

BMW Motorsport – Formula BMW Season Review 2005. Contents.



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The 2005 Season Review.



Talent promotion pays dividends.

As the season just ended has clearly shown, there is no other globe-spanning entry-level series in which talented young drivers who have grown out of their karts are offered such an invaluable introduction to professional motor racing as Formula BMW. All four champions of the successful sister series in Germany, Britain, North America and Asia took part in the BMW Education and Coaching Program before their triumphs on the race track.

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“If rough diamonds are to be turned into gems,” says BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen, “they first need to be polished. In terms of motor racing that means junior drivers need a comprehensive training program tailored to their needs. Formula BMW is just such a school to prepare for the life of a racing driver.” Whether driving technique, chassis set-up, fitness or media training – as part of the tried and tested BMW promotion scheme the young drivers are provided with the necessary stock-in-trade with which to make their mark in the big wide world of motor sport.

At BMW, the tradition of talent promotion goes all the way back to the late 1970s when the BMW Junior Team made a name for itself in motor racing. As part of the Procar Series, up-and-coming young drivers competed against well-known Formula One stars. Since 1991, BMW has been collaborating with the ADAC in the German motor sport scene. In 2002 this cooperation led to the founding of the new Formula BMW ADAC Championship in which a standard car – the Formula BMW FB02 – sets benchmarks above all in terms of safety technology. In the following years, the series went international with great success. In 2003 the concept was first exported to Asia, and a year later to Great Britain and the USA as well.

The latest example of how Formula BMW graduates are primed for a successful future is Sebastian Vettel (Heppenheim). Last year, the 18-year old took a commanding Formula BMW ADAC Championship title and on September 27, 2005 had the opportunity to take a test drive with the BMW WilliamsF1 Team in Jerez, Spain. That same opportunity also awaits the winner of the first Formula BMW World Final, which takes place from December 13 to 16, 2005 in Bahrain. This event represents the highlight so far of the global rise of Formula BMW.

Germany: Review – Champion profile – Statistics.

Formula BMW ADAC Championship 2005.

Two drivers made their mark on the Formula BMW ADAC Championship last season: Sébastien Buemi (SUI) and Nicolas Hülkenberg (Emmerich). For a long time it looked as if BMW promoted driver Hülkenberg would have no problem taking both the championship and the rookie titles in his debut year in this successful junior series. But towards the end of the season Buemi – who had finished third in the previous year’s championship – brought his experience into play and managed to close the gap to Hülkenberg.

Even after the final race, the championship upheld its excitement. Only after a judgment by the DMSB appeal court in Frankfurt was Hülkenberg hailed as the new Formula BMW ADAC Champion. At the end of a safety car period in the 19th race, Buemi had braked sharply just ahead of the start/finish line. Hülkenberg swerved, passed the Swiss driver and took the chequered flag. Initially both drivers were handed a 30-second penalty. After an appeal by both team managers, the DMSB sports stewards revoked the penalty against Buemi since no unsporting behaviour that was in breach of the regulations could be proved. Hülkenberg’s team manager Kaufmann, however, lodged an appeal with the DMSB appeal court, which retrospectively imposed a 60-second penalty on Buemi.

“Once again this year our junior drivers have made tremendous progress over the course of the season,” says BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen. “With his performance, Nicolas Hülkenberg has confirmed that he is the discovery of the 2005 season. I’m looking forward to seeing him and the other drivers again at the Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain.” After only the 14th race, held at the Norisring, the 18-year old had tied up an early Rookie title for himself.

Last year saw Sebastian Vettel (Heppenheim) dominating the Formula BMW ADAC Championship, while the 2005 season had fans electrified by the head-to-head battle between Buemi and Hülkenberg. But further back in the field, too, the 25 drivers from 13 countries provided plenty of exhilarating sport in each of the 20 races. Apart from Hülkenberg (eight wins) and Buemi (seven), race victories were also celebrated by Chris van der Drift (NLD), João Urbano (POR) and Mika Mäki (FIN). The sole woman in the field, Natacha Gachnang (SUI), finished sixth in the championship rankings.

