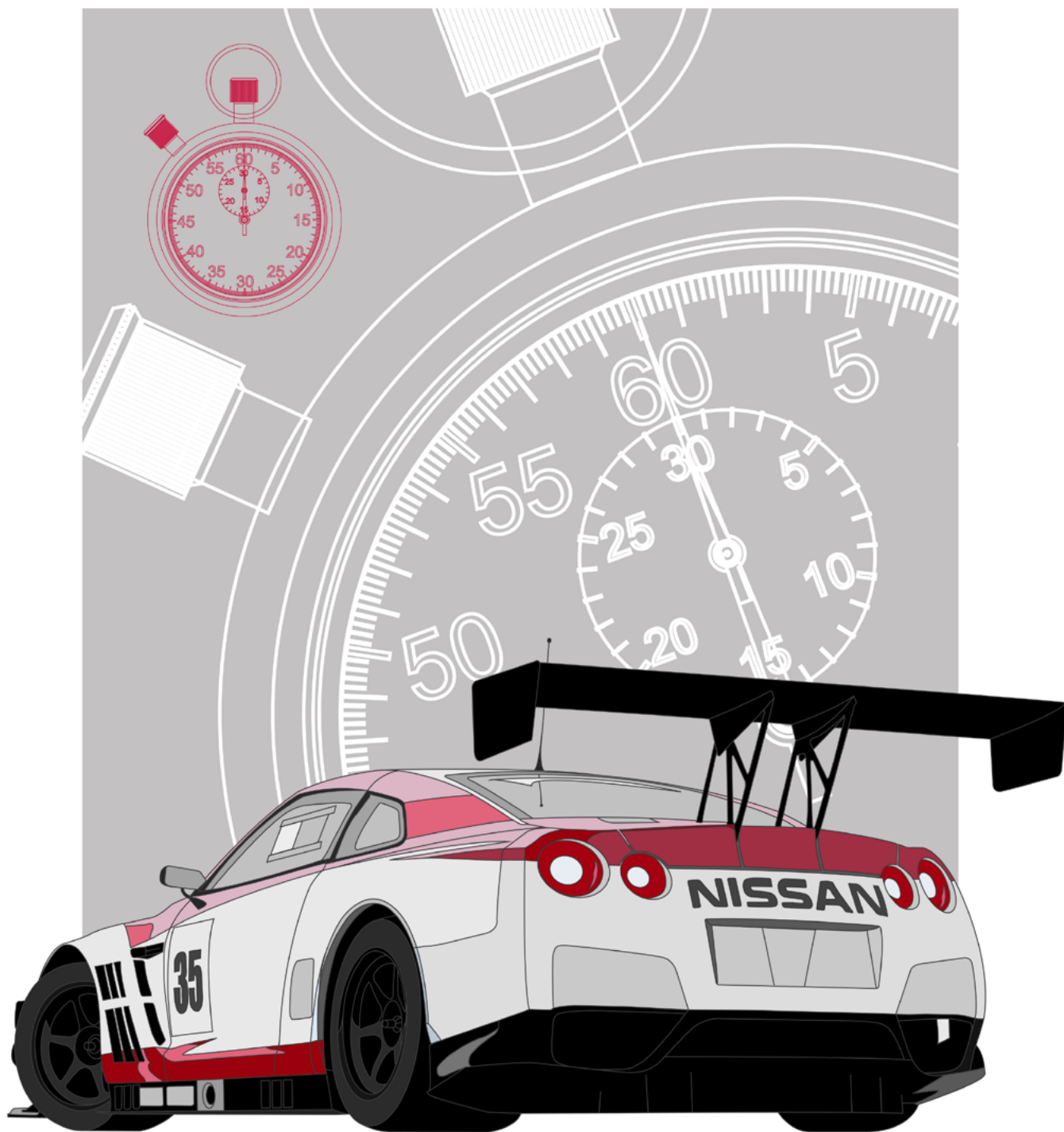


YOUR ONE STOP GUIDE TO INTERNATIONAL

GT3 RACING

IN 2013



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FIA GT Series

An in-depth look at the much refreshed 2013 FIA GT Series.

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Graham Goodwin

The GT racing scene in Europe and beyond has much to thank Stephane Ratel for.

Together with his then partners Jurgen Barth and Patrick Peter, Ratel's BPR series in the mid 1990s all but recreated a form of racing that had withered on the vine of the endurance racing scene.

From the heady days of the McLaren F1s and Ferrari F40s, through the factory dominated era of the original FIA GT Championship with Porsche and Mercedes Benz banging heads and on into an era that saw the 'new' GT1s, the Oreca Vipers, then Care Racing's Ferrari 550s, Aston Martin DBR9s, Saleens, and latterly Maserati MC12s to the fore, throughout all of it Ratel was leading the charge.

Alongside the premier class though there were always the GT2s from Ferrari, Porsche and other pretenders to the throne, variety in GT racing has always added spice and here was proof positive that racing the cars we all love to see on the street had

real appeal.

2006 saw a major change, the new GT3 class arrived with a bang with almost 50 brand new cars packing the pitlane for the first outing of the FIA GT3 Championship.

The formula was simple in some ways, fiercely complex in others.

Race the cars that owners want to buy was the easy bit, balance of performance was the trickier part - but it was an essential ingredient in a formula that saw front, rear and mid engined GT cars with everything from 6 through to 12 cylinders and a variety of displacements starting at under 4 litres and topping out at around 8!

The teams loved it, and so did many gentleman drivers, and the pros that benefited from the new scene too, though there were casualties along the way as Morgan, Lotus, Ascari and others came and left.

Others though joined in the fun, and some made it pay like few other marques in racing with Porsche, Ferrari, Lamborghini,

“

THE GT3 CLASS ARRIVED WITH A BANG WITH ALMOST 50 BRAND NEW CARS PACKING THE PITLANE FOR THE FIRST OUTING



Aston Martin, Corvette, BMW, Audi, Mercedes Benz and latterly Nissan and McLaren too also selling cars in substantial numbers with Chrysler, Ford and Alpina joining the grids from Europe to South America, from Asia to Australia.

The variety was still there, and so too was the will to win, cars that were initially designed to be uprated road cars soon developed into pure bred racers - Massively powerful, massively fast and with at times massive price tags too!

Even more massive in terms of the power, pace and price tags were a short-lived new breed of GT1 racers for the FIA GT1 World Championship, launched in the midst of a global economic meltdown and with no assistance whatsoever from a blunt decision

from the ACO to bar the cars from Le Mans.

The new GT1s, with all Pro driver line-ups provided thrills and spills in roughly equal measure but its downfall seemed inevitable - Along the way though there was some great racing, World titles and more profile on a world stage for GT racing again.

Through all of it the GT3s powered on with plenty of opportunity to race the cars in one hour sprint races on national or continental platforms but there was an appetite for more, proven by the continued popularity of the Spa 24 Hours and serviced, very adequately indeed, by the new for 2011 Blancpain Endurance Series, the longer race format was a smash hit with grids

growing rapidly - 40 and 50 plus not unusual whilst other Series struggled for double figures!

Onto 2013 and we have a new addition to the racing roster as the FIA GT Series takes a bow - Like a phoenix from the ashes of the GT1 World Championship it retains the format of sprint races for all pro teams but now relies on GT3 machinery that the teams can utilise in any number of additional races or Series.

The signs are good that both Series will have healthy grids in 2013 - all told that means over 70 GT3 cars on some of the very best circuits in Europe - Watch them on TV, follow them on the web, or get down to the tracks to see, and hear, them live but don't, whatever you do, miss them!

Stephane Ratel



Our history speaks for itself, not only with the original BPR but also playing a very active role in bringing GT cars back to Le Mans in 1993/94. That helped the race to flourish and it really is amazing to think that we are now 20 years on with real endurance races having been revived over that time - our efforts helped the ACO to launch the LMS, a Series I held shares in until quite recently, and from that came the FIA WEC.

Our history also saw the old Super Racing Weekends with the FIA GT Championship supported by the ETCC, which became the WTCC - there's a lot of World Championship history tied up with SRO's racing!

Of course the latest chapter in that story saw the FIA GT1 World Championship, there's no secret that that was a big ambition of mine, and there's no secret too that it turned out to be a hard and expensive time too.

Indeed it has been a very hard last four years travelling

around the world. Discussing, negotiating, organising - Very tough, but a real life lesson in what works, and what doesn't - and more important why.

That's what we are building into our current packages and that's why we are concentrating 100% on stability and not development. The FIA GT Series is really a direct continuation of the FIA GT1 World championship but without the world title.

Costs are reduced and at the moment that's the most important thing. We've listened to the teams and have brought together all of the best elements of the old and very successful FIA GT3 European Championship and the FIA GT1 World Championship.

We have a good and affordable calendar in FIA GT, a format that makes for great racing and great TV.

Investing in TV, where we have the best coverage ever for GT racing, was one of the two over-riding priorities - The other was to have events with strong promotion and a record of good

crowds for GT racing.

Nogaro had a great crowd for its traditional Easter meeting and Zolder has a great record too of getting fans in through the gates.

Spa always has a great attraction for racegoers and is going to take another step forward this season and I know the Nurburgring are getting excited about a new large event to get behind.

That has all come together to

create lots of interest and we hope to have a stable 24-25 cars for the season, more at some races.

We already have some very good cars, teams and drivers but I hope we can attract others later in the season including a good Lamborghini team and Aston Martin too.

I'm delighted to see Nissan back after such excellent results in GT1

and Sebastien Loeb's arrival with us was excellent news of course.

Success now should see the Series grow and that can only add to the success we're seeing across our top three Championships, FIA GT, Blancpain and British GT.

Between them there should be over 120 cars regularly competing. An amazing total!

The Blancpain Endurance Series has an optimised calendar with a

“ THE BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE SERIES HAS BEEN A SMASH HIT AND WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO WORK TO MAKE SURE IT STAYS THAT WAY.

perfect endurance mix - three x three hour races then the Blue Riband event the Spa 24 Hours and finally the new event for us the 1000kms at the Nurburgring.

All events should see a full season entry of well over 50 cars

Some cars will do both international Series so integration of the calendars and cost cutting is essential. That plays to the real strengths of the GT3 format, that the cars can be raced in a huge number of different races, Series and Championships. That ticks another major box for me. We, and the rulemakers, need to ensure that the teams, the sport's

lifeblood, are helped to gain better value and a better business model.

Too many drivers and too many teams are still competing for the same available budgets. We can help them to get better value but they must all help us to market the sport better too.

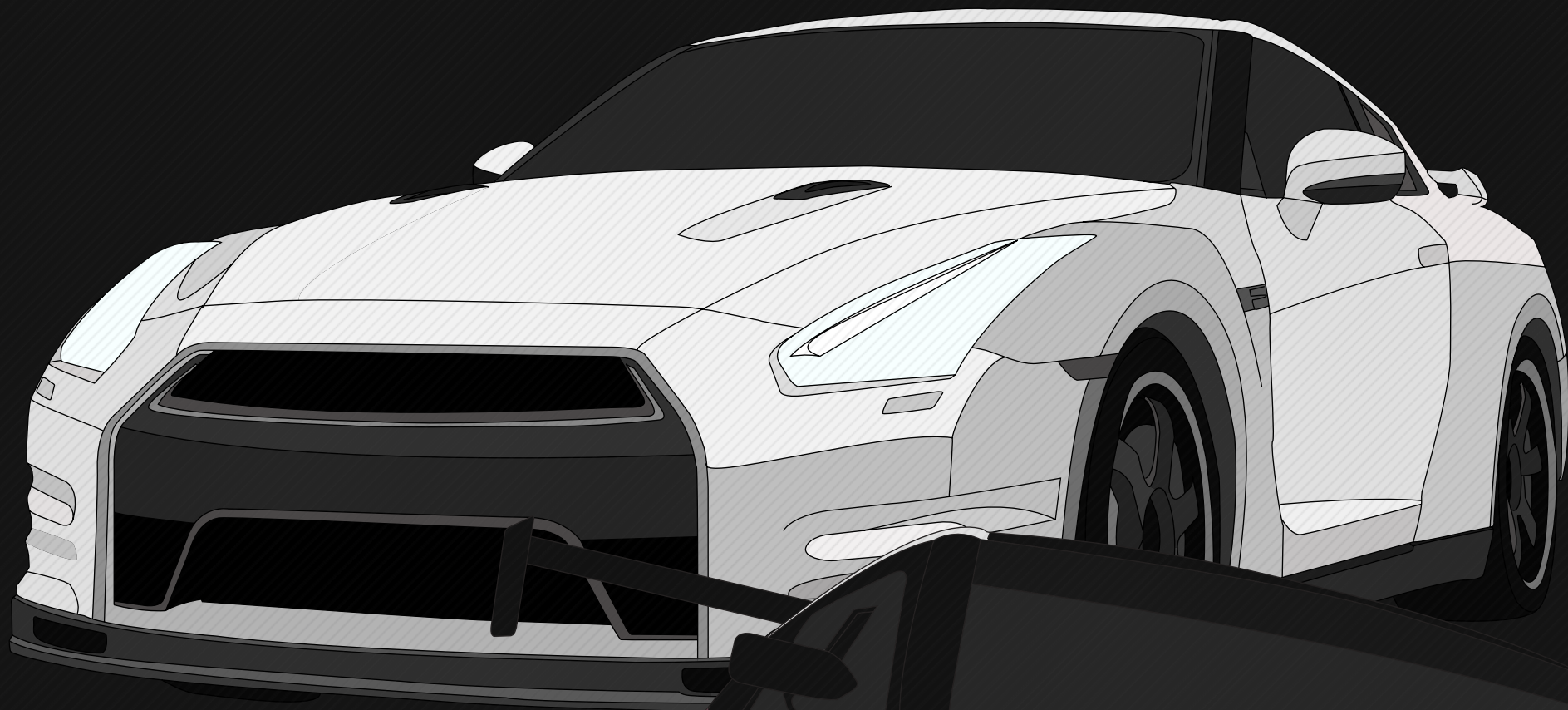
I hear some saying that sportscar racing is in a mess but I disagree.

Look at the ladder with the WEC at its head then Blancpain, FIA GT and the National Series. The best Championships have good and stable grids and a class system that is easily understandable.

