowed the pre-race favourites at McLaren and Red Bull. Even with Russell’s disqualification, Mercedes took the win in Belgium. Hamilton had resisted Oscar Piastri’s late-race surge for second on the road, albeit in risky circumstances as the Australian put Hamilton under a serious level of scrutiny at the climax. When Russell’s result was expunged from the final standings, Hamilton was granted his 105th victory, albeit one he won’t necessarily count as among his most memorable. The seven-time world champion had been outfoxed by his team-mate in pellucid fashion, and hardly seemed entirely happy about it in the aftermath.

But that’s not to discredit Hamilton’s efforts. The result on the podium simply came down to his relative passiveness on the radio against Russell in the strategic arena. And that’s understandable, when you consider that he had led proceedings among the two-stoppers after dispatching the two men lining the front row on the grid. It’s not easy to take a risk when a rare victory sits in your grasp.

One challenger was effectively taken out of the running at the start: Max Verstappen. Red Bull had, mirroring the two seasons prior, used the Spa weekend as a cheaper hit for a power unit penalty. The Dutchman’s effortless glide to the fastest time in damp conditions came encumbered with the knowledge that he would not take pole >>

QUALIFYING

Just as in 2023, Charles Leclerc benefited from a Max Verstappen grid penalty to assume pole for the Belgian Grand Prix, after splitting the two Red Bulls at the top of the timing board at the climax of qualifying. The Dutchman spent the session knowing he'd be encumbered by a 10-place grid penalty for taking new power unit components, repeating his trick from the past two years of sacrificing qualifying at Spa, but scorched to the fastest time in a wet Q3 to lay down his statement of intent.

As prophesied by the weather radar, a dreary convection of clouds had washed over the Ardennes, bursting ahead of FP3. It remained wet for qualifying, prompting the teams that made it into Q3 to spend all four sets of intermediate tyres available. Verstappen had been the most comfortable driver out there, Red Bull tacking on more downforce after he'd found his RB20 skittish over Friday's sessions.

This paid off on a damp and greasy track surface; Verstappen had been so at ease in Q1 and Q2 that he'd saved two sets of fresh inters for the final stage, and opted to go again at the end, although the rain had started to fall marginally more as Q3 drew to a close. An under-pressure Sergio Perez looked set to dispel his recent hoodoo with second, albeit six tenths shy of his irrepressible team-mate, but Leclerc pressed a fresh set of inters into service to pip the Mexican. This came despite the conditions having passed their peak, offering the Ferrari driver pole once Verstappen's penalty was applied.

“Verstappen had been the most comfortable driver out there, Red Bull tacking on more downforce”

Perez, who was 0.003 seconds clear of the Q2 drop as Alex Albon fell just short of a fourth Q3 appearance of 2024, could at least be consoled with a start on the front row. Lewis Hamilton had been fourth fastest in the session ahead of the two McLarens; Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri were prepared for a dry race and had sacrificed grid position to some degree in the wet, the two placing ahead of George Russell in the order. Fernando Alonso and Esteban Ocon completed the top 10 qualifying order, while Albon moved up to 10th on the grid by dint of Verstappen's penalty, the championship leader starting 11th for his second 'home' race.



position, shuffling him down the pack. He hoped to swashbuckle his way through the order in the same manner as in the previous two seasons, but his progress was stilted. Red Bull no longer possesses the same level of performance in hand over its fellow top-four constructors.

Verstappen's relegation to 11th on the grid promoted Charles Leclerc onto pole and put the beleaguered Perez onto the front row. The Mexican had perhaps hoped that his renewed performance in qualifying would give him the shot of confidence that he so sorely needed, but he ended up being little competition for Hamilton at the start. Instead, the two were side by side into the first corner, and Perez's Red Bull was easily outdragged on the exit of La Source by the Mercedes, which had already got ahead before the Eau Rouge compression to force Perez into ceding the position.

Leclerc was next on Hamilton's checklist, and he had the pace to stay within DRS range to overtake on the Kemmel Straight. The inevitable came to pass on the third lap. Hamilton breezed past the



and sister Ferrari of Sainz finally called in.

Sainz, who had attempted an alternate strategy on the hard tyre, eventually collected a set of medium tyres at the end of lap 20 to restore Hamilton's lead. This stood at 1.9s over Leclerc, and the Ferrari driver showed few signs of making any inroads prior to his second stop at the end of the 25th lap.

Here's where the Mercedes duo diverged. To cover off Leclerc, Hamilton stopped at the end of the next lap for another set of hard

“TODAY THE CAR CAME ALIVE, AND I WAS REALLY SURPRISED TO GET INTO THE LEAD AND THEN PULL AWAY”

Ferrari and held the lead before the Les Combes braking zone, and immediately began to set upon building a one-second advantage over the Monegasque to ensure there would be no DRS-assisted riposte.

This is where Hamilton started to become surprised by his own pace. Although the spectre of Friday had threatened to loom over Mercedes, it was conspicuously absent once the race got under way. Instead, he had the opportunity to roll back the years to his purple patch with Mercedes during the late 2010s.

“It was literally night and day different today,” Hamilton explained. “On Friday, it was pretty disastrous for both of us and really struggling with balance. Then today the car came alive, and I was really surprised to get into the lead and then pull away from everyone. It felt fully under control – and I’ve not had that for years...”

Russell, for his part, sat in fifth behind Piastri. He'd moved up when another expected victory challenger, Norris, meandered wide on the exit of La Source, his McLaren tussling the gravel and bogging down to cede position to the Mercedes and to Carlos Sainz. It was another scruffy opening to a race from Norris, one that he could scarcely afford as he aimed to capitalise on Verstappen's lowly grid position.

Although Hamilton continued to build his lead, he started to suffer with a modicum of graining. A patchwork of the time-tested Spa track surface and a handful of relaid areas had made tyre degradation something of an unknown, not helped by the distinct lack of dry running throughout the weekend. It proved to be manageable, although it became apparent that his medium Pirelli boots were starting to lose performance at the rear.

One tour after Russell's lap 10 stop for hard tyres, which would prove to be the younger Briton's final set for the grand prix, Hamilton also called in for the harder compound to ensure he preserved the lead over Leclerc. The Ferrari driver had asked to go long, worried that he was going to be undercut by the chasing pack, but the Italian squad instead opted to pull him in a lap later to minimise the damage. It proved to be the call that preserved track position, ensuring Leclerc could shake out in second once the long-stopping Norris

tyres, despite being happy on the set he was currently carrying. In the meantime, Russell had told his team to “think about the one-stop”, sending his suite of engineers to their calculators to check whether they could make something out of his suggestion.

Suggestions from Pirelli ahead of the race were that the race was a nailed-on two-stopper, and some teams might even consider three if the degradation was marginally higher than expected. Instead, the inverse applied. Russell reported that the tyres were “just getting faster and faster; the grip was improving” with each lap, cementing the decision in his mind.

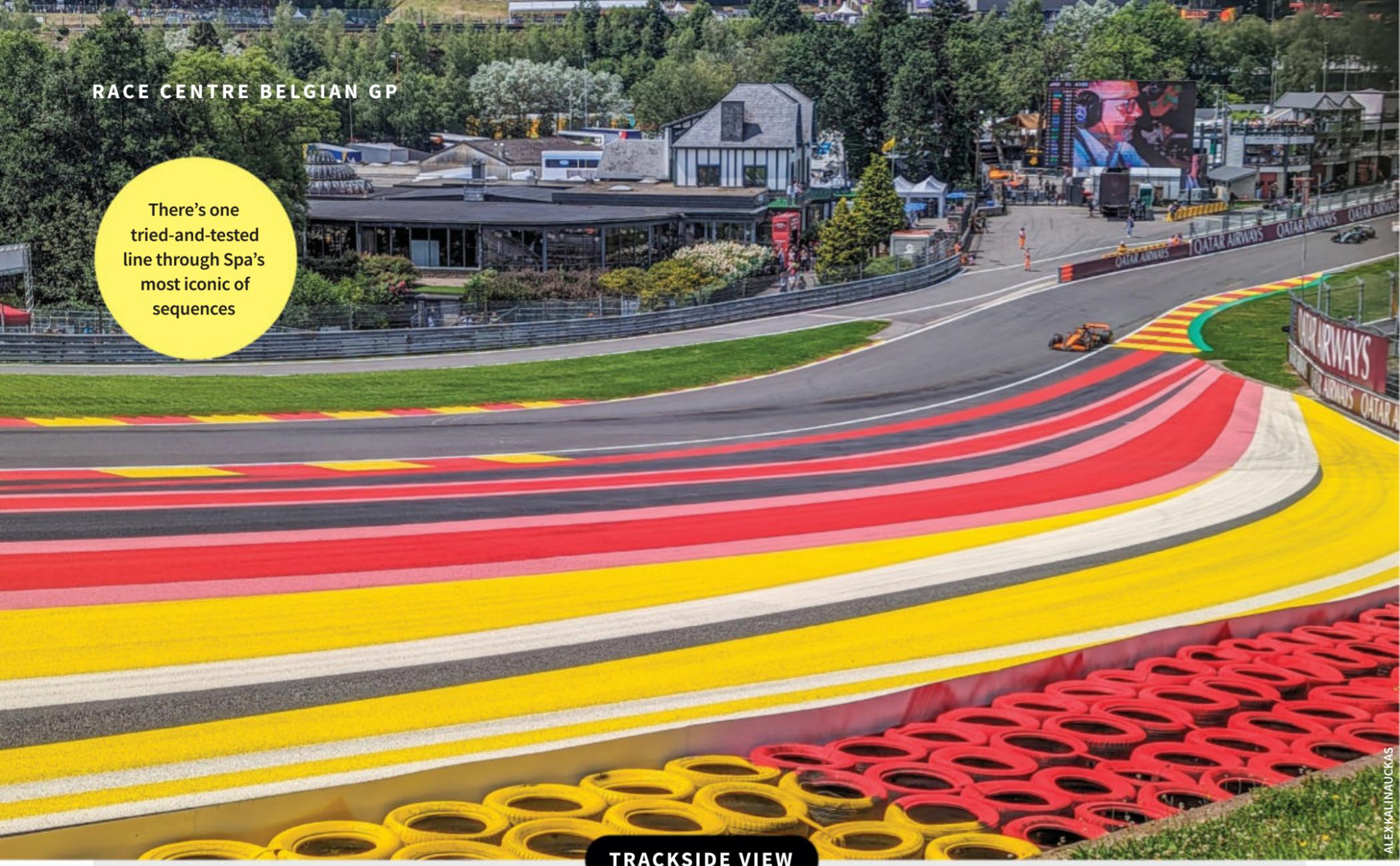
When the team came on the radio to confirm the decision, Russell's “yep” was saturated with conviction; the decision was made, and he'd stay out. “When you feel something in your gut, you have to go with it,” Russell revealed. “But when every single driver and team is pitting, and after all the data we had on Friday suggested a one-stop was not even close to being viable, you do kind of question that a couple of times, thinking, ‘Are we missing something here? Why isn't anybody else doing this?’

“But I felt at one with the tyres and I managed it a little bit at the beginning, and I knew that would give me a bit of money back at the end. We've got so many sensors and data points on the car, but there's only 20 of us driving these F1 cars. You can feel how the tyre is sliding over the track. And you've just got to trust your gut sometimes.”

Pirelli chief Mario Isola explained after the race that the tyre company expected a much bigger split between the medium and hard compounds on pace, but track evolution brought the hard very much into play. The hard showed few signs of graining or abrasion, and degradation was the main mitigating factor – which was also gradual.

The lead was going to come to Russell when the net-third Piastri eventually pitted his McLaren for the second and final time, four laps later than Hamilton. The Hungary winner had gone longer and had pumped in a series of good laps once he'd got into clean air, estimating that being behind Leclerc earlier on had cost him about a second per lap. “Clean air is king,” the Melburnian dryly noted after >>

There's one tried-and-tested line through Spa's most iconic of sequences



TRACKSIDE VIEW

It's been a long time since this writer came to Spa. The road signs reel off the towns and villages that lend their names to the undulating ribbon of Tarmac ensconced within the Ardennes: Stavelot, Malmedy, Rivage, et al; but we're here for the jewel in the crown. A cliché? Maybe, but you can't make a pilgrimage to Spa without watching the cars tackle the Eau Rouge/Raidillon complex at full pelt.

We're armed with local knowledge too, as Belgium's own Filip Cleeren comes along for the ride. He estimates he's been here

"at least a dozen" times, and finds us a path through the spectators in the fanzone and towards one of the grandstands perched upon the uphill ascent. It offers a great view of the cars attacking the Eau Rouge compression and, thankfully, it's dry.

That said, the installation laps are leisurely. Max Verstappen and Oscar Piastri are on slow ascents up the hill, before a flurry of cars start to tame the acclivitous kink, the cars grunting to signal that their handlers are completely flat on the throttle. Those guttural noises

come from the undertrays scraping the floor under the Eau Rouge compression, as the suspension squats down under the load and then slowly begins to rebound as the road rises. Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes is running low, and he kicks up sparks a long way up the hill, the amber flecks bouncing off the floor far further up the corner compared to everyone else.

You can see how everyone

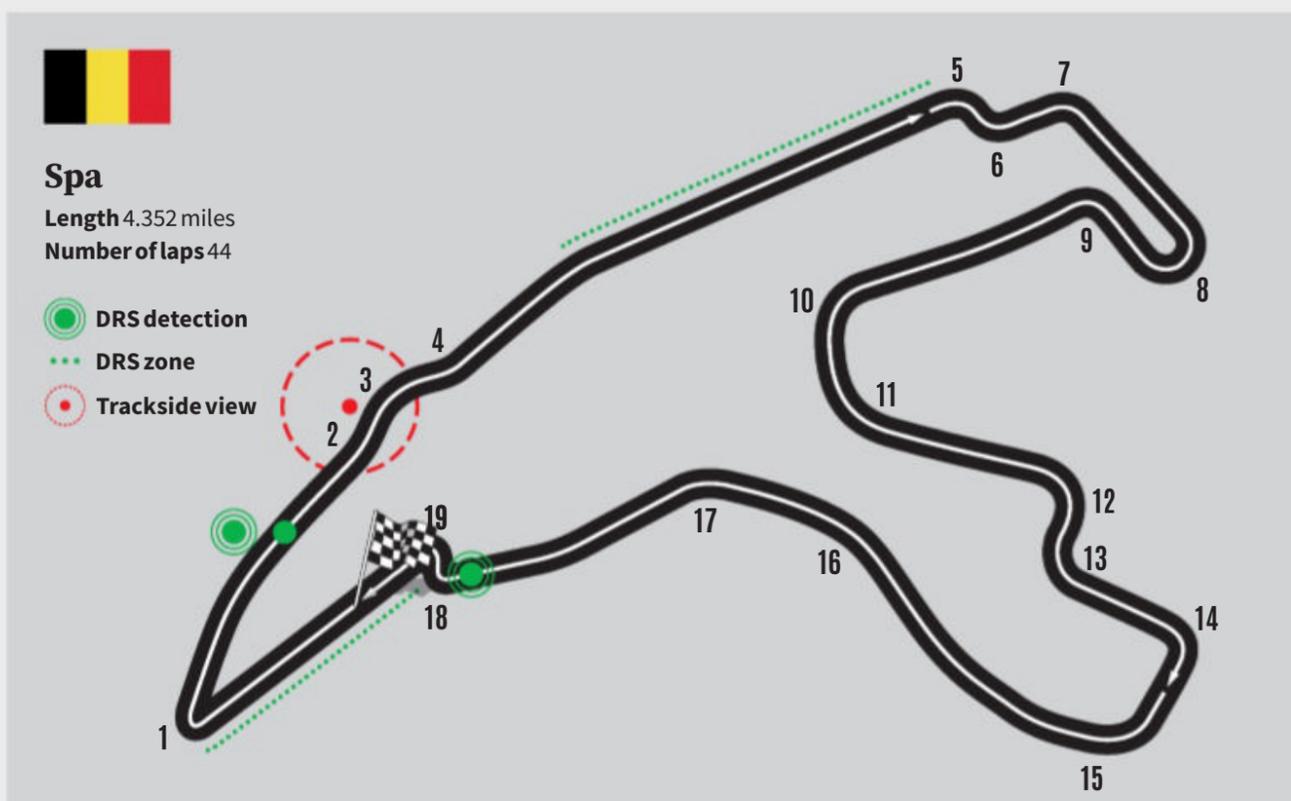
"Film producer Jerry Bruckheimer is perched at the same corner"

attacks the line, since there's effectively one tried-and-tested line to emerge onto the Kемmel Straight with the maximum of momentum: grab an armful of kerb on the inside, point the car to the apex of the next right-hander, and then aim for the Raidillon exit kerb with the minimum amount of steering travel. It's hard to see them attempt to straight-line the corner, so Fil and I change tack and take the Eau Rouge underpass (where a running stream demonstrates that the eau is indeed rouge), wander through the support paddock, and watch from the bottom of the hill.

Lance Stroll passes, his Aston Martin kicking up more smoke and dust than sparks, suggesting his car isn't as hunkered down as the Mercedes. His team-mate Fernando Alonso appears shortly after, albeit at a more glacial pace, and is encountered by one of the Haas drivers. It's a daring overtaking move from the black-and-white machine, a brief lift preceding the assumption of the outside line for a Raidillon pass.

Box-office? Eau Rouge certainly has that reputation. Film producer Jerry Bruckheimer seems to agree – he's perched at the same corner to watch the drivers fight against the ascent. Or perhaps he's here to take inspiration from the dashing journalists trackside...

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



pumping in a fastest lap to rather demonstrate the point, but he ended up losing a couple of seconds after going marginally beyond his pitbox to give his front jack operator a fright.

Piastri reckoned he simply “went in a bit hot” and was surprised by the lack of grip available in the pitlane – relative to his practice stops on Friday, where he noted he was “always undershooting the box” as the car came to rest a bit more easily. “It wasn’t my finest moment, but I don’t think it really cost much in the scheme of things,” he added. “I think it meant I probably would have just been stuck behind Lewis and George for another lap or two at the end...”

When Russell confirmed that he was happy to stick with his tyres, with 12 laps still to go, he sat 6.5s clear of Hamilton, while Piastri closed on Leclerc’s gearbox. Mercedes needed Leclerc to keep the McLaren at bay, but it was expected that the Ferrari SF-24 would lack the pace against a low-drag MCL38.

When Hamilton was warned of Piastri’s pace, he asked engineer Pete Bonnington if he was “on target to beat him”. “It is close,” came Bonnington’s sage reply, unwittingly forecasting the final stages. Indeed, Piastri put a move around the outside of Leclerc into Les Combes on the 36th lap, but was still over five seconds in arrears of the second-placed Hamilton.

In turn, Hamilton was eating into Russell’s lead at a rate of almost a second per lap. Old hards versus a much younger set appeared to be a straightforward battle, certainly in favour of the latter by most metrics. It was with four laps to go that Hamilton had cut that lead into one that could service his DRS activation, while Piastri was given the hurry-up by race engineer Tom Stallard to catch them.

But the dirty air effect, allied to the reduced power of DRS thanks to the low-drag wings, ensured that Hamilton struggled to get a move on against Russell. The #63 car seemed to find great traction out of the tighter corners, repelling the threat of Hamilton and allowing Piastri to close in. It looked risky from Mercedes’ perspective, but Piastri soon faced the same problem by the final lap.

The order was set, and Russell seemed to secure a famous victory against the odds – and Mercedes had taken a decisive win against two stronger teams. It still retained the latter accolade, but Russell’s stripped victory rather tainted an otherwise salubrious affair. Hamilton had angled for a one-stop too, but his call that the “tyres were fine” was much less assured than Russell’s verdict from the cockpit.

Although Leclerc had faded towards the end, leaving centre stage when Piastri swept past, he still had a part to play. Verstappen and



“PIASTRI RECKONED HE SIMPLY ‘WENT IN A BIT HOT’, SURPRISED BY THE LACK OF GRIP IN THE PITLANE”

Norris, perhaps licking their respective wounds and ruing the what-might-have-beens, were closing in on the Ferrari at a vast rate – but also came to the same fate as Russell’s chasing entourage. Norris had flashes of pace, but never capitalised on the opportunity to pass Verstappen with DRS, despite the Red Bull’s higher wing level. When the two caught Leclerc, it was effectively set in stone.

It looked like McLaren had dropped the ball once again with strategy, although Piastri explained that it had not deeply considered a one-stopper beyond the most fleeting of thoughts. Red Bull, meanwhile, perhaps figured that Verstappen would make more progress – instead, he got caught in a DRS train after the first lap, and had to rely on undercutting Sainz and a swap with Perez to ensure he could at least keep Norris at bay.

And so, the summer break comes at a perfect time for Formula 1’s current top three teams. Mercedes has a bittersweet victory to mull over, and can be equally proud of its progress and disappointed with what team principal Toto Wolff termed as the team having “clearly made a mistake”. Red Bull must assess how its prior dominance has faded, and McLaren must again consider how it contrived to throw away a bigger, better result. There’s much in the way of soul-searching ahead of F1’s return at Zandvoort – the season’s second half promises some explosive spectacles ahead. ✨



**NEXT
F1 REPORT**

Dutch Grand Prix
29 August issue



WILLIAMS-BOUND SAINZ HAMPERED BY SPA STRATEGY

Carlos Sainz left the Belgian Grand Prix with his mind made up on his 2025 future, but his current drive with Ferrari led to a frustrating swing from podium potential at Spa to seventh at the flag.

Unlike most of the field, Sainz started on the hard-compound tyres. After he'd nipped past Lando Norris thanks to the McLaren driver's mistake at the exit of La Source, then resisted his former team-mate for the rest of the opening phase, Sainz cycled to the lead as those ahead on medium tyres pitted.

He spent seven tours in the lead, during which it became clear that Norris would undercut ahead when, on lap 16 of 44, Sainz slipped briefly into the Stavelot gravel. He then pitted for medium tyres, on which he spent just eight laps. After getting more hard tyres with 16 tours left, he caught and passed Sergio Perez for what became sixth following George Russell's disqualification.