In the course of the season, “the fastest classroom in the world” appeared not only on circuits around Germany: the talented youngsters were also vying for points in Spa-Francorchamps (BEL), Brno (CZE) and Zandvoort (NLD). The highlight came with the races staged as part of the support program of the European Grand Prix at the Nürburgring. Here Hülkenberg and Urbano won a race each to make it to the top of the podium – in close vicinity to their Formula One idols.

Winner of the Formula BMW ADAC Championship 2005.

The memory that Formula BMW ADAC Champion and Rookie champion **Nicolas Hülkenberg** will cherish above all others is of his race win during the Formula One weekend at the Nürburgring: “Driving there was something very special for me. Kimi Raikkonen is my role model,” says the young racer from North-Rhine Westphalia. While his idol in motor racing’s top echelon had to make do with the runner-up slot, 18-year old Hülkenberg ultimately ended the season with the championship title. Not only that, he proved unmatched in the rookie rankings as the fastest driver in his class 16 times. With another six races still to go, he had the title firmly in his grasp.

Hülkenberg spent ten years building up experience on the kart track, where he won the 2003 German Kart Championship among other achievements. Before the start of the season the youngster had already won over the judges at the Formula BMW Racing Center in Valencia during the three selection courses. In doing so he secured one of seven coveted places in the sponsorship program run jointly by BMW and the ADAC. In 2005 Hülkenberg provided proof that their confidence had justifiably been placed in his racing ability. Whether he will launch another attempt at overall victory next year or move on to the next stage of his Formula racing career has yet to be decided.

December, at any rate, will once more see Nicolas Hülkenberg behind the wheel of a Formula BMW when, at the Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain, he will be pitting his skills against another 35 drivers from 15 nations. Awaiting the winner will be an invaluable prize: a test drive with the BMW managed Formula-One-Team.

Formula BMW ADAC Championship 2005.

Driver	Hockenheim		Euro-Speedway		Spa		Nürburgring F1		Brno		Oschersleben		Norisring		Nürburgring		Zandvoort		Hockenheim		Total
1. *Nicolas Huelkenberg (GER)	20	20	15	20	10	15	20	15	12	10	20	10	-	20	12	10	20	12	6	20	287
2. Sébastien Buemi (SUI)	15	8	20	12	20	-	15	12	15	20	15	20	8	15	20	20	15	20	-	12	282
3. João Urbano (POR)	8	4	-	10	-	8	1	20	20	12	12	15	12	-	6	-	12	15	-	-	155
4. Chris Van der Drift (NLD)	12	12	2	-	12	20	6	6	8	15	10	8	4	-	10	-	-	6	8	10	149
5. *Nick De Bruijn (NLD)	6	-	10	15	3	-	-	-	2	6	8	12	-	10	3	12	10	8	-	4	109
6. Natacha Gachnang (SUI)	-	3	12	6	-	3	-	4	6	4	3	-	15	8	-	15	3	-	-	8	90
7. Markus Niemelä (FIN)	1	-	8	-	6	-	3	2	3	8	6	6	-	4	8	-	-	4	20	6	85
8. Martin Ragginger (AUT)	-	-	4	8	1	10	8	-	4	1	1	-	-	-	2	6	8	10	-	15	78
9. Tim Sandler (GER)	-	-	-	-	-	4	12	8	10	-	-	3	3	-	15	3	2	2	12	-	74
10. Jonathan Summerton (USA)	-	-	3	3	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	4	10	-	4	8	4	1	2	-	51

Rookie classification.

