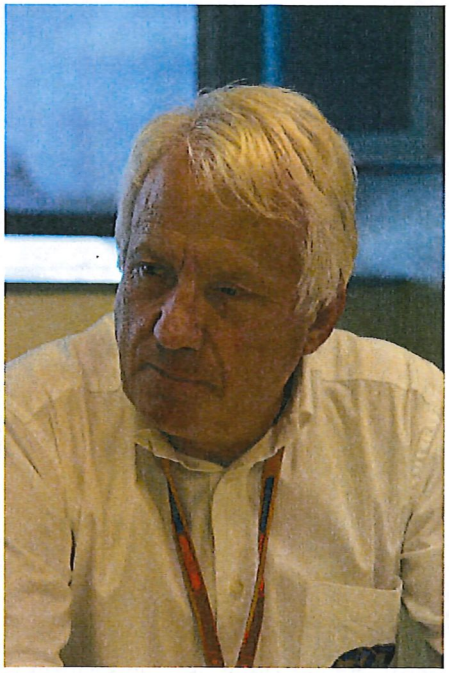
THE OFFICIALS
UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX NEWSLETTER

CHATTING WITH CHARLIE

Time for this year's annual treat - Chatting With Charlie Whiting, the FIA F1 Race Director, Starter and Safety Delegate. This year is the fifth year for USGP at COTA. Charlie said "The first year went very, very well. The track was perfect, better than any circuit I've had. We've had a few issues with the artificial grass coming up which we've sorted with different kinds of mix in the soil. And this year we have new kerbs at the exit of (Turn) Nineteen. But now the circuit has evolved into a very good race track. The only issue is the underlying soil it was built on. It's very, very strange soil. If you've ever seen the surface in a car park, that's what the track would be like if they hadn't done all the underlying work to make sure it doesn't. But it's probably going to be a little bit of a worry at some point in the future. But, as an event, I think it's grown, matured, and everyone has worked together. And to hear that the marshal communication has improved is a step in the right direction." (Ed Note: A new landline system was just installed and being used for the first time this weekend.) The track was state of the art when it was built and it remains that way.

Charlie was quite pleased that there is a new landline system at COTA which is being used for the very first time this weekend. He's been asking for it for a long time. While he doesn't get to talk with anyone on the track directly, "If it improves communications then it's good. And it's always good to have a back-up radio system, which COTA has."



Charlie Whiting

The landline was put to use Thursday for the obligatory Track Familiarization Test and Systems Checks. There were a few teething problems, to be expected with something brand new, but overall it was good.

The Virtual Safety Car procedure was first tested at USGP two years ago, and was made policy last year. "Virtual Safety Car is working out very well, really, really good. And it's liked by the Marshals. And now that we use it in Practice, which we never did before, even the Marshals in Monaco like it. The marshals there don't really worry about cars being on the track there, it's just part of their job. But even they said 'Wow, this makes a big difference. The cars are actually noticeably slower.' And that's what they want to know - that a driver is going 30 percent slower than he would normally. That s a huge margin. So it's working out really well. It just means that incidents can be dealt with quickly. We don't have to shut down the whole thing, and then recover the car, restart it, get the teams adequate notice, it just goes on. And to my surprise, a few cars do stay out. I thought they would just come into the pits, but they don't. They're on a long run, for example, and they realize that this could happen in the race, 'so let's see what we run one and a half laps under the VSC.' And it s all part of their race preparation. So it's worked out very well".

The F1 Safety Car driver, Bernd Maylander, on the job since 2000, may be used a little less now than he would have been otherwise, "But we still need a Safety Car. For those first lap incidents, for example, when you have to bring the Safety Car through the pit lane. Those are the sort of things where you need a Safety Car to slow them down slower than with the VSC. With the VSC and the SC, the lap times are the same and the drivers have to do exactly the same thing and follow the same system."

The new double yellow flag procedure for Qualifying has been implemented. "If a couple of yellows are shown, there shouldn't be any attempt to set a meaningful lap time. That's what is meant by the rule. So no meaningful lap time means basically you ve got to bail out of the lap. It's as simple as that. The very reason we're saying that, is that it's an alternative to a Red Flag. It's in order to ensure that those who are in front of the accident or incident don't necessarily get their times wiped. If you have an accident, say at Turn One, you've got six cars on their quick lap; and you throw a Red, they lose their lap and that's not fair. But anyone coming up on the accident has to abandon the lap, basically. The whole reason for that is to make sure we don't have to get into how much they are expected to slow, just forget it. If the alternative is a Red, then that would be an unfair disadvantage. And during the season, what goes around comes around, as we all know. And the drivers understand that concept."

