



60th Year - 1964-2024



WAYFARER MARCH 2024

WAYFARER

The Magazine of THE GREEN BELT MOTOR CLUB

Incorporating Stort Valley Auto Club

MARCH 2024

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The Editor is not responsible for factual errors, or errors of spelling and English usage, in submitted articles.

For convenience, membership records are maintained on a personal computer. Any Member who does not wish their details to be held in this way should advise the Membership Secretary.

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Front cover: Richard Warne/Chris Deal on Manston Airfield on the Hughes Rally, May 2023 (photo by Andrew Manston)

Club News

Firstly, my apologies for the lack of magazines for some time, just lack of time to chase people etc, plus I've been away travelling or involved with other things etc.

2024 is the 60th year of the Club and we will be marking it with an anniversary gathering as we have done at the 40th and 50th. Our plans to have it at North Weald have come to nothing, but thanks to the Hughes', David and Louise, we have a new location in the shape of Welwyn Sport & Social Club on Sunday 30th June. More details to follow, in the meantime make sure you are free and start to spread the word to former members etc.

Before that we have the AGM on Wednesday 17th April at the Woodman, North Mymms with a meal prior to it with guests. Details are in a few pages time, both the meal and the AGM. As always your committee isn't getting younger, we do need younger blood, in fact any blood to help or the Club will go like many other clubs.

North Weald Sprints are being allowed this year, despite the land we use being sold to Google for a data centre. Regulations are being prepared along with all the paperwork with entries opening in mid May for the July event and early August for the September event. Club members will be getting a larger discount due to the bequest from Gerry Thurlow.

The Club will be organising an AutoSolo on 27th October at Debden, Carver Barracks. We will be looking for volunteers nearer the time to set up, marshal, timekeepers etc.

Finally, a reminder to renew your membership with our new Membership Secretary Andrew Wishart, to go the website and follow the link to the membership form. Plus my thanks for the work David Hughes has done to keep the membership running.

Club Diary

17th April – AGM

30th June – 60th Anniversary

21st July – TAMS Packaging North Weald Sprint

15th September – Gerry Thurlow Memorial North Weald Sprint

27th October – Debden AutoSolo

Event dates

Key

(ASMC) – events run by Anglia Motor Sports Clubs which can be entered using our GBMC club card and with a RS Clubmans licence.

(AEMC) – events run by clubs of the Association Eastern Motor Clubs and GBMC is invited to and normally you need a competition licence.

(ACSMC) – a round of the ACSMC Sprint championship

(ASWMC) – a round of the ASWMC Autocross championship

Championships

EngRC – English Rally Championship

Welsh RC – Welsh Rally Championship

BTDR – BTDR Rally Series

BRC – British Rally Championship

ProARC - Protyre Asphalt Rally Championship

BHRC – British Historic Rally Championship

CRC – Circuit Rally Championship

HRRC – Historic Rally Car Register Motorsport News Historic Road Rally Championship

April

7 Trial at Wattisfield, run by West Suffolk MC (ASMC) - CANCELLED

7 Japanese GP, Suzuka

13 Rallynuts Stages (Welsh RC/BRC/BTDRA/ BHRC)

13 Hughes Historic (HRRC)

13-14 Members Meeting at Goodwood

13-14 Rome, Italy TBD (ePrix)

14 SMC Stages, at Anglesey (CRC)

14 Cambridge Classic run by Cambridge CC, starting and finishing at Duxford

18-21 Rally Croatia (WRC)

21 China GP, Shanghai

21 Ivinghoe Sprint Trail, run by Falcon MC (ASMC)

27-28 Tendring & Clacton Stages, run by Chelmsford MC (AEMC) - CANCELLED.

27 Monte Carlo, Monaco (ePrix)

28 Donington Park (National) BTCC race

May

5 Miami GP

9-12 Rally Portugal (WRC)

10-11 Manx National Rally (ProARC/ BHRC)

11 Border Counties Rally (EngRC/BTDRA)

11-12 Berlin, Germany (ePrix)

- 12 Gremlin (HRRC)
- 12 Debden Sprint, run by Herts County (AEMC)/(ACSMC)
- 12 Brands Hatch (Indy) BTCC race
- 12 South Suffolk Classic, run by Eastern Counties MC and West Suffolk MC
- 12 AutoSolo at Chelmer Valley, run by Club Triumph/Chelmsford MC (ASMC)
- 18 Plains Rally (Welsh RC)
- 19 San Marino GP, Imola
- 24-25 Jim Clark Closed Road Rally (BRC/ ProARC)
- 25-26 China, Shanghai (ePrix)
- 26 Monaco GP, Monte Carlo
- 26 Snetterton 300 BTCC race
- 30-2 Rally Italy (WRC)