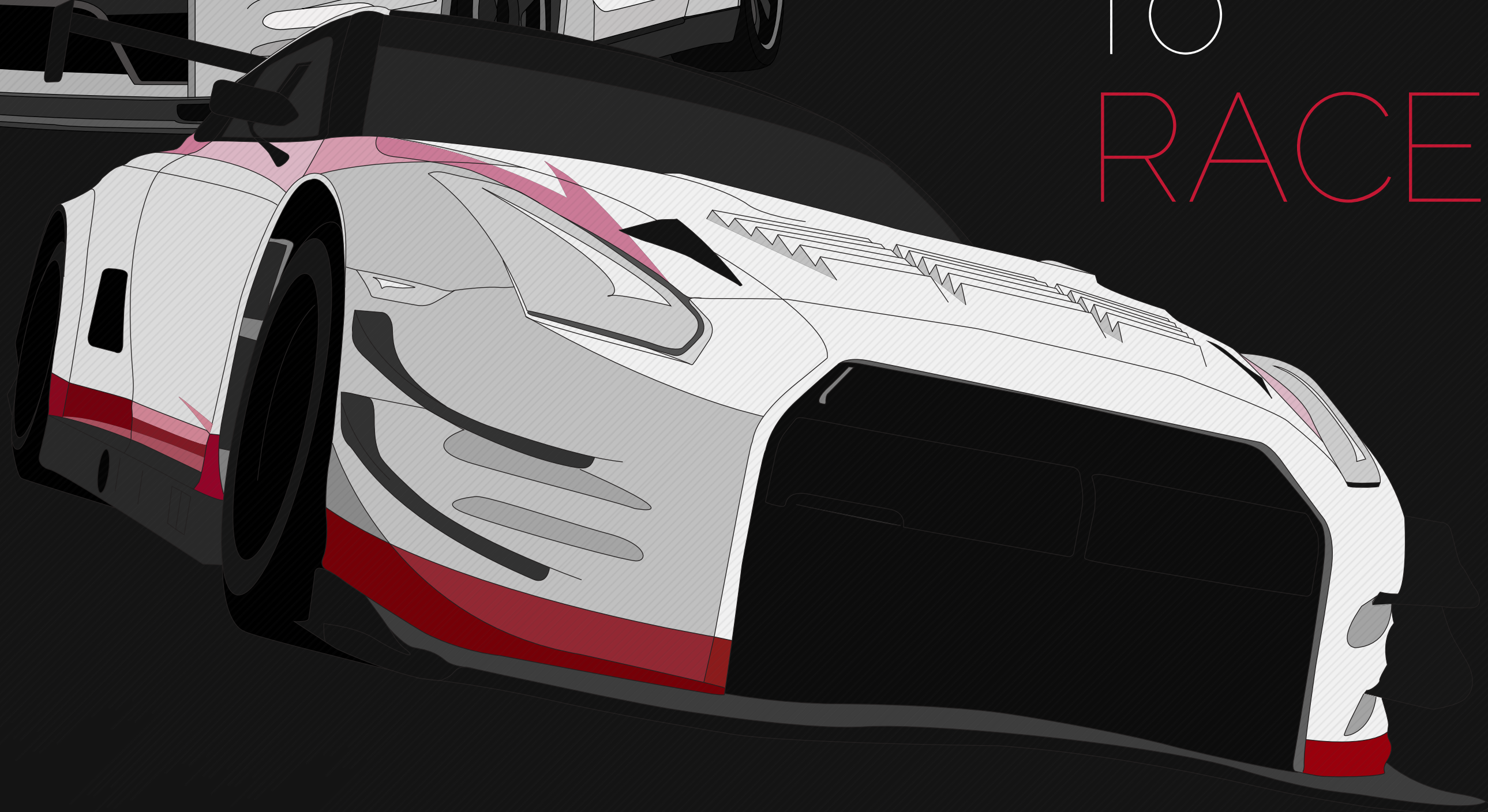
The WEC looks good, I am very happy for the ACO and they have a very good grid for a second year that could have been very difficult. They too have seen the need to look at costs.

The Blancpain Endurance Series has been a smash hit and we need to continue to work to make sure it stays that way.

There is huge support out there for this type of racing, from the teams, from the drivers, and from the fans. The cars are fabulous, the racing is fantastic and whilst this is, of course, my business there should be no doubt that I love what I do.



ROAD TO RACE



The original intention of GT3 racing was to bring relatively lightly modified racing versions of roadgoing supercars to the track.

Very quickly though the large brained engineers tasked with doing what all car makers like to do, win races, realised that there was plenty of scope for further

modification to the extent that today a GT3 race car is more than 7 seconds a lap faster on a typical circuit than the 2007 versions of the same basic car - and a LOT quicker still than the roadgoing versions of what are already VERY rapid road cars!

How do they do it? Read on.

Engine

Road

Nissan VR38DETT: 3.8 litre, V6, twin-turbo
542 bhp @ 6,400 rpm
628 nm @ 3200 rpm



Race

Nissan VR38DETT: 3.8 litre, V6, twin-turbo
500+ bhp @ 6,400 rpm
650+ nm @ 4,000 rpm

Drivetrain

Road

AWD
6-speed twin-clutch auto



Race

RWD
Hewland 6-speed sequential
Semi-automatic paddle shift

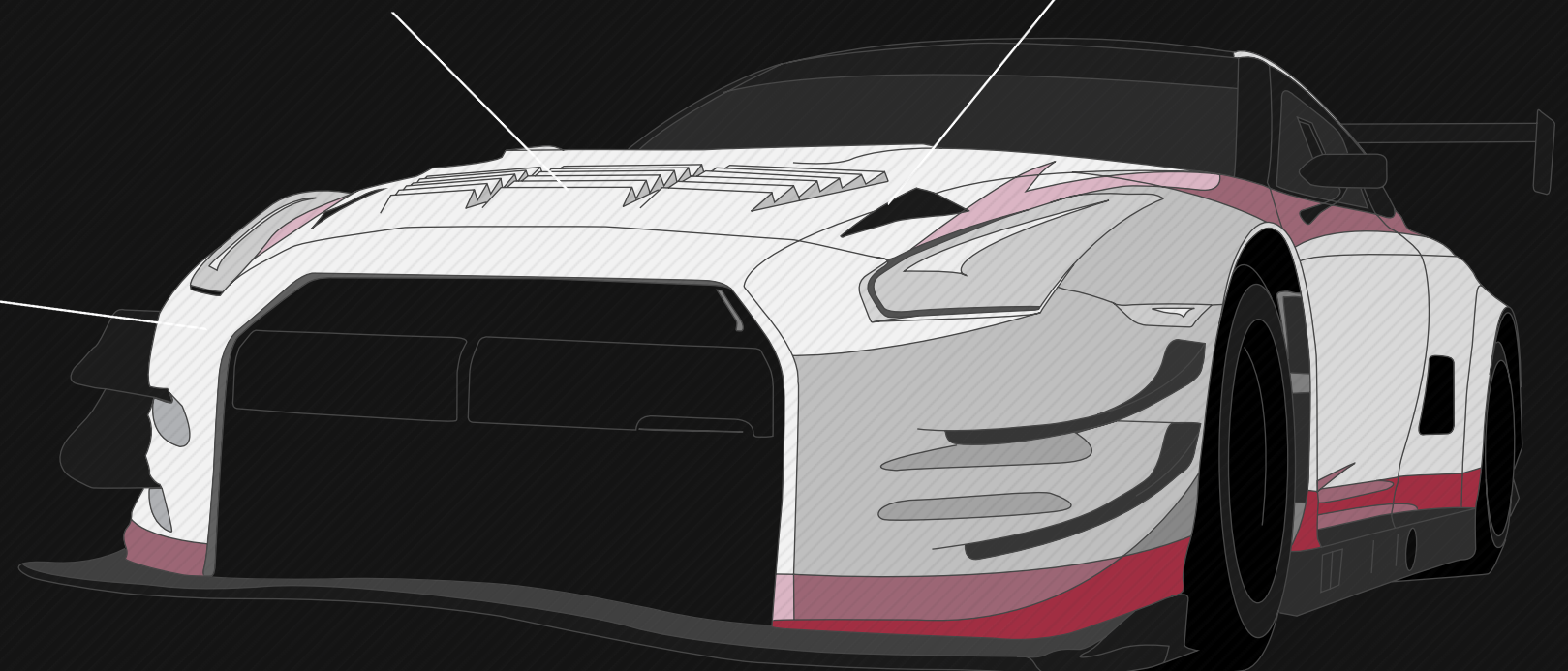
Suspension

Road

Independent double wishbone aluminum, integral tube-frame structure, six-point mounting

Race

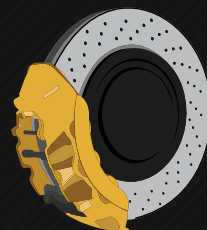
Ohlins TTX with two-way adjustment



Brakes

Road

Front: Brembo six piston monoblock calipers
Rear: Brembo four piston monoblock calipers



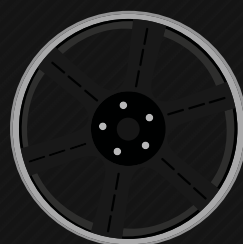
Race

Brembo six piston, long distance front calipers
Front/rear, driver adjustable brake bias

Wheels

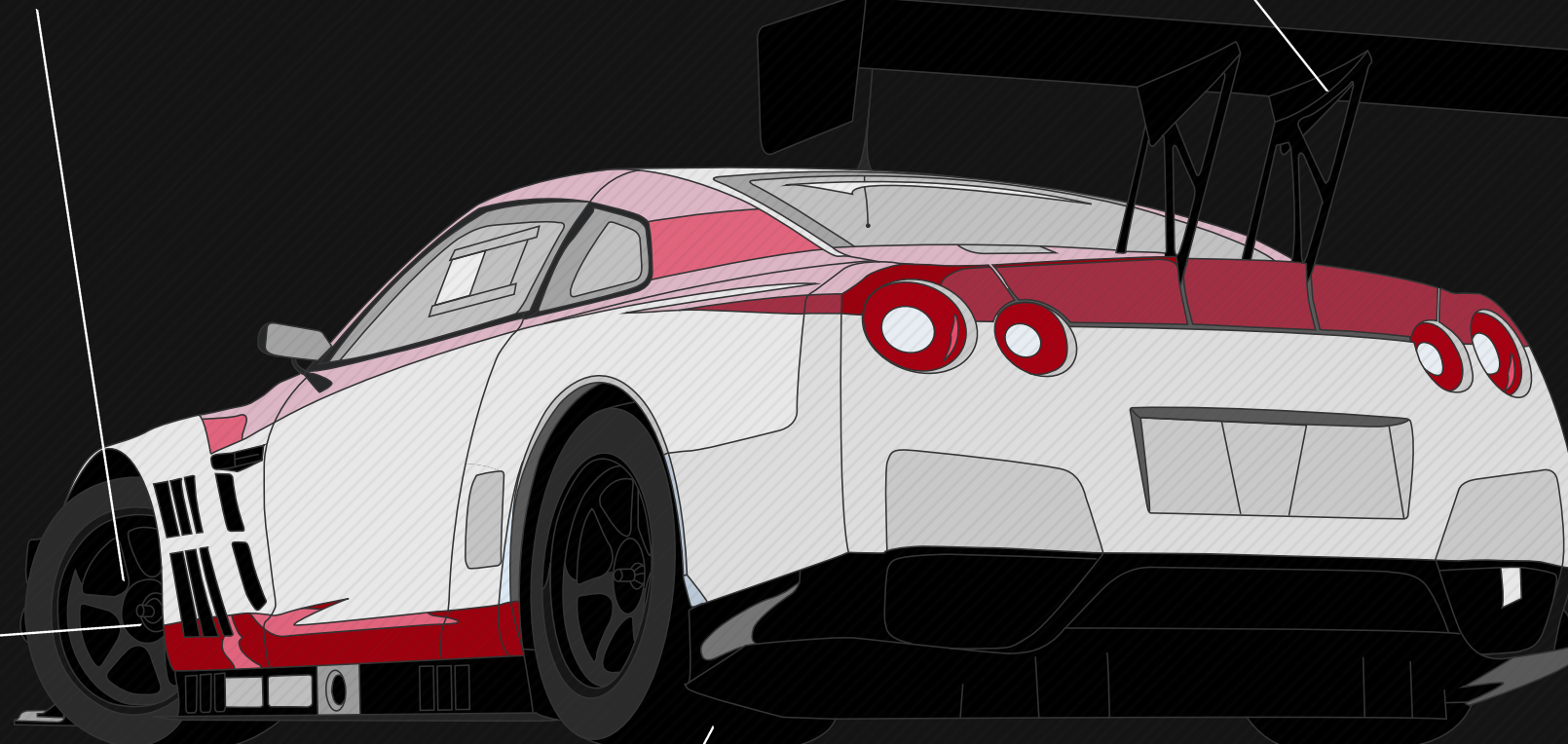
Road

6-spoke RAYS
aluminum-alloy forged rims



Race

6-spoke RAYS centre-lock, aluminium forged 18" x 13" front and rear, 9kg each



Aero

Road

Moulded rear wing
Carbon fibre rear diffuser



Race

Wind tunnel developed front splitter, bumper and flat floor
Adjustable rear wing assembly

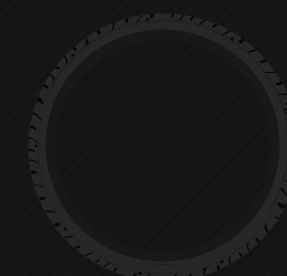
Tyres

Race

Pirelli P Zero GT Slick

Road

Dunlop® SP Sport Maxx
GT600 ultra high performance run-flat





TIMELY SUCCESS

JAKE YORATH ON THE WONDER THAT IS THE BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE SERIES

Very few of us in the motorsport world have stopped pinching ourselves yet. Growth has been a little used word of late, used especially sparingly to describe grid numbers. Yet here, at the gates of the Blancpain Endurance Series, Jack's beanstalk towers over a grove of stunted, withering trees, proud and still growing.

Presuming that Stephane Ratel doesn't have a handful of magic beans, what does he have? Firstly, the GT3 class. The cars are cost capped (in theory), they're balanced so no one brand gains an advantage (in theory) and they provide fantastic, door to door racing (in theory and glorious, glorious practice). They're easier to drive than GTE cars and you can race them in any one of a vast range of series all over the globe.

Then there's the format. There's a Pro class, sure, but the series' trump card is the Pro Am division, which offers a budding amateur with a fat enough wallet to drive alongside a professional driver, in an up to date race car, at a variety

of famous European circuits. In three hour races. Three hours means that most drivers will get near enough an hour's racing every weekend.