"The main thing is that we didn't do a one-stop, but we also didn't do an optimal two because we boxed too late for the two or too early for the one," said Sainz. "I felt like the race was promising a lot more. After 20 laps I was like we might have a shot at the podium, and then suddenly I finished P7."



Norris misses chance to close points gap to Verstappen

Max Verstappen extended his lead in the drivers' standings by two points after finishing just 0.6 seconds ahead of distant title rival Lando Norris.

For the third year in a row, Verstappen started down the Spa order after topping qualifying. His domination of the wet Saturday session was the fourth consecutive time he topped qualifying at Spa. But this time, from 11th due to an engine-change grid penalty, he could not recover higher than fifth at the flag, which later became fourth.

Verstappen stayed out of trouble at La Source, then jumped Esteban Ocon and Alex Albon on lap one, before he blasted past Fernando Alonso one tour later. This meant he was already running behind Norris thanks to the McLaren driver's La Source lap one gravel-strike, where he "just misjudged the exit" and lost three places.

Verstappen hounded Norris to the first pitstops, where he was able to undercut

ahead. Norris stayed out for five extra laps in the expectation of repassing later with a tyre-life offset, plus having two sets of hard tyres to the two mediums Verstappen deployed in the first and third stints. But Norris got stuck in the dirty air and his charge was thwarted. He ultimately spent over a third of the race within DRS threat, but the reduced DRS zone down Kemmel Straight prevented an attack and frustrated Verstappen's attempts to climb higher.

"If you start P1 with the pace that we had, I think you're fighting for the win," said the world champion, who like Norris passed Sergio Perez in the third stint, after the second Red Bull had been pitted out of Verstappen's way when the second round of stops kicked off. Verstappen, with Norris in tow, closed to within 0.7s of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc at the finish.

"Impossible to overtake," reflected Norris. "I don't feel like we maximised what we could have done."

“EVERY TIME I WEAR THE DEADPOOL HELMET I GET DECENT RESULTS!”

Alpine driver Esteban Ocon scored ninth with a special helmet design – and livery – promoting the latest Marvel film *Deadpool & Wolverine* at Spa. He took fourth in Las Vegas last year with a similar helmet.



Soft-tyre starter Ricciardo scores again for RB – just

George Russell's disqualification boosted Daniel Ricciardo to his third scoring finish of 2024, after the RB driver had crossed the line in 11th.

The Australian surprised many by starting on soft tyres, instead of mediums, for what was expected to be a tricky tyre-management race, but was helped by relatively low degradation: "I was able to stay with the guys on medium in the first stint. So, for the two-stop, it probably

didn't change too much in the end."

At the start, he'd fallen behind Valtteri Bottas's rapid launch and, after pitting to take medium tyres, he chased Williams driver Alex Albon to reach 10th place as other strategies played out around them. In the final stint on hards, Ricciardo put in a series of passes to rise through the order again, but was eventually overcome by Esteban Ocon's Alpine and needed the Russell situation to get him into 10th.



SBLOXHAM



HAAS STRUGGLES RETURN AS HULK PROPS UP THE PACK

Haas endured a very challenging weekend at Spa, where its VF-24 again didn't gel well with the intermediate tyres required in qualifying, before Nico Hulkenberg had a rare 2024 tyre degradation nightmare in the race.

Both the German and his team-mate Kevin Magnussen were knocked out in Q1, where Haas team boss Ayao Komatsu revealed that the Dane was dealing with a rear suspension problem.

They held their starting positions of 16th and 17th early on, with Hulkenberg ahead. But when Hulkenberg came in to complete the race's first pitstop on lap seven, their trajectories diverged considerably.

Hulkenberg entered a painful realm reminiscent of Haas's 2023 misery, with bad in-race tyre wear, where he had "no pace, no harmony, no rhythm". Hulkenberg did undercut several rivals with his early first pitstop, but his struggles on the hard tyres meant they soon went back ahead. He returned to the mediums for a long final stint, but things did not improve and he was overtaken late on by Logan Sargeant's Williams.

Magnussen, meanwhile, had better fortunes after being converted to a one-stop strategy similar to that of on-the-road winner George Russell. Magnussen rose as high as ninth before pitting, with several drivers demoting him during his second stint to put him 15th at the flag.

"We had a decent race, we just didn't have the pace to fight further up," said Magnussen.

Q&A

FERNANDO ALONSO ASTON MARTIN DRIVER

Did you expect to complete a one-stopper going into the race?

We always have the plans – Plan B, Plan C, whatever. We covered the one-stops, the three-stops. We were just waiting for a safety car to play into our hands and then 11 laps from the end we started to consider that the safety car is not coming and maybe we go to the end. It was just about being very flexible and lap by lap judging the conditions. In the end, it was the right call but let's say it was not planned just to go for one stop from the beginning.

Why didn't you experience the feared high degradation?

Good driving! No, I think with



new asphalt you sometimes get very low deg or you get graining. You can have the two things. This was one of those days where maybe temperature helped – it being a little hotter on Sunday. We had a lot of graining on Friday, but we didn't have any in the race. But nobody could predict – even the last five laps, either the degradation was not linear and you have a big cliff and then that strategy will not work. It is a little bit of luck

sometimes when you take these decisions.

Did you pit earlier or later than planned?

We reacted to Esteban Ocon's stop, we were flexible, we didn't have a lap to stop, it was more or less on that time.

How important was track position here this year?

It depends on the cars you are fighting. In our case it was crucial because the Williams and the Alpines were the two fastest cars and if you fall behind the race was over, so we underestimated that a little bit. But at the end our car, thanks to the extra downforce, maybe was taking care of the tyres a little bit better and it made it possible to do the one-stop. It was a trade-off and I think it was the right call for us.



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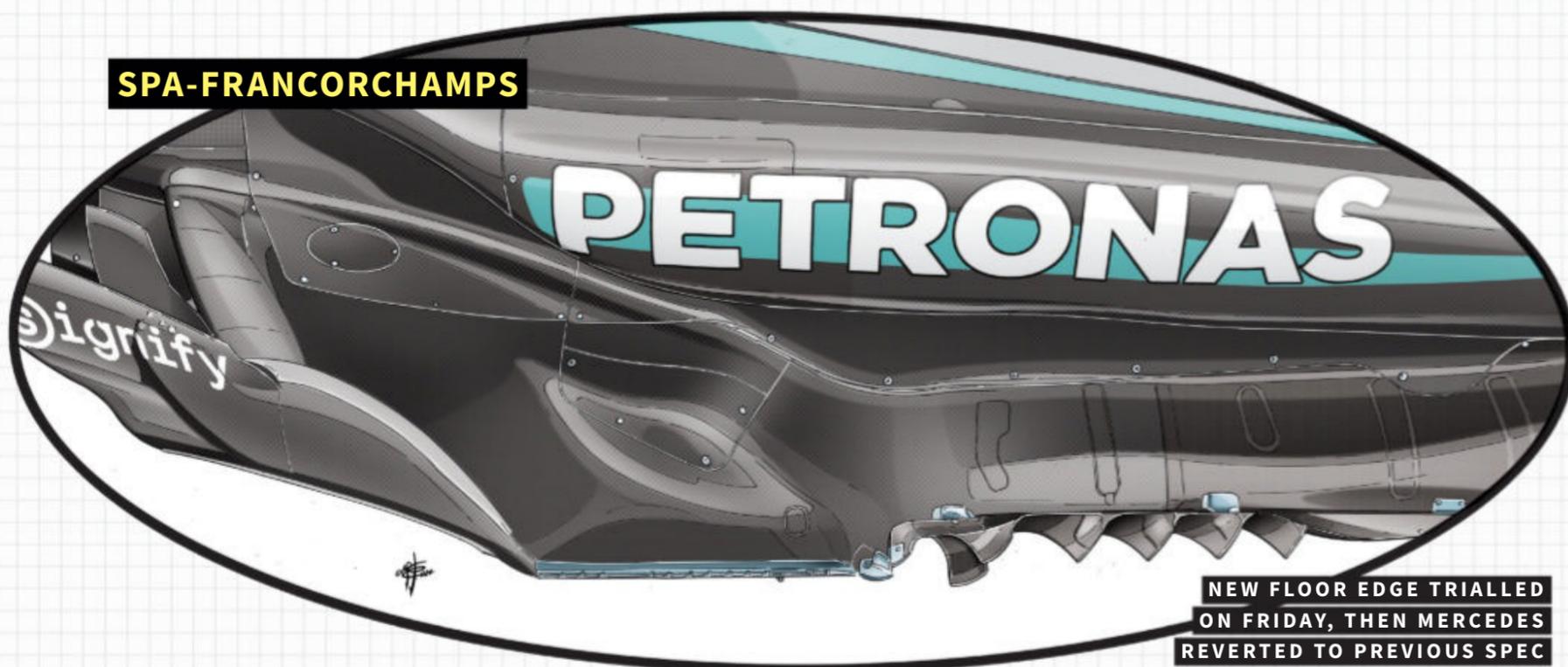
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NEW FLOOR EDGE TRIALLED ON FRIDAY, THEN MERCEDES REVERTED TO PREVIOUS SPEC

MERCEDES CHANGES FLOOR AMID SPA STRUGGLES

Mercedes introduced a new floor edge wing for the Belgian Grand Prix, which featured a revised 'ice-skate' section at the edge's front and a couple of flick-ups behind it in a design not dissimilar to that employed by Red Bull this season. Its pre-event technical notes stated that this was designed to "drop the local pressure behind the fence systems which in turn increases forward floor load".

After the team struggled in Friday practice,

the decision was made to revert to the previous-spec floor to ensure the team had a better-known baseline to work with for the rest of the weekend. George Russell reckoned that the new floor had been working as expected, and its underperformance across FP1 and FP2 was symptomatic of a perennial problem with Mercedes' cars at the Spa circuit.

"We have struggled here the last three years and the fluctuation in performance of all the

teams circuit to circuit is pretty substantial," he said. "I think it was important for us to revert to something we know. The upgrades were nothing substantial, they are just part of the development over the course of the year – we're confident those upgrades were working as expected."

Team principal Toto Wolff added that it was "more of a mechanical thing where we messed up", and was alleviated with set-up tweaks.

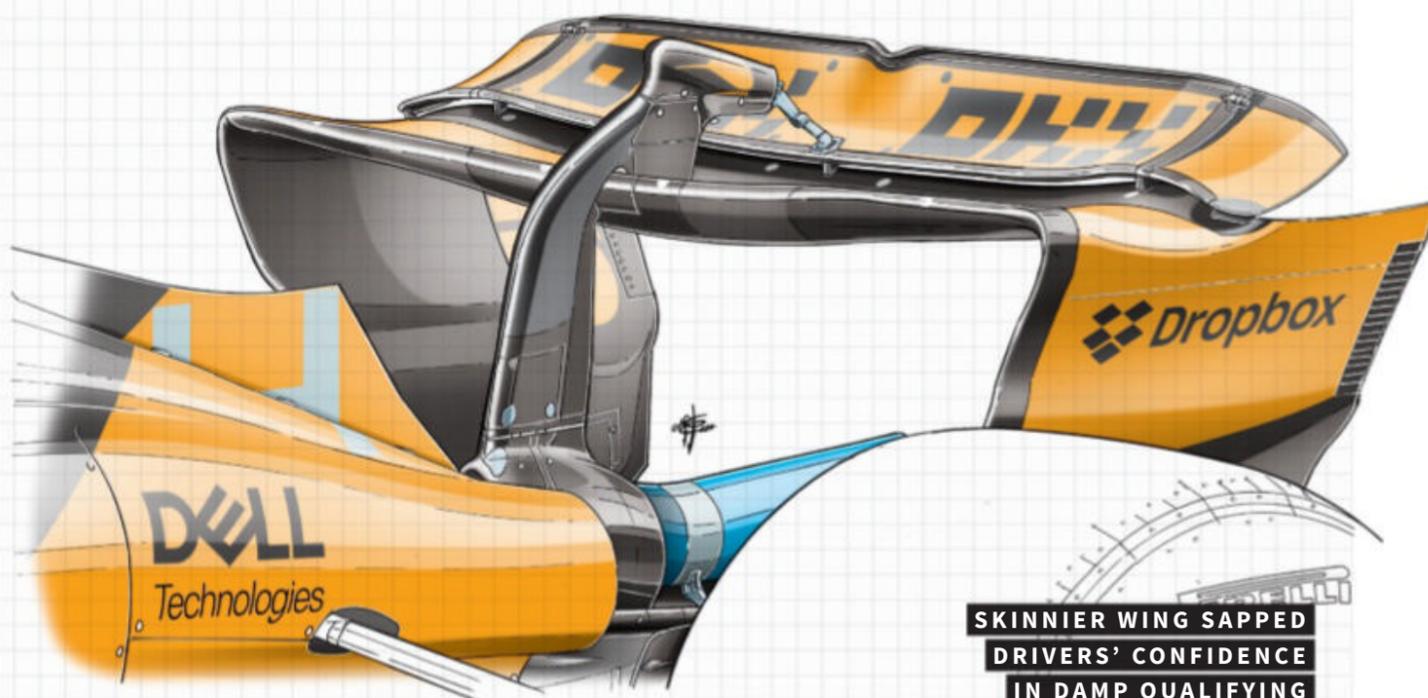
JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

McLAREN SHEDS SOME DOWNFORCE

The demands of the Spa circuit prompted teams to trial lower-downforce wings to extract more performance from their cars on the lengthy Kemmel Straight and the high-speed run to and through Blanchimont curve. McLaren opted to go down the road of a skinnier rear wing, made up of a shallower and squarer mainplane paired with a single-element beam wing.

In the damp conditions of qualifying, McLaren admitted that it had "paid the price" of preparing for the grand prix by taking a lower grid slot, with the drivers less imbued with confidence in the wet owing to the lower downforce level.

"You need to have the right wing level when you race in dry conditions," said team boss Andrea Stella after Saturday qualifying.



SKINNIER WING SAPPED DRIVERS' CONFIDENCE IN DAMP QUALIFYING

"If you are short of top speed, it can be pretty challenging. So we stayed on the same wing we had in practice, where the car proved to be

quite competitive in dry conditions."

By comparison, Red Bull opted for a higher downforce rear wing for greater stability, also aiming to reap

the benefits of stronger tyre preservation at the cost of reduced top speed.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m43.372s
2	Piastrri	1m43.903s
3	Albon	1m44.099s
4	Russell	1m44.225s
5	Hamilton	1m44.279s
6	Leclerc	1m44.306s
7	Perez	1m44.329s
8	Norris	1m44.415s
9	Sainz	1m44.574s
10	Stroll	1m44.699s
11	Gasly	1m44.833s
12	Alonso	1m44.921s
13	Ricciardo	1m44.950s
14	Bottas	1m45.155s
15	Sargeant	1m45.311s
16	Tsunoda	1m45.564s
17	Hulkenberg	1m45.645s
18	Magnussen	1m45.812s
19	Zhou	1m45.995s
20	Ocon	no time

WEATHER Clear, air 22-23C track 33-34C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Norris	1m42.260s
2	Piastrri	1m42.475s
3	Verstappen	1m42.477s
4	Leclerc	1m42.837s
5	Sainz	1m43.098s
6	Russell	1m43.290s
7	Ocon	1m43.401s
8	Magnussen	1m43.485s
9	Perez	1m43.504s
10	Hamilton	1m43.519s
11	Stroll	1m43.532s
12	Alonso	1m43.538s
13	Bottas	1m43.675s
14	Ricciardo	1m43.823s
15	Gasly	1m43.829s
16	Hulkenberg	1m43.846s
17	Albon	1m43.892s
18	Sargeant	1m44.226s
19	Zhou	1m44.302s
20	Tsunoda	1m44.348s

WEATHER Clear, air 21-22C track 30-32C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	2m01.565s
2	Piastrri	2m02.998s
3	Gasly	2m03.175s
4	Norris	2m03.372s
5	Ocon	2m05.250s
6	Leclerc	2m06.033s
7	Stroll	2m06.037s
8	Bottas	2m06.492s
9	Hamilton	2m06.751s
10	Perez	2m07.103s
11	Albon	2m07.443s
12	Hulkenberg	2m08.040s
13	Alonso	2m08.071s
14	Ricciardo	2m08.410s
15	Tsunoda	2m09.444s
16	Zhou	2m11.109s
17	Sargeant	2m11.220s
18	Russell	no time
19	Sainz	no time
20	Magnussen	no time

WEATHER Wet, air 18C track 22C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	277	1	1
2 Norris	199	1	1
3 Leclerc	177	1	1
4 Piastrri	167	1	2
5 Sainz	162	1	2
6 Hamilton	150	1	2
7 Perez	131	2	2
8 Russell	116	1	1
9 Alonso	49	5	3
10 Stroll	24	6	8
11 Hulkenberg	22	6	6
12 Tsunoda	22	7	7
13 Ricciardo	12	8	5
14 Bearman	6	7	11
15 Gasly	6	9	7
16 Magnussen	5	8	12
17 Ocon	5	9	9
18 Albon	4	9	9
19 Zhou	0	11	14
20 Sargeant	0	11	12
21 Bottas	0	13	10

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS
1 Red Bull	408
2 McLaren	366
3 Ferrari	345
4 Mercedes	266
5 Aston Martin	73
6 RB	34
7 Haas	27
8 Alpine	11
9 Williams	4
10 Sauber	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Verstappen	14	0	Perez
Hamilton	4	10	Russell
Leclerc	8	5	Sainz
Leclerc	1	0	Bearman
Norris	11	3	Piastrri
Alonso	9	5	Stroll
Gasly	4	8	Ocon
Sargeant	0	13	Albon
Ricciardo	4	9	Tsunoda
Zhou	1	13	Bottas
Magnussen	2	10	Hulkenberg

Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control

WINS

Verstappen	7
Hamilton	2
Leclerc	1
Norris	1
Piastrri	1
Russell	1
Sainz	1

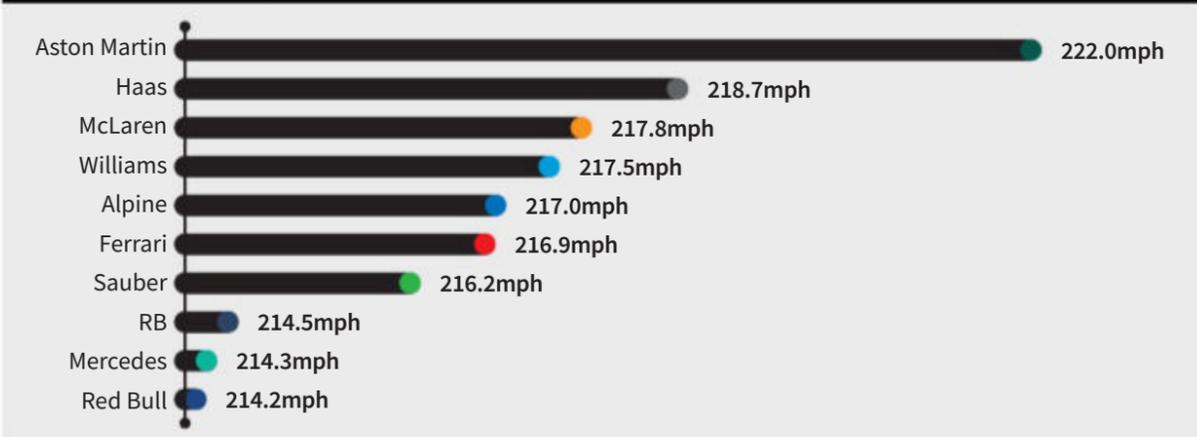
FASTEST LAPS

Alonso	2
Hamilton	2
Leclerc	2
Russell	2
Verstappen	2
Norris	1
Perez	1
Piastrri	1
Sainz	1

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	8
Leclerc	2
Russell	2
Norris	2

SPEED TRAP (RACE)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Piastrri	1m54.835s
2	Gasly	1m54.911s
3	Verstappen	1m54.938s
4	Perez	1m55.139s
5	Sainz	1m55.169s
6	Leclerc	1m55.349s
7	Russell	1m55.353s
8	Ocon	1m55.417s
9	Ricciardo	1m55.451s
10	Alonso	1m55.489s
11	Bottas	1m55.531s
12	Norris	1m55.582s
13	Hamilton	1m55.692s
14	Albon	1m55.722s
15	Stroll	1m56.072s
16	Hulkenberg	1m56.308s
17	Magnussen	1m56.500s
18	Tsunoda	1m56.593s
19	Sargeant	1m57.230s
20	Zhou	1m57.775s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m53.837s
2	Hamilton	1m54.037s
3	Russell	1m54.095s
4	Sainz	1m54.112s
5	Piastrri	1m54.136s
6	Leclerc	1m54.193s
7	Alonso	1m54.258s
8	Norris	1m54.358s
9	Ocon	1m54.460s
10	Perez	1m54.470s
11	Albon	1m54.473s
12	Gasly	1m54.635s
13	Ricciardo	1m54.682s
14	Bottas	1m54.764s
15	Stroll	1m55.716s

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m53.159s
2	Leclerc	1m53.754s
3	Perez	1m53.765s
4	Hamilton	1m53.835s
5	Norris	1m53.981s
6	Piastrri	1m54.027s
7	Russell	1m54.184s
8	Sainz	1m54.477s
9	Alonso	1m54.765s
10	Ocon	1m54.810s

WEATHER Wet, air 18-19C track 25-26C



STARTING GRID

10 Albon #23 1m54.473s		8 Alonso #14 1m54.765s		6 Russell #63 1m54.184s		4 Norris #4 1m53.981s		2 Perez #11 1m53.765s		1 Leclerc #16 1m53.754s	
	9 Ocon #31 1m54.810s		7 Sainz #55 1m54.477s		5 Piastri #81 1m54.027s		3 Hamilton #44 1m53.835s				

RESULTS ROUND 14/24 (44 LAPS - 191.41 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h19m57.566s	15	Mn, Hn, Hn
2	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+0.647s	4	Mn, Hn, Hn
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+8.023s	4	Mn, Hn, Hn
4	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+8.700s		Mn, Hn, Mn
5	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+9.324s		Mn, Hn, Hn
6	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+19.269s	7	Hn, Mn, Hn
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+42.669s		Mn, Mn, Hn, Sn
8	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+49.437s		Mn, Hn
9	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+52.026s		Mn, Hn, Hn
10	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	RB-Honda RBPT	+54.400s		Sn, Mn, Hu
11	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m02.485s		Mn, Hn
12	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m03.125s		Mn, Mn, Hn
13	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m03.839s		Mn, Hn, Hn
14	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m06.105s		Mn, Hn
15	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Sauber-Ferrari	+1m10.112s		Mn, Hn, Mn
16	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	RB-Honda RBPT	+1m16.211s		Mn, Hu
17	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m25.531s		Mn, Mn, Hn
18	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m28.307s		Mn, Hn, Mn
R	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Sauber-Ferrari	5 laps-electrical		Hn
DQ	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	-0.526s/underweight	14	Mn, Hn

WEATHER Clear, air 22-24C track 40-43C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 143.634mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 149.640mph.