June

- 9 Canadian GP, Montreal
- 9 Thruxton BTCC race
- 9 AutoSolo at Wattisham, run by Cambridge CC (ASMC)
- 15 Kielder Forest Rally (EngRC)
- 22 East Anglian Classic, Historic road rally based in Bury St Edmunds, run by Chelmsford MC (HRRC)
- 23 Midsummer Vintage, Classic & Sports Car Run, run by SCCoN
- 23 Spanish GP, Barcelona
- 23 Oulton Park Island BTCC race
- 21-22 Argyll Rally (ProARC/BHRC)
- 27-30 Rally Poland (WRC)
- 29 Portland, USA (ePrix)
- 30 Cotswold Historic (HRRC)
- 30 Falcon Classic Car Tour, run by Falcon MC
- 30 Austrian GP, Spielberg
- 30 GBMC 60th anniversary**

July

- 7 British GP, Silverstone
- 7 Classic Run, finishing in Hunstaton, run by Kings Lynn & DMC
- [11-14 Festival of Speed at Goodwood](#)
- 13 Nicky Grist Stages (Welsh RC/BTDRA)
- 18-21 Rally of Latvia (WRC)
- 20-21 London (ePrix)
- 21 TAMS Packaging North Weald Summer Sprint, run by GBMC(AEMC)/(ACSMC)**
- 21 Hungarian GP, Budapest
- 21 Debden Autosolo, run by WSMC/MCAC (AMSC)
- 28 Belgian GP, Spa
- 28 Croft BTCC race

Club Dinner & Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 17th April 2024 – 18.30 for 19.00

The Woodman, 21 Warrengate Rd, North Mymms AL9 7TT

This year the committee agreed to have an informal dinner before the AGM for members and their guests to get together who otherwise rarely get the opportunity to do so. After dinner, there will be a short break to arrange the seating and we will have our club's Annual General Meeting (starting 21.00 approx.) including the various reports of last year's activities and the election or re-election of officers to the committee.

The Woodman can offer either a carvery meal or a la carte but all need to be pre-ordered as the anticipated numbers (say 25-30 persons) would otherwise mean a very long wait to be served!

To assist the pub please pre-order your meal via David Hughes email hughesd450@gmail.com and pay for the meal on the night. You can choose from the main menu or the carvery menu, both are on their website www.thewoodmaninn.com Orders to be with David by 12th April.

We hope that this suggestion meets with your approval and that you will sign up but please get in touch soon with David so that we can keep the pub up-to-date with our intentions and numbers.

We look forward to dining with you.

Chris Deal
Club Secretary

NOTICE OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Notice is hereby given that the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Green Belt Motor Club is on Wednesday 17th April 2024, commencing at 21:00 at The Woodman Inn, North Mymms AL9 7TT

The business of the meeting shall be:

1. Welcome and (approval of register of meeting attendees eligible to vote), proxies and apologies for absence.
2. Approval of the minutes of last year's Annual General Meeting.
3. Business arising from those minutes, if any.
4. Secretary's report.
5. Treasurer's report including financial statements.
6. Question time.
7. Election of officers to the Club's committee.
8. Announcement of election results.
9. Ballot on any motions/resolutions put on notice.
10. Re-appointment of the Club examiner.

18th March 2024

Secretary, Chris Deal.

SCRUTINEERING BAY FEBRUARY 2024

For a number of reasons, it's been quite a while since I last submitted a Scrutineering Bay article to the club's magazine. After I had a health scare at the beginning of 2023 then, after my recovery, I had a very busy year in the scrutineering bay; I've just not had time!

During the year, working for three race clubs, MSVR, BARC and BRSCC, I scrutineered at 26 race meetings at Snetterton, Silverstone, Brands Hatch and Donington, and I managed to do some marshalling on two rallies, Mull in Scotland, and The Rixy Stages just before New Year's Day. Including several clubbie race meetings, I scrutineered on two 24 hour race meetings (Citroen C1's at Silverstone and 2CV's at Snetterton), also, seven historic race meetings, three British GT's, plus the GTWCE race meeting at Brands Hatch, and the London FormulaE at the London ExCeL as well. It looks like 2024 will be even busier with some new race meetings too.

