



AUTOSPORT

Awards 2015

When you gather a constellation of motorsport's shining lights in one London hotel to recognise the stars of the season, you realise how vibrant this great sport really is.

At every table there might be a world champion like Jackie Stewart, Damon Hill or John Surtees, a current Formula 1 driver like Max Verstappen, Carlos Sainz or Nico Hulkenberg, or an illustrious team boss like Eric Boullier or Claire Williams. Throughout the room, the leaders of the industry assemble to honour the cars and drivers of 2015 – as voted for by readers of *Autosport*.

Alan Jones, world champion in 1980, stole the show

when he accepted his Gregor Grant Award for lifetime achievement. After being presented with his award by compatriot Mark Webber, Jones drew laughter and applause by describing today's F1 drivers as "a bit precious", raising a smile from current Williams driver Felipe Massa, who was seated at the same table!

But it wasn't just about F1, for Porsche's return to winning ways at Le Mans was honoured by Hulkenberg also receiving a Gregor Grant for his crossover win, with the Porsche 919 also receiving an award.

As always, the McLaren *Autosport* BRDC Award provided the evening's climax, with Will Palmer the latest name to be added to the illustrious roll of honour.





NATIONAL DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Gordon Shedden

"THIS IS MEGA, BECAUSE AUTOSPORT IS THE bible!" That was Gordon Shedden's reaction immediately after his second win in this category, which, like his first, was earned in the wake of a British Touring Car Championship title. "The enthusiasts probably know more about my racing than I do!" he continued, "so to get that public vote's just incredible. It was great to win a second championship – it puts me the same as John Cleland, and he was the reason I got into touring cars [as an inspiration]."

This is the seventh consecutive year in which this Award has been won by the BTCC champion. "It shows that it's popular, doesn't it?" said Shedden. "The BTCC is on the crest of a wave, and the competition's coming thick and fast."

While the Jason Plato-Matt Neal rivalry is the most infamous in the BTCC, Shedden feels that the public spreads its love throughout the field: "Now there are more groups of fans who are supporting different drivers and different teams. It's great. And for me in a race at Knockhill... it's like that 12th man on a football field. The buzz and the energy it gives is great."

Talking of buzz and energy, that finale at Brands Hatch really boosted the BTCC's appeal: "Thirty races in a season, and four laps from home it's still not ultimately decided – that's pretty cool. The amount of letters and emails we got afterwards was like, wow – how amazing is touring cars? And it was a great advert for the sport. It got everyone on the edge of their seats and that's what motorsport is about, isn't it?"



GRIFFITHS/LAT

BRITISH CLUB DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Will Palmer

THIRTY-TWO YEARS SINCE HIS FATHER JONATHAN received an Autosport Awards gong as British Competition Driver of the Year, after earning the public's approval for his dominant 1983 European Formula 2 Championship season with the Ralt-Honda, Will Palmer similarly gained the public vote for his BRDC Formula 4 success.

Perhaps significantly, it showed that his defeat of Harrison Newey captured the imagination more than F4's rival MSA Formula series and the other TOCA supports.

"It's amazing," said Palmer. "I've been coming to the Autosport Awards for years now, and to finally be up on that stage... it's incredible. It's been an amazing season, I've had a huge amount of success, and it's fantastic to be recognised at such a prestigious event as this."



GRIFFITHS/LAT



"It's fantastic to be recognised at such a prestigious event as this"

Will Palmer





Congratulations **Will Palmer**

McLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD WINNER 2015

Thank you

McLaren, Autosport and the BRDC gratefully acknowledge the support of the following:

Arai, Base Performance Simulators, Grand Prix Racewear, McLaren Automotive, McLaren GT, Mercedes-Benz, MotorSport Vision, Porsche Human Performance Centre, Pirelli, Silverstone Circuit, Sparco, Timing Solutions Ltd

The McLaren Autosport BRDC Award judging panel:

Andrew Kirkaldy, Scott Mitchell, Jason Plato, Ian Titchmarsh, Kevin Turner, Mark Williams

Chairman of the judges:

Derek Warwick



McLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD WINNER 2015

Will Palmer

SON OF JONATHAN. BROTHER OF JOLYON. IT'S NOT been easy for Will Palmer to overcome family affiliation. But the 18-year-old deserves to be viewed as a genuinely talented young driver with the intelligence and the ability to make a career in motorsport.

