

AMR Driver Academy back in search of new talent as former graduates flourish with Aston Martin



- **New group of aspiring Aston Martin Vantage racers step forward to try and graduate from the 2026 Aston Martin Racing Driver Academy**
- **2025 winner Kobe Pauwels set to make FIA World Endurance Championship debut with the Heart of Racing Team at Imola**
- **Former winners Ross Gunn and Roman De Angelis lead the Aston Martin THOR Team Valkyrie charge in North America**
- **2024 winner Jamie Day racing Vantage with busy international calendar**
- **The winner will receive Aston Martin Racing support and assistance through 2027 and a test in a contemporary Aston Martin Vantage GT3**
- **Judges include Aston Martin endurance racing legend Darren Turner, works driver Valentin Hasse Clot and WEC Vantage racer Jonny Adam**

Tuesday, 7 April, 2026, Gaydon, UK: As Aston Martin Racing's (AMR) newly-crowned GT racing prodigy Kobe Pauwels (BEL) prepares to make his FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) debut at Imola on 17-19 April, the Aston Martin Racing Driver Academy opens its doors again to an exciting new intake of aspiring young GT drivers from around the world.

The British luxury sportscar brand's talent search has grown exponentially to become a well-established, proven and sought after pathway for aspiring endurance drivers, with eight previous graduates shining examples of its success and competing across the most prestigious and important sportscar series around the globe. Among those drivers is Pauwels. In addition to his full-season GT World Challenge Europe commitments with partner team Comtoy Racing, the Belgian takes his bow with the Heart of Racing Team in WEC's LMGT3 class standing in for Dudu Barrichello (BRA), who is on IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship duties that weekend.

Now AMR begins its search to endorse a ninth winner from this prestigious initiative. An exciting collection of promising racers, 22 in total, from ten countries, will collectively compete for at least ten different Aston Martin partner teams in 2026. This includes 2024 Spa 24 Hours winner and DTM competitors Comtoy Racing, Nürburgring 24 Hours winners Walkenhorst Motorsport, IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship [IMSA] teams the Heart of Racing Team and Van Der Steur Racing and top European Le Mans Series team Racing Spirit of Léman. Front-running domestic Vantage GT4 teams such as Mirage Racing, Racar Motorsport, Medusa Motorsport and British GT squads MKH and GBR Stratton also have aspirants registered for the pioneering programme.

Adam Carter, Aston Martin Head of Endurance, said: "We're very proud of the Aston Martin Racing Driver Academy. As the initiative matures, we see even more clearly how its alumni have flourished. Two of the six drivers racing works Valkyries are AMR Academy graduates, and at least four will contest WEC and IMSA races this season. Others will race in the GT World Challenge Europe, the Spa 24 Hours and ADAC Nürburgring 24 Hours. As a tool for defining potential endurance racing talent, it's clearly effective and we look forward to seeing who it produces in 2026!"

The initiative is designed to fast-track talent from within AMR's thriving partner team network and is a way for it to contribute back to motorsport by investing in and honing future talent. An unrivalled platform for learning and development with an established manufacturer, the academy is fine-tuned every year and improved to effectively coach drivers in the early stages of their careers.

Competitors aged between 16 and 26 with Vantage GT3 and GT4 race programmes in recognised championships are eligible. The prize on offer for the successful graduate includes financial support towards their 2027 race programme, as well as assistance and guidance from the factory, tailored to their season plans.

Aston Martin is proud to have furthered the careers of several endurance racing stars including works Aston Martin THOR Team Valkyrie drivers Ross Gunn (GBR) and IMSA GTD champion and Rolex 24 Hours at Daytona winner Roman De Angelis (CAN). Other graduates include multiple GT champion Valentin Hasse-Clot (FRA) – who remains connected to the AMR Racing Driver Academy as a coordinator, driver coach and judge – GT World Europe racer Romain Leroux (FRA), 2023 graduate Mike David Ortmann (DEU) and 2019 British GT4 champion Tom Canning (GBR).

The most recent graduate, Pauwels, will contest the entire GT World Challenge Europe season – Endurance and Sprint Cups – with Aston Martin partner Comtoy Racing, as well his maiden WEC race with the Heart of Racing Team. His predecessor Jamie Day (GBR) – the 2025 GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Silver Cup champion – will also run a full campaign in the Sprint and Endurance Cups with Walkenhorst Motorsport. The 2024 AMR Academy winner will supplement that with a season driving Comtoy Racing's Aston Martin Vantage GT3 in the Germany-based ADAC GT Masters series.

"Winning the AMR Academy is a great honour for me," said Pauwels. "I learned a lot working with Aston Martin through the season and the test at the end of year was an amazing experience, because you get to work with some outstanding people and that allows you to validate what you are learning as you develop. The WEC debut is very exciting, and if I'm honest, has come earlier than I expected it would! I will do my best to show the Heart of Racing Team and Aston Martin that I was the right choice!"

