

2008 PREVIEW SINGLE-SEATERS

What can be better than watching loads of young F1 wannabes scrapping to get to the top? Here's what to look out for in 2008. By **RICHARD ASHER**



Pont Oscar at Pau: track is back on Euro F3 calendar



New Mygale M-08 will race in British F3, with Nick Tandy



Marcus Ericsson one of many in ubiquitous Dallara F308



New GP2 design will up the ante for young chargers

A1GP AND FERRARI TAKE NEXT STEP...

The new tie-up between A1GP and the legendary Ferrari marque takes full effect from the first race of 2008. That means that the existing Lola-Zytek cars will carry the 'Powered by Ferrari' logo at Taupo in New Zealand later this month. The significance for the sport could be enormous.

...AND THEN NEW FERRARI RACES

The first A1GP race of the 2008-09 season – probably at Zandvoort in the autumn – will see concrete evidence of Ferrari's involvement in the series. This is where the all-new car and engine will hit the track in a race for the first time. The motivation will be an all-Maranello production, with significantly more power, and the car should have a recognisably new look. And they're still talking about bioethanol fuel too.

GP2 ASIA KICKS OFF

Motorsport continues its eastwards expansion with the inaugural GP2 'winter' series in Asia. This five-round championship will be the new home for the 'old' 2005-07-spec cars, while the engines are detuned to produce 500bhp. The idea is to develop Asian talent, but it's safe to say there isn't enormous excitement about the whole thing. The Dubai opener takes place on January 26. Let's see how it goes...

TEAMS TRY OUT NEW GP2 CAR

Formula 1's feeder category is getting even faster this year. And, teams will hope, more reliable too. In addition to the aero tweaks, the Dallara-Mecachrome has a new carbon clutch, ECU and gearbox controller, which could help iron out some of the transmission issues that have

cropped up in the category's first three seasons. Although the car tested pre-Christmas, the teams themselves won't get it until Paul Ricard next month.

F1'S FEEDER HITS THE STREETS OF VALENCIA

Okay, so Formula 1 will be the headline act, but GP2 is another reason to head to Spain and celebrate what should be a brilliant weekend. A new street track in Europe is a very rare thing indeed, and the layout actually looks quite fun. F1 may put on a good show, but you can expect the GP2 racing to be even better – it generally is. It'll be August and it'll be hot, so head for Spain's party capital for an awesome couple of days.

NEW RENAULT WORLD SERIES DALLARA RUNS

Renault's World Series takes another technical step this

year, with a new car and more power likely to cement the championship's status as a valid GP2 alternative. Output will be up from 425 to 500bhp, and the engine is scheduled to run on bioethanol. Even more speed for the new, Dallara-built tools should come from the introduction of a new monocoque and aero package, complete with a swoopier front wing. The first group test is at Valencia in March.

RWS TRIES ITS RACE-WEEKEND SHAKE-UP

The World Series introduced reverse-grid races last year, but there's been a new spate of tinkering ahead of 2008 – it's fantastically complex. This year the top six drivers in each qualifying group will proceed to a new Super Pole session. The top eight in this session will take the top eight grid slots for race two – but only in race-one finishing order! Oh yeah, and they'll be reversed for race one. That



New World Series chassis will be GP2 alternative



Mercedes is planning to move the F3 goalposts again



RENAULT-SPORT

Renault World Series grids will be more complicated

Formula BMW screamers should wow the GP hordes



BMW/AG

rather than Ultimate, is the only team that has so far signed up to run the car this year.

Although Japanese F3 gets going first, British F3 will be the first European series to kick off. So Oulton Park on Easter Monday is the place to see the new vehicles in action for the first time.

MERCEDES MAKES NEW F3 ENGINE

Mercedes, the master of European F3 power, is bringing out a new engine for 2008. The lump still isn't ready, and this has put testing back later than it should be, but will that shake up the status quo? You have to assume the engine will be faster and equally reliable – but will Merc have found enough to snatch back Macau from Japanese rival Toyota? Pop along to Oulton to hear how it sounds.

VOLKSWAGEN RETURNS TO FULL-TIME F3 ACTION

When the F3 Euroseries kicks off at Hockenheim in April, Mercedes will have some significant competition from its German rival, Volkswagen. Both Signature and RC Motorsport will run the promising powerplant for the full Euroseries season, and since this is a serious effort there is every chance the motor could be a winner this year.

F3 EUROSERIES GOES BACK TO PAU

Pau remains one of the ultimate challenges for up-and-coming drivers, so it's only right that a major single-seater series (nothing personal, Formula Master) is holding a round there again. Last time the Euroseries visited Pau, Lewis Hamilton was the winner – so take note of this year's result! The race goes ahead in early June.

FORMULA BMW EUROPE

This year the German and British Formula BMW championships combine to create Formula BMW Europe. With the series featuring at eight Formula 1 grands prix, and several GP2 squads joining the ranks, more than 30 young drivers will be desperate to announce themselves as the next big thing in front of the people who matter.

FORMULA MASTER'S SECOND YEAR KICKS OFF

Formula Master enters its second season at Valencia in May, with several new suppliers and car tweaks to ensure that last year's reliability problems, which hit an otherwise successful debut year, don't happen again. With Honda now officially badging the engines, new teams of the calibre of GP2 race-winning outfit Trident Racing, ex-Dutch Formula Renault champ AR Motorsport and British F3 stalwart Performance Racing have been pulled in by the low-cost ethos of the N.Technology-inspired F3 rival, which supports the World Touring Car Championship.

EUROSERIES 3000 RACES IN AFRICA!

It's hard to believe that the mooted street race in Morocco is really going to happen – it's very much TBC at the moment – but let's just say it is and start getting excited about it anyway. Whatever happens, the series is certainly keeping up with the rest, thanks to a revised Lola featuring suspension updates and paddleshift technology. Not to mention a new 515bhp Zytec engine and the confirmation of at least three grand prix circuits on its calendar.

■ should make things easy to follow. Or not.

NEW FORMULA 3 CARS GO RACING

Formula 3 is supposed to be an open-chassis category, but you wouldn't know it when you see Dallara cars flying off the shelves for yet another year. The Italian company remains the F3 market leader after more than a decade in that comfy position, and there are absolutely no signs of that changing. Although it's time for a new round of F3 cars this season, which is the start of a new three-year cycle, the teams reckon that the latest Dallara will be the car to have.

Mygale made a respectable entry to Formula 3 last season, with British Championship newcomer team Ultimate Motorsport coming close to scoring a podium for the French constructor. But there were plenty of areas that needed improving and Mygale has specifically addressed those with its new challenger. New team JTR,



PIETERS/MPB/CC/LAT

Ferrari leads A1GP. It won't be 599GTB in future though



A1GP

VW back in F3. Can it repeat Tom Kristensen's '91 success?