Earlier this year, I attended our MSUK Stewards, Clerk of the Course and Scrutineers seminar at Duxford, Cambridge. Our first training session was on electric vehicles (EV). Amusingly the trainer couldn't open the front luggage compartment (can't call it an engine cover as there's no ICE under it!!!) to expose the isolation cable on his Tesler until he'd done a reset via an app on his phone! What's wrong with an internal lever to release the catch?! As there are very few EV or hybrid competition cars competing at the moment, we're told only 16 have been inspected for a Vehicle Passport (VP), so we will probably only see standard road car EV or hybrids at club level events for sprints, hill climbs, autosolos etc. We've been told that the event secretary must inform scrutineers, marshals, rescue and recovery crews etc. of any EV or hybrids competing and the rescue and recovery crews must have had training on EV and hybrids recovery and therefore be fully equipped to deal with EV's!

Then we moved on to our second session and we had a look at fire extinguishers, and their installation problems! A reminder for you, before the start of the new season, ensure the extinguisher(s) in your competition car(s), if more than two years old, have been serviced to the manufacturer's instructions, and then every two years thereafter. Can I also make a request, to help us at scrutineering, please make sure the service label(s) are visible on the fire bottle, if we can't see them; we may ask you to take the bottle(s) out of its holder for us to inspect them. Better still, take a picture on your phone of the service label(s) or keep the service certificate with the vehicle paperwork or VP.

While we're talking about fire extinguishers, please check the fire extinguisher bottles mounting brackets are securely attached to the floor/chassis of the vehicle, we've seen some horror pictures of self-tapper screws having pulled through the floor of the vehicle after an incident, worse still, the use of plastic cable ties and duct tape! A fire bottle weighs at least six kilos full, with inertia, it increases in weight quite considerably and could be lethal if it becomes loose and flies around inside the vehicle, or worse, as a projectile into the spectators or marshals! Watching in-car videos after an incident is frightening to see when a loose fire bottle is seen flying around inside a vehicle!

Also, we were reminded about the installation of the piping, please ensure the piping doesn't get trapped or kinked in bends and all the pipes and nozzles must be secured to the vehicle chassis by metal lock wire and brackets, and not plastic! Why? The plastic clips will melt in the unlikely event of a fire!!! Ensure you install **ALL** the nozzles in the kit, as per the manufacturer's installation instructions, and do not use the old nozzles from your previous fire extinguisher system! The extinguishant only works with its correct nozzles, as homologated when tested by the FIA! And don't forget to check the triggering system! Batteries in electronic systems can go flat after a while, and test the push button circuits too. Pull cords can seize after a wet event! Lubricate the cables and leave at least 10-15mm of slack from the bottle handle and trigger, and install the cables and labels correctly too!

Our third session concentrated on PPE. No, not face masks, but crash helmets, flame retardant suits, underwear, gloves and boots, seats and harnesses. We were reminded that all seats and harnesses FIA expiry dates that were extended due to the Covid pandemic, their extensions have now finished. Therefore, all seats and harnesses, their expiry dates as printed on their labels now apply...but with one exception! Harnesses to the FIA 8853-2016 standard is the only FIA standard that has an extension of five years beyond its expiry date, K.2.1.7, page 174 in the 2024 MSUK Motorsport (Blue) Book. Of course, this only applies to MSUK permit National or below events but if you compete in International events or go abroad to compete, they'll need to be in date. Please note, for the harness to be FIA homologated, the foil FIA hologram label must be on the left shoulder.

This next bit of information is now very important, I've been warning you about it in previous magazine articles!

As of January 1st 2024, the Snell SA2010 and SAH2010 standard crash helmet is now no longer valid for any MSUK motorsport events unless, it's a dual standard crash helmet! To be a dual standard crash helmet, look inside and alongside the orange Snell label there may be another label, usually white in colour, possibly with a FIA hologram attached, the FIA standard should read FIA 8860-2010, and not to be confused with the FHR tether or anchorage points labels, FIA 8858-2010 or FIA 8858-2002, read the labels carefully. For further guidance, see K.10.3.1 page 184 and page 193 for the helmet standards illustrations.

Provided the helmet carries the FIA 8860-2010 label with possibly a hologram and is in good condition, has a blue MSUK scrutineer approval sticker attached over, or near, the right ear, you can carry on using a dual standard helmet, irrespective of the orange Snell label SA2010 or SAH2010, until the FIA standard expires, January 1st 2028.

WARNING! DO NOT attempt to remove the Snell label, it will leave behind "Void" and will cause any inspecting scrutineer to question why! Also, it will render the crash helmet invalidated to use! I've seen it happen! Standards are withdrawn for a reason! Remember, these helmets were manufactured at least fifteen years ago; they do deteriorate with age and use, and testing standards will have changed through time!

Until the next time, keep safe, and play nicely! Any scrutineering questions, my contact details can be found via the MSUK website, scrutineers list.

