



TEXA

BRIT

70

DAF

DAF

BRIT

GOODYEAR

DAF

ODYSSEY BATTERY

BRAID

VBOX MOTORSPORT

Britcar

TEXACO

KARCHER

AAAtraq

TEAM BRIT

CDW



Aaron Morgan

Rhino PRODUCTS

KARCHER

MB

TDW

VBOX MOTORSPORT

GOODYEAR

YUTREE

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Basingstoke's Aaron Morgan is rewriting the rules for what can be achieved in motorsport

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As a young boy with a passion for racing, his dreams seemed over when he broke his spine riding a motocross jump aged just 15. But Aaron Morgan turned adversity into a series of track triumphs to become the fastest paraplegic racing driver in the world.

Regularly achieving podium finishes with pioneering Team BRIT, Aaron uses revolutionary hand controls while racing against teams of able-bodied

'I quickly set goals as to how I was going to integrate myself into normal life'

drivers on a totally level playing field. Now he is targeting Le Mans, the world's oldest active endurance racing event in the ultimate test of his skills.

Racing tracks have been a second home for Aaron all his life. His father Rod was a keen go-kart racer and as a young boy, he spent most weekends watching him compete; fuelling his own competitive interest.

Aged seven, he was given a 50cc motocross bike of his own, riding it around the Hampshire



ABOVE: Aaron Morgan leapt at the chance to take to the track in Team BRIT's Aston Martin

LEFT: Aaron is now a proud member of Team Brit

countryside before asking Rod to build him mini tracks with sticks and posts.

Inevitably, the next question was: 'Can I race other people now?' he explains. 'We went along to our local motocross club and that was where it all began really. The adrenaline buzz you get from going fast on a bike, and the jumps as well, were the real big draws for me.'

After his accident in 2006, Aaron was taken to the Duke of Cornwall Spinal injuries Unit in Salisbury and placed in a medically induced coma for four

weeks before a lengthy period of rehabilitation and recovery.

The memories of that initial period in hospital are unclear.

'My mum has a photo diary of my whole hospital stay,' he says. 'There are some photos where I'm clearly awake. But I don't remember that photo being taken. So, the whole transition back into consciousness is quite a hazy one.'

During his recovery, Aaron made an important decision, one which has driven all his achievements since his fateful accident. ▶

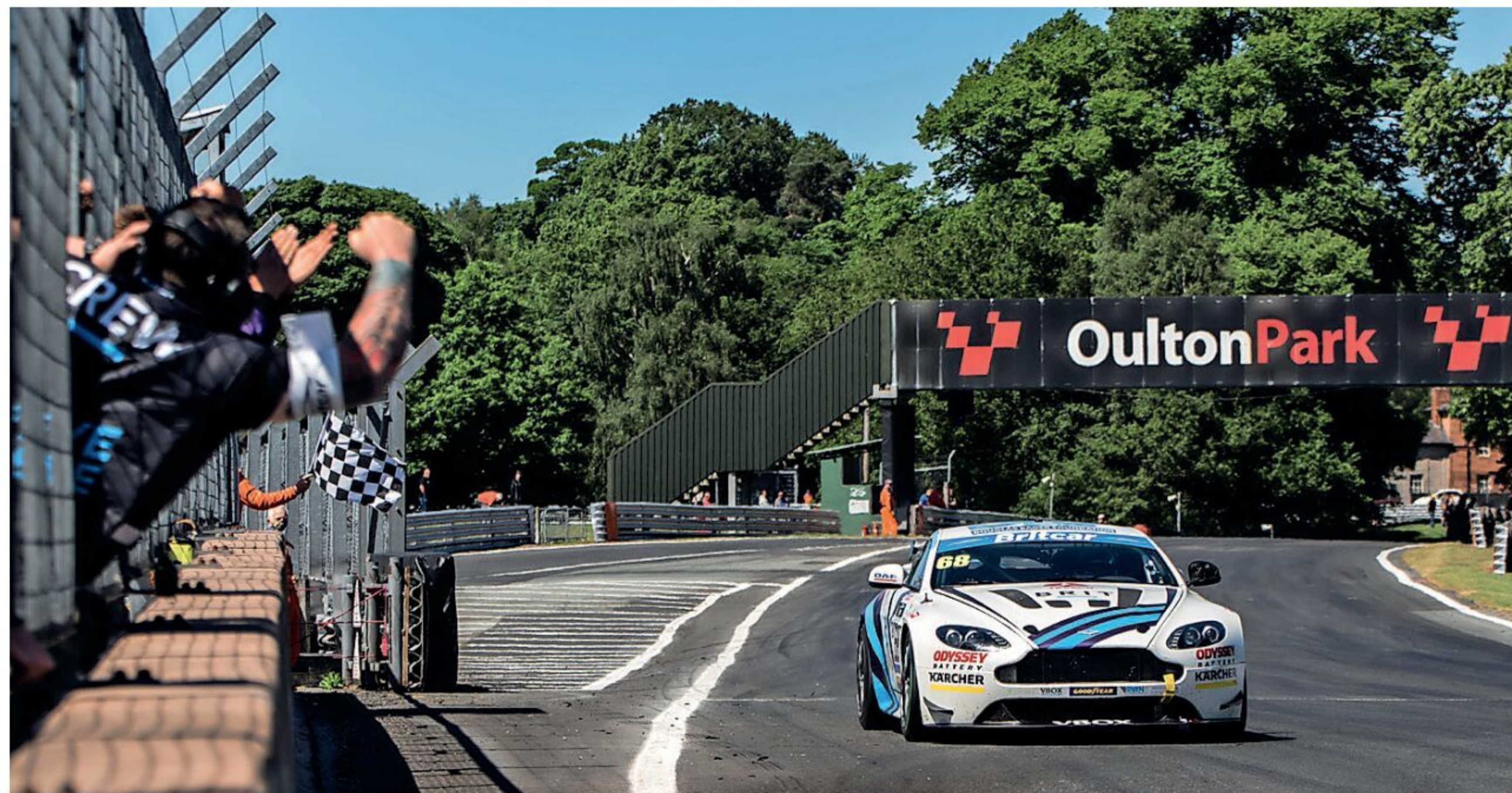
'I was told that I actually stopped breathing at the motocross track for nine minutes. So that very quickly made me realise how lucky I was to still be alive. At that moment, I made a promise to myself that I wasn't going to let my disability hold me back. So, I quickly set goals as to how I was going to integrate myself into normal life.'