CHATTING WITH CHARLIE.....CONTINUED

This weekend the Stewards, selected by Charlie, are Paul Gutjahr from Switzerland and Silvia Bellot of Spain as well as Driver Steward Mark Blundell. The ASN/National Steward is Dennis Dean from DC Region SCCA. We'll probably use him for a couple of races this year. Dennis is a very good man. He's very experienced, intelligent, and understands the business very, very well. He's a nice guy and a great asset. Dennis thinks things through very clearly, and doesn't get too emotional about some things."

Charlie also thinks highly of Silvia as a Steward. She has been the permanent steward for GP2 and GP3 for the past four years as well as working in WRC. Silvia, who started marshaling when she was 16 and started steward's training at 18, was awarded the FIA Outstanding Marshal of the Year in 2012.

Charlie is looking forward to fair weather this year. First we have to get through Thursday which has unpredictable weather including lots of wind and maybe some of that wet stuff. But then, the forecast calls for a sunny Friday and Saturday with highs of 79-81 degrees F. Sunday could be warmer, with some clouds. Anything would be better than last year's Hurricane Hostilities.



Photo: Dennis Dean, left and Sylvia Bellot, (right)

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Scrutineers: Chief Suzanne Royce (center)

Who We Are.....

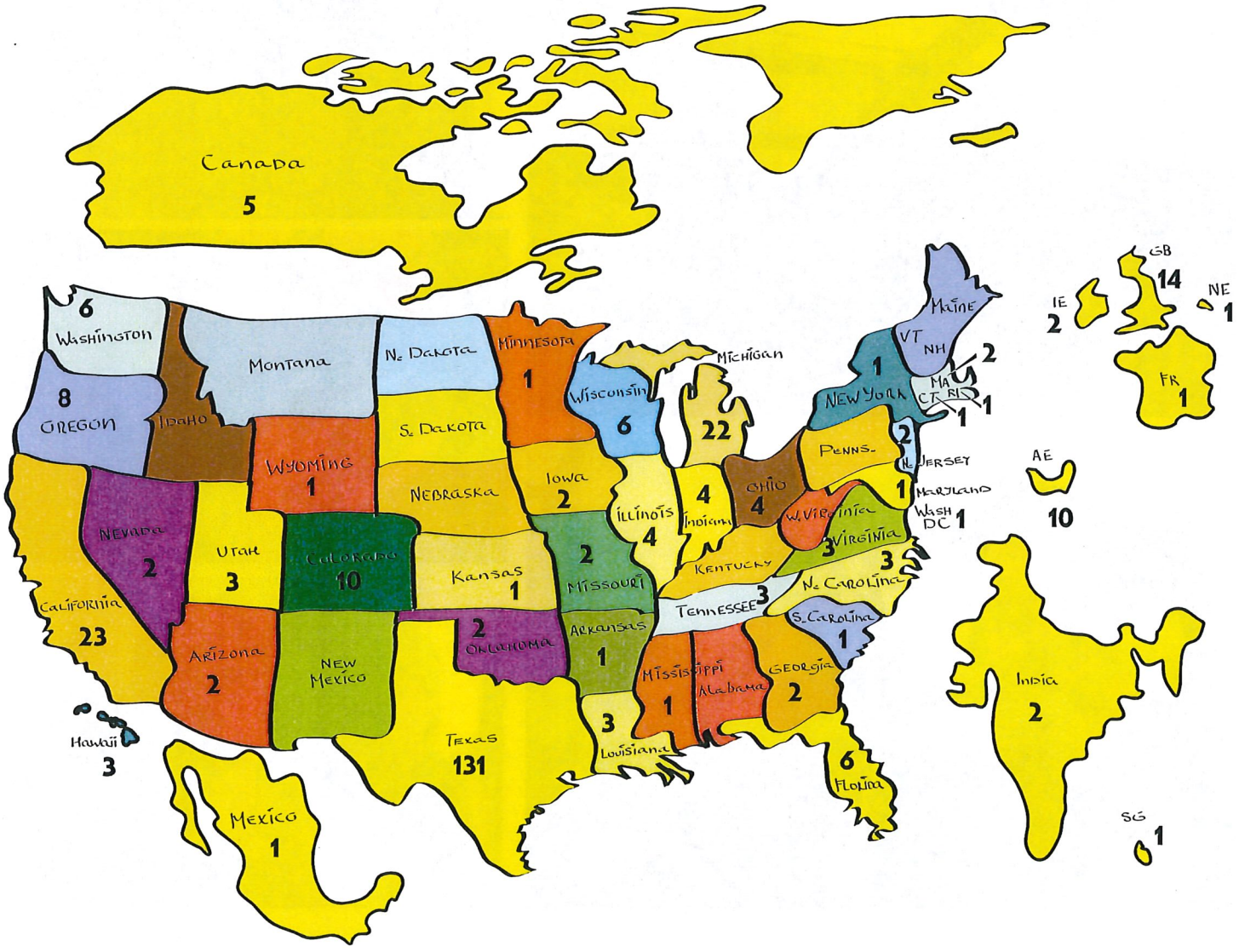
This year's USGP's marshals and race officials come from far and wide, near and far. Of the more than 310 volunteers, the majority come from the host state of Texas. The remainder come from all over our country and from nine foreign countries. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia are represented this year, the most states ever for the USGP at COTA. And the nine countries ties last year's highest number, but not the same countries. This year Great Britain is again sending the most marshals – 14; the Arab Emirates has ten marshals, who probably are a bit jet-lagged at this point from their long journey. Other countries represented are: Canada – five; Ireland and India – two each; and one each from France, Mexico, Netherlands and Singapore, who also must be tired, coming from more than 9,000 miles away – the longest distance of any marshal this year.

