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Who designed the MP4/4? We investigate...

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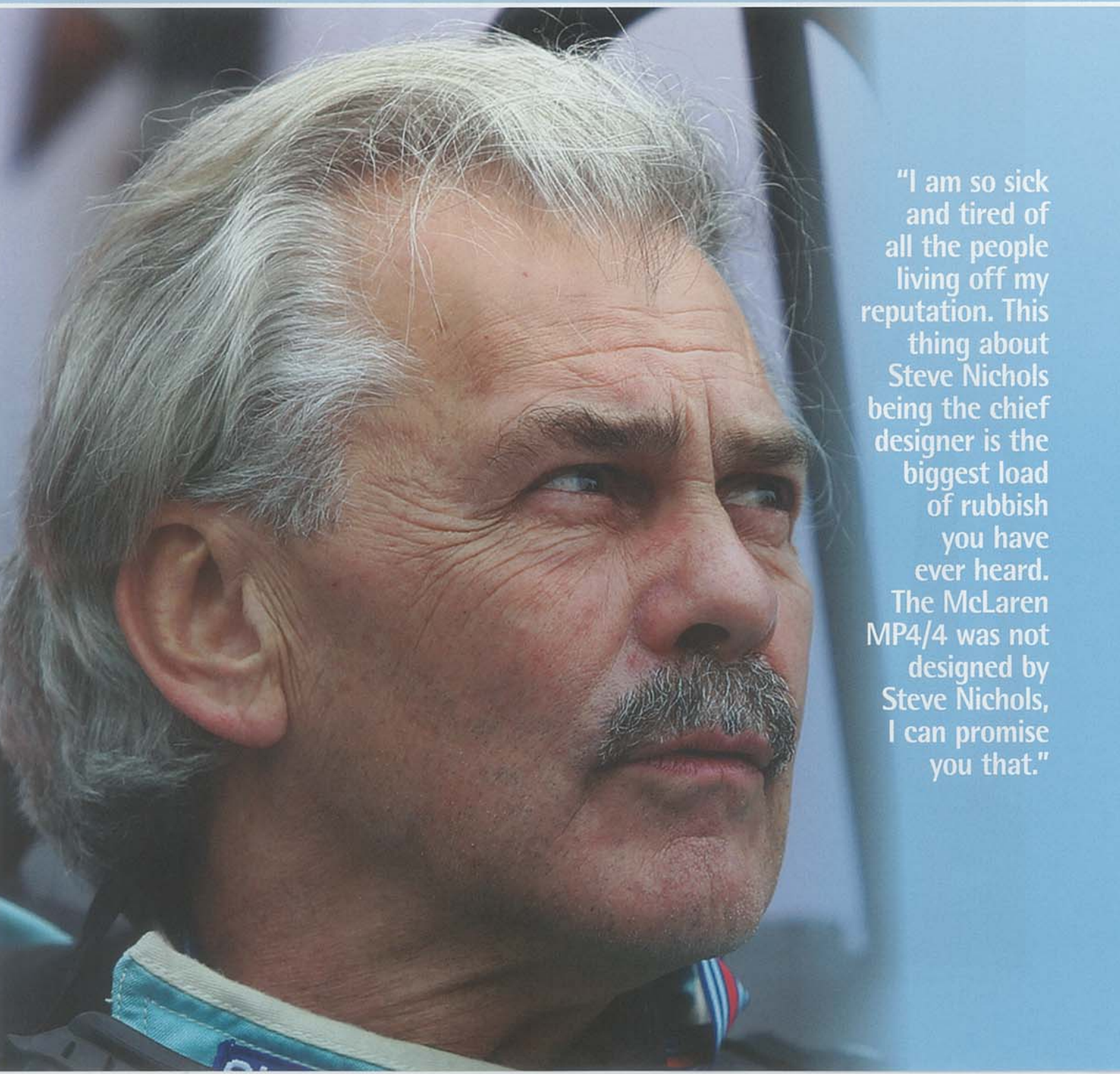