Driver	Hockenheim		Euro-Speedway		Spa		Nürburgring F1		Brno		Oschersleben		Norisring		Nürburgring		Zandvoort		Hockenheim		Total	
1. *Nicolas Huelkenberg (GER)	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	15	4	20	20	15	20	20	15	20	15	20	369
2. *Nick De Bruijn (NLD)	15	-	15	15	12	-	-	4	12	15	15	20	-	12	15	20	15	12	6	12	215	
3. Martin Ragginger (AUT)	6	8	10	12	8	15	15	10	15	8	10	10	-	-	12	12	12	15	-	15	193	
4. Mika Mäki (FIN)	-	4	8	10	4	-	8	12	6	10	12	8	20	15	-	4	10	10	-	10	151	
5. Sergio Perez Mendoza (MEX)	10	15	12	-	15	-	4	15	8	12	-	6	10	4	-	8	6	8	10	-	143	
6. *Stefano Coletti (MON)	12	10	3	8	10	12	6	-	10	6	3	-	6	-	4	-	8	-	-	8	106	
7. *Tobias Hegewald (GER)	8	12	6	-	2	10	3	3	4	1	6	4	8	6	8	3	-	-	12	6	102	
8. Marco Idilli (NLD)	3	2	4	6	-	3	10	6	2	4	8	12	3	8	6	10	4	4	-	4	99	
9. *Christian Vietoris (GER)	-	6	2	4	6	4	12	8	1	3	4	3	-	-	10	2	-	2	20	-	87	
10. *Jens Hoeing (GER)	-	3	-	3	1	8	2	-	-	-	-	2	12	10	2	-	-	6	8	-	57	

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points	20	15	12	10	8	6	4	3	2	1

* BMW Junior

Great Britain: Review – Champion profile – Statistics.

Formula BMW UK Championship 2005.

Eight different winners and the title decided in the very last race: the second season of the Formula BMW UK Championship could hardly have been more exciting. Following the successful launch of the series last year, Formula BMW has also consolidated its reputation in Britain as the leading entry-level series in international Formula racing. At tradition-steeped venues such as Brands Hatch, Silverstone and Donington the 27 drivers delivered first-rate motor sport from the first to the last of the season's 20 races.

In a nail biting final, Dean Smith (GBR) of Team Nexa Racing clinched the title. His first win of the season at Mondello Park – in the 13th round – marked the start of an impressive feat of catching up. Point for point, the 17-year old clawed his way up to his compatriot Sam Bird and ultimately achieved his third season's win in the final to relegate his rival into second place.

"The Formula BMW UK Championship was open right up to the last race," says BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen. "Dean Smith earned the title with his consistently good performance throughout the season."

Euan Hankey (GBR) and Barwell Motorsport Team also had plenty of cause for celebration. With six class wins, the 18-year old managed to prevail over Michael Meadows (GBR) to secure the title of "Best Junior Driver of the Year". Both Hankey and Meadows took part in the Formula BMW Education and Coaching Program in 2005. Smith's championship title win proves that this scheme offers the young racing drivers the ideal preparation for their future career. This year's champion was supported by BMW in 2004 and gathered valuable experience in his first season of Formula racing. Just one year later he was able to reap the fruits of his labours at Brands Hatch when he raised the championship trophy up in the air.

For the next season there are already numerous scholarship candidates in the starting blocks waiting to follow in Smith's tire tracks. But that is no easy prospect with the British race tracks among the most challenging in the world. The knowledge edge of experienced Formula BMW drivers is a clear advantage – one that Smith used to great effect in the last season to clinch his first major title in an as yet fledgling career.

Winner of the Formula BMW UK Championship.

Even beyond his involvement in the Formula BMW UK Championship, **Dean Smith** spends a lot of time out on track since his main leisure pursuit is karting. At the age of 13, the budding young driver from Wolverhampton took his first kart ride and quickly earned a reputation as one of Britain's biggest motor racing talents. Smith's thirst for knowledge has paid off: in 2004 he took part in the Formula BMW Education and Coaching Program, internalized what he learnt and made steady progress.

The key to winning the title was undoubtedly the young man's unfailingly good performance. Not only did he complete each race, but he took away championship points from each of the 20 rounds. "This feels fantastic," said Smith after his triumph in the season final, "and I want to thank the team for the amazing job they have done for me." His proud father Anthony gave him a bear hug: he and Dean's grandparents were rooting for him at every race. To have claimed the title in the final race of such an evenly balanced event as the Formula BMW UK Championship will have given Smith a great deal of self-confidence for his next steps up the career ladder.

