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28 AUGUST 2008

GP2 SERIES Valencia



Final stretch

Pantano, di Grassi and Senna set up tantalising title finale

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TITLE PREVIEW
LOWDOWN ON GP2'S SELECT

ZUBER Q&A
ANDI'S SEASON SO FAR

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Glock watching

Timo Glock is the reigning GP2 Series champion having won the title in 2007 with iSport. Now driving for the Toyota F1 team, he gives us the inside line on this year's GP2 championship race, and how iSport can propel Bruno Senna to the drivers' title.

Even though I've been incredibly busy this year, having moved to Formula 1 with Toyota after winning the 2008 GP2 Series, I still find time to keep an eye on the GP2 races.

They're so interesting to watch, and I try to get onto the grid and among the drivers before the race start as often as possible. It's a great place to be. I'm still in touch with a lot of people in the championship – especially my old team, iSport International. They're the reason why I'm in F1 today.

In terms of this year's GP2 championship fight, I have to say that Bruno Senna – the man who has taken my seat at iSport – is impressive, and at times this year he's been performing incredibly well. His team-mate, Karun Chandhok, has also shown some good speed and, when he gets his stuff together, he looks very strong.

I've known Giorgio Pantano – who is currently leading the point standings – for a long time. He's been in GP2 for a few years now, and every time he jumps in a car, he's quick, whether it's a top team or not. I think it will be difficult for anyone to pip him to the title.

The man to beat

For sure, he has the potential and speed to be in F1. Ultimately, Giorgio is still the guy to beat. But, Bruno is right on his arse. He is showing that he has the potential and I know how good his team is so I expect him to be fighting all the way.

Among the other frontrunners, Romain Grosjean looks impressive, especially considering that he's a rookie this year. He was strong in Formula 3, and he

was strong in GP2 Asia, as he proved by winning the title. He's perhaps a bit inconsistent, but, once he's got that sorted, he's another guy that can fight for the championship.

I can relate to Luca Filippi's difficult year with ART Grand Prix and now Trust Team Arden. I changed teams from BCN Competicion to iSport mid-season in 2006, and it's a tricky thing to adapt to. Luca showed last year that he has the speed, but this year things just aren't happening like he'd planned. He has to get his confidence back.

Confidence is critical

Being in a team where you feel confident and believing that the team is behind you, is critical to any driver's mentality. That's what I found at iSport. Within two hours of meeting them in some Chinese restaurant in Northampton, I felt like I'd been there for a whole year.

It's all part of learning about racing for the future, though. As I've found this year, once you get into F1 everything changes. I mean everything. In F1 every minute of your schedule is planned from Thursday midday, right through to Sunday. It's a big difference to GP2, and it's quite tricky to get focused when you finally get to sit in the car to do your job. So it's nice for me to relax and watch the GP2 races when I can.

With just two more events, and four races, of the 2008 season to go, it's looking like it's going to be a great finish to the year. Whether it's my old friend Giorgio, or Bruno at my old team, iSport, I've got plenty to cheer for, so I'll be just as interested in the outcome as you are.



Toyota F1 driver and reigning GP2 champion Timo Glock



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One eye on GP2 Asia

The GP2 teams enjoyed a summer break before the Valencia races, so we caught up with some GP2 team principals to talk summer holidays, sponsors and all-important GP2 Asia preparations.



Paul Jackson iSport

"We've been working on our GP2 Asia plans over the break and we're very pleased to have secured a major sponsor in Gulf Finance House as well as a driver from the region in Hamad Al Fardan. One of the targets of the series as a whole is to engage with the Asian community and bring on local drivers. This is a first step along that road for us, to develop a Middle Eastern driver to a highly competitive level."



Frederic Vasseur, ART

"We have been focusing on the current series over the last few weeks, so the Asia Series line-up has not been decided yet. This will happen in the next couple of weeks, and definitely before the test at Paul Ricard in September. That is when I want to test with my Asia Series drivers, so that we are well prepared to start the new season."



Alfonso de Orleans Borbón, Racing Engineering

"During the three-week break everyone on the team managed to get a holiday of some sort, but there was someone at the raceshop every day. We really didn't do anything different to the car during that time - if it ain't broken don't fix it. I spent most of my time on my yacht off the coast of Greece, near Mykonos. I work hard all year so when I get a chance I love to go over there."