'Hey, gentleman racing driver, do you fancy racing a Ferrari at Monza against 50 other similar cars?'

It's a simple enough question and, thankfully, one answered very often with, 'Yes, please'. The weekends are short - mostly two days - and there are only five rounds, which means businessmen only have to miss a couple of very important meetings to compete. And they have juniors for that kind of thing, right? Five races also means that the series is (relatively) cheap, too. Certainly, it is good value for money, even if it's unlikely you'll find a season's budget down the back of your sofa.

For the 2013 season, there are more than a dozen different brands with a GT3 car that could, theoretically again, go out and win races in the class. In GTE, there are less than half as many. In touring cars, there are even

fewer and in most touring car classes, there's very little hope for a gentleman driver to take any silverware.

So to refresh; take your pick from anyone of the supercar brands represented, turn up at whichever famous grand prix circuit the series is visiting, race with a near equal chance of victory against more than 50 other cars. When Berlinda Carlisle suggested that heaven might be a place on the very earth we inhabit, she might have had a crystal ball and a passion for motor racing.

It has come to a head in 2013, the series' third year, with a 60 car grid for the opening round at Monza. Most motor racing fans will have been to race meetings where there were less than 60 cars for all the races in a day. I certainly have.

It does present a small problem, though - Monza's start straight is very wide, and the chicane at the end of it is tight. More than 30,000 horsepower, formation needle threading...

What's not to love about the Blancpain Endurance Series?



THE BRANDS

BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE SERIES

BLANCPAIN

IB
1735
BLANCPAIN

CLASSIC
21
ECOUTEZ
L'ORIGINAL



The reigning champion brand has returned once again, with a further updated version of their all conquering R8 LMS Ultra. Homologation issues at early season races should be cleared by Monza, and the even more aggressive looking (and sounding) V10 powered supercar lines up as one of the top preseason favourites.

The Audi R8 LMS has taken both previous titles, three of the eleven previous BES races, the last two Spa 24 Hours and last year's Nürburgring 24 Hours. It's taken wins in FIA GT3, GT1, ADAC GT, VLN, British GT and sundry other championships.

More than 100 have been delivered to customers, making it one of the most numerous and commercially successful GT3 cars in the class's history.

In Pro, reigning champions WRT return, with three cars. Stephane Ortelli (2012 champion), Laurens Vanthoor and '12 Spa winner Rene Rast take #1, Edward Sandström, Nürburgring and Spa 24 victor Frank Stippler and (also 2012

champion) Christopher Mies #2. It is a formidable double line up, featuring works drivers, works support and multiple championships. The third line up, of ex DTM star Rahel Frey, Niki Mayr-Melnhof and Matt Hallyday might not quite be on the same pace, but strong finishes and points can certainly be expected from the car.

Phoenix Racing also bring real strength. The German squad have strong Audi links, having won the Nürburgring and Spa 24 Hours with the Ingolstadt marque. Two of their N24 winning drivers will drive with the squad in 2013. Christopher Haase is joined by works driver Oliver Jarvis and Harold Primat in #6, with Markus Winkelhock (who is also the reigning FIA GT1 World Champion) joined by Enzo Ide and Anthony Kumpen in #16.

Saintéloc will also bring a Pro class car, with just Gregory Guilvert the only man liste so far. They run a Pro Am for Ronnie Latinne, David Hallyday and Romain Monti. Latinne did some limited running

with GPR's Aston Martin in 2012, while Monti has some limited Porsche racing under his belt; both will need all the time in the car they can get. Hallyday, meanwhile, has a huge amount of experience as a gentleman driver in Audis, Ferraris and also at Le Mans - he should be a good asset to the team. The team also run a year old Am car.

Six Pro Audis, then, all with a strong chance of scoring victories. Realistically, it is hard to look past double teams' champions WRT, particularly cars #1 and #2. Though WRT rarely show their strength early in the season, their unerring ability to pick up strong points, alongside the now near bulletproof vehicle that Audi provide, probably just about make them favourites.

It is always difficult to predict the Pro Am class; so, if the Saintéloc crew can show consistency and stay on the track, there's every chance they can score some decent results and possibly even some wins over the course of the season.

AUDI

R8 LMS ULTRA

Specifications

Engine:

5.2 Litre V10

BHP:

(Upto) 560 bhp

Dimensions:

L: 4670mm W: 1994mm

Dimensions:

1250 kg

BES Wins:

3





BMW

Z4 GT3



Specifications

Engine:

4.3 Litre V8

BHP:

508 bhp

Dimensions:

L: 4387mm W: 2012mm

Dimensions:

1190 kg

BES Wins:

4

BMW have the most wins in the Blancpain Endurance Series, with more than a third of the races being won by the Z4 GT3. The car's success has been in consistency, rarely being the outright fastest car but often being the fastest over the course of stint and race. The 4.0 litre V8 is one of the smallest in the class, leaving the Bavarian charger to rely on its excellent cornering for its laptime.

The greatest exponents of the car's wiles, in BES at least, have been the Marc VDS Racing Team. The Belgian squad won four races back to back with the car spanning the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012 and probably should have been champions last season, leading the points leaving every round except the finale. They return once again in 2013, with two cars once more.

The four victories were all achieved with Maxime Martin, Bas Leinders and Markus Palttala sharing the driving, but for the new season Palttala switches cars and is replaced by newly BMW approved driver Yelmer Buurman.

With Martin currently rated as the fastest driver in GT racing by some pundits and also now a works driver, the #3 VDS car is the one most will look to as BMW's title threat. Certainly, Martin, Leinders and Buurman is one of the strongest partnerships ever assembled for this series.

Their team mates show great promise too; experienced Palttala (who has been vice champion in both seasons of the BES) is joined by sometime GT3 European champion Henri Moser, who impressed in difficult circumstances for the team last year and extremely rapid young Dutchman Nick Catsburg. It's a line-up that, given the right chance, could challenge their team mates.

The VDS team are not the only Pro BMW team. Michael Bartels' Vita4One team have not seen the same success his Vitaphone team did, but that does not mean they should be discounted. One line-up features the only man to outpace Martin in equal equipment in 2012, Frank Kechele. He's joined by Belgian Greg Franchi, who won

the BES title and Spa 24 Hours in 2011, and Stephano Colombo of Italy. The other car sees Stefano Cressoni, ex LMP2 racer Matias Russo and Martin Matzke. Though the line ups are arguably not as strong as some in the class, they could still score podium results.

The Z4 will also be campaigned in Pro Am, by ROAL Motorsport and TDS Racing. ROAL entered the Spa 24 last season and disappointed a little, despite running with Tom Coronel; they haven't got a gold or platinum driver in their car and, in this company, could well struggle. An all Italian team of silver rated Edoardo Liberati (who steps in with limited experience from single seaters) and bronzes Michela Cerruti and Mario Ferraris will campaign the car.

TDS, who have showed prowess running in LMP2, step into Pro Am with Henry Hassid and Ludovic Badey. Badey showed some real class with SOFREV in the last couple of years and is a real catch for the team.

The bottom line is this; BMW have a lot of reasons to be confident going into 2013.



To say that 2012 was a disaster for McLaren in the BES wouldn't necessarily be accurate, but it wouldn't be too far from the truth; 2013 has to be a big improvement for the Woking manufacturer. The MP4-12C is not, fundamentally, a bad car - in fact, it's a very good one, as displayed in the final round of 2012 by Hexis Racing. The jigsaw could well fall into place for them this season.

The most important part of that jigsaw is improved reliability. Early season problems were, it seemed, largely erased by Navarra last season where Hexis turned up and blew away their competition. On top of that, an MP4-12C cruised to victory at the Barcelona 24 Hours, proving its endurance credentials.

The Pro class runners, then, are probably a little concerned that Hexis are back for a full season - and they are not messing about. Philippe Dumas' crack outfit have long been the fastest pitstop guns in the west, and their standards of preparation are second to none.

McLaren works drivers Alexander Sims and Alvaro Parente are joined by Stef Dusseldorp on the driving side. Sims is a McLaren F1 test driver, while Parente showed time and time again in the last year that he is just about as good as it comes in GT racing right now. Dusseldorp, though, won't be left behind in this company.

ART Grand Prix are back, after impressing in Pro Am last season. Mike Parisy, no slouch, comes in as a late replacement for impressive Brit Duncan Tappy and joins Antoine Leclerc and Andy Soucek. Leclerc is not slow, while Soucek has a huge amount of talent and will certainly be one to watch in the series.

Gulf Racing also return. After flashing promise repeatedly in 2012, including a strong front running performance at Silverstone from Rob Bell, the team will run a Pro car in the new season. Works McLaren pilot Bell is joined by rapid Irish star Adam Carroll and promising Dutchman Nico Verdonck. It is yet another extraordinarily strong line-up.

Gulf Racing enter a Pro Am car, too. Mike Wainwright is joined by rapid ex Aston Martin factory Welshman Andy Meyrick.

As well as their Pro entry, ART Grand Prix will again run a Pro Am car for promising but controversial Frenchman Gregoire Demoustier, who impressed with Tappy in '12 (often very close to Tappy's pace). The silver rated driver is joined by 2007 GT3 European champion Gilles Vannet and Yann Goudy.

Von Ryan Racing are back, but after a very troubled 2012 they'll be desperate for improvement. The British squad return with Rob Barff, Leon Price and Jordan Grogor; the trio strike a good balance and, if their luck turns, they could be in for some decent points finishes.

MRS GT Racing will step into the Pro Am class from ADAC GT, with three relatively unknown drivers. Rodin Younessi has a little experience in American open wheel, and drove with the team at this year's Dubai 24; but the car was not a major feature in the results. He's joined by Brazilian

GT racer Carlos Kray and Austrian youngster Philipp Eng. Eng also drove with the team in Dubai, but this trio will need to adapt very, very quickly.

Boutsen Ginion are also present in Pro Am. The Belgian squad topped the official test with Frederic Vervisch, and the Belgian joins two promising team mates. Koen Wouters is a popstar by trade but his ability behind the wheel is improving year on year and he must be rated as one of the best of the gentlemen drivers now. David Dermont steps up from Mégane Eurocup to take the third seat.

The Belgian team is also present in Am. Massively experienced Karim Ojeh is joined by Belgian lady Marlene Broggi. She steps up from Clio racing, having run one event with Boutsen in 2012.

Can a McLaren win the title? It's debatable whether they'll be as strong over the course of a season as Audi, BMW or Porsche, but the teams are startlingly strong. If you're putting money on it, put it on Hexis Racing.

McLAREN

MP4-12C GT3

Specifications

Engine:

4.5 Litre V8

BHP:

550 bhp

Dimensions:

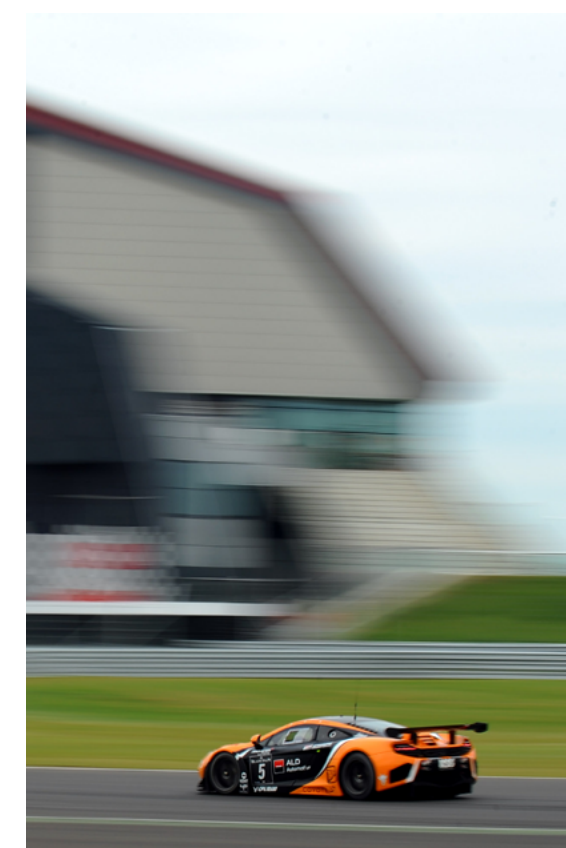
L: 4598mm W: 2033mm

Dimensions:

1215 kg

BES Wins:

1







LAMBORGHINI

GALLARDO GT3 FL2

Specifications

Engine:
5.2 Litre V10

BHP:
561 bhp

Dimensions:
L: 4340mm W: 1930mm

Dimensions:
1065 kg

BES Wins:
0

Reiter's Lamborghini program has stepped up in 2013, with the Italian marque finally taking notice and joining in. The new car certainly looks the part; it's as if someone got hold of early development parts for the Stealth Fighter and sold them to Reiter Engineering. It's a fast package, always has been; but it's never been the most solid GT3 cars.

So what can we expect in 2013? Only two cars, both in Pro Am. Blancpain Racing, effectively the works team for Reiter, return with Blancpain supremo Marc Hayek alongside Peter Kox. Kox is still pretty close to the top of his game, development driver for

Reiter and former Le Mans class winner. Hayek is no slouch these days, and a rounded performer too.

Grasser Racing join the series, with a beautifully presented machine. Hari Proczyk was third in the GT3 European Series last season, while Gerhard Tweraser has some Lamborghini GT3 racing under his belt already. They're joined by Gottfried Grasser, who has plenty of experience in GT racing.

Blancpain Racing will certainly be a strong prospect in Pro Am - don't bet against them. At Spa, however, the car's infamous unreliability could well prove their Achilles' heel.

PORSCHE

911 GT3 R



This year marks the 50th year of the Porsche 911, but sadly for fans of the Stuttgart brand this is unlikely to be a vintage year. The 997 is long in the tooth, though a 2013 update of considerable proportions will come as some comfort. The Porsche GT3 project, however, does not have the same level of factory commitment brought by Audi, BMW, McLaren or, to an extent Nissan. There will not be a Porsche factory driver in the championship.

In fact, there's only one Pro car. Last season, Prospeed took a victory and probably should've won more. Their star, though, is gone. Marc Goossens' commitments with SRT Viper mean he is gone, and he'll be missed; his old team mates Marc Hennerici and Xavier Maassen, however, do return. They're joined by Maxime Soulet. Soulet is fast, but he's years behind Goossens in experience.

They have also entered a Pro Am car for Americans Charles Putman, Charles Espenlaub and

friend to the stars Joe Foster.