Loyd Gerken
MSUK National Scrutineer

On Wednesday 19 July 2023, 27 Green Belt members and guests attended the Woodman Inn at North Mymms for the club's annual BBQ and Concours d'Elegance. The food was excellent. It was great to see so many members out enjoying themselves in the sunshine.

The results of the concours were as follows:-

Class 1 - Under 5 years

Joint 2nd - Hazel Hughes BMW Mini 2019 and Chris Deal Volvo XC60 2022
1st Ross Crisp - Ford Mondeo ST 2021

Class 2 - Under 20 years

3rd - Richard Tree Ford Focus 2008
2nd - Marcus Foreman VW Golf 2008
1st - John Davie Jaguar XKR 2007

Class 3 - Over 20 years

3rd - Gerry Moroney Ford Escort RS2000 1977
2nd - Simon Page MGA 1960
1st - Keith Warner MG Midget 1970

Class 4 - Competition Cars

1st - Richard Warne Austin Healey 3000 MkIII 1967

Best in Show

David Hughes Jaguar MKII 1963

Congratulations to all the winners. Awards will be given out at the Christmas meal in December, date to be confirmed.

Melanie Camp
Social Secretary

President's Chat

For 2023 The Car Spares Escort Richard Warne/ Chris Deal had an enjoyable, reliable year,

The first event of 2023 was the first round Pirelli Welsh Rally Championship The Rally North Wales with use of the forests around Dyfnant, Gartheiniog, and Dyfi. A Trouble-free run with MK 2 Escort finished 40th overall.

The second round of the Championship was the Rally Nuts forestry stages in mid Wales starting from the Royal Welsh showground. After an enjoyable day in the Welsh forests of Hafren/ Sweet lamb and Myherin the Escort started 77th and finished in 77th Place, they got their seeding right.

Our GBMC organised sprint meetings were next in July and September at North Weald Airfield, a reasonable of entry of 48/46 competitors respectively with 7/9 Green Belt members competing. The Car Spares Escort was rewarded with a class win on each event.

In August it was time for the Witney Autocross at their usual venue near Bicester on 26/27 August.

After discussions with organisers, they agreed in the end that Green Belt Motor Club was an invited club it did take a little persuasion, they found the right web page in the end.

After Saturday practice it was an inclement affair with the Escort more sideways hampering a good time. Sunday however was a perfect day for weather and the times quickly improved. The circuit was 1200 metre large oval with a small number of open left & right hand bends, it was fast!!

Combining the two days of competition was awarded 1st in Class which was very rewarding.



In October Herts County AAC organised their second event at Debden Airfield Wimbish, Saffron Walden. A lowly 45 competitors attended this event. As this event has been on the calendar for many years and never actually competed on, I thought it was time.

This course is extremely fast unfortunately there was cones everywhere, and half the field was awarded penalties for hitting cones including myself, I hope lessons learnt by the organisers, don't use so many cones. Jurying the penultimate run of the day the escort had a mystifying engine problem which was diagnosed as a faulty injector, so our times were not improved from the morning run. Ashley Davies was also not having a good day in his Super 1600 ford Fiesta with another clutch failure.



Another event that had been missed off the radar was the **Wyedean Stage Rally**, with this being the first time I had been in the forest of Dean based at Colesford. This year the service area was at Folly Farm Coleford which I understand has been used for a number of years. The weather prior to the event was not good as it had been raining for weeks, thanks to Dales Glover Ex GBMC member for use of his service facilities.



The farmer's field was the worst I seen in a number of years, as soon as you stopped you sank in the mud, not good. The stages were based around the local Speech House forests which if were dry would have been great. With the stages in muddy conditions as soon as you tried to accelerate the car would head for the trees, if you went offline, again the car was dragged towards the nearest ditch, very exciting. Having been on medium Pirelli tyres it was probably the wrong choice, softs may had been the way to go. On the second loop of stage 6 (Staple Edge) with the finish in sight slid wide on a tight chicane and beached the Escort half a meter off the track at 45 degrees, with 20 or so spectators running towards the escort and pushing in all directions the escort did not budge, plan B, I gave them me tow rope and after 5 long minutes the escort was sucked out of the mud. The spectators looked if they were enjoying themselves all covered in mud, they did a great job.

After the days entertainment we finish in 51st Place.

Not so lucky was Green Belts Martyn Andrews in his Subaru Impresa who on stage 3 had a log pile jump out with substantial consequences, whilst holding 14th spot I am sure it will polish out!!!.



