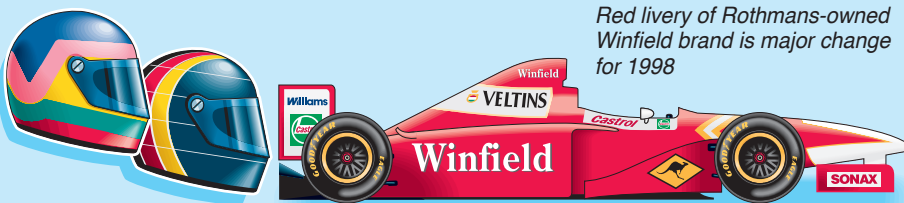
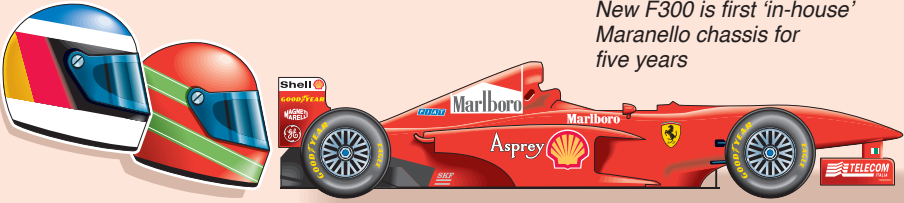
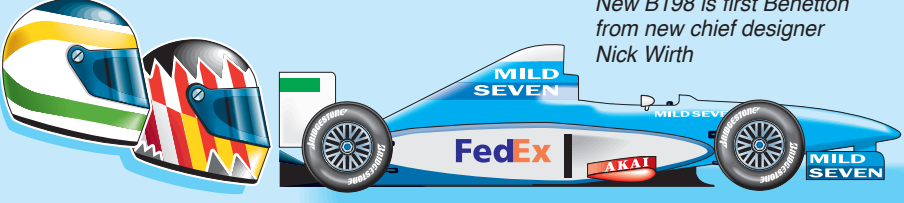
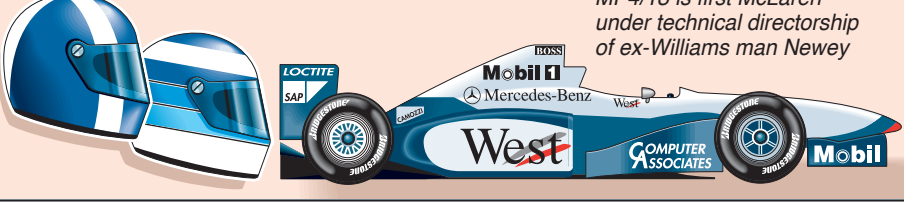
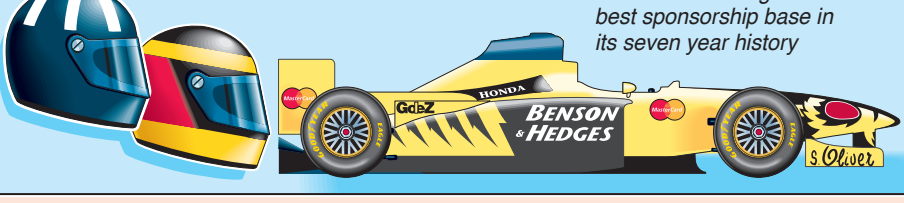
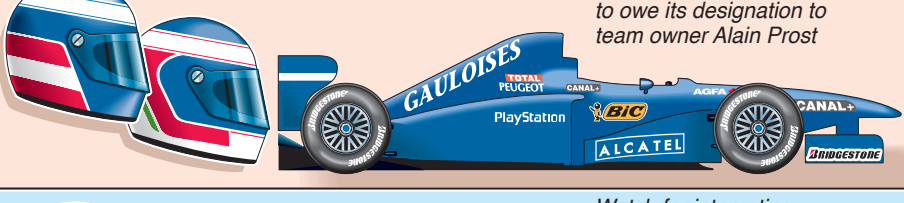

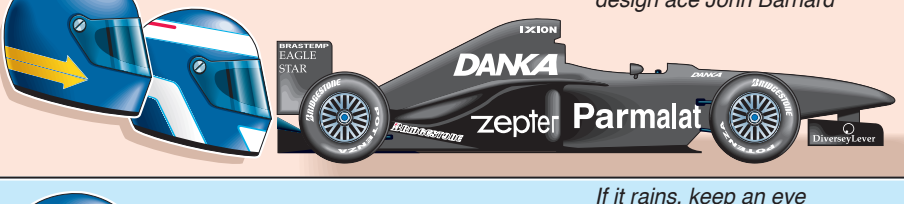
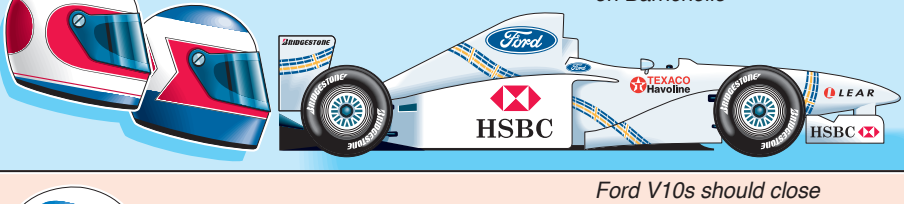
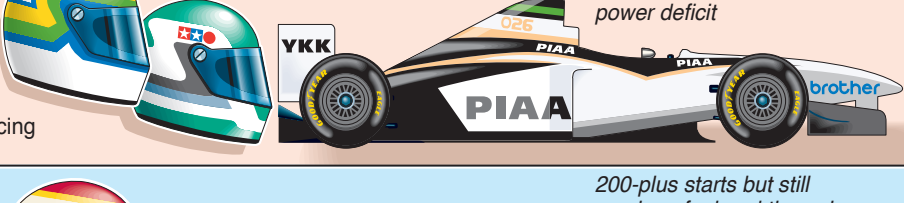
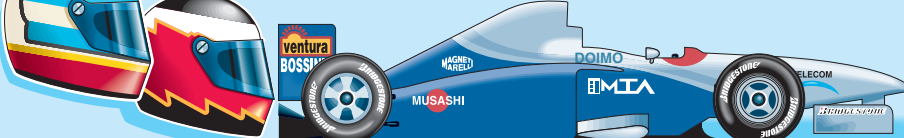


# On the grid: How they line up for 1998

The new breed of skinny cars with grooved tyres – the biggest single change in design in 15 years – could lead to a much closer title fight. Formula One correspondent *Tony Dodgins* looks at the cars and drivers and predicts a spectacular season ahead

<b>Williams Mecachrome</b>  Main sponsor Winfield	<b>1</b>	<b>Jacques Villeneuve</b> Canada. Age 26 33 starts, 11 wins <b>Current World Champion</b>		Red livery of Rothmans-owned Winfield brand is major change for 1998	New FW20 is first complete car since chief designer <b>Adrian Newey</b> left for McLaren. Engine development may slow without Renault works support. Nevertheless, strong infrastructure will guarantee potent challenge. Expect <b>Frentzen</b> to be closer to <b>Villeneuve</b> this time around
	<b>2</b>	<b>Heinz-Harald Frentzen</b> Germany. Age 30 65 starts, 1 win			
<b>Ferrari</b>  Main sponsor Marlboro	<b>3</b>	<b>Michael Schumacher</b> Germany. Age 30 102 starts, 27 wins <b>World Champion 1994, 1995</b>		New F300 is first 'in-house' Maranello chassis for five years	With <b>Michael Schumacher</b> on board Ferrari don't need to build the best car, just come close. The team's last world champion was <b>Jody Scheckter</b> back in 1979 and new technical group led by <b>Rory Byrne</b> and <b>Ross Brown</b> are out to recreate Schuey's Benetton success of 1994-95
	<b>4</b>	<b>Eddie Irvine</b> Britain. Age 32 65 starts, no wins			
<b>Benetton Mecachrome</b>  Main sponsor Mild Seven	<b>5</b>	<b>Giancarlo Fisichella</b> Italy. Age 25 25 starts, no wins		New B198 is first Benetton from new chief designer Nick Wirth	With new boss <b>David Richards</b> at the helm, a talented and determined young driver pairing, the dominant engine of past seasons – albeit without Renault works support now – and Bridgestone tyres, the potential is there for Benetton to win. Much will depend on the new car
