

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club racing



Classic F3 is set for another fine season in 2014

Classic F3's support can vary but 2014 calendar is exciting

Like many championships or series, especially in financially challenging times, competitor support for Classic Formula 3 has been cyclical in recent years. The vital signs of the attractive two-litre class are strong, though, and with superb race opportunities ahead – on complementary UK and French (F3 Classic) calendars – it ought to be a growth area in 2014.

As a co-founder of CF3 (initially run by the BRSCC for 1974-80 cars) in '86, and an early racer with Argo JM6s, I have kept an avuncular eye on it, although I've not competed since a one-off in the late Frank Gomm's ex-Nelson Piquet Ralt RT1 in 2004. Having enjoyed its highs – particularly its Monaco Grand Prix Historique debut in '10, its 25th season – and shared concerns when in the doldrums, I'm excited again.

Part of the HSCC family for more than a decade, the scope of CF3 was widened to match the French regulations that allow 1981-84 chassis – with the later 'wing cars' of the Ralt RT3-dominated era obliged to run flat-bottomed – a couple of seasons back. While Graham Fennymore (a quality champion wherever he's raced, including the SPEED sportscar series) won this year's title in an RT3, earlier cars remain ultra-competitive.

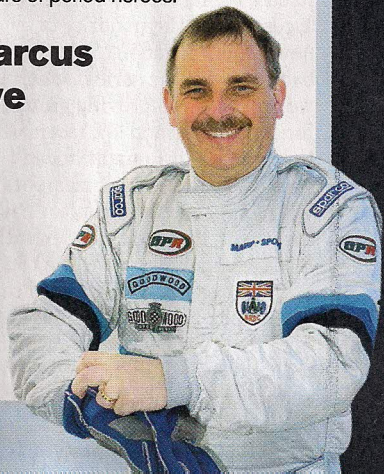
While investors in new-generation kit, like Fennymore and his backers, are deflated there is no Monte Carlo

call-up for them – the Automobile Club de Monaco's announcement of a 31/12/78 cut-off was presaged by those 'in the know' snapping up earlier chassis – the chosen timeline will hopefully result in more early cars returning to the tracks regularly.

Domestic action kicks off at Thruxton's Easter Revival. Snetterton (on the AUTOSPORT 3 Hours bill) and Cadwell Park's F3-themed Wolds Trophy meeting in June should be fun too, but the chance to compete on the Brands Hatch and Silverstone Grand Prix circuits inside a fortnight is unmissable. The French legions are invited to the Silverstone Classic double-header, and Bernard Honnorat and Laurent Vallery-Masson's group returns to the Brands Indy circuit in September.

On the continent Monaco (May 9-10) is followed a week later by a race on the historic French street circuit at Pau, the charismatic university town that has hosted racing since 1900. If longer gearing and run-off areas trip your trigger more, Dijon and Imola are among Europe's greatest tracks and should be on everybody's wish list. You can do so much in an F3 car, preferably with it dressed in the colours of period heroes.

Marcus Pye



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