Adrian Campos Campos

"The plans for GP2 Asia are going well, our cars are already on the way to the region and we are speaking to some drivers, but nothing is decided yet. We would like to have Natacha Gachnang, who races for our Spanish F3 team, and during the break we've been working in that direction. For our team sponsor, Barwa International, it's great to go back to the region, and it's very important for us to do the Asian Series in a good way."

Q&A ANDREAS ZUBER

Andreas Zuber and his Piquet Sports team have been enjoying a resurgence during the last three rounds of the series, and following his second place in the Hungarian feature race, the Austrian is full of praise for his current outfit.

You've had some great results in recent races, you must be pleased?

"Yeah, our race performances since the middle of the season have been much improved and much more consistent. We found a good solution at Hockenheim and had a very good second race there. In Budapest we showed that we are now as quick in the races as we know we can be during qualifying."

What have you changed to achieve this?

"This year's car is quite tricky to set-up. A lot of drivers have struggled to find a good direction, and although our first three races were okay, we then had problems with tyre wear towards the middle of the season. The main problem was the back end of the car, but now we've found some clever ways to solve the problem."

Piquet Sports is your third GP2 team, how do you rate them?

"They are very strong, a very good team. All the teams in GP2 are very professional, and the three teams I've been with - Trident, iSport and Piquet Sports - are at a very high level. It's like the junior world championship for drivers and teams!"

For your career, how important is this year?

"GP2 is mega-important. Formula 1 teams take a lot of interest in this championship, it's the only place they look. If you want to get to F1, you have to perform in GP2."

What are your hopes for the final rounds?

"I want to win a race this year. I've had lots of podiums, but that is my ultimate aim."

Andreas Zuber scored back-to-back second places in Germany and Hungary



[CLICK HERE FOR ZUBER'S PROFILE](#)

GOOD MONTH



CAMPOS

Three wins in four races - including a double in their home event - has catapulted Campos above Racing Engineering and into second in the team standings. Seven points behind iSport and with Lucas di Grassi pushing hard for the drivers' title, the Spanish team could yet win the pair.



JÉRÔME D'AMBROSIO

The 22-year-old Belgian enjoyed his most successful weekend of the year in Valencia. Fifth place in the feature race was only his second points finish of the season, but was also followed up with second in the Spanish sprint race. The perfect filip ahead of his Spa homecoming.



BRUNO SENNA

An imposing three consecutive thirds in Germany and Hungary had Senna nudging Pantano's bumper at the top of the table. But Spanish eyes weren't smiling on the iSport man in Valencia. He failed to score any points in Spain, allowing third placed Lucas di Grassi to close the gap at the top of the standings.



LUCA FILIPPI

The Italian has promised so much all season, but ultimately delivered very little. An eighth in race one at Valencia was his third points finish of the season. It set him up for pole in race two, which he converted to a second place finish before a 25 second penalty dropped him back to 13th.



MARKO ASMER

When the FMS driver's luck is out it's really out. Yet to score since joining GP2 in France, Marko was forced to retire from the last three races and must look to Spa and Monza to end the year on a high.

BAD MONTH

GP2 prepares season finale

GP2 Series organisers have released details of their end of year awards ceremony at the Monza Sporting Club.

The Winning Attitudes Awards (WAA) charity dinner, on September 14, will include the award for best driver - as voted for by visitors to the GP2 Series website (<http://surveyor.caradisiac.com/index.php?sid=57>) plus presentations to the title-winning driver and team.

The evening starts at 7pm and will be run in partnership with the Gonzalo Rodriguez Memorial Foundation (GRMF), which was formed in memory of the young driver, after his career was cut short by a racing accident in 1999.

Proceeds from an auction held during the WAA will go towards the charity, which uses sport to engage children in underdeveloped areas.

On Thursday September 11 from 4:30pm the GP2 paddock will host a cocktail reception to announce the WAA nominees. The event will also include a photocall with a number of F1 stars who will be signing a large canvas that will be auctioned at the dinner on Sunday evening.



Last year's WAA dinner in Valencia

Senna: GP2 title key for F1 seat

iSport driver Bruno Senna believes taking the GP2 drivers' title would play a big part in any negotiations for a 2009 Formula One seat.