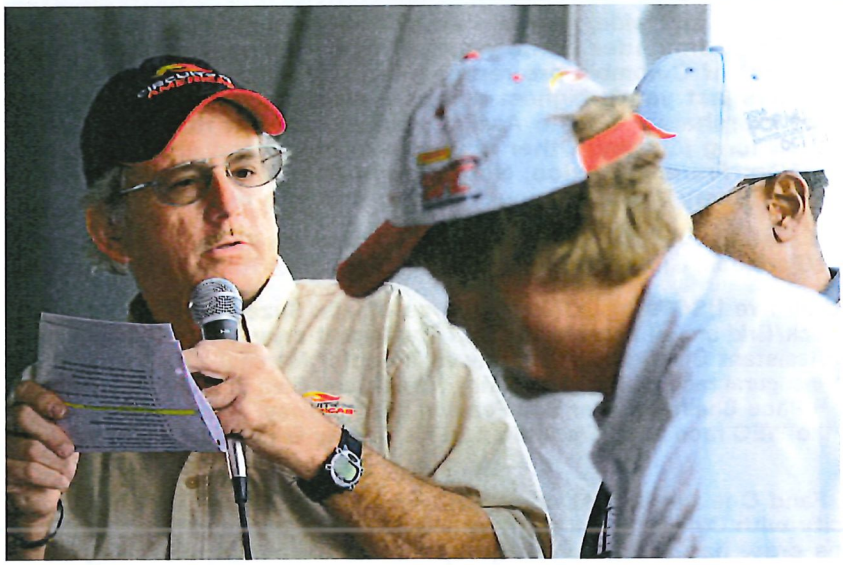
As many of the duties around the 3.427-mile elevated road course are handled in-house, there are basically four teams of volunteer marshals: Flagging Communications; Pit/Paddock/Grid; Scrutineering; and Start, plus Race Administration.

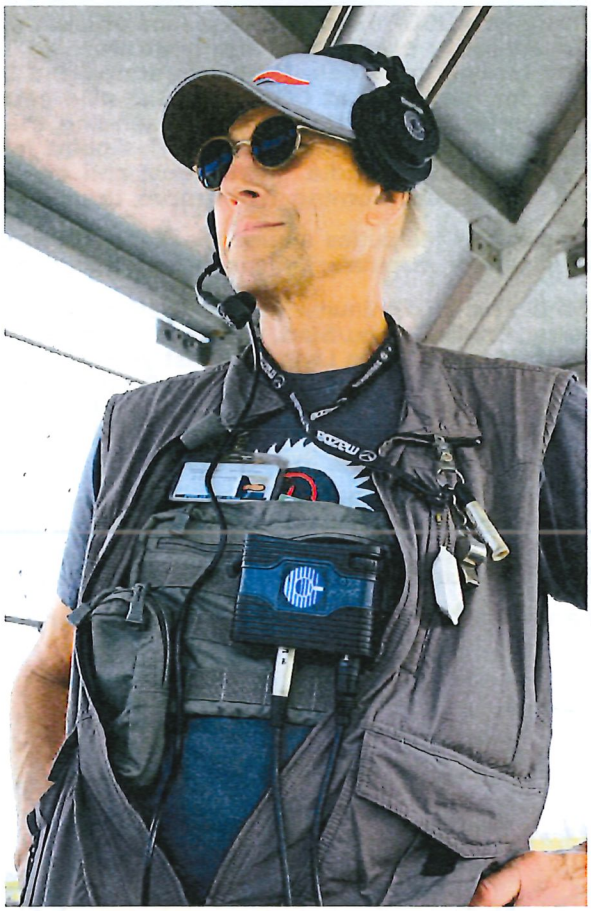
We believe in continuity. All our Chiefs have worked all five USGPs at COTA, mostly as Chiefs. Suzanne Royce/Scrutineering, Gordon Ensing/Start, and Ben Coleman/Pit/Paddock/Grid are all five-year Chiefs. The largest crew, F and C, has a new Chief this year – Ron Long, who last year worked as Assistant Chief, and previously as a Sector Marshal and Corner Post Captain. Previous F and C Chiefs were Pat Burns for the inaugural race, followed by Kathy Maleck, and then Bill Armitage for two years – who added a second hat to that role last year – Race Chairman after Bob Pearson passed away. Armitage is now our new Race Director – a role he baptized last month at the WEC race at COTA. And again his Deputy is the Queen of Logistics and Hurricane Planning, Sydney Yagel.