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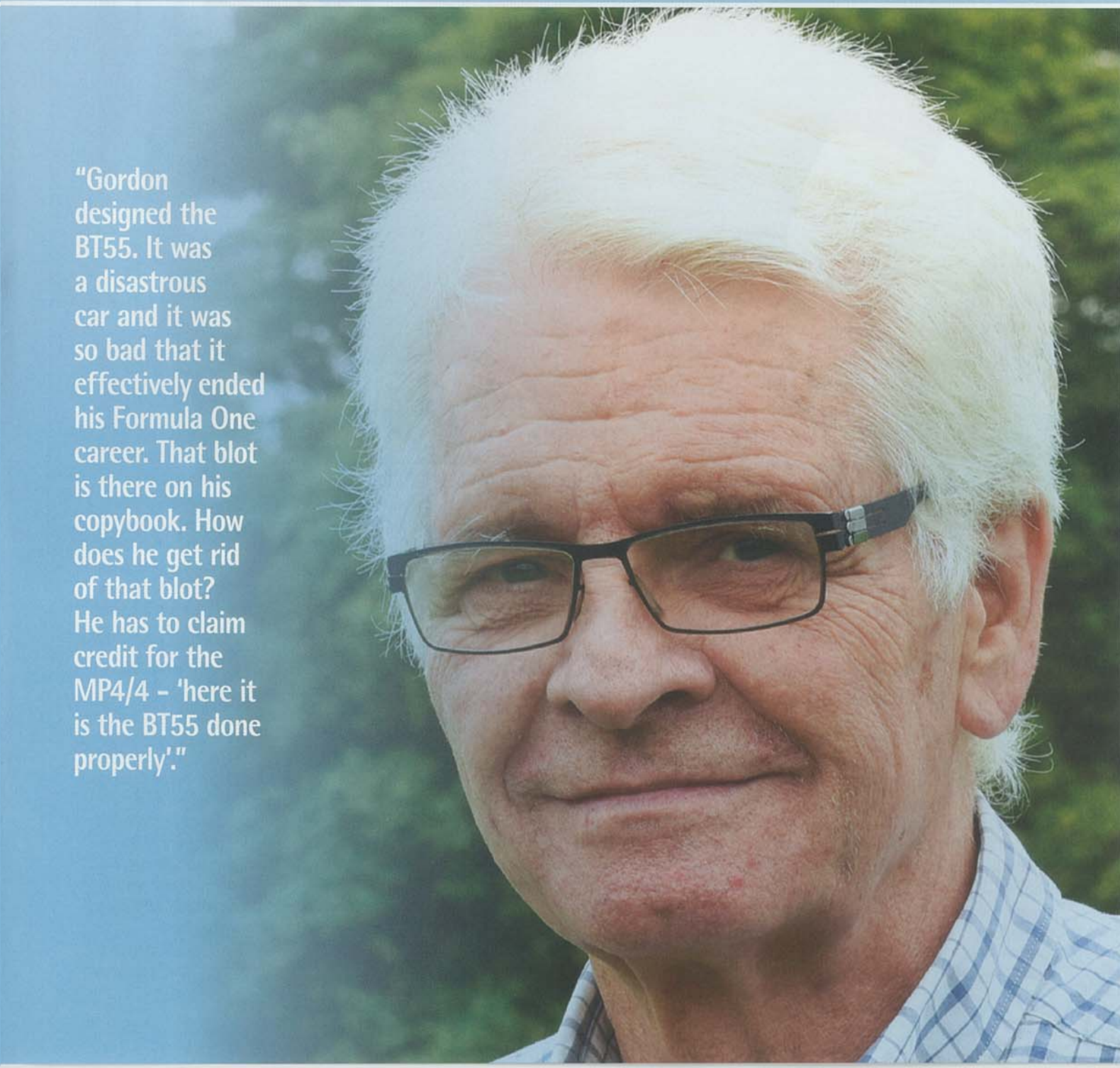
*For 32 years
Gordon Murray
has claimed
credit for the
McLaren-Honda
MP4/4 – now
the real story is
revealed*

T Gordon Murray

F Steve Nichols



"I am so sick and tired of all the people living off my reputation. This thing about Steve Nichols being the chief designer is the biggest load of rubbish you have ever heard. The McLaren MP4/4 was not designed by Steve Nichols, I can promise you that."



"Gordon designed the BT55. It was a disastrous car and it was so bad that it effectively ended his Formula One career. That blot is there on his copybook. How does he get rid of that blot? He has to claim credit for the MP4/4 – 'here it is the BT55 done properly.'"

Feuds can be ugly things, especially between former colleagues. But in 1990 Gordon Murray laid down the gauntlet when he co-operated with a book that gave him all the credit for the design of the 1988 McLaren-Honda MP4/4. The book's publication and its claims incensed his 15 colleagues who wrote a letter to then McLaren head of Operations, Martin Whitmarsh. Whitmarsh buried the letter but now it is revealed here for the first time and reflects no credit on Murray and his claims.

By Tom Rubython



Steve Nichols was very close to Ayrton Senna during the great 1988 season.

For over 30 years there has been a feud between Gordon Murray and 15 engineers at McLaren over design credit for the McLaren-Honda MP4/4. The design credit matters because the McLaren-Honda MP4/4 is the most successful car in the history of Grand Prix racing winning 15 out of 16 races in the 1988 season in the hands of Ayrton

to try and resolve the issue of credit for the car. Nichols readily agreed but Murray couldn't find the time.

The saga started in late 1986. Towards the end of the year, it became clear that John Barnard, the incumbent technical director and one of the founders of the company, was going to leave McLaren and go to Ferrari. Barnard was

lifetime group of people." The strong message from Nichols was that Barnard did not need to be replaced, so strong was his legacy and the team he had put together. Usually when a star designer leaves, he also takes the best from his team with him. But that never happened. Barnard played it straight when he left McLaren and did not ask any of his old colleagues to

Murray firmly stated that Steve Nichols did not design the McLaren-Honda MP4/4. But then he then threw in the incendiary statement that the McLaren MP4/4 was an almost exact copy of the Brabham BT55.

Senna and Alain Prost. It would have won all 16 races had Senna not run into another car whilst leading at the Italian Grand Prix.

Now for the first time the real story of the design of the MP4/4 can be told, backed up by documentary evidence of the time that has been leaked to *BusinessF1* by a former McLaren engineer. Backed up with this evidence *BusinessF1* challenged both Gordon Murray, the McLaren technical director in 1988 and Steve Nichols, chief designer, to be interviewed

offered a salary by Ferrari with many telephone numbers on the end which was hard to resist. In any case he had effectively reached the end of the road with Ron Dennis, McLaren's team principal.

Ron Dennis was very nervous about losing his star designer and he called Steve Nichols into his office for some reassurance. Nichols told him that during his time at McLaren, Barnard had recruited a very strong team that other people later described as a "once in a

join him at Ferrari. Barnard's integrity and straightforwardness meant he would leave a brilliant design team in place at McLaren.

Barnard finally left in August and Nichols got on with the job of designing the McLaren MP4/3 for the 1987 season. But Dennis was still nery. His immediate response was to create two design teams, he asked Neil Oatley to head up one and Nichols the other.

Henceforth the two teams would alternate responsibilities for different cars. Different >



Steve Nichols with a copy of the book that was published in 2018 about the McLaren-Honda MP4/4 that gave proper credit to him and his 15 colleagues.

Investigation | The 32-Year Feud

designers would do different year's cars. Nichols recalls: "We carried on when John left and designed the MP4/3 and when it came to 1988, Ron assigned me the task of doing the MP4/4 and Neil Oatley got the job of designing the MP4/5."