Speaking to the GP2 e-zine about his F1 options for next year, Senna explained: "In my opinion it's important to deliver [the GP2 title]. Sometimes things don't go your way, but, trust me, I'll only give up when I have no more chance to win. I'm sure I can do a good job."

The Brazilian currently sits in second place overall, 13 points behind series leader Giorgio Pantano of Racing Engineering and has been busy investigating his options for next year.

"I'm doing all the things I have to do, chatting to the right people in the F1 paddock, and we'll see how it turns out.

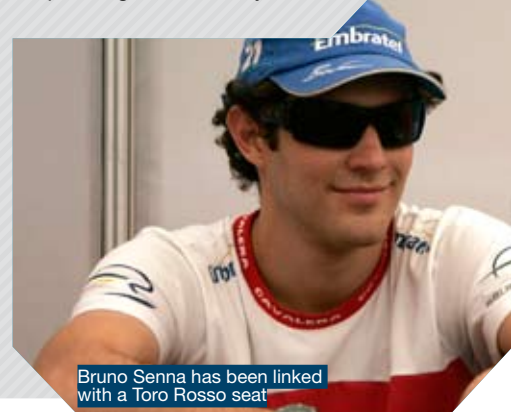
"The only team I haven't spoken to at all is Ferrari. So there's no real logical place for me to go yet. We've spoken to many, many people about the best option in both the short and long terms. There's no point in doing something

for next year and then having nothing for 2010 or 2011."

Although Senna has been strongly linked to a Toro Rosso race seat next season, the 24-year-old is taking nothing for granted.

"It's a tough time now," he said. "It might look very good, because people are saying 'he's good in GP2 and he's obviously going to F1' but really, where? How?"

"I'd consider a test seat. At the moment I'm considering everything. But a race drive would be a better option, because I don't want to stop racing for a whole year."



Bruno Senna has been linked with a Toro Rosso seat



FROM THE
GP2SERIES.COM
BLOG

Pastor builds foundation

As the Pastor Maldonado Foundation enters its fourth year, the Piquet Sports driver has been speaking to the GP2 e-zine about setting up the charity in his native Venezuela.

"The purpose of the charity is to help impoverished kids in Venezuela to learn and develop through sport and education," explained Maldonado.

"Throughout the year the foundation helps young children through a variety of means, whether that's paying for medical operations that they cannot afford, organising sports events, sponsoring schools or encouraging children to focus on education.

"In the past we've organised karting events for children that would never be able to afford that sort of sport. It is always a great event for them and an unbelievable experience for me."

Walking down to the podium after the feature race I came across Nelson Piquet talking to Hiroki Yoshimoto at the Renault pit perch.

Just then the Brazilian national anthem started up, and looking at the screens Nelson didn't like what he saw.

"Come on Lucas, take off your hat..." he said.

"Look at you: after Hockenheim you're suddenly the podium expert now!"

"Well, I was when I was in GP2!"

"Yeah, fair enough. Nice job by you today, too."

"Well it's a shame for Zuber, but..."

"No no, I mean for you in F1 qualifying today, you idiot!"

"Oh, right..."

See blog.gp2series.caradisiac.com for more

Paddock Pass GP2 News You Can't Get Anywhere Else



As the title race heats up, Bruno Senna and Lucas di Grassi's tussle for the title has spilled over into the realms of picture messaging. First off Bruno sent di Grassi a photo of this yoghurt pot that he hopes carries a prediction for Lucas' title chances - "0.1% di Grassi" and out of date.

The Campos driver's retort? He sent Bruno back a snap of this packet of laxative tablets emblazoned with Senna's name. Bruno must have finished up the happier of the two though - at least his name appears on something that is associated with speeding things up...

There are always teething problems at a new circuit and the one that caused the most gnashing of teeth (or should that be chewing of gums?) at Valencia was how far the GP2 paddock was from the pitlane entrance.

It took a good 20 minutes to walk between the two, which meant that the traditional circuit walk on Thursday attracted some diverse modes of transport.

Marko Asmer opted for the traditional paddock scooter, Vitaly Petrov - complete with race helmet - took the team quadbike, while Romain Grosjean strapped on the loudest trainers in Valencia and legged it.



