

Autosport

WILLIAMS FIGHTS FOR ITS FUTURE

ON TRACK New car must deliver

OFF TRACK B-team row to erupt

The new regulations are
"a charter for bankruptcy
unless you're a manufacturer"
Frank Williams



THE F1 CAR YOU JUST CAN'T MISS
Technical focus on bright new Spyker

CAN YOU TRUST YOUR INSTINCT?



THEY SAY that drivers know when they've got a winner after just a handful of laps in a new car. So how are the Formula 1 class of 2007 feeling after the first key test of the year?

Well, they're not about to tell us! It's early days and they can ill afford to speak freely about what their instincts are telling them. Some

will probably be churning inside, a knot of dark disappointment constantly reminding them that the new car just isn't quick enough, that they're in for a slog of hard work – that it isn't going to happen for them this season, just as it didn't last year. Stay positive, they'll be telling themselves, maybe we'll turn it around. But that knot inside won't let them forget the truth.

Then there is a select few who will be fit to burst, doing all they can to contain themselves, to maintain a poker face that doesn't let on they've got a flyer. Don't get carried away, it might not be as good as it looks, they'll be telling themselves. But for these guys, Melbourne can't come soon enough.

Is Fernando Alonso in the latter group right now? Is he safe in the knowledge that the move to McLaren is already paying off, that he's going to be just fine? By his pace last week in Valencia, you'd have to suspect that's exactly the case.

Perhaps – just perhaps – Kimi Raikkonen, Giancarlo Fisichella, Jenson Button and Mark Webber are carrying round those knots of dread in their stomachs. Hard to be sure. After all, the Valencia test was badly affected by rain and teams were inevitably enduring new-car gremlins.

But still, if it's really true that a handful of laps is all you need, they will know what they've got. It's only February, of course – but you can usually trust your instincts.

There may be five weeks until Melbourne, but we're already deep into the season.

DAMIEN SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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British sports car star Sam Hancock tries a 1970s sports racer for size and likes what he finds

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Can the new Toyota-powered machine turn the legendary F1 fortunes around in 2007?



Autosport TRACK TEST

COURAGE LC70 v ALFA T33

DRIVEN BY **SAM HANCOCK**
VENUE **DONINGTON PARK**
DATE **24.1.07**



Fisken leads Hancock in Alfa Romeo and Courage racers. Aerodynamics account for cars' physical difference

BEAUTY AND

British sportscar star SAM HANCOCK, a lifelong fan of 1970s sports racers, finally gets to compare one of the most iconic – Alfa Romeo's T33/TT/3 – with his regular mount, a Courage-Mugen LMP2 prototype. And he is suitably impress



Above: old meets new at Donington.
Below: Dean Lanzante (left) gives Hancock (centre) and Fisker Alfa brief



THE BEAST

Purposeful: that's the only way to describe the Courage LC70. Beautiful: is there a better word for the Alfa Romeo T33/TT/3? A modern Le Mans prototype and one of its predecessors from four decades ago couldn't look more different. Thirty years' worth of aerodynamic development are all too apparent as you look at them nose to nose on the main straight at Donington Park. You'd barely believe that they were designed for the same purpose: trying to win the Le Mans 24 Hours and other big sportscar races around the world.

Yet even as I start to climb into the Alfa of 1972 vintage, it becomes clear that it is of the same family as the Mugen-engined Courage LMP1 prototype I drove at Le Mans last year with my old friend Gregor Fisker and Switzerland's Alexander Frei. You don't feel quite as cocooned as you do in a modern prototype, but it's no different to a car from only a few years ago, before the latest round of safety improvements. It has the same basic cockpit arrangement as the Kremer Lola I raced in the FIA Sportscar Championship in 2001.

There is one difference, however. The gauges, what few there are in this spartan cockpit, are all in Italian. That means it says *acqua, benz, olio* and *giri* on the water, fuel, oil and rev read-outs.

That just serves to get me in the mood for the moment I've been waiting for, the moment the Alfa Romeo three-litre V8 barks into life. I grew up reading about 1970s sportscars, and watching videos too, so I can't wait to get to hear that wailing engine note.

I had high expectations for the engine, and it lived up to them and then some. That noise gets you right in the chest. My left ear is right next to the air intake, so I get a dose of induction roar, too. The noise is even better from inside the cockpit.

Take it up to over 7000-7500rpm, and this engine just sings. Let the rpm fall and it starts coughing and spluttering, so you've got to keep the revs up to get the best out of this engine. That's fine by me.

Gregor, who has brought along the T33 today, likens its V8 to Judd's 3.4-litre LMP2 powerplant. The characteristics of this engine aren't a million miles away from what we have today and the power-to-weight ratios of the old and new prototype aren't dissimilar.

The Alfa tips the scales at just 600kg thanks to an aluminium spaceframe chassis and beautifully-crafted titanium suspension. Of course, the 4.5-litre Mugen V8 could push out much more than the 600bhp or so we had at Le Mans last June, but don't forget the ever-smaller

