



HUMBLE PYE

# MARCUS PYE

## “DI RESTA IN THE WET AT SILVERSTONE WAS A REAL EYE-OPENER”

**PAUL DI RESTA's** McLaren Autosport BRDC driver award was thoroughly deserved, for, confidence buoyed by a tremendous climax to his Formula Renault season, he drove all three cars brilliantly at the Silverstone tests, impressing engineers and the judging panel alike.

While we are not clinging to the dream of Formula 1 tests or additional kudos for our CVs, the six weeks before the announcement are as interminable for judges as they are for nominees.

In fact, it was only last week that I was obliged to share the secret of di Resta's success with a trusted colleague in charge of the evening's logistics. This time round, unusually, nobody tried to prise the result from me beforehand. I presumed, therefore, that everybody had anticipated the likely result.

Their money might not have been on di Resta, but they did not see him perform in the wet at Silverstone. That was an eye-opener!

Watching him attack the International circuit's Abbey Hairpin in the Formula 3 Dallara, visibly carrying more speed into the slippery corner than his rivals, yet balancing the car throughout the foreshortened braking area, then getting it turned in and blasting away, was simply magical.

The five other finalists did themselves proud, too, each underlining their talent over the three disciplines (F3, DTM Mercedes and BTCC MG) over two days.

EuroBOSS champion Scott Mansell had the toughest job, stepping back from a high-powered, downforce-laden single-seater to the F3 car—a much

more logical upward progression for Renault, Palmer Audi and BMW drivers.

But that is precisely why we put the bold Midlander under the spotlight. Anybody who has seen him tame that Benetton-Judd V10 knows he can hack it in the power stakes—the Merc brought a huge smile—and that is the direction his career must take.

Looking outside the box is something we've done before in selecting the six awards finalists, with the likes of Clubmans champ Dan Eagling, double Formula Honda title holder (and now SEAT king) James Pickford, and Caterham winner Simon Pullan. None managed to win the grand prize, but all gained a great deal from the total experience of the awards.

My one major regret is that I failed to persuade fellow judges that runaway British Hillclimb champion Andy Priaulx should be in the '95 shoot-out. Perhaps it would have been too soon, for the transitional Formula Renault season and subsequent Renault Spider, F3 and BTCC campaigns hardened the Guernseyman's resolve.

The roar in the Autosport office when we learned he'd won the European Touring Car Championship for BMW in Dubai was genuine. I was as thrilled for Priaulx landing the coveted British Competition Driver award on Sunday as I was later for di Resta.



Di Resta's performance in the wet awards tests did much to persuade the judges