The GP2 paddock had problems with internet access over the Valencia weekend, and rumour has it the cause was an F1 team boss' yacht. The circuit's swing bridge was sealed in place for the race weekend, meaning any boats arriving late couldn't enter the harbour. But one tardy F1 boss convinced race organisers to pull up cables and wiring, let him through then reseal the bridge.



AWAY FROM THE TRACK

ALVARO PARENTE, DOG LOVER

I've always loved dogs since I was young, and my father always had them at our family home. Sadly, my own dog passed away a couple of months ago, but my girlfriend has four dogs, and one of them is like having my own again.

I went to get him as a puppy from a really nice place in the South of Portugal just after he'd been born. He was just the size of my hand when I first picked him up!

I am at my girlfriend's house almost every day, so it's almost like he is mine - when he sees me, he comes running over and jumps up.



He's a boxer, the same breed as my old dog, and he's called Rasta which is strange, because he doesn't have very long hair and you can't do any Rasta dreadlocks with it, that's for sure.

Dreads or not, I love that breed of dog, because they are so energetic and playful. They say dogs are like their owners, but I'm not sure if he has a personality like mine, that depends on how lazy I'm feeling!

I'm also into lots of other sports away from the track, including tennis and football, and absolutely anything on the water, but I have to be careful and make sure I don't get hurt so it doesn't affect my racing.

Actually, I sometimes play football with the dog too!

He's quite good, but when I kick it against the wall he goes mental!

[CLICK HERE FOR ALVARO'S PROFILE](#)

RACE REPORT

CLICK HERE FOR RACE IMAGES

SPAIN

VALENCIA (August 23-24)



Campos takes double Spanish win as race one fuel miscalculations upset Senna and Pantano.

Vitaly Petrov and Lucas di Grassi gave the Spanish Campos team the perfect homecoming by winning the feature and sprint races as GP2 debuted on Valencia's new street circuit.

Petrov had spent all of race one in second behind Giorgio Pantano, before the Italian ran out of fuel just metres from the finish. Heartbreak for Pantano's Racing Engineering team meant delight for Campos as Petrov crossed the line first, 0.8s ahead of Pastor Maldonado of the resurgent Piquet Sports.

Di Grassi completed the Campos double in race two, snatching first from Luca Filippi as the Arden driver scrapped with Romain Grosjean. Filippi finished second but was subsequently given a 25 second penalty for coming together with Grosjean and dropped down to 13th.

Di Grassi also picked up the extra point for the fastest lap in race two, closing the overall gap on Bruno Senna who failed to score in either race, running out of fuel in the first outing before crashing out of the sprint..

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Drivers' points

1	Giorgio Pantano	71
2	Bruno Senna	58
3	Lucas di Grassi	51
4	Romain Grosjean	42
5	Sébastien Buemi	37
6	Pastor Maldonado	35
7	Andreas Zuber	32
8	Karun Chandhok	31

Teams' points

1	iSport International	89
2	Barwa Int. Campos	82
3	Racing Engineering	79
4	Piquet Sports	67
5	ART Gradh Prix	50
6	Trust Team Arden	43
7	Super Nova Racing	36
8	Trident Racing	25

Feature race (34 laps)

1	Vitaly Petrov	(Campos)
2	Pastor Maldonado	(Piquet)
3	Romain Grosjean	(ART)
4	Lucas Di Grassi	(Campos)
5	Jérôme D'Ambrosio	(Dams)
6	Sébastien Buemi	(Arden)
7	Andy Soucek	(Super Nova)
8	Luca Filippi	(Arden)

Fastest lap Giorgio Pantano
Pole position Giorgio Pantano

Sprint race (23 laps)

1	Lucas Di Grassi	(Campos)
2	Jérôme D'Ambrosio	(Dams)
3	Giorgio Pantano	(Racing Eng.)
4	Diego Nunes	(DPR)
5	Javier Villa	(Racing Eng.)
6	Kamui Kobayashi	(Dams)
7	Davide Valsecchi	(Durango)
8	Mike Conway	(Trident)

Fastest lap Lucas di Grassi
Pole position Luca Filippi

MONZA, ITALY PREVIEW

Whether or not Giorgio Pantano has the title wrapped up by Monza, he's looking forward to his home race.

EAT

The lavish surroundings of Shu and the Just Cavalli Café are rich in Milanese excess.

STAY

The family-managed Grand Hotel Et De Milan is a must for its old-world elegance and charm.