Haribo Racing have once again entered in Pro Am. Mike Stursberg returns, with Hans Guido Riegel once again alongside him. Richard Westbrook once again joins the team, as a late replacement for Emmanuel Collard. The Briton is a current Corvette factory driver and has plenty of experience squeezing the best out of racing Porsches.

Pro GT Almeras are back. The French squad have a few races in the BES in their history, and Eric Dermont and Franck Perera are listed in their Pro Am entry. Dermont has plenty of experience racing Porsches, while Perera has a lot of racing with Pro GT under his belt and could show a strong turn of pace.

Pro GT Almeras also bring an Am car, shared by Christian Blugeon, Nicolas Armengole and Philippe Giauque, an experienced trio. They're joined in Am by Delahaye Racing and ARC Bratislava. One thing's for sure; Miro Konopka's Slovakian entry will not be easily missed in its traditional acid yellow paint.

Specifications

Engine:
4 litre Flat 6

BHP:
500 bhp

Dimensions:
L: n/a W: n/a

Weight:
1200 kg

BES Wins:
2





FERRARI

458 ITALIA GT3



Specifications

Engine:

4.5 Litre V8

BHP:

550 bhp

Dimensions:

L: 4598mm W: 2033mm

Dimensions:

1215 kg

BES Wins:

1

Italy's finest dominates the BES grid numerically. The 458 GT3 has been a phenomenal success, with wins all over Europe including a solitary victory in the BES' first season. There are fully 17 entered for the opening round at Monza, and they will be strong; though they didn't take a victory last year, they were blindingly fast.

Kessel Racing prepared the fastest Ferraris in 2012. With that in mind, their Pro entry should be one to watch. Daniel Zampieri, Cesar Ramos and Davide Rigon take charge of the driving. Youngster Zampieri has a lot of pace and was the GT Open GTS class champion last season (as well as a star in BES), Ramos has an Italian F3 title to his name, while Rigon has twice been Superleague Formula champion. They will be strong, for sure.

Vita4One Team Italy prepare a Pro class entry for Eugenio Amos, Giacomo Petrobelli and Francesco Castellacci. All three have experience at this level and should be able to stay the pace at this level.

The other Pro Ferrari is prepared by AF Corse for SMP Racing. Three

Russians will do the driving; Kiril Ladygin, who has varied European GT racing experience, Viktor Shaitar, who has a big step to make moving up from Legends racing, and Mikhail Aleshin. Aleshin is a star in most company, winner of the World Series by Renault in times past, and still a rapid pilot. He'll need to transfer some of his pace to his team mates, though, if SMP are to shine.

In Pro Am, the ranked masses are massed indeed. Insight Racing bring Dennis Andersen and Martin Jensen. Jensen has a lot of strong racing on his CV, but they're unlikely to challenge for victories in such a strong field.

The strongest of the field could well be AF Corse's combination. Louis Machiels and Nic Hommerson were the best amateurs in the series last season and will likely be paired with a top pro from the crack Italian squad.

MTEch run two cars. Jake Rattenbury and Stephen Jelley are both rapid (Jelley particularly so), and the two Brits are joined by experienced Canadian Andrew Danyliw. It makes for a strong trio. Their second car sees an all Argentinian crew; Diego Menedaz,

Fabian Taraborelli and Jorge Ginaz will drive.

SMP also enter two Pro Am cars. Boris Rotenberg and Sergey Zlobin drive one, with Yuri Evstigneev, Alexandr Frolov and David Markozov in the other. Besides providing something of a challenge for commentators, the driving squad will need to do a lot of learning over the season if they are to challenge, most having just stepped up from the Ferrari Challenge. There is a fourth entry, also in Pro Am, for the team, though no drivers were listed against it.

Kessel have a Pro Am car, with Stefano Gattuso, Marco Zanuttini and Thomas Kemeneter to drive. Gattuso, in particular, should be rapid. Team Ukraine also enter a car in Pro Am.

In Am, SOFREV and Sport Garage each enter two cars, AF Corse and Kessel both with singleton entries.

Ferrari's problem in recent years has been inconsistency; their fastest Pro entries have often faded. That will need to change, but if the Kessel Pro car gets its act together, there's nothing to say there aren't victories in that team.



NISSAN

GT-R NISMO GT3



Specifications

Engine:

3.8 litre, V6, twin-turbo

BHP:

550 bhp

Dimensions:

L: 4650mm W: 1902mm

Dimensions:

1300 kg

BES Wins:

0

This could well be the year Nissan comes forward and begins to build on the potential the GT-R GT3 has shown. The car has had an injection of manufacturer development support over the winter and looks like it is reaching fighting fitness going into the season.

Some main figures are playing down the car's chances, saying that there's still a long way to go with development and that it's a learning year, but there's real chance of some very strong performances in 2013. The GT-R is physically the biggest of the GT3 cars (except the stately home-esque Alpina), and that presents its own challenges. The car has certainly got a more aggressive look over the winter.

As with all the teams, tyre management will be key. Last season the car had traction issues and its additional weight will make life more difficult. On top of that, the RJN team struggled with a lack of front grip in '12. To combat this, they've added aggressive dive planes, as well as increasing the size of the already sizeable rear aero.

It isn't just the car that is stronger in 2013. For the first time, Nissan will be represented

in the Pro class for a full season. Development squad JRM will run one of the strongest line ups in the class, with 2011 GT1 World Champion and reigning American Le Mans Series LMP1 champion Lucas Luhr joined by Peter Dumbreck and Steven Kane. Scotsman Dumbreck, rightly, has a reputation as one of the very best in the business and Kane will certainly not be left behind, even in this exalted company.

The drivers of JRM's second car do not have quite the same experience. Matt Bell, who is beginning to shrug the 'Rob's brother' tag, is joined by Charlie Bateman and Humaid Al Massaad. Bell is fast, Bateman can be and Massaad has won at LMP1 level. The story of Pro Am in the series, though, could well be RJN Motorsport and the Nissan GT Academy team. Bob Neville's outfit is one of the best in the business and, despite a car that was not quite ready and a driver who began the season with almost no racing experience, nearly won the British GT Championship last year. Can his squad repeat the feat in 2013?

Alex Buncombe, who was partnered with rookie star Jann Mardenborough in the British series last year, is a star in his

own right and he'll be key to the team's success. He is joined by Lucas Ordóñez and Steve Doherty in #35. Ordóñez won the very first GT Academy and since then has become a superb example of conduct as a professional. He'll be looking to transfer that knowledge and attitude to American GT Academy 2012 graduate Doherty.

#32 is an all GT Academy rookie crew. Belgian Wolfgang Reip, German Peter Pyzera and Russian Mark Shulzhitskiy are all brand new to motor racing and, like Doherty, only drove the GT-R GT3 for the first time at the Paul Ricard BES test. Reip and Shulzhitskiy at least have the luxury of a weekend's racing at Nogaro with the FIA GT Series under the belts (a luxury not afforded to Doherty or Pyzera).

In the early season exchanges, it will take a slice of luck of sizeable proportions to be in a winning position.

Bear in mind, however, that last year's Monza winners qualified 18th and expected to be out of contention until Mother Nature intervened.

The Pro car, particularly, is full of real class and if there's any chance the car can win, they'll make it happen.



NISSAN 32

GT3

FIAT Series

nismo

sparco

ACADEMY

RJN

Brittany Ferries

Freight

W. Relp M. Shulzhitsky

NISSAN

ASTON MARTIN

V12 VANTAGE GT3



Specifications

Engine:
6 litre V12

BHP:
600 bhp

Dimensions:
L: 4619mm W: 1963mm

Weight:
1250 kg

BES Wins:
0

The British marque have had a strong reputation in recent seasons in SRO sanctioned racing. Victories in GT1, GT2, GT3 and GT4 for their DBR9, DBRS9, V8 Vantage and now the V12 Vantage make them familiar sights on European GT grids. Two are entered in the series, and though class wins may be possible, overall victories are unlikely.

There is one entry in the Pro class, for Young Driver/ Emil Frey. Young Driver have forged strong AMR connections in recent years but the driving line up for the car is not the strongest. Fredy Barth,

Lorenz Frey and Gabriele Gardel are the drivers, an all Swiss line up of mixed heritage. Barth has touring races behind him, Frey some GT experience and Gardel an FIA GT title; though he was heavily assisted to that title.

The other is for Beechdean AMR. Beechdean showed very strong form in British GT last season with the Vantage, and Andrew Howard is an accomplished amateur. He's joined by extremely rapid Brit Jonny Adam, who will relish the opportunity to challenge the Pro teams in qualifying and Daniel McKenzie, an Aston Martin 'junior' and certainly one for the future.

MERCEDES

SLS AMG GT3



Specifications

Engine:
6.3 Litre AMG V8

BHP:
500 bhp

Dimensions:
L: 4710mm W: 1990mm

Dimensions:
1340 kg

BES Wins:
0

Since its debut in 2011, Mercedes' SLS AMG GT3 has been a crowd favourite, but has not seen the success that the standard of engineering has perhaps deserved. The car is a solid and reliable package, and will be a useful tool particularly for Pro Am teams, as proved by its multiple Dubai 24 Hours victories.

The Jones brothers once again return to the series they tasted for the first time last season, with their Preci Spark team. David and Godfrey have a strong background in national racing and have often scored results in big races with consistency and guile; something they should bring. The most interesting question will be which driver takes two hours behind the

wheel, and which twin is left to make do with only one!

The other team running the SLS is works supported Black Falcon. They bring one Pro Am, and one Am car. The Pro Am car's crew is strong. Adam Christodolou, Klaas Hummel and Steve Jans share the driving. Christodolou is a real star (though short of miles in the car), while Hummel and Jans have plenty of races under their belts. Jans was with the team in '12, while Hummel will race the Mercedes for the first time, having spent two years with McLaren machinery.

Their Am car once again features Oliver Morley, who is joined by Robert Hissom and Andrii Lebed, both of whom have a fair amount of GT experience.

ENTRY LIST:
BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE SERIES
ROUND ONE, MONZA

Car No.	Class	Team	Car
1	PRO	Belgian Audi Club Team WRT	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
2	PRO	Belgian Audi Club Team WRT	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
3	PRO	Marc VDS Racing Team	BMW Z4
4	PRO	Marc VDS Racing Team	BMW Z4
6	PRO	Phoenix Racing	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
7	PRO	Hexis Racing	McLaren MP4-12C
11	PRO	ART Grand Prix	McLaren MP4-12C
13	PRO	Belgian Audi Club Team WRT	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
16	PRO	Phoenix Racing	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
23	PRO	JRM Motorsport	Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3
26	PRO	Vita4one Racing	BMW Z4
27	PRO	Vita4one Racing	BMW Z4
40	PRO	Sainteloc Racing	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
44	PRO	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
57	PRO	Vita4one Team Italy	Ferrari 458 Italia
69	PRO	Gulf Racing	McLaren MP4-12C
71	PRO	SMP Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
75	PRO	Prospeed Competition	Porsche 997 GT3 R
80	PRO	Young Driver AMR / Emil Frey Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GT3
83	PRO	SMG Challenge	Porsche 997 GT3 R
8	PRO-AM	Haribo Racing Team	Porsche 997 GT3 R
9	PRO-AM	Gulf Racing	McLaren MP4-12C
5	PRO-AM	Boutsen Ginion	McLaren MP4-12C
12	PRO-AM	ART Grand Prix	McLaren MP4-12C
17	PRO-AM	Insight Racing with Flex Box	Ferrari 458 Italia
18	PRO-AM	Black Falcon	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
22	PRO-AM	Preci Spark	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
24	PRO-AM	Blancpain Racing	Lamborghini LP560-4
25	PRO-AM	TDS Racing	BMW Z4
32	PRO-AM	Nissan GT Academy Team RJN	Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3
33	PRO-AM	Pro GT by Almeras	Porsche 997 GT3 R
35	PRO-AM	Nissan GT Academy Team RJN	Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3
42	PRO-AM	Sainteloc Racing	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
43	PRO-AM	ROAL Motorsport	BMW Z4
48	PRO-AM	Prospeed Competition	Porsche 997 GT3 R
50	PRO-AM	AF Corse	Ferrari 458 Italia
54	PRO-AM	Mtech Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
55	PRO-AM	Mtech Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia

Driver 1	Driver 2	Driver 3
Stephane Ortelli	Laurens Vanthoor	Rene Rast
Edward Sandstrom	Frank Stippler	Christopher Mies
Bas Leinders	Maxime Martin	Yelmer Buurman
Henri Moser	Markus Palttala	Nick Catsburg
Oliver Jarvis	Christopher Haase	Harold Primat
Alvaro Parente	Alexander Sims	Stef Dusseldorp
Antoine Leclerc	Andy Soucek	Mike Parisy
Rahel Frey	Niki Mayr-Melnhof	Matt Halliday
Enzo Ide	Anthony Kumpen	Markus Winkelhock
Lucas Luhr	Steven Kane	Peter Dumbreck
Franck Kechele	Greg Franchi	Stephano Colombo
Matteo Cressoni	Matias Russo	Martin Matzke
Gregory Guilvert	TBA	TBA
Daniel Zampieri	Cesar Ramos	Davide Rigon
Eugenio Amos	Giacomo Petrobelli	Francesco Castellacci
Rob Bell	Adam Carol	Nico Verdonc
Kirill Ladygin	Victor Shaitar	Mikhail Aleshin
Maxime Soulet	Xavier Maassen	Marc Hennerici
Fredy Barth	Lorenz Frey	Gabriele Gardel
Marco Mapelli	Eric Clément	Nicolas Armindo
Hans Guido Riegel	Mike Stursberg	Richard Westbrook
	Mike Wainwright	Andy Meyrick
Koen Wauters	David Dermont	Frederic Vervich
Gregoire Demoustier	Gilles Vannelet	Yann Goudy
	Dennis Andersen	Martin Jensen
Klaas Hummel	Steve Jans	Adam Christodoulou
	David Jones	Godfrey Jones
	Marc A. Hayek	Peter Kox
	Henry Hassid	Ludovic Badey
Wolfgang Reip	Peter Pyzera	Mark Shulzhitskiy
	Eric Dermont	Franck Perera
Alex Buncombe	Lucas Ordonez	Steve Doherty
Ronnie Latinne	David Hallyday	Romain Monti
Edoardo Liberati	Michela Cerruti	Mario Ferraris
Charles Putman	Charles Espenlaub	Joe Foster
Niek Hommerson	Louis Machiels	Andrea Bertolini
Jake Rattenbury	Andrew Danyliw	Stephen Jelley
Diego Menendez	Fabian Taraborelli	Jorge Ginaz