BMW scholarship driver **Euan Hankey** already proved in his first year of Formula racing that he has the confidence it takes to pull in titles. Over the last season the young driver, who is planning to do a business degree, fought an exciting duel with Michael Meadows. Both drivers claimed six wins each in the Rookie class. After a third-placed finish in the penultimate race of the season at Brands Hatch, it was Hankey who was hailed as the early winner of the Rookie Cup. That means in the coming year he will also be able to enjoy BMW's support and financial backing to the tune of 35,000 pounds.

An all-round sportsman, Hankey takes pride and pleasure in representing his school on the hockey pitch and the tennis court. On the football pitch, too, he cuts a good figure. But his paramount passion is motor racing. He first got behind the wheel of a kart at the age of nine – and immediately began raking in wins. In 2005 he also drew attention to himself in the Formula BMW UK Championship. Hankey already has his next major goal in his sights: a good score in the Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain this December.

Formula BMW UK Championship 2005.

Driver	Donington		Thruxton		Rockingham		Brands Hatch		Oulton Park		Croft		Modello Park		Knockhill		Silverstone		Brands Hatch		Total
1. Dean Smith (GBR)	6	6	12	4	6	3	8	10	15	8	15	10	20	12	20	4	15	12	15	20	221
2. Sam Bird (GBR)	10	12	15	15	-	-	15	20	20	20	20	20	6	8	2	-	20	-	-	15	218
3. Matt Howson (GBR)	20	10	-	-	15	20	20	6	-	-	-	6	12	3	15	15	12	15	20	-	189
4. Stian Sørli (NOR)	12	-	20	20	10	-	3	8	10	15	12	4	-	1	-	8	10	20	-	-	153
5. *Ross Curnow (GBR)	15	8	4	6	4	-	10	12	-	-	3	3	-	10	12	20	-	-	10	10	127
6. Simon Walker-Hansell (GBR)	-	2	2	2	20	15	6	3	12	3	8	8	8	-	6	10	1	4	-	8	118
7. Nathan Antunes (AUS)	-	20	6	12	12	8	2	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	10	12	8	3	-	4	105
8. Oliver Turvey (GBR)	-	-	-	-	8	-	12	4	2	12	-	15	15	15	-	2	6	-	12	-	103
9. Jordan Wise (GBR)	-	-	3	8	2	-	4	15	6	-	4	-	-	6	8	-	3	10	4	6	79
10. Duarte Felix da Costa (GBR)	-	-	8	3	-	10	-	1	-	10	6	12	4	2	-	-	2	6	-	-	64

Rookie classification.

Driver	Donington		Thruxton		Rockingham		Brands Hatch		Oulton Park		Croft		Modello Park		Knockhill		Silverstone		Brands Hatch		Total
1. *Euan Hankey (GBR)	15	20	20	-	20	15	20	15	-	20	10	-	20	15	8	15	12	6	12	15	258
2. *Michael Meadows (GBR)	20	15	15	20	12	8	-	10	20	12	20	-	-	10	20	-	8	12	15	20	237
3. *Jonathan Legris (GBR)	-	-	4	8	15	20	15	12	8	15	15	20	-	12	10	-	20	20	20	10	224
4. *Joe Osborne (GBR)	8	0	12	0	6	10	10	8	12	8	12	15	12	-	12	20	10	10	-	12	177
5. Dominique Cauvin (GBR)	-	-	6	15	8	12	-	20	15	6	-	-	-	-	15	12	15	15	10	-	149
6. *Aaron Steele (GBR)	12	12	10	10	4	-	12	-	10	10	-	-	15	20	-	10	-	8	-	-	133
7. *Edward Hoy (GBR)	10	-	8	12	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	-	40

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points	20	15	12	10	8	6	4	3	2	1

* BMW Junior

USA: Review – Champion profile – Statistics.

Formula BMW USA 2005.

In all four Formula BMW series around the globe, the championship title was not decided until the final. The situation before the last of 14 races in Formula BMW USA that was held at Road Atlanta ensured even more excitement: Richard Philippe (FRA) of Team Autotecnica and Kevin Lacroix (CAN), competing for AIM Autosport, launched into the concluding race of the season with the same points tally. Robert Wickens (CAN), the number three in the championship rankings, was also in with a chance of winning the title for Team Apex Racing USA. But in the end Philippe kept his nerve and crossed the line in second place to claim overall victory.

BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen commented on the Frenchman's triumph: "Richard Philippe has won the Formula BMW USA 2005 as a 15-year old rookie. That makes him the youngest Formula BMW Champion of all time. I congratulate him!" But that wasn't all. Apart from overall victory, Philippe – who is supported by BMW with a scholarship worth 40,000 US-Dollars, also took the top podium slot in the Rookie class, in which it was Lacroix again who gave him a hard time right until the end. There can hardly be a more successful Formula racing debut than Philippe's in the 2005 season.

For the second Formula BMW USA season since the series launch in 2004, no fewer than 29 drivers lined up on the grid to vie for the crown on North America's most traditional and taxing circuits. As in the previous year, the young drivers made two appearances during a Formula One weekend: in Montreal and Indianapolis. It was on the legendary Indianapolis Motor Speedway that Philippe celebrated one of a total of three season wins and, along with his fellow-competitors, was able to sniff the heady air of Formula One.

The Education and Coaching Program offered by BMW proved particularly successful in Formula BMW USA. The top four drivers in the rankings – all of them novices to Formula racing – took part in the seminars and put what they learnt perfectly into practice in their race outings. Apart from Philippe, Lacroix and Wickens, scholarship candidate Reed Stevens (USA) also managed to secure a race win. Further victories went to James Davison (AUS) and Edoardo Piscopo (ITA), who took to the podium three times. With a season of exciting races and a truly heart stopping final, Formula BMW USA was able to bear out the positive impressions from the previous year and shore up its position as one of the leading entry-level Formula series in North America.

Winner Formula BMW USA.

Kid brothers don't have an easy time of it. That goes for normal life, but even more so for motor racing. Yet **Richard Philippe** has no need to hide behind the achievements of his brother Nelson, three years his senior, who races in the Champ Car World Series. At the age of just 15, the younger of the Philippe brothers went straight to the top of Formula BMW USA in 2005, taking both the championship and the rookie titles.

"I've learnt a great deal this year," said Philippe after his triumph. "When I started out I wanted to win every single race. But I had to accept this just wasn't possible, and so I concentrated on consistently finishing the race and collecting points." The youngster who lives in Key Biscane, Florida certainly did a brilliant job of that, completing 18 out of 20 races in the points. Only Robert Wickens, who scored in every race, emerged as an even steadier scorer than Philippe.

The Formula USA champion sat in a kart for the first time at the age of just eight – not in his French homeland, but in Argentina. Indeed, Philippe is quite a globetrotter, having competed in various series in South America, Europe and the USA. He speaks fluent French, English and Spanish, and is already every inch the professional at his young age: you won't find Philippe taking any undue risks in the cockpit.

"I have a healthy respect for all the tracks on which I race," the Team Autotecnica driver says of his recipe for success. "Some may be more fun than others, but in the end it doesn't really matter. I simply have to drive as fast as I possibly can on every circuit." Perhaps it is this approach that helped him deliver his best performance of the season against the impressive Indianapolis backdrop. At the "Brickyard", Philippe won one race and finished the other as runner-up – to the applause of an F1-savvy crowd.

To follow in his brother's footsteps may initially have seemed a tall order to Philippe, but his success in Formula BMW USA makes it incontrovertibly clear that he is in a position to go his own way in motor racing. Their father Terry will in future be able to delight in two high-speed sons with tremendous potential.

Formula BMW USA 2005.

Driver	Laguna Seca		Mid-Ohio		Montréal F1		Indianapolis F1		Barber Motorsports Park		Denver		Road Atlanta		Total
1. *Richard Philippe (FRA)	-	20	1	20	8	-	15	20	15	10	4	15	8	15	151
2. *Kevin Lacroix (CAN)	20	12	20	-	20	-	-	15	20	3	6	10	10	6	142
3. *Robert Wickens (CAN)	6	10	4	10	12	20	12	12	1	4	20	8	3	2	122
4. *Reed Stevens (USA)	15	3	6	-	10	15	-	8	6	-	12	-	15	20	110
5. Edoardo Piscopo (ITA)	-	-	-	15	3	-	8	-	-	20	10	20	20	12	108
6. James Davison (AUS)	8	8	15	4	-	-	20	-	10	12	15	-	12	-	104
7. Maxime Soulet (BEL)	12	15	12	8	6	10	-	4	12	15	1	1	2	-	98
8. Rob Bunker (USA)	4	4	2	-	-	8	-	-	4	6	-	3	-	10	41
9. Tom Sutherland (USA)	2	-	3	-	4	4	3	10	8	1	-	4	-	-	39
10. Race Johnson (USA)	1	1	-	6	-	-	2	-	3	8	3	12	-	1	37