SEE

Balance the culture of the Pinacoteca di Brera art museum with shopping in Italy's consumer capital.

Monza is my home track, so when I arrive there it always feels very good. I turn up, I jump in the car, I go out on the track - it's almost too easy!

It helps that each time I've raced there, I've done well and the way I drive the car is obviously suited to Monza: the way I brake, the line I take, how I hit the kerbs, which kerbs to miss. For me it's such a good feeling to be racing there.

When I'm going through the Roggia corner, the two Lesmos and down to Ascari, I look at the trees that surround the circuit and I feel relaxed. On a sunny day, it's a beautiful place to be racing.

But the speed is so high, and the downforce is low so that the car feels very light and it can still be quite scary approaching the braking zones, no matter how relaxed you are.

I couldn't say what the key is to being quick there

though. I just do what I do, and I'm always quick - so that must be the secret.

Of course, the other attraction is that there are plenty of great places in nearby Milan to eat, drink and hopefully celebrate...

Dates 13-14 September
Track length 5.793 km (3.599 miles)
Race One 42 laps (13 Sept 4:00pm)
Race Two 28 laps (14 Sept 10:30am)
Website www.monzanel.it



SHOWDOWN PREVIEW

Glory calling for title trio

With just two rounds left, Pantano, Senna and di Grassi are locked in a three-way battle for the 2008 drivers' title. We assess their seasons, and championship hopes.



NAME: Giorgio Pantano
TEAM: Racing Engineering
POSITION: 1st
POINTS: 71

LOOKED LIKE A CHAMPION...

...for much of the second half of this season. Consistent points finishes and three consecutive feature race wins in France, Britain and Germany marked Pantano out as the man anyone with title aspirations would have to beat.

MAY LIVE TO REGRET...

...a double retirement in Monaco. The first time this year that one of the top three came away from a weekend pointless could yet prove costly for Pantano. His collision with Sebastien Buemi in the feature race was unavoidable, but the crash with Marcello Puglisi in race two was Pantano's fault.

FATE HAD A SAY WHEN...

...an unexpected brake problem in Hungary allowed Bruno Senna to close on Pantano in the overall standings. "The problem with the brakes was overheating the rear tyres. This was my bad weekend of the season," explained the Italian.

NEEDS TO...

...keep his nose clean and go for points not glory. Should the Italian outscore Senna by six points or more in Spa he will have the championship pocketed before for his home race at Monza.



NAME: Bruno Senna
TEAM: iSport
POSITION: 2nd
POINTS: 58

LOOKED LIKE A CHAMPION...

...when he took the top step of the Monaco podium earlier this year. For much of the world's press it was the moment that marked Bruno's arrival in world motorsport. The Brazilian soaked up the media attention and hasn't looked back since.

MAY LIVE TO REGRET...

...three consecutive third place finishes in Germany and Hungary. Normally three podiums in a row would be a dream haul, but with Pantano failing to score in two of those outings, and the championship so close, converting just one third to a win could have had a big impact on the title.

FATE HAD A SAY WHEN...

...Bruno hit a dog. Probably the most bizarre retirement in GP2 history befell Senna while he was running sixth in Turkey's sprint race. The Brazilian hit one of two wild dogs that ran onto the circuit and was forced out of the race with damaged suspension.

NEEDS TO...

...find a way of beating Pantano at Monza. The Italian has three GP2 wins at his home circuit including a double in 2006. If Senna is to overhaul him he can't afford to let Pantano onto the top step.



NAME: Lucas di Grassi
TEAM: Campos
POSITION: 3rd
POINTS: 51

LOOKED LIKE A CHAMPION...

...after almost every round he has contested. Di Grassi missed the first six races of this season, but finished second on his return at the French feature race. Since then he has scored points with metronomic consistency and suffered just one retirement.

MAY LIVE TO REGRET...

...missing those first three rounds of the series. On average, di Grassi has scored over five points in each of his 10 races. With Pantano's scoring average at less than 4.5 in 16 outings, Di Grassi is delivering more bang per buck, but with just two rounds left he is running out of race track.

FATE HAD A SAY WHEN...

