

Tim Bridgman won the Formula BMW UK Championship in 2004:
"It's a level playing field. "The championship was set up to give everyone a fair chance of succeeding"



Champions' view

We ask last year's Formula BMW UK champions, Tim Bridgman and Ross Curnow how their 2004 seasons created a good base from which to further their careers

Interview [Edd Straw](#) Photography [Mitch Jenkins](#)

What was it about Formula BMW that made you choose the championship?

Tim Bridgman It's by far the best package out there. Everything is right – the car, the Education and Coaching Programme, the commitment from BMW. I looked closely at all the options for last year and there was no contest. It's a level playing field, and for my second year in racing I had to go somewhere where the championship was set up to give everyone a fair chance of succeeding. We won the title last year as a driver entrant, although the fact that it was the championship's inaugural season in the UK helped that. Ross was also able to win a race as a rookie driver, which shows how even it is.

Ross Curnow For me, moving up from karting, it's good that all the

cars are the same. They're not too powerful and they're safe, so if anything does go wrong you know you're going to be OK.

How important was the Education and Coaching Programme in your success?

RC The E&C Programme is brilliant, not just for the fitness training and the media training which prepares you for what comes next (hopefully all the way up to Formula 1), but also because of the driver coaching. With Formula BMW UK Championship series instructor Andy Priaulx being so experienced, he can see things about a driver's technique from the side of the track that you can't even see when you're driving. You never stop learning, and I improved all the way through last season to be in a position to go for the championship this year. ➔

TB Having that kind of experience behind you is vital, particularly if you're running on your own. Andy has raced so many different cars and is one of the best drivers around. No other championship has someone like him doing this for the drivers. I'm moving up to Formula 3 this year, and realise how much of an advantage this is over people coming in from other championships. Other drivers don't get the chance to go on the kind of fitness and nutrition training courses that we do.

What is the FB02 like to drive?

TB It's a mini Formula 3 car. I've driven some of the other categories at this level, and the FB02 is the closest.

RC From what people say, it's very close to F3 in that it's got more grip than power – you've got to be smooth to be quick.

TB That style really does go into the F3 car, and that's a big advantage for me this year over the drivers from other categories. The car is really well put together – it's not difficult to drive, but you have to get the style right to drive it fast, which is how it should be.

RC Because of the way the cars are designed the racing is really close. The whole grid is covered by one second, and there are really good chances to overtake, which teaches you racecraft.

Away from the actual driving, how much is there that has to be learned in terms of car setup?

RC It's all in the fine tuning of the dampers, the cambers, that sort of thing. There's plenty to play with to learn how these changes influence the car without going too far.

Obviously this prepares you well for the next step up the racing ladder.

TB You learn a lot about how important it is to get the setup right, but if it's not quite there you can make up the difference through your driving.

RC Having three or four people working on your car is something new for someone like me coming out of karting. As you move up the categories it's something you have to get more used to, so it's good to learn how to work with professional teams with mechanics and engineers.

How well prepared are you for the next motorsport level?

TB I've found it really easy to step up to an F3 car. It's basically just a bigger version of the FB02. Getting used to more power isn't much of a problem because the relative grip is similar.

RC I'll have the advantage in knowing how to get sponsors and deal with professional teams, as well as all the advantages of the physical training programme.

Off the track, BMW has spared no expense in laying on hospitality for guests. How important is this?

TB It's just on another level compared to anything else. This is BMW, and the company doesn't do things by halves – it shows how seriously it takes the series.

RC It's a massive boost for attracting sponsors. They love going to the meetings and spending time in the hospitality suite, even if they don't know a great deal about the racing side. They have a great day out, and the drivers have something they can offer in terms of hospitality.

TB That's a big part of what makes the championship the best value at this level. You just don't get that anywhere else. For the amount of money involved you get a lot out of it, and so do the sponsors.

After last year's success, have you found that you're becoming more well-known in the motorsport world?

TB When you've got people like BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen and Williams F1 Team Principal Sir Frank Williams coming to races and giving guidance to the drivers, it's a massive boost. They know how strong the formula is, so they know the drivers coming up out of the championship.

RC It's a big thing, because you are known to BMW and hopefully have the chance to establish a long-term partnership with the company, as Andy Priaulx has. Also, from outside BMW, a lot of people have shown an interest in the championship, and, if I can win that this year, it should hopefully guarantee I get the backing to do Formula 3 and then have a real future in motorsport. ©



Ross Curnow won the Rookie Cup in the Formula BMW UK Championship in 2004.
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