ENTRY LIST:
BLANCPAIN ENDURANCE SERIES
ROUND ONE, MONZA

Car No.	Class	Team	Car
70	PRO-AM	SMP Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
72	PRO-AM	SMP Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
73	PRO-AM	SMP Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
77	PRO-AM	MRS GT Racing	McLaren MP4-12C
78	PRO-AM	GRT Grasser-Racing Team	Lamborghini LP560-4
88	PRO-AM	Von Ryan Racing	McLaren MP4-12C
99	PRO-AM	Beechdean AMR	Aston Martin Vantage GT3
111	PRO-AM	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia
123	PRO-AM	Team Ukraine	Ferrari 458 Italia
230	PRO-AM	JRM Motorsport	Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3
10	GENT	SOFREV Auto Sport Promotion	Ferrari 458 Italia
15	GENT	Boutsen Ginion	McLaren MP4-12C
19	GENT	Black Falcon	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3
20	GENT	SOFREV Auto Sport Promotion	Ferrari 458 Italia
34	GENT	Pro GT by Almeras	Porsche 997 GT3 R
41	GENT	Sainteloc Racing	Audi R8 LMS Ultra
51	GENT	AF Corse	Ferrari 458 Italia
52	GENT	Sport Garage	Ferrari 458 Italia
53	GENT	Sport Garage	Ferrari 458 Italia
58	GENT	Delahaye Racing	Porsche 997 GT3 R
66	GENT	ARC Bratislava	Porsche 997 GT3 R
79	GENT	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 458 Italia

Driver 1	Driver 2	Driver 3
Alexey Basov	Alexander Skryabin	Alessandro Pier Guidi
Boris Rotenberg	Sergey Zlobin	Daniil Move
Yuri Evstigneev	Alexander Frolov	Devi Markozov
Rodin Younessi	Carlos Kray	Philipp Eng
Hari Proczyk	Gerhard Tweraser	Gottfried Grasser
Leon Price	Rob Barff	Jordan Grogor
Andrew Howard	Jonny Adam	Daniel Mckenzie
Marco Zanuttini	Stefano Gattuso	Thomas Kemenater
TBA	TBA	TBA
Matt Bell	Charles Bateman	Humaid Al Masood
Gabriel Balthazard	Maurice Ricci	Jérôme Policand
Karim Ojeh	Marlene Broggi	TBA
Robert Hissom	Oliver Morley	Andrei Lebed
Jean-Luc Beaubelique	Jean-Luc Blanchemain	Patrice Goueslard
Christian Blugeon	Nicolas Armengol	Philippe Giauque
Pierre Hirschi	Marc Sourd	Claude-Yves Gosselin
Filipe Barreiros	Francisco Guedes	Raffaele Giannoni
George Cabanne	Romain Brandela	Lionel Comole
Leonardo Gorinni	Thierry Stepec	Thierry Prignault
	Christian Kelders	Daniel Desbruyères
	Miro Konopka	Ahmad Al Harty
Lorenzo Bontempelli	Beniamino Caccia	Alessandro Garofano





ALLUHRING

Graham Goodwin speaks to Nissan's GT World Champion

World champions in any sporting endeavour are very few and far between - And GT Racing has had fewer than most - In fact only six men have ever held that mantle.

One of them is Lucas Luhr, the 33 year old German took the FIA GT1 World Championship for drivers alongside compatriot Michael Krumm in a JRM Nissan GT-R after a season that Luhr himself describes as "very intense, almost brutal, but with absolutely fantastic racing"

In taking the title against the combined attacks of all pro line-ups from Aston Martin, Corvette, Lamborghini and Ford, Luhr had to dig deep with the resources of the team, the edges of the envelope of the GT-R's performance potential and his own massive experience in GT, endurance and DTM racing.

"You always had to have an eye on the title, to remember that the most important thing was to get to the end of the race in as good shape as possible.

"In GT1 that often meant that the biggest challenge was getting through the first corner where time after time there would be an incident that would take out cars.

"Between Michael and I we had a lot of experience in multi class racing which can be summarised as making sure you keep the car in as good a shape as possible for as long as possible. Handing over a car in a position and a condition to enable your team-mate to continue the attack."

That experience included years as a factory driver for Porsche and then for Audi. It brought him no fewer than eight Championship wins as well as class wins at Le Mans, Sebring, Daytona, Spa and

Petit Le Mans and overall wins at the Nurburgring 24 Hours.

"For me though the experience I had in DTM was just as valid, where aggression was just as important to stay with the battle for the lead - 20 GT1 cars with all pro drivers with the likes of Richard Westbrook, Tomas Enge and Darren Turner involved was a wonderful concept and showed that GT cars can be just as exciting over a one hour race as over 6 hours or more.

"What many people don't see though is that it really is a team sport. The expertise of the engineer and of your pit crew is, if anything, more significant in keeping you in touch with the lead than the drivers.

"We saw that when, after a slow start to the season with a new race engineer, Nigel Stepney took charge of our car. From there on in we were always looking for the edge, including getting the best result possible without getting too much success ballast (in FIA GT1 a double win could see a car dealt a crippling 45-50 kilos of ballast for the next race). That's what made the difference between a good package and a great package."

2013 sees Luhr back in a Nissan GT-R and back into endurance racing, but at the wheel this time of the new GT3 version of the GT-R in the Blancpain Endurance Series, again for JRM.

"It is a very different car from the GT1, much closer to the roadgoing GT-R but still an impressive racing machine. I'm pretty new to GT3 machinery, I had only ever raced a GT3 Porsche before the JRM programme came together.

"Balance of performance is everything in GT3 and I expect we



will be very competitive at some circuits, not so much at others. The longer races mean that the strategy is even more important and I expect we'll be strong there too.

And there's a chance that Lucas will again have an inbuilt advantage that he held during the GT1 campaign - The number of his race car!

"From the moment that I heard that Michael and I would be racing in car number #23 I told him that we were definitely going to win the title - I just didn't tell him why - #23 is of almost mythical significance to Nissan racers as the number translates to Ni - San and I thought that was an excellent omen and I only told Michael why I was so confident after we won it!"

To win this time though Luhr and his 2013 team-mates Peter Dumbreck and Steven Kane will have to beat not only the Audis, Mercedes, Porsches, Aston Martins, Ferraris and more, they'll have to beat another Nissan team too!

"When I first heard that Nissan were going to put computer gamers into real race cars I was astonished - I thought they were nuts!

"But when you look at the depth and quality of the selection and development process that they put the guys through there's less of a surprise when it produces the quality of someone like Lucas Ordonez and the newer graduates.

"Honestly, hats off to whoever green lighted that programme - Giving new talent that sort of opportunity is just another example of their attention to detail. Nissan are just brilliant at what they do, I'm delighted to be a part of it.

TRACK GUIDE

Meet the first three tracks on the Blancpain Endurance Series calendar; look out for the rest in our Spa 24 Hours preview e-zine!



^{JB}
¹⁷³⁵
BLANCPAIN

ENDURANCE SERIES

1

Monza
Italy
April 13 - 14 2013

Circuit Length: 5.793 km

2012 Winner: #3 Marc VDS BMW Z4 GT3
2012 Pole: #71 Kessel Racing Ferrari 458 GT3
2012 Pole Time: 1:47:293



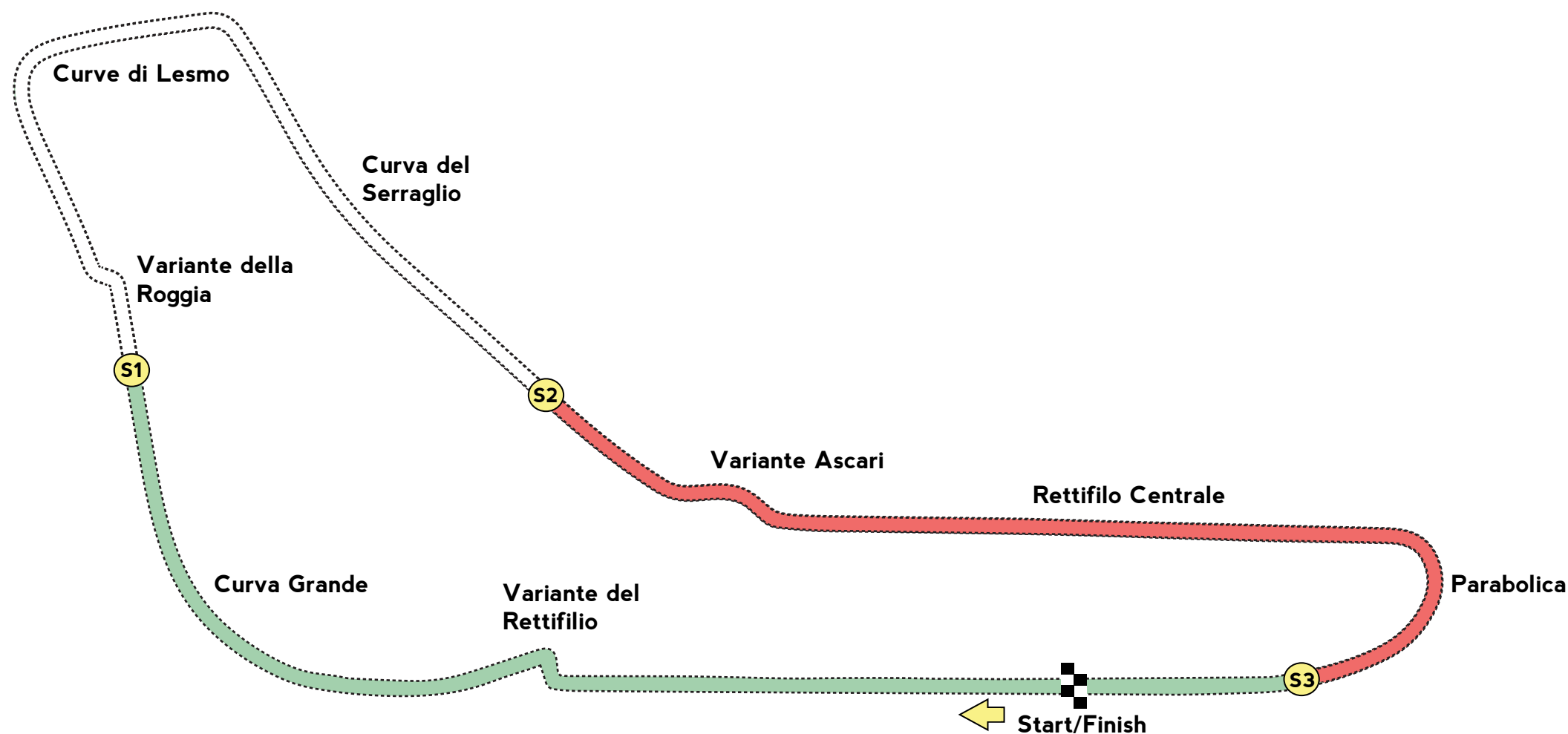
About.

The Autodromo Nazionale di Monza is one of the most famous circuits in the world and almost literally dripping with class and tradition.

The names trip off the tongue and invoke deep racing memories; Curva Grande, Parabolica, Variante Ascari...

It is the home of the Tifosi, and the Ferrari hordes will be well backed here.

Tickets: www.monzanet.it



Circuit Length: 5.901 km

2012 Winner: #3 Marc VDS BMW Z4 GT3
2012 Pole: #66 Vita4One Racing BMW Z4 GT3
2012 Pole Time: 2:00.331

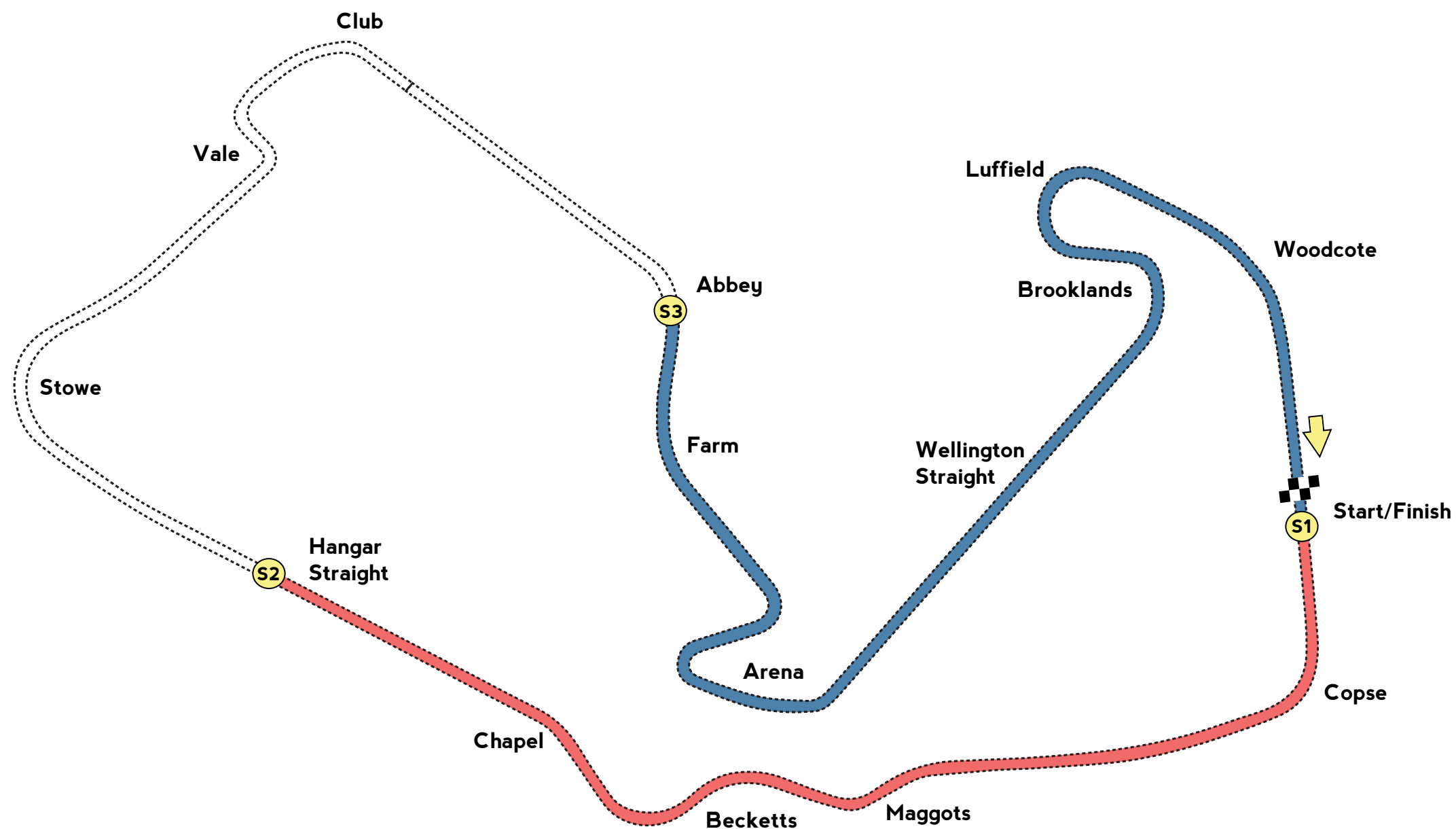


About.