The last event of the year on Saturday 30th December was **The Rixy Stages** in memory of the late Ian Rix who pass away earlier part of last year after a short illness. This new venue at the STANTA Army training ground has not been used since around 1986 so it was a welcome return. The format was a 5 mile stage followed by a 9 miler, then competed again in reverse in the afternoon. To slow the competitors down to ensure they don't exceed the boggy time around 16 chicane's were constructed on the long straights. These chicanes did not help my car sickness and felt very green during the afternoon competition, but we survived.

The Car Spares Escort ran faultless all day, running flat out in 6th gear it was the quickest the Escort has been, with a seeding of 25 from 60 starters the Escort came home 25th. Probably due to the high speeds there was a high attrition rate of 20 plus cars. A noticeable retirement was John Legg in his mk2 Escort who got on the grass and hit one of the many Concrete Dragons tooth, ouch!!!

From the Green Belt Contingent who expired, Phil Clark, Escort, engine misfire, Rob Clark, Escort, sick engine Cam timing ?Ashley Davis Super 1600 Fiesta, 1 wheel drive, transmission failure.

The overall winner by minute and half was Rob Swan/Steve McNulty in their WRC Fiesta. Green Belts John Indri was 2nd Overall in the Mirage R5.

The award for the highest place Green Belt member Driver went to John Indri, and for the highest placed co-driver was Chris Deal.

Arran Rix car 1 Rixy Stages 2023



Following on from my Road Rallying days of the 70's/ 80's I was hoping to compete in Historic Road Rallies. The chance came along for a works replica 1967 Austin Healey MK111 BJ8. With Chris Deal up for the navigation challenge our first outing was the Hughes Rally starting in Maidstone and toured the Kent countryside with tests in and around Manston Airfield near Deal.

Hughes Rally Regularity section



The second event in June was the East Anglian Classic starting from Bury St Edmunds, many of the special tests all on private estates or loose farm tracks (White roads to you and me)

East Anglian Classic Special Test



The Healey unfortunately was not built to traverse rough tracks as the ground clearance is less than 100mm. Chris had great fun with the navigation except for the last section but we made it to the finish on time.

Next was the Cotswold Historic based in and around Cirencester and the Cotswolds, very similar format to the East Anglian with a number of regularity sections based on varied average MPH and 8 Special Tests. (A special Test is a mixture of a Autotest and a Road Rally Selective) if that makes sense.

The Last event in the Healey for 2023 was the Dansport Historic around Sheffield and the Peak District (see separate report)

Overall, a busy enjoyable year 2024 hear we come.

2023 FIA Hankook FormulaE London ExCeL July 29/30 2023

After a few years absence, Great Britain has a new British driver crowned as an FIA World champion. Jake Dennis, driving his Andretti Gen 3 FormulaE race car scored enough points, with one race remaining, to claim the 2023 ABB Formula E FIA World Championship title, held at the London ExCeL exhibition centre at the end of July.

I must've done something right last year, I was invited back to join the scrutineering team again for the 2023 FIA Hankook FormulaE race meeting, to be held for the third year at the London ExCeL in July, for the last two races of the 2023 ABB FormulaE season.

After I had completed the licence accreditation process Thursday morning; I collected my security passes and was allowed in to the exhibition centre while contractors were putting the final touches to the circuit infrastructure and grandstand seating. The startline, pitlane and garages were located inside the main exhibition hall, the track then exited the hall via a few corners, 22 in total, along some of the exhibition hall's tight and narrow service roads and with some elevation changes, the track returned back into the hall to complete a lap of 2.2kms total length and averaging, with the new car, 1m 10s per lap, and it's believed to be, apart from indoor karting, the only FIA sanctioned race to be held inside a building in the world!

After a quick sandwich and a coffee, we all met up at the FIA Technical Garage and we were greeted by our old friends Luca Gibello and Carlos Funes, the FIA Technical Delegates for FormulaE. The weeks leading up to this weekend, we had had many zoom meetings with Carlos along with training videos about the various safety features of the new Gen 3 FE car introduced for the 2023 season, and we were to have another training session but this time with the new car in front of us, showing what and where not to touch because of the high voltages involved. The jury is out about the looks of the new Gen 3 car; it's a bit Marmite for some, but this show car looked mean and menacing in its black carbon fibre!

When we finished watching more endless videos and power point slides we made our way back to the nearby Kingsford Community School, Becton, which was again providing our excellent accommodation for the weekend. Following a disastrous evening meal at a local pub (food arrived late and cold!), we made our way back to the school via the local Asda to get our supplies for the weekend.

