

## VENTURE Fitness

**T**wo seconds. In the time it took you to read that sentence, there were more than 120,000 Google searches, a bee flapped its wings at least 460 times, and Oracle Red Bull Racing's F1 drivers Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez would have completed a pit stop.

In a sport where recent World Championships have been decided on the final lap of the final race of the season, marginal gains are everything; the time it takes to change a set of tyres can be the difference between finishing first and being the first loser.

The Oracle Red Bull Racing pit crew is the ace up the racing-suit sleeves of its drivers. It has won every DHL Fastest Pit Stop Award since 2018, breaking and re-breaking world records in the process – 1.82 for Max Verstappen at the 2019 Brazilian Grand Prix remains the time to beat.

This isn't a dedicated specialist team, however; in fact, 'pit crew member' isn't even the main job of those involved. The 20-strong group work as mechanics, technicians and even trackside IT engineers by day, their pit crew credentials only coming to the fore during races.

Matt Caller knows what it takes first-hand. Number one mechanic for Sergio Perez's car, the 33-year-old is one of the Oracle Red Bull Racing pit crew's four wheel gunners – the person who bookends a wheel change by removing and attaching the nut using an aerospace-grade wheel gun.

"You don't have to be insanely fit or strong [to do pit crew duties]," says Caller. "It's more about injury prevention. I'm crouched down a lot and leaning in and out, so I try to keep my core and back in relatively good condition and strengthen it with exercises and compound lifts to deal with the stresses and strains."

To be the best, though, requires a body and mind



AIM

## Top gunner

Oracle Red Bull Racing's Matt Caller on what it takes to be a cog in the well-oiled machine that is the world's best Formula 1 pit crew

that's ready to get to work at a moment's notice, 23 race weekends a year.

### Track time

While the off-season is for personal fitness targets such as "putting on a bit of size or getting back into cardiovascular goals", Caller says flexibility is key for the season's March-to-November duration: "Sometimes you'll go to a hotel and it'll have the world's best gym; other times, you'll be in a tiny room and there won't be a gym whatsoever." If it's the latter, pit crews are able to get creative with their cardio; once covers are on the cars, they have an hour to use the

track for running or cycling. Some even use it as an opportunity to secure their own pit-lane bragging rights: "There's a competition every weekend between all the really serious runners to see who gets the fastest time on the circuit."



**"You don't have time to warm up"**

Matt Caller,  
Formula 1 wheel-gunslinger

### Muscle memory

Caller estimates that the crew practise 2,000 pit stops every season – 100 a week during pre-season, and between 60 to 100 on a race weekend. A session lasts around 15 to 20 minutes, with everything reset between each drill: "We all go back into the garage to be roughly where we'd be sitting or standing." The aim is consistency rather than speed at all costs. "We're doing exactly what we'd do in the race, every single time, so it's like muscle memory."

### Chain reaction

Although the pit crew will warm up with stretches and use massage guns to overcome any pre-race niggles, there's no way of knowing when they'll be sprung into action for the first pit stop. "You can get into the right mindset, but it can happen with 15 seconds' notice," says Caller, "so you don't really have time to warm up – you've just got to hit the ground running and react straight away." To help compose himself, he performs breathing exercises – "deep breaths, holding and exhaling really slowly to bring my heart rate down and get everything under control" – and visualises the perfect stop while making the 10-15m journey from the garage to the pit lane. "Before you even get out there, you've done two stops in your head, so that first stop isn't the first, it's the third."

### Take aim

A wheel gunner requires amazing accuracy to ensure that the gun locks onto the nut first time. While he believes the practice pit stops help him stay sharp, Caller also completes a drill where he throws a tennis ball against a wall and catches it with the other hand, before repeating. "[Doing the drill] under time pressure and trying to get as fast as you can keeps your hand-eye coordination up," he says. [redbullracing.com](http://redbullracing.com)