The candidates benefit from a three-day seminar that includes a tour of the Aston Martin Aramco Formula One® Team Technology Campus, media training with FIA World Endurance Championship commentator Louise Beckett, a comprehensive fitness assessment, including a bespoke training programme and nutrition plan, Aston Martin Racing in-house commercial training and a factory-based engineering workshop to further their understanding of how to competitively set-up Vantage. The participants will be comprehensively assessed through the

season as the judging panel receives feedback from partner teams, works drivers and AMR engineers at events.

The judging panel, which includes three-time 24 Hours of Le Mans class winner and 2023 Rolex 24 at Daytona GTD class champion Darren Turner (GBR), four-times British GT champion and two-times 24 Hours of Le Mans winner Jonny Adam (GBR), former Academy winner and works driver Hasse Clot, Head of AMR Academy Rachel Adam, AMR Head of Performance Gus Beteli and Head of AMR Partner Racing Huw Tasker. The panel will evaluate each drivers' ability to manage the strategic, teamwork, commercial and public relations aspects of their role. Finally, the outstanding candidate will have demonstrated the most potential to develop their talent for the future at the end of the season.

2026 ASTON MARTIN RACING DRIVER ACADEMY CANDIDATES

Driver	Team	Series	Car
Sébastien Baud (FRA)	Van der Steur Racing	IMSA	GT3
Joel Bergström (SWE)	Gianfranco Motorsport	Iberian GT4	GT4
Louka Desgranges (FRA)	Racing Spirit of Léman	GT4 European Series	GT4
Baudouin Detout (FRA)	Comtoy Racing	ADAC GT Masters	GT3
Arthur Dorison (FRA)	Comtoy Racing	GT World Europe	GT3
Roberto Faria (BRA)	Gianfranco Motorsport	Iberian GT4	GT4
Dennis Fetzer (DEU)	Walkenhorst Motorsport	NLS	GT3
Marius Fossard (FRA)	Racing Spirit of Léman	European Le Mans Series	GT3
Pedro Garcia (BRA)	Racing Spirit of Léman	GT4 European Series	GT4
Hannah Grisham (USA)	Heart of Racing Team	IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge	GT4
Ethan Ischer (CHE)	Walkenhorst Motorsport	GT World Europe	GT3
Mathieu Martins (FRA)	Racar Motorsport	Iberian GT4	GT4
Anton Morsing (DEN)	Racar Motorsport	Iberian GT4	GT4
Will Orton (GBR)	MKH	British GT4	GT4
Ronan Pearson (GBR)	GBR Stratton	British GT4	GT4
Gaspard Simon (FRA)	Walkenhorst Motorsport	GT World Europe	GT3
Jodie Sloss (GBR)	Mirage Racing	FFSA GT4	GT4

Oliver Söderström (SWE)	Comtoy Racing	GT World Europe	GT3
Rory van der Steur (USA)	Van der Steur Racing	IMSA	GT3
Athan Sterling (USA)	Medusa Motorsport	IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge	GT4
Mateo Villagomez (ECU)	Walkenhorst Motorsport	GT World Challenge Europe	GT3
Hunter Yeany (USA)	Medusa Motorsport	IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge	GT4

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About Aston Martin Lagonda:

Aston Martin’s vision is to be the world’s most desirable, ultra-luxury British brand, creating the most exquisitely addictive performance cars.

Founded in 1913 by Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford, Aston Martin is acknowledged as an iconic global brand synonymous with style, luxury, performance, and exclusivity. Aston Martin fuses the latest technology, time honoured craftsmanship and beautiful styling to produce a range of critically acclaimed luxury models including the Vantage, DB12, Vanquish, DBX and its first mid-engined plug-in hybrid, Valhalla. Aligned with its Racing. Green. sustainability strategy, Aston Martin is developing alternatives to the Internal Combustion Engine through a blended drivetrain approach, with a clear plan to have a line-up of electrified sports cars and SUVs.

Based in Gaydon, England, Aston Martin Lagonda designs, creates, and exports cars which are sold in more than 50 countries around the world. Its sports cars are manufactured in Gaydon with its luxury DBX SUV range proudly manufactured in St Athan, Wales.

Lagonda was founded in 1899 and came together with Aston Martin in 1947 when both were purchased by the late Sir David Brown, and the company is now listed on the London Stock Exchange as Aston Martin Lagonda Global Holdings plc.

2020 saw Lawrence Stroll become the company’s Executive Chairman, alongside significant new investment. This coincided with Aston Martin’s return to the pinnacle of motorsport with the Aston Martin Aramco Formula One® Team and commenced a new era for the iconic British marque.