ISSUE **Ja2910** February 52014

The new car is a

great platform

HEADING INTO

EUROPE EARL

11 SUBSCRIBETO MOTORSPORTNEWS 26

Wanted:The first F1 race to take place

28 30

## HEADLINE NEWS

### **Double champion signs up for a BTCC**

By Matt James

Italian Fabrizio Giovanardi has joined the swelling ranks of champions who will race in YOUR PICS email:mn.letters@ haymarket.com the British Touring Car Championship this season.

Six champions have been confirmed for the 2014 series while a seventh is in the final stage of negotiations to line-up. It will be the first time since 1997 that so many former title-holders have shared the grid.

Giovanardi confirmed his deal with the Airwaves Racing team last night (Tuesday) and will nandle one of the Kent team's Ford Focus machines.

Reigning champion Andrew Jordan will return to the grid in 2014, alongside Honda Racing duo Matt Neal and Gordon Shedden. Former double champion Jason Plato will race an MG, while 1997 and 2000 winner Alain Menu has sealed a deal to race a Team BMR VW Passat (MN, January 29).

The 2009 title winner Colin Turkington is in advanced talks with the eBay Motors team to return in a BMW, although the deal had yet to be concluded as Motorsport News went to press.

The last time there were seven overall champions on the grid vas at Silverstone in September 1997. They were Menu, Frank Biela, Gabriele Tarquini, Tim Harvey, John Cleland, Will Hoy and privateer Robb Gravett.

### **Gio physics**

Giovanardi, who won the title for Vauxhall in 2007 and 2008, said that he had been keen on a return to the UK and had opened talks with Motorbase Performance, which runs the Airwaves-backed cars, late last season

The 47-year-old said: "When [team boss] David [Bartrum] called me I asked him if it was a ioke! He told me to come and see him and we started to put things together for a new challenge."

Giovanardi has raced in the Superstars series and a handful of Australian V8 Supercar rounds  $since \, quitting \, the \, BTCC. \, He \, has \,$ also taken part in several long distance races. The BTCC has changed its regulations from the S2000 machines that Giovanardi handled during his three previous BTCC campaigns to new Next Generation Touring Carrules. which mandate a raft of controlled parts to keep the costs down. The engines are also two-litre

Classified advertising: 0208 267 5355

turbocharged units. "Rejoining the BTCC is like being born again because in four years, everything has changed," said Giovanardi. "It is a challenge for me. Obviously I know the British championship but I don't know who is driving now.Ido know that there are a lot of good names to beat.

"The spirit of the championship is the same as when I was here before but because the car is new that is why there is a challenge. I am not worried about the new car because when you are racing. there is no time to be worried. Giovanardi will shake the car down on Thursday next week

before the team heads to Portimão in Portugal for some more intensive running. Team principal Bartrum said that upgrades to the car over the

winter should turn it into a title threat: "The car is ready to move to the next level and Fabrizio is the final piece of the jigsaw. Signing Fabrizio is brilliant for us. He is a great character.

"We have new staff in ex-Team Dynamics man Stuart Beaton and you will see a different look of the car. It will be a faster car for 2014 and we are ready to kick on."

 $Bartrum\, said\, that\, the\, drivers\, for$ his other two entries would be revealed soon.

**eBay at bay** Turkington's deal had yet to be  $finalised-although\, team\, boss$ Dick Bennetts was hopeful of

getting the Northern Irishman back in to a car.

Turkington, who was in the title  $fight\,until\,the\,final\,meeting\,last$ season, beat Giovanardi to the crown in 2009.

Bennetts said: "We are talking. and there is a desire on our part to have Colin in the car. It is all about the fine details, and we are having discussions all the time.'

The eBay Motors team should also confirm that Nick Foster and Rob Collard will remain with the team.

### Gow: it's about now

BTCC series director Alan Gow said the influx of interest in the championship with the household names returning would have a positive impact on the future of the contest.

Alongside the winners, there is a  $new \, licensing \, system \, for \, teams$ which has been introduced for 2014. It means that there should be 30 cars on the grid for each round and teams have some value for their slot on the grid.

Gow said: "When I created the  $NGTC\, rules, I\, was\, more\, focused$ with creating the stars for the future of the BTCC. But it's really nice to have some of the old guys  $back\dots in\,the\,smaller\,paddocks\,at$ some venues, it may be very difficult to accommodate all their egos! But seriously, they perfectly underline the stature of the BTCC  $and\,will\,create\,more\,media\,and$ spectator attention.

### FABRIZIO GIOVANARDI

Are you pleased to be back in the British Touring Car Championship?

I was away for four years. I was getting old and I wondered if maybe my chances to come back to the BTCC are finished. So instead, I started to do some boring races like 24-hour races and I was almost falling sleep in the car because it was dull. I knew that I wanted to get back to shorter races and have a real fight

Have you kept in touch with the BTCC since you have been away?

'Not really because when I moved

from the BTCC in 2010, I was pissed off because I wanted to race again in the UK. It is difficult to follow the other guys driving in a championship that you want to be in yourself. I isolated myself from it."

Do you think you will be able to adapt quickly enough to the new breed of Next Generation Touring Car?

have not got the answer to this. The time to be adapting to the car will be short, but we start in a good position The team have built the car so they have one year's experience, so the

car is not zero. The car is top I believe The rules are quite similar between the cars, so we have to fine-tune the set up and then I think we will find that I will be in the top."

quite old together now!

With all the former champions on the grid, is there anyone you're ALAIN MENU looking out for especially? The first name I can think about is lason Plato. Then there is Matt Neal and all my friends are there too. 1997, 2000 They are competitors in the car but they are real good friends too maybe because we are all getting

# **comeback in Airwaves Racing Focus**



# vanted to get with the new car Neal said serious testing of the Tourer would start next week.

ne was thrilled with his first outing

n the new Honda Civic Tourer,

which was shaken down at

Neal was giving passenge

hours of test work, which was

conducted back-to-back with I

the car up, but we were able to

omponents to make sure they

Neal's team-mate Gordon

bassenger rides to was a joy.

They were really buzzing, and tha

Shedden was also present at the

vere reliable."

of the 2013 machine Neal added: "It was hard to ge

rides over a four-day session to a

number of corporate quests but

Rockingham last week.

Neal tested Civic Tourer

2004 James Thompson (GBR) Vauxhall Astra Coupé

2002 James Thompson (GBR) Vauxhall Astra Coupé

Honda Integra

Vauxhall Astra Coupe

Vauxhall Astra Coupe



005 Matt Neal (GBR)

2003 Yvan Muller (FRA)

2001 Jason Plato (GBR)

999 Laurent Aïello (FRA)

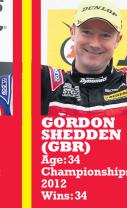
2000 Alain Menu (SUI)



ige:47

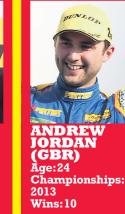


Àge:46



Giovanardi gets comfy in his

new Airwaves Ford Focus



ERC report: Latvia this week. Apply: any team with a Mercedes engine... **→**recycle

Classifieds

Karting round-up

Sporting Scene round-up

Letters/Comment/What's On

25

26

HOW HYUNDAI AIMS TO

Historic race and rally news

Retro: Fl's ugliest cars

Insight: FIA Formula E

Rally reports

Insight:Formula Renault NEC

Insight: Hyundai's WRC baptism