He was determined to return to his studies, eventually achieving a 2:1 in sports science at Brunel University, but the lure of the racing circuit was perhaps the biggest incentive.

'Learning to drive opened my eyes to what could be possible'

'I found out when I was in hospital that disabled people can actually learn to drive when they're 16 years old. So, having been in and around cars and motorbikes all of my life, when I heard that, my ears pricked up and I immediately started taking driving lessons, even from the hospital. The nurses would wheel my chair out to the car, I'd get in, go for my driving lesson, and then come back to the hospital for the night.'

'It was really learning to drive that opened my eyes to what could be possible in terms of



motor racing. And it was at that point I started making some serious inquiries about how I could go about doing it, the type of cars that I would be able to race and the sponsorship I'd need.'

After that, Aaron became the youngest disabled person to achieve a National B Race Licence, but racing is an expensive sport. It was not until 2011 that he was able to complete a full season when he had secured sponsorship.

Currently, Aaron is backed by Rhino Products and CDW UK where he works in IT as a networking specialist.

'Getting sponsorship is not easy and you have to deal with a lot of nos. But I'm really proud that since 2011, all of my racing has been funded by sponsorship, most of which I've found myself.'

From 2014, he raced as the only disabled driver in the BMW

Compact Cup Championship and his progress up the grid soon caught the eye of founder and chief executive of Team BRIT, Dave Player.

Dave set up the enterprise to support, inspire and motivate people with disabilities, PTSD and mental health issues, by demonstrating what can be achieved through motorsport.

In 2019, Dave invited Aaron to come and try Team BRIT's controls, something he had long wanted to try out and took to immediately. And it wasn't long before he was offered a seat in the team's Aston Martin.

Team BRIT's racing hand controls are widely recognised as the most advanced in the world. They use paddles built into the back of the steering wheel, which can be made to suit drivers' personal needs. With the pedals functioning as normal, this

ABOVE: Aaron and Team BRIT have raced on tracks around the country in the Britcar Championship



LEFT: Aaron Morgan with his other Team BRIT members



makes the team's system highly flexible so it can suit drivers with a wide range of disabilities. As Aaron explains: 'What Team BRIT has done has completely revolutionised racing for disabled people. It is the only sport where disabled people can compete on a level playing field with able-bodied people. When I get in the Aston Martin and start my race, I leave my wheelchair behind, and it almost feels like I leave my disability behind too because I'm just as able as the other drivers in the race to control that car as well as they are.'

Aaron has forged a strong relationship with his racing partner Bobby Trundle from Wokingham and says the bonds between the whole garage team are really close.

'As drivers, we all get on brilliantly. We really put the team in Team BRIT and it is such an uplifting atmosphere to be part of.'

ABOVE: Team BRIT's controls have revolutionised motor racing for people with disabilities

Driving their Aston Martin GT4, Aaron and Bobby compete in hour-long races in the Endurance category of the Britcar Championship. There is a mandatory pit-stop, which can be taken at any time point between 20 and 40 minutes, at which point the pair change over.

With plans to enter the British GT in 2022, this will take them one step away from being able to apply for Le Mans, and would make Team BRIT the first disabled team to enter the prestigious event.

'It is an incredibly exciting journey to be part of', says Aaron. Sponsorship will be key to financing their ambition, but the team are hopeful that their growing success and profile on the track will help bring more sponsors on board.

While last year's racing calendar was affected by COVID, it allowed Aaron and Bobby to get used to competing in the Britcar

Championship and achieve some podium finishes before stepping up a gear in 2021.

'We've have had an amazing start to the season this year. I think we've bought home a trophy from every round we've competed at so far, which is fantastic.'

Motor racing is a way of life for Aaron, an all-year round endeavour, whether he is looking for sponsors, updating his social media feeds and website, working in the gym or practicing and testing.

'Motor racing has given me something to focus on, so I'm not just focusing on my disability. It takes a bit of pressure away, I guess.'

Ultimately, he says his story is proof of what you can achieve with determination.

'Being part of Team BRIT is incredibly motivating in its own right. Hopefully, as a team, we show what can be possible.'