

Jolyon Palmer is among the favourites for the GP2 Series



by **HOWARD GRIGGS**
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JOLYON PALMER is hoping for a change of luck as he looks to make the ultimate step into Formula One.

The Sussex driver will be among the favourites for the title when the new GP2 Series gets under way alongside the biggest names in the sport in Bahrain this weekend.

Palmer, 23, is embarking upon his fourth season in GP2, a feeder series to Formula One. Former champions include Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Timo Glock.

Long earmarked as a top prospect in the sport, Palmer has always made it clear his ambition is to race in Formula One, just as his father Jonathan did in the past.

To take a step closer to that goal, he needs to make a concerted challenge for this season's GP2 title with DAMS, his new French team.

The highly-respected DAMS team have provided the GP2 champion for two of the last three seasons and Palmer intends to continue their success story.

He scored two feature race wins last season, including a flawless weekend at the penultimate round in Singapore where he also claimed a maiden pole position and fastest lap on his way to his second victory of the year.

Palmer, driving for Carlin, finished seventh overall in the standings in 2013, not helped by some problems in the first half of the season.

That was still an improvement on 11th the year before and 28th in 2011. Palmer, from Southwater, believes

Palmer's driving ambition is place in F1 team

everything is in place for a good campaign, especially after pre-season testing went well, but he also knows he needs a bit of fortune on his side as well.

He said: "I'm very confident with myself, with the team, with the car, with everything. In testing we were very strong."

"It is important to get off to a good

start this weekend and just hope we can get a couple of lucky breaks which I think you need early on in the season to get the ball rolling.

"In my last couple of years especially I have had a lot of bad luck. Last year there was so much which cost me some good positions. There was a wheel falling off while in a podium position in Monza, I was run into by my team-mate, there were so many things which were stopping me getting the points. We should have been fighting towards the front of the championship.

"The year before I had a car which kept breaking down, for five races over three weekends we couldn't really fix it so that cost me in a couple of races.

"I'm aware bad luck can have an impact. Hopefully I have had my fair share now but you can't really go into a season worrying about luck. It will happen if it happens and I just have to do the best I can. Whenever I'm in the car I will just do the absolute maximum."

Palmer, whose younger brother Will is also making progress in the sport, believes the move to DAMS will help further his career.

He said: "They have had a bit of success in the past. Two times in the last three years they have won the drivers' championship.

"I have been down there quite a bit during the winter, before the testing, doing a lot of preparation work. Then testing went really well.

"I'm confident the car is going to be capable of fighting for wins and I have been working hard with the team to get the most out of myself as well. Hopefully we have got all the ingredients in place and it can make the difference."

Home town title hopes are fading for Jones

by **MIKE LEGG**
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BEN JONES admits his hopes of a dream world title fight at Crawley Town's stadium are dwindling.

But the WBO European super-featherweight champion, left, is still confident he

will be challenging for a big title this summer.

Assassin Promotions have been trying to thrash out a deal with Crawley Town Football Club to stage a world title showdown at the Checkatrade.com Stadium on May 10.

Despite support for the plans from the town council, the prospect of that happening is getting less likely with each passing day.

Jones, 31, from Crawley, is refusing to rule it out but said: "It needed to be all sorted out eight weeks before for the police and others and now we are down to five-and-a-half weeks.

"From that, I take it that it is not likely to happen there."

Jones is optimistic that he will still get his world title shot, though, with a challenge for an International Boxing Association (IBA) belt.

He said: "The IBA still want me to fight for their world title. They would love to have more of a profile in Britain.

"It is massive in America and Bernard Hopkins is fighting for the IBA light-heavyweight title in two weeks time.

"Oscar De La Hoya has won it, Roy Jones Junior won it and they call it the stepping stone title. It is a stepping stone but it is still a fantastic title and right on the edge of everything.

"It would help me if I got it and it was settled for me to fight for it at Crawley."

Salmon loses in semi-finals

PROMISING West Hill (Hastings) amateur Toby Salmon lost in his South semi-final of the National Schoolboy Championships last Sunday.

He was beaten by Repton's Adam Mohammad in under-41.5kg class A (born 2001).