

Safety measures for Grand Prix racing drivers haven't worked

Most of the measures introduced over the past decade to boost the safety of Grand Prix motor racing, have not cut death rates or curbed speed, as intended, suggests an analysis published ahead of print in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Organisers have agreed regulatory and technical changes to boost driver safety over the past decade, including serial reductions in engine size, grooved tyres, and two way radio frequency data transfer (telemetry).

But drivers continue to die or sustain serious injuries in competitions, such as Formula One and Moto GP, say the authors.

Deaths in all types of motor racing have risen from 28 in 1979 to 37 in 2006, reaching as high as 45 in 2005, say the authors.

And while there have been fewer deaths in motorcycling, the rate of serious injury has continued to be high.

Lap times have also decreased steadily since 1995. The highest Formula One speed of just under 230 miles (370 km) an hour was recorded in 2004.

Safety improvements should not be too restrictive, say the authors. But they do need to work.

They suggest lowering the cornering speed, making vehicles heavier and safer, strengthening barriers around the track to protect both drivers and spectators, and the use of protective clothing for drivers.

“Since driver safety comes ahead of spectacle and business, it is not acceptable that drivers continue to die and or be seriously injured. Drivers’ injuries are an unsustainable price to pay for the show,” they say.

Source: BMJ Specialty Journals

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