	<b>6</b>	<b>Alexander Wurz</b> Austria. Age 24 3 starts, no wins			
<b>McLaren Mercedes</b>  Main sponsor West	<b>7</b>	<b>David Coulthard</b> Britain. Age 26 64 starts, 3 wins		MP4/13 is first McLaren under technical directorship of ex-Williams man Newey	High expectations. The Mercedes V10 is strong, <b>Hakkinen</b> is considered to have the natural speed of Schumacher and, with <b>Coulthard</b> , forms a highly potent driver pairing. Bridgestone tyres may be a plus and new technical director <b>Adrian Newey</b> could be the final piece in the jigsaw
	<b>8</b>	<b>Mika Hakkinen</b> Finland. Age 29 96 starts, 1 win			
<b>Jordan Mugen Honda</b>  Main sponsors Benson & Hedges	<b>9</b>	<b>Damon Hill</b> Britain. Age 37 84 starts, 21 wins <b>World Champion 1996</b>		B&H/Mastercard gives team best sponsorship base in its seven year history	Eddie Jordan has opted for blend of youth and experience with <b>Damon Hill</b> alongside <b>Ralf Schumacher</b> . Hill had a trying season in 1997 and will want to reassert himself, but does the fire still burn? Strong Peugeot engines have gone to Prost but Honda input may compensate
	<b>10</b>	<b>Ralf Schumacher</b> Germany. Age 22 17 starts, no wins			
<b>Prost Peugeot</b>  Main sponsor Gauloises	<b>11</b>	<b>Olivier Panis</b> France. Age 31 59 starts, 1 win		New AP01 the first chassis to owe its designation to team owner Alain Prost	The team has doubled in size over the winter and is in the process of relocating to new factory. Peugeot engines and ex-Renault man <b>Bernard Dudot</b> as technical guru are plus points, as could be the Bridgestone tyres. Potential to be a winning team, but perhaps not quite yet
	<b>12</b>	<b>Jarno Trulli</b> Italy. Age 23 14 starts, no wins			
<b>Sauber Petronas</b>  Main sponsors Red Bull	<b>14</b>	<b>Jean Alesi</b> France. Age 33 135 starts, 1 win		Watch for interesting Alesi/Herbert internal battle	Peter Sauber admits that his team needs to expand its technical capability but the potential is there for surprises. The budget is strong, as is the Ferrari-built Petronas engine and Sauber is one of only three teams where both drivers have won races
