



ACADEMY REUNITED

Academy Motorsport will run two GT4 Mustangs in the full-capacity 2023 British GT Championship

Words: MARK BRIDGEMAN, Photos: FORD MOTORSPORT

The 2023 British GT Championship looks set to be the most competitive yet thanks to an influx of world-class factory drivers and a rebound in GT4 numbers. This year's championship features a capacity 36-car entry. Past Ford attended the championship's Media Day at Silverstone with Porsche-based Academy Motorsport to capture the mood for the upcoming season.

A full entry list is split equally between GT3 and GT4 cars spanning nine manufacturers. There are also 10 former or reigning overall champions and eight full factory drivers

amongst the 72. This year's entry is the largest since 2019 when full-season numbers were capped at 26 cars. It is also the largest full-time GT3 grid since 2014, while GT4 numbers have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

The more road-relevant GT4 class will be closely contested thanks to eight different manufacturers, three former champions and two brand-new cars. Along with the two BMW M4s, the GT4 Mustang muscle cars stand out from the sleeker supercar-derived McLarens, Mercedes-AMGs and Aston Martins. The balance-of-performance formula, attributed by championship organisers

SRO, seems to equalise the performance within each class while also retaining the defining characteristics of each car. For example, the Mustang may be less slippery on the long straights but its often woeful corner grip and exit traction balances any deficit.

There are no technical changes in this year's Mustang as the current S550 model is in its final year of GT racing homologation before the arrival of a new S650 Diatone-based GT4 car. These are tough cars indeed. The cooling and moving parts get changed on a time and mileage basis and the strength of the monocoque bears witness to the inherent integrity of the underlying structure.

New season liveries reflect both cars reflecting the changes in driver line up and their supporting sponsors. After two years running a single Mustang, Academy is now back up to full strength with two cars for the full season and an intriguing combination of youthful and experienced pairings. Academy Motorsport Team Principal Matt Nicol-Jones has recruited his roster of drivers into two quite different combinations. His driver has ever won the GT4 title twice – a statistic 2000 GT4 Champion Matt Nicol-Jones (30) himself will be hoping to change this year. He's been out of the driving seat for the last 3 seasons and has never raced the Mustang. For 2023 he is reunited in car 62 with his long-standing



team-mate and close friend Will Moore (35). As experienced British GT Championship contenders they bring a depth of knowledge and race craft that is hard to replicate.

On the younger side of the garage, car GT is manned by Americans Erik Evans (19) and Matt Cowley (24). Cowley was GT4 runner up in 2021 and with 4 Mustang race wins has more than enough experience to coach his new team mate in the ways of the Championship. Evans, who comes with the essential karting and junior formula, single-seater experience from the U.S., acquitted himself with a display of skills beyond his years during his first British GT outing last October at Donington Park.

With both cars up and running, Academy Motorsport had to be a strong contender for the 2023 GT4 Teams Championship. The pitlane team supporting the two cars is chock-a-block with GT racing experience and we plan to feature members in their specialist roles during this season. Given the age difference between the two halves for the 2023 campaign, the famous Academy three-garage banner should reach new heights.

All of the Championship races, including the series first visit to Autódromo do Algarve, Portugal in Portugal will be shown live on GT World YouTube and British GT Facebook. Some rounds will also be shown live on Sky Sports F1 with highlights repeated one week after each race. How to distinguish the cars if the race numbers are hard to read? Both cars have a distinctive 'poking pony' wrap with the GT Evans / Cowley car displaying hotlap photography and support for the 'Caudwell

Children's charity. Their pony wrap fades to grey on the back and has a white 'poking pony' surround. The 62 car for Moore and Mark-Jones, which is still dominated by its Wilson Developments sponsorship, fades to black at the back and has a dark colored 'poking pony' surround.

During the season, Fast Ford will cover all of the races and also include the team's reactions in an upcoming, extended Mustang Mach-E GT 'living with feature'. In conjunction with their near-by neighbour, Hennessey Performance Academy are developing the ultimate Mustang GT road-legal, track day car with every relevant power and handling performance enhancement. Look out for an upcoming feature on this outstanding car as Matt Mark-Jones does in the roads to get the very best outcome using carefully selected off-the-shelf parts from specialist equipment manufacturers. ■

2023 BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

2023 GT4 Teams Championship

2023 GT4 Drivers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

2023 GT4 Manufacturers Championship