It was a stupid o'clock start Friday morning so, after an excellent breakfast provided by the school, we made our way back to the ExCeL. On arrival at the FIA Technical garage, we were divided into two groups of four scrutineers and at the allotted time each scrut group went to our first teams to scrutineer their cars. I was given the task of checking the driver's kit for each team in our group, and I was assisted by Carlos. Carlos had been the FIA Technical Delegate for F1 for more than 25 years; he had some rather amusing stories, especially about some drivers, teams, and race officials, which must remain between me and Carlos!!!

Some cars were "bounced" with issues which were quickly rectified (even professional teams can get it wrong!) while Carlos and I went to the back of the garages and, assisted by a team member, we checked the driver's kit. I was impressed by some of the team's facilities, washer/dryers for the driver's suits and underwear if they didn't have spares, and dryers for the crash helmets.

Talking of crash helmets, each driver had two crash helmets with one driver from each team nominated to have cameras mounted inside the eye aperture of their crash helmets...to give a driver's eye view of the action for the live TV audience! Carlos told me that each crash helmet with camera would cost in excess of €8,000 each and each nominated driver had two, FHR's and race suits €1,000+ each, underwear and gloves €100 apiece and boots €250!

Although most teams provided their drivers with new safety kit for each race meeting, I had two items of kit impounded for tears or invalid FIA logos, while my colleague Evelyn in the other scrutineering group confiscated eight race suits from two teams for holes, torn seams or faulty zips!

We finished scrutineering the cars just in time for lunch, we chatted about Evelyn's suits she'd impounded, and the various car issues found, and we returned to the team garages we had been allocated to, ready for the first shakedown session.

I had asked to go to the McLaren team as it was the old Mercedes team I had worked with last year and I had got to know most of the team members. I was pleased the team principle, Ian James, remembered me from last year, along with team manager Rob and No1 mechanic Matt, and most of the other mechanics and engineers too, and of course, we mustn't forget "Doc" the gofer too! The PR lady, Shona, was missing this year so she was replaced by Chloe, a very familiar face to me. I had helped Chloe with her training module for scrutineering over the past few years and, until recently; she had been a MSUK training officer at Bicester MSUK. Chloe was now with McLaren looking after VIP guests and making sure everyone was fed and watered, including me!

For 2023, McLaren had two new drivers, British driver Jake Hughes in his first season in FormulaE was joined by the vastly experienced German driver Rene Rast. I thought Jake was a bit stand offish and didn't interact with anyone but Rene was the complete opposite, full of laughs and joking with his mechanics and engineers!



My primary job in the team garage was to observe the team members while working on their cars, making sure they observed the health and safety regulations especially with the high voltage stored in these cars, observing pit stops for infringements and making sure only using tyres allocated for the weekend for each driver. After 15 minutes the shakedown was finished, the cars returned to their garages and we were allowed to go off for a break, returning again for the first practice session later in the afternoon.

The 30 minute first practice session finished without incident for “my” team and the cars returned to their garages, but this time the cars were all placed in “parc-ferme” with barriers being placed around the cars while I watched over them. Luca then randomly chose cars to be pushed to the FIA Technical Garage for weighing and components to be removed for closer inspection. We were finally released from our duties around 7pm so we went in search of some hot food and early to bed for another early o’clock start Saturday morning.

After another excellent breakfast at the school, we arrived at the ExCeL, and after more briefings, we returned to our team garages. On arriving at the McLaren garage, my team had a relatively quiet night checking their cars, unlike some teams along the pitlane; we learnt that some teams were still working frantically to finish off replacing battery cells and motors late last night, having to stop before curfew time, then finishing off in the morning!

I made sure the tyres were correctly positioned in the garage and those team personnel working on the cars were wearing their armbands correctly...the FIA penalise teams very heavily with fines, €500 if an arm band is missing or not worn correctly, €5,000 if more than four team members are working on a car, €1,000 if the tyres were not in their correct position...the list goes on, and we're observed by CCTV in each garage going direct to the race director in race control!



The teams were now ready for the second practice session of the weekend and with no major incidents, the cars returned to their garages and again placed in "parc-ferme". This time, Rene's car was pushed down to the FIA Technical Garage while Luca, the FIA Technical Delegate, asked for a suspension component from Jake Hughes' car to be removed for checking. With all cars and components returned to their respective garages, we were released from our duties for a quick break, ready to return for the qualifying sessions later in the morning.

Rene had qualified well in fifth in group A, meanwhile Jake, in group B, was down in a disappointing 18th position. After each group had finished their qualifying, the cars were parked in the FIA's "parc-ferme", while the drivers were each weighed then they went off to the "press-pen" to be interviewed by the press and TV. After the FIA Technical Delegates had completed their checks, all the cars were returned to their garages so that they could be prepared for the race later in the afternoon, and we went back to our cabin office to grab a drink and a late lunch.