It was a frenetic period when the 17-strong technical design team were split, one under Nichols and the other under Oatley. During those 18 months the two teams, between them,

one of his directors, Creighton Brown, to investigate. Matthew Jeffreys remembers: "We felt we could continue without John and Creighton Brown interviewed us all and we told him all would be well."

There was no pressure to hire a star designer to replace Barnard but still Ron Dennis felt the invisible pressure. It was his version of "only the paranoid survive." Then fate provided a solution.

Gordon Murray took a different view, declared that the BT55 was a wonderful car and blamed the BMW engine for the problems. He maintained that with any other engine the car would have won the championship.

designed the MP4/3, the MP4/3B, the MP4/4, the MP4/4B and the MP4/5 - five cars in all from 17 people.

Nichols first car under the new structure, the MP4/3, was good enough to attract Honda and Ayrton Senna to come to McLaren.

The shock of Barnard leaving was still felt by Dennis and left him with a dilemma. He felt naked without a Technical Director. Despite the assurances from Nichols and others, Dennis was just not sure that Barnard's surviving team was good enough.

Nichols says that Dennis felt he needed a figurehead to replace Barnard. But he was even more unsure when he saw how seamlessly the existing team had taken over Barnard's responsibilities. But he still fretted and asked

Gordon Murray left Brabham in late 1986 after a catastrophic season with his 1986 car, the infamous Brabham-BMW BT55. The BT55 was a complete and utter failure and tragically ended up killing the team's new Italian number one driver, Elio de Angelis. The failure of the BT55 was the nail in Murray's coffin at Brabham and it was effectively over for him with the team's owner, Bernie Ecclestone.

Murray's BT55 was born in the dying days of the turbo era when engines were developing as much as 1200 horsepower in qualifying mode. BMW's engine was the most powerful on the grid but this was not enough for Murray who was in the mood for revolution. Together with David North, his sidekick in the Brabham design office, he conceived the BT55, a car

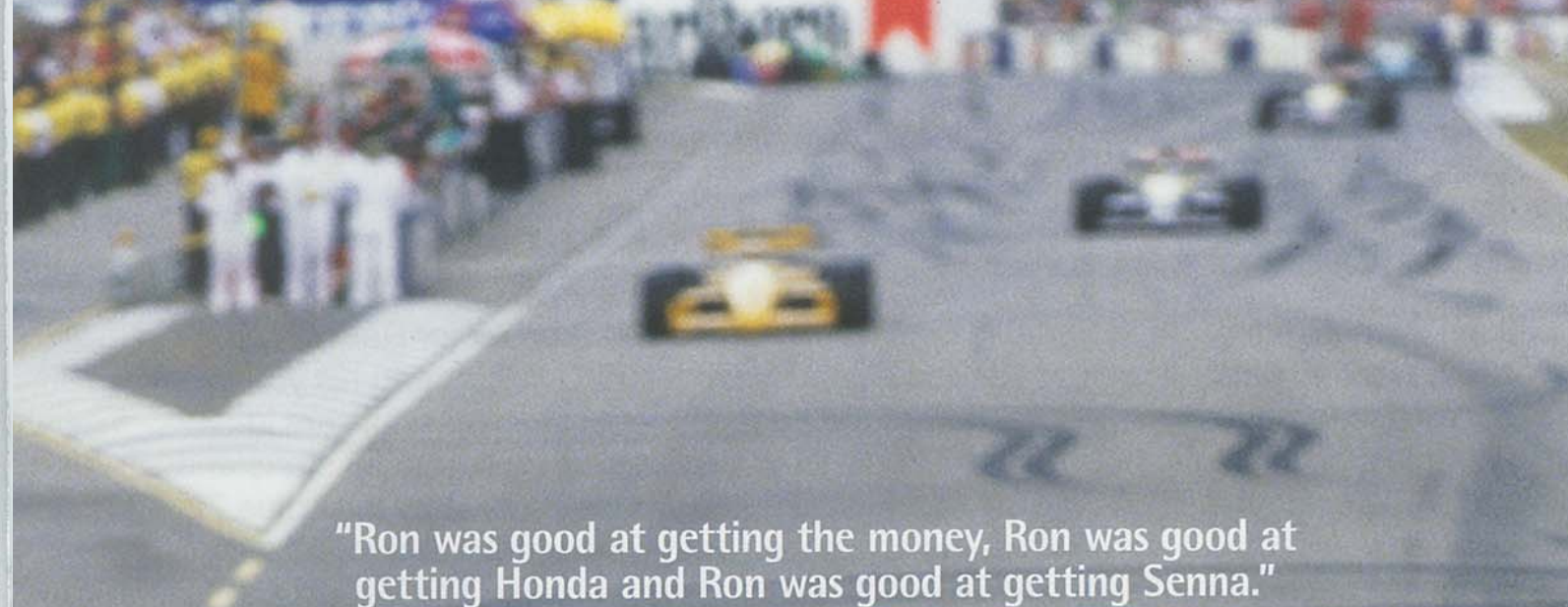
whose sole objective was to get as much airflow as possible to the rear wing thereby enabling all of the 1200 horsepower available to be utilised with the lowest possible aerodynamic drag.

It was as basic as it was sophisticated. Anything in front of the rear wing had to be flattened and lowered and the car was designed to be 28cms lower than the BT54 of the previous year.

The relatively tall, BMW four-cylinder

engine made packaging difficult. Murray solved this by convincing BMW's engine designer, Paul Rosche, to turn the engine on its side through 72 degrees, as well as narrowing the monocoque and lowering the sidepods, but in doing so creating immense structural difficulties. The turbocharger was moved to the side and mounted lower to the point where it was almost under the engine. The driving position was moved very far forward of the engine and the BT55 laid the driver almost flat on his back. Wind tunnel model results were positive as the air flowing to the rear wing was less impeded.

But there were many technical issues when installing the engine at an angle and BMW was forced to redesign the installation. The drive >



"Ron was good at getting the money, Ron was good at getting Honda and Ron was good at getting Senna."