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Perez	1m44.701s	-	44
2	Norris	1m45.563s	+0.862s	31
3	Piastri	1m45.840s	+1.139s	32
4	Verstappen	1m46.128s	+1.427s	32
5	Sainz	1m46.364s	+1.663s	44
6	Hamilton	1m46.653s	+1.952s	33
7	Ocon	1m46.957s	+2.256s	43
8	Leclerc	1m47.013s	+2.312s	33
9	Bottas	1m47.019s	+2.318s	37
10	Gasly	1m47.418s	+2.717s	30
11	Ricciardo	1m47.435s	+2.734s	37
12	Sargeant	1m47.490s	+2.789s	43
13	Magnussen	1m47.848s	+3.147s	44
14	Tsunoda	1m47.969s	+3.268s	44
15	Albon	1m47.996s	+3.295s	44
16	Alonso	1m48.051s	+3.350s	42
17	Stroll	1m48.105s	+3.404s	44
18	Hulkenberg	1m48.954s	+4.253s	44
19	Zhou	1m52.099s	+7.398s	2
DQ	Russell	1m47.113s	+2.412s	44

RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES
VERSTAPPEN 10-place penalty for additional power unit element used
ZHOU three-place penalty for impeding Verstappen in qualifying
TSUNODA required to start from the back - additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES
RUSSELL disqualified for car being 1.5kg under minimum weight

5

Hamilton now has as many Belgian GP wins as Ayrton Senna, one behind Michael Schumacher

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set

C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	INTERMEDIATE	WET

LAP CHART

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Leclerc	Perez	Hamilton	Norris	Piastri	Russell	Sainz	Alonso	Ocon	Albon	Verstappen	Gasly	Ricciardo	Bottas	Stroll	Hulkenberg	Magnussen	Sargeant	Zhou	Tsunoda
G	16	11	44	4	81	63	55	14	31	23	1	10	3	77	18	27	20	2	24	22
1	16	44	11	81	63	55	4	14	1	23	31	10	77	3	18	27	20	24	22	2
2	16	44	11	81	63	55	4	1	14	23	31	10	77	3	18	27	20	24	22	2
3	44	16	11	81	63	55	4	1	14	23	31	10	77	3	18	27	20	22	2	24
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42	63	44	81	16	1	4	55	11	14	31	3	18	23	10	20	77	22	27	2	
43	63	44	81	16	1	4	55	11	14	31	3	18	23	10	20	77	22	2	27	
44	63	44	81	16	1	4	55	11	14	31	3	18	23	10	20	77	22	2	27	

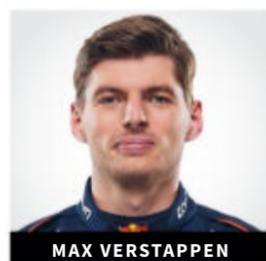
KEY: 1 Classification 1 Lap number 17 VSC lap
 G Starting grid 24 Lapped 3 Pit entry
 16 Overtook 27 Overtaken Retirement

BELGIAN GP DRIVER RATINGS

Four of the 20 F1 drivers only just came up short of perfection at a circuit that remains one of the biggest tests on the calendar

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **11th** — Result **4th**

9 Made Q3 on just two sets of inters and topped qualifying by 0.6s, then impressive on the mediums with Norris bearing down. Eased by midfielders from penalty starting spot, then DRS trains and tyres overheating in sector two stopped him climbing higher. Rued not having two hard sets for race.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **2nd** — Result **7th**

6 Finished 0.01s behind Leclerc in Q3 on used inters. But in the race he let Red Bull down. Monstered from second at the start by Hamilton, then faded down the order feeling his pace on second set of mediums in stint two was costly. Passed by Piastri and Sainz easily. Pitted late to take fastest lap.

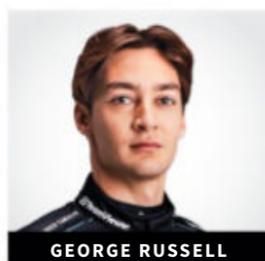
MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **3rd** — Result **1st**

9 Sent out fuelled to do multiple Q3 laps for rain that didn't intensify. Brilliantly overcame Perez on lap one, then caught and passed Leclerc. Was able to drop Ferrari in each stint but was undone by Russell's better strategy. Struggled in dirty air but couldn't even mount a faint attack.



GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **6th** — Result **DQ**

9 Q3 0.35s gap to Hamilton cost three spots. Put in mammoth 34-lap stint on the hards – after deciding one-stopper was on and team forecasting he'd be fifth stopping again. Kept pace up, didn't crack under late Hamilton pressure. Also nearly got Piastri at start. Devastated to be disqualified.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **1st** — Result **3rd**

8 Fresh inters worked well at end of Q3 to grab 'pole'. Kept lead up to Les Combes on lap one, but easily overcome by Hamilton just two tours later. Felt his higher tyre degradation on starting mediums was costly, pace on second hards not as good as Piastri. Nearly caught by Verstappen/Norris.

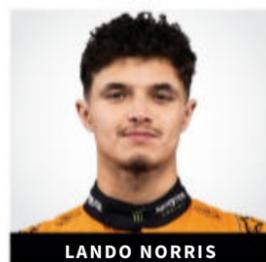


CARLOS SAINZ

Started **7th** — Result **6th**

6 Turn 1 mistake on sole new-tyre Q3 run was costly, started six spots behind Leclerc. Started on contra-strategy so, after resisting Norris well, led when others pitted earlier in stint one. Slid into Stavelot gravel then had no chance of one-stopper with mediums. Caught and passed Perez later.

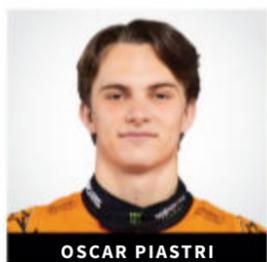
McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **4th** — Result **5th**

6 McLaren's struggles with lower-downforce setting held him back in qualifying, then had a messy race. Turn 1 exit gravel-strike cost three places, then botched Sainz Les Combes dive. Undercut by Verstappen so ran long in stint one, then pursued Red Bull to the finish.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **5th** — Result **2nd**

8 Beaten by Norris in qualifying. Made better start, chasing Perez before passing him in stint two after immediately reversing Russell's undercut. Caught and passed Leclerc brilliantly at Les Combes late on, but overshooting final stop cost precious seconds and possible late Hamilton attack.

ASTON MARTIN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **8th** — Result **8th**

8 Made Q3 when Stroll didn't, then maintained position on lap one before Verstappen came by on lap two. Ran long on starting mediums, converting to a one-stopper. Ocon got by early on, but pace on hards was enough to cycle back ahead when Alpine stopped. Stayed clear to the finish.

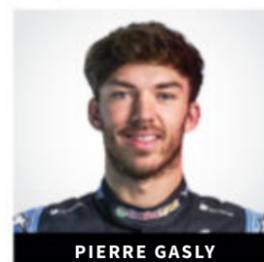


LANCE STROLL

Started **15th** — Result **11th**

6 FP3 crash at Raidillon meant a big repair job. Then he missed the Q3 cut. In the race, he maintained his starting spot in stint one, then changed to a one-stopper. Passed Sargeant then followed Bottas and reached 10th as others pitted, but was overcome by Ricciardo and Ocon late on.

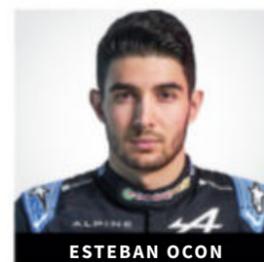
ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **12th** — Result **13th**

6 Felt poor tyre prep late in Q2 meant he lost rear grip, but it was odd Ocon did so well when Gasly had the better set-up. Held 12th early on, then passed Hulkenberg once Ocon had come by. Chased Alonso, took more hards and passed Magnussen. Battled engine temperature problem.



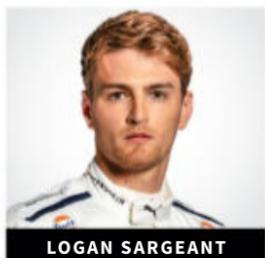
ESTEBAN OCON

Started **9th** — Result **9th**

9 Timid against Verstappen on lap one, but was unfortunate to be pinched by Norris. Then excellent. Had made Q3 without Gasly's good-for-the-wet bigger rear wing. On medium-hard-hard two-stopper, passed Gasly, got Hulkenberg and Alonso too. Also fought by Albon, Stroll and Ricciardo.



WILLIAMS



LOGAN SARGEANT

Started **18th** – Result **17th**

4 Out in Q1 having abandoned final push lap to get better track position. In the race, lost ground with clunky start gearshift, ran last when Zhou retired. Struggled on second mediums set trying to hold up one-stoppers and earlier two-stoppers. Got Hulkenberg with late Les Combes move.



ALEX ALBON

Started **10th** – Result **12th**

7 Made Q2 and was 0.003s short of Perez's Q3 spot. In the race, he gained with Ocon being pinched on run to Eau Rouge, but put up zero fight against Verstappen. Lost time on stint-two mediums as he lacked a second set of hards. Used hards later to pass Magnussen before Ocon blasted by.

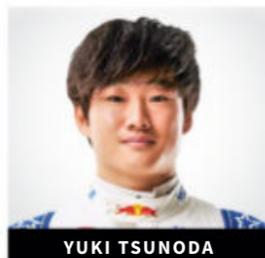
RB



DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started **13th** – Result **10th**

8 Felt waiting in the pits late in Q2 cost a Q3 shot as couldn't build tyre temperature. At the start, he slipped behind Bottas, even with grippy softs. Chased Albon on short stint two on mediums, then on hards passed Sargeant, Magnussen and Stroll, but Ocon got him with bold late Les Combes attack.



YUKI TSUNODA

Started **20th** – Result **16th**

5 Struggled for grip in Q1. Got Sargeant at start, rose as others pitted. Resiliently or foolishly didn't let Verstappen by on Dutchman's first out-lap. Couldn't undercut Magnussen, then on one-stopper Gasly and Bottas passed in second half. Vaguely alluded to car problem post-race.

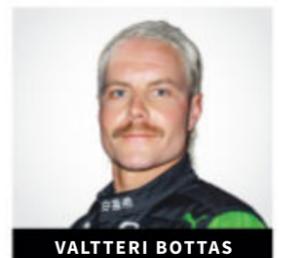
SAUBER



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **19th** — Result **R**

4 Race ruined by an electrical problem costing him power and hydraulics. Did at least shoot by Sargeant at the start. In Q1, track positioning gamble from Sauber backfired as other cars came through and mistakes at La Source and Raidillon followed, and he impeded Verstappen.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **14th** – Result **15th**

7 Made Q2 well and beat Stroll. At the start, shot by Ricciardo and Gasly, who nailed him back, then settled in behind Alpines. Tried a one-stopper, but eventually stopped for more mediums. Overheated rears, so didn't make much progress, bar getting Tsunoda as late stages commenced.

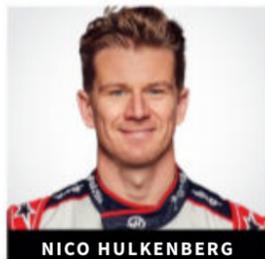
HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started **17th** – Result **14th**

6 Rear suspension problem in Q1. Ran behind team-mate in race's early stages, then cycled up to ninth with long first mediums stint. Was converted to the 'winning' one-stopper and passed Sargeant with great Les Combes move. Then later Ricciardo, Albon and Gasly piled by.

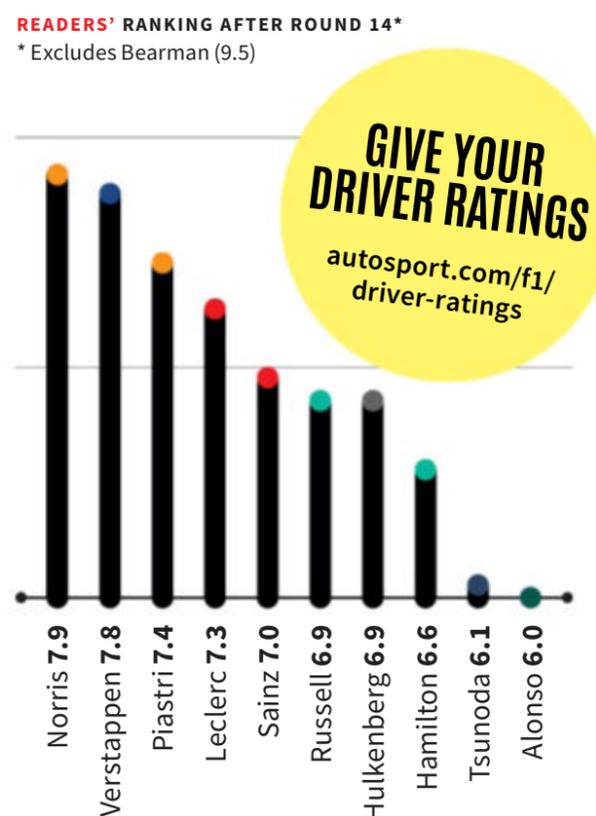
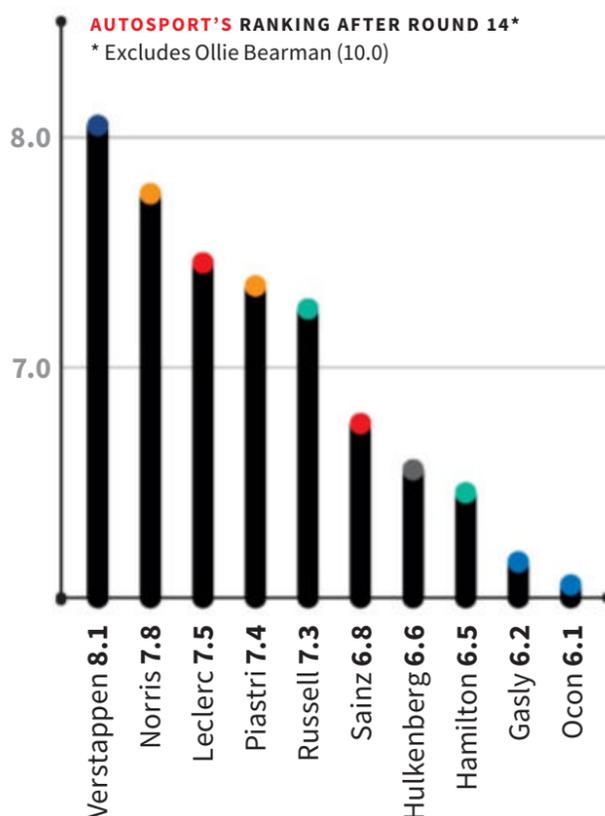


NICO HULKENBERG

Started **16th** – Result **18th**

3 A rare horror show. Stayed 16th at the start, then he got the race's first pitstop and so undercut ahead of several rivals. Pace poor on short hards stint, when the Alpines and Bottas passed by. Couldn't find time or preserve mediums well to the finish and Sargeant beat him home.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



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BTCC

Ingram makes headway amid the drama

The 2022 champion is now heading the 2024 points, but not without controversy as Turkington, Cook and Chilton took race honours

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

There were a fair few Newcastle United shirts among the throngs baking on the sun-soaked grass banks of Croft as the British Touring Car Championship hit the north last weekend. And a series that is regarded as the Premier League of UK motor racing became so in another unfortunate aspect: its refereeing decisions. Out of contention on Saturday went championship leader Jake Hill due to British motorsport's attempt to enforce regulations that are proving hard to police properly; out on Sunday went Hill again and his West Surrey Racing stablemate Colin Turkington (twice) in incidents that provided controversy, appeals, and the ref waving 'play on' – to the benefit of new series leader Tom Ingram and the other main title contender, Ash Sutton.

It all left a disagreeable taste at the end of the weekend as drivers and their team managers traipsed to the TOCA bus to plead their cases to the jury, trudged back to their area in the paddock, then ambled back again to discuss another incident. And for Ingram, who was at the centre of one of the most controversial clashes, it ended on a joyful note. His second, third and fourth positions, on a weekend when neither Hill nor Sutton won, gave him the biggest haul of points, putting him 21 ahead of Hill. And he escaped the hearing into his clash with Turkington in the final race with no action taken against either driver.

Yes, Ingram is on a roll. That three-day pre-season test at Anglesey in glorious sunshine unlocked everything required from a winter of development carried out by Excels8 Motorsport on the



There were no wins at Croft but Ingram's Hyundai was quick once again

Hyundai i30 N Fastback. OK, he didn't win a race at Croft, but that's largely because the BTCC regulations for 2024 have tipped us back from a period of relative sporting purity to the 'let's have as many different winners as we can' ethos of half a decade ago. "It's a case in point of how strong this car is this year," reflected Ingram at the end of Sunday. "The performance of the car this weekend has been staggering. Every time we've bolted a tyre on, soft or hard, it's been great. It's beyond a joy to drive – it's done everything I've wanted it to. That's enabled us to get the big points. Happy all round really."

“The performance of the car has been staggering. Every time we bolt a tyre on it's been great”

The race winners at Croft were Turkington, driving away from the pack for his 15th BTCC success at the North Yorkshire venue and the 70th in total of his career; Josh Cook, who just as he did last time out at Oulton Park played the tyre game perfectly; and Ingram's own team-mate Tom Chilton, the veteran Surrey extrovert raising his game after a period of race weekends of 'you couldn't make it up' misfortune.

Chilton's victory may have come in the reversed-grid race, the one purists sniffily deride, but it was a case of full circle for a driver who, in the first phase of qualifying, had set the quickest 'legal' BTCC lap time recorded around Croft since the end of the Super Touring days. Then it had all gone wrong in Q2, where he faded to eighth, bemoaning “understeer, wheelspin on power, >>



The 2022 champion is now 21 points clear



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Turkington
took his 70th BTCC
win from pole
in race one



SPEEDWORKS FINDS ITS SPEED

There's no question that Speedworks Motorsport had a tough first half of the season with its squad of Toyota Corolla GR Sports. OK, Rob Huff produced a virtuoso performance to win at Snetterton, and Josh Cook used a tyre gamble to triumph at Oulton Park, but pace had been lacking and there had been mechanical issues too.

Cook's latest win, over Huff, at Croft was also thanks to tyre choice, but the difference this time is that it appears that the Toyota had genuine pace, and that only circumstance had pushed the Cheshire squad into its strategy. "I genuinely believe we had the pace to fight for pole," said Cook. "I had a 21.0 in me [that's what pole was], and I think the car did. But we had a couple of small issues and the way qualifying is now [with the three-phase format] that hurt us." Apart from the track-limits fiasco, Cook added that "we've had a small electrical gremlin we're trying to sort".

Huff explained that since the previous round at Oulton five weeks prior "the guys have done a wonderful job with listening to us drivers and forging ahead with really good development". Some has been from Toyota engine builder Neil Brown Engineering "with the way the throttle and the turbo works, which has made a strong difference in terms of driveability. We've also made the car lighter in a few places, along with having a month to improve what we already had."

Interestingly, Huff's best lap on hard tyres in race one was just 0.126 seconds slower than Tom Ingram's weekend best on that compound in the sequel, in which the Toyotas took a 1-2 and where Cook showed his class. And that was despite him having to delay his attack while grass from the front grille was shaken off following his first-lap trip off the road.

Huff is pleased with the
Toyota's progress



“It’s all down to the judge of fact and, as soon as they do you, you can’t argue with it”

no grip” on a set of soft tyres that he claimed felt like the harder, older rubber he’d used in free practice. Quicker still, to the tune of 0.030 seconds, had been Dan Rowbottom, but this lap and his follow-up were both deleted due to exceeding track limits at the Jim Clark Esses. With the bearded Midlander’s qualifying group also including Hill, Ingram, Sutton and Cook, his third best lap, although it would have put him fourth in the other batch, left his Alliance Racing-run NAPA Ford Focus down in seventh – and outside the top six to progress to the second phase.

Rowbottom was distraught. “Having looked at the footage I think we’re OK,” he sighed. “And if I’m honest I’d do exactly the same thing tomorrow. It’s disappointing. We spend a lot of money, and it’s a s*** regulation if you can’t monitor it properly with sensors. It’s all down to the judge of fact and, as soon as they do you, you can’t argue with it.”

The same problem caught out Hill in Q2. He had just one second per lap of hybrid on his BMW 330e M Sport – well, theoretically, because he forgot to press the button – but had put in a mighty effort to record a lap that should have put him fourth, to progress to the top-six shootout. “I feel pretty hard done by,” he fumed, adding that he wasn’t even told which corner he’d transgressed at. “I was being super-strict with myself. I went to go on the lap after but ran wide at Turn 2 [Hawthorn] through the marbles, and at the end of that lap I was going to come in, because Craig [Porley, his engineer] said we were safe. Then right at the end of the lap he asked me to go again, but my tyres just weren’t prepped.”

Cook was another who was miffed, his lap that should have put his Speedworks Motorsport-run LKQ Toyota Corolla GR Sport fourth (or fifth, behind Hill) struck off for his own offence at the Jim Clark Esses. Another contender eliminated from the final six in qualifying. “There’s nothing we can do about it,” he summed up. “I’ve looked at the video and onboard, and I was nowhere near being off the track. It’s a long way from being track limits.”

