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FOR MOTORSPORT NEWS STAFF CONTACT DETAILS PLEASE SEE P35

Turkington and Plato team up to form

By Matt James

British Touring Car Championship outfit Team BMR has created a dream team for the 2015 season after completing the signing of reigning champion Colin Turkington and double title winner Jason Plato.

Northern Irishman Turkington and Plato have inked multi-year contracts with the Hertfordshire squad and will drive Volkswagen Passat CCs alongside Aron Smith and Warren Scott.

The team has also bolstered its backroom staff by recruiting former WSR engineer Kevin Berry, who masterminded Turkington's championship victory in 2014, and Carl Faux, who was the technical director of Triple Eight Racing. Faux was Plato's engineer with MG during the 2014 season.

Team boss Scott believes the team will be in the hunt for this season's title.

"With the people we have put in place, winning the championship is a reality this season," said Scott. "We needed to move the car forward and we have been working very hard. We have put a lot of time and effort into assembling the best crew that we can."

"Both Jason and Colin know how to win championships. We have won races, and that is great, but we are here to win the title. They can bring that experience to the rest of the team. They will both be winning races and they will both be in the fight for the crown."

Plato pleased

Plato is delighted to have tied up a long-term deal with BMR, which will begin its testing programme this week. The 2001 and 2010 title winner said that it was Scott's drive to move the team forward that appealed to him.

"What is exciting for me is that Warren doesn't come from the traditional mould," said Plato. "He's got new ideas, they are not just doing things because it is the way it has always been done. He is new to the game, he wants to learn and he knows he has to surround himself with the right sort of people to do that - both technically, from an engineering and design perspective, and also from the driving perspective. It is a fresh approach and he has a new pair of eyes on it. He comes with a very solid commercial foundation and that is necessary."

Plato said that the team would conduct an intensive pre-season



testing programme and that both Berry and Faux had already had a significant impact in upgrading the VWs since the end of 2014.

The Oxford-based racer has no fear about going up alongside reigning champion Turkington in the same squad, and was eager to see how the pair stack up. "Colin is a top level driver, no question," said Plato. "It is going to be great fun. As a driver, you always want quick team-mates and all the way through my career, I have always had quick team-mates. For me, it is better to have a guy in the sister car

who is bloody good and who is going to help push me along. That means I am going to push them along too. We are going to have a good time and by both of us having input, we will move the car forwards quickly."

The 88-time race winner added that he will be ready to fight for the title from the opening rounds of the series.

"That is why I am here," he said. "One thing is for certain - with the right brains in the design and engineering of NGTC cars, the right people bolting them together

Collard signs up to complete WSR line-up for 2015 showdown

Rob Collard will remain with the WSR team for the British Touring Car Championship in 2015.

The Hampshire man will spend his eighth season with the Middlesex-based team and will line-up alongside former world champion Andy Priaulx and new recruit Sam Tordoff. Collard was sixth in last season's contest with one victory at Knockhill.

Collard had been in talks with several teams but confirmed his deal to remain with the title-winning team last Friday.

Collard, who is engineered by WSR team principal Dick

Bennetts, said: "I am delighted to be returning. It is important to have consistency, and the BMW was the car to beat last season. WSR doesn't rest on its laurels so the car will be better this season, which means it will certainly be competitive."

The team was backed by eBay



Collard grabs BMW seat

Motors last season but the firm withdrew in December. Bosses at the squad said they are due to announce a new backer shortly.

Bennetts said: "Rob has been a mainstay of WSR for a number of years and we're pleased to have him for another season."

"It's great to welcome the talents of both Priaulx and Tordoff but we felt it was vital to have some continuity in our driving ranks. Rob's speed and experience are there for all to see and he will, as ever, play a key role in helping WSR's challenge."



HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey and LAT

partnership for 2015 touring car season

BMR CREATES A BTCC SUPERTEAM



L-r: Scott, Plato, Turkington and Smith form BTCC crew

and the right people driving them, we win. At Team BMR, we have a fantastic blend to win and we want to be doing that from year one."

Turkington's ambition
Turkington said that joining Team BMR will give him a new challenge for the season ahead. He has driven for a WSR-run team for all but one of his 10 BTCC years.

He said the environment will reinvigorate him and offer fresh motivation: "Things changed quite a lot at the end of 2014 with eBay deciding that it didn't want to

continue with WSR. That was a blow, and Kevin [Berry], my engineer, left the team. So it felt like there was a lot of change happening. It felt like a significant – but very successful – chapter was closing for me.

"It was my target when I rejoined the series to try and win the championship with BMW and I did that within two seasons. I felt I was ready for a new challenge and the motivation that goes along with it."

Turkington said teaming up with Plato will also mean that he

is in for a tough battle. The 32-year-old will be returning to a front-wheel-drive touring car for the first time since he drove the Team RAC MG ZS in 2006.

Despite the switch, he said that he will readjust quite quickly. "Jason is a front-wheel-drive touring car specialist and I am a rear-wheel-drive touring car specialist so there is a lot that I have to learn from both Jason and Aron," said Turkington. "I will have to brush up on my skills. I hope with the combination of drivers, we can move the car up the road pretty quickly. It is going to take me a little bit of time to get on top of things, but I am just going to go there, work hard and do the best job I can. I am not just here to beat Jason; I want to beat everyone. It doesn't matter who is in the garage next to you because you have to beat everyone if you want to win the BTCC title."

Scott wants progress

Team BMR head Scott said that bolstering the engineering staff – as well as building a new 15000 sq ft purpose-built facility in Hertfordshire – would help take the team to the next level, and that he was planning a long future in the BTCC.

Scott entered the series as a privateer driver in 2013 in a SEAT Leon, but took over the cars built by Team Hard at the end of the year. The team ran Jack Goff, Scott, Smith and Alain Menu last season and Smith won two races.

Scott believes the recruitment drive – including the two star name drivers – was vital for the future. "The guys we have with us now have NGTC experience," he said. "You have to remember that we are only a two-year-old company, but if you look at the years of experience in our staff, and our number one mechanics, there is lots of history. That is the sort of platform you need to take steps forward, and that is the type of steps we want to make."

"This is a serious programme for us, and this is a serious statement of intent. The title is our aim, and we want it sooner rather than later. I don't see why we can't gun for it this season."

The team will begin its preparations for the 2015 season at Thruxton this week, when all four drivers will undertake testing. The opening round of the 2015 British Touring Car Championship season takes place at Brands Hatch on the Indy Circuit on April 4/5.

ENTRY LIST

Who goes where for the 2015 BTCC?

DATE	TRACK
Rob Collard	WSR BMW 1 25i M Sport
Andy Priaulx	WSR BMW 1 25i M Sport
Sam Tordoff	WSR BMW 1 25i M Sport
Andrew Jordan	Triple Eight Racing MG6
TBA	Triple Eight Racing MG6
Gordon Shedden	Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R*
Matt Neal	Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R*
TBA	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
TBA	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
Alex Martin	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
Jason Plato	Team BMR VW Passat CC
Warren Scott	Team BMR VW Passat CC
Aron Smith	Team BMR VW Passat CC
Colin Turkington	Team BMR VW Passat CC
Jeff Smith	Eurotech Honda Civic
TBA	Eurotech Honda Civic
Aiden Moffat	Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes A Class
Adam Morgan	Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes A Class
Rob Austin	RAR Audi A4
Hunter Abbott	RAR Audi A4
TBA	Speedworks Racing Toyota Avensis
Mike Bushell	AmD Tuning Ford Focus
TBA	Houseman Racing Toyota Avensis
Simon Belcher	Handy Motorsport Toyota Avensis
TBA	BTC Racing Chevrolet Cruze
Andy Wilmot	Welch Motorsport Proton Gen-2
TBA	Welch Motorsport Proton Gen-2
Richard Hawken	Support Our Paras Infiniti Q50
Derek Palmer Jr	Support Our Paras Infiniti Q50
Kieran Gallagher	Team Hard Toyota Avensis

* = to be confirmed



It's all-change in BTCC teams



Turkington and Plato have had many tough on-track battles

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP



Illien effect

Renault has joined forces with engine guru Mario Illien to help push the development of its troubled V6 turbo unit forwards. Illien's company is working in an advisory role with Renault to help find more performance. Illien founded Ilmor, which developed the Merc engines that won with McLaren in the 1990s. "Mario is an chance to benchmark what we are doing," said Renault F1's Cyril Abiteboul.

McLaren blocker

McLaren hasn't ruled bringing back the suspension 'blockers' design that featured on the early iteration of last year's car. The design featured highly sculpted rear wishbones that created air dams to create more downforce at low speed. McLaren's new MP4-30 ran a conventional rear suspension design in Jerez. Team engineering director Matt Morris said: "We have designed a suspension that gives us options to do different things."

Dying sponsors

McLaren chairman Ron Dennis believes the days of lucrative title sponsorship in F1 are over. McLaren has been unable to secure a title sponsor since its split with Vodafone at the end of 2013. Dennis said he wasn't prepared to sell a sponsorship of his team for too little. "It doesn't exist any more as a concept," said Dennis. "Title sponsorship would normally be 40-50 per cent of a budget, [but] where the budgets are for a competitive team now, no company can give you that!"

Force delays

Force India has confirmed that its new VJM08 racer will not make its debut until the final pre-season test in Barcelona. The team will run last year's car in the second test this week.

Perrinn's design

British company Perrinn has released images and aerodynamics data of its concept customer F1 chassis. The design is by company head, Frenchman Nicolas Perrin, and has been designed to fit the 2015 technical regulations.

Perrinn: new F1 design



Photos: LAT

Marchionne (inset) believes progress has been made

FERRARI: NEXT TEST IS CRUCIAL

Barcelona running should reveal Scuderia's true pace in 2015

By Rob Ladbrook

Ferrari chairman Sergio Marchionne believes his team will only know how much of a step forwards its new car is after this week's second test in Barcelona.

The Scuderia heads into the second pre-season group test at the Spanish GP venue in a strong position, with its SF15-T challenger having shown impressive pace during the first four days at Jerez.

Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen topped the times on three of the four days at Jerez, with Felipe Nasr's Ferrari-powered Sauber taking the other top spot.

Initially, the SF15-T looks to be a genuine step forward from the troubled F14-T of last term. That car suffered from large aerodynamic flaws and a power deficit to the dominant Mercedes cars, largely down to a lack of development of its hybrid components.

Ferrari has addressed many of those concerns with the new car, with team technical head James Allison confirming the largest push over the winter was to find more grunt from the V6 power unit.

Marchionne, who took over as the head of Ferrari from Luca di Montezemolo last year, said he was happy with the start the new car had made, but urged caution on

its ultimate performance gains. "I am encouraged by the performance of the new car, although it is one thing to do a quick lap, and quite another to do an entire race," he said. "I have so much confidence in the work of the boys, I am proud of their work."

"Now we'll see when the world championship starts in Australia [next month] where everybody is in truth. I am not expecting miracles, but it is important to see progress. At this Barcelona test I expect the ultimate proof of what has been achieved so far."

Although drawing conclusions from the first test, in which 2014 pacesetter

Mercedes concentrated on mileage, some of Ferrari's rivals remain convinced the team has taken a genuine step forward.

Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo said he was interested to see if the team can replicate the form on one of the GP host tracks this week. He said: "Ferrari came out pretty strong. For now they look good, but it is one of those things. Jerez is a place we don't race at, plus we never drive in conditions that are five-to-eight degrees and the track is also really abrasive. They look good but can they do it the same once we start running in racing conditions? I think Barcelona will give us all a good idea."

FIA still in Marussia talks for 2015 outings

The FIA is understood to be in talks with the Manor F1 Team in an effort to determine whether the former Marussia concern can take up its slot on this year's grid.

Manor (formerly Marussia F1 Team) is due to exit administration on February 19 and has already paid its entry fee for the 2015 world championship. However, the team's bid to return hit a bump last week when Force India vetoed a dispensation to allow Manor to field an updated version of last year's

car for the first races of the season. In order for Marussia to claim its share of the sport's commercial rights funding, it needs to be racing by the Bahrain GP in April.

The FIA is holding talks with Manor in an effort to find a compromise to help the team race again, and it has pledged to keep the official entry list open as long as possible to accommodate Manor. The FIA wants to ensure Manor has the means and resources to contest the full season should it rejoin.

Button and Alonso expect more speed

McLaren duo Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso are adamant their new car will start to show its true potential across the next two tests, and haven't ruled out springing a surprise in Melbourne.

The Woking firm's new Honda-powered MP4-30 suffered a difficult first test in Jerez as myriad technical issues left it with the least running and slowest lap of any team.

Honda will bring an updated engine to Barcelona this week, and has plenty more changes planned before the first race in Australia next month.



Drivers believe the MP4-30 has potential despite early issues

Speaking at a Honda press conference in Japan last week, Button said: "Testing is all about improvement and that is what the first test was. We saw a lot of improvement in the way we're working and the car-engine package. It feels as one now, not just like a car and an engine."