Ayrton Senna, McLaren MP4-4 at the 1988 Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, 13th November, Adelaide.

The launch of the worst performing car from a top line team in Formula One history. If they had known what they know now they would have put the BT55 in a skip and raced the previous year's car in 1986. It was far quicker. From left to right: Riccardo Patrese, BMW's Paul Rosche, Gordon Murray, Pirelli's Mario Mezzanotte and Elio de Angelis on Tuesday, February 22nd 1986.



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shaft was at the side necessitating a new gearbox and Peter Weismann of Traction Products USA Inc designed a new 7-speed, 3-shaft box. Weismann was a legendary gearbox engineer and worked on Jack Brabham's powertrains in the sixties.

The result was a low-drag car with smaller radiators which meant the engine ran a lot hotter than previously. At the opening Brazilian Grand Prix engine cooling was a huge problem and power was down as a result. The car, engine

demanded more testing at the Paul Ricard circuit down the road from Monte Carlo to try and sort out the problems. Murray's solution was a new rear wing. But during testing the new wing's side endplate failed and detached itself and sent the car into a vicious high speed spin, hitting the barrier and flipping over the top of the armco rails and landing upside down in the soft sandy earth. Amazingly De Angelis was not seriously injured but was trapped underneath the car as fuel spilled on

and blamed the BMW engine for the problems. He maintained that with any other engine the car would have won the championship. He took the BT55 drawings with him when he left Brabham.

Murray's departure from Brabham came just at the right time to solve Ron Dennis's problems and he was a ready-made replacement for John Barnard. Dennis seized the opportunity and offered Murray the job with free rein to do what he wanted.

There was no pressure to hire a star designer to replace Barnard but still Ron Dennis felt the invisible pressure. It was his version of "only the paranoid survive." Then fate provided a solution.

and gearbox were chronically unreliable. The car was also dead slow with Elio de Angelis five and a half seconds off the pace.

The engine changes made the package unreliable and the drivers were also unhappy with the lay-down driving position. They complained their chins were buried in their chests.

Bernie Ecclestone ordered the team to stay in Brazil and continue testing the car to try and get to the root of the car's lack of speed. However, Murray refused to stay in Brazil and returned to England against Ecclestone's wishes.

The cars proved to be as much as four seconds off the pace at the next two races and a crisis was reached at Monaco on 11th May 1986 when De Angelis only just managed to qualify. Everything was wrong and Elio de Angelis

the hot turbocharger and the car caught fire, he was asphyxiated by smoke and fumes. It took eight minutes to get the by then unconscious De Angelis out of the car and another 30 minutes to call a helicopter to take him to hospital where he died the next day.

The team never recovered and Brabham's 1986 season was the most dismal season ever for a top Grand Prix team. Brabham scored just two points that whole year - it was beyond ridiculous, a true disaster. The BT55 was arguably the worst car ever produced by a top team. It was a dog of dogs. The Brabham team was brought to its knees and Bernie Ecclestone got rid of Murray at the end of the season out of sheer frustration.

Gordon Murray took a different view and declared that the BT55 was a wonderful car

But Murray's arrival came as a complete shock to Steve Nichols and the rest of his team who had been busily working away on the 1987 car for three months quite happily. The circumstances of the announcement were also bizarre.

In November 1986 Dennis came down to the design department and announced he was taking the entire department out to lunch at the Toby Cottage restaurant in Ripley's High Street, ostensibly to discuss the upcoming 1987 season and have a post mortem on 1986 over a convivial lunch. But Dennis was being economical with the truth as the sole purpose of the lunch was to introduce them to their new technical director. The 15-strong team all settled in looking forward to a pleasant lunch with the boss and had no idea what was about to happen.



The scars of 1986 never really healed at Brabham and there was always tension between Gordon Murray and Bernie Ecclestone after that. The Brabham BT55 effectively wrecked the team and took away its future. There was a brief reunion at Easter at Imola, Italy on Good Friday, 21st April 2006 during the San Marino Grand Prix when Murray and Ecclestone, along with team manager, Herbie Blash donned replica team jackets.

After about half an hour Dennis stood up and announced: "By the way there is someone I would like to introduce to you." According to people who were there suddenly Gordon Murray appeared "as if by magic" out of a door which appeared to be a broom cupboard. Matthew Jeffreys remembers: "It was all very bizarre, a real Mr Ben moment." Nichols says: "It was a complete surprise."

Murray walked in and just said: "Hi guys, you've been doing a great job." He proceeded to sit down, eat lunch and started telling his new colleagues about the merits of the latest Beaujolais Nouveau.

When the plates had been cleared, Ron Dennis made a speech welcoming Murray as McLaren's new Technical Director. Afterwards Murray was keen to tell everyone he was not there to interfere in the design department but that he was the new manager and would

be focusing on the big picture. Nichols says: "When Gordon arrived it was pretty much as though he wasn't there, he let us get on with it."

After lunch the somewhat bemused team went back to the factory. Jeffreys remembers: "When Gordon arrived there was a feeling of why did we need Gordon?" Nichols openly admits: "I didn't like the idea of him coming, the idea of anyone coming. Maybe from Ron's perspectives it worked."