Such is our reliance upon 1960s technology – ie none – to enforce fine judgement calls, and these had a big impact upon how things played out on Sunday during the races. It was Turkington who had emerged on pole position, although the BMW man had >>



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looked unconvincing in the first phase of qualifying in the weaker group, with a third-fastest time that wouldn't even have put him in the top six from the other batch, visibly struggling to turn in at the slower corners. Then the tide turned. "Q1 is the first time you've been on the new rubber," explained the Northern Irishman. "The balance always shifts on them, and it's hard to predict, so you try to compensate. But we nudged it in the right direction. You always try to get a good banker lap, and I knew mine would get me up there somewhere."

Similarly, Dan Cammish, who is on such a consistent run that

"Tom had a look at me on lap two into Tower, but that was the end of the challenge"

he's creeping into title contention, put his Alliance Ford on the front row alongside Turkington. "We have a habit of peaking when it really matters," smiled the Berkshire-domiciled Yorkshire native. "Q1 was OK, Q2 we barely got through, and Q3 I put down a lap that really moved us on. It's just me – I'm doing better and learning as we go on, and I think this qualifying format is suiting me."

Ingram, on just three seconds per lap of hybrid, was third but felt "we should be on pole", but a snatching of the left-rear tyre at Clervaux ruined his first hot lap. He therefore looked in very strong shape. Sutton, on 5s of hybrid, was sixth behind Aron Taylor-Smith and Rob Huff. "A bit of a painful session," he sighed. "The car wasn't quite where we were expecting, and I got held up on two of my laps [on one by Ingram, the other Turkington]." On the other, he somehow held a massive slide at the Complex. "I just covered that up," he chortled.

Now came the tyre gambles, with the format this weekend of using the soft Goodyear for two races, the hard for one. Basically, it gave us two races – one of them monotonously processional – that proved only that the soft rubber is faster than the hard, which is all very interesting and exciting. It's fair to argue that this sporting regulation is arguably one variable too many. It wasn't until all but Nick Halstead were on the softs for the finale that we got a properly entertaining touring car race...

Turkington only briefly looked under threat in the opener, in which the top four on the grid all opted for soft tyres. This was from Ingram, who had nosed inside Cammish at Hawthorn on the opening lap and, when the Ford skipped the chicane, completed the move on the run to Tower. "It was great," beamed Turkington.



Turkington's BMW suffered in Ingram clash

"Converting pole position into a win is often easier said than done but, with the car in the right place, I'd got hybrid to match anything that the others could potentially throw at me, so it was a case of getting through the first two laps. Tom had a look at me on lap two into Tower, but that was the end of the challenge. Then I could use a bit of hybrid, the tyres were switched on and away we go. Relatively straightforward."

Cammish held off team-mate Sutton for third, while Taylor-Smith brought his Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra home in fifth, and Hill used the soft rubber to climb from 11th on the grid to sixth. With five drivers ahead of him in the starting line-up starting on the hards, this was a surprising gambit from Hill, who admitted later: "I would have run hards if we could do it again. It's only because so many people ran the hards from such a long way forward. Although I got to sixth – great, I got some points back in the bag – but thinking back, we probably would have been better off doing the hard and getting further up in race two."

Interestingly, Huff on the hard rubber finished closer to sixth-placed Hill than he did to the sister Speedworks Toyota of Cook in eighth. "For me it wasn't a gamble – it was the most sensible thing to do," reckoned the 2012 World Touring Car champion of his tyre choice. "I had a really strong feeling that everyone behind me would go hard except Sutton on soft." Don't ever argue with the intuition of an East Anglian veteran...

Those two Toyotas therefore looked very strong for race two, with the top six from the opener all forced by the regulations to run the hard tyres. Now Cook was looking feisty, but on the opening lap he was forced to the grass at the Jim Clark Esses as >>



Sutton kept points ticking over despite controversy

he tried to run side by side with Huff and Taylor-Smith. That cost him a couple of places, but he followed Cook up the order past the hard-shod cars ahead. Once they were in the top two positions, Cook homed in further, and on the 13th lap of 15 he pulled off a wonderful move that lasted from Tower to Barcroft.

Also in the mix was Rowbottom, for whom a gear-cut glitch had impeded progress in the opening race, but got up to third and hounded Cook over the last couple of laps.

Behind him, Ingram held off Sutton for fourth, but the reigning champion had got involved early on with fellow four-time title winner Turkington on the run to Tower. On the hard tyres, the BMW was struggling. Sutton got into position for a move, but got caught out by Turkington being early on the brakes, and contact sent the Northern Irishman spearing down the grass, shooting across the bows of Sutton and Huff, and down to eighth position.

“It’s been deemed a racing incident,” said Turkington after the failure of the WSR team’s appeal against the decision to take no action. “But I feel aggrieved because I’m defending my position on the inside against Ash into Tower, and he’s been using the hybrid on that lap, and from my perspective he’s just been caught out by the closing speed. He’s coming at me very quickly. I’m on the hard tyre, and I’m defending on the inside, so I’ve braked earlier than he’s anticipated, and he sort of went through the back of me.”

More WSR BMW woe occurred when Hill, caught in a queue behind Taylor-Smith and Turkington, was turned lightly into the barriers at Sunny Out by contact from Chilton. And to rub salt for the Sunbury squad, Chilton then passed Turkington and got drawn on reversed-grid pole by Cook... This was another ‘racing incident’ – and again WSR lost an appeal – albeit not according to Hill: “I got fired off by Tom good and proper, which was lovely of him.”

You can argue that Chilton had at least part of his Hyundai alongside Hill’s BMW; and ditto Ingram with Turkington in the final race as they battled for third. While Chilton scampered happily into a clear early lead thanks to an “epic” getaway, Ingram tried to pass Taylor-Smith for second, only for them to hold each other up with some side-by-side action through the Jim Clark Esses and for Cammish to superbly demote both of them into Barcroft.

Now along came Turkington, up from ninth on the grid. For a while it looked as though the top four were going to concertina together, and by half-distance Turkington was probing down the inside of Ingram at the hairpin. Half a lap later, he got on the boost and they ran side by side, the BMW slightly ahead, through the Jim Clark Esses. Into the following Barcroft, Turkington appeared to move across in a bid to take the apex, Ingram was forced onto the grass, and contact fired the BMW into the barriers.



Chilton enjoys his race-three success with Ingram



Cook took a well-judged victory in the second encounter

“Unfortunately, hard racing but from my side the move needed to have been done”

“I was having a great race, and I’d caught Tom and Dan without using any hybrid relatively early, and I had six laps of hybrid left,” related Turkington. “So my pace was excellent, and again I just feel it was unnecessary. I’d used the hybrid coming out of Tower, and then we went side by side although I was ahead through the Jim Clark Esses, and then we’ve obviously pinched through Barcroft. I just feel it didn’t need to happen – it felt overly desperate to hold onto position. You can sense when a car has got significantly more pace, and it’s not worth the fight to the death. Tom was over the grass and the contact put me in the wall.”

“Fairly fruity, wasn’t it?” chirped Ingram. “Colin was obviously very fast and looked quite punchy as well. Coming out of Tower he used hybrid to pull alongside, and then left me exactly a millimetre enough room for the right-hander, but pinched me, so we ended up getting caught together in the first part of the Jim Clark Esses, which then ran us wide. I think Colin’s then potentially used hybrid again to try and get clear of me, but hasn’t got far enough past. And then I think he’s tried to come and take the apex when I’m already there. It’s difficult. I tried to jump out of his way – I could see him coming so we ended up making contact and going across the grass. It was a dodgy one; it wasn’t a nice place to be in that scenario. Unfortunately, hard racing but from my side the move needed to have been done.”

While Ingram continued to take third behind Cammish, Turkington pulled the battered BMW back on track and even got into the points on the final lap as a Power Maxed civil war broke out between Taylor-Smith and Mikey Doble. There aren’t many people who crash at Barcroft and... “are still alive!” laughed Turkington. “I sort of stunned myself that the car was pointing straight. The hybrid overheated but the car felt like it did before.”

Team-mate Hill, meanwhile, stormed from 16th to fifth and was crawling all over fourth-placed Sutton, who had somehow rescued a massive moment at Sunny after contact from Huff. “I’ve got a lot of time for Rob,” said Sutton. “As soon as the contact happened and he realised the situation I was in, he didn’t just steam past, he hesitated a little bit, and we left Sunny Out in the same position.”

Both Hill and Sutton remain very much in the title frame, and each loves the next track: Knockhill. But Ingram is confident too: “We’re in a happy place with the car. It’s working well at every circuit we’ve gone to. I think we’ll be very, very strong at Knockhill...”

[P60 BTCC SUPPORTS REPORT](#)

RESULTS ROUND 6/10, CROFT (GBR), 28 JULY RACE 1 (15 LAPS – 31.502 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (s)	20m50.152s
2	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (s)	+1.746s
3	Dan Cammish (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (s)	+3.562s
4	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (s)	+4.114s
5	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (s)	+10.231s
6	Jake Hill (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (s)	+15.774s
7	Rob Huff (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (H)	+19.755s
8	Josh Cook (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (H)	+28.886s
9	Tom Chilton (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (H)	+31.080s
10	Dan Rowbottom (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (H)	+32.165s
11	Mikey Doble (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (H)	+35.431s
12	Andrew Watson (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (H)	+35.815s
13	Adam Morgan (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (H)	+39.627s
14	Aiden Moffat (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (H)	+40.530s
15	Chris Smiley (GBR)	Restart Racing / Cupra Leon (H)	+42.891s
16	Ronan Pearson (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (H)	+43.522s
17	Scott Sumpton (GBR)	Restart Racing / Cupra Leon (H)	+44.594s
18	Daryl DeLeon (PHL)	Unlimited Motorsport / Cupra Leon (H)	+46.946s
19	Sam Osborne (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (H)	+48.421s
20	Nick Halstead (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (s)	+52.706s

Winner's average speed 90.71mph. **Fastest lap** Turkington 1m22.243s, 91.92mph.

Q3 1 Turkington 1m21.072s; 2 Cammish 1m21.245s; 3 Ingram 1m21.253s; 4 Taylor-Smith 1m21.433s; 5 Huff 1m21.478s; 6 Sutton 1m21.582s.

Q2 Ingram 1m21.121s; Turkington 1m21.350s; Sutton 1m21.401s; Huff 1m21.536s; Taylor-Smith 1m21.558s; Cammish 1m21.594s; 7 Smiley 1m21.626s; 8 Chilton 1m21.712s; 9 Cook 1m21.830s; 10 Doble 1m21.871s; 11 Hill 1m21.877s; 12 Watson 1m21.885s.

Q1 - GROUP 1 Ingram 1m21.133s; Cook 1m21.213s; Sutton 1m21.342s; Hill 1m21.584s; Doble 1m21.694s; Huff 1m21.773s; 13 Rowbottom 1m21.900s; 14 DeLeon 1m22.072s; 15 Moffat 1m22.128s; 20 Halstead 1m24.890s.

Q1 - GROUP 2 Chilton 1m21.058s; Cammish 1m21.700s; Turkington 1m21.823s; Taylor-Smith 1m21.964s; Watson 1m22.073s; Smiley 1m22.099s; 16 Morgan 1m22.157s; 17 Osborne 1m22.184s; 18 Pearson 1m22.191s; 19 Sumpton 1m23.114s.



Turkington's win was his 15th BTCC success at Croft

GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1.

RACE 2 (15 LAPS – 31.502 MILES)

1 Cook (s) 21m03.148s; 2 Huff (s) +0.742s; 3 Rowbottom (s) +0.954s; 4 Ingram (H) +6.257s; 5 Sutton (H) +8.115s; 6 Cammish (H) +8.770s; 7 Taylor-Smith (H) +16.772s; 8 Chilton (s) +17.248s; 9 Turkington (H) +17.967s; 10 Moffat (s) +18.358s; 11 Doble (s) +18.820s; 12 Watson (s) +23.271s; 13 Osborne (s) +23.352s; 14 DeLeon (s) +25.092s; 15 Sumpton (s) +25.374s; 16 Hill (H) +29.948s; 17 Morgan (s) -2 laps; R Halstead (s) 14 laps-issue with car; R Smiley (s) 12 laps-oil pressure sensor; R Pearson (s) 7 laps-buckled wheel.

Winner's average speed 89.77mph.

Fastest lap Cook 1m22.625s, 91.50mph.

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

RACE 3 (15 LAPS – 31.502 MILES)

1 Chilton (s) 20m56.324s; 2 Cammish (s) +1.504s; 3 Ingram (s) +2.141s; 4 Sutton (s) +8.219s; 5 Hill (s) +8.760s; 6 Huff (s) +11.151s; 7 Cook (s) +12.550s; 8 Rowbottom (s) +12.719s; 9 Morgan (s) +17.519s; 10 Pearson (s) +24.337s; 11 Smiley (s) +24.583s; 12 Osborne (s) +26.379s; 13 Taylor-Smith (s) +28.842s; 14 Turkington (s) +28.951s; 15 Doble (s) +29.154s; 16 Sumpton (s) +29.638s; 17 DeLeon (s) +33.889s; 18 Halstead (H) +1m05.223s; NC Watson (s) 11 laps-running; R Moffat (s) 3 laps-radiator.

Winner's average speed 90.26mph.

Fastest lap Cammish 1m21.989s, 92.21mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ingram 253; 2 Hill 232; 3 Sutton 224; 4 Cammish 212; 5 Cook 192; 6 Turkington 178; 7 Chilton 130; 8 Taylor-Smith 130; 9 Huff 129; 10 Rowbottom 121.



Hill's pace deserved more but he was one of those to suffer misfortune

NEXT REPORT
Knockhill
15 August issue

Hadjar tightens F2 title grip with Belgium victory

FORMULA 2
SPA (BEL)
27-28 JULY
ROUND 10/14

Isack Hadjar moved 36 points clear of the chasing pack with a controlled victory in the Formula 2 feature race at Spa on a weekend severely affected by heavy rain. The Red Bull-backed Campos driver entered the event with an 18-point advantage over Hitech's Paul Aron, but had the chance to extend this lead in the sprint race, an outing in which Aron would serve a 10-place grid penalty for misdemeanours last time out in Hungary.

After Aron topped qualifying, the nature of the partially reversed grid sprint race meant he started the opening event in 20th, with title rivals Hadjar and Gabriel Bortoleto (Invicta) in eighth and ninth respectively. However, the sprint race would have no effect on the top of the order thanks to the weather.

Rain caused a postponement of more than four hours, meaning the race took place after F1 qualifying at 1825 local time. Even then, the running was limited, with only two and a half racing laps completed before Pepe Marti's Campos machine came to a halt, causing the safety car to be deployed. Although the track was cleared relatively quickly, the safety car remained in action until the red flags were shown due to safety concerns in the heavy rain. The result was declared at five laps, meaning only the top five drivers received points.

Williams junior Zak O'Sullivan had started from pole and the ART driver backed up his unconventional Monaco win with another strange success, Dennis Hauger and Richard Verschoor joining him on the podium.

Conditions was vastly better come Sunday morning, with Aron heading



WEEKEND WINNERS

FORMULA 2
SPA (BEL)

Race 1 Zak O'Sullivan
 ART Grand Prix
Race 2 Isack Hadjar
 Campos Racing

FORMULA 3
SPA (BEL)

Race 1 Dino Beganovic
 Prema Racing
Race 2 Callum Voisin
 Rodin Motorsport



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

Bortoleto and Hadjar on the grid, all three starting on the softer-compound Pirelli. Much like in the sprint race, it wasn't long until the safety car was required, with Zane Maloney (Rodin) the meat in the sandwich as Oliver Bearman (Prema) was turned into Marti on the initial run to La Source. Future Haas F1 racer Bearman was handed a five-place grid penalty at the next round for his part in the incident.

Aware the safety car would soon be deployed, Hadjar wasted no time in drafting past Bortoleto on the Kemmel Straight and into Les Combes for second.

A further disruption came after less than one full lap of racing, with Barcelona sprint winner Victor Martins (ART) left with no way of avoiding Rafael Villagomez's Van Amersfoort Racing car as it spun back across the track at Les Combes.

As racing resumed, Hadjar used DRS to pass Aron for the lead, with Hitech reacting by immediately pitting the Estonian to fit

the medium rubber – a move copied one lap later by Hadjar, with Bortoleto following suit on the tour after that. This allowed Aron, his tyres up to temperature, to quickly repay the DRS move on Hadjar, but he was not able to maintain the lead. Hadjar retook him on lap 13 of 25 and then Aron fell behind Bortoleto on lap 17, just before the late stoppers peeled in and left the trio once again out front.

Things got worse for Aron on the final lap when he ground to a halt with a technical issue – 15 points gone. So he failed to score a point for the third feature race in succession and fell behind runner-up Bortoleto in the standings.

Aron's problem promoted DAMS driver Jack Crawford to an unlikely podium and O'Sullivan to fourth. Verschoor was the highest-placed driver on the alternative strategy of starting on mediums, in fifth.

SAM HALL



O'Sullivan (second from right) topped shortened wet sprint



Mini (2) and sprint winner Beganovic (1) helped Prema secure teams' title

FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

First win for Voisin as Fornaroli takes top spot

FORMULA 3
SPA (BEL)
27-28 JULY
ROUND 9/10

Leonardo Fornaroli stole the Formula 3 championship lead with just one event remaining, while Dino Beganovic and Callum Voisin shared the wins at Spa.

The weekend's drama began in the closing stages of qualifying. With no driver wanting to go first on the final runs, the final metres into the lap-ending chicane resembled a car park more than a race track, with some drivers failing to begin their final efforts. This left Prema's title-chasing Brit Arvid Lindblad to start both races from 27th, while his team-mate and pre-event points leader Gabriele Mini was 11th – a position that at least gave him a strong reversed-grid slot.

Completing the Prema trio, Beganovic was 12th and started the damp sprint race from pole, a position he conceded early on to Mini, following a brief safety car period after Max Esterson crashed at Raidillon. The positions were again reversed on the drag to Les Combes after the restart, Beganovic nicely sweeping around the outside of Mini, while a fierce battle was brewing for the final podium place.

Van Amersfoort's Noel Leon eventually defeated Tim Tramnitz (MP Motorsport) on the final lap for third. Luke

Browning had been in the mix for Hitech and took the flag in seventh before a 10s post-race penalty for track limits violations pushed him back to 12th. Lindblad charged to 12th but a similar penalty dropped him to 15th.

Sunday's feature race was heavily affected by the safety car, with three separate interventions meaning more than half of the 15 laps were spent under caution. Leading from pole, Rodin's reigning GB3 champion Voisin took a maiden win to back up his previous Silverstone podium, managing the various restarts with composure.

In drying conditions, Mini was the first championship challenger to fall as he was tagged into a spin by Campos driver Oliver Goethe at La Source on the opening lap.

Involved in the incident that caused the final safety car period, Lindblad ended his weekend in the Bruxelles gravel after contact with ART's Christian Mansell – this the same corner that Sophia Florsch (Van Amersfoort) had earlier stopped at after tangling with Rodin's Joseph Loake.

Both of these incidents followed the longest four-lap stoppage, caused when Martinius Stenshorne and Formula Regional European frontrunner Tuukka Taponen, who was standing in for regular ART driver Nikola Tsolov (banned for racing at Spa in another series, which contravened F3's sporting



Briton Voisin took his first F3 win in feature

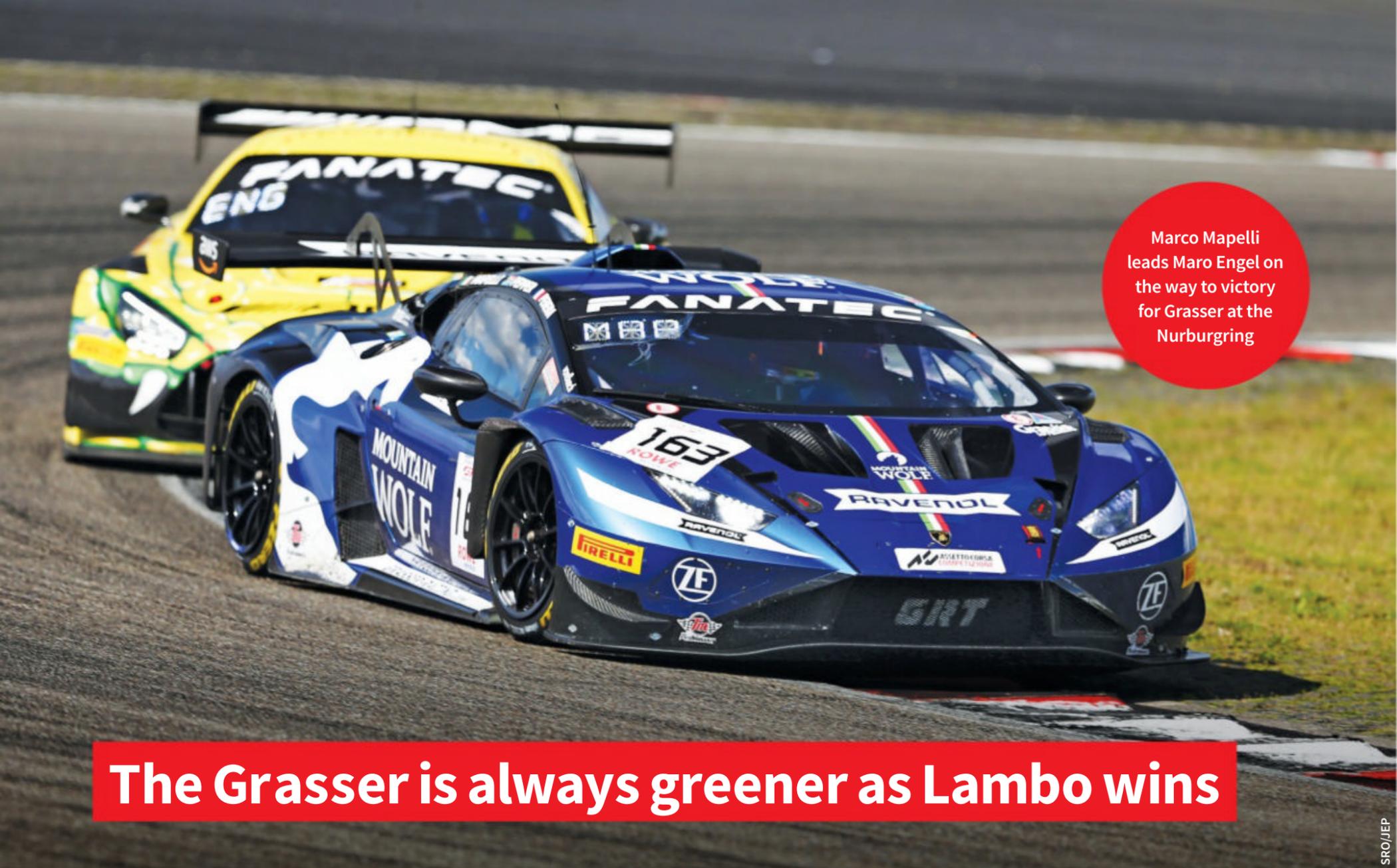
FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

rules), crashed in separate incidents.