The home of British motorsport is the second stop on the calendar. The circuit starts with a fast flowing section, the fantastic Maggots and Becketts leading onto the Hangar Straight. The relatively new Arena section coupled with Brooklands and Luffield creates a technical end to the lap.

Despite taking place in June, the weather in Britain is unpredictable, so a wet race like last year's could again be on the cards.

Tickets: www.silverstone.co.uk



3

Paul Ricard
France
June 29 - 30 2013

Circuit Length: 5.809 km

2012 Winner: #1 Team WRT Audi R8 Ultra
 2012 Pole: #71 Kessel Racing Ferrari 458 GT3
 2012 Pole Time: 1:57:208

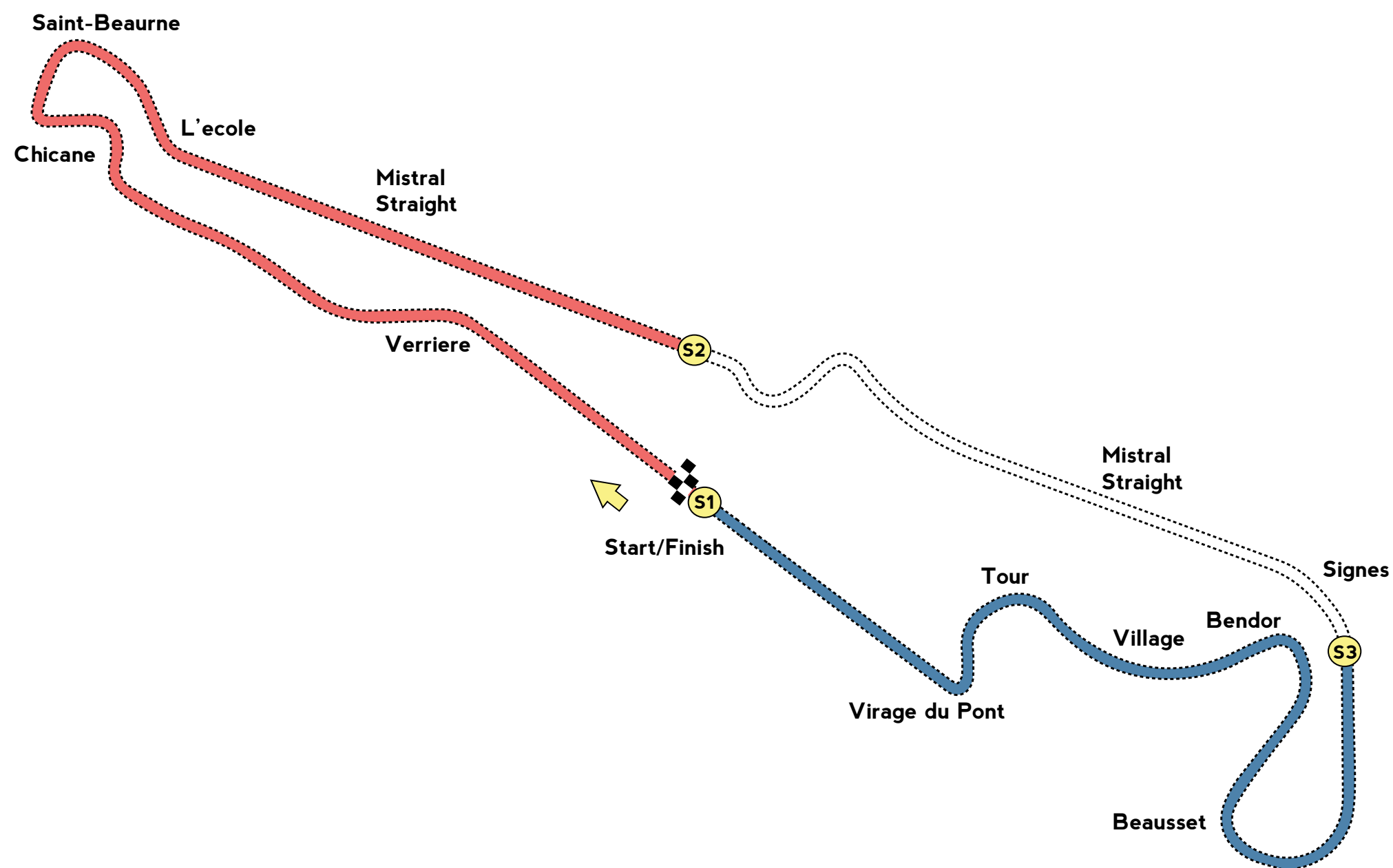


About.

Located in stunning surroundings in the South of France and with unrivalled facilities, Paul Ricard is a favourite of teams and journalists alike.

Recently the circuit has opened its gates to racing, having been a test facility for many years, and it's produced some fantastic action. Look out for the frightening Signes turn.

Tickets: www.circuitpaulricard.com



TRACK GUIDE

Meet the first three tracks on the FIA GT Series calendar; look out for the rest in our Spa 24 Hours preview e-zine!



1

Nogaro
France
March 29 - April 1 2013

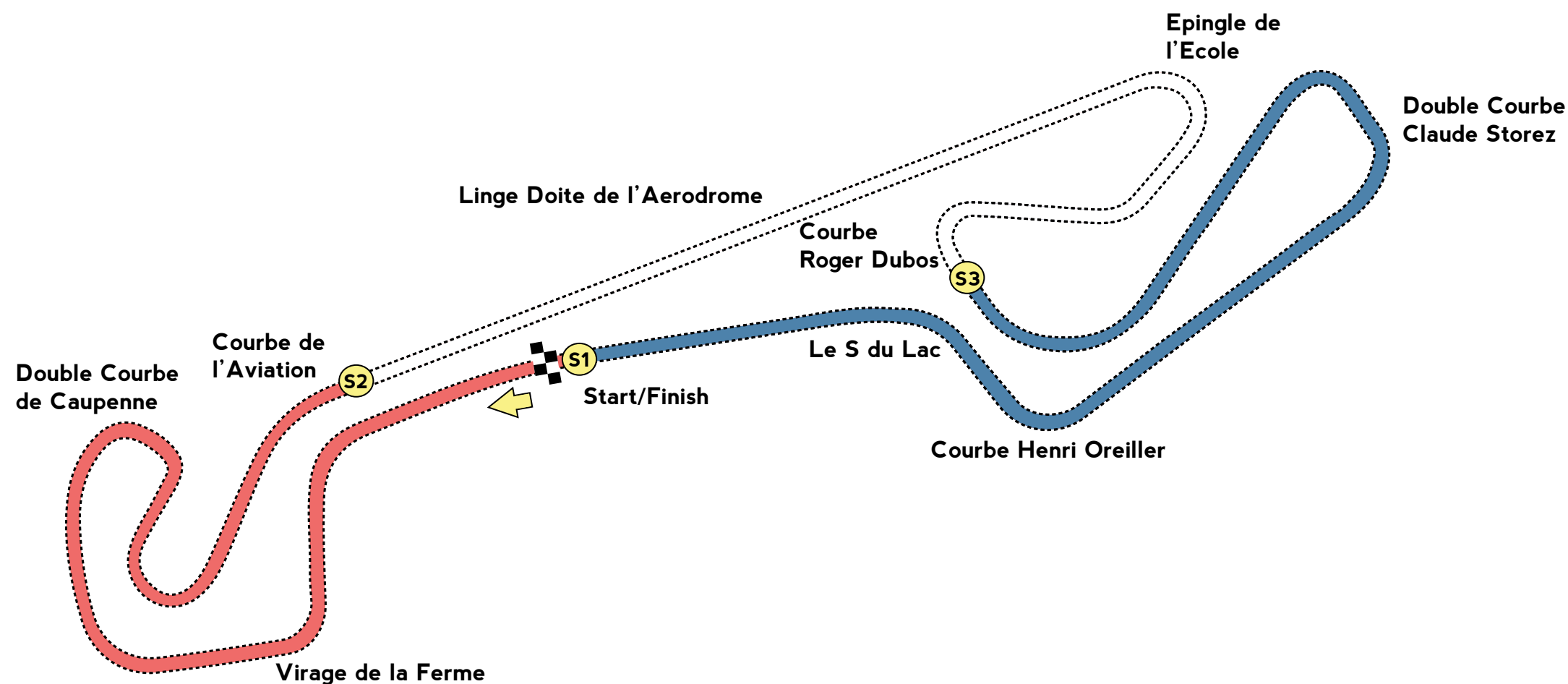
Circuit Length: 3.636 km

2012 Winner: #32 Team WRT Audi R8 Ultra
2012 Pole: #3 AF Corse Ferrari 458 GT3
2012 Pole Time: 1:26.776



About.

Nogaro hosted the opening rounds of the series and did so with the usual bumping and grinding. Shy of overtaking spots, drivers are often forced into risky moves and tight gaps. All the circuits on the FIA GT Series calendar are tight, twisty and guaranteed to bring the cars close together and the crowd close to the action - Nogaro is no exception.

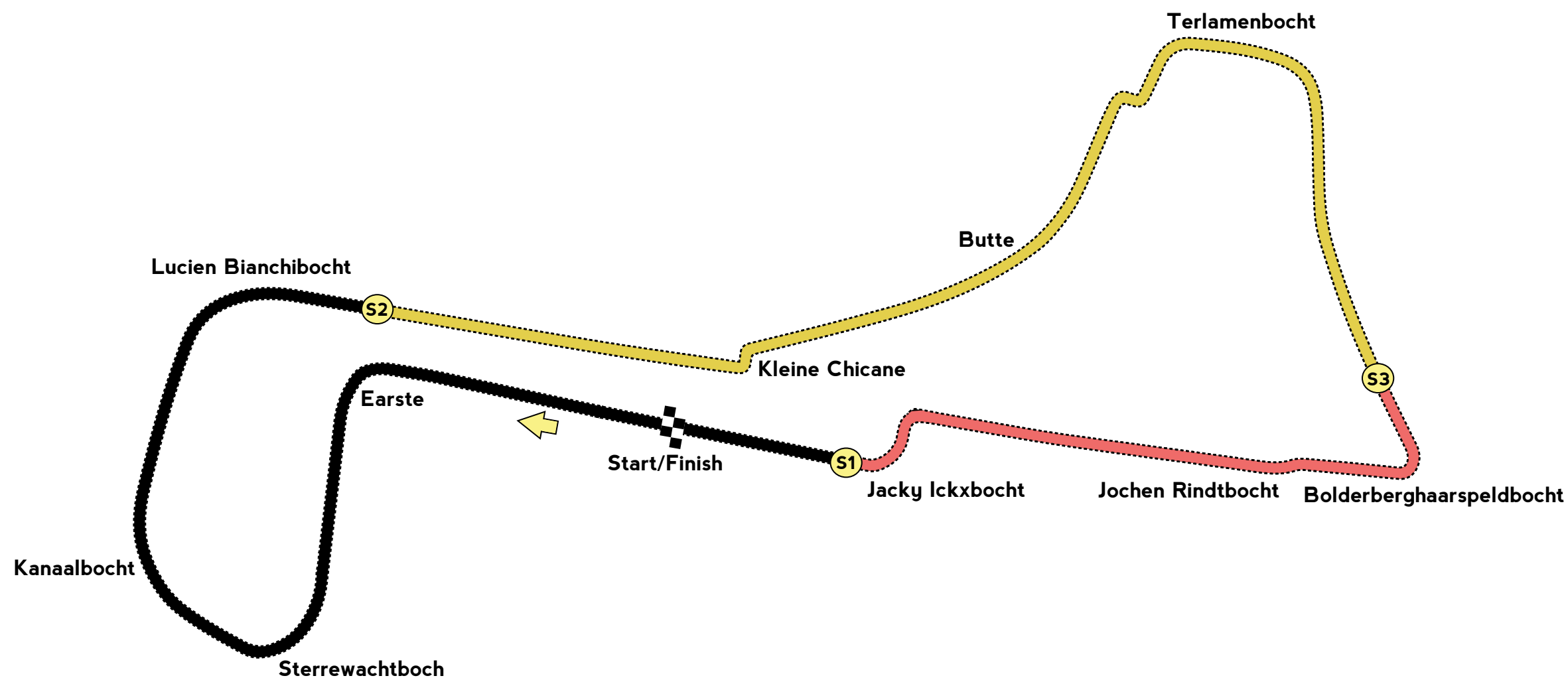




About.

Zolder is a demanding challenge. Short, fast paced and a real car killer, the track has a number of big stops and lots of action behind the wheel. It's also an atmospheric experience, with a huge covered viewing platform over the pits and plenty of fans to pack it. The Belgians love their motor racing! The chance to see their GT Academy star Wolfgang Reip could give them something extra to shout about!