"I'm very much looking forward to the next few tests and hopefully we can arrive in Melbourne ready and to fight for the best possible result." Alonso added: "It's a very challenging time but we will be ready for some victories this year. Hopefully soon."

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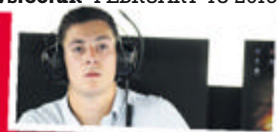
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'Lynn's hunger has rattled some cages'

Top Brits to watch in 2015, p28



MARDENBOROUGH TO HANDLE NISSAN LMP1



BRITS IN LMP1

NAME	TEAM	CAR	ROUNDS ENTERED
Mike Conway	Toyota Hybrid Racing	TS040	Full WEC
Anthony Davidson	Toyota Hybrid Racing	TS040	Full WEC
Oliver Jarvis	Audi Sport Team Joest	R18 e-tron quattro	Full WEC
Jann Mardenborough	Nissan Motorsports	GT-R LM-NISMO	Full WEC
Nick Tandy	Porsche Team	919 Hybrid	WEC Spa, Le Mans
Harry Tincknell	Nissan Motorsports	GT-R LM-NISMO	Full WEC



Mardenborough tested the new car in the USA last week

GT Academy star will be second Brit in GT-R LMP1

Jann Mardenborough will become the sixth British driver to take part in the top class of this year's Le Mans 24 Hours after being confirmed for Nissan's new factory LMP1 programme.

The 23-year-old, ex-GP3 and Formula 3 racer, will handle one of Nissan's new GT-R LM prototypes for the full FIA World Endurance Championship, including the showpiece Le Mans 24 Hours. Spaniard Lucas Ordóñez and former FIA GT1 world champion Michael Krumm join him at the team.

Both Mardenborough and Ordóñez are graduates of Nissan's Playstation GT Academy programme, which

converts computer gamers into real life racing drivers. Ordóñez won the talent search in 2009, with Mardenborough winning in 2011.

Nissan now has seven of its total nine drivers confirmed, with the trio joining Marc Gene, Harry Tincknell, Tsugio Matsuda and Olivier Pla.

Mardenborough, who led the LMP2 class at La Sarthe last year before technical issues struck, said: "To think how far I've come in the last three years is unbelievable, I literally can't believe it myself! To go from racing on the PlayStation to the top class at Le Mans and the world championship

is just unreal. My single-seater experience will help. The racing is very cut-throat and those first few laps are the ones that matter; you need pure speed and awareness. That combined with the longer-run experience I have from LMP2 should stand me in good stead. Nissan put me in single-seaters in the first place to develop me for a drive like this.

"Right now LMP1 is the most competitive category in the world. To enter it in a four-way fight between manufacturers is incredibly exciting. It goes back to the 1990s, when there were loads of manufacturers and the racing

was amazing. I'm really looking forward to being part of this new era."

Nissan's global motorsport chief Darren Cox added: "We've promoted these guys through talent. We're going to Le Mans to be credible as a brand and we've got these guys in because we know they can do a job. They both have great track records in LMP2 and I expect Jann, being one of our full-season drivers, to be one of the quickest guys in the new car."

Ordóñez added: "This is the ultimate test for any GT Academy graduate. We're at the top level now racing the best teams and the best drivers. We have to show what we are capable of."

Porsche hybrid move close after test runs

Porsche is closing on a decision on which hybrid category its reworked 919 Hybrid LMP1 challenger will compete in after completing a second long-distance test in Bahrain last week.

The Stuttgart firm has yet to reveal whether it intends to stick in the six megajoule LMP1 energy class or push for a move into the 8MJ category, which both Nissan and Toyota are expected to enter.

Porsche completed over 3000 miles of running at the Sakhir Circuit across five-days last week to follow on from the car's first public shakedown at Abu Dhabi last month. Factory drivers Romain Dumas, Marc Lieb, Nico Hulkenberg, Brendon Hartley and Mark Webber handled the car.

The data will now be assessed before Porsche decides whether to increase its hybrid dependency this year.

"We did tyre testing with Michelin, worked on setup and aerodynamics and have been evaluating hybrid strategies," said team technical director Alex Hitzinger. "Mileage is very important to find areas to improve and so far we've had no problems. We had the data from running at this track last year and the results of the new car are encouraging, but not meaningful enough yet."

Porsche will field three cars for Le Mans this year, with Briton Nick Tandy sharing the third entry with Hulkenberg and Earl Bamber.



919 ran well in Bahrain

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



British Formula Ford race winner Sam Brabham and GP3 Series drivers Dino Zamparelli and Conor Daly have all been selected to take part in a new reality TV show, with one winning a fully paid-up seat in the Le Mans 24 Hours. A total of 24 drivers

have been selected for the Raceto24 show, which will reward its winner with a seat in the Team SARD-Morand Morgan LMP2. The show starts as an internet broadcast on March 26 before moving onto TV at the semi-final stage... **Sebastien Loeb topped the times for the first pre-season FIA World Touring Car Championship test at Barcelona last week. Only seven cars turned out for the first run and Loeb put his works Citroen C-Elysee top by almost 0.9s from Mehdi Bennani's privateer car, run by Sebastien Loeb Racing...** Australian racer Mitchell Gilbert will join Carlin for this year's GP3 Series. Euro F3 regular Gilbert, 20, will join Ferrari Academy

protege Antonio Fuoco at the team... **Spanish squad Campos Racing has signed Alex Palou and Zaid Ashkanani as its first two GP3 drivers for this season. Spaniard Palou was a frontrunner in the EuroFormula Open, while Kuwaiti Ashkanani switches from the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East...** Formula Renault Eurocup frontrunner Bruno Bonifacio and F3 graduate Roy Nissany will race in Formula Renault 3.5 this year. They will run with Draco and Tech 1 Racing respectively... **Ferrari Academy driver Lance Stroll won the Toyota Racing Series title in New Zealand last weekend with victory in the New Zealand Grand Prix at Manfeild...**

Strakka ready to give Dome LMP2 its WEC bow after testing mileage

British sportscar squad Strakka Racing has completed almost 2500 miles of running with its new Dome LMP2 machine ahead of this year's FIA World Endurance Championship.

The Silverstone-based team was due to enter the world championship last year using the new Japanese S103-Nissan machine, but ended up having to sit out the season due to

build delays and development issues in 2014.

Strakka conducted a multi-day test at Motorland Aragon in Spain last week, with all three drivers – Danny Watts, Jonny Kane and Nick Leventis – gaining mileage.

Leventis said: "It was great to get back out again early in the year. The car ran extremely well and we're really happy with how it has developed

in recent months. Aragon is a demanding circuit and perfect for learning your way around a new car. We're now really looking forward to showing the new Dome off at Silverstone."

The FIA WEC season begins with the Six Hours of Silverstone on April 11/12. Strakka is aiming to run a second chassis during the year for test and development before expanding to a multi-car programme for 2016.

Dome S103 ran well at Aragon



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RACING NEWS

Smith to tackle full Renault Clio season

Brett Smith will graduate into the Renault UK Clio Cup this season, and has targeted a top three finish with champion squad Team Pyro.

Smith, 22, is the son of British Touring Car racer Jeff Smith. He has been competing in club-level Mazda and Michelin Clio Cup racing over the past years, finishing second in the 2013 Mazda MX-5 Championship.

Pyro ran Mike Bushell to last season's title, before his graduation to the British Touring Car Championship this year.

Smith, who raced with the Pyro squad in last year's Michelin Clio class, tested his Mk4 Clio for the first time at Donington Park last week. He said: "I'm coming in to win races and go for the title. I'd be very disappointed if I'm not in the top three."

"Mazdas really got me used to having lots of cars in close proximity on track which is something that you need to be able to handle in the Clio Cup. I'm up for a bit of a fight."



Smith has joined Team Pyro

Chadwick expands for 2015 campaign

Ginetta GT5 Challenge runner-up Ollie Chadwick will return to the series this year with the Xentek Motorsport squad.

The 19-year-old, who was second to George Gamble last term, is also looking to dovetail his GT5 races with selected outings in longer endurance events. Chadwick tested both GT4 and GT3 machinery at the end of last season.

"I'm delighted to be back in the GT5 Challenge this season," he said. "I enjoyed my racing last year, the series has big grids, close racing and is value for money. It's great to be working with the guys at Xentek again, who have always been 100 per cent committed and supportive."

"Ginettas will be my main focus, but I also intend to compete in endurance events. Other possibilities are on the table too."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey and Gary Hawkins



Cammish (l) won on a one-off outing in 2014

CAMMISH LANDS PORSCHE CUP DEAL

Former British Formula Ford champion to make Carrera Cup title assault

By Russell Hayes

Former British Formula Ford champion Dan Cammish will launch a title assault on this season's Porsche Carrera Cup, and will be joined on the grid by Formula Renault 3.5 racer Nicholas Latifi and ex-Ginetta Supercup runner-up Tom Sharp.

Cammish, 25, dominated the FFord championship in 2013, scoring victory in all 24 races he started with the JTR squad. He campaigned a Team Parker Racing Porsche 911 type-994 GT4 in last season's British GT Championship, finishing

eighth alongside Barrie Baxter.

The Leeds-based racer will team up with fellow new recruits Latifi and GT racer Jack Falla at the Redline Racing outfit.

Cammish competed in a single round of last year's Carrera Cup in the series' guest car at the final rounds at Brands Hatch, taking race one victory.

"I've been working on this deal ever since Brands Hatch back in October," Cammish said. "To be honest, it was never on my radar as I didn't feel I could achieve a drive in the Carrera Cup due to lack of finance. I was looking to further my career in GT racing. But [former Carrera Cup

champion] Tim Harvey approached me at Brands and, with the aid of a sponsor which he is connected with, it became more of a reality over the winter."

"In British GT last year, I raced the older type-997 GT4 which was a tough car to drive, but I got on top of it quickly. A title challenge has to be done."

Latifi, who recently graduated to FR3.5, will dovetail his single-seater racing with the Carrera Cup. The Canadian made a single outing with Redline Racing at Rockingham last season. Sharp, 23, finished second in the 2012 Ginetta Supercup, and will run as a privateer entry.

Jordan gets his first test miles in BTCC MG

Andrew Jordan thinks he will be able to battle for the British Touring Car Championship title this season after his first run with MG at Brands Hatch last week.

The 25-year-old completed more than 70 laps in mixed conditions, and said he was pleased to familiarise himself with the Triple Eight Racing team that operates the factory MG squad.

"It was hard to get heat in to the

tyres because it was such a cold day, and the track didn't really dry up," explained Jordan, who lifted the 2013 crown. "Despite that, I was able to get to know the team and how it operates as well as find my feet in the MG. It is a very strong package, and we have lots more development to do, so I am very optimistic about the season ahead."

The first rounds of the championship take place at Brands Hatch on April 4/5.



Jordan got to grips with the Triple Eight Racing MG at Brands

Live TV coverage boost for Caterham

The 2015 Caterham Superlight R300 Championship will feature on the British GT package and get live TV coverage this year.

The marque's flagship domestic racing series will be featured live on Motors TV for its rounds at Silverstone in May and Brands Hatch in August, in addition to its regular highlights package after each round. British GT and the VW Racing Cup will also be extensively aired live on Motors TV this season.

"We are excited to have live TV coverage," said Caterham's Simon Lambert. "R300 is at the top of our domestic motorsport ladder, so it is a great chance for our drivers and viewers to see one of the most hotly contested one-make championships."

OBITUARY

Roy Kennedy 1938 – 2015

Team owner Roy Kennedy died last week aged 77.

The former car dealer was persuaded to race by wealthy customer Masami Kuwashima. The Japanese enthusiast told Kennedy that he wanted to race in F2, and Kennedy told him that he had a team – and then had to rapidly go and create one to field the driver. He bought a March for the 1974 and 1975 seasons.

Kennedy's team made its debut in domestic competition at the end of the decade, running in British F3, but also enjoyed forays on to the continent. His team entered Serge Saulnier, who would go on to head up the Promatecme squad in later years, in the 1979 Monaco F3 event. He remained in the category until the end of 1980, when he went to work with yachts in the south of France. On his return to Britain in 1986, he fielded cars in the Thundersports category, running Ian Flux, Mike Wilds, Ian Taylor and John Brindley to many successes.

Roy Kennedy Racing switched to the BTCC in 1990 with a BMW M3 for Flux, and went on to run Matt Neal.

The team fielded a Peugeot in 1993 and then went on to run Chris Goodwin and Robb Gravett in a Vauxhall Cavalier. Following the BTCC, Kennedy turned his attention to Renault Spiders. His Orbit Motorsport team ran Julian Westwood and Jamie Hunter.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE BTCC'S NEW SUPERTeam

PAGE 20

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"This year will be do or die for my career"
Oliver Rowland on FR3.5, p29



Photos: LAT and Jakob Ebrej

KART CHAMP ILOTT GETS RED BULL JUNIOR CHANCE



Iloft will race with Carlin in Euro F3

European senior karting champion Callum Iloft has been set an early season top 10 target by new team boss Trevor Carlin after graduating to the FIA Formula 3 European Championship as a member of the Red Bull Junior Team.