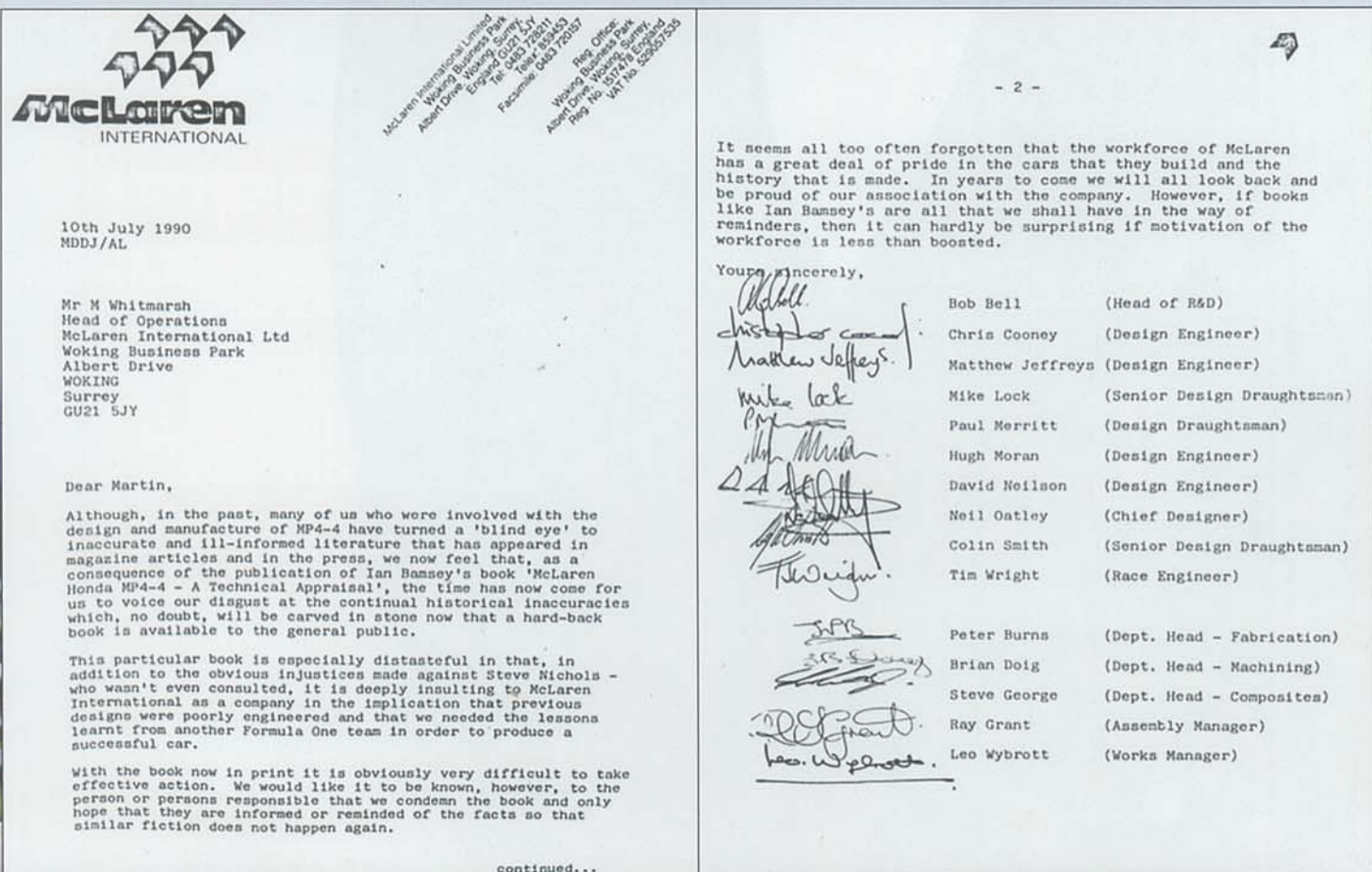
Dennis was specific that he did not hire Murray as a car designer. Dennis said at the time: "Gordon's abilities as a designer and I mean that in the broadest sense were not of interest to me. What I was really interested in

was that he had won a couple of championships and got it out of his system."

Murray said himself he was bored of designing Formula One cars and saw his role as being department head and not the car's designer.

Tim Wright, a McLaren engineer, confirmed it: "It was sold to us that Gordon was not hired as a designer but more as someone who knew how a race team and a manufacturing factory should operate." He adds: "At the factory Gordon seemed to spend most of his time with Ron, or the heads of departments, looking to streamline the way the factory operated."

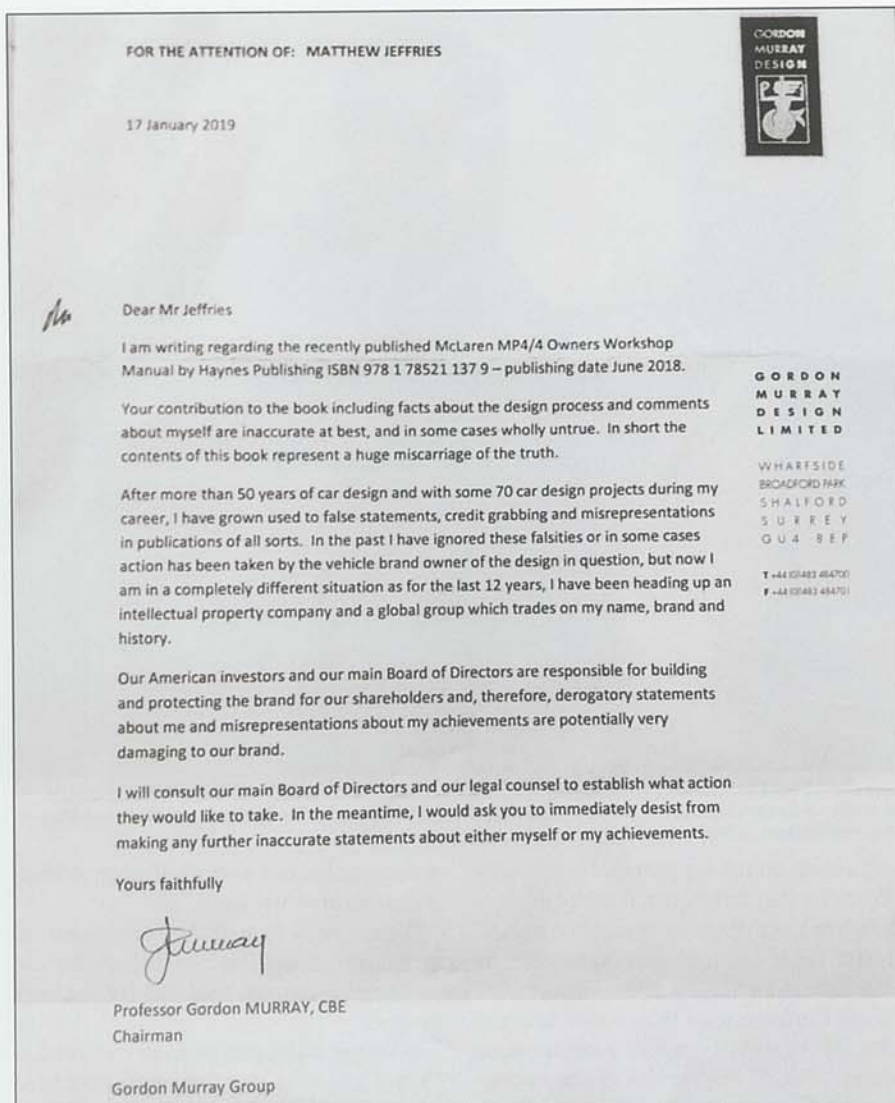
At first it all went well. Nichols and his team carried on with their work on the MP4/3 for 1987 with the Tag engine which had fallen behind the Honda engine. 1987 was a moderately successful season but it was clear the team needed a new engine. Dennis >