The Start Team is the smallest – four, Yankees all. Fand C is the largest crew, with nearly 260, of which 36 are from outside the country. Scrutineers are at full capacity with 30 marshals, all from the US. Pit/Paddock/Grid also has a full roster at 28, four of whom are foreign. This crew has the greatest geographical challenge, covering both the F1 Pit Lane as well as the Support Paddock way high atop the hill by Turn 12.

Language doesn't seem to be a barrier as most of our visitors speak English as well or better than us.








CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS

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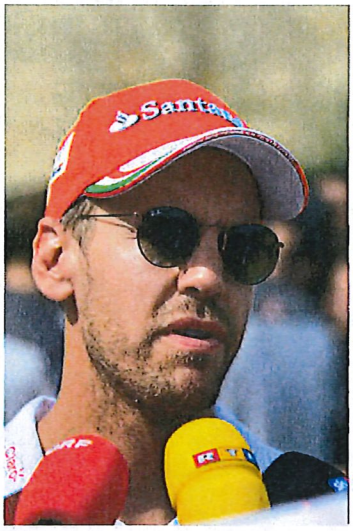
INTERVENTION MARSHAL
COURSE




PETRONAS
BOSS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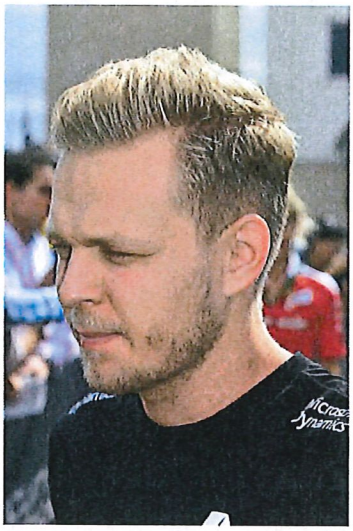
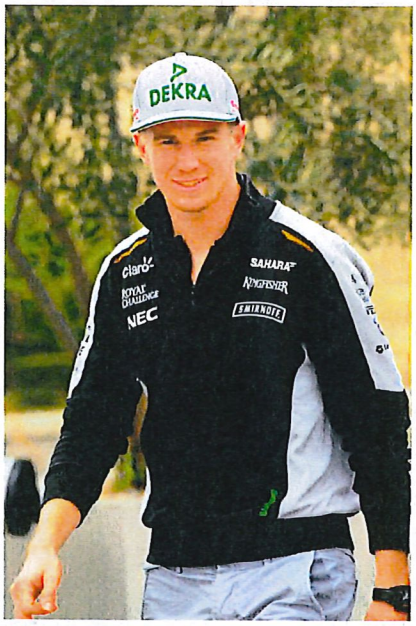



Mercedes-Benz
AMG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SAHARA
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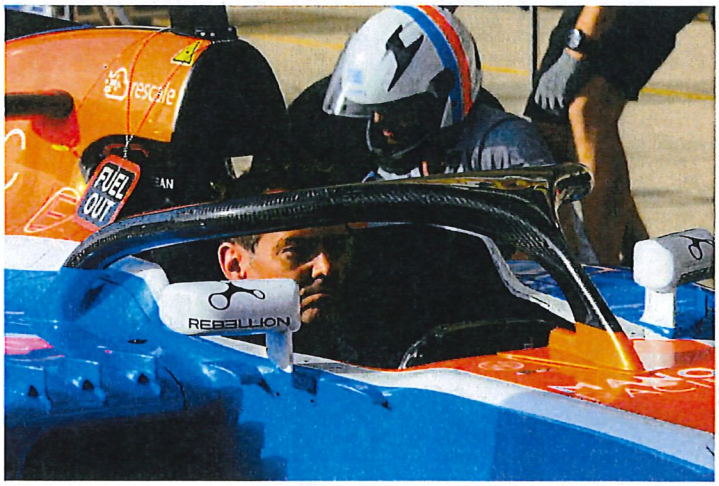
FUEL OUT
REBELLION