The 16-year-old, who won last year's European title at a dramatic final round, made his car racing debut in the New Zealand-based Toyota Racing Series that finished last weekend. Iloft has extensively tested F3 machinery over the winter.

Carlin has run Red Bull Junior Team drivers in British F3, FIA European F3, Formula Renault 3.5, as well as the GP3

Series for the past 10 years. "The deal with Callum and Red Bull has been going on from around November last year," Carlin said. "Time will tell whether Callum is ready to make that move into F3 without a season's worth of racing under his belt. Max Verstappen was an exception because he was well prepared, but I don't see why Callum can't be competitive from early on.

"His initial target will be to get as close to his team-mates as possible. And if he does that, he'll be racing towards the front of the grid. The data which he'll share with [team-mates] George Russell and Antonio Giovinazzi will help him. I expect him to be

around the top 10 in the early part of the year before moving into the top six mid-season. He can then gain the required experience to go for a title shot if he remains in the championship next season."

Iloft added: "Being in the Red Bull Junior Team is a privilege, you just have to look at the history of the drivers that have gone before. I was hoping for a good start in cars but I didn't imagine that I would get this chance.

"The step up to F3 is quite something. I have a lot to learn but I have had a very good start with a few F3 tests with Carlin and I want to make a good impression this year."

Stoneman looks to hit ground running in Renault 3.5 with Red Bull support



Stoneman: FR3.5 shot

GP3 runner-up Dean Stoneman has targeted early podium finishes and an attack on this year's Formula Renault 3.5 title with champion squad DAMS after becoming part of Red Bull's junior programme.

Stoneman, who claimed the F2 title in 2010 before undergoing treatment for cancer, returned to racing in 2012 and joined Koiranen GP for the final

round of the GP3 season in '13, claiming a podium finish. He went on to launch a full season in the category last year with the Manor squad before returning to Koiranen, winning in Sochi in Russia. A second win in Abu Dhabi took his number of victories to five, finishing the season behind champion Alex Lynn.

Stoneman will team up with Nyck de

Vries at the French outfit that took Kevin Magnussen and Carlos Sainz Jr to the last two FR3.5 titles.

"You just have to look at the names that have gone before to see that only the best drivers get into the [Red Bull junior] programme," Stoneman said. "I'm aiming very high, Carlos came from GP3 to World Series and won. I showed last year in GP3 what I can do."

Ex-GT champ scores American Kia deal

British sportscar racer Ben Clucas will contest the American Pirelli World Challenge series this year after signing with Kia's factory team.

The 31-year-old from Northampton will join the Kinetic Motorsports team to race a factory backed Kia Optima turbo in the Grand Touring Sport [GTS] category. Canadian Mark Wilkins will race the second car in the pan-American series, which supports both the Tudor United SportsCar Championship and IndyCar Series.

Clucas is a former Spanish GT champion, but has only raced sporadically in sports prototypes in both the UK and Europe in recent years. He will take over the Kia raced by

Kinetic team boss Nic Jonsson.

"It's exciting to get a seat with a factory team, that's a huge bonus for me," said Clucas. "Kia is a growing motorsport brand so there could be a lot of opportunities down the line, but for now I'm fully focused on this year and doing my best.

"I tested the Optima at Road America and it was very different to what I was used to. There's more weight to manage in corners, but it's a very well-developed car, being in its fourth year of operation. I want to hit the ground running this season. Track knowledge will be against me but hopefully I can learn fast and I know I'll work well with the team."

The first round is at the Circuit of Americas on March 7/8.



Clucas will race factory Optima in pan-American series



Mercedes will unveil its new GT3 racer during the Geneva Motor Show on March 5. The car is named the Mercedes-AMG GT3. Technical details have yet to be confirmed. The new machine will be available to customers for the 2016 season

Circuit of Wales heads: no threat to project

The developers behind the new Circuit of Wales facility insist the project is not under threat, despite its temporary deal with Donington Park to host this year's MotoGP round falling apart last week.

The proposed £300m circuit in Blaenau Gwent secured a deal with MotoGP promoter Dorna to hold the British Motorcycle Grand Prix until 2024. But with construction of the planned FIA-standard race circuit yet to begin, CoW developers struck a deal for Donington Park to host this year's event. Donington withdrew from that deal last week, insisting that CoW had failed to meet agreed payment deadlines. A statement from the CoW

countered that it "was unwilling to provide significant funding for track upgrades" at Donington.

Silverstone will now host this year's MotoGP round on August 30, having originally lost the right to hold the event to CoW last year.

CoW project executive Michael Carrick said the rearrangement bore no reflection on the progress of the circuit: "This ensures we have MotoGP in the UK. We continue to advance our development on the Circuit of Wales and are focused on the upcoming public inquiry into the deregistration of common land."

Silverstone's planned World Series by Renault round will be moved to September 5/6 to accommodate MotoGP.

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMES

"The 2015 headlines have already started"



Jason Plato (l) will go toe-to-toe with Turkington

So, what did you think was going to happen? Jason Plato put out a teasing tweet last week saying that he might take a "year off" from the British Touring Car Championship and it provoked a huge internet reaction.

As with anything that double champion Plato does, you can split the reaction 50-50. Some were vociferous in their pleasure at the fact the 88-time race winner might be kicking his heels for a season – others were aghast that the man who has been the benchmark for the championship for a decade might not be wheeled on to the grid for the opening exchanges at Brands Hatch on April 4/5.

But now he has announced his deal with Team BMR for the forthcoming season, and there is much more to this deal than meets the eye.

Firstly, there is Plato's habit of juggling every aspect of his deals. He will spin plates when it comes to generating money and making sure that the deal makes commercial sense. And he is right in the middle of this deal making things happen, and that is something that will help his future and that of the team's move forward – and quickly too.

Watching the elements of this deal come together, which has seriously started to happen over the last two months or so, you get the impression that Plato, a man very aware of his self-worth, simply loves being in the centre of things. It also gives you the impression that when his driving days are done – which is a while away yet, I am sure – then he will easily sidestep into the role of team principal. The only problem he will have then is not being able to employ himself, because he is the only man he feels he can truly trust to perform at the highest level.

The more immediate concern for Plato is how to deal with new team-mate Colin Turkington. It is fascinating that the Northern Irishman and Plato will line up together next year and it truly is the clash of the titans. Both have a lot to prove here: Plato has previously bemoaned the fact that Turkington grabbed more than his fair share of the 2014 headlines in what he perceived was a car with a rear-wheel-drive advantage, while Turkington hasn't been seriously challenged by a team-mate for nearly 10 years. It will be gloves off stuff and fascinating to watch. Who is your money on? The old stager, or the new generation?

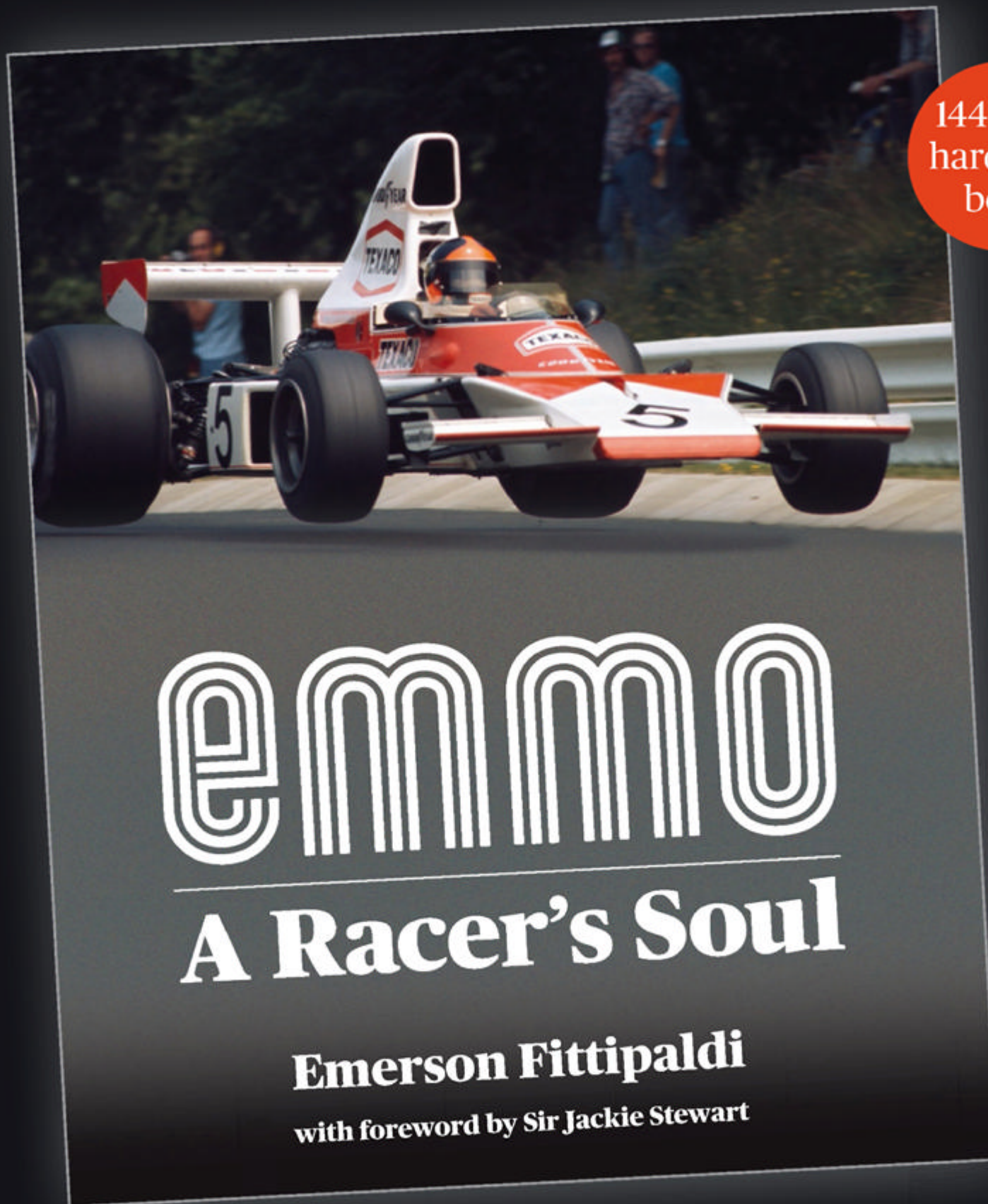
Whoever prevails, the BTCC will be a better place for having Plato back in it next season. As we have proved this week, the 2015 BTCC headlines have just started to write themselves.



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RACING NEWS

Photos: Gary Hawkins and Jakob Ebrej

Wrigley commits to GT4 campaign

Reigning Kumho BMW champion Tom Wrigley will switch to the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this year.

The 22-year-old from Wrexham made his GT4 championship debut at the final rounds of last season at Brands Hatch after wrapping up the BMW crown. He claimed a brace of top 10 finishes in Kent. He will return for a full campaign with his family-run Tom Wrigley Racing squad.

Wrigley has targeted a top five finish in the championship this year: "I had a great time in the GT4 Supercup at Brands Hatch last year, and I'm excited to contest the entire season in 2015. I fell in love with the G55 GT4 from the first time I drove it so here's hoping we can bring home some silverware in it."

Davies prepares for fresh 24 Hour attack

Veteran saloon car racer Craig Davies will be joined by three new team-mates with the SZ Motorsport squad to compete in the Dunlop 24 Hour race at Silverstone on April 23-26.

Davies, who has over 30 years of saloon car racing experience, will be competing in his third 24-hour race. Davies will share a SEAT Leon Supercopa with Super Touring racer Paul Smith, 2011 Britcar 24 winner Sean McNerney and Britcar regular James Thorpe.

"We've put together a group of real team players," Davies said. "The car will be well prepared as the weather at that time of the year at Silverstone will be unpredictable. James's addition to the line-up is an excellent one as he's a good strategist."

Davies will also race in the Spa Six Hours in an ex-Alan Mann Ford GT40, and the HSCC Super Touring Series in a 1989 Brooklyn Ford Sierra RS500.

MG ACES MAKE CLASS SWITCH

Paul Luti will change to a ZR 170 and rival Chris Bray may join him



Bray (2) and Luti have been fierce rivals in ZR 190 class

By Russell Hayes

Multiple MG Trophy race winner Paul Luti will step down from the top 190 class to the more popular 170 this season, and could bring reigning champion Chris Bray with him.

Luti, who entered the championship in 2008 in a ZR190, then switched to a TFL E500 for four years before returning to front-wheel-drive action in 2013 with another 190.

Luti will now step back to a 170 class machine, and his decision has prompted Bray

to have a rethink too. The pair won nine of last year's 12 rounds between them and Bray lifted the title by a single point.

Bray plans to rent his 190 to Australian driver Cody Hill this year, so he is free to also step down a division.

"I've been trying to convince Chris to switch too, I called him out of courtesy when I made the decision as we've been main rivals for years," said Luti.