The smoking gun letter written by 15 McLaren engineers to Martin Whitmarsh in July 1990 complaining about Gordon Murray grabbing all of the credit for the design of the McLaren-Honda MP4/4. Whitmarsh laughed, showed it to Murray and then filed it. 28 years later a copy was found in a loft and sent to BusinessF1 where it was filed again until two months ago when Gordon Murray reignited the row in MotorSport magazine.



Alain Prost in the all-conquering McLaren-Honda MP4/4. It was the perfect year as Prost won seven races and Senna eight races in the car.



The 'cease and desist' letter delivered by Gordon Murray to Steve Nichols and Matthew Jeffries at the Brooklands Society on 17th January 2019. Nichols and Jeffries had been interviewed on stage by Simon Taylor, in front of a huge crowd about the McLaren-Honda MP4/4.

successfully manoeuvred Honda into quitting Williams and moving the works engine deal over to McLaren. He did this by hiring Ayrton Senna, who Honda was in love with.

Amazingly the design work on the McLaren-Honda MP4/4 did not get the go ahead until August 1987, giving Steve Nichols and his team precisely six months to produce a running car. Gordon Murray sent all the staff a memo

on 25th August 1987 entitled 'Drawing Office Job Definitions' confirming the exact responsibilities of all the staff in the design department, it confirmed the arrangements that Nichols would be in charge of the design of the MP4/4 (1988 turbo car) and that Neil Oatley would be in charge of the MP4/5 (1989 naturally aspirated car). In the memo about the 1988 car (MP4/4) Murray firmly stated: "The

designer (Steve Nichols) will control all the design work."

It couldn't have been clearer than that. Nichols said: "The total technical staff were 17 people split up between the MP4/4 and the MP4/5." As he says: "It was a sympathetic group of people who worked well together, worked as a team and enjoyed working with each other." Jeffreys adds: "It was a lot of experienced people who knew what to do and could perform under pressure." It was a once in a lifetime group of people which Nichols admits he has never experienced anywhere else.

The time frame for the MP4/4 was very tight because the decision on the engine arrived very late. For reasons that were never fully explained Honda yanked the engine away from Williams at the very last minute and handed it to McLaren. A van was sent to the Williams factory to collect the two V10s to deliver to McLaren's factory at Woking. It was as brutal as that.

But that time was short and Nichols was very worried about money and went to Dennis as he remembered: "When this all kicked off, I said to Ron I can't do anything without the money – what about the money, what can I spend? And he just said to me, 'you just do whatever you need to do to make the car go fast and if I can't keep up financially, I'll come and tell you.' And he never came and told me."

Nichols claims that Murray was not really interested and had no role at all in the car's design. Nichols says he showed almost no interest in the design: "His only two suggestions were that we use Pete Weissman for the gearbox." Weissman and David North, who had also joined from Brabham, designed the rear end of the car. Nichols says that it was Murray's only contribution to the project and admits it was a vital one. Other McLaren engineers also credit Murray for his contribution to the gearbox. Hugh Moran says: "Gordon did put a fair amount of effort into the gearbox."

Matthew Jeffreys was Nichols's deputy. The design was done principally by Nichols who set out the parameters and gave the responsibilities

out to his team. Jeffreys was given responsibility for the front of the monocoque, the nosebox and the front suspension. Hugh Moran was given responsibility for the cockpit section and the fuel tank. Dave Neilson was given responsibility for the rear suspension, Dave North the gearbox and Bob Bell, the aerodynamics.

Murray has often claimed credit for instigating the low line of the car, as per the Brabham BT55, but Nichols says the car was always going to be lower than the MP4/3 as the fuel tank was smaller at 150 litres and the bottom of the car was flat as the ground effect architecture was designed out of the car. Honda had also developed a lower crank engine.

All the ingredients for success were there and everything came together perfectly for McLaren in 1988. It had the best driver combination ever seen in Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost and it had the most money and the best engine. It was pure serendipity.