Tickets: www.circuit-zolder.be



3

**Zandvoort
Netherlands
July 6 - 7 2013**

Circuit Length: 4.307 km

2012 Winner: N/A

2012 Pole: N/A

2012 Pole Time: N/A



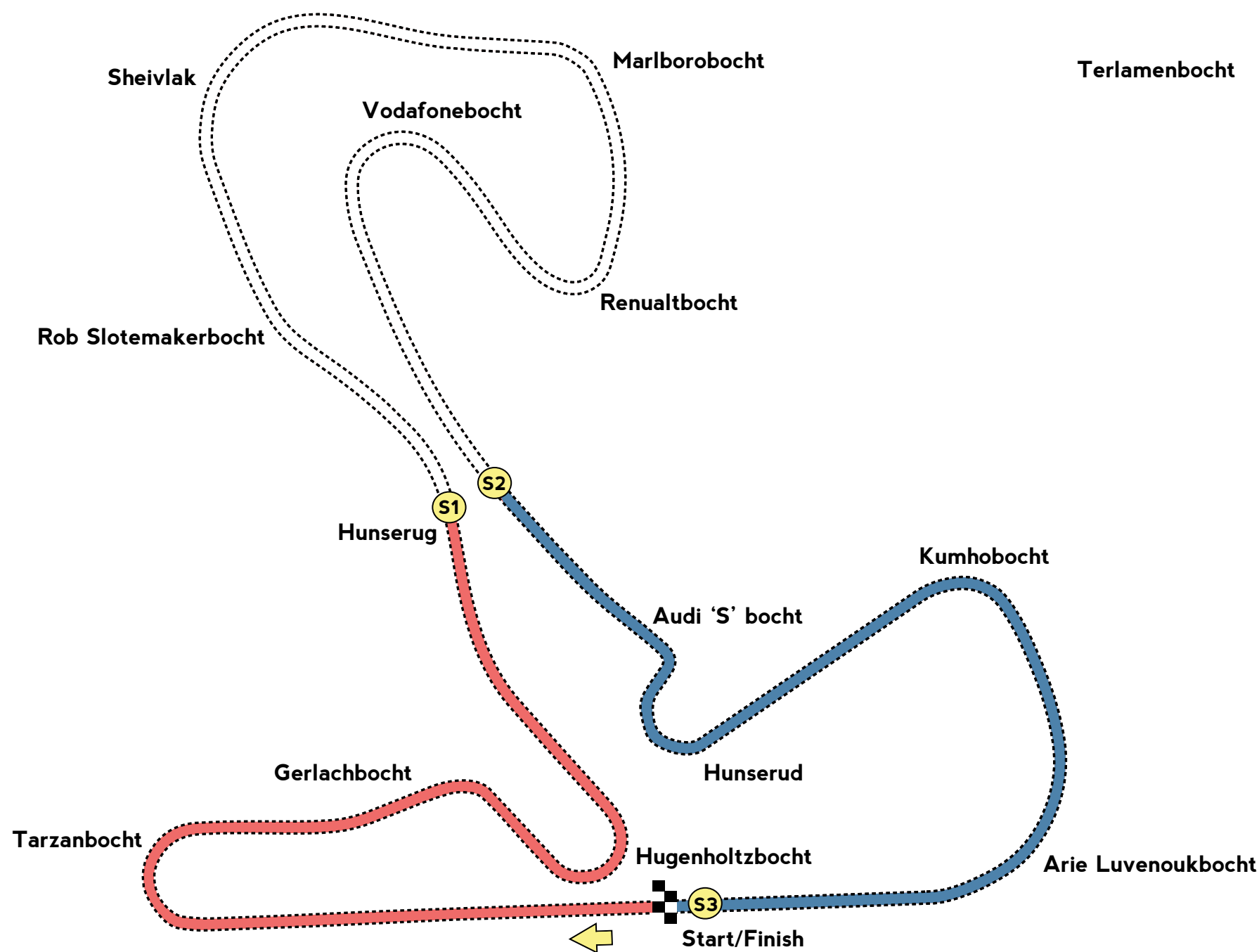
About.

The Dutch circuit sits on a beach, but it's no easy ride. The only towel a driver will need is to wipe the sweat of his face after another demanding lap.

There's only one short straight to speak of, and a series of sweeping curves. Drivers love it for that, and for the elevation changes that give it a rollercoaster feel.

GT Academy graduate rolled a Nissan 370Z GT4 car here - proof that it can catch even the talented unawares.

Tickets: www.circuit-zandvoort.nl



— SRO GT RACING HISTORY IN PICTURES —

A look back at GT racing from the 90s to 00s from the archives of John Brooks

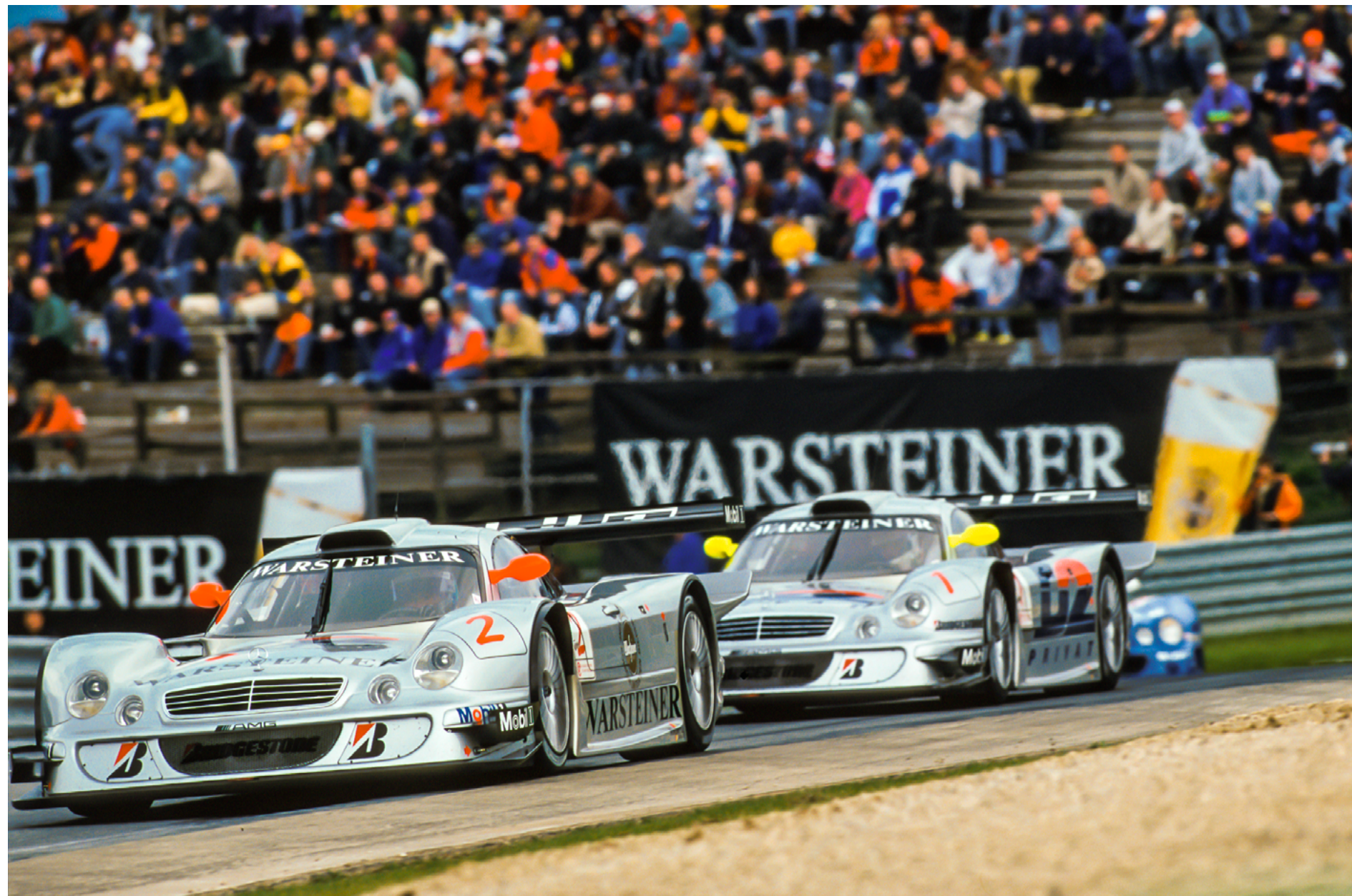




1997 -1998 THE FACTORY ERA

In 1997 a new FIA sanctioned Championship appeared on the block, born of the success of the BPR Global Challenge and the demise of the FIA International Touring Car Championship. The FIA GT Championship got a flying start with factory teams from AMG Mercedes, Team BMW Motorsport, Gulf Team Davidoff (in part a covert operation from McLaren) Porsche AG, Panoz and Lotus. Add in a substantial field of privateers running the latest spec Porsches and a healthy GT2 grid and this was an instant success, at least at initial glance. Arguments about the deadline for the production of road registered models caused a fracture almost from day one. Thus BMW left after one year, haven taken AMG Mercedes right to the wire in the Championship struggle.

The following season, Porsche, celebrating their 50th birthday, stepped up to the plate to challenge their Stuttgart rivals. The result, somewhat embarrassingly, was a whitewash, a 10-0 drubbing that effectively ended the factory GT1 era but at its height in mid-1997 there were few greater spectacles in motorsport.





1999 - 2003 THE VIPER YEARS

Pragmatic as ever, SRO Supremo Stephane Ratel regrouped his teams and the old GT2 became the new GT1. The car to have was the Chrysler/Dodge Viper, as pure an expression of American muscle car as could be found. Opposition came from the rather long in the tooth Porsche 911 GT2 and the Lister Storm. Once the works Oreca team had conquered all in 1999 and withdrawn from the competition, the conflict was usually between the British Lister Storm squad led by Laurence Pearce and the French outfit, Labre Competition run by Jack Leconte. The stability of the Championship ensured that other manufacturers were attracted to join, though direct involvement was discouraged, the lessons of the 97 and 98 were still keenly felt.





2004 - 2009 THE ARRIVAL OF THE SUPERCARS

The challenge led initially by the ProDrive built Ferrari 550 Maranello, the reign of the aging Vipers was soon at an end. Where Banbury led, Ferrari with the 575 Maranello followed, with Maserati getting in on the act with their MC12. Aston Martin finally produced a road car that could be turned into a racer so the DBR9 joined the grid. Add in a collection of Saleens, Vipers, Corvettes and Lamborghinis to the mix to give perhaps the Golden Era of GT racing. The results were largely dominated by Vitaphone Racing's MC12s but they never had an easy ride. GT1 development stagnated towards the end of this period and no new arrivals joined the grid.





2010 - 2012 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINTS

The ultimate goal of the FIA GT Championship was realised when the FIA granted SRO World Championship status for 2010 and 2011. New cars from Nissan and Ford were added to the existing field and in an attempt to attract a wider TV audience the races became pure sprint events of one hour. The launch of such an enterprise in the difficult economic conditions proved to be unsustainable and after Nissan powered their way to the title in 2011, the Championship lost momentum, leading to a suspension of the World Title status.



DIFFERENT CLASS

WHAT MAKES A NISMO ATHLETE TICK?



Alex.

What is your favourite circuit to drive at, and why?
Nürburgring Nordschleife, because of the huge challenge.

Which track would you most like to drive at in the future?
Le Mans.

Favourite Road Car and why?
Nissan GT-R R35, because of the effortless speed.

Have you ever experienced a particularly scary moment while out on track?
Yes; a left rear puncture going up Eau Rouge at Spa 24 hours in the middle of the night.

Do you have any rituals that you go through before during or after events?
None I can think of.

What is your ultimate goal for your driving career?
Win the Le Mans 24 hours, and Nürburgring 24 hours.

What is your favourite part of a race weekend?
The first time you step into the car in practice.

Which sportscar/GT car from the past would you most like to drive?
Nissan GT-R GT1.

If you could go back to any race in history as a fan, which would it be and why?
1995 Silverstone GP watching Jean Alesi in the wet at Woodcote.

Which driver, from any era, would you most like to have as a team mate sharing your car - and why?
My dad, always wanted to do a long distance race with him.



Lucas.

What is your favourite circuit to drive at, and why?
Le Mans in terms of importance of the race, prestige and speed, Nordschleife because of its 25km of danger and atmosphere.

Which track would you most like to drive at in the future?
I still have a few big tracks that dream to compete in... Suzuka and Bathurst are probably the ones I'd like to test most.

Favourite Road Car and why?
Nissan GT-R. We all know it is one of the fastest cars in the world, for half price than direct competitors. The handling is just amazing around the Nordschleife, easy and fast to drive.

What was your, 'welcome to professional motorsport' moment?
I would say Le Mans 24 Hours 2011. Before I competed in GT4 at a high level but after my first race at LM24 finishing second in LMP2 I started to feel and work like a pro driver.

Have you ever experienced a particularly scary moment while out on track?
Silverstone 24 Hours 2009, with heavy rain in the night was probably the most scary moment with lots of standing water and no lighting on the track...

What is the strangest question you have been asked since reaching the final stages of the GT Academy process?
The strangest was from a journalist from FHM Spain at Dubai 24h 2012... I prefer not to mention what he asked. Not a motorsport question... I would say it was a sex question...

Training on Gran Turismo 5 has obviously to an extent prepared and taught you how to race, but has racing in real life improved your driving skills in games?
Yes, Gran Turismo 5 really simulates real racing, feedback, and the physics of the cars are pretty similar to real racing.

Wolfgang.

Which track would you most like to drive at in the future?
I can't wait to drive Spa-Francorchamps because it's my home track and one of the most famous and respected tracks in the world.

What was your, 'welcome to professional motorsport' moment?

When Bas Leinders told me that, if I had not won the GT Academy, he would have offered me a test in the Marc VDS Racing Team because he believed in me.

What is the strangest question you have been asked since reaching the final stages of the GT Academy process?
I've been asked if my virtual skills helped me to pass my driving test...

If you could give one piece of advice to the thousands of people who are going to enter the GT Academy competition in the future, what would it be?

Believe in yourself, give always 100% of your capacity or even more if the situation needs more and for the virtual part watching the replays of the world's fastest players can help a lot.

Which past or present driver in terms of driving style and strengths would you say you are most like and why?

I want to say Senna - it's a bit pretentious to say that, but I would like it. He was very focused and strong in his mind and that's one of my qualities as well. In terms of driving style I am quite aggressive like he was, but controlled.

If you could go back to any race in history as a fan, which would it be and why?

Dijon prenois in 79 because it was one of the best battle in F1 history between René Arnoux and Gilles Villeneuve.

Do you think that is it viable for anyone who considers themselves talented at racing games, to consider taking their talents to the real like circuit?

I think that anyone can try of course to go on track. But like everything sport or activity some are naturally more talented than others and some will be extremely fast in games and less in reality and some the opposite where other will be fast in both.





Steve.

Which track would you most like to drive at in the future?
Tsukuba circuit in Japan. It's like the benchmark of speed for all Japanese tuning cars.

Do you have any rituals that you go through before during or after events?

I think all drivers do, I always like to keep my wrist bands on the entire day after an event, for good luck for the next one! When I start a race I always like to try to fall asleep in the car before the race starts, it really clears my mind and helps me focus on the task ahead.

What is your ultimate goal for your driving career?