"The 190 car is brilliant. It's quick enough and for me it's like a mini touring car. Back in 2008 there were loads of the 190s, but it's slowly decreased

since. I don't want to be the quickest car, racing around on my own. It's boring and I want the competition. This year I don't think that competition will be there. In the 170 class there will be a group of over 20 which I can have a ding-dong battle with. The running costs between the two classes are very similar too."

Luti said he is excited at the strength of competition he will be racing against this season.

"I won't have a clue who I'm going to be quick and I've no idea how I'll get on," he added. "I want to spice the competition

up. I've bought the 160 road car and am building it up from scratch including fitting air jacks. There will be a big group battling up at the front, so to get amongst that would be great."

Bray added: "The focus is on my trackday company and building racecars, but racing a 170 is certainly a possibility for a part-season. It would be rude not to. I felt I needed a break as I've not had the same fire. But I do feel that it will probably happen. I'd love to do the first round at Brands Hatch, it's rare that I've not won there in the last six years, it's my favourite."

Fiesta champ Cockill makes Radical move

Reigning Ford Fiesta champion Ed Cockill will switch to sportscar racing in this season's Radical Enduro Championship.

The 26-year-old, who dominated the Fiesta points, claimed maximum scores in 14 of the 16 rounds he competed in last year in a Class D machine. He will now share a Radical SR3 with brother Harry. The pair claimed the Britcar Production Cup title in an ex-Team Dynamics Honda Civic in 2012.

"Although it couldn't have been a more perfect season, last year the racing became quite lonely

at times," Cockill said. "If you've got a very quick machine and you're racing at long tracks like Rockingham, it wasn't a competition. But I'm now looking forward to a new challenge in Radicals."

"I've always wanted to go sportscar racing, as I prefer the enduro format. We need to prove ourselves first and be realistic. I'd be very happy if we took some podium finishes in the first few rounds. But it'll be a huge learning curve and Harry and I will have to learn from each other."

Cockill will swap Fiesta for SR3 racer



Middlehurst led Walter Hayes Trophy in team's car

Dutch outfit Geva looks to expand its Formula Ford 1600 line-up

Dutch squad Geva Racing could expand to field a pair of Kent-engined Mygale racers in selected Formula Ford 1600 events this year.

The team debuted its converted GV14-K Mygale at last year's Formula Ford Festival and Chris Middlehurst led the Walter Hayes Trophy final with it. Geva has now completed the build of a 2011 ex-Duratec chassis, which

Middlehurst has bought, and Geva intends to keep racing the 2009 version.

"We'll run both cars at the first round of James Beckett's Super Series in Mettet [Belgium] and we're going to take Chris and hopefully his father [historic ace] Andy Middlehurst too," said Geva's Nelson Valkenburg. "After that we're looking at races like the Star of Mallory, Jim Walsh

Trophy at Silverstone and BRSCC National Series.

"We've revised both cars and stripped another five kilos out by using lighter bolts and components. We've also got new Bold engines so we're expecting both cars to be faster than ever."

Geva is in talks with Dutch racer Melroy Heemskerck to handle its second car at this year's Formula Ford Festival.

IN BRIEF

F4's new sponsor
The BRDC Formula 4 Championship has confirmed Duo as its new title sponsor from this year. Construction industry specialist Duo will run its logos on all cars in the series.

Clio champs' prize
The champions of this year's Michelin Clio Cup Race and Road Series will again be rewarded with a test in the latest Mk4 Clio UK Cup car. The prize test will take place in the official pre-event practice for the final round of the season at Brands Hatch.

Century's star
Former British Touring Car racer Ollie Jackson will join Century Motorsport for his attack on the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this year. Jackson believes the support of former category champion Nathan Freke can aid his push: "The team has a great reputation. Nathan engineered the Ginetta G50 I raced in Dubai earlier this year and I know there will be a great atmosphere here."

Senna signs
McLaren GT has added former Williams F1 driver Bruno Senna to its roster of factory racers this year. Senna, 31, joins Briton Rob Bell, Kevin Estre and Alvaro Parente on the works driver team. Senna will race in selected GT3 events around Europe in the new 650S GT3 machine and will also join certain customer teams. His main campaign is expected to be in the Blancpain Endurance Series.

Stroll to Euro F3
Ferrari Driver Academy ace Lance Stroll will switch to the FIA Formula 3 European Championship this year with title-winning outfit Prema Powerteam. The 16-year-old Canadian, who won last year's Italian F4 Championship with Prema, took the New Zealand-based Toyota Racing Series title. He will join up with British driver Jake Dennis.

Rudd to VWs
Kent-based racer Simon Rudd will return to the Volkswagen Racing Cup this season with Team Hard. The 25-year-old from Rochester will race a Golf GTi. Rudd finished in the top 20 in the championship in his first term last year. Team head Tony Gilham said: "Simon showed glimpses of his pace and ability. This year the team has an all-new setup and we should see a marked improvement from us both on and off the track. Simon has great support and he will get it together this year."

New KTM GTR
The new hard-top KTM X-Bow GTR will have its first test later this month. The new car is the result of a technical partnership between the Austrian make and German tuning firm Reiter Engineering. The car will be homologated for GT4. It will cost £102,000 and will feature a 350bhp two-litre turbocharged Audi engine and a Holinger six-speed sequential gearbox.



KTM now has a hard-top roof

HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB WITH

NICK DANKS

Age: 51 Lives: Pewsey
BHRC class C3 contender

He started rallying after leaving school

"Martin Corbett, my co-driver, and I were at school together and he got me into road rallying in the early 1980s, just after leaving school. I saw Martin at a motocross meeting and we got chatting about cars and he suggested I joined the local motor club. I'd just got a Mk1 Ford Escort 1300 Sport at the age of 18. I've still got that car and its waiting to be renovated."

He did some stage rallies

"We also did a lot of autotesting and a few single venue stage events at places like Down Ampney. We had the propshaft fall off in Ebworth Woods and got it back on with two bolts from the bonnet hinge to get us out of the stage. We had a great time but went our separate ways for 20 years for business and families."

A chance meeting sparked return

"Then we met up again at a school reunion about five years ago. We got chatting about rallying and we've been stage rallying ever since. I started building my old Mk1, but it was taking too long so I bought Robin Shuttleworth's old car. That was a Mexico and it got us straight back into it."

They love their sport

"Our first BHRC event was the Bulldog in 2009 and we've learnt so much since then. I've got so much respect for the other drivers who make it look so easy. But our results are getting better and we just thoroughly enjoy it. As we get more competitive, we enjoy it more."

He now runs with Pinto power

"My current car was Kevin King's car and we bought it through John Indri in the summer of 2013. We did the Isle of Man last year which was our first time there; it was superb."

It's better now

"Coming back to rallying after an absence of about 20 years, we just enjoy it that much more. I dabbled with enduro bike racing, but that hurts when you fall off. I also did a bit of hillclimbing in a spaceframe Imp, but the rallying is in the blood and it never goes away. We're planning to do a full season in the BHRC this year, and can't wait to get back to the Isle of Man. We've never been to Epynt before, so we're looking forward to that. We're going there to learn it and not be heroes!"



Danks is a rally returnee



Alen will again pilot iconic Fiat Abarth 131

McRAE TO TAKE ON ALEN

Former British champion and WRC legend join bumper Boucles entry

By Paul Lawrence

Alister McRae will travel from his home in Australia to be one of the star entries on this weekend's Legend Boucles de Bastogne in Belgium.

The 1995 British Rally champion and former WRC driver will team up once more with co-driver Stephane Prevot to field a Ford Escort Mk2 in the

biggest historic rally in Europe.

Ranged against the Scot will be Markku Alen in a Fiat Abarth 131 from the Milano Racing team in Italy. Alen's co-driver Denis Giraudet won the event back in 1994 with Francois Chatriot.

McRae said: "I'm excited to be going back to Belgium and I'm looking forward to putting on a good show in the Escort Mk2. At present there is no snow on the

stages, which could make for a very interesting rally. I love driving an Escort."

McRae hopes that the fresh route for 2015 will be to his advantage, with as much as 30 per cent of the route and three stages running on gravel roads. "The route is a secret to everyone and not just the visitors," added McRae. "But if the top Belgian crews have not respected the regulations, we

will be at a disadvantage.

"The entry is very strong but I'm hoping for a better result than last year; maybe a podium or even victory. But I'm also going there to entertain the fans."

The entry also includes Robert Droogmans, Marc Duez, Bernard Munster, Patrick Snijers and Bruno Thiry, while Francois Duval joins McRae in the Mk2 Escort pack.



McRae: Escort drive



Phil Perryman tested his 1977 BMW 530i at Brands Hatch last week, ahead of next month's 73rd Goodwood Members' Meeting. Perryman will share the BMW with five-time Le Mans winner Emanuele Pirro in the Gerry Marshall Trophy race for Group 1 touring cars

Sports and GT series get back together

After a split several years ago, the two race series for pre-1966 up to 2700cc production sports and GT cars will be reunited in a single series under the original Equipe GTS name.

The split left one group of competitors with the MG Car Club as Ecurie GTS and one group with Aston Club Racing under Equipe GTS, but peace has broken out and the 2015 calendar includes dates from both clubs.

"The new series will give even bigger grids, closer racing and a great spread of cars," said Ron Gammons from the MGCC.

The 10-event season starts at Mallory Park on March 29 and takes in Spa and Zandvoort.

Top rally machines to go under the hammer

Two iconic cars from the recent rallying story of Steve Perez, an ex-Markko Martin Ford Focus WRC and a Datsun 260Z, will go up for auction at Race Retro this weekend.

The ex-works Focus and the Datsun, built and developed specifically for the Classic Safari, will star at the Silverstone Auctions sale and both have guide prices of £180,000 to £200,000.

Martin took the Focus to victory in both Corsica and Catalunya in 2004 and drove it the following year. Perez



Perez 260Z is for sale

took the car over for 2006 and won rallies and titles before retiring it in 2009 and moving to a later spec car.

The 260Z was built for the Safari and finished third overall in 2009. Perez has not decided what to do next for the daunting African event.

Beagle Clubmans racer in comeback

The rare 1977 Beagle MkIV Clubmans car will return to the track this season in Classic Clubmans after a complete rebuild by its creator, Jim Yardley and racer Jonty Hair.

The MkIV was Yardley's first purpose-built Clubmans car after success with self-conceived single-seaters in the Monoposto Championship. New owner Richard Fry commissioned the rebuild and will entrust the Beagle to Hair for its initial races.

Yardley will continue to compete on the hills in his F3 version of the MkIV. The Beagle name derives from 'British Eagle' in deference to Dan Gurney's American Eagle cars.

IN BRIEF



Potter's Escort will return

Potter to the R.A.C. James Potter and Bob Duck will return to rallying on the Mid Wales Stages following a hefty accident on the Trackrod Historic Cup last September. Potter's Ford Escort Mk2 has been reshelled over the winter and the Kent-based driver now plans to contest this year's R.A.C. Rally Championship.

Porsche perfect

After being forced to miss last November's Roger Albert Clark Rally due to a wrist injury, Tim Mason will return to action on the Mid Wales Stages with his rebuilt Porsche 911. Graham Wild will be co-driving once more for the Yorkshireman for a first rally since September's Trackrod Historic Cup.

HEROic details

Details of the HERO Summer Classic Reliability Trial have been released for the May 22-24 event, which will be based at the Woodland Grange Hotel near Leamington Spa. After a short prologue section on Friday, a full day on Saturday includes a visit to Shelsley Walsh. The final day leads to the finish at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon.

Chevron birthday

The 50th anniversary of the Chevron marque will be celebrated at Shelsley Walsh (June 20/21). A dedicated class for Chevron sports and racing cars will run at the famous Worcestershire hillclimb and only a small number of places are still open. Details are available from Helen Malkie, email helen@chevronracing.com

Matton in 911

Citroen Racing team boss Yves Matton will return to driving on this weekend's Legend Boucles de Bastogne. The Frenchman will campaign a Porsche 911 among the 250-strong entry for the famous Belgian event and has enlisted the services of nine-time world champion co-driver Daniel Elena for the occasion.

Four for Junior

Formula Junior will have no fewer than four races at this year's Donington Historic Festival (May 2-4), with double-headers for both front- and rear-engined grids. The organisers are particularly keen to encourage Elva owners to race in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the marque.



Elva will celebrate its 60th

**'Chevron's 50th
will be celebrated'
Shelsley contest, below left**

Photos: Paul Lawrence, LAT

Big interest ahead of the Bradford Classic

The organisers of the Bradford Classic Rally have reported strong support from drivers seeking to take part in the August 16 event around the city's Bowling Park.

A 1.3-mile demonstration special stage will be created in the urban park, which is only a mile from the city centre. The stage will be in use all day as part of a two-day motorsport celebration in Bradford and entries will be open to a range of period rally cars.

Event organiser Darren Fox said: "We have been thrilled by the number of enquiries we have received and we have some stunning cars already looking to take part."

