

Sonic youths

SPECIAL FEATURE A sextet of Britain's top young talent turned out at a soaking Silverstone last week to shoot it out for the chance to win this year's prestigious McLaren Autosport BRDC Award. By EDD STRAW



Even in the junior ranks of racing, pressure is everywhere. But, for six of Britain's best prospects, the evaluation tests for the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award had a significant extra edge.

Three very different classes of racing cars were made available to the contenders at a damp and often saturated Silverstone for two days last week to decide this year's prize winner, who will be revealed at the Autosport Awards on December 5, at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London.

A trio of Alan Docking Racing-run Dallara-Mugen Honda F302 Formula 3 cars, Gary Paffett's Mercedes C-class DTM machine and West Surrey Racing's independently-run British

Touring Car Championship MG ZS represented a diverse selection of machinery. Each is a test in its own right. But all three? In two days? With your every move scrutinised by a panel of experts? Now *that's* pressure.

Formula Renault UK champion Mike Conway, along with fellow series' frontrunners Paul di Resta and Susie Stoddart, EuroBOSS champ Scott Mansell, Formula BMW title holder Tim Bridgman and Formula Palmer Audi series winner Jonathan Kennard stepped up for two of the most important days of their careers.

Judging the sextet were former Award winner Andrew Kirkaldy, British Racing Drivers' Club secretary Roger Lane-Nott, former grand prix

driver Howden Ganley, veteran commentator Ian Titchmarsh and Autosport's Marcus Pye. It was a task almost as difficult as that faced by the drivers. The judges had to digest every aspect of the six drivers, from pace, attitude, presentation, technical feedback and consistency to technique. Picking the name to succeed the likes of David Coulthard, Jenson Button, Gary Paffett and Anthony Davidson was never going to be easy.

And the prize? Not only the prestige and a cash sum, but also the big carrot – a test drive in a contemporary McLaren-Mercedes Formula 1 car. Come December 5, one of these six will be on the fast-track to F1 – not bad for a couple of days work at a submerged Silverstone in October. ☺



Familiarity was gained in a Caterham