	<b>15</b>	<b>Johnny Herbert</b> Britain. Age 33 113 starts, 2 wins			
<b>Arrows Hart</b>  Main sponsor Danka	<b>16</b>	<b>Pedro Diniz</b> Brazil. Age 27 50 starts, no wins		First Arrows chassis from design ace John Barnard	Difficult to assess. Last season was character-building but progress was made. Expect a good chassis from technical chief <b>John Barnard</b> and <b>Mika Salo</b> is a more than able replacement for the departed Hill. The team will use <b>Brian Hart's</b> newly developed V10 engine
	<b>17</b>	<b>Mika Salo</b> Finland. Age 31 52 starts, no wins			
<b>Stewart Ford</b>  Main sponsor Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank	<b>18</b>	<b>Rubens Barrichello</b> Brazil. Age 25 81 starts, no wins		If it rains, keep an eye on Barrichello	Designing a new car while running a racing programme is the acid test. Stewart's move to a purpose-built facility will help and Ford are determined to get the job done, but don't expect miracles. <b>Barrichello</b> is under-rated and <b>Magnussen</b> will be more confident in his second year
	<b>19</b>	<b>Jan Magnussen</b> Denmark. Age 24 18 starts, no wins			
<b>Tyrrell Ford</b>  Main sponsor PIAA	<b>20</b>	<b>Ricardo Rosset</b> Brazil. Age 29 16 starts, no wins		Ford V10s should close some of team's 1997 power deficit	The 1998 season will write the final chapter of the Tyrrell story before the remnants are swallowed up by newly-announced <b>British American Racing</b> in 1999. Sadly, it's hard to visualise anything but another underfunded year of struggle for Uncle Ken
	<b>21</b>	<b>Toranosuke Takagi</b> Japan. Age 24 First season of Grand Prix racing			
<b>Minardi Ford</b>  Main sponsor Mild Seven	<b>22</b>	<b>Esteban Tuero</b> Argentina. Age 19 First season of Grand Prix racing		200-plus starts but still no sign of a breakthrough	No prospect of escape from back of the grid gaol for F1's minnows. Ex-Ferrari man <b>Gustav Brunner</b> will help the technical strength but the resources aren't there. Journeyman <b>Shinji Nakano</b> brings a fistful of Yen but the FIA's refusal to grant <b>Esteban Tuero</b> a superlicence is a blow
	<b>23</b>	<b>Shinji Nakano</b> Japan. Age 26 17 starts, no wins			