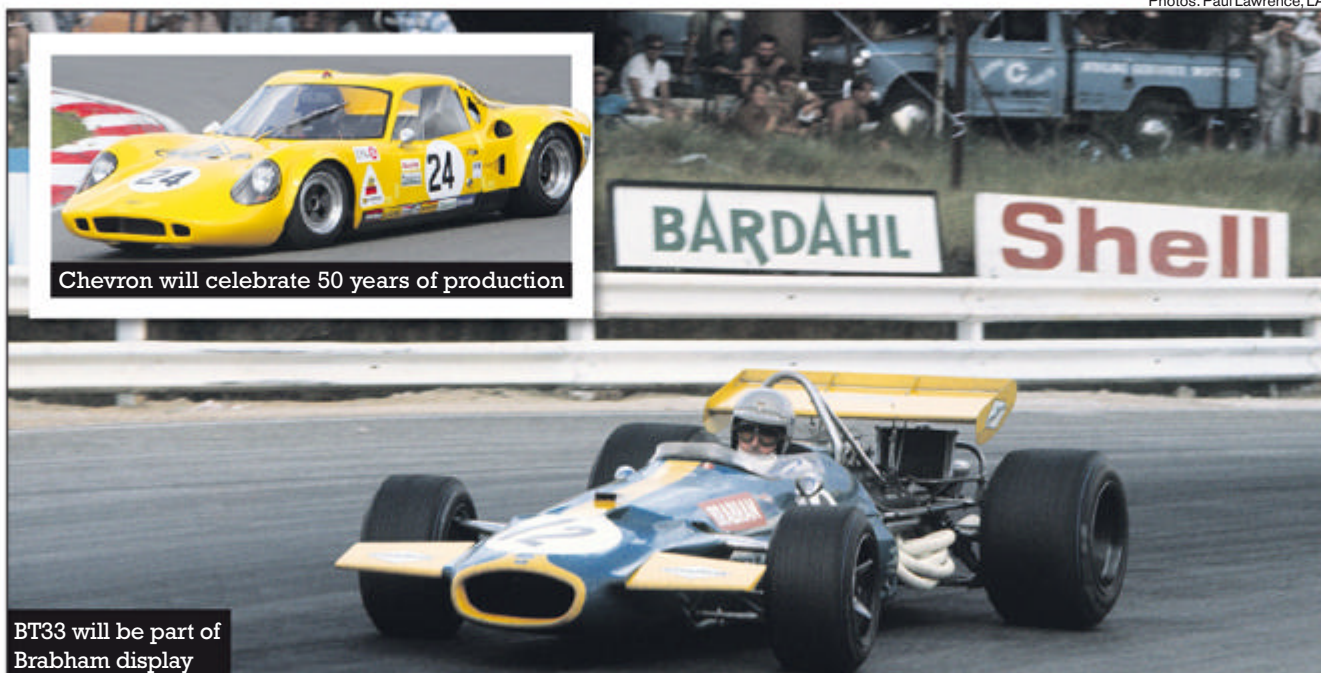
Restored Astura set to be unveiled

The unique 1934 Lancia Astura, raced by Ronald 'Steady' Barker in the 1950s, will be unveiled at Race Retro after a two-year restoration by current owner Michael Scott.

Barker, who died recently after a short illness, was the VSCC bulletin's editor and later became the president of the club. The renowned guest speaker was also road test editor for *Autocar*.

After the war he turned the V8 three-litre Lancia limousine into an open two-seater racecar, and raced it until Scott bought it in 1959.

When the Lancia is unveiled on Friday it will be fitted with a bespoke body, modelled around sketches drawn by Barker almost 60 years ago.



Chevron will celebrate 50 years of production

BT33 will be part of Brabham display

BIG CELEBRATIONS PLANNED FOR BRABHAM AND CHEVRON

Two of the most successful racing marques of the 1960s and 1970s will take centre stage at this weekend's Race Retro when Chevron and Brabham are celebrated at the annual International Historic Motorsport Show in Coventry.

Renowned preparation expert Hall and Hall will provide three Formula 1 Brabhams charting the development of the cars produced by the late Sir Jack

Brabham and Ron Tauranac. A BT3, the first grand prix car from 1962, the 1966 BT20 and the BT33 from 1970 will feature in the main display of the show's 'Speed Street'.

David Brabham, son of Sir Jack, will be on hand for his first visit to Race Retro. "In the last few years I have taken a keener interest in old racing cars and what they achieved and represented in their time," said

David. "It's a great opportunity to see some wonderful cars, speak to the public about the Brabham heritage and the future of Brabham through Project Brabham."

A selection of Chevrons will trace the story of the company founded by the late Derek Bennett, starting with the very first Chevron, the 1965 B1 Clubmans car. Examples of the B8 and B16 sports cars will be

joined by B25 and B27 single-seaters and the unique B62 Group C2 car from 1985.

On display will be a complete B8 as well as one without bodywork so visitors can see the mechanicals. The B16 appeared in the Steve McQueen film *Le Mans*, the B25 Formula Atlantic is an ex-John Lepp car, while the B27 is the ex-Dieter Quester F2 car from 1974. It is hoped Quester will attend.



Vauxhall Firenza Can-Am of Mick Strafford will thrill live stage

Vatanen leads Live Action highlights with two legendary machines

Ari Vatanen behind the wheel of a Ford Escort Mk2 will be one of the highlights for the Live Action rally stage at Race Retro.

The former World Rally champion will tackle the demonstration stage on both Saturday and Sunday and is expected to drive two

landmark cars from his career: a Ford Escort Mk2 and a Peugeot 205 T16.

There will be a range of Group B cars and other significant machines from rallying history, including a Lancia Delta S4, Tony Worswick's Ferrari 308 GTB and the Chevrolet-powered

Vauxhall Firenza Can-Am of Mick Strafford.

The Live Rally Stage will be in operation from 1115hrs to 1245hrs and from 1415hrs to 1545hrs on both Saturday and Sunday. Each session will begin with a demonstration from the historic karting movement.



IN BRIEF



Race Retro has huge variety

Race Retro details

Race Retro runs from Friday to Sunday this weekend at Stoneleigh Park near Coventry. The show is open from 0930hrs to 1730hrs on Friday and Saturday and from 0930hrs to 1630hrs on Sunday. On-the-day adult admission is £26, with children admitted free on Sunday. Parking is free throughout the show.

Interview schedule

On the interview stage over the course of Race Retro will be star guests Ari Vatanen and David Brabham, with Vatanen due to be present on both Saturday and Sunday. Other guests scheduled to appear on the interview stage include Race Retro favourites Win Percy and Barrie Williams.

Fiat's record car

One of the star cars at Race Retro will be the 16.5-litre Fiat Isotta Fraschini land speed record car now owned by Mike Vardy. Though designed by Fiat in 1905, the car was never completed in period but has now been recreated using original drawings and fitted with an aero engine. The car finally ran for the first time last year and weighs in at around two tonnes.

HSCC out in force

The HSCC will mount an eight-car display at Race Retro, showing the breadth of racing categories offered by the club. Single-seaters on show will include a newly restored Lola T332 Formula 5000 from Wren Classics and the rare Formula Junior Condor III of Stuart Roach. Gary Pearson's Jaguar E-type will represent the new Jaguar Heritage Challenge.



HSCC stand will show range

FIND OUT WHO STARRED ON THE KIRKISTOWN STAGES

PAGE 19

WIN A DAY AT THE 73RD GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING AT THE GOODWOOD MOTOR CIRCUIT

We have teamed up with Goodwood to offer readers the chance to win one of five pairs of single-day tickets to the 73rd Goodwood Members' Meeting on Sunday 22 March 2015. The event follows the success of last year's 72nd Members' Meeting, which allowed members of the GRRC and other Goodwood clubs the chance to enjoy a weekend of historic motor racing without the packed crowds found at the circuit's other events. The 72nd Goodwood Members' Meeting was a huge success, with 2015's event expected to be even bigger and better.

TO STAND A CHANCE OF WINNING, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION AND SEND YOUR ENTRY TO motorsportnews.competitions@haymarket.com

QUESTION
Which iconic firm became the first British manufacturer to win the world sports car championship by taking victory in the RAC Tourist Trophy at Goodwood?

**COMPETITION CLOSING
FEBRUARY 25, 2015**



RALLY NEWS

Photos: www.mcklein-imagedatabase.com

OGIER: 'THEY KNOW I'M STILL THE BOSS'

Sweden win gives champ mental advantage



Ogier fought back from bad running order to win rally

By David Evans

Sebastien Ogier made history in Sweden last week, becoming the first non-Scandinavian to win the event twice – but he now faces the pain of running first on the road on round three in Mexico next month.

Ogier, who now leads the championship by 23 points, delighted in his second win in three years in Karlstad, not least because he did it while running in what he considered the worst conditions at the front of the field on Friday and Saturday.

Status proved

It served, he said, as a timely reminder to his rivals of his status as champion.

"This result is satisfying to prove that even with the big handicap I am still able to win," Ogier told *MN*. "But it is very important because mentally for the others it's a strong show to them: remember, who is the boss... I like that."

Ahead of the event, there had been some talk of drivers slowing down and potentially even dropping points in pursuit of a stronger position on the road for round three in Mexico. Next month's

Leon-based event is reckoned to be the worst place in the season to run at the front of the field.

Ogier has resigned himself to what's to come – but stands by his decision. "Thinking about the future, it looks not so nice for us, but what can you do?" he said. "I came here chasing the maximum points, I wanted the win and I went flat out. I wanted the lead. Now I will have two or three rallies where I will suffer."

"I wouldn't change this. Jari-Matti [Latvala] is the one under pressure already because he is not allowed to do the mistake [in Mexico] or he is too far away [in the championship]. I took a good

psychological advantage here."

Ogier's team principal Jost Capito was full of praise for his world champion, following his thrilling final-stage win over team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen.

Capito said: "Seb and Julien [Ingrassia, co-driver] have proved they are the real world champions. It all went down to a mind game and they have shown strength and that, when it really counts, they can do some miracles."

While Mikkelsen led going into the final stage, a mistake on the powerstage dropped him to third. Despite that, Capito said he expected the Norwegian to top the podium soon. "It didn't go well for Andreas, but he is a fighter and it will go well – very well – soon," added Capito.

Speeding's not fine

The only downside to Ogier's week in Sweden came during the recce, before the start of the rally proper – where he was caught speeding seven times. Ogier now carries a suspended two-minute fine for the rest of the year. That doesn't mean, however, that he will be hit with two minutes if he's caught again immediately in Mexico. He would have to speed twice

before the event stewards were involved and the penalty imposed.

Regardless, Ogier wasn't happy at the nature of the penalty. "OK, something was wrong," said Ogier, "but something changed in the interpretation of the regulation this weekend and I feel really bad that they come to me and tell me how bad I have been. I never got caught before and we have no warning, just this."

The recce speed limit is 10kph slower in Sweden than on other rounds and drivers are warned by a beep from the GPS system in the recce cars when they exceed it. They then have three seconds to reduce speed.

"When it beeps, it's already at least one second past – so I only have two seconds," Ogier added. "And one of them showed that I slowed down 3.05s after the beep, but this one was included. I don't blame anybody, but I'm just a little sad. Of course, now I have to be careful, a two-minute penalty would not be good!"

● Ford Fiesta RS WRC driver Lorenzo Bertelli was also caught speeding seven times, but the worst culprit was Yuriy Protasov (Fiesta RS WRC), who was done 18 times. They both received the same suspended two-minute penalty.

Latvala says he is in title fight

Jari-Matti Latvala says the direction of this year's WRC won't be known until Rally Poland in July.

By the time the Mikolajki-based event arrives, most of the hot gravel rallies will have been completed and from there, to the end of the season, Latvala says it will be a race to the title.

Latvala crashed out of the lead fight on last week's Rally Sweden and, while he was distraught at missing his chance for a fourth Swedish success, he admits it does help his situation for the next round in Mexico – where the road cleaning effect is most prevalent.

Latvala's chances were given a further boost when his Polo R WRC was retired in final service in Sweden last week, allowing the team to fit new parts to the car. If he had finished, he would have had to run the same engine and transmission in Central America. The team wouldn't, however, confirm which parts would be changed in time for round three.

Latvala said: "For the gravel rallies now we have Mexico, Argentina, Portugal, Sardinia, where you benefit from the position on the road. For me, when we get to Poland then you have to be close to the top fight because after that we have the Tarmac rallies coming and gravel events which don't clean so much – then it will get more difficult. Basically, you can do mistakes in the first half of the year, but not in the second half."



Ogier (r) and Ingrassia at finish

▶ HOW VOLKSWAGEN'S STARS BATTLED LATE ON IN SWEDEN

▶▶▶ PAGE 22



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'Paul Bird was rapid on the Wyedean stages'
BTRDA Series opener report, p26



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Neuville put in a storming drive to finish a fine second

NEUVILLE CALLS FOR HYUNDAI UPGRADES

Thierry Neuville has urged his Hyundai team to find more pace from the i20 WRC after the Belgian came within an ace of winning Rally Sweden.

