

2014 FIA FORMULA ONE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

CENTURION Magazine Online's exclusive season preview with Stefan Johansson

Jan Tegler
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Forget much of what you know about Formula One. This season will be different.

Sweeping rules changes with stated goals ranging from moving the sport forward technologically and making it greener, to enhancing safety and making the racing more unpredictable have been instituted for 2014. The alterations amount to what is arguably the largest single-season change in F1 history.

Explaining all that is new would require a book but we'll get you up to speed in style by examining four of the most significant revisions and drivers and teams to watch with outspoken Formula One legend and sports car star Stefan Johansson.

Johansson's incredible career includes eleven years in F1, driving with Ferrari and McLaren amongst others, racing in the CART IndyCar Championship, two wins at the 12 Hours of Sebring and a victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in prototype sports cars. He's still racing professionally and will compete in the World Endurance Championship in 2014 driving an LMP2 prototype with Millennium Racing.



INSIDER KNOWLEDGE



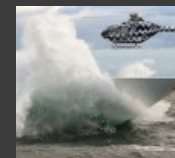
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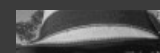


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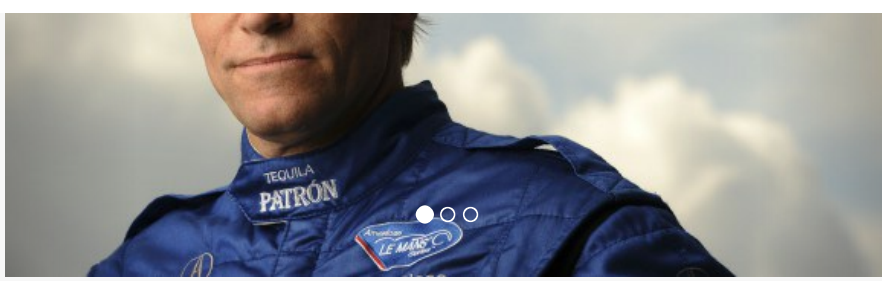


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Power Unit

The screaming 750 horsepower 2.4-litre normally-aspirated V8 engines of 2013 with an additional 80 horsepower available for six seconds per lap from KERS are gone. In their place is a new 'power unit' consisting of a 1.6-litre V6 turbo engine and two Energy Recovery Systems (ERS). Producing approximately 600 horsepower, the quieter V6s are boosted by the dual ERS to the tune of 160 horsepower or so, for approximately 33 seconds per lap.

Developing the new power units is one of the most daunting challenges F1 engine makers have ever faced. Reliability and drive-ability issues surfaced for many teams during three winter tests, including the reigning and four-time world champs, Red Bull Racing (RBR) and Renault.

"If you look at the state of the testing now, it could be seriously embarrassing for many teams at the first race," Johansson notes.

But he says there's a larger issue.

"To have this little time for actual running on-track with such a new concept is crazy. I don't think you can truthfully read anything into the lap times yet. Literally everyone is still at such an early stage of development. The other factor is that it has become incredibly complicated just to operate these cars now. The batteries and hybrid energy-recovery systems and power transfer systems – it's insane. Is that really necessary?"

Like most observers, Johansson thinks RBR and Renault will solve their problems fairly rapidly. "The rumblings I hear are that their car looks mighty on-track even with the lack of pace they have now."

Still, the difficulties associated with change in powerplants present opportunities for others Johansson acknowledges.

"I think Williams are the dark horse this year. They've hired a lot of good people and Pat Symonds (Chief Technical Officer) is without a doubt one of the best guys in pit lane. Felipe Massa still seems to have life in him. He's been quick in testing and don't forget he was quicker in qualifying than Alonso at Ferrari several times last year but couldn't quite put it together in the races."

Notably, Williams switched to Mercedes power for 2014. Mercedes GP itself has proven to be the quickest team throughout testing with good reliability.

"They have good momentum and great resources. Ross Brawn obviously put good infrastructure in place with their technical team before leaving at the end of last year. I think they'll be tough to beat for sure."

Fuel

For 2014 the total fuel available for a race is limited to 100 kilograms, while fuel flow is limited to 100 kilograms per hour. Previously, there were no limits. Effects will be minimal during practice and qualifying but fuel efficiency will be all-important in races.

"All the teams have been keeping very quiet about the fuel limitation so we don't know how that's going to play out", Johansson observes. "One hundred kilograms



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for an hour and forty-minute grand prix isn't a lot of fuel. That's another reason why it's kind of pointless reading anything into the lap times in testing."

"With the fuel economy now required, these guys are going to be crawling around during portions of the races. Not only have the drivers been screaming about the tire situation over the last couple years, now they're going to have to go half-throttle to have enough fuel to get to the end of a race."

Moreover, the Swedish racer points to a number of the changes - including the pair below - as being artificial, unnecessary and expensive.

"There are at least five factors that are now in the rules to manipulate 'the show'."



Front and Rear Wings

Front and rear wings are altered for 2014. Front wings are significantly narrower, creating a challenge for aerodynamicists to channel airflow efficiently. Shallower rear wing flaps and the elimination of rear beam wings reduce downforce significantly. In addition, the DRS (drag reduction system) flaps which open on the wing to aid passing are allowed to open 15 millimetres wider than in 2013.

Double Points

Controversially, F1 is introducing a "double-points" system for its final race of the season. Drivers and teams can score double the points awarded in other grands prix, raising the possibility that a driver or team with a large deficit in points scored could overcome previously insurmountable gaps to competitors.

Johansson doesn't understand "how these things really improve the racing" but concedes that the changes will scramble the order at the front in F1 until teams figure them out. Given this, we asked him to rate the chances of two of the sport's perennial favorites and teams for which he once drove - Ferrari and McLaren.

"It's hard to say with Ferrari. Their cars seem to be ok but the one thing we know is that they have the best two racers in the field (Fernando Alonso, Kimi Räikkönen). If their car is good enough and they have reliability you know they'll be near the front in every race."

"McLaren seemed to start out pretty well in testing but stalled a bit in the later tests. You just don't know what kind of program they're running. They may not be so interested in lap time. They may just be trying to build an understanding of their car and optimizing race set-ups."

Many pundits have opined that McLaren's Jenson Button could benefit from the changes because his smooth driving style should help him conserve fuel and tires but Johansson pegs his new teammate, Kevin Magnussen, as a driver to watch - potentially the best of the 2014 F1 rookies because of his quickness and youth.

“Magnussen certainly looks very strong so far. Youth is a benefit because you don’t have any fear and you don’t care really who you’re driving against. He also has no bias against the new cars having not competed in the old cars. But it’s one thing to drive these cars fast and another thing to race them well. Magnussen will be very quick I’m sure but when he comes up against some of the big boys it’s going to be a new challenge for him.”

If the top teams are struggling with the new rules, those lower down the order are facing an even tougher challenge. Which among them might rise amidst the 2014 changes?

“Force India,” Johansson says. “Nico Hülkenberg is very good and it looks like their car isn’t too bad. They could be a surprise this season.”

As for the double points to be awarded at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Johansson echoes the sentiments of fellow current and former F1 drivers. “It’s a gimmick really and I don’t know how this makes F1 any more attractive. But the season is here, so let’s see.”

Head over to our new Formula 1 2014 section for a complete overview, or dive straight in and see the first race... Australia

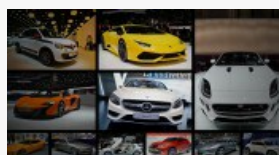


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