During the lunch break, to entertain the large crowds opposite the garages, Jake Hughes and Lucas di Grassi went head to head in a specially modified Gen 3 car, to try and set a new World record for the fastest speed achieved by a powered vehicle indoors along the start/finish straight. Hughes successfully set the new World record setting a speed of 135.90mph.

Suitably refreshed, I returned to my garage, checked the spare tyres were in their correct position and team personnel arm bands were worn correctly, I managed to grab a quick word with Nyck de Vries who was visiting his old ex-Mercedes FE team, I could see there was genuine warmth towards Nyck from the team members. I think Nyck may have been looking for a drive for next year; he'd recently been sacked by Red Bull from the Alpha Tauri F1 team, and he smiled on learning his replacement, Daniel Riccardo, was having a torrid time at Spa with Nyck saying "I'm glad Danny's having trouble, I told them the car was shite!" I later remarked to Zak Brown, McLaren's owner, and team principle Ian James, saying it would be nice to see Nyck return to FE in 2024!

With the drivers now strapped in, their No 1 mechanics having checked the pitlane was clear, released their drivers out into the pitlane and onto the circuit, followed by team personnel entering through the pitwall gate pulling their tool trollies with spare wheels and equipment to cool the batteries down on to the grid, to wait for their cars to arrive to take up their grid position.

New Zealander Nick Cassidy in his Envision took up his pole position, earning a bonus three points to help boost his second place championship hopes behind championship leader Jake Dennis who lined up his Andretti for second place on the grid and Cassidy's team mate Sebastien Buemi in third position. McLaren's Rene Rast lined up in fifth and Jake Hughes in the other McLaren was down towards the rear of the grid in 18th.

As soon as the VIP's, TV crews and team personnel had cleared the grid, the cars went off to do their green flag lap. The cars came round to the start line, did a couple of burn outs to warm their tyres and lined up in their correct grid positions and waited for the race starter to extinguish the red lights on the overhead light gantry.

The five red lights went out and they were off, with a loud roar from the crowd opposite the start line as home hero Jake Dennis tried to squeeze down the inside of Cassidy but lost out to Buemi as they disappeared out of sight to exit the exhibition hall followed by the rest of the grid, some missing bits of bodywork after clashes at the start! The leaders returned back into the hall to complete their first lap, Buemi now in the lead after getting a better start, and Cassidy and Dennis banging wheels trying to pass each other.

The lead changed several times during the early part of the race while drivers took their Attack Modes for extra power, but unfortunately, Buemi didn't understand his team orders, do not race your team mate! Because of Buemi's defensive moves, Cassidy rear-ended him, breaking his front wing in the collision. After Cassidy came in to the pits to replace his front wing, he returned back out and while trying to claim back some lost positions he collided with Maserati's Edoardo Mortara breaking his new wing and forcing Cassidy to retire from the race. As you can understand, Cassidy was livid when he returned to the pits because now, if Jake Dennis finished third or higher, he would be crowned FormulaE's first British World Champion!

By now, most of the drivers had taken their Attack Mode, the race had settled down with Cassidy's fellow Kiwi Mitch Evans in his Jaguar now having taken the lead trying to improve his own championship hopes when, on lap 32, the red flag was shown! Sacha Fenestraz in his Nissan had crashed heavily into the barriers at turn 16 following a collision with Sergio Sette Camara in his NIO333, fortunately without injury to both drivers but it took at least thirty minutes to recover Fenestraz's damaged car and repair the barriers.

All the remaining cars returned to the pits and stopped outside their respective garages and placed in "parc-ferme". Unfortunately Rast had damaged his front wing in an earlier incident and was pulled into his garage to replace his front wing and check for any further damage. Hughes, somehow, had managed to avoid damaging his car. While observing the teams working, I noticed that all the British teams just calmly got down to work, they knew what to do without speaking while, especially the Latin teams, everyone else was running around shouting at each other and getting nowhere quickly!

The hard working marshals repaired the damaged barriers and race control informed the team managers in which order their cars would restart the race and lined up in order in the pitlane. Those teams that had repaired their cars were put to the back of the grid as they'd broken the "parc-ferme" rules! Evans led the cars out of the pit lane followed by Felix de Costa in his Porsche and Dennis third behind the safety car.

After only two laps had run the red flag was shown again, this time for a blockage! Nissan's Norman Nato tried to squeeze between Buemi, who was in fourth position, and the wall at turn 19, the pair collided but the following Sam Bird was unable to avoid them in his Jaguar, all three cars coming to a stop and blocking the track for most of the entire field!



