

Marcus Simmons's Stars of Tomorrow

AUTOSPORT's Marcus Simmons scours the junior single-seater ranks to pick out six youngsters making big waves on the path to Formula 1

By Marcus Simmons

AUTOSPORT chief sub-editor

Matthew Brabham



When the names Brabham and Andretti join forces, you're never going to expect an anonymous run in the midfield.

So it's proved in the Pro Mazda series in the US this season, with Matthew Brabham grandson of three-time world champion Jack and son of former Le Mans 24 Hours winner Geoff winning four of the first five races with the Andretti Autosport team.

Born in Florida, 19-year-old Brabham holds joint American and Australian citizenship. He moved from midgets into karts and then Formula Ford down under, before contesting the US F2000 series the first rung on the 'Road to Indy' ladder last season.

On race wins, Brabham was outdone eight-four by main rival Spencer Pigot, but consistency gave him the F2000 title and he was rewarded with selection as a Team

USA scholar. His prize for this was some end-of-season Formula Renault outings in the UK, where he came very close to a race win in the Winter Series at Rockingham.

This year he has comfortably outshone Pigot and all the rest on his graduation to Pro Mazda, a return to the US scene that indicates he is more likely to wind up emulating his dad and grandad by racing in the Indy 500, rather than copying Sir Jack and uncles David and Gary by competing in Formula 1.

His versatility is clear, as his wins this season have come on a road course (the Austin F1 venue), a street circuit (St Petersburg) and an oval (the five-eighths mile Indianapolis Raceway Park).

Jake Dalton



In a motorsport landscape increasingly populated with the offspring of former racing champions, Jake Dalton is no exception. But rather than being the son of an ex-Formula 1 or sportscar king, the current BRDC Formula 4 Championship leader's father is a multiple title winner in something rather more humble – 2CV racing.

Dalton, who recently turned 18, has even emulated dad Richard by racing a 2CV himself – in last year's 24-hour race – but it's in the single-seater realms where he's making an impression.

After hanging onto the coat-tails of Racing Steps proteges Jake Dennis and Ben Barnicoat in the last full season of his karting career, Dalton had a one-off outing in the InterSteps series for old Formula BMW cars in 2011.

Since then he has driven in Formula Renault BARC, finishing eighth against serious

opposition last season, and then in F4. It may be a different series, but he has remained with the MGR Motorsport team of Mark Godwin, where he continues to enjoy the coaching skills of 2009 McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award winner Dean Smith.

Its early days in the inaugural season of F4, but Dalton is the only man to have won non-reversed-grid races at each of the first two meetings and as a result he tops the points. At Silverstone he was on the pace all weekend, while at Brands Hatch he pulled a tremendous qualifying effort out of the bag, with a set-up that wasn't quite right, to lay the foundations for another victory.

So he's quick and, in the form of multiple world touring car title winner Andy Priaulx, who is giving Dalton some help, he also has a championship-winning expert to turn to if he ever needs clues on racking up points.

Luca Ghiotto



With victories in the prestigious Pau street race, and then in the Eurocup and ALPS rounds at Spa, this Italian teenager has put together a good run in Formula Renault recently.

The Pau race win was inherited after the British trio at the front removed themselves from contention in a spectacular shunt, but Ghiotto did a stout defensive job in the Eurocup round at Spa to fend off Pierre Gasly for a win. Back at the same venue last weekend for an ALPS round, he passed Prema team-mates Antonio Fuoco and Bruno Bonifacio to add to his tally.

Born in Vicenza in 1995, Ghiotto graduated from karting into Formula Abarth in 2011 with Prema, and has been with the team ever since. He showed a marked improvement

last season to claim seven wins more than anyone else in the category and finish runner-up in both the European and Italian Abarth classifications.

After the Abarth season had finished, Ghiotto moved into Renault as Prema returned to the category, and the relationship has continued into this year.