Through it all, Trident driver Fornaroli managed to steer clear of trouble. From third, he overtook Alex Dunne's MP Motorsport machine but dropped behind Sebastian Montoya at the start before managing his own race – providing no threat to those ahead but being equally unbothered by those behind. The Italian is yet to take a victory this season but six podiums and only two non-points results have put him one point ahead of Mini going into the Monza season finale.

Browning, sixth on Sunday, is six points off the lead, while Lindblad's second consecutive point-less round leaves him 16 off the top.

SAM HALL



Marco Mapelli leads Maro Engel on the way to victory for Grasser at the Nurburgring

The Grasser is always greener as Lambo wins

**GT WORLD CHALLENGE
ENDURANCE CUP
NURBURGRING (DEU)
28 JULY
ROUND 3/5**

Not since September 2021 had Lamborghini stood on the top step of the GT World Challenge Europe podium. The Italian marque ended that three-year hoodoo in fine fashion as Marco Mapelli, Franck Perera and Jordan Pepper gave Grasser Racing Team victory at the Nurburgring.

Rather aptly, the Eifel circuit was the venue of that last victory and continues a strong run of form for Gottfried Grasser's crew that began with pole position at the Spa 24 Hours last month.

And while the three-hour race was hardly an action-packed end-to-end thriller, the race-long scrap between the winning Lambo and the Winward Mercedes of Maro Engel, Daniel Morad and Lucas Auer did

provide a degree of intrigue until the former pulled clear in the final hour.

"We executed the race perfectly from the start," said Mapelli. "Jordan did an amazing job, and we were able to manage the race properly. The Mercedes had more than us at times but to stay behind another car is not easy. This is a big credit to Grasser because they prepared the car perfectly since Paul Ricard [in April]. We've had a decent shot since the start of the championship, so now we have to fight."

Both starting drivers, Pepper and Auer, found themselves in an unlikely lead fight in the early going following a chaotic first lap that left the polesitting Rutronik Racing Porsche of Patric Niederhauser out with suspension damage after a banzai divebomb from AF Corse's David Vidales at Turn 1. Vidales picked up a drive-through penalty for his part in the collision and his car ultimately finished 10th, but the knock-on effect was profound for Rutronik,

which lost a winning chance, while Auer was also delayed.

Despite escaping the Turn 1 melee, having probably had flashbacks to last year, when he was run into on lap one, ironically by Engel's Mercedes, Pepper "had to drive at 110%" to hold off Auer before handing over to Mapelli.

The Mercedes pitted one lap earlier at the first round of stops and was the quicker car in the second stint, to the point where Engel was practically pushing Mapelli around Turn 8. The pit sequence was then reversed at the final stops, which seemed to have given the Merc the upper hand, only for Daniel Morad to run slightly too deep at Turn 1, handing Perera the lead once more.

From there, the Merc's tyres appeared to fall away as Perera opened up a six-second margin. The race was won, and Winward demoted to the bottom step of the podium as Schumacher CLRT's Porsche trio of Dorian Boccolacci/Ayhancan Guven/Laurin Heinrich finished strongly to take second.

The best of the Audis was fourth-placed Christopher Haase, Alex Aka and Ricardo Feller for Attempto Racing, with Rowe Racing's Philipp Eng, Nick Yelloly and Marco Wittmann rallying late to end up fifth as the highest-placed BMW.

Spa 24 Hours winner Comtoy Racing Aston Martin was sixth.

Audi enjoyed success in the Gold Cup, with Sainteloc taking the win, while Boutsen VDS Mercedes won the Silver Cup. Scant consolation for Rutronik came in the Bronze Cup, claimed by Dustin Blattner, Dennis Marschall and Loek Hartog.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



Marvin starvin' for Porsche crown

PORSCHE SUPERCUP
SPA (BEL)
28 JULY
ROUND 6/8

Marvin Klein signalled his intention to take the Porsche Supercup title fight down to the wire with a controlled win at Spa, as Larry ten Voorde again dropped points to his closest challengers.

The top three contenders are now split by just 12 points with two races to go, after Harry King beat ten Voorde to third in a gloves-off final-lap scrap.

Klein boosted his hopes of a first Supercup win since Zandvoort 2022



by snaring pole position, just 0.096 seconds ahead of Schumacher CLRT team-mate ten Voorde. Crucially, Klein aced the start as GP Elite driver Huub van Eijndhoven got a run on ten Voorde exiting La Source. After the two Dutchmen went side-by-side into Eau Rouge, double champion ten Voorde took to the run-off at Raidillon, allowing King (Lechner) and veteran Jaap van Lagen (Dinamic Motorsport) to draft ahead into Les Combes. This battle gave Klein an enormous 2.7s lead at the end of the first lap, but two quick-fire safety cars meant he had to build up his advantage again once racing fully resumed on lap seven of 12.

However, van Eijndhoven never looked likely to challenge his French rival and was content to settle for a maiden Supercup podium in second, as behind ten Voorde made quick work of van Lagen and set about challenging nearest title rival King, the winner last time out in Hungary. A late lunge into La Source on the final lap briefly put ten Voorde ahead, but King fought back and after repeatedly banging wheels, running side-by-side through Raidillon, the Briton slotted ahead into Les Combes to reduce his points deficit to seven, with Klein another five behind.

JAMES NEWBOLD

WEEKEND WINNERS

GT WORLD CHALLENGE ENDURANCE CUP
NURBURGRING (DEU)
Marco Mapelli/Franck Perera/Jordan Pepper Grasser (Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2)

PORSCHE SUPERCUP
SPA (BEL)
Marvin Klein
Schumacher CLRT

WORLD RALLYCROSS
NYIRAD (HUN)

Race 1 Niclas Gronholm
CE Dealer Team (PWR RX1e)

Race 2 Johan Kristofferson
KMS (Volkswagen Polo 601 RX)

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
GOIANIA (BRA)

Race 1 Eduardo Barrichello
Full Time Sports (Toyota Corolla)

Race 2 Gabriel Casagrande
A Mattheis Vogel (Chevrolet Cruze)

EUROCUP-3

MOTORLAND ARAGON (ESP)

Race 1 Jesse Carrasquedo
Campos Racing

Race 2 Javier Sagrera
MP Motorsport



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

Rivals on the boil in Red Cauldron clash

WORLD RALLYCROSS
NYIRAD (HUN)
27-28 JULY
ROUND 2/5

Niclas Gronholm and reigning champion Johan Kristoffersson took a victory each during a fiery double-header around the 'Red Cauldron' at Nyirad.

The weekend will be remembered for a chaotic final on Saturday. Kevin Hansen topped the qualifying heats in his electric Peugeot 208 R1Xe, and was joined on the front row in the final by Kristofferson, who had bounced back from reliability issues with his Volkswagen Polo to win his semi-final.

It all kicked off between the pair at the start, with Kristofferson making the better launch to draw alongside into the first corner before contact sent them both spinning backwards into the tyre barriers and, unsurprisingly, both would later blame each other for the incident.



Hansen was out on the spot, and he was subsequently disqualified, while his brother and team-mate Timmy also spun and crashed one corner later after coming together with Gronholm, who survived the clash to lead the remainder of the contest and take his first win of the season.

Having limped home in fourth and fifth in their damaged machines, Timmy Hansen and Kristofferson were involved in a feisty qualifying heat with Gronholm during round four on Sunday.

Kristofferson overcame more damage to win the semi-final, and the six-time

champion followed it up with a dominant 43rd career victory in the final by finishing 11s clear of his team-mate Ole Christian Veiby.

While Gronholm was absent after retiring from the semi-final, fellow PWR Racing driver Klara Andersson took her second podium of the season in third after resisting race-long pressure from Timmy Hansen, who finished fourth ahead of his younger brother. Rene Munnich was sixth in his first appearance of the year in a final driving a SEAT Ibiza.

STEVE WHITFIELD

WHY F1 CANNOT IGNORE F2'S UNDER-THE-RADAR STAR

Hitech's Estonian rookie Paul Aron has proved he's fast and consistent – he just needs a breakthrough win to cement his claim to take the next, biggest step

SAM HALL

Formula 1 is always looking for the next star and appears to have found its latest favourite sons in Prema pairing Andrea Kimi Antonelli and Ollie Bearman, with the latter already confirmed as a Haas driver for 2025. But while drivers connected to the academies of current teams often steal the headlines, those without connections sometimes fly under the radar.

This has certainly been the case with Hitech's Paul Aron, a Mercedes junior between July 2019 and November 2023, who has been a consistent figure at the front of the F2 field this season as a rookie.

Despite not having a win prior to the summer shutdown – something that fellow rookie Antonelli has achieved twice – a steady stream of podiums has kept the Estonian at the sharp end of the standings, while others have come and gone in the

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Aron (left) runner-up to Hadjar in March's Melbourne feature race



2024 F2 season was approached as a one-year plan

top order. Some may point to the lack of wins as a sign that he is not yet ready to make the jump, but there is certainly merit in his level of performance and lack of serious errors. And he's already underlined his speed with three pole positions, at Barcelona, the Hungaroring and Spa.

"We have tried our best to talk around the paddock and get my name going as much as possible," says the 20-year-old of his bid to secure an F1 seat. "I've talked to as many people as possible. We are doing our best but it's obviously not easy and, for sure, if we were related to a junior team, it would be easier.

"But at the same time, at least we have the freedom to talk to everyone. There is a lot of movement going on in the F1 paddock, so all I can really do is try to get my name around the paddock as much as possible and, to be honest, this year has definitely

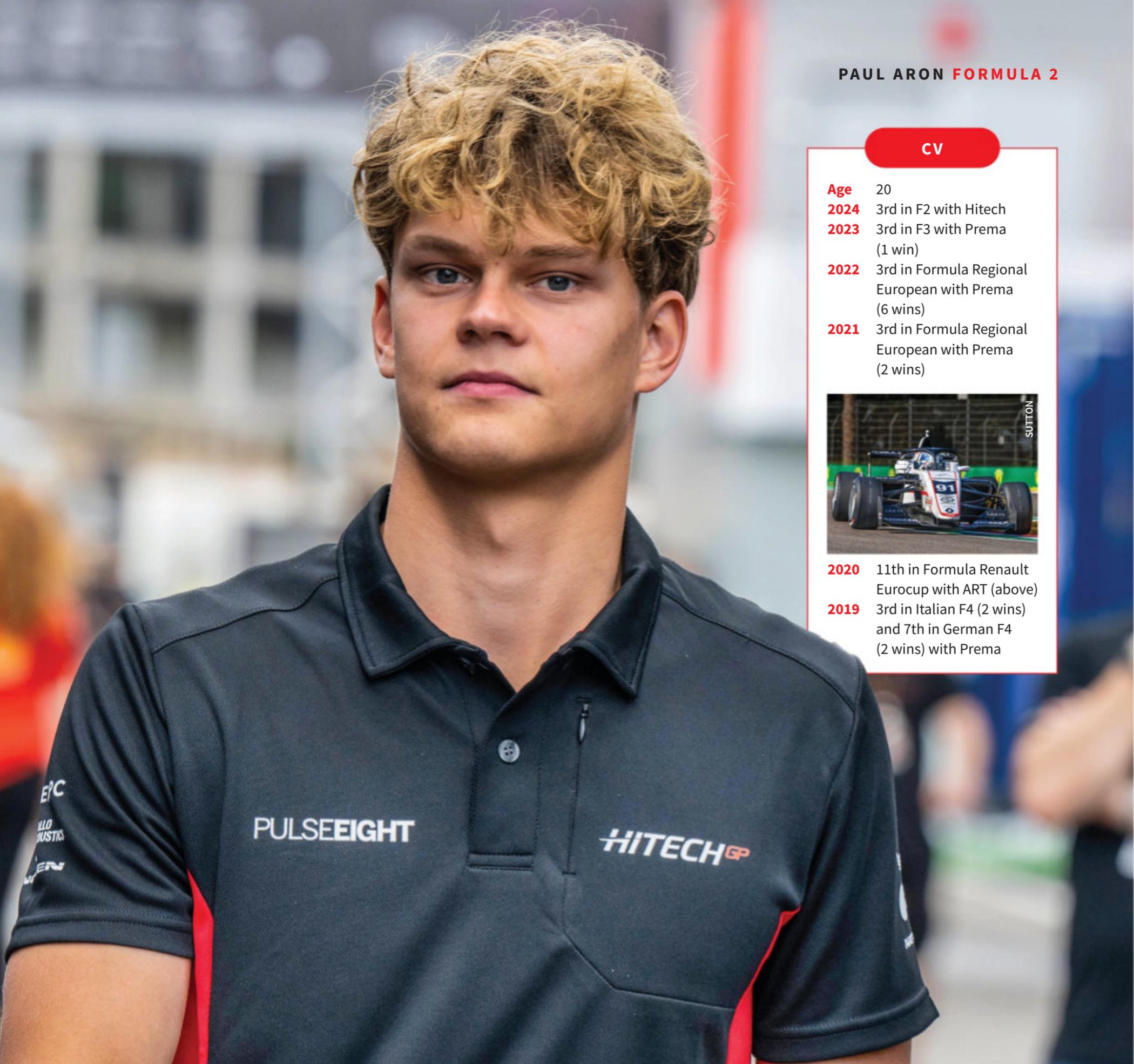
shown that the best way to do that is through results."

The timing of Aron's Hungarian feature race performance – a poor start from pole and tangles with first Bearman and then Zane Maloney (Rodin) in a move that ended both their races – was unfortunate given it came off the back of a disappointing weekend at Silverstone, where technical issues in both races cost him. And at Spa a feature race podium was lost to last-lap mechanical woes.

Conceding that Silverstone was "not one of my proudest moments", Aron suggests that the top drivers in Formula 3 each year "deserve" to graduate to F2, with Autosport questioning whether this logic translates to the next step, with top F2 talent deserving an F1 seat. "I think that if you're young and if you're a rookie in F2 and are performing well – I'm not saying this because that's the position that I'm in – that is what it's for," he replies.

CV

- Age** 20
- 2024** 3rd in F2 with Hitech
- 2023** 3rd in F3 with Prema (1 win)
- 2022** 3rd in Formula Regional European with Prema (6 wins)
- 2021** 3rd in Formula Regional European with Prema (2 wins)
- 
- 2020** 11th in Formula Renault Eurocup with ART (above)
- 2019** 3rd in Italian F4 (2 wins) and 7th in German F4 (2 wins) with Prema



“It’s never looked on positively if you finish quite high in the championship and you do it again”

“If you’re young and doing well, you should get interest from F1 and you should get a chance to go there.

“In the end, that’s why Ollie has got his chance. He’s having a very difficult time this year but he managed to do the job last year, in his rookie [F3] year, to perform and impress the F1 grid enough. And I don’t see why my position or Gabriel’s [Bortoleto, currently second] position as rookies who are doing well is any different. But it’s not that simple, and I could say that the guys on the grid this year – me, Isack [Hadjar, current points leader], Zane – have all had a good season so far and we’re all good drivers, but it’s always hard to say who exactly deserves the chance to go up and who doesn’t.”

However, while silly season has been a prolonged affair this year since Lewis Hamilton announced his shock move to Ferrari, there have been no real surprise names linked to seats, with both

Antonelli and Bearman already having been in strong positions.

Of course, there is greater scope for opportunities to arise in the reserve driver market, with 2021 F2 champion Oscar Piastri taking this role with Alpine for a year before joining McLaren, and Bearman currently serving as one of three reserve options for Ferrari while competing in F2.

Although keen to keep as many doors open as possible, one option Aron has all but ruled out is a return to F2: “It’s never looked on positively if you finish quite high in the championship and you do it again. Nobody really likes that because then people assume that you don’t believe in yourself enough.

“Speaking about the facts, every year is different. It’s a technical sport, so there is a lot that goes into having a quick car and having the synergy between the driver and the car, and you can never fully guarantee that, because everybody is different, every car is different, every team is different – so it’s always a bit of a risk of doing a series again. Yes, if you were quick one year, most likely you will be quick the next year, but you can never guarantee that.

“The thing with me is that this season has obviously cost a budget and they are not cheap seasons, and I almost struggled to have a place on the grid this year, even after finishing third in F3. So, I’m >>



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very glad to have the opportunity to race here with Hitech, but I certainly won't have the possibility to do the series again – at least with my current funding. If there was potential help from somewhere then it could be a possibility but, if you finish top three in the championship, I would definitely expect to have a chance to make a step up and, if not, to explore other options.

“We have approached this year as a one-year plan. We never approached F2 as taking the first year to develop and then go for it in the second year. I've taken the mindset that this is the year and that is why I've been pushing so hard with myself and the team.”

This is all well and good, but why should an F1 team consider a driver that is not part of its junior academy, is yet to win a race and has yet to put a title to his name?

“I've taken the mindset that this is the year and that's why I've been pushing so hard with myself and the team”

While the answer may not be immediately clear to those watching Aron for the first time this season, his ability to learn from mistakes and develop his driving between seasons is a trait that only the top drivers share. While his Hungary collision was clumsy and was likely the product of a desire to quickly make up for his poor start, this is an error that you can be sure will not be seen again.

You then look to his progression between seasons and see that, even with a run of difficult weekends, he remains ahead of Zak O'Sullivan, one of the two drivers who bested him last year in F3 – and is just five points behind the other, Bortoletto. And in that F3 campaign he beat Gabriele Mini and Dino Beganovic, the two drivers that had finished ahead of him in the 2022 Formula Regional European Championship – and are this year still competing in F3. “That has been the story of my whole career,” adds Aron, who has finished third four times in junior series. “There have been people who have beaten me in a year and have won a title, but I've always been able to make a step forward and beat them the year after.”

F2/F3 CEO Bruno Michel has seen a raft of talented drivers move





Prema pair Bearman (left) and Antonelli are F1's latest favourite sons

GALLOWAY

through the ranks and on to F1, so has a keen eye for those destined to reach the top. "He is definitely a very gifted driver – he is very fast," offers Michel on Aron. "But for the moment, he hasn't won a race yet, and he has made a few mistakes that cost him a few points.

"He's been extremely consistent, and that's a massive advantage when you want to win a championship and he's smart on that because he knows how to run it. But also he needs at some point to win a race in F2, which I'm sure he will do before the end of the season. That's going to be his next step. After that, it is a little bit unfortunate that he's not part of an F1 programme, but I'm sure he will be in the near future and I don't have any doubt with that."

"It obviously means a lot," says Aron of Michel's assessment. "He sees all these young kids go through the ranks so certainly, he has got some experience of what a driver needs to be good and what he needs to be quick and what he needs to be ready for F1."

Of course, it's the F1 paddock that Aron really needs to persuade. But if he keeps on improving – and finally gets that win – he will be harder and harder to ignore. *M*



SUTTON

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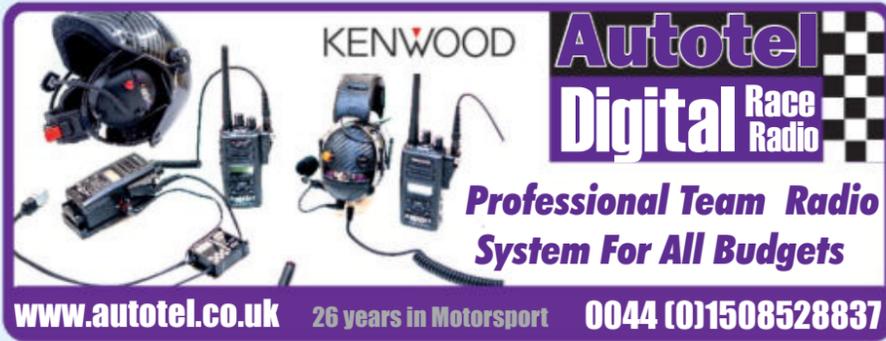
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FIA reveals 'entry-level' TC Lite tin-top concept

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Existing Rally4 and Rally5 cars will head to the tracks



FIA

New TC Lite tin-tops based on rally cars

FIA

The FIA has created a new “entry-level” touring car category that will result in a convergence of tin-top racing and rallying.

The new TC Lite classes will share existing Rally4 and Rally5 technical regulations and will form the base of the FIA’s touring car pyramid under TCR. As a result, through minimal modifications, Rally4 and Rally5 cars will be able to compete in both tin-top racing and rallying.

The initiative is particularly targeted at developing motorsport in areas outside of its traditional heartlands, such as in Eastern Europe, South America and Asia.

According to the FIA, the objective is to

have cars suitable for different motorsport competitions without the need for costly and time-consuming conversions between the rallying and circuit racing specifications. The minimum weight set will be adjusted to compensate for the removal of spare wheels and tools, which are not required for circuit racing, while the addition of FIA-homologated racing nets will be mandatory. There will be two classes, TCL4 and TCL5, which will feature contrasting power-to-weight ratios.

“It’s a base of the pyramid for countries that haven’t got a series like a one-make Clio Cup, and where you can devise a series out of currently homologated cars,” explained FIA Touring Car Commission president Alan

Gow. “The important thing here is that there is no extra cost in someone adopting these regulations, because they already exist and the cars already exist.”