Rookie classification.

Driver	Laguna Seca		Mid-Ohio		Montréal F1		Indianapolis F1		Barber Motorsports Park		Denver		Road Atlanta		Total
1. *Richard Philippe (FRA)	-	20	4	20	10	-	15	20	15	12	6	15	8	15	160
2. *Kevin Lacroix (CAN)	20	15	20	-	20	-	-	15	20	4	8	10	10	8	150
3. *Robert Wickens (CAN)	8	12	8	10	15	20	12	12	3	6	20	8	3	3	140
4. *Reed Stevens (USA)	15	4	10	-	12	15	-	10	10	1	12	-	15	20	124
5. James Davison (AUS)	10	10	15	6	-	-	20	-	12	15	15	2	12	-	117
6. Edoardo Piscopo (ITA)	-	-	-	15	8	1	8	2	-	20	10	20	20	12	116
7. Rob Bunker (USA)	6	6	6	1	2	10	-	-	8	8	1	4	-	10	62
8. Race Johnson (USA)	3	2	3	8	3	-	6	1	6	10	4	12	1	2	61
9. *Justin Moon (USA)	2	8	-	12	-	-	4	4	4	-	2	3	6	-	45
10. John Zartarian (USA)	12	-	12	4	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	37

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points	20	15	12	10	8	6	4	3	2	1

* BMW Junior

Asia: Review – Champion profile – Statistics.

Formula BMW Asia 2005.

Hardly another Asian country evinced such palpable trackside exuberance last year as Bahrain. It wasn't just that Formula One was making its second stop in the desert state: with Salman Bin Rashid Al Khalifa (Team E-Rain), a Bahraini driver clinched an important title in international Formula racing for the first time when the 24-year old won the Formula BMW Asia Championship.

Formula BMW will be serving up another highlight at the Bahrain International Circuit this December, when drivers from around the world pit their skills against each other in the Formula BMW World Final for a chance to win a Formula One test drive. BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen: "It was an exciting 2005 Formula BMW Asia season. Congratulations to the winner, Salman Al Khalifa. I look forward to seeing him again at the Formula BMW World Final in Bahrain."

For the first time in the history of Formula BMW Asia – which debuted in 2003 – the title went to the Middle East. The inaugural year saw Chinese driver Ho-Pin Tung take victory, while in 2004 the series was dominated by Marchy Lee of Hong Kong. Al Khalifa made his mark last season by winning six out of 14 races and taking seven pole positions. But he had to fend off pressure from Team Meritus drivers Michael Patrizi (AUS) and Hamed Al Fardan (BHN) right up to the final. In Shanghai these two drivers were still in with a chance of winning the title.

Patrizi, one of six BMW supported drivers in the field, eventually finished as runner-up in the final standings. In the class of first-timers, however, he was ahead of the game and took the Rookie Cup. Both for Patrizi and for Al Khalifa, the Bahrain and China events staged as part of the Formula One program were the highlights of the year. At his home event, Al Khalifa kicked off the season with a win, while Patrizi won the final race in the series at the Shanghai International Circuit, watched on both occasions by the assembled crowds of motor racing experts.

The 2005 season once again proved that it would be difficult to find an entry-level series with the same international spread as Formula BMW Asia. The field of participants was made up of ten different nationalities and the aspiring youngsters raced in six countries. Nail biting wheel-to-wheel duels and spectacular overtaking manoeuvres delighted the crowds, who witnessed nine different drivers ascending the podium. Formula BMW Asia had never seen such an exciting and close-fought battle as in this last season.

