



# Stepping out of a shadow

His dad's the founder of the series and his brother is chasing an F1 drive. Will Palmer needed a big season to make his own name in single-seater racing – ALEX KALINAUCKAS says he did exactly that

**T**he 2015 BRDC Formula 4 season is already in the history books; Will Palmer, son of series' boss Jonathan Palmer, took 12 wins from a possible 24 and romped to the title with a round to spare.

Palmer Jr's wins, added to the two victories scored by his team-mate, Harrison Newey, gave the HHC Motorsport squad 14 wins, 14 pole positions and the top two places in the championship, to the delight of team boss Charlie Kemp.

"Three years ago we weren't classed as a single-seater team and I think it's fair to say now that we probably are. Taking first and second in the championship was absolutely fantastic."

Meanwhile, Lanan Racing, the team that won the first two BRDC F4 titles, has endured a "character-building" year, according to team principal Graham Johnson. Rodrigo Fonseca finished fourth in the championship but too many incidents and off-pace weekends cost the team dearly.

"The drivers haven't quite clicked," said Johnson. "I don't know why, maybe we're not giving them the right gear to click with."

Palmer, who finished sixth in 2014, took

control of the series after a poor second weekend at Rockingham where his highest finish was fifth in race two. From Silverstone onwards he won twice at each meeting – except for the first visit to Snetterton, which yielded just a single victory.

The champion reckons his year of experience in 2014, added to better feeling for the Pirelli tyres used in BRDC F4 this year, was the key to his dominance of the season.

"I've raised my game this year and the way the

team and I set-up the car together has been very good," he said. "The Pirelli tyres seemed to have helped me a bit too as they're a bit different to drive than the Yokohama [tyre used last year]. Now I feel confident if I'm on pole. I can control it because I've got the experience of being able to lead from the front."

Kemp puts Palmer's progress down to a more mature attitude. "The main improvement is his consistency and understanding that if it's not

Lanan team won races but no third title







Palmer landed HHC its first single-seater title

**“The main thing he knows now is it doesn’t have to be do or die”**  
**Charlie Kemp**



Newey charged to first car win at Donington

going your way, you take as many points as you can. It doesn’t have to be do or die,” he explained.

Newey made an impact in his first season in car racing, but despite the 17-year-old’s pace, it took him until the final few races of the season to win. The team got him to build to a successful weekend, not just show flashes of speed. “This year exceeded all expectations,” he said after securing second in the championship.

Tom Jackson took two wins for Chris Dittmann Racing on his way to third in the standings. The 19-year-old was in the title fight for much of the year but dropped down the order after two tough final weekends. “He’s a lot more mature in the car this year,” said Chris Dittmann. “He’s generally a more rounded driver.”

HHC’s domination meant this was the least competitive BRDC F4 season to date, because there were quite a few races when its drivers simply converted pole position into commanding race wins. Nevertheless, there was still exciting racing further down the field, and the series did what it sets out to do, provide a learning experience for young drivers.

“These junior formulae are not just about young drivers showcasing their talents immediately, they’re arenas where people

develop,” said Jonathan Palmer. “Tom Jackson is a great example. He wasn’t particularly quick when he started last year, but by working with Chris Dittmann Racing he’s really come on in leaps and bounds and is a feisty driver now.”

The arrival of MSA Formula on the British single-seater scene brought questions about what impact it would have on BRDC F4, but Jonathan Palmer reckons his series has seen off its rival.

The new-for-2016 Tatuus-Cosworth MSV F4-016 will help take BRDC F4 a step above the FIA’s anointed British F4 series, as the new car will be 45bhp more powerful than the old model and has upgraded aerodynamics. “It’s going to be significantly more competitive next year with the more high-performance car,” said Palmer Sr. “We’re going to have F4 championships from Europe feeding into BRDC F4 next year. The low cost of our 230bhp car is going to be pretty attractive to a lot of drivers.”

The step-up BRDC F4 is making for next season points to a positive future for the championship, as does the arrival of big British single-seater teams Fortec and Double R Racing. With Palmer’s expectation for a more competitive championship next year, a fascinating battle should be on the cards for 2016. **W**

## TOP FIVE DRIVERS

### 1 Will Palmer

**Age:** 18  
**Wins:** 12  
**Championship position:** First

The low point of Palmer’s season came at the second round at Rockingham when he was eliminated in a first-corner crash in race one. After that he took total control of the championship. He won a record 12 of the 24 races.



### 2 Harrison Newey

**Age:** 17  
**Wins:** Two  
**Championship position:** Second

Newey looked rapid from the off and pushed Palmer all the way in qualifying. He made as many rookie mistakes as stunning overtakes in the first half of the year, but calmed his approach and was rewarded with two race wins at the tail end of the season.



### 3 Tom Jackson

**Age:** 19  
**Wins:** Two  
**Championship position:** Third

Consistency in the first half of the year brought him into the title fight. Two wins, one from down the field in the wet at Snetterton, helped his prospects. But poor weekends at Rockingham and Brands Hatch Indy cost him second in the standings.



### 4 Rodrigo Fonseca

**Age:** 19  
**Wins:** Two  
**Championship position:** Fourth

As a second-year driver, more was expected of the Mexican. He won twice and scored podium finishes early on in the year, but he was fairly anonymous in the second half of the season before scoring two podium places at the Brands Hatch finale.



### 5 Ciaran Haggerty

**Age:** 19  
**Wins:** None  
**Championship position:** Fifth

The rookie was unlucky not to win a race and looked set for victory in the wet race two at the first Snetterton meeting, before the slick-shod runners stormed past. His podium haul was impressive, as was his speed, given his team’s lack of resources.