Neuville led the second round of the World championship into the final morning, but couldn't keep pace with Volkswagen drivers Sebastien Ogier and Andreas Mikkelsen. Neuville finished second to Ogier, but believes it was him who made the difference in the snow.

Hyundai team principal Michel Nandan agreed and said the Frankfurt-based squad would be redoubling its efforts with the current car, while simultaneously developing the new-generation i20 in time for the season's second half.

"On performance," said Nandan, "we are still behind and most of the reason we are in this position is because of Thierry and his fantastic drive. Thierry feels confident with the car and

when a driver's confident he's quick. He made no mistakes. The performance of the car did not change from last year, so for sure, this is down to the driver. We do have more knowledge of the car than last year and that helps, but still we have more to do with this [car]."

Neuville added: "I have a positive feeling from this event – it was impossible to stay ahead of both VWs and I have to be proud of what we have done. We

know that everybody is doing their best, but we need more improvements to be closer to the others. Nicolas [Gilsoul, co-driver] and me have done the difference this week, but we couldn't do this every time."

Hyundai's i20 WRC is the only manufacturer car not to be running the 2015 upgraded paddleshift on the steering column. It is hoped the team's unit will be in place in time for the next round in Mexico.

New Tour of Corsica route causes concern

France's round of the World Rally Championship caused yet more controversy last week, when initial plans for October's Tour of Corsica were revealed and include a 45-mile opening stage run in darkness.

Corsica will return to the WRC for the first time since 2008, but the event's desire to run a linear route including service and/or stages in Porto-Vecchio, Ajaccio, Bastia and Corte has caused considerable consternation and split opinion in the service park.

While the route has yet to be rubber-stamped, after the long opening stage on Friday, only a further five or six more stages are planned through the weekend – but they are all likely to be around the 30-mile mark.

An itinerary of this nature flies in the face of the guidelines laid out by WRC Promoter, including a full day of action on

Friday, to ensure three separate television shows can be produced at the end of each day.

WRC Promoter's Oliver Ciesla said: "We are in talks with the organisers of France's round of the World Rally Championship regarding the itinerary."

Opinion among the works teams is divided, and Citroen's Kris Meeke admitted he could see both sides of the argument: "Commercially, I can see that it's difficult for the promoter but, from a personal point of view, I think it could be fantastic to go into an event with a stage that length. What's being proposed looks to be a true Corsica and that could be incredible."

The October event, which was drafted into the year's calendar after the Alsace-based rally hit funding trouble, is reckoned to be working on potential refinements to the itinerary.

Teams rally behind Sweden despite warmth

Teams have praised last week's Rally Sweden – after the WRC's winter rally ran in warmer-than-expected conditions again.

The recce for the second round of the WRC was run in perfect winter conditions, but when temperatures rose as the event got underway, there were concerns for the hard ice base on the roads and more calls for a possible relocation.

Volkswagen's Jost Capito said: "We have been asking these questions for more than 10 years, so why do we carry on asking them? This is the area where the rally can run, where we have the stages, where there are the people to run it and the government is happy to support it. It's difficult to find anything else, while we are complaining, it's never really that bad."

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson added: "It's been full snow on



Sweden still had lots of snow

the stages and that's the important thing. It looks like a full winter rally to me and the pictures from the stages are good. The only thing I would say is that spectator numbers look like they might have fallen."

WRC promoter Oliver Ciesla said he had no issue with the conditions. "They were better than last year," he said. "It looks good and it's been a superb winter rally."



DMACK was Swedish winner

Summer running helps DMACK deliver top winter tyres to Ketomaa

Summer time testing at Carlisle airport last year was the key to Jari Ketomaa's WRC2 win in Sweden last week.

Twelve months ago, the Finn was hit by significant issues with DMACK's snow tyre, but the firm turned that around in time for Ketomaa to take a dominant win aboard his Ford

Fiesta R5 in Karlstad last week.

DMACK's Dick Cormack said: "This is probably the tyre we have put the single most amount of work into. We even ran the studded tyre across the airfield in Carlisle in June to work on stud retention and it worked."

Ketomaa added: "The tyres have been fantastic. Last year,

it was difficult when we were losing studs, but this year we lost none. It's a great achievement against the big brands."

Ketomaa will do the WRC2 rounds in Mexico and Argentina before his season is evaluated ahead of Portugal, where reigning Drive DMACK winner Sander Parn starts his season.

VIEW FROM THE WORLD STAGE

JERRY WILLIAMS

"Drivers do the impossible in Sweden"



If you want to know what makes a world class rally driver, go to Sweden. There, on the snow and ice you'll see them doing the impossible. Just like that.

Yes, the superstars have skinny tyres, each studded 380 times with spikes biting into the snow and underlying ice. But what they do with their cars is out of this world.

For 20 years, I've always tried to catch at least one stage on the WRC's only snow rally. In the past that's included Colin's Crest on Vargasen; the final sweeping bends of Sagen; the snow and (sometimes) gravel of Fredriksberg and the last, snowy curves at Likenas rallycross circuit at the end of the monstrous 30-mile-plus Granberget test.

This time we managed two first day stages: Rojden and Kirkenær, over the border in Norway as it happens. Our Rojden spot was about halfway through. Cars approached down a level straight, into an open left-hander, up a steepening hill to a right-hander, then tight left up into a tiny village.

All of us, me, my *MN* colleague David Evans and Rally GB guru Andrew Kellitt, were gobsmacked by the speed of the leaders through that initial left bend.

It was approached accelerating hard at maybe 70-80mph. Getting through was just a well-timed flick. Turning in early was key. Move the wheel 12 inches too late and you'd run wide, have to get out of the power and lose five mph. One or two even brushed the outside snow bank. That would cost another three or four mph.

As you'd expect, the top men were mostly spot on. Kris Meeke and Elfyn Evans were impressive. But what got me was how rock-solid and stable those VWs looked. Talk about confidence boosters...

Then we were up the road to Kirkenær, scene of a mid-day regroup. But first, a 7km stage alongside a lake. We stood on a banking 15 feet above the track.

Below us was a km-long, snaking stretch of swooping bends, going left, right, left, right, left, with straw bales at each apex. Watching the aces slice through was simply mesmerising. I couldn't get enough of it. Most of them seemed to clock 60-90mph, flicking their cars into amazing angles past the bales, engines alternately blaring loud or on the overrun.

As a demonstration of driving skill it was breathtaking – and don't forget that, like Rojden, this exhibition was on hard-packed, slippery snow!

Like I say, if our sport ever looks like it's starting to lose its lustre for you, go to Sweden and watch the world's best on the snow and ice.

It'll give you another decade of enthusiasm guaranteed.



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Would like to congratulate Petter and Pernilla on winning their 3rd successive victory at the Rally Sweden Historic 2015



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RALLY NEWS

Solberg wins after Latvala Escort advice

Petter Solberg sealed his Rally Sweden Historic hat trick last week, following a little help from Volkswagen factory driver Jari-Matti Latvala.

Co-driven in his Ford Escort Mk2 by his wife Pernilla, Petter dominated the 80-mile event, leading home Audi quattro A1 driver Tom Axelsson by more than three minutes.

Ahead of the event, Solberg had been discussing his car's set-up with fellow Mk2 owner Latvala.

"We were talking about the preload in the differential and the suspension," said Latvala. "It looks like it worked!"

Shortly after donating the £400 he collected for winning the event to the marshals' party fund, Solberg told *MN*: "It was fantastic to be back out in a rally car again. We did work on the car and it helped – especially in the last stage, when we took Colin's Crest absolutely flat out."

Ogier hits out at historic influence

Rally Sweden winner Sebastien Ogier has questioned the sense of running historic events as support to WRC rounds.

The Frenchman was furious after the second run of the Fredriksberg stage, where he dropped 14 seconds to the quickest time after struggling for grip – and blamed the historic runners.

"They take such a different line to us," he said. "They were spreading snow everywhere and when we came into this stage the rear of the car was constantly sliding on the loose snow. It was horrible and this idea to run the historic is really stupid. I'm not saying this against the drivers."



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

KUBICA: SWEDEN WAS MY BEST YET

Polish star takes the positives from his impressive Sweden event

By David Evans

Robert Kubica labelled last week's Rally Sweden performance one of the best of his career so far.

The Polish RK World Rally Team driver finished a lowly 20th overall, but that was due to a technical problem on the car and a five-minute penalty from the stewards. Without those two issues, the 30-year-old felt he could have taken a career-best fourth place.

Kubica's performance was particularly good following a

disastrous Swedish outing last year, when he rolled his Fiesta RS WRC on each leg of the rally.

"This was one of the best rallies for me," Kubica told *MN*. "It's a shame we had the [transmission] problem because without this we could have had a very nice and unexpected result. Coming here for the second time after last year's very negative experience, we could have been fourth or fifth fighting with [Ott] Tanak or even in front of him – that's very good for us!"

Kubica said he is confident

the team's performance will show a further improvement following Rally Mexico, when there is a six-week gap between the Leon-based event and round four in Argentina. He added:

"We still need to improve and the time is very tight to Mexico. We now have to rebuild this car and then send it straight to that rally. After Mexico there will be more time and we can try to improve the functionality."

The stewards hit Kubica with the penalty after the turbo on his Fiesta overboosted.

"It was [overboosting] for a fraction of second," he said. "We can't do anything about it, we just need to understand why it happened. But there was no performance gain and, for sure, it was not done on purpose."



Kubica: good speed

Frustration for Ostberg at Citroen

Mads Ostberg has called on the Citroen team to find a fix for the recurring gearbox issues that blighted his Rally Sweden outing.

Ostberg ended the event in 10th place after going off the road on the final morning, having suffered downshifting problems.

"We had increasing problems with the gearing of the car," said Ostberg. "And this has posed major challenges. I pull the paddle when I upshift, so it is not possible to make mistakes for themselves. But the gear system here lived its own life! [The] gear [was] late when I upshift and skipped gears on the downshift. It wasn't all the time, but time and again."

"Imagine what happens when we come fully on sixth gear; shift down to fifth before the turn and the car goes straight to four. It began Friday and got worse through the rally, even though the team has changed part-by-part and eventually the whole gearbox without it helping."

Citroen team principal Yves Matton admitted Sweden hadn't been ideal after Ostberg's team-mate Kris Meeke finished seventh, having spent time in a day-one snowbank.

Matton said: "The racing incidents, the technical problems we had and the mistakes made by our drivers mean that the result is a long way off our targets. We'll take a closer look at what happened at this event in order to prepare for Rally Mexico as effectively as possible. Everyone is still very motivated. And it's just the start of the season."

Matton said: "The racing incidents, the technical problems we had and the mistakes made by our drivers mean that the result is a long way off our targets. We'll take a closer look at what happened at this event in order to prepare for Rally Mexico as effectively as possible. Everyone is still very motivated. And it's just the start of the season."



Ostberg had gearbox woes



Kevin Abbring and Sebastian Marshall impressed in Sweden

Abbring pleased with WRC learning curve in Sweden

Hyundai rookie Kevin Abbring and his British co-driver Sebastian Marshall exceeded the team's expectations on last week's Rally Sweden.

The pair ran on the fringes of the top 10 for the duration on the rally and set a fastest sector time in one stage.

Hyundai team principal Michel Nandan brought Abbring into the team after Dani Sordo was injured earlier this month when he fell off his mountain bike. The squad's third driver, Hayden Paddon, was moved into the factory team alongside Thierry Neuville while Abbring drove the number 20 i20 WRC.

Nandan said both Paddon – who scored his best ever WRC result with fifth – and Abbring, who ended the rally 11th, had impressed: "[Abbring] kept

his head down, worked hard and delivered a classified finish just outside of the top 10."

Abbring had never contested a snow rally – his only experience was a 90-mile test on the Sunday before – and had never competed in a World Rally Car. The Dutchman told *MN*: "The biggest challenge here was driving the WR Car, of course driving on snow for the first time wasn't easy, but this car was a big step from the R5 car. It was amazing and, I have to say, I surprised myself with some of the times on the second running of some stages."

Abbring will tackle four rounds of the WRC later this season. "My focus is on testing [the new car], not competing," he said. Neither Abbring or Paddon will rally the 2015 car this year.

SEB MARSHALL

Hyundai WRC co-driver

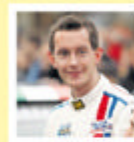
Q&A

How has the reality compared with the dream of entering in the WRC?

"I thought: 'OK, this is going to be the biggest challenge I've faced in my rallying career'. So I was prepared for how tough it was going to be; I don't think it has exceeded that, but it's certainly lived up to it!"

What's the biggest difference at this level?

"Reading the pacenotes has to be the primary thing. The speed is so different. Some corners



you come to and think: 'I can probably pause here'. Then you get halfway down the next straight and think: 'I really shouldn't have paused there!'"

You've been talking a lot in the stages then...

"I talked to Dan [Barritt], Scott [Martin] and Paul [Nagle] about it, asking them what it's like to be in a World Rally Car. They explained it to me, but you really have to see it to believe it. You are just talking, talking, talking. I've learned something."

