

Four young Brits boost F1 hopes



JOLYON GOOD SHOW ... winner Palmer, centre, on GP2 podium with Chilton, left

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THE future of British motorsport was given a huge boost at Monaco as FOUR rising stars proved they have the talent to reach Formula One.

Jolyon Palmer, son of ex-Williams F1 driver Jonathan, took his first GP2 win in F1's main feeder series.

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Max Chilton, brother of touring car star Tom, was close behind Palmer in second place.

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Mercedes F1 reserve driver Sam Bird took the chequered flag in another supporting race for Renault 3.5 single-seaters, fighting off a desperate late lunge from Ferrari academy ace Jules Bianchi.

And perhaps the most promising of the lot, James Calado, showed he could mix it with the best in GP2.

Palmer, 21, kept his cool in the second of two GP2 races in the principality to win for the iSport team.

He made a lightning start from third on the grid, which was just as well as a mega-shunt involving seven cars exploded behind him in the run-up to Casino Square.

After a safety car period he pulled clear but then had to withstand a late challenge from the closing Chilton.

A jubilant Palmer – whose dad runs the MSV group of British circuits including Brands Hatch – added his name to a list of previous Monaco GP2 winners including Lewis Hamilton, Sergio Perez, Bruno Senna and Pastor Maldonado.

He said: "I got an awesome start to jump into the lead and after the safety car I was able to build a good gap to Max. Then I just managed it without taking any risks.

"Hopefully we can now carry this momentum through to the next rounds at Valencia and be fighting at the front again."

Carlin driver Chilton had his strongest-ever weekend in GP2 as he also finished fifth in the weekend's first race after qualifying on the front row.

Calado, driving for Lotus and backed by the Racing Steps Foundation that helps rising British stars, has been among the season's pacesetters.

At Monaco he turned 13th on the grid into a seventh-place finish in Race One.

He looked set for a win or at least a podium in Race Two but tangled at the first corner with pole-sitter Stephane Richelmi.

He pressed on but his front wing was damaged and he eventually had to pit.

Bird and Bianchi were in a class of their own in the Renault 3.5 encounter.

On the final lap, Bianchi tried to pass at the chicane after pulling up to Bird's rear wing in the tunnel.

But he thought better of it at the last gasp, narrowly avoiding the Brit before clattering over the kerbs.