Sunday night will not be the last time that Jonathan Palmer receives his son's gratitude. But emerging from the shadow of a famous family name is a great personal burden for any young driver.

"My family has a long history in motorsport and, with my brother being in Formula 1 next year, it's easy for me to maybe look like just the brother of Jolyon Palmer," says Will. "Instead, this Award is huge in making it clear I'm a driver in my own right. I'm trying as hard as I can to get to F1 as well. Hopefully this is a big step in getting there one day."

Palmer's a rarity among modern young drivers: he's not done any serious amount of karting. Ginetta Juniors were his first real foray into motor racing, and he's been on a steep learning curve since. It would have been truly harsh had people written him off in 2012 after a first full season that yielded 12th in the points.

In his second full campaign Palmer took his first win,



and wound up third in the points. A switch to single-seaters beckoned, and he took two victories in the BRDC Formula 4 Winter Series before graduating to the full series for 2014, in which he won twice again and finished sixth in the points.

Palmer, by this stage, had proven capable of searing pace. But racecraft, arguably the single greatest skill learned in karting, was lacking. There were too many incidents and a large slice of bad luck. So it was back to the Winter Series, which he won, and then a return to the main championship for 2015 for a crack at the title.

He didn't disappoint, crushing his opposition with 12 wins from 24 races and clinching the crown a round early. That was complemented by a competitive showing on his two-litre Formula Renault debut in the Eurocup at Silverstone, and since the end of the campaign he has tested Formula 3 and GP3 machinery.

Where Palmer goes next, he's not sure. But he knows where he wants to be, and what becoming the 27th McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner could mean.

CV

WILL PALMER

2015 BRDC F4 champion (HHC Motorsport)
12 wins, 15 podiums,
10 poles

2014 6th BRDC F4 (HHC)
2 wins, 7 podiums, 1 pole
BRDC F4 Winter
Series champion (HHC)
4 wins, 7 podiums

2013 3rd Ginetta Junior (HHC)
1 win, 10 podiums, 4 poles
5th BRDC F4 Winter
Series (HHC)
1 win, 1 pole

2012 12th Ginetta Junior (HHC)

McLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD

ROLL OF HONOUR

- 1989 David Coulthard
- 1990 Gareth Rees
- 1991 Oliver Gavin
- 1992 Dario Franchitti
- 1993 Ralph Firman Jr
- 1994 Jamie Davies
- 1995 Jonny Kane
- 1996 Darren Turner
- 1997 Andrew Kirkaldy
- 1998 Jenson Button
- 1999 Gary Paffett
- 2000 Anthony Davidson
- 2001 Steven Kane
- 2002 Jamie Green
- 2003 Alex Lloyd
- 2004 Paul di Resta
- 2005 Oliver Jarvis
- 2006 Oliver Turvey
- 2007 Stefan Wilson
- 2008 Alexander Sims
- 2009 Dean Smith
- 2010 Lewis Williamson
- 2011 Oliver Rowland
- 2012 Jake Dennis
- 2013 Matt Parry
- 2014 George Russell
- 2015 Will Palmer

THE OTHER FINALISTS



JACK AITKEN

The Formula Renault Eurocup and ALPS champion has tested in GP3 and Formula 3.5 V8 as he assesses which championship he should step into next season.



BEN BARNICOAT

Racing Steps Foundation-backed Barnicoat will move out of two-litre Renault and into Formula 3, with an announcement already about joining the crack Prema Powerteam.



RICKY COLLARD

After finishing runner-up in MSA Formula, the son of BTCC racer Rob hopes to move to continental European competition in 2016, and has tested in Formula Renault.



JAKE HUGHES

A car problem hobbled Hughes's Eurocup and ALPS campaign, but the Brummie has shrugged off that disappointment and performed strongly in FR3.5 and GP3 testing.



TOBY SOWERY

The future's unclear for the talented MSA Formula driver. Moving from Britain is the aim, but budget restraints may force him to look closer to home, perhaps in BRDC F4.