FIND OUT HOW THE DRIVERS RATED ON RALLY SWEDEN

PAGE 25

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RALLY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Fan boost

The Somerset Stages will have a new spectator stage at Kennisham Forest this year. The new test will run twice during the day. The April 18 rally, which is the third round of the BTRDA Rally Series, includes a seafront service area in Minehead. The famous Porlock Toll Road stage will also feature.

TSH doubles up

The TSH Stages will run over two days once again this year. The rally will take place on May 16/17 and regulations are available at shmc.co.uk. The 85-mile event will run at Portreath and will be based at Perran Sands.

Corinium Stages

Cirencester Car Club has confirmed that the Corinium Stages will run at Down Ampney on Saturday, May 2. The popular single-venue event is a round of three regional championships – the Cotswold MSG, the ASWMC Sealed Surface and the ACSMC series. Regulations will be available shortly from cirencesterclub.com.

No BRC switch

BTRDA Rally Series driver Russ Thompson says that he's unlikely to switch to the new MSA British Rally Championship when it runs again next year. The BRC will be back for 2016 with a new format based around the four-wheel-drive R5 class. "One of the reasons I went four-wheel drive in 2014 is because I thought that in the long-run the BRC would go four-wheel drive. But I'll probably stick to the BTRDA for a couple of years instead," he said.

Marshal day

The British Rally Marshals Club will run a training day in Telford on March 8. The session will include a variety of activities and will be an ideal way for motorsport enthusiasts to get involved in the sport. For details of the free-of-charge day go to brmc.org.uk and click 'Training'.

Trelleck knocked

Many two-wheel-drive and historic crews said the Trelleck Common stage, the third of last weekend's Wydean Forest Rally, was undrivable. Part of the stage had been regraded and large stones were left on the route. "It was terrible," said Citroen Saxo driver Steve Jenkins. "It kills the little car; they should look for alternative stages."

Anniversary date

Saturday's Wydean Forest Rally was the 40th running of the event. It was based at Chepstow Racecourse and attracted a strong entry of 167 crews. Hundreds of people attended the launch of Neill Henderson's book, *The Wydean at 40*, last week. Entry for the event was oversubscribed.

Cave's comeback

WRC driver Tom Cave returned to the BTRDA Rally Series last weekend. The Welshman was competing on a one-off basis but he and co-driver Craig Parry suffered difficulties with their Subaru Impreza. "We'd never been in the car before," said Cave. "It had a misfire so we had to drop out at service."

Pryce ran a Fiesta R5 on Rally GB last year



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, JBo Snaps

ROAD TO WALES

Who can win?

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MSA Scottish Rally champion
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Plus one entry from each of

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Rally Isle of Man
RSAC Scottish Rally
Ulster Rally
Jim Clark Rally

ROAD TO WALES IS ADAPTED FOR 2015

Free Rally GB entries on offer to top crews in championships and individual events

By James Bolton

Wales Rally GB organiser, International Motor Sports, will offer a Road to Wales entry to each of the five rallies that were in last year's BRC, plus Rally North Wales.

The Road to Wales scheme has run for the past two years and has awarded free Rally GB entries to winners of various

British championships. The demise of the BRC for this year means the scheme has been altered. The BRC organisers had six Road to Wales entries to offer as prizes last year. Coincidentally, there were six rounds of the BRC in 2014.

The organisers of the rallies will set their own criteria as to who will get the entry. The Rally North Wales organisers say a random draw will take place from

all of the class winners, and one crew will receive the prize.

"The Road to Wales has proved to be a huge success and we had no hesitation in continuing the initiative in 2015," said managing director of the BRC Ben Taylor. "Wales Rally GB needs to be not only the climax of the WRC but also a fantastic end-of-season festival to celebrate the very best of British rallying

and the Road to Wales makes sure that some of this country's best will be on the stages in November."

Last year BRC runner-up Osian Pryce was one of the Road to Wales winners: "I gained crucial experience on a WRC event and that has given me a career stepping stone. There aren't many prizes in rallying and the Road to Wales award is something I just had to take up."



Dean Raftery ran Mini WRC

Raftery keen to get more WRC miles

Billy Coleman award winner Dean Raftery wants more outings in four-wheel-drive cars after his run in a Mini World Rally Car on the Galway International Rally.

The 23-year-old has rallied two-wheel-drive cars throughout his career, but adapted well to the WRC machine, finishing sixth overall earlier this month.

"It took a lot of getting used," he said. "We didn't test

the car prior to the event due to the snow, so every stage was a learning curve."

Raftery suffered a damaged hose and dropped two minutes while it was fixed. He then set a second fastest time on stage 11. "Hopefully this proves that my skills are not just limited to front-wheel drive," he said. "I'm pleased how I adapted to the car throughout the rally. I really hope we can do it again."

New stages planned for Aldershot Rally

The Aldershot Rally for Heroes will run over two days in April and will also include a shorter one-day event.

The rally will raise money for charity and is organised by Southern Car Club and Farnborough DMC. It will include four stages on Friday April 10 and 18 on Saturday April 11. A second rally will run only the Saturday stages.

The rally will start at Longcross in Surrey and will include stages in Rushmoor, Minley and Bramley. There will also be a new stage at Pirbright/Deepcut and at Buller in Aldershot.

"New stages, night stages and a town centre stage are all on Tarmac," said event director Rick Smith. "Add in the joy of raising money for our injured troops and you have a fantastic event. Get your entries in now." Entries will open this month.

Elsmores stun on Wydean outings

Graham and Nik Elsmore impressed on their return to competition on last weekend's Wydean Forest Rally.

Their comebacks were part of the festivities that marked the 40th running of the event. Local driver Graham won the first three Wydeans from 1975-'77, and returned on a one-off basis in a brand new Ford Escort Mk2 that is owned by Rob Weir.

Graham's son Nik was in Matthew Edwards' Mitsubishi Lancer E9. While Nik finished an impressive fifth overall, Graham won class B11.

"The car is immaculate," said



Elsmore with car and an MN

Graham. "It's been a joy to drive. In the afternoon we gave it a bit of a push. There are a lot of spectators on the stages, there's a lot of interest in the sport."

Nik added: "We've had a lot of laughs. I think I'll do this every year, get the co-driver to hire the car and then come along for a ride with me."

Bell in rally return after seven years

Former BTRDA Silver Star champion Brian Bell returned on last weekend's Wydean Forest Rally after seven years away.

He and co-driver Matthew Whattam finished 13th in class in their Ford Focus WRC. Bell said he would dovetail his BTRDA appearances with rallies in his historic Porsche 911.

"I was watching rallying on TV and decided I had to come back," he said. "It's in the blood."

Whattam said the Focus WRC was the best car he'd driven: "It's so different. The suspension travel is so good, it helps you."

Bird opens BTRDA account with win

BTRDA driver Paul Bird dominated the opening round of the series last weekend.

The Ford Focus WRC driver won the 40th Wydean Forest Rally by 34 seconds.

"I made no mistakes all day and it was comfortable," he said. "I'm especially pleased with how I drove today. It can be a tricky little rally. The stages are always fast and tricky but I felt sharp after doing the North West Stages [the weekend before] and I knew it was a case of managing the lead."

The season continues with the Malcolm Wilson Rally on March 7.

Irish champion Declan Gallagher to debut Toyota GT86 this weekend

Irish modified champion Declan Gallagher will steer the new rear-wheel-drive Toyota GT86 rally car on this weekend's Birr Stages – the opening round of the Irish National Rally Championship.

The car is owned by Kelly's Toyota in Donegal and will be serviced on the nine-stage event by David Greer Motorsport – the same company that has helped

develop the car in recent months.

Brendan Kelly stressed that the outing was merely a test exercise for the class 13 machine. It first broke cover on last year's Ulster Rally where it was used for 00 car duties. Gallagher said he was looking forward to the challenge.

"I promise to give it my best," he said. "It was a great feeling [winning the Modified title] and

something that I dreamed of since I started rallying over 10 years ago and, to be honest, it is something that I will cherish for years to come. I see this as a new experience and it would be great to go and do the same thing again, albeit in a new car. Kelly's Toyota has given me that chance. We are doing Birr to test and develop the car, but I'll be going for it."

*'Multiple champion
David Bogie is top seed'*
MSA Scottish Rally Championship, below

Photos: Writtle Photographic



EUROPEAN SWITCH FOR CHAMPION THORBURN



Scots champ Thorburn won't defend crown

MSA Scottish Rally champion Euan Thorburn will switch to the FIA European Rally Championship this year.

The Duns driver won his first Scottish title last season and immediately switched from his Ford Focus WRC to a Ford Fiesta S2000 for Wales Rally GB last November.

"We've done the Scottish championship for six or seven years and finally we won it,"

said the 28-year-old. "We want to do something different so we're going to do the European championship and we'll make our debut on the Circuit of Ireland."

Thorburn said he wasn't sure what his budget for the season would be and so he'll work out which other European events to enter once he's run in the Circuit, which is the next round of the series

and takes place on April 2-4. "I've never rallied outside of the UK before," said Thorburn. "The car should be competitive enough in Ireland, and we'll do a rally before. But it is a bit of an unknown. I think we should be able to get some fairly decent results and you get good exposure, especially with the Eurosport TV package. It's the next logical step, especially as

there's no British Rally Championship. We're fast enough to be in Europe."

Thorburn did the Ulster Rally in 2009 in a Subaru Impreza. "I enjoyed it and everyone said I should do the Circuit," he said. "It has such great history and heritage, it'll be good to give it a go."

He's won nine SRC rounds in his Ford Focus WRC over the past four years.

Scottish series can be most open yet

MSA Scottish Rally Championship driver Jock Armstrong is expecting renewed competition in the series this year following Euan Thorburn's decision not to defend his title.

Armstrong competes in a Subaru Impreza, and pointed to the fact there is only one non-Subaru or Mitsubishi among the top 18 crews for this weekend's season-opening Snowman Rally. "A lot of people think they can win this championship now," he said. "If it was all Mitsubishis and Subarus it would be really good. The

TOP 10 ENTRIES

MSA SCOTTISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
Round one: 60th Snowman Rally

NO.	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	David Bogie/Kevin Rae	Ford Fiesta R5+
2	Mike Faulkner/Peter Foy	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
3	Jock Armstrong/Paula Swinscoe	Subaru Impreza
4	Andrew Gallacher/Jane Nicol	TBA
5	Quintin Milne/Stephen O'Hanlon	Mitsubishi Lancer E6
6	Barry Groundwater/Sean Donnelly	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
7	Donnie MacDonald/Andrew Falconer	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
8	Dougal Brown/Lewis Rochford	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
9	Mark McCulloch/James Haugh	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
10	Chris Collie/Mark Fisher	Mitsubishi Lancer E6

Entries: 108 Stages: five Miles: 44

championship is great; a lot of people are doing it. You enjoy yourself for day a month and that's what the sport's about. The organisers have got it all about right. If they could nominate one tyre

[manufacturer], or limit us to six tyres per rally, that would limit the cost more."

Armstrong won the final event of 2014 but retired from the Snowman Rally with a driveshaft failure.

Ian Mills

The Valentine Trophy, awarded to the top Novices, went to fourth placed Robert Midwood/Chris Tindall.

Results

Organiser: Caernarvonshire & Anglesey MC
Date: February 14/15 Where: Anglesey
Championships: none Route: 85 miles Starters: 40
1 Geraint Jones/Merfyn Williams (Peugeot 205) 3m 54s;
2 Gwynfor Jones/Chris Evans (Ford Escort) +16s; 3 Chris Phillips/Alun Owen (Peugeot 205 GTI); 4 Robert Midwood/Chris Tindall (Ford Escort); 5 Jamie Jay Lee Williams/Sion Matthews (Vauxhall Astra); 6 Rhys Jones/Dion Bee (Citroen Saxo VTS); 7 Sion Hardy/Jason Hardy (BMW 318i); 8 Tomas Adamek/Osian Trefor Jones (Peugeot 206 GTI); 9 Osian Vaughan Williams/Rhys Jones (Peugeot 106 GTI); 10 Robert Charles Jones/Adam Owen Jones (Peugeot 205 GTI). Classes, Novices: Midwood/Tindall; Beginners: Hardy/Hardy.

Changes made after safety review report

This weekend's Snowman Rally will be observed by the MSA's new safety delegate in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recommended in a report that was published late last year that an outsider should work with motor clubs in the organisation of stage rallies and should consider the safety of events. International steward Nicky Moffitt has been appointed interim safety delegate.

"We will be observed before the rally starts," said Snowman Rally clerk of the course Neil Moir. "Nicky will be making sure the spectator areas are up to scratch. And he'll be with us throughout the rally. It will be the same for all the rallies, we just happen to be the first."

The MSA said more safety delegates will be appointed in due course, including for events outside Scotland.

Meanwhile, Moir said that snow was melting and shouldn't hamper this weekend's MSA Scottish Rally Championship season opener.