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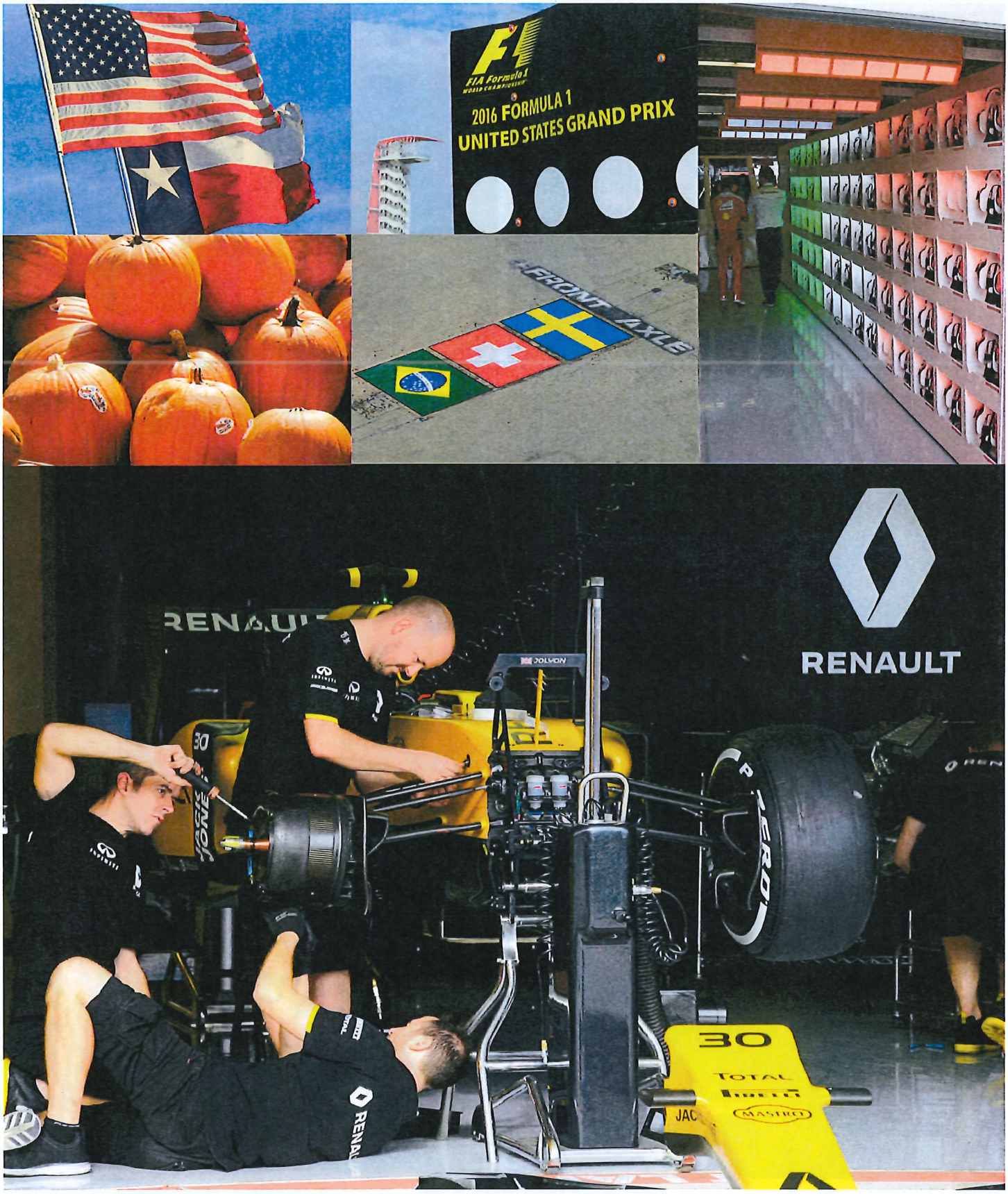
FIA Formula 1
2016 FORMULA 1
UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX
FRONT AXLE
RENAULT
30
TOTAL
PIRELLI
MASTRO