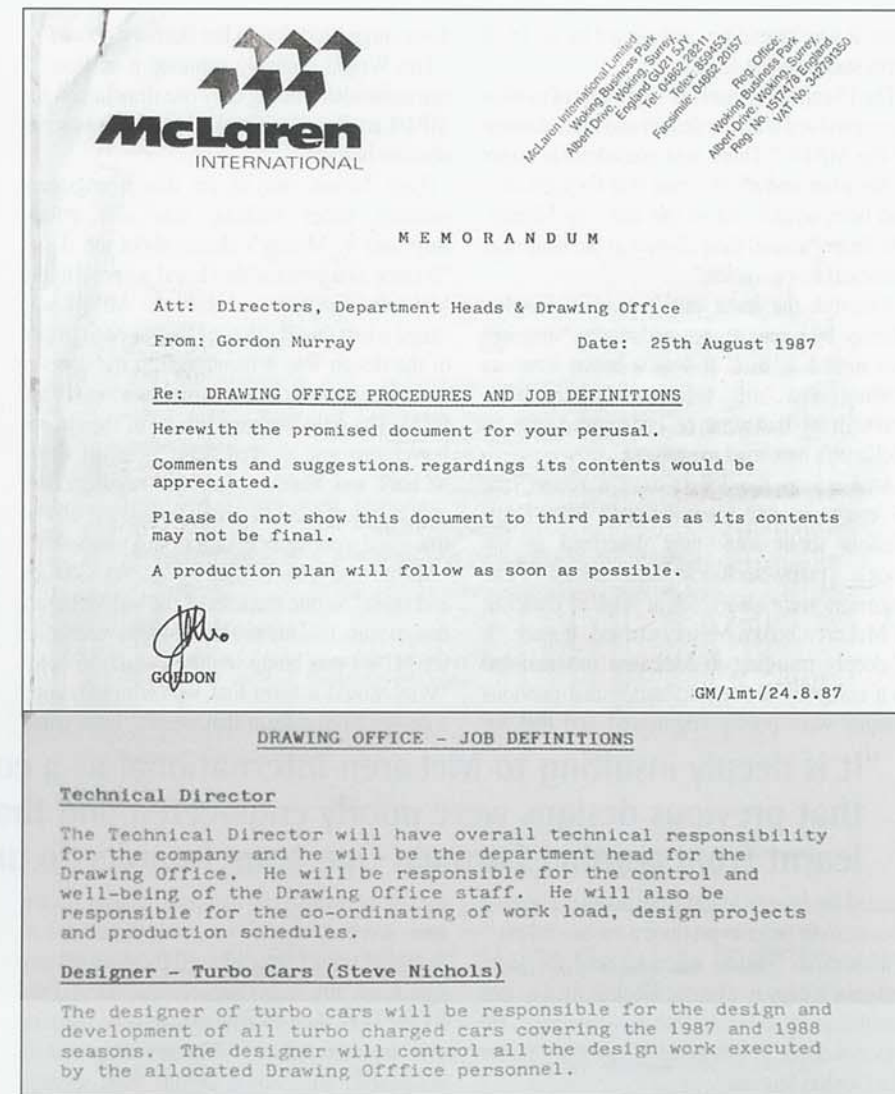
Nichols gives Ron Dennis the most credit as he says: "Ron was good at getting the money, Ron was good at getting Honda and Ron was good at getting Senna."

The rest was history as the McLaren-Honda MP4/4 won 15 out of 16 races. The McLaren MP4/5 also won 10 out of 16 races the following year in 1989. At the end of 1989, Steve Nichols was a hot property and accepted a big money offer to join Ferrari in Italy, ironically replacing John Barnard who had moved on to the Benetton team.

Back then no one was bothered about individual credit for the design of the MP4/4 and MP4/5 models. It was what it was and everyone bathed in the success, not least Gordon Murray.

Then suddenly out of the blue a book was published in 1990 by Haynes Publishing called 'F1's Greatest Turbo Car' written by a technical journalist called Ian Bamsey. The book was described as a technical appraisal of the MP4/4.

The book basically attributed all the credit for the McLaren MP4/4 to Gordon Murray, but worse still gave little credit to anyone else. The remaining engineers working at McLaren



The memo written on 25th August 1987 when Gordon Murray, McLaren's Technical Director put Steve Nichols in charge of the designing the McLaren-Honda MP4/4.

were incensed. 15 of them; Bob Bell, Chris Cooney, Matthew Jeffreys, Mike Lock, Paul Merritt, Hugh Moran, David Neilson, Neil Oatley, Colin Smith, Tim Wright, Peter Burns, Brian Doig, Steve George, Ray Grant and Leo Wybrott, were so angry they decided to do something about it. By then they were working on the McLaren-Honda MP4/6 and Gordon Murray had moved over to a new company, McLaren Automotive Ltd, developing a road

car, although he was still nominally their boss. When Steve Nichols received the book in Italy he was beyond angry.

The book had clearly been heavily influenced by Gordon Murray. The McLaren design team were unsure to know what to do but, in the end, they took the extraordinary decision to write to Martin Whitmarsh, who was then effectively running McLaren, to voice their discontent. The letter was an extraordinary attack on their

The two books that were published 28 years apart. The first by Ian Bamsey in 1990 (right) gave Gordon Murray all the credit and the second in 2018 (left) recognised the contribution by Steve Nichols and the 15 McLaren engineers.



Gordon Murray has always claimed the McLaren Honda MP4/4 was a copy of the Brabham BMW BT55. McLaren engineers have always denied that. Derek Warwick is photographed in the Brabham BT55 at the British Grand Prix at Brands Hatch in 1986 on Sunday 13th July.

boss. It was incendiary and signed by all 15 of them such was the anger.

The 15 called themselves “the many of us who were involved with the design and manufacture of the MP4/4.” There was considerable anger in the letter and all 15 wrote that they felt they had been written out of the story by Murray. The letter “voiced their disgust at the continual historical inaccuracies.”

Although the letter didn’t mention Gordon Murray by name it was evident the “disgust” was aimed at him. It was a brave letter as Murray was still technically their boss, although by that time he had moved over to McLaren’s new road car project.

Attached to the letters was a report, the 15 engineers had commissioned from Steve Nichols about what they described as the book’s “many technical inaccuracies.” The engineers were also upset at implied criticism of McLaren before Murray arrived. It read: “It is deeply insulting to McLaren International as a company in the implication that previous designs were poorly engineered and that we

“It is deeply insulting to McLaren International as a company in the implication that previous designs were poorly engineered and that we needed the lessons learnt from another Formula One team in order to produce a successful car.”

needed the lessons learnt from another Formula One team in order to produce a successful car.”