After the blockage was cleared and the cars returned back to the pitlane, the restart was to be a three lap dash to the finish of the race. Evans crossed the line first followed by de Costa and third was Jake Dennis to claim his first FIA FormulaE World Championship. To add to Dennis's joy, he was promoted to second when de Costa was handed a three minute time penalty, and dropped down to 16th, for a tyre that had a slow puncture and not at the prescribed tyre pressure for the race! Porsche, later, were unsuccessful in their protest!

More penalties were applied as Sette Camara was excluded from fifth place; his Nissan team ignored the instruction from FIA Technical Delegate Luca, to replace the damaged front wing after the incident with Fenestraz from the first collision, the team having declared it was safe to continue!

All the cars were placed in "parc-ferme" and one by one returned to their garages for their teams to repair their damaged cars ready for Sunday's race. We left the exhibition hall at around 7pm and made our way to our favourite local pizza restaurant and back to the school for a shower and bed.

This was to be our last day at the school and after another excellent breakfast, we said our goodbye's to the school's caretaker and his hardworking team and returned to the ExCeL for the last round of the 2023 ABB FormulaE season.

After we all gathered at the FIA Technical garage for a group photo, and yet another briefing, we returned to our respective team garages. My team, McLaren, only had to repair Rast's car for suspension damage, Hughes's car got away reasonably light! But other teams were not so lucky. A couple needed to rebuild their cars around new chassis, but after the big impacts suffered at the previous round in Rome, spares were in short supply! I heard the show car was stripped of some of its important bits!

After all the teams had completed their repairs, those cars being re-scrutineered, the drivers had another morning practice session, to make sure all the repairs were completed. Qualifying was again later in the morning and this time both of McLaren's drivers were to be in the one group. Unfortunately both drivers didn't progress very far with Rast 13th and Hughes in 19th position. Cassidy got pole again and a further three bonus points to help soften the blow after losing the championship the previous day, while fellow Kiwi Evans was alongside him and Nato lined up in third and the new FE champion Jake Dennis was fourth.

After the qualifying "parc-ferme" was declared open, the cars were released back to their teams for them to prepare the cars for the last race of the season. After a quick comfort break, again I made sure the team personnel wore their armbands correctly and the spare wheels and tyres were in their correct position, the drivers climbed into their cars and after strapping them in, the No 1 mechanics released their cars into the pitlane, followed by the mechanics with their tools/spare wheel trollies, as the cars came onto their grid positions. We'd heard the weather for the day was going to be overcast with possibly heavy rain; the teams were busy scanning their computer screens looking at the weather forecast for the afternoon.

After the various VIPs, hangers-on, TV crews and team personnel had cleared the grid, the cars went off to complete their green flag lap. The outside part of the track, although still damp, the earlier rain had stopped. The cars formed up on the grid with Cassidy on pole, Evans second, Nato third and new 2023 FE Champion Dennis in fourth, to wait for the red lights on the overhead gantry to go out. This time the race start was a bit muted as the drivers' championship had been sorted, it was only left for the team manufacturers title to be claimed, Envision and Jaguar were within a couple of points of each other.

The lead changed several times while the drivers took their Attack Modes, then the safety car was called out as the rain returned but more intense this time. After seven laps behind the safety car the red flag was shown because parts of the track was considered dangerous with poor visibility and standing water, it took four road sweepers with their tanks full of rain water to clear parts of the flooded track.

After a restart behind the safety car for a couple of laps, because of the heavy rain, it was decided to red flag the race again. With the cars lined up in the pitlane, the drivers meanwhile tried to keep their minds occupied, someone in the McLaren garage had found a child's golfing set, and Rast, Hughes and a few other drivers all took turns at trying to hit the ball into the toy frog's mouth! The TV crews descended onto our garage to film the crazy golf!

Eventually, after an hour and a half of the hardworking marshals sweeping the water from the track aided by the road sweepers, race control decided it was safe to restart the race behind the safety car as it was now starting to get dark! The safety car did two laps, came in, and Cassidy led Evans and Dennis in third around for the remaining six laps, remarkably without incidents, finishing in those positions and all 22 cars completed the final race of an incredibly intense and unpredictable season. Congratulations to Envision, Cassidy's win meant he kept his second place in the championship and also helping Envision to win the teams manufacturers World championship for 2023.

As the cars were finally released from "parc-ferme" following their technical checks, we returned to our cabin office for a quick debrief and we made our way down to the underground car park to splash our way home after an exhausting weekend. I hope I get invited again in 2024 to see if Jake Dennis can make it two World championships.

Loyd Gerken

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The copy date for the next issue is 1st May 2024.

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