To drive everything I can. I love racing. It doesn't matter if it's single seaters, GT cars, rally cars, off road trucks, time attack, circle track, karts or whatever. As long as I can keep racing for a living I will be happy!

If you could give one piece of advice to the thousands of people who are going to enter the GT

Academy competition in the future, what would it be?

Don't ever doubt yourself. I was in one of the lowest parts of my life when I entered the GT Academy. I had some doubt that I belonged there during race camp and it almost cost me everything. Anyone can win if you put your maximum effort in to it!

What has been the hardest part of learning to become a racing driver?

Learning to not always be the fastest driver. I am a very competitive person and not being the fastest really gets to me sometimes. I have learned to deal with this much better and just learn from everyone around me. We are all a team and it's best to just let it go and focus on how to make the team improve as a whole.

Do you think that is it viable for anyone who considers themselves talented at racing games, to consider taking their talents to the real like circuit?

100%! I think if you are talented in the simulators then the transition is much easier! There are a few things that you need to change but overall it's a very viable way to get in to motorsports now. No one has proved that more than GT Academy.

Mark.

Have you ever experienced a particularly scary moment while out on track?

Yes I have few. I remember race in Donington in night it was Britcar championship. I drove my 2nd stint and started rain and I was so close to lose car in a fast corner in downhill. it was really scary.

What is your favourite part of a race weekend?

Definitely a race. I don't like waiting between racing!

Do you have any rituals that you go through before during or after events?

No, I haven't any rituals. I'm not a superstitious, if something happens it happens!

Which sportscar/GT car from the past would you most like to drive and why?

The Mazda 787B. It sounds incredible and it is, I think, one of the greatest car from past.

What is the most interesting piece of advice from a mentor, instructor, teammate or competitor you have received?

I remember advice from Christian Vann and Rob Jenkinson.

They helped me so much and give me a lot of advice!

I was not patient with the throttle when I started the Driver Development Program. The guys said to me if I wasn't patient they would break my leg and I never will be a driver! I changed my style...

Do you think that is it viable for anyone who considers themselves talented at racing games, to consider taking their talents to the real like circuit?

I think yes, if you really like racing and you play a lot in the game, why not to try yourself in real life? Between game and real life some things the same, and you can easily learn a new track on the sim before you go in real life! Today, simulators looks like real life.

Which driver, from any era, would you most like to have as a team mate sharing your car - and why?

For me nice to drive with Wolfgang Reip! I am happy, he good guy, we every time learn together, trying to progress. So I don't want other team mate now)



What is your favourite circuit to drive at, and why?
My favourite track is the famous Nürburgring Nordschleife, I live near the Nordschleife and I drive a few times over the track. It's a fantastic and dangerous Track, very long nice and in a good looking country! I've only drive a few laps in my road car on a tourist day, I think in a race it must be crazy!

What was your, "welcome to professional motorsport" moment?
The real first professional moment in motorsport was in Dubai when I see all the fast cars with some professional drivers . I was very impressed. But I get shocked every now and again; for example when we tested the new Nismo GTR GT3 in France, and I saw all the (only) professional drivers and teams...it was so incredible!

Have you ever experienced a particularly scary moment while out on track?
In Donington one time with the 370z GT4 with 0° temperature and cold tyres, on the inlap I brake for a corner and the back tyres locked (it was a little software failure with the ABS) and I go full sideways, it was 160 km/h and I missed the wall by maybe 50cm. If I had hit the wall, me and the car would be complete garbage.

Do you have any rituals that you go through before during or after events?
I warm up my body and try to be very relaxed! I think in the Blancpain Endurances Series it will be very hard! Even now when I think about it, it feels crazy in my stomach! I'm nervous :D

What is your favourite part of a race weekend?
The favourite part is the driving! You must learn in motorsport it's all about waiting and a very little piece of driving..the few minutes of driving...this moments are fantastic! The other part is when you compete against other guys and you see you are good. It feels so good and when you finish your stint good it's fantastic!

Which past or present driver in terms of driving style and strengths would you say you are most like and why?
I think Steffan Bellof was a very good man. In young years he won a lot and he was fantastically skilled!

Peter.



60 MINUTE HEROES

FIA GT SERIES





The FIA GT Series has quite a legacy to live up to in 2013. The old FIA GT Championship was revered by fans in its various states, before a switch to a World Championship format which drew mixed reviews and troubled grids. The new series has a real chance to go back to the glory days, with promising grid numbers, a sensible calendar and strong team support.

That strong team support has come from a change of tack from the organisers. In the last three years, race by race entries were banned, equal numbers of each brand were (supposed to be, at least) represented and each team

had to run two cars with the same livery - the only series outside Formula One to stipulate that.

All those rules are gone. Teams can enter as many cars as they like, paint them however they like (whether this is a positive step is open to interpretation) and enter them at whichever rounds they wish. They can also choose, as with the other SRO headline series the BES, whether they would like to enter Pro, Pro Am or Gentleman classes.

What stays is the two race format, each one hour. The first is a 'qualifying race' which sets the grid for the 'championship race', which carries more points.

WRT enter three Audis, in two

different classes. RJN's Nissans are painted different colours. Vita4One skipped Nogaro but expect to be on the grid at round two in Zolder. In fact, there were 24 cars on the entered for Nogaro; the combined total GT1 and GT3 grid at Nürburgring last year.

The opening races served up some great racing, despite the tight French circuit making overtaking very difficult for big GT machinery. The story of the weekend was Sebastien Loeb, the nine time World Rally Champion switching full time to the series with Alvaro Parente and a McLaren MP4-12C GT3 under the Sebastien Loeb Racing banner. He fought to a hard victory in the qualifying

race, and was in contention in the Championship Race before a rookie error (unbuckling his belts before the car was stopped) caused he and Parente a penalty in the one that really counts.

His team are fairly new to this game, but they showed themselves well and probably would've shown even more convincingly had it not been for abysmal luck for their second car. Andy Zuber is a solid performer, and alongside Mike Parisy he makes a solid partnership - Parisy is always spectacular to watch.

McLarens are also the weapon of choice for Nürburgring specialists Dörr Motorsport, venturing out of the VLN for the

first time. The team have a lot of learning to do in this arena, and it showed at Nogaro. The team's Pro car's best finish was 17th in the Championship race. Daniel Keilwitz is a sometime GT3 champion alongside Niclas Kantenich but there is certainly room for improvement. Their Gent class car did not take part, 'Paul Green' withdrawing ill.

It seems likely, though, that it will be near impossible to beat WRT at this game. They've won back to back BES titles, have factory support and run two Pro cup cars. Even their Pro Am car is strong - and it looked on for double podiums overall at Nogaro. The Audi is updated again for

2013 (though, at Nogaro, the car lacked homologation so had to run in 2012 spec) and will remain the easiest to drive and hardest wearing GT3 car.

The two Pro cars feature Frank Stippler and Edward Sandström (two extremely capable pilots) in #13 and Laurens Vanthoor and Stephane Ortelli in #11. Vanthoor surprised a lot of people last season and starred at Nogaro, while Ortelli is a former Le Mans winner and still rapid. The Pro Am (#12) sees Niki Mayr-Melnhof, who is at the higher quality end of the amateur racing spectrum, teamed with René Rast, who is strong enough for any team. They may have underachieved in the GT1

World Championship last season, but they will be strong - they took a 1-2 in the Championship race, #13 leading #11 home. It was a 1-2-3 until a penalty dropped #12 to sixth.

Multiple race and championship winning team Phoenix also bring an Audi for the Pro Cup. Belgian star (celebrity, in fact) Anthony Kumpen races it with Enzo Ide, who has come on strongly in recent years. A pair of fourth places were the reward for a pretty good French trip, and they could well find themselves challenging WRT very strongly.

There is one further Audi; Novadriverrun it in Pro Am. Cesar Campanico and Carlos Viera drive, and they took a handy fifth overall and first in class at Nogaro, thanks to the WRT car's penalty. Consistency will be their strength.

Nissan started well. The RJN GT Academy team, through Alex Buncombe and Lucas Ordóñez, took a Pro Am podium in the first Championship race of 2013 and the GT-R GT3 is only going to get better over the year. The first ever GT Academy winner, Ordóñez, has matured into a fine racer and will compliment rapid Buncombe well. The second car features two men making debuts

at this level; Wolfgang Reip and Mark Shulzhitskiy are both brand new graduates of the GT Academy and showed well. Stars of the future for sure.

Where the endurance series is full to the brim with Ferraris, the sprint series has just three. One is for AF Corse, a Pro Am entry for Felipe Salaquarda and Fabio Odini. However, the car was heavily damaged in a practice crash in France and did not take the start. SOFREV bring two further 458s; one Pro Am, and one Gent. The Pro Am car sees experienced racer Soheil Ayari team up with the wonderfully monikered Jean Luc Beaubelique. It lasted a single lap in the first, and a lap down in the second; it was not a strong weekend. It was partly saved by their Gent car; Fabien Barthez, sharing with Gérard Tonelli, which won their class twice.

Mercedes could be in for a strong season, if their form at Nogaro is anything to go by. Three cars for HTP Gravity Charouz, across the three classes, were on show in France. The Pro entry, for Maximilian Buhk and Alon Day, could show well later in the season, if they continue up the learning curve they began at the opening rounds. A podium in the



Top left:
Chandhok takes to GT racing with Seyffarth Mercedes.

Top middle:
Loeb at the pitstop; it's a discipline he's still learning.

Top right:
Crowd access is unrivalled.

Left:
Nissan is a strong prospect.

Bottom:
Altogether, the cars make an impressive grid.





Championship Race was solid reward.

The Pro Am is for Sergei Afanasiev and Andreas Simonsen. It's a pairing with room to improve; it will be interesting to see them develop. The Gent car is Jan Stovicek and Petr Charouz, and they scored two podiums in class. However, there were only three cars entered in that class.

The fourth three pointed star is carried by SMS Seyffarth Motorsport. Jan Seyffarth is joined by ex Formula One and LMP1 pilot Karun Chandhok. The Indian got a rude welcome to GT racing and will need a bit more seat time until he's competitive, but there's promise for sure.

BMW has a rather international flavour in the series. BMW Team Brazil has the strongest line ups. Multiple stock car champion Caca Bueno joins Allam Kohodair in one while ex F1 and GT1 star Ricardo Zonta partners Sergio Jimenez.

There's talent there for sure (and aggression; ask Chandhok) and these cars will score well once they're used to the series.

The third Bavarian machine is for BMW Sports Trophy Team India. Armaan Ebrahim has an uphill climb to learn Pro Am, joined by Julien Jousse. They've got time to learn and could show some speed as the season progresses; they were not left behind in France.

There's a sole Lamborghini for Grasser Racing. FIA Talent of the Year and GT3 European champion Dominik Baumann joins Hari Prozyck in the Pro Am class. The car will improve as the team adjusts to racing at this level; and they've got points already.

Finally, Ford is back. Two GTs, run by ACL Rodrive. The team are supported by the car's new developers Lambda Performance, and the Brazilian team bring some driving strength. Two-time

Brazilian GT3 champion Matheus Stumpf will likely be the quickest driver but Claudio Ricci should prove an able partner if the pair are able to adapt to a selection of circuits that will be new to both. Felipe Tozzo and Raijan Mascarello find themselves thrown in at the deep end in their first experience racing outside of their native Brazil. This second entry runs in the Gentleman Trophy, and could be a useful partnership if they learn fast.

Certainly, it's a series not short of intrigue. The action will be close all season and there's no doubt it will also be the source of much controversy before the season's through.

But there's an American saying that could be well applied; rubbin's racin', so they say. Purists might not agree, but for these one hour races there's not much chance of any other outcome.



ENTRY LIST:
FIA GT SERIES
ROUND ONE, NOGARO

Car No.	Class	Team	Car	Drivers
1	PRO	HTP Gravity Charouz	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3	Maximilian Buhk Alon Day
5	PRO	Phoenix Racing	Audi R8 LMS ultra	Anthony Kumpen Enzo Ide
9	PRO	Sébastien Loeb Racing	McLaren MP4-12C	Sébastien Loeb Alvaro Parente
10	PRO	Sébastien Loeb Racing	McLaren MP4-12C	Andreas Zuber Mike Parisy
11	PRO	Belgian Audi Club Team	Audi R8 LMS ultra	Stéphane Ortelli Laurens Vanthoor
13	PRO	Belgian Audi Club Team	Audi R8 LMS ultra	Frank Stippler Edward Sandstrom
16	PRO	Dörr Motorsport	McLaren MP4-12C	Niclas Kantenich Daniel Keilwitz
0	PRO	BMW Team Brazil	BMW Z4 GT3	Caca Bueno Allam Khodair
21	PRO	BMW Team Brazil	BMW Z4 GT3	Ricardo Zonta Sergio Jimenez
28	PRO	SMS Seyffarth Motorsport	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3	Karun Chandhok Jan Seyffarth
2	PRO-AM	HTP Gravity Charouz	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3	Sergei Afanasiev Andreas Simonsen
6	PRO-AM	BMW Sports Trophy Team	BMW Z4 GT3	Armaan Ebrahim Julien Jousse
7	PRO-AM	ACL by Rodrive	Ford GT GT3	Matheus Stumpf Claudio Ricci
12	PRO-AM	Belgian Audi Club Team	Audi R8 LMS ultra	René Rast Niki Mayr-Melnhof
14	PRO-AM	Novadriver	Audi R8 LMS ultra	Cesar Campanico Carlos Viera
25	PRO-AM	Grasser Racing	Lamborghini Gallardo	Hari Proczyk Dominik Bauman
30	PRO-AM	SOFREV ASP	Ferrari 458 Italia	Jean-Luc Beaubelique Soheily Ayari
32	PRO-AM	Nissan GT Academy Team	Nissan GT-R Nismo GT3	Mark Shulzhitskiy Wolfgang Reip
35	PRO-AM	Nissan GT Academy Team	Nissan GT-R Nismo GT3	Lucas Ordóñez Alex Buncombe
51	PRO-AM	AF Corse	Ferrari 458 Italia	Filip Salaquarda Fabio Odi
3	GENT	HTP Gravity Charouz	Mercedes SLS AMG GT3	Jan Stovicek Petr Charouz
8	GENT	ACL by Rodrive	Ford GT GT3	Felipe Tozzo Raijan Mascarello
17	GENT	Dörr Motorsport	McLaren MP4-12C	Paul Green Arne Hoffmeister
31	GENT	SOFREV ASP	Ferrari 458 Italia	Fabien Barthez Gérard Tonelli