“It’s easy to be very British about it and say ‘but they’re rally cars’, but the majority of countries in Europe run Tarmac rallies. They’re race cars with an extra seat in. There’s a lot of these Rally4 and Rally5 cars around that can be used new or second-hand.”

On whether the TC Lite concept could have a place in the UK, Gow added: “The UK is well served with touring car classes below the British Touring Car Championship, such as Mini Challenge and TCR.”

TOM HOWARD & MARCUS SIMMONS

GB4’s 2025 challenger undergoes shakedown

GB4

The GB4 Championship’s new 2025 challenger was put through its paces for the first time last week during testing at Silverstone.

The Tatuus MSV GB4-025 had a successful shakedown earlier in the week at Bedford Autodrome before GB4 podium finisher Max Marzorati conducted

a full day of testing at Silverstone on Friday.

The car uses the existing GB3 chassis, which incorporates a halo as well as stronger side-impact protection than the F4-T014 currently used in GB4. It also features a normally aspirated two-litre, four-cylinder engine, with lap times expected to be a few seconds quicker than those achieved



using the older GB4 model.

“It’s a better car to drive, more predictable, easier to get heat into the tyres, and an all-round better package,” said Marzorati, who raced in GB4 in 2022. “Having a naturally

aspirated engine is also much nicer to work with, and it’s really going to suit young drivers coming up through the ranks from karting. It looks great too; it’s going to make a real impression.”

Bentley club develops car for one-make series

BDC

The Bentley Drivers Club has unveiled a new version of the Continental prior to its debut at the club's annual Silverstone race meeting next weekend amid plans to develop a modern one-make race series.

The Prototype 'Car Zero' is the latest milestone in a project started over two years ago to create an affordable race series based around the evergreen Continental GT. A previously abandoned idea was revisited by BDC competitions captain Ben Eastick, who felt that success depended upon ensuring that cars would maintain their resale value and could be raced without needing a team of mechanics. The package has been developed in partnership with M-Sport, which was responsible for the factory Continental GT3 racers, and with the support of Bentley.

Eligible cars will be upgraded to a standard specification at a cost of around £77,000 including VAT, meaning a complete car, including the donor vehicle, is estimated



M-Sport has worked on car that gives the BDC a modern element

M-SPORT

to be around the £100,000 mark. Although this still represents a substantial investment, it is seen as being attractive when compared to the cost of campaigning a vintage Bentley.

The car is enhanced by upgrades to the exhaust, brakes and suspension, while the GT3-inspired body panels will improve aerodynamic performance. The finished car will be suitable for conversion to road use and this, along with the desire to use the factory chassis, has driven the project away from the initial vision of creating a GT3 clone.

The BDC is now looking for significant interest being expressed in at least 10 cars

before progressing the project further, with an initial timetable of mechanical development through the autumn and car builds starting later in the year.

Interested parties will be invited to try the car on M-Sport's test track before taking part in the initial race series, predicted to consist of four to six rounds in 2026. Eastick added: "Unveiling an affordable 21st century Continental GT for competition purposes allows us to offer something different and contemporary and bring the Bentley brand to a whole new range of competitors."

STEPHEN MOSLEY

Century to upgrade to new M4 GT3 Evo for 2025



BMW stalwart has had a tough GT3 campaign

BRITISH GT

Reigning British GT champion squad Century Motorsport will compete with the new BMW M4 GT3 Evo next year, following a difficult 2024 where it is not in title contention.

The tweaked car represents an upgrade from the M4 GT3 that

carried Dan Harper and Darren Leung to the 2023 drivers' crown for Century, a BMW customer since 2018. Century will use the GT3 Evo in British GT, as well as GT World Challenge Europe.

"It is great to be continuing our relationship with BMW," said Century boss Nathan

Freke. "We have had a lot of success with the M4 GT3 and we are sure the Evo kit is going to give us that competitive edge."

Century will also continue its GT4 operation, but it is not yet known whether it will keep the M4 GT4 Gen II with which it won the 2023 teams' title.

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Drivers will form 'controlled' and 'unlimited' tyre groups



CSCC to open up tyre rules in Magnificent Sevens next season

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

The Classic Sports Car Club has decided to reintroduce greater tyre freedom in its Magnificent Sevens category for next year in a bid to boost the series' fortunes.

Drivers have been restricted to using harder constructions, such as the Toyo R888R, for this season amid concerns over tyre supply. The closure of the Avon factory created fears of a shortage of the ZZR Extreme and ZZS products that had been popular in Magnificent Sevens in the past.

But the CSCC has opted to return the series to its traditional ethos of welcoming as many drivers as possible by opening up the regulations for 2025. Separate 'controlled' and 'unlimited' groups will be created depending on the type of rubber a driver uses, and races will be

shortened to two 20-minute sprints per weekend to mitigate the potential for greater lap time differences between cars.

"We made the decision for this year, knowing supply was limited, to fall into line with what the majority of other Caterham championships were doing, which is the Toyo R888R," said CSCC director David Smitheram. "They are harder tyres but Magnificent Sevens is unique in that some drivers have developed their Sevens to suit fairly relaxed rules with regards to modifications, so were looking for a tyre to deliver suitable performance for their car.

"We've spoken to a lot of drivers and teams that support us and, for next year, we're going to go in the opposite direction and, rather than restrict tyres, we're going to completely open it up."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Rees wants more after first Porsche win

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Former British Formula 4 champion Matthew Rees admits it has taken him longer to adapt to sportscar machinery than he expected after clinching his first Porsche Carrera Cup GB win at Croft last weekend.

Rees, who took the British F4 title in his maiden season racing cars in 2021 and was then a GB3

frontrunner, did impressively qualify fastest at the Donington Park Porsche opener, but had only achieved one podium finish across the first three events. The Team Parker racer then enjoyed success in the partially reversed-grid contest in Yorkshire, leading throughout race two.

"It's taken a lot longer to get where we wanted to be,"

acknowledged Rees, who added that the unique characteristics of the Carrera Cup machinery were a particular challenge. "You come into it and there's so many little tips and tricks to make the car go better."

Rees is currently fifth in the standings at the mid-point of the season, but believes Croft could be a turning point.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

TIM SAMWAYS 1951-2024

Renowned engineer Tim Samways has died, aged 72, following a short illness. The Sporting & Historic Cars team he founded was famed for preparing the 1959 Le Mans-winning Aston Martin DBR1 and glorious Ferraris that notched numerous Goodwood Revival wins and took the factory-backed Historic championship. Motorcycle fanatic Tim forged his earlier career in the two-wheeled industry and was a sidecar racer, passengering Dave Edgington to GP level.

SUPERKARTS TO ASSEN

There will be a large British contingent of Superkart drivers heading to Assen this weekend for the annual Dutch Superkart Grand Prix. Lee Harpham will be going for the hat-trick having already won the French and British GPs earlier in the season. The former European Superkart conqueror will face stiff opposition, with Peter Elkmann heading the entry list. French champion Richard van de Nes will be hoping to keep the local fans happy with another overall win, but Carl Hulme, Andy Gulliford, Sam Moss, Matt Robinson and Jack Tritton will all be looking to get in the mix.

ADCOCK GOES RADICAL

Rupert Adcock, son of European and Asian Le Mans racer Nick, made his Radical Cup UK debut at Silverstone last weekend. "I have got very little racing experience and raced at Silverstone once before, in the Fun Cup last season with my dad and Nielsen's Sven Thompson," he said. Adcock took a best result of 14th.

AGUILERA ON SONG

Prototype racer Ian Aguilera (below) took the Radical Cup UK by storm at Silverstone last weekend when he qualified his RAW Motorsports SR3 on pole ahead of series dominator Chris Lulham. "I knew I had good pace after testing, but was pleased to outqualify Chris," he said. Aguilera was runner-up in race one after contact at Copse from the start, but was victorious in the second contest.





ROSE GOES ON A ROLL

The second Historic Formula Ford 2000 race at Oulton Park last weekend was stopped after side-to-side contact with Richard Coleman's similar Reynard SF79 at Knickerbrook sent Jonathan Rose rolling through the gravel. Rose emerged uninjured.

Photographs by Ben Lawrence



Strong start for Sowter's new F355 Challenge

FERRARI CLUB CLASSIC

Colin Sowter made a promising debut for the first F355 Challenge Spider to be seen in the increasingly high-profile Ferrari Club Classic series, finishing fourth in Sunday's Chris Amon Trophy race at the Oulton Park 70th Anniversary Gold Cup event.

Sowter, whose Superformance marque spares concern sponsors the competition, intended to debut the car – built in-house from a damaged shell – last season, but a heavy testing shunt at Brands Hatch forced a rethink around a more substantial safety cage.

"I'm chuffed to bits with the car, but



New car caught the eye of other Ferrari drivers

MICK WALKER

can't believe how different it feels to the regular F355," said Sowter. Barely run before Friday, when he qualified seventh in five laps, he retired from Saturday's race after "I knocked the ignition switch off!"

He added: "It's probably heavier than the coupe, because of the extra chassis stiffness [to compensate for

the lack of roof], but we're carrying a huge amount of ballast, 115-120kg, to meet the class 5 minimum. It already feels well balanced, but I'm looking forward to developing it.

"Another team immediately expressed interest in building one, subject to a prospective client's budget."

MARCUS PYE



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Crashes for NZ F5000 duo before Ross charges up field to second

F5000

Visiting New Zealand Formula 5000 racers Steve Ross and Glenn Richards were in the wars at Oulton Park last weekend, but Ross turned his event around to snatch a brilliant second from the back of the grid in Sunday's Derek Bell Trophy race.

Buoyed by his Brands Hatch Superprix victory a fortnight earlier, Ross drove the Cheshire circuit for the first time in Friday's open practice sessions and took the left wheels off his McRae GM1 when he crashed under braking for Hislop's.

Undaunted, Ross and his crew repaired the car and he was running third in the opener when it was stopped, but a rear suspension joint failure after the red flag meant he couldn't take the restart. He then charged up the order in the sequel.

"These cars are awesome round here,

flat-out over the blind brow [Clay Hill], you feel the rear wheels lighting up," grinned Ross, who was faster than winner Michael Lyons through the three speed traps. "It's [the track's] all right, except every corner tries to kill you."

Richards felt the same, despite a big shunt on Saturday that damaged his ex-Eppie Wietzes Lola T400's period tub. He had just taken the chequered flag, in seventh place, when the Chevrolet engine's throttle jammed open, firing him into the Old Hall barrier.

Subsequent investigation found the mechanical linkage to have snagged on a fuel injector pipe. Richards, who has raced the car for more than a decade, was fortunate to escape with only burns to his calf from a burst radiator, flank-mounted behind the front wheels.

MARCUS PYE

Varied entry for Fastest Mini races

MINI FESTIVAL

Organisers of this weekend's annual Fastest Mini in the World contests at the Brands Hatch Mini Festival have been encouraged by the number of top-class entries received as the race celebrates its 30th birthday this year.

The competition features a diverse range of Minis with Class A catering for heavily modified specials, in contrast

to other divisions that contain cars of road-going spec. Eleven cars are set to be entered in Class A, including some new machines for this year, while a larger grid is also expected across the field.

"We've got 11 Class A cars and they're the ones where drivers have built their own spaceframe cars – either as individuals or with race car builders, like Enville Motorsport," said coordinator

Nigel Death. "They can do sub-52s laps around Brands Indy. The class is a nod to the spirit of club racing with driving and engineering capabilities [being tested]."

"The race is going up a level now we've got these really great cars. The cars keep getting newer and newer and better and better, as well as still having classic cars on the grid."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



CAR DISPLAY FOR MINSHAW

The late Alan Minshaw's beloved Maserati Birdcage, two Chevron B8s, the BMW E30 M3 he shared with Roland Ratzenberger, VW Golf GTI, Toyota Corolla, Chevrolet Malibu and Manchester Liners DAF V8 formed a cavalcade to celebrate his colourful racing life at Oulton Park last Saturday (above). The Demon Tweeks emporium the Liverpoolian founded humbly in nearby Tattenhall had a satellite shop in the circuit's paddock for many years.

FJ TITLE FOR RICHARDS

Clive Richards has claimed this year's Formula Junior Lurani Trophy, his first title since winning in Caterhams 15 years ago. With four maximum scores from the opening four rounds in his Lotus 22, he cannot be beaten with one weekend remaining at Dijon in October. "I've loved it," he said. "It's nice to race against the best people. I went to Sicily, to Enna with it, and then I drove to Brno in the Czech Republic." He also hopes to race the Lotus at Spa in September.

MCLAREN M10B BACK OUT

Sixty years after his debut at Oulton Park in a Lister-Bristol, 83-year-old Anthony Taylor raced his McLaren M10B for the first time in several years in the Gold Cup's Derek Bell Trophy double-header last weekend (below). Built by the intrepid Clive Bracey from Trojan-sourced parts as the Vebra Mk1, it was speed-vented from the 1970s until 1990, ultimately with a 7.6-litre Chevrolet engine. Acquired from sometime McRae GM1 owner Noel Butler, Lancastrian Taylor rebuilt the car to F5000 circuit spec at his Autotune workshops in Rishton, debuting it in 2013.



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DAVE DJ JONES/SANTA POD

Healthy points lead for Robinson with just two more rounds left this year

Robinson beats Wallace again in British Drag Racing

SANTA POD

Troubles abounded in the fourth round of the Motorsport UK British Drag Racing Championship last weekend as the previous event's result was repeated, Andy Robinson beating Bobby Wallace in an attritional period for the Pro Modified class.

Although the US's parts industry is geared towards supplying tens of thousands of domestic racers, orders placed from smaller overseas markets can take months to arrive, sundered by the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It means that UK-based racers have had plans disrupted and reduced entry lists, but one new car did make its Santa Pod debut last weekend. Not content with a previous model that had clocked 5.81s at 250.85mph, Dutch racer Michel Tooren has imported a

2020 Chevrolet Camaro-bodied machine from Bahraini-American Pro Mod star Khalid Al Balooshi.

While Tooren gets used to driving a converter car after his previous clutch machine, his crew have a different engine set-up to deal with. Concerned by fuel system problems, Tooren opted to make an off-pace qualifying pass at Santa Pod and was a no-show for a semi-final match against Robinson.

But the Robinsons had troubles, too. Their blown Camaro broke two valves on its lone qualifying attempt, causing collateral damage requiring a full engine rebuild. With no semi-final opponent after Tooren's withdrawal, Robinson opted to take the green light and shut off, preserving the rebuilt motor rather than shooting for final-round lane choice.

The other semi-final also featured Camaros, this time of the unblown, nitrous-boosted variety. The Wallace camp were puzzled and disappointed by their mount's recent loss of form, the machine Britain's quickest Pro Mod at 5.837s, which was achieved last year. Wallace's opponent, Jean Dulamon, had suffered transmission woes all weekend and lurched to instant disqualification when his transbrake failed to engage during staging.

Robinson's decision to save his motor paid off in the final. Wallace challenged hard from the start but got out of shape at the mid-point, while Robinson charged to victory with the event's quickest, fastest pass, 6.001s (242.52mph). The win gives Robinson a comfortable championship lead with two races to come.

ROBIN JACKSON

Melling's restored Holden hits the track

HISTORICS

Two Holden Commodores raced together in the Motor Racing Legends Historic Touring Car Challenge at Oulton Park last weekend as the car of Graham Pattle and Mark Burton was joined by the recently restored machine of Martin Melling.

The Melling car was raced by Jason Minshaw, and the last time the two cars were on a grid together was at

Bathurst in Australia more than 30 years ago in 1990 with Bob Forbes Racing. Pattle and Burton have done three seasons with their car, but Melling's has just been restored by the MRM team headed by Graham Price.

"It arrived from Australia in 2019 as a rolling shell," said Price. "They were both built in late 1988 and early '89 from factory shells, and we think they are the only two examples active in Europe.



MICK WALKER

"It's been a hell of a journey to get to this point," he added of the five-litre Holden V8-engined cars.

Minshaw fought for the win at Oulton before an oil

pressure problem scuppered his chances, while the Burton/Pattle Holden finished second to Darren Fielding's BMW E30 M3.

PAUL LAWRENCE

TOCA SUPPORTS CROFT 27-28 JULY

Close Caymans as Coates and Hopkins tie

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

The Porsche Sprint Challenge GB title battle completely reset itself as the season reached its midpoint after last weekend's entertaining Croft event, with Max Coates and Seb Hopkins now tied on scores at the standings summit.

Will Jenkins's Team Parker machine led the wet opener from pole, but Coates was on the attack and grabbed the lead through the Esses with a brave move on lap two. Yet it was not long before Jenkins was back in front. "I thought I marginally did track limits through the Esses, so gave him the place back," said Coates. "With 18 minutes to go, I had enough time to have another go."

And, sure enough, he did. After a couple of failed attempts, the Graves Motorsport driver made it stick at half-distance, going around the outside at Tower and edging ahead through the Esses. From there, he pulled clear and won comfortably, while Jenkins's race unravelled. Coates's team-mate, fellow Yorkshireman Ethan Hammerton, was on a charge and slight contact on the way into Clervaux with two laps to go left Jenkins stranded.



Another driver storming through the field was Hopkins, who languished down in 11th on the grid after a penalty for contact with Coates at the previous round. As others faltered ahead, including Tom Bradshaw, Hopkins picked up the pieces and pounced on Hammerton into Tower to seal a remarkable runner-up spot. "It's a good way to bounce back," he said after his messy event at Oulton Park.

Things got even better for Hopkins in the dry race two and he led throughout a dull contest, while Jenkins and Coates rounded out the podium. But Hopkins missed out on ending his weekend on a high, and had to settle for second in the finale.

The Team Parker driver was leading when he ran off at Sunny In early on. Hopkins quickly dispatched Hammerton and then was all over the back of Coates, diving for a move up the inside of the hairpin on lap 12 of 15. But he crossed over the white line while doing so and the inevitable track-limits penalty was applied to a driver who had not followed Coates's cautious example of the opener. This sanction left Coates as the winner and Hopkins second – first-time podium visitor Oliver Cottam was much further back – with the tussle intriguingly poised heading into the campaign's second half.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Tordoff flies to treble in Falcon on his BTCC event return

PRE-'66 TOURING CARS

The sight of a packed field of 32 Pre-'66 tin-tops from the Classic Touring Car Racing Club doing battle at Croft last weekend, and spending much of the time sideways, was glorious. And, while Sam Tordoff soared above the rest in his Ford

Falcon to snare all three wins, there was plenty going on behind as the club made an appearance on the British Touring Car bill in its 50th anniversary year.

Tordoff, the 2016 BTCC runner-up, has been a regular fixture in historic racing in recent years and proved almost unstoppable. He led throughout the first

and third races, but did briefly fall behind David Dickenson's Lotus Cortina in the middle bout, only to blast back past on the pit straight on lap two.

"Compared to some of the tracks we normally race in the Falcon, this is very tight, very bumpy and very twisty and not really suited at all!" said Tordoff, who first raced the car at the end of 2020. "Lots of power, lots of sideways action – I was scared of it when I first drove it! We've tamed it over the last couple of years and it's just a really nice thing to drive."

The finale was the pick of the races and featured the thrilling sight of Max Chilton, who was third in the opener, charging his Team Dynamics-run Cortina from 28th to fifth after earlier gearbox and clutch woes. One of many terrific scraps was between Tom Sharp's Falcon and the Minis of Nick Swift and Joe Ferguson, who just pipped Swift to the line for sixth.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Carrera Cup rivals clash at Croft

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Will Martin may not have won either Porsche Carrera Cup GB race at an event for the first time this season, but he has boosted his championship chances after a clash with key rival George Gamble derailed the ex-BTCC racer's Croft weekend.

Team Parker driver Hugo Ellis had made a bold move down the inside of Martin's Eden Race Drive machine at the hairpin in



Ellis had already snuck ahead before Martin/Gamble tangle

the opener, and slight contact between them opened the door for Gamble. He ran side by side with Martin to Clervaux, but the points leader clipped the inside kerb hard, sending him into Gamble, who in turn hit the barriers. After the resulting caution period to retrieve Gamble's Century car, Martin attacked at Tower, but Ellis held on and subsequently pulled clear.

Martin was given a reprimand for the contact, a decision Gamble unsuccessfully appealed to the stewards, believing it deserved a harsher sanction. "It ruins my championship – he was a bit desperate and should have conceded," said Gamble, who suffered a track-limits penalty in race two and could only manage 18th.

Up front, Team Parker enjoyed more success as Matthew Rees claimed his maiden series win (see News), while Martin was third. Two podiums for Charles Rainford mean he is now Martin's closest challenger but is 21 points adrift.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Ups and downs for Ovenden

MINI CHALLENGE

Tom Ovenden made up for the disappointment of retiring from the lead of the Croft Mini Challenge opener with driveshaft trouble by taking his maiden win in the second contest.

His Excelr8 team-mate Max Hall was the beneficiary of Ovenden's woes, despite making a slow start and falling from third to fifth. Nelson King was on a charge in the early stages, moving up to second after a big dive up the inside of Dominic Wheatley at the hairpin and then braving it around the outside of Hawthorn to secure the spot.

But King then locked up at Sunny In and ran wide, opening the door to Hall

to profit on Ovenden's strife. He did have to resist a late attack from Jamie Osborne at the hairpin, but Osborne succeeding only in delaying himself, and then fell victim to points leader Dan Zelos at Clervaux.

Osborne initially led race two, but Ovenden dived ahead at Tower upon a safety-car restart to take the spoils. Behind Osborne, Hall snuck past Lewis Selby by just 0.011 seconds on the run to the line, but was later penalised for his earlier move on Wheatley at the hairpin. Zelos fell to 13th after contact with Osborne when battling for second, but he still retains a comfortable 144-point lead with two events to go.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Driveshaft woe was followed by maiden JCW win for Ovenden

RACE RESULTS



PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Race 1 (14 laps) 1 Max Coates; 2 Seb Hopkins +8.601s; 3 Ethan Hammerton; 4 Jacob Tofts; 5 Robert Cronin; 6 Matt Kyle-Henney. **FL** Reece Somerfield 1m25.644s (88.27mph). **P** Will Jenkins. **S** 23.