If anything, Ghiotto has been a little overshadowed by the arrival at Prema of Ferrari protege Antonio Fuoco, but he's on a very good roll at the moment. And if he moves up to Formula 3 in the future it won't be a first for the family: his father Franco and uncle Sergio raced into their forties in Italian F3 in the early 2000s with their own team, and since then have raced powerful single-seaters and sports-racers, with Franco winning the 2008 Italian Prototipi title.

Alessio Picariello



The leader of the ADAC Formel Masters series has blazed his way to five victories in the opening six non-reversed-grid races this season and only lost the sixth because of a drive-through penalty.

From the French-speaking Wallonia region of Belgium, this is a crucial season for Clemente Alessio Picariello (to give him his full name). Now 19, he moved into cars with a handful of Formula Renault NEC races in 2010, and continued in that series on an on-off basis until the end of last season. He dovetailed that in 2012 with his first FMasters campaign.

Now it's getting serious, for he's joined the crack Mucke Motorsport team and is reaping the plaudits in an ultra-successful season in the series that uses the Dallara Formolino chassis with a Volkswagen engine.

Picariello took two wins each at Oschersleben and then on home ground at Spa. Last weekend at the Sachsenring he was leading the first race when he copped a drive-through penalty for going too quickly under yellow flags. But, on slicks on a damp track, he dominated the second race, lapping nearly three seconds quicker than anyone else

Clearly everything is now in place for Picariello to take the title, and from that the logical move would be to graduate with Mucke from the junior ranks to European F3. Such a move worked out pretty well for a certain Pascal Wehrlein. And, come to think of it, for Sebastian Vettel.

Ed Jones



In the first couple of months of this season he seems to have been racing in a different series every weekend, but in all likelihood the well-supported European Formula 3 Open will become the main focus for Ed Jones over the summer months.

Having been born to English parents in Dubai and grown up in the Gulf state, 18-year-old Jones regards himself as a UAE national and is on a mission to represent the country on the international stage.

He signed up this season for dual campaigns in F3 Open with Team West-Tec and the Formula Renault Eurocup with Fortec Motorsport. He missed the first F3 event due to a clashing Renault round, but since then has won two out of four F3 races to move into third in the points.

Consistent Thai driver Sandy Stuvik has opened up a healthy points advantage, but Jones who is mentored by Lewis Hamilton's former karting mechanic Keiran Crawley

is chipping away and is on a strong run of form.

That includes an appearance in the British F3 opener at Silverstone with his West-Tec Dallara F312, in which he took a clean sweep of three National Class wins. He won't be doing the next round at Spa but, if he returns for Brands and the Nurburgring, he'll have a very strong chance of taking this title too.

The other focus will be on improving his Renault results with Fortec, the team that has run him since he moved into cars, firstly in InterSteps in 2011 and then in the FR Eurocup last season.

Afiq Ikhwan Yazid



He took an ultra-close title fight in the 2011 JK Racing Asia Series, for old Formula BMW cars, down to the final round against Lucas Auer, thanks to a run of 10 wins in the last 12 races.

At that point, this Malaysian looked the man most likely to follow Jazeman Jaafar as the next from his country to climb the single-seater ranks in Europe, but with a lack of funds his career stalled.

Auer is now a rising star of the Formula 3 European Championship, but since his Austrian opposition left Yazid endured a disappointing 2012. He was forced to abandon hopes to move to Europe to race in F3 or Formula Renault, and instead slipped to third in a repeat JK series campaign.

For 2013 he has remained with the Meritus squad of Irish expat Peter Thompson who has been loyal to the 21-year-old since the start of his car-racing career and switched

his focus to the Formula Masters China series.

Yazid had a handful of outings in this series last year, when it was called Formula Pilota China and was run for Formula Abarth cars. This season, Volkswagen has pumped in support for the championship and kept the Tatuus FBarth chassis, but switched to restricted VW F3 engines.

After the opening two rounds Yazid looks the class act, with three wins from six races. He proved his speed and car control in his year racing against Auer, and with his experience anything less than a maiden car-racing title will be a disappointment as he refocuses his long-term ambitions on a move into GT racing.

With Audi, Lamborghini and Porsche all having strong one-make GT3-spec series in Asia, his belated move to Europe could come via this route.