Whitmarsh laughed when he read the letter and gave a copy to Murray. He then filed it, that was that as far as Whitmarsh was concerned. He was not about to discipline a legendary figure like Gordon Murray.

The letter was lost for 25 years, until a McLaren engineer found a copy of it in an old box of papers in his loft and sent it to *BusinessF1*. At the time there was nothing that could be done with the letter as the feud had been forgotten. The Editor realised if it was ever to be published it would be very damaging for Gordon Murray and he had nothing against Murray. It was once again filed away to be forgotten again.

Matthew Jeffreys says now: “We were always puzzled why Gordon doesn’t want to credit us for the work we did.” Jeffreys also questions Murray’s powers of recall after he subsequently mentioned the airflow into the airbox of the MP4/4 which doesn’t have an airbox.” There’s no doubt that his former colleagues at McLaren believed he had lost the plot.

For his part Nichols says he knows why Murray is so desperate to claim all the credit for the MP4/4 and explains: “Gordon designed the BT55. It was a disastrous car and it was so bad that it effectively ended his Formula One career. That blot is there on his copybook. How does he get rid of that blot? He has to claim credit for the MP4/4 - here it is the BT55 done properly.”

Nichols utterly denies any influence from the Brabham BT55 and says “Why would we? This whole myth of the BT55 didn’t exist in 1988 and

it was suggested first in Ian Bamsey’s book.”

Tim Wright probably summed it up best: “I can remember finding only one drawing on the MP4/4 attributed to Gordon and that was some obscure bracket.”

Hugh Moran, one of the design engineers working under Nichols, was also utterly surprised by Murray’s claims about the BT55: “It came as a genuine shock and surprise to the McLaren design team when the MP4/4 was called a low line BT55 copy. Never once in any of the design was it mentioned to me. I never saw a drawing or picture or even mention of the BT55. The only working layouts of the chassis I ever saw and worked from were off Steve Nichols and Matthew Jeffreys board and the only aero surfaces I saw were from Bob Bell and true sized working drawings from Colin Smith.”

Moran was truly baffled by Murray’s claims and says: “As one member of the ‘old McLaren’ design team told me in almost these words after the MP4/4 was being written as a BT55 copy, “Why would a team that was winning, copy a design from a team that wasn’t? How could

we risk copying a car that for whatever reason never worked, was two years out of date and all our wind tunnel tests showed there wasn’t any significant advantage between our car and the BT55? How do we know we won’t be copying over another failure?” Moran’s argument is inarguable; why would anyone want to copy the most unsuccessful car in the history of Formula One from a top team?

Nichols continues: “Gordon was trying to portray himself as the guy who came in as the saviour of McLaren. We didn’t need any saviour from Brabham.”

Ironically, 30 years after the Murray/Bamsey book was published Nichols and his old McLaren colleagues cooperated on another book, also published by Haynes, called the ‘McLaren MP4/4 Worksop Manual.’ The book was commissioned by Zak Brown, the Team Principal of McLaren, to mark the 30th anniversary of the McLaren-Honda MP4/4. This time Murray was hardly mentioned in the book at all.

As part of the promotion of the book, Steve Nichols and Matthew Jeffreys were invited to be interviewed on stage by Simon Taylor about the McLaren MP4/4 at a meeting of Brooklands Society members. The discussion attracted a huge audience interested in learning about the most successful Formula One car in history. Just before it started Gordon Murray joined the audience at the back.

Afterwards Murray went up to Matthew Jeffreys and Steve Nichols and the conversation seemed amiable enough. But before he left, Murray handed them two envelopes. In these envelopes were cease and desist letters signed

by Murray. The letters effectively warned Nichols and Jeffreys off. Murray wrote: “Facts about the design process and comments about myself are inaccurate at best and in some cases wholly untrue. In short the contents of the book represent a massive miscarriage of the truth...I would ask you to immediately desist from making any further inaccurate statements about myself or my achievements.”

Murray wrote that he was used to “false statements, credit grabbing and misrepresentations in publications of all sorts” but it was important to him because he was now “heading up an intellectual property company and a global group which trades on my name, brand and history.”

Murray ended the letter by threatening possible legal action after consulting with his fellow directors and solicitors.

Jeffreys was worried about the letter but Nichols did not bother to open his and says he would have secretly welcomed any legal action where the truth could be finally established.

The book was to bring some closure to the

long feud and to the 15 aggrieved McLaren engineers who maintained Murray had tried to steal the credit for their work. They finally had closure.

That was until the September 2021 issue of *MotorSport* magazine appeared on news stand shelves. In the magazine, Murray gave a long interview with Rob Widdows. In the middle of it, Murray firmly stated that Steve Nichols did not design the McLaren-Honda MP4/4. That, in itself, was not surprising as it was something Murray had been saying for years and if he had left it at that no one would have been concerned. But then he threw in the incendiary statement that the McLaren MP4/4 was an almost exact copy of the Brabham BT55.

There was worse to come. Murray suddenly launched an attack on Steve Nichols. He said: “I am so sick and tired of all the people living off my reputation. This thing about Steve Nichols being the chief designer is the biggest load of rubbish you have ever heard. The McLaren MP4/4 was not designed by Steve Nichols, I can promise you that.”

Murray has virtually claimed that the MP4/4 design was wholly based on his 1986 Brabham BT55 design and the drawings he brought with him from Brabham. He said: “I’d taken the Brabham BT55 drawings with me to McLaren so the basic concept of the MP4/4 was the BT55. If you look at the two cars together the BT55 and the MP4/4, you’ll see the design is almost identical.”

But the letter sitting in *BusinessF1*’s files told a different story and it was time for it to be revealed to the world. [BF1](#)