Race 2 (13 laps) 1 Hopkins (above); 2 Jenkins +3.109s; 3 Coates; 4 Hammerton; 5 Tom Bradshaw; 6 Cronin. **FL** Hopkins 1m20.857s (93.50mph). **P** Hopkins. **S** 23.

Race 3 (15 laps) 1 Coates; 2 Hopkins +3.139s; 3 Oliver Cottam; 4 Edward Stanton; 5 Hammerton; 6 Tofts. **FL** Hopkins 1m21.499s (92.76mph). **P** Hopkins. **S** 21.

Points 1 Hopkins 70; 2 Coates 70; 3 Bradshaw 50; 4 Jenkins 44; 5 Hammerton 43; 6 Cronin 26.

PRE-'66 TOURING CARS

Race 1 (all 13 laps) 1 Sam Tordoff (Ford Falcon); 2 David Dickenson (Lotus Cortina) +8.688s; 3 Max Chilton (Cortina); 4 Victor Cullen (Cortina); 5 Guy Smith (Cortina); 6 Patrick Shovlin (Cortina). **FL** Tordoff 1m37.085s (77.87mph). **P** Tordoff. **S** 31.

Race 2 1 Tordoff; 2 Dickenson +4.038s; 3 Smith; 4 Cullen; 5 Joe Ferguson (Mini); 6 Shovlin. **FL** Tordoff 1m37.332s (77.67mph). **P** Tordoff. **S** 32.

Race 3 1 Tordoff; 2 Smith +15.609s; 3 Dickenson; 4 Shovlin; 5 Chilton; 6 Ferguson. **FL** Tordoff 1m36.649s (78.22mph). **P** Tordoff. **S** 28.

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Race 1 (both 17 laps) 1 Hugo Ellis; 2 Will Martin +4.703s; 3 Charles Rainford; 4 Matthew Rees; 5 Andrew Rackstraw; 6 James Wallis. **FL** Ellis 1m18.839s (95.89mph). **P** Martin. **S** 22.

Race 2 1 Rees; 2 Rainford +1.881s; 3 Martin; 4 Ellis; 5 Stephen Jolley; 6 Wallis. **FL** Rackstraw 1m19.198s (95.46mph). **P** Rees. **S** 22.

Points 1 Martin 72; 2 Rainford 51; 3 George Gamble 44; 4 Ellis 41; 5 Rees 33; 6 Rackstraw 32.

MINI CHALLENGE

Race 1 (14 laps) 1 Max Hall (below); 2 Dan Zelos +0.409s; 3 Jamie Osborne; 4 Nelson King; 5 Dominic Wheatley; 6 Lewis Selby. **FL** Osborne 1m29.412s (84.55mph). **P** Tom Ovenden. **S** 18.

Race 2 (13 laps) 1 Ovenden; 2 Osborne +4.002s; 3 Selby; 4 Lydia Walmsley; 5 Wheatley; 6 Hall. **FL** Ovenden 1m29.223s (84.73mph). **P** Osborne. **S** 18.

Points 1 Zelos 601; 2 Hall 457; 3 Osborne 442; 4 Wheatley 429; 5 Ovenden 404; 6 Nathan Edwards 386.



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Sharp back to the front as Bennett wins

SILVERSTONE
GB3
27-28 JULY

The lead of the GB3 Championship changed hands for the fourth time in as many rounds last weekend at Silverstone, while JHR Developments' John Bennett moved firmly into contention for the crown with his third win of the season.

Bennett's latest triumph had looked unlikely after struggling in testing, and he qualified only fourth for race one as Elite Motorsport's McKenzie Cresswell finally hit form to take a double pole.

Rodin Motorsport's Louis Sharp made the better start in the opener off the front row to move ahead into Copse before Cresswell fought back through Maggotts and Becketts. Having gained one place off the line, Bennett capitalised on the battle in front to squeeze between the middle of his rivals and snatch the lead at Stowe.

Further back, having made ground from sixth on the grid, championship leader Tymek Kucharczyk collided with Cresswell into Stowe on lap two after diving up the inside for third, putting the Hitech GP driver out and leaving Cresswell down in 10th.

Bennett remained ahead following a safety car period to take victory from Sharp, who returned to the championship's summit, while Jarrod Waberski took his first podium in a non-reversed grid race by finishing third. Hitech's Gerrard Xie had slipped back three places to sixth at the start but profited from the Kucharczyk/



Bennett passed Sharp and Cresswell to win

Cresswell clash to finish fourth.

VRD Racing by Arden's Noah Ping climbed four spots to fifth ahead of Hugo Schwarze – who, like his two Elite team-mates, was enjoying his strongest performance of the season.

Having recovered to seventh ahead of Rodin's returning Ugo Ugochukwu, Cresswell then made amends in Sunday's second contest to take his first victory in 12 months despite the first lap almost following the same pattern as the opening encounter.

Having again been beaten off the line by Sharp, Cresswell repeated his challenge through Maggotts and Becketts, allowing Bennett to draw alongside on the Hangar Straight once more. However, this time it was Cresswell who prevailed into Stowe before pulling over 2s clear of Sharp, while Bennett resisted pressure from Waberski and Kucharczyk to complete the podium.

Ugochukwu held off VRD duo Shawn Rashid and Ping for sixth, the latter climbing from 14th on the grid, while Xie passed Rodin's Arthur Rogeon and Schwarze for ninth.

Rogeon then scored his second reversed-grid triumph in the final contest after moving ahead of JHR's polesitter Patrick Heuzenroeder and controlling proceedings after an early safety car period. Rashid concluded his strongest weekend in GB3 to date with his first podium in second, while Kucharczyk climbed from seventh to snatch third on the final lap from Schwarze, who lost a further place due to a penalty.

By finishing fourth, three places ahead of Sharp, Bennett ended the meeting just four points behind the New Zealander in the championship. Kucharczyk heads to the final two rounds in September a further nine points behind, while his team-mate Will Macintyre suffered a blow to his own title chances having struggled all weekend and scored a best result of just 10th in race three. Hitech leads Rodin in the teams' race by 11 points.

STEVE WHITFIELD

RACE RESULTS

GB3

Race 1 (9 laps) 1 John Bennett; 2 Louis Sharp +1.298s; 3 Jarrod Waberski; 4 Gerrard Xie; 5 Noah Ping; 6 Hugo Schwarze.

Fastest lap Bennett 1m54.229s (115.36mph). **Pole** McKenzie Cresswell. **Starters** 23.

Race 2 (10 laps) 1 Cresswell; 2 Sharp +2.234s; 3 Bennett; 4 Waberski; 5 Tymek Kucharczyk; 6 Ugo Ugochukwu. **FL** Cresswell 1m53.840s (115.75mph). **P** Cresswell. **S** 23.

Race 3 (12 laps) 1 Arthur Rogeon; 2 Shawn Rashid +3.354s; 3 Kucharczyk; 4 Bennett; 5 Schwarze; 6 Xie. **FL** Kucharczyk 1m54.280s (115.31mph). **P** Patrick Heuzenroeder. **S** 23.

Points 1 Sharp 336; 2 Bennett 332; 3 Kucharczyk 323; 4 Will Macintyre 290; 5 Cresswell 275; 6 Waberski 219.

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



Kucharczyk (r) lost lead in the points after DNF



No one could get near the Abba Racing duo

OLLIEREAD

Loggie/Neary Merc unstoppable in GT Cup, Granfors wins again in GB4

SILVERSTONE
MSVR
27-28 JULY

Richard Neary and Ian Loggie's domination of the GT Cup continued last weekend at Silverstone, with the Abba Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 crew winning all four contests.

Neary, the 2021 champion, started with a comfortable triumph in the opening sprint race as several drivers behind faltered. The returning Andrey Borodin (McLaren 720S) collided with Fraser Fenwick (Lamborghini Super Trofeo), Steve Burgess retired from second when his Radical RXC suffered a rear-left puncture, while Beechdean Motorsport's Andrew Howard recovered from an early spin to demote Topcats Racing's Tom Rawlings to third.

Saturday's endurance race was clouded in confusion. Loggie took over the Abba Mercedes for the opening stint and built a 17-second lead before handing over to Neary but a timing glitch initially resulted

in them effectively losing a lap.

Burgess was classified as the leader on the timesheet before serving a drive-through penalty due to his pitstop being under the minimum allocated time, which dropped him behind Howard/Darren Turner's Aston Martin Vantage, but Neary/Loggie were given their lap back at the finish, and the victory.

Neary immediately broke clear in Sunday's endurance race as Howard prevailed in a battle with Burgess for second. A shorter mandatory pitstop time enabled the latter to reclaim the position but he was hunted down and passed by Turner, as Neary/Loggie triumphed by 30s. Loggie won by a similar margin in the final sprint encounter, while Howard took another runner-up spot after passing Burgess early on.

Linus Granfors reclaimed the GB4 Championship lead with his fifth victory of the season in the opener despite being chased throughout by Lucas Blakeley, while Alisha Palmowski took third ahead of pre-event points leader Harry Burgoyne.

Blakeley led the sequel and took advantage of an opening-lap clash between Granfors and Palmowski to romp clear and win by a huge 15.4s, the series' largest-ever victory margin, as Granfors held off Burgoyne, Finn Harrison and Palmowski for second despite car damage.

Harrison prevailed in a three-car battle with Megan Bruce and Jack Taylor to snatch the lead in the reversed-grid race, pulling away following an early safety car period to take a maiden victory by 4s. Taylor finished second, while Branden Templeton edged a charging Blakeley to third. Chloe Grant was fifth ahead of team-mate



Granfors took his fifth win of the GB4 season

OLLIEREAD

WEEKEND WINNERS

GT CUP

Race 1 Richard Neary (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

Races 2 & 3 Richard Neary/Ian Loggie (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

Race 4 Ian Loggie (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

GB4

Race 1 Linus Granfors

Race 2 Lucas Blakeley

Race 3 Finn Harrison

RADICAL CUP UK

Races 1 & 3 Chris Lulham (SR3)

Race 2 Ian Aguilera (SR3)

FOCUS CUP

Race 1 Jon Baker

Race 2 Ian Mitchell

7 RACING

Races 1 & 2 Anthony Barnes

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Burgoyne. Palmowski lost out to the latter with engine issues on the final lap, while Granfors was only eighth.

Two close races between series dominator Chris Lulham and debutant Ian Aguilera resulted in each taking a victory in the Radical Cup UK, and Lulham extended his points lead with a more comfortable win ahead of Aguilera in race three.

Lewis Clark's unbeaten Focus Cup run was ended at Silverstone, with the reigning champion just holding off Ian Mitchell in a photo finish for second in race one, while Jon Baker edged the pair to victory. Mitchell won the partially reversed-grid race, while Clark and Baker denied William Lincoln a podium spot on the final lap.

Anthony Barnes won both 7 Racing contests, edging Lewis Tootell by 0.360s in the opener and Mark Stansfield by just 0.038s in race two.

STEVE WHITFIELD

Fitz-Simon stormed through to win from the back after Wilson (inset) triumphed earlier



Horatio honours 'Hawkeye' with incredible last-gasp Brabham Formula Junior win

**OULTON PARK
HSCC GOLD CUP
26-28 JULY**

On a Gold Cup weekend peppered with scintillating performances, Horatio Fitz-Simon's Historic Formula Junior victory first time out in Paul 'Hawkeye' Hawkins' 1963 Brabham BT6 from the back of Sunday's grid will live long in onlookers' memories. Five years after making his UK car racing debut at the Oulton Park staple, he passed Sam Wilson audaciously on the exit of Lodge, the final corner.

"The car is fantastic, but I have mixed feelings because Paul Hawkins was killed here [in a fiery Lola T70 Mk3B crash during the 1969 TT race]," said Fitz-Simon. Ironically, the Australian's big win in the Ian Walker Racing Brabham was in the GP

de Rouen six years earlier, a photo finish with Richard Attwood's Lola Mk5A witnessed by Oulton commentator Ian Titchmarsh, on Dutchman Jimmy Twisk's Brabham BT2 team that day.

Fuel pump issues left Fitz-Simon at the back of the 34-car grid for the Jim Clark Cup races, marking the Scot's 1960 Lotus 18 victory here. A shower prior to Saturday's made his task trickier. Fifteenth inside a lap, sixth within three on a drying surface, HF-S rose to third behind Wilson (ex-Dave Charlton Lotus 20) and Lurani Trophy champion successor Clive Richards (Lotus 22). Points leader Andrew Hibberd (ex-Reg Armstrong 20) stretched his advantage with the first of two drum brake class wins over Nic Carlton-Smith (20), and fourths overall.

Sunday's conditions were near perfect, when a focused green-flag lap tyre and

brake warming regime sharpened Fitz-Simon's steed. He was fourth after three laps, when Keith Pickering spun his Britannia into the gravel at the foot of Cascades, triggering a one-lap caution. Having got the jump on Hibberd at the green, HF-S homed in on Richards, who he deposed on lap six of 10, then threw caution to the wind catching Wilson.

Plunging from Hill Top towards Hislop's chicane they were almost together, with traffic ahead. Having to round Ralph Carter (Lotus 22) sapped Wilson's momentum heading towards Knickerbrook, where HF-S shot past Carter in an elegant drift, closing the gap onto Clay Hill, with more lapped cars to negotiate. Horatio drafted Sam out of Druids, braked late for Lodge, turned in from the outside and powered past. As aggregate victor, appropriately in a Lotus, Wilson was delighted to receive the Jim Clark Trust's cup. Hibberd and Carlton-Smith were next home, with Alex Morton (Condor) front-engined king again.

Hibberd saddled his Brabham BT18 for the 1000cc F3 double-header, honoured with the Historic Gold Cup title in the category's 60th anniversary year. Michael O'Brien started Nick Fennell's Tecno from pole, but Saturday's race was stopped within seconds following a chain-reaction shunt that left American Steve Nichols' ex-Peter Hanson Chevron B17 upside down against the pitwall. The veteran McLaren F1 designer escaped unscathed.

O'Brien led the restart superbly until the



HGPCA Coopers of Friedrichs and Martin had a close battle

MICK WALKER



MICKWALKER

MICKWALKER

last lap, when clutch issues gifted Hibberd a 13-second victory and the hobbled Tecno was shadowed in by Enrico Spaggiari's ex-John Miles Lotus 41X. Aggregate victory was still possible, indeed O'Brien had almost negated the deficit on Sunday when he tangled with Simon Etherington's Brabham at Britten's, bringing an early chequer. Hibberd thus claimed the big prize with his sixth straight win. Spaggiari and Francois Derossi (B17) flanked him on the overall podium, Pete de la Roche (Alexis) having charged to third in the race.

The Historic Grand Prix Cars Association races provided fabulous spectacles worthy of the 70th Anniversary Gold Cup title. Rudi Friedrichs, driving his ex-Jack Brabham 1960 title-winning Cooper T53, narrowly beat Andy Willis (BRM P48) and Charlie Martin (T53) on Saturday.

Friedrichs withstood intense pressure from Martin on Sunday until the final lap, when Charlie ambushed him into the Shell Oils hairpin. Mark Shaw (ex-Clark Lotus 21) bested Nick Fennell (Lotus 25 V8) for third as the BRM wilted, but Friedrichs earned his aggregate gold. Elliot Hann's first front-engined wins in his family's Cameron Millar Maserati 250F reflected Stirling Moss's victories in the early Gold Cups.

Six seconds per lap quicker than anybody else, with his Lola T400's rear wheels spinning flat out over the summit of Clay Hill, Michael Lyons reminded spectators of contemporary F5000 aces as he cut a 1m33.584s (103.55mph) best lap. >>



HARRISON MARCHES ON Young Yorkshireman Samuel Harrison continued his seemingly inexorable march towards a third HSCC championship in successive seasons with an imperious Historic Formula Ford 2000 double. Driving Adrian Reynard's spare SF79 with awesome pace and precision, he blitzed the first, pursued by rival Graham Fennymore until his SF81 was stranded on Clay Hill by a broken throttle linkage. Fennymore led a restarted race two before Harrison sped clear.



TOYOTA BACK ON TRACK The Toyota Corolla AE86 that Alan Minshaw drove in British Saloon Cars in 1986, and champion Chris Hodgetts used for Silverstone's finale, returned to racing after a long hiatus with Andy and Chris Middlehurst, following their two-year restoration. It was raced by Hodgetts and Andrew Bagnall in 1987 world tin-top events, before heading to the stages. Andy and son Chris took fourth in Sunday's touring car contest, watched by 1960s Austin A40 racer father/grandfather Phil.



QUIPP'S 5000A ODYSSEY Roger Quipp, an Oulton Park fanatic since his childhood, made his racing debut on Saturday – aged 76! "I attended the first public meeting here in [October] 1953, and have been coming ever since," said the Staffordshire man. "When my wife died, I needed something to focus on and thought why not a 500?" The 1951 Cooper Mk5 was acquired in derelict condition from the widow of hillclimber Rob Hilton. It took three years to rebuild, with the help of Andy Turner.



After two car damaging days (see News), New Zealander Steve Ross blasted his Brands Hatch-winning McRae GM1 from the back to a mighty second on Sunday. Mark Dwyer was runner-up on day one in his ex-Jody Scheckter Trojan T101, heading Neil Glover's Chevron B37 and a V8 pack monsterring Graham Ridgway's March 742.

Ferrari Club Classic returnee Wayne MARRS and Tristan Simpson each defeated the other in tight stanzas as they chased the Chris Amon Trophy. Colin Sowter's stunning F355 Spider turned heads on its debut, finishing fourth in Sunday's race.

Simon Allaway was a popular first-time Classic Sports Car Club Special Saloon & Modsports winner in Sunday's race, named for his hero Tony Sugden. Undeterred by a hairy spin at Druids in his self-built Lotus Esprit on day one, Allaway outran Saturday victor Andy Southcott and Tom Carey (Honda CRX-BDG) after Danny Morris's

Peugeot 309-Cosworth turbo fizzled out.

Frazer Nash chain-gangers aced Sunday's Vintage Sports-Car Club races. Theo Hunt (in Pat Blakeney-Edwards' Super Sports) beat Robert Beebee (TT Replica) and Dougal Cawley's GN-Ford in the opener. Later, Eddie Williams (in Clive Fidgeon's TT Rep) took an early chequer, with pitlane starter PB-E closing and Wilf Cawley matching his dad's third on the Piglet.

Connor Kay's ex-Rod Longton TVR Tuscan V6 topped Historic Sports Car Club Road Sports, Saturday challenger Elliot Paterson's Morgan +8 falling on Sunday, promoting John Williams's Porsche 911.

Only nine Motor Racing Legends Touring Car Challengers emerged and, when leader Jason Minshaw parked his Holden Commodore with low oil pressure, Darren Fielding slithered his BMW M3 to victory over Mark Burton/Graham Pattle's Holden.

MARCUS PYE

WEEKEND WINNERS

JIM CLARK CUP HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR

Race 1 Sam Wilson (Lotus-Ford 20/22)

Race 2 Horatio Fitz-Simon (Brabham-Ford BT6)

1000cc F3 HISTORIC GOLD CUP

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Hibberd (Brabham BT18)

HGPCA 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF GOLD CUP

Race 1 Rudi Friedrichs (Cooper-Climax T53)

Race 2 Charlie Martin (Cooper-Climax T53)

DEREK BELL TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Michael Lyons (Lola-Chevrolet T400)

FERRARI CLUB CLASSIC

Race 1 Wayne MARRS (F355 Challenge)

Race 2 Tristan Simpson (F355 Challenge)

TONY SUGDEN TROPHY

SPECIAL SALOONS & MODSPORTS

Race 1 Andy Southcott (Lenham Midget)

Race 2 Simon Allaway (Lotus Esprit)

HISTORIC TOURING CARS & ROAD SPORTS

Races 1 & 2 Connor Kay (TVR Tuscan)

VSCC EGERTON CUP

Race 1 Theo Hunt (Frazer Nash Super Sports)

Race 2 Eddie Williams (Frazer Nash TT Replica)

MRL HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHALLENGE

Darren Fielding (BMW E30 M3)

RICHARD TROTT TROPHY HISTORIC FF2000

Races 1 & 2 Samuel Harrison (Reynard SF79)

500 OA F3

Races 1 & 2 Tom Waterfield (Cooper-Norton Mk9)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

No stemming Waterfield's 500 OA victory tide

Driving with the gung-ho of a 1950s' rising star, Tom Waterfield ruled the half-litre roost in Tim Ross's Cooper-Norton Mk9 as the 500 Owners' Association honoured period hero Stuart Lewis-Evans – a winner here in 1956 – and historic star Roy Hunt in style. Five drivers shattered Steve Jones's 2013 record, Waterfield leaving it at 2m12.437s (73.17mph). Roy's widow Pat and Stuart's son Steve graciously presented the trophies.

The paddock buzzed as 12 chassis marques – series-builds plus Albert Zains' Cooper-derived Flash Special, Godfrey Messervy's Jason and the Mathews Special – and Manx Norton, JAP and Triumph engines coloured a superlative 32-strong entry.

Favourites from Oulton Park's opening event on 8 August, 1953, when Don Truman (Cooper Mk6), Les Leston (Leston Special) and Don Parker (Kieft CK52) won the heats and Leston the final, 500cc F3 also starred at the first public meeting on 3 October.

Third in August's final, Ninian Sanderson



won two of the three races in his Staride-Norton Mk3, from Ken Tyrrell (Cooper). Now owned by Simon Dedman, Sanderson's was one of three in the pack. Darrell Woods, Xavier Kingsland and Dedman qualified 10th-12th!

Cooper pilots bagged the top four places, Waterfield heading Pete de la Roche (Mk5-JAP), George Shackleton (Mk11) and Alex Wilson's Mk10. Shackleton swept ahead of Waterfield and Wilson into Hislop's on

Saturday's opening lap, but fell to fifth when he vaulted the kerb at Britten's. Wilson, Waterfield and de la Roche all led thereafter, Tom beating Alex and Pete home.

