

CLASSIC DRIVER

Five Questions to Martin Brundle

Lead

At a rainy Silverstone, Classic Driver caught up with the man who finished a close second to Ayrton Senna in British Formula 3, won the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1990 at the wheel of a TWR Silk Cut Jaguar Group C car, and competed in over 150 Grands Prix.

In recent years he's carved an enviable reputation presenting F1 on television and been a 'natural' at historic racing, most notably behind the wheel of Nick Mason's Ferrari 250 GTO. This year he will share a Greaves Motorsport Zytek Z11SN-Nissan LMP2 car at Le Mans with his son, Alex.

When were you more nervous on the grid at an F1 race? Behind the wheel, or in front of the TV cameras, starting your now famous grid walkabout?

I would say 'driving'; I don't really get nervous doing the TV stuff - apart from just before the grid walk, when I'm not really sure who I'm going to see or what I'm going to say. As a driver, I would say it was just before qualifying at Monaco, because you knew how important it was to get a good grid position there. Fifteen minutes before I went to the grid as a driver I'd get a little tightness in my stomach. Generally, with the TV it's not a problem.

I was there when you won Le Mans in 1990, and I remember seeing you approaching the relatively new Dunlop Bridge chicane with a speed and commitment far exceeding any other driver out there. Isn't it a pity that we no longer see top-flight Grand Prix contenders in sports car racing while still competing in F1?

Yes it is. They are scared. A lot of them are frightened of the circuit and the event. Neither they nor the Grand Prix teams really understand Le Mans, and they worry that the F1 stars will hurt themselves or tire themselves out. I have always been quick there and feel very comfortable with it all; I used to like attacking it a bit. It would be nice to see some of today's drivers breaking the odd fingernail at Le Mans...



Your drives at the Goodwood Revival have really proved you can pedal an older car - something not every modern racing driver can do. What's it like to race the sort of Ferrari GT car that John Surtees, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart have driven, on an almost unchanged circuit, against top professionals from F1, Touring Cars and Le Mans?

I enjoy it, I really do. Although it does frighten me - and not just from the viewpoint of the value of the GTO. The thing with those sorts of cars is that you really have to *drive* them. I've already survived three very big accidents as a racing driver, and have been in the best F1 and sports cars. At the Goodwood Revival, with all the top drivers, and perhaps it's raining as well, everyone is going flat out. They are really going for it.



You are driving with your son Alex at this year's Le Mans 24 Hours. Proud father (obviously...), how do you reconcile being a competitive dad with being a competitive racing driver yourself? In other words, how will you react when the times come out and 'who's fastest' is revealed?

Well, Alex is faster than me. He's cleverer [laughter all round], I've already proven myself and I'm expecting him to be one second a lap faster than me this June.

No pressure, then, Alex! Martin, I see you are wearing a Richard Mille watch. And I know Richard Mille himself is passionate about motorsport. How did you become involved with the company?

I like them. They made me a watch and we did some work together in Abu Dhabi. And there's a lot of empathy in how they do things and how I do things, together with the technical side of watches and racing cars. We said to them, "Would you like to be involved at Le Mans? And they said 'yes'."

Photos: Classic Driver

Gallery

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