Note 101

Traction and Launch Control

"Traction Control" was 1st fitted to a winning Grand Prix car by Williams in their 1992 FW14B-Renault RS3C.

It worked by comparing the measured RPMs of a front wheel with a rear so that any spin was detected and then the Engine Control Unit (ECU) cut the ignition to 1 or more cylinders to control that spin to the %age which gave maximum traction.

This %age depended on the type of tyre. In the mid '80s a figure of 15% was quoted by Niki Lauda (571) for an optimum standing start, driver-controlled at that date, of course.

In 2004 5% was quoted (1027) for tyres which undoubtedly had a much higher Coefficient of Friction (approaching 2 (987)) than 20 years previously.

The difference in opinion between McLaren and Cosworth in 1993 over the best way to reduce torque for Traction Control (ignition cut-out versus throttle reduction) is described in Eg. 77.

When Traction Control was later combined with a fully-automatic gear-change (FAGC) then "Launch Control" for optimum Grand Prix standing starts was produced.

However, both Traction Control and FAGC were banned from the start of 1994 until the end of the period covered by this review.