Waterfield scarpered on Sunday, pursued by de la Roche, Wilson and Harry Painter. Simon Frost (Martin-Norton) broke the Cooper monopoly in fifth, one better than Dedman managed the previous day.

MARCUS PYE



PAUL LAWRENCE

Wiscombe hill record was obliterated by 1.2s by Ryder to now stand at 31.77s

Sublime Ryder smashes hillclimb record to seal winning double

**WISCOMBE PARK
BRITISH HILLCLIMB
27-28 JULY**

Matthew Ryder had one of his best-ever weekends in the British Hillclimb Championship as he dominated at Wiscombe Park, winning both run-offs and obliterating the hill record. At the wheel of the Gould GR59 he shares with Sean Gould, Ryder was unstoppable at the Devon hill and took a massive 1.2 seconds off the record across the course of two championship run-offs.

Points leader Alex Summers headed the chase but was quick to acknowledge that he could not match the performance of Ryder, who bounced back strongly after missing the Guernsey run-offs when Gould damaged the car in the first timed runs at Val des Terres.

In the first Wiscombe contest on Saturday, Ryder went to the startline

knowing that he needed to better the hill record to outperform Summers, who had just completed a 32.94s climb in his DJ Firestorm. Ryder's attacking run of 32.16s brought gasps of admiration from the crowd and fellow competitors as he went well over a second faster than his own previous personal best.

On Sunday, Ryder again ran last as the fastest qualifier and, when Summers dipped to a 32.48s, Ryder knew he had to dig deep once again. But even he was amazed when the clock stopped at 31.77s – he had become the first person to climb Wiscombe in under 32s.

"I'm almost speechless," admitted Ryder. "It's been a fantastic weekend, and to come away with a record as well, I'm absolutely chuffed. But I didn't see that time coming. I just knew I had to give it everything."

Two second places and an additional point for bettering the old hill record was still a strong weekend for Summers, but he knew that Ryder was out of reach. "It's absolutely stunning what he's done," admired Summers of his rival.

Will Hall had a positive weekend and was close to the old record in the second shootout as he bagged a brace of thirds in his Gould, while Wallace Menzies, Trevor Willis, Sean Gould and Dave Uren all took a share of the mid-order places in the two run-offs.

Other stand-out performances included that of Paul Haines, who got his 1300cc turbo-engined Gould into sixth overall on Sunday with a 33.98s, having already taken two tenths off Jos Goodyear's long-established class record.

Meanwhile, young Alex Coles went to his home event with the ambition of getting

HILLCLIMB RESULTS

ROUND 16
1 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 32.16s; 2 Alex Summers (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Firestorm) 32.94s; 3 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 33.07s; 4 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 33.24s; 5 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS-RTE 28) 33.48s; 6 Sean Gould (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 33.99s; 7 Dave Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 34.11s; 8 Alex Coles (1.3t Force-Suzuki TA) 34.39s; 9 Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59) 34.72s; 10 Johnathen Varley (2.0 GWR-TKD V8 Predator) 35.20s.

ROUND 17
1 Ryder 31.77s; 2 Summers 32.48s; 3 Hall 32.97s; 4 Uren 33.61s; 5 Menzies 33.65s; 6 Haines 33.98s; 7 Gould 34.30s; 8 Coles 34.50s; 9 Willis 34.92s; 10 Varley 35.49s.

POINTS
1 Summers 156; 2 Ryder 125; 3 Hall 122; 4 Willis 100; 5 Menzies 84; 6 Uren 79.

For full results visit: britishhillclimb.co.uk

into the run-off and did just that to score two eighth places in the 1300t Force of Karl Broad. Coles was brilliantly committed on the climb and was another driver to receive a rapturous reception.

Away from the single-seaters, the second Tin Top run-offs of the season delivered great competition as Scott Moran won twice in his father Roger's Skoda Fabia R5. Moran had to push hard in the face of opposition from Eynon Price in his Fabia R5 and Simon Bainbridge in the SBR Chrono as well as Moran Sr.

But the weekend belonged to Ryder and, when dropped scores start to come into play over the closing events of the season, there will likely be little to separate Ryder from Summers in what is set to be a thrilling battle all the way to the title decider at Loton Park in September.

PAUL LAWRENCE



PAUL LAWRENCE

Summers still leads the points, but for how long?

ALL LOOKS ROSY IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Eden Race Drive is brand new to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, yet has enjoyed an incredibly successful first half of the season

STEPHEN LICKORISH



The Porsche Carrera Cup GB can be a pretty daunting place for a fledgling team. It's a championship renowned for being decided by fine margins, with its single-make nature ensuring that anyone caught underperforming is quickly found out. And the presence of established star squads such as Team Parker Racing (a stalwart of the series for over 20 years), JTR and Century Motorsport – all of which are proven winners – means there is sure to be plenty of stiff opposition.

Yet Eden Race Drive has defied its short history to take on the successful giants – and has made quite an impression so far this season. Its lead driver, Will Martin, is heading the standings after the first four events of 2024, while it is also sitting pretty at the top of the teams' table.

While it may be a new name, there are some very familiar faces as part of the Eden Race Drive set-up. The team is headed by Dino Zamparelli, who knows a thing or two about Porsches. He was Carrera Cup runner-up in three consecutive years from 2016, each time with a different squad, and witnessed first-hand how various teams operate. And Zamparelli is

surrounded by a group of engineers and mechanics boasting plenty of Porsche experience themselves.

Nevertheless, Zamparelli did not expect so much silverware quite so quickly into the journey of a team that had only a few Porsche Club GB races under its belt prior to this season. "At the start of the year, we were just focusing on getting on the grid," he admits. "Once we knew we could get on the grid, we knew we would have a good chance of doing well. But we felt really underprepared because we didn't test much and it was all a bit last-minute. We knew the engineers and mechanics were experienced, but didn't know how long it would take to put it all together. The fact we won at round one with Will was a real boost."

Martin's triumph in the opening Donington Park contest was a signal of intent, especially considering he had only confirmed his deal with the team shortly beforehand. He was third in the 2022 standings, before spending last season in the equivalent North American Carrera Cup, and has been impressed by his new surroundings.

"The way the team's run, Dino Zamparelli has done an amazing job – it all runs like clockwork," says Martin, who highlights the

Martin gave Eden Race Drive a winning start in Donington Park season-opener



Martin is the clear number one as the season reaches mid-point

PORSCHE/JEP



Zamparelli is enjoying his new role as a team boss

PORSCHE

“It doesn’t feel like you’re in a brand-new team; it feels like they’ve got 10 years’ experience”



Three-time Carrera Cup runner-up Zamparelli brings Porsche pedigree

ROBERTS/JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

squad’s meticulous preparation and ability to find a good baseline set-up as being key factors in its strong opening half of the season. “It doesn’t feel like you’re in a brand-new team; it feels like they’ve got 10 years’ experience. They’re just super-consistent.”

Croft last weekend was the first round where Martin had not won either of the races. But six podium visits from a possible eight still leaves him in a very healthy position. For all the success – Harry Foster has been a podium finisher this year, while Oliver White is a leading Pro-Am contender and Will Aspin has also visited the class rostrum – Zamparelli is taking nothing for granted. “We’re all bracing for some not-so-good days, but

that’s part of the championship,” he says.

The team’s origins lie in a business that was focused on “corporate days and coaching” but has “evolved from there”. And former GP3 podium finisher Zamparelli is certainly relishing his new role outside of the car.

“It’s been interesting, and a lot of work behind the scenes, and the results have been a bonus,” he adds. “I would love to be out there winning [himself] but I’ve passed that on – I don’t get any sense of ‘I need to be in the car’. It’s enjoyable still – it’s a different type of enjoyment but it’s fun and you get a sense of satisfaction. It feels really rewarding.”

What Zamparelli is keen to emphasise is that he sees this as a long-term project and does not want the team’s initial success to be a flash in the pan. And that is evidenced by his desire to run a sizeable multi-car operation in its first Carrera Cup season,

rather than just one or two, to highlight how he sees this as a serious “commercial” squad.

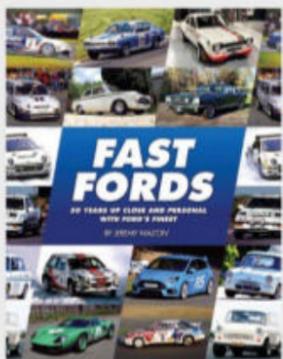
“It’s about setting up now for future years,” he continues. “Year one, if we go and win the championship, great. We didn’t expect to be here, let’s do the best job we can and see what transpires. It’s taking it step by step and seeing where we get to.”

Regardless of the direction Eden Race Drive heads in the future – and Zamparelli is keen to keep his options open – Martin’s 21-point lead at half-distance of the Carrera Cup campaign is a pretty eye-catching start as it now battles to keep those more established operations at bay. ❄️

FINISH IN A MIGHT



The very best of the Blue Oval



BOOK
**FAST FORDS:
50 YEARS UP
CLOSE AND
PERSONAL WITH
FORD'S FINEST**
Jeremy Walton
RRP: £60 hardback

A look at the title – *Fast Fords*:

50 years up close and personal with Ford's finest – provides the perfect overview of 401 pages of reading. It really is a Ford lover's paradise.

Whether you are an owner of a road car bearing the Blue Oval or purely interested in the company's various motorsport escapades over time, the collage of vehicles on the cover will be enough to pique intrigue.

Any concerns over the expertise behind the book are instantly quashed by the introduction, which gives a detailed background of the author, who is at pains to point out that, while he is a former Ford employee, this is no glorified PR churn.

It comes across as a clever start to a book that is set up as a model-by-model guide, as there is a baseline story, a reason to invest

time into reading through the entirety and not just your favourite models. It also proves that this is no technical, statistical attack on the reader but rather a nuanced guide. With it explained that the author had worked in the motorsport PR department, the forthcoming stories are confirmed as being unique and by no means a regurgitation.

The first car off the production line, so to speak, is the Anglia and straight away it is clear that each model will get the full backstory, from conception to various notable periods of use. Here, the story of the Anglia's birth (three pages), a page dedicated to its appearance in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, almost three pages on its entry to racing and a further chunk of detail on late Formula 1 driver Roger Williamson's experience in the model as part of his sporting journey just scratches the surface.

This detail in coverage continues throughout the book across no fewer than 15 further chapters, covering everything from the Cortina to Supervans and the Capri to the Mondeo.

What is most impressive about the book is the accessibility to the reader. If you are a technical whizz, there is

enough jargon to whet the whistle, yet not so much that the layman is left Google-ing the meaning of certain components every other sentence. And when specific phases of a model are mentioned, there is enough reference to popular culture to make everything feel comfortable. The information is relatable, rather than lines just being fed of details that will be long forgotten three paragraphs later.

For the motorsport fan, the images used across the book are enough to stimulate specific memories of liveries displayed on different models and the stories of various racers – such as Williamson in the Anglia or Jim Clark in the Cortina, or Timo Makinen's Escort – bring emotion. It's not just images either, but copies of mementos, such as magazine covers or dealership brochures, are also used to this effect.

But when the main crux of *Fast Fords* returns, as the author describes the sensation of driving each car at the end of each chapter, the reader can get a sense of what it would be like to sit behind the wheel. The way it is described brings the reader as close as you can get without being there –

A little too fast:
Colin McRae's
landing broke his
Focus's radiator, Rally
Australia 2002

Telstra



Clark's Cortina wins
1966 Guards Trophy
at Brands Hatch

SUTTON

much like a motoring show on TV.

A perfect example of this comes in the review of the rear-wheel-drive Escort, where it is explained: "The exhilaration, particularly from the massive turbocharged acceleration, came in adrenaline surges, countered by equally violent chemical changes in my body as the brakes tried to slash that velocity." It is clear then, this car isn't your typical family A-to-B vehicle!

There is no doubt that the book is aimed at, and will be best enjoyed by, the Ford enthusiast. Yet it is fair to suggest that this isn't a stipulation – though perhaps the everyday motoring and motorsport fans would pick and choose their chapters.

EWAN GALE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



SUTTON

Otmar Szafnauer exclusive interview

In the latest James Allen on F1 podcast, former Alpine team principal Otmar Szafnauer shares insights from his Formula 1 career, which stretches back to 1998. Having held top positions with BAR, Honda, Force India, Racing Point and Aston Martin prior to his time at Enstone, there is little about the modern championship that has escaped his gaze – and he's typically forthright with his thoughts.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

British Grand Prix MotoGP

Round 11/21

Silverstone, UK

3-4 August

TV Live TNT Sports 2,
Sat 1430, Sun 1215

TV Highlights ITV4,
Mon 2000

Rally Finland World Rally

Championship
Round 9/13

Jyvaskyla, Finland

1-4 August

TV Live TNT Sports 1,
Thurs 1800, TNT Sports 3,
Fri 0600, 1000, TNT Sports
4, 1300, TNT Sports 3,
Sat 0700, 0900, 1330,
1530, Sun 0645, 0800,
0915, 1100

TV Highlights

TNT Sports 3, Fri 2145,
TNT Sports 1, Sat 2330,
TNT Sports 2 Sun 2330

Super GT

Round 4/8

Fuji, Japan

4 August

TV Live Livestream

Motorsport.tv, Sun 0615



GOLDANDGOOSE

TCR World Tour

Round 5/7

El Pinar, Uruguay

4 August

IMSA SportsCar

Round 8/11

Road America, USA

4 August

TV Livestream IMSA.tv

UK MOTORSPORT

Castle Combe CCRC

3 August

Allcomers single-seaters,
CCRC (FF1600, GT, Hot Hatch,
Saloons), Sports Prototypes

Donington Park MSVR

3-4 August

HRDC Dunlop Allstars,
Masters (1966-85 F1 Cars,
Endurance Legends,
Gentlemen Drivers, GT
Trophy, Pre-'66 Touring Cars,
Sports Car Legends)

Anglesey SMRC

3-4 August

C1 Cup, Cockshoot Cup,

Fiesta ST Cup, Fiesta
Zetecs, Irish Strykers,
ITCC, Junior Mini
Challenge, Mini Cooper
Cup, Northern Sports &
Saloons, Scottish Classic
Sports & Saloons, SEAT
Supercup Ireland

Knockhill BARC

3-4 August

Caterhams (270R, 310R,
Academy, Roadsport,
Seven UK)

Snetterton 750MC

3-4 August

116 Trophy, 116 Sprint/
120 Coupe Cup, Armed
Forces Challenge, BMW
Car Club, CALM Porsche,
Clio Sport, Ma7das, Sports
1000, Type R Trophy

Brands Hatch MSVR

3-4 August

Allcomers, Fastest Mini
in the World, Mini Miglia,
Mini Se7en, Pre-'66 Minis,
Production GTIs, United
FF1600



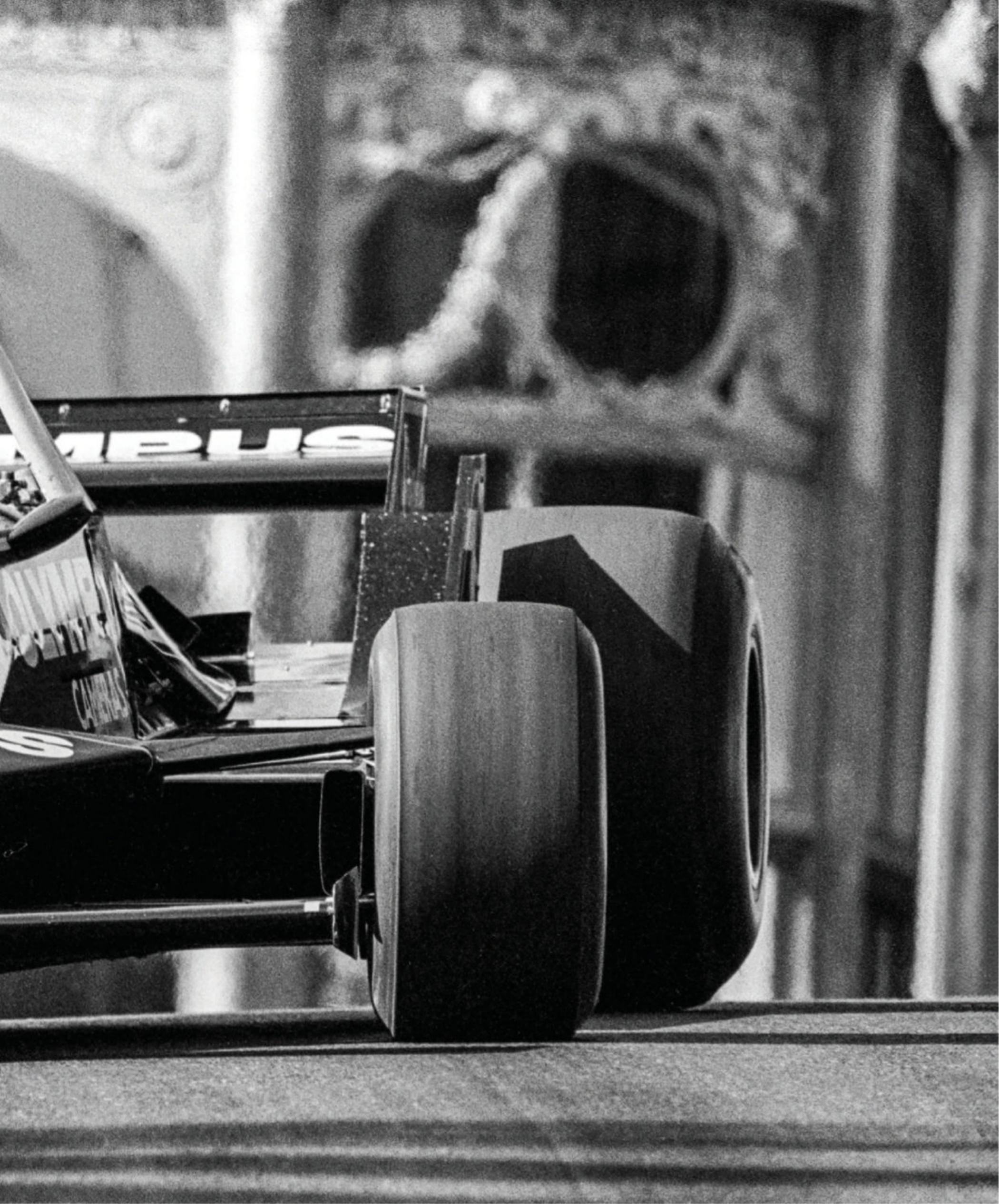
FROM THE ARCHIVE

Six years after making his Formula 1 world championship debut at the 1973 Monaco Grand Prix, James Hunt's swansong would be at the same venue, halfway through what

had turned out to be a disappointing and fruitless season. After qualifying his Wolf in 10th place, Hunt's race lasted just four laps before a driveshaft broke – Murray Walker, in his inimitable style, initially

misidentifying the 1976 world champ twice after he'd parked at the side of the track. Hunt had intended that the 1979 season would be his last: "I wanted to have a really good final year. It wasn't a matter of thinking

about the championship. I wanted a good, competitive car with which to win some races. It's become clear that our car will never get there. And it's not worth the risk to life and limb to continue under those circumstances."





MG Metro Turbo

Patrick Watts is surely one of the finest British Touring Car Championship drivers not to score an outright race win. The multiple single-make champion came close with Peugeot during the competitive Super Touring era, but the cards never fell his way. It's perhaps not surprising, then, that it's a class dominator that Watts picks as his favourite car. It's a machine that he feels he could have won the BTCC crown with.

Watts joined the factory-supported Roger Dowson Engineering MG Metro team for the 1983 BTCC, or British Saloon Car Championship as it was then known. He started off with the normally aspirated Class C car before getting his hands on the Class B Metro Turbo.

He quickly adapted to the dreaded turbo lag of the period. "You had to left-foot brake and get on the power when you didn't want it, knowing you'd want it two seconds later," recalls Watts of the car that helped launch his career.

"I was a works driver for Austin Rover Group, I was being paid to go racing and my team-mate was Tony Pond. We developed the car in 1983, then in 1984 my team-mate was Robin Brundle and we were all set to win."

Watts hit the ground running with the 1.3-litre turbocharged pocket rocket, winning his class in three of the first four rounds of 1984. In those days, class



winner could score the same number of points as outright victors, so the overall title was a real possibility. But then works Rover driver Steve Soper lost his 1983 crown when the engine-rocker assembly on the Tom Walkinshaw Racing Vitesse was finally adjudged to be illegal. The result was that Austin Rover withdrew from the 1984 championship and Watts could only watch as Andy Rouse took the crown in his self-prepared Rover: "It was a winning car, so I missed my opportunity to be BTCC champion."

Nevertheless, he has fond memories of the diminutive, flame-spitting car that produced more than 200bhp and could be a giant-killer against bigger Group A opposition. "I would attack the bigger stuff but with a mind to finishing," says Watts, who now owns and drives one of the originals. "I don't remember denting the car - you had to stay out of trouble."

KEVIN TURNER



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

F1 half-term report

WE RATE THE CLASS OF 2024 SO FAR



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23/26 JAN 2025	Portimão /P	GTWS	G4	FWS	PTWS
30/02 FEB 2025	Portimão /P	6h. PORTIMÃO		FWS	
13/16 FEB 2025	Valencia /E	GTWS	G4	FWS	
27/02 MAR 2025	Aragón /E	GTWS	G4	FWS	PTWS
06/09 MAR 2025	Barcelona Catalunya /E	GTWS	G4	FWS	PTWS
13/16 MAR 2025	Barcelona-Catalunya /E	6h. BARCELONA			

RACE TEST '24/'25 *Additional Race Tests by GEDLICH Racing*

27/28 NOV 2024	Barcelona-Catalunya /E	RACE TEST
12/13 DEC 2024	Portimão /P	RACE TEST
14/15 DEC 2024	Portimão /P	RACE TEST
21/22 JAN 2025	Portimão /P	RACE TEST
12/13 MAR 2025	Barcelona-Catalunya /E	RACE TEST

Info and registration
winter-series.com



GTWS

G4
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6h. of
PORTIMÃO

6h. of
BARCELONA

FWS

PTWS

RACE TEST