

Details of the BMP championships

1. British Superbikes is a national championship for high-powered, production-based machines, although they are uprated from showroom models with upgraded suspensions and engines plus full race tyres. Two races are held at each meeting. The promotion rights to this event were previously held by TwoFour Sports (owned by Donington Park Leisure). On 15 October 1999 the MCRCB subdelegated to BMP for a period of five years certain promotion rights, including media rights, sponsorship rights, merchandising rights, name rights, presentation rights and other intellectual property rights. There are a number of supporting championships held at the same meetings as British Superbikes. The British Supersports Championship is for production-based 'showroom look-alikes' with changes allowed to tyres, exhausts and suspension internals; there is also the British Superstock Championship (for showroom machines with only minimal changes), a Junior Superstock Championship, and the British 250cc and 125cc Championships. BMP owns the rights to the support races to British Superbikes as well as the headline championship (it does not do so in relation to the BTCC and PowerTour).

2. Historically, PowerTour was owned by BRDC. Octagon obtained the right to promote the PowerTour championship as a result of the merger. Octagon told us that it had subsequently transferred all the commercial rights to BMP and the formal agreement for this would be executed shortly. The PowerTour consists of six championships, of which the principal ones are British Formula Three and British GT. Formula Three is for single-seat racing cars, based on engines developed from a road car, and they run on one type of specified tyre. The British Formula Three Championship is regarded as a very competitive national series and attracts many international drivers. GT cars are based upon models built and sold for the road, and are similar to those competing in the Le Mans 24 Hour race. The British GT races are for two drivers, with a mandatory driver change, and are 500 minutes in duration. The other PowerTour championships are the BRSCC TVR Tuscan Championship, the National Formula Ford Championship (Zetec) (one of several British Formula Ford Championships), the Porsche Cup and the Ford Credit Fiesta Championship. The rights to these last four championships are not held by BMP. PowerTour rounds are currently televised in a highlights show on Channel 4.

3. The MSA granted the rights to BMP to promote the BTCC for a five-year period commencing on 1 January 2002, for which BMP pays £[] a year. The rights had previously been held under a five-year agreement by TOCA Ltd. Octagon purchased TOCA in June 2000 because, it told us, it felt that TOCA, having lost the rights to promote BTCC from 2002, was failing to maintain the health of the championship until then. The BTCC became extremely successful in the 1990s, drawing very large crowds. The vehicles are based on two-litre, four-door road cars, although substantial modifications are allowed. Many manufacturers entered works teams, and close racing between cars apparently similar to road models proved popular, while weight penalties imposed on successful teams ensured competition remained close. However, it proved extremely expensive to run works teams and by the late 1990s many manufacturers withdrew from the championship and attendances at events fell dramatically. In 2001, only two works teams started the season. The regulations have now been revised to cut the cost of operating teams in the hope of attracting manufacturers back in.

4. There are two BTCC races at each meeting. These are supported by three other championships: Formula Renault (single-seat race cars using two-litre Renault engines and where some other components, such as the transmission, have to be of standard type), the Renault Clio Cup, and the Lotus Sport Elise Series. The BBC televises the BTCC races, while Formula Renault is televised via Eurosport, Sky Sports and Channel 5.

5. Octagon provided us with data on paying spectator attendances at Octagon circuits for the BMP series from 1998 to 2001. PowerTour did not start until 1999 and many venues had not staged their rounds in 2001 at the time the data were prepared. Some circuits have two rounds in the championships. It is noticeable that, in most cases, the second round at a particular circuit has a lower attendance than the first round. Attendances are shown in Figures 1 to 3.

FIGURE 1

British Superbikes: paying attendance at Octagon circuits, 1998 to 2001

Details omitted. See note on page iv.

FIGURE 2

BTCC: paying attendance at Octagon circuits, 1998 to 2001

Details omitted. See note on page iv.

FIGURE 3

British F3/GT (Powertour): paying attendance at Octagon circuits, 1999 to 2001

Details omitted. See note on page iv.

Note: The Powertour championship did not begin until 1999.