Winner Formula BMW Asia.

Racing drivers like **Salman Bin Rashid Al Khalifa** are a breed apart. The Bahraini has a charming personality, a consummate way of dealing with the media, and at the age of 24 is already the representative of Asian motor racing. These attributes, coupled with his own brand of modesty, have taken "Sal" – as his friends in the paddock know him – to the top of Formula BMW Asia in 2005. In this he demonstrated his ability to return to his usual form even after difficult stretches. "Halfway through the season I sat back a little on my achievements so far," Al Khalifa recalls. "But the fighting spirit of the other drivers brought me back down to earth. It was a very balanced field this year, which is why the championship wasn't decided until Shanghai."

With two wins in races eleven and twelve of the series at Japan's Autopolis, the ambassador of the Formula BMW World Final managed to forge firmly ahead of his rivals. A mature performance and two fifth places at the final event in Shanghai were enough to secure him the championship title. In all, Al Khalifa made it to the top rung of the podium six times. In his appearance against a home backdrop at the Formula BMW World Final in December, he wants to conclude the season with a further success before taking the leap to Europe to try his luck in Formula 3.

Like Al Khalifa, **Michael Patrizi** also went through BMW's Education and Coaching Program. The first Australian ever to race in Formula BMW Asia was a fast learner, and by the time he had clinched a double win in the Rookie class in races five and six in Bira, Thailand, he had already set his sights on the top slot among the Formula novices. It soon became obvious that this racing driver from the small town of Kalgoorlie even had the resources to be mixing it with the title contenders. But despite two wins – including the last race in Shanghai – he ultimately had to settle for second place.

That did nothing to dampen Patrizi's delight at his successful debut in Formula BMW Asia. "It's been a fantastic year," he said. "Travelling around Asia was a great experience. It has been an important maturing process for me – not just as a driver, but on a personal level as well."

Formula BMW Asia 2005.

Driver	Bahrain F1		Sepang		Bira		Peking		Taebaek		Autopolis		Shanghai F1		Total
1. Salman Al Khalifa (BRN)	20	15	20	12	1	20	20	2	6	-	20	20	8	8	172
2. *Michael Patrizi (AUS)	12	6	-	4	15	12	3	15	10	20	15	15	10	20	157
3. Hamed Al Fardan (BRN)	10	1	15	-	20	15	15	20	20	-	-	10	20	2	148
4. Charlie-Ro Charlez (MAS)	15	10	12	8	12	8	12	-	15	15	12	-	15	6	140
5. *Armaan Ebrahim (IND)	8	12	10	20	-	10	10	10	-	10	-	12	12	15	129
6. *Robert Boughey (THA)	6	20	1	15	10	-	6	6	4	6	10	-	6	4	94
7. *An Suk-Won (KOR)	4	8	4	6	6	4	8	12	12	-	8	6	2	10	90
8. Aaron Lim (MAS)	-	-	8	10	8	6	4	8	8	12	-	-	4	12	80
9. *Jonathan Chan (HKG)	-	-	3	2	3	2	-	3	2	8	4	8	3	3	41
10. *Mitsunobo Endo (JPN)	2	3	2	1	4	1	-	-	3	-	6	4	-	1	27

Rookie classification.

Driver	Bahrain F1		Sepang		Bira		Peking		Taebaek		Autopolis		Shanghai F1		Total
1. *Michael Patrizi (AUS)	15	10	-	8	20	20	8	20	12	20	20	20	12	20	205
2. Charlie-Ro Charlez (MAS)	20	15	20	12	15	12	20	-	20	15	15	-	20	8	192
3. *Armaan Ebrahim (IND)	12	20	15	20	-	15	15	12	-	10	-	15	15	15	164
4. *An Suk-Won (KOR)	10	12	8	10	10	8	12	15	15	-	12	12	8	10	142
5. Aaron Lim (MAS)	-	-	12	15	12	10	10	10	10	12	-	-	10	12	113
6. *Wang Jian-Wei (CHN)	8	6	10	4	8	4	4	-	8	-	-	10	6	6	74
7. Dejan de Zoysa (SRI)	6	8	-	6	-	6	6	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	40

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points	20	15	12	10	8	6	4	3	2	1

* BMW Junior

Formula BMW World Final.