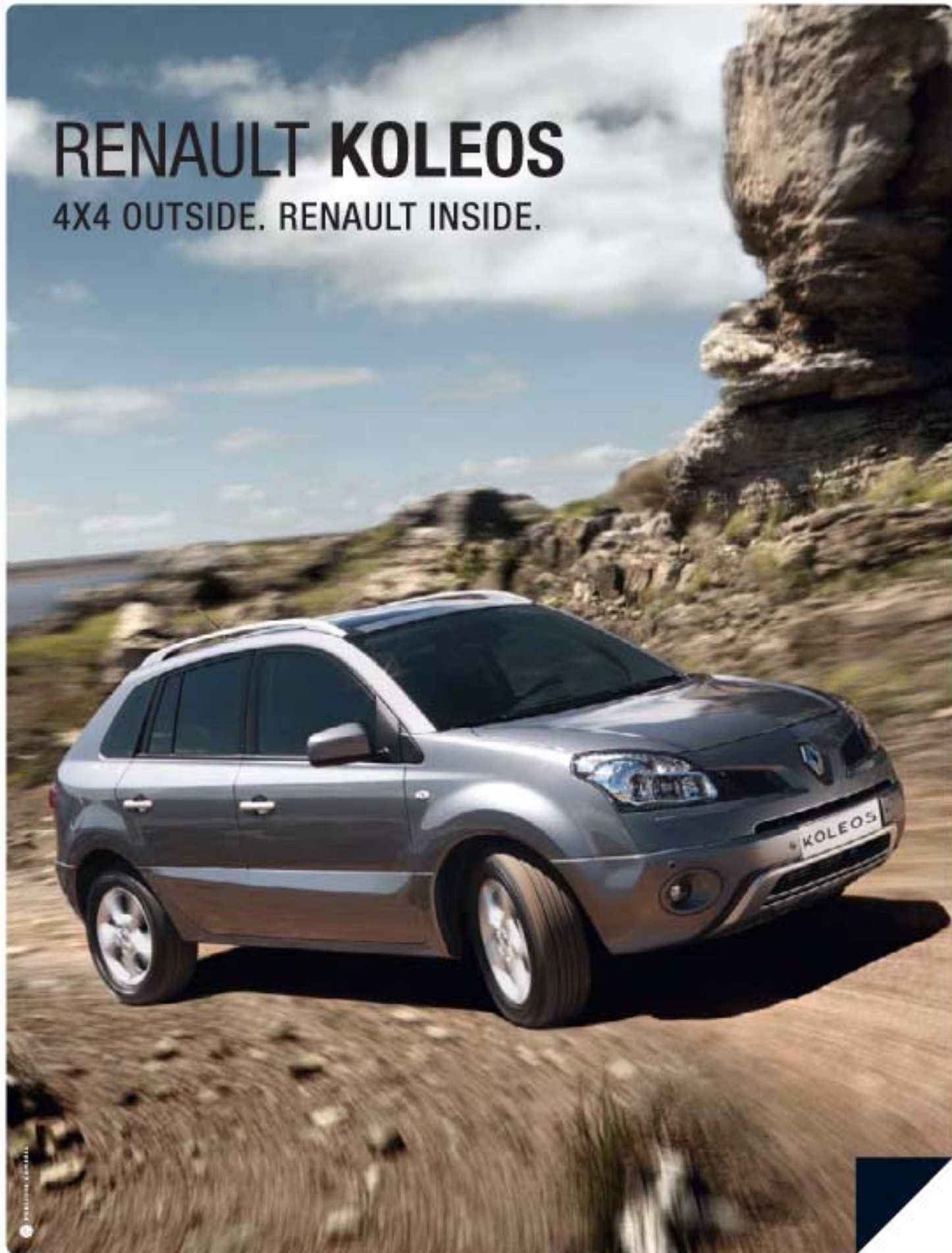
...Pantano ran out of fuel while leading the Valencia feature race. Had Pantano won that race, instead of coasting to a halt at the final bend, his resultant 32-point lead over di Grassi would have been all-but unassailable for the Brazilian Campos driver.

NEEDS TO...

...keep up his momentum. The last two rounds brought Di Grassi his first two wins of the year. Realistically, if he wants to go on and take the title, he needs wins at Spa and Monza.

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Renault Koleos, also in 4x2. Fuel consumption figures min/max (l/100km): 7,2/9,9 - CO₂ Emissions min/max (g/km): 191/237. 