36 drivers – one goal: the first Formula One test of their life.

The 2005 motorsport year ends much later than usual. From December 13 to 16, when the winter break has long silenced the race tracks across Europe, Bahrain will host the crowning conclusion to the Formula BMW season – the first ever Formula BMW World Final. In Bahrain, 36 drivers will be fighting for the title of “World’s Best Formula BMW Driver of the Year” and a total purse of 60,000 dollars. But that’s not all: the winner of the World Final will be granted a unique opportunity to take a Formula One test drive.

As BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen explains: “The top drivers from the four Formula BMW series will contest the BMW World Final. This promises some fascinating motorsport with thrilling battles on the circuit. In order to win you have to prevail over drivers from four continents. It will be far from simple to earn that test drive in a Formula One car.”

Participants from the Formula BMW championships in Germany, Great Britain, the USA and Asia will make the journey to the Bahrain International Circuit. It will be an impressive grid line-up including the winner of this year’s Formula BMW ADAC Championship, Nicolas Hülkenberg (Emmerich), alongside his keenest rival Sébastien Buemi (SUI).

Dean Smith (GBR), winner of the Formula BMW UK Championship, and British Rookie champ Euan Hankey (GBR) are the best-known representatives of the British Isles. For the fans at the circuit, the spotlight will undeniably be on local hero Salman Al Khalifa (BHN) after his Formula BMW Asia title win. Formula BMW USA will be represented by, among others, Robert Wickens (CAN), Reed Stevens (USA) and Edoardo Piscopo (ITA).

The 36 participants in the Formula BMW World Final will have plenty of time to familiarize themselves with the challenging track. The event format will ensure that fans see plenty of qualifying heats before the grand final takes place on Friday, December 16. Three free practice sessions, a 30-minute qualifying session, a super pole competition and a pre-final are planned.

Well-known racing drivers appear as official ambassadors for the Formula BMW World Final. Apart from Khalifa, who will be gunning for the title on his home circuit, both Formula One driver Nico Rosberg (Wiesbaden) and Alessandro Zanardi (ITA) will also be involved in this unique event. “The first Formula One test was a very special moment in my life,” Rosberg recalls. “It was a launch pad for my career.” Since winning the 2003 Formula BMW ADAC Championship, the son of ex-Formula One World Champion

Keke Rosberg is experiencing a meteoric rise. In 2005 he won the GP2 Series and has worked as a test driver for the BMW WilliamsF1 Team. Rosberg is just one of a number of one-time Formula BMW drivers who have gone on from winning a national championship to make it into the higher racing categories. In September 2005, Sebastian Vettel, winner of the 2004 Formula BMW ADAC Championship, had his first outing in a Formula One car. Ho-Pin Tung, winner of the 2003 Formula BMW Asia series, has also been granted a Formula One taster.

Zanardi, who is racing for BMW Team Italy-Spain in the FIA WTCC, is thrilled with the concept of the World Final: "It's a great opportunity for young drivers to pit their skills against competitors from all over the world," says the 39-year old pro. "I would have been glad of such an opportunity when I started out in motor racing. The Formula One test for the winner is of course the icing on the cake."

The arena for the Formula BMW World Final is the Bahrain International Circuit. Designed by Aachen-based architect Hermann Tilke, it is one of the most state-of-the-art motor sport arenas in the world. The World Final will be held on the 3.596-kilometre Paddock Circuit, which omits the northwest section of the Grand Prix course. This circuit variant is the perfect stage for spectacular passing manoeuvres and riveting battles for position. In the middle of the European winter the circuit offers the teams optimal working conditions in the pursuit of victory. In the last two years, the Formula One caravan has also stopped off at the desert venue.

The BIC is also home to the new BMW Performance Center where, among other things, the licence and scholarship qualifying courses of Formula BMW Asia are held. Then in spring of 2005, BMW Driver Training opened its doors here. A variety of training courses are offered for all-comers, with the range of models stretching from the BMW 1 Series to the BMW M3.