Rally safety is paramount

Controversy erupts as top runners all tricked by rally spectators

The Valentine Novice Rally was won by Geraint Jones/Merfyn Williams after a number of their rivals made major errors.

At the halfway point, the rally should have been led by Ken Jones/Ianto Fon Jones, followed by Stefan Llewelyn/Daniel Jones, with Dewi Hughes/Gareth Rhys Jones completing the top three.

All these crews had picked up a fail in odd circumstances. At PC3D competitors were supposed to take the long way around a large triangle, but spectators stood across the correct route and

indicated for the cars to cut across the base of the triangle. The first three crews fell for the deception, but Jones/Williams, who were running fourth on the road, worked out what was going on and got the crowd to move, as did Gwynfor Jones/Chris Evans.

The incident decided the result as these latter two crews finished in first and second, with Jones/Williams having drawn out a five-second lead at halfway to a 16-second margin at the Finish.

Top seeds Jones/Fon Jones, along with four other crews, were excluded for a give way offence.

THE STRAIGHT-TALKING SCOT

JOHN FIFE

"We need a headline-making BRC"



Is the British Rally Championship too important to be left in the MSA's hands, or is it the right organisation for the job?

This is a fair question because, at the end of the day, it is the competitors who will decide where they spend their money and the amateur clubs where they spend their time, effort and resources.

So I thought I would get my tuppence worth in early. First of all we need to cater for everyone and all cars, and not bar anyone from taking part. We need a headline-making, big-name aspirational competition that is inclusive not exclusive. You're either good enough and quick enough to beat allcomers – or you're not. Sport is brutal.

That's why we need one premier championship to cater for allcomers, but with one big difference. This one championship could provide two points scoring opportunities – one for professionals and ambitious amateurs and the other for serious amateurs and clubmen who simply enjoy the bigger stage. That's why we need a 'British Rally Championship' for homologated machinery and a 'British Open Championship' where anything goes.

But here's the twist. Say you have an eight-round series. Everyone can compete and score points on the first six rounds, whereas 'Nationals' only will score points up to round seven, and round eight will be Wales Rally GB for homologated cars. That way we end up with a British International champion and also a British National champion, but without the expense and organisational headaches of running two separate championships.

This could appeal to manufacturers and professional teams and could be marketed abroad. We also need to encourage more amateur entries. One 2016 event is already planning a two-day affair for those who don't want to cut into their working week. Arrive Saturday morning for signing on, start in the afternoon (and into the evening?) then bed, and finish off on Sunday morning, go home on Sunday afternoon or evening. Other events will need to look at their own offer to ensure best appeal.

The international competitors could recce on Fridays but no recceing for the nationals, although they will be free to choose from contracted pacenote providers.

And finally it needs to be promoted better. At a time when British football is getting £5 billion for the TV rights for three years, British rallying is getting sweet FA. Other sports like rugby, golf and cricket can generate TV income but many other so-called minority sports can't. We need to make rallying and its participants exciting and attractive to generate not just TV interest, but sponsors and partners.

These views might qualify me for a one-way trip to the happy farm, but British rallying is too important to sit back and do nowt.

AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com



RSR Historic Engineering

would like to congratulate driver **Graham Elsmore** and his co-driver **Stuart Harrold** on their fantastic result at the Wydean Rally this weekend where they competed in the brand new Weir Laundry Equipment MK2 Escort.



Many thanks to HJ Weir Engineering, Weir Laundry Equipment, Mr Tyre Motorsport and Mad Bob Media for their ongoing support.

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Tuesday 24 February	Snetterton 300	£575
Wednesday 25 February	Snetterton 300	SOLD OUT
Thursday 26 February	Snetterton 300	SOLD OUT
<hr/>		
Tue 3 March	Oulton Park	SOLD OUT
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Thu 5 March	Snetterton 300	£575
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RALLY REPORTS



McGARRITY TAKES IT Mini WRC pilot wins the Northern Ireland Championship opener

Kirkistown Stages

By Brian Patterson

Organiser: North Armagh MC When: February 14
Where: Kirkistown, County Down Championship:
Northern Irish Stages: six Starters: 91

Northern Irish Rally champion Derek McGarrity started the defence of his title in the best possible manner by taking a victory on this opening round.

He was co-driven by James McKee in their Mini WRC, but had to push hard for the win. Former champion Kenny McKinstry, co-driven by Noel Orr, finished second in his Subaru Impreza WRC. Kevin Barrett and Claire Gamble took third in their similar car.

Over the years McGarrity has been hard to beat at Kirkistown. A few weeks ago on the New Year Stages McKinstry finished ahead of him, but since then McGarrity has fitted European-spec asphalt suspension to his Mini and that has sharpened everything up. Derek was determined to redress the balance, even though he

expressed doubts that a 1600cc WRC could beat a two-litre WRC at Kirkistown. He led initially, then McKinstry got in front on stage two. McGarrity then pulled out all the stops to retake the lead.

Barrett had already had a major moment on the opening stage when his Subaru went up on two wheels after hitting a tyre. Following that incident, Kevin settled down to a clean and fast run in which he rose from fourth to third by the finish. Alan Carmichael had no seat time in the McGeehan Mini WRC before the rally, so he did well to take fourth place.

Martin Cairns was on his first visit to Kirkistown and brought his Impreza WRC into sixth. Kieron Graffin was impressive in GpN, and he won the category despite his Lancer E10 suffering fuel starvation on left-hand bends over the final two stages.

Keith White and Damian McCann drove brilliantly to take the two-wheel-drive honours in their Escort.

Stephen Wright seemed to be

heading for fifth in his newly acquired Fiesta R5, but lost time when a cable tie got jammed under the accelerator.

Best Junior 1000 driver was the impressive Josh McErlean, with Damien Duff co-driving in his Peugeot 107. Daniel Harper was expected to shine, but his similar Peugeot broke a driveshaft. Paul Bennett and Arthur Kierans were second in the Juniors in their Citroen C1.

Results

1 Derek McGarrity/James McKee (Mini WRC) 26m 15.1s; 2 Kenny McKinstry/Noel Orr (Subaru Impreza WRC) +6s; 3 Kevin Barrett/Claire Gamble (Subaru Impreza WRC); 4 Alan Carmichael/Ivor Lamont (Mini WRC); 5 Paddy McVeigh/Gary McElhinney (Subaru Impreza WRC); 6 Martin Cairns/Brian Hoy (Subaru Impreza WRC); 7 Emma McKinstry/Kenny Hull (Subaru Impreza WRC); 8 Ray Brammer/Mo Downey (Subaru Impreza WRC); 9 Keith White/Damian McCann (Ford Escort); 10 Wesley Patterson/Johnny Baird (Ford Escort). Classes, 1: Michael Nutt/Geraldine McBride (Honda Civic); 2: Kieron Graffin/Paddy Robinson (Mitsubishi Lancer E10); 3: Conor Cochrane/Alexander Cochrane (Ford Escort); 4: Kyle White/Adam Carson (Citroen C2 R2); 5: Ian Green/Amanda Green (Peugeot 205 GTI); 6: Patterson/Baird; 7: White/McCann; 8: McGarrity/McKee; 9: Carmichael/Lamont; 10: Stephen Mawhinney/Nigel Magee (Sunbeam Lotus); 11: Drew Wylie/Cormac McGrady (Ford Escort).

Speed and derring-do on the Downs pays for Davrian driver Dean

South Downs Stages

By Ian Harden

Organisers: Southsea Motor Club/Bognor Regis Motor Club When: February 14 Where: Goodwood Motor Circuit, Sussex Championships: Hamilton Classic ACSMC, Jelf Motorsport ASEM/AEMC Starters: 55 Stages: nine

Dean Thomas and co-driver Richard Knowlton produced a giant-killing performance in their 1600cc Davrian Dav-Tec at the South Downs Stages.

Taking advantage of changeable on-stage conditions, where tidy driving counted more than outright power, they set consistent times to stay in the top three before taking the lead on stage seven. On the final two tests, run in complete darkness, they held everyone at bay to win by 6s from Paul King/Alicia Miles (Ford Escort Mk2), with Christopher and Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova) third, 1m 02s behind.

The nine-stage rally started in dry weather but with a sheen on the road surface that made correct

tyre choice crucial.

Anticipating the circuit being completely damp, King began the day on full-wet tyres. Despite not being the ideal choice, he finished stage one with a 12s lead over Roger Moran/Joy Hoyles (Ford Fiesta Millington). Thomas had two spins but clung to third, pursued by the Escort Mk2s of Stuart Cogger/Ade Summers, Martin Page/Hugh Holdaway and Tim Mewett/Liz Jordan.

Having got the feel for his new Fiesta's handling, Moran upped his pace on stage two, taking the lead and opening a gap on the next tests. King switched to intermediates, which gave better grip and allowed him to consolidate second while Thomas, having fitted a new 'diff, had another spin and admitted to having to learn how the car handles all over again. Cogger and first-time co-driver Summers also switched tyres after the opening run. They held on to fourth, pressured by Page

and Mewett, with Newton also challenging hard.

The leaderboard changed in the afternoon. Moran retired the Fiesta with propshaft vibration. Then Thomas set a blistering time on stage seven to snatch the lead, while Newton drove his 1400cc machine flat out to leapfrog Cogger. Thomas just held off King at the end, while Newton set two third-fastest times to take the final podium spot. Cogger dropped time on the last run but stayed ahead of Page, while former Vauxhall Astra driver Mewett was sixth on his debut in a rear-wheel-drive Escort.

Results

1 Dean Thomas/Richard Knowlton (Davrian Dav-Tec) 39m 50s; 2 Paul King/Alicia Miles (Escort Mk2) +6s; 3 Christopher Newton/Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova); 4 Stuart Cogger/Ade Summers (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Martin Page/Hugh Holdaway (Ford Escort); 6 Tim Mewett/Liz Jordan (Ford Escort Mk2); 7 Richard Weaver/James Pink (Ford Escort Mk1); 8 Kevin Jones/Lee Jones (Ford Escort Mk1); 9 Roland Brown/Terry Luckings (Ford Escort Mk1); 10 Abi Mahmood/Colin Felstead (Fiat Stilo Abarth). Classes, A: Newton/Newton; B: Thomas/Knowlton; C: Cogger/Summers; D: King/Miles; E: Nigel Mummery/Fiona Scarrett (Ford RS200); F: Jones/Jones.

FIND OUT HOW BIRD TOPPED THE WYEDEAN RALLY

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BTCC'S NEW DREAM TEAM

CLASH OF THE

Plato and Turkington sign up for Team BMR's title ambition

BY MATT JAMES
DEPUTY EDITOR



The British Touring Car Championship will welcome the nearest thing to a supergroup this season. Team BMR has assembled a title-winning driver line up and a serious amount of engineering nous to announce its arrival in the BTCC's top flight.

The constituent parts of a supergroup don't just consist of the talented front men, and that is the case with Team BMR's line-up for the 2015 British Touring Car Championship season too.

Signing reigning champion Colin Turkington and Jason Plato, the most successful man in the BTCC in terms of race wins, is a coup in itself. They will line up in VW Passats alongside Aron Smith and team owner Warren Scott for the new campaign, but there is a certain strength in depth that makes this outfit even stronger. Behind the men at the wheel, there are new recruits Kevin Berry (who comes from title winner WSR and engineered Turkington to his eight victories in 2014 and has worked with Plato before) and Carl Faux, the former Triple Eight Racing technical director who engineered Plato to runner-up slot in the 2014 contest. The headlines will, no doubt, be stolen by the drivers, but the underpinnings behind their success is equally as vital.

Attracting Plato and Turkington is a signal of intent for team owner Warren Scott, who has invested heavily in his operation and in the BTCC. The team was a double race winner in 2014 with Aron

Smith, but now he wants to take the next stage. For him, gathering such a strong crew together is pivotal to show the world just how seriously he takes the operation. He hopes it will be the first step towards landing a manufacturer deal in the future.

"Getting a works deal would be the end goal for us and I think what we have here is the first step towards achieving that," explains former motorcycle racer Scott. "We have spent money, but we are here for the long term. What Alan Gow has put together with the BTCC is the perfect platform for any business model, and not just on the racing side of things. The model is there, and the future is strong, and you have to invest in a strong future."

"I have found in business with most of the things that I have done that if you invest and spend the money in the right areas, then it does work out. That is the philosophy we have – you can see it in the drivers we have, the staff we have and the engineers we are employing."

Tying up Turkington and Plato was not an easy task, but the timing fell right for both to pair up together.

Plato was at the end of a three-year deal with MG, while Turkington was left out in the cold at WSR when the team's backer, eBay Motors, pulled the plug last December. But the fact that both have come to BMR's door is a resounding endorsement of the enthusiasm that Scott has had.

Plato says it was Scott's vision, which is something shared by the double champion, that meant he was tempted to join. "The first appealing thing about this deal is that the Passat is inherently a good package. In terms of the nuts and bolts, it is a strong car. The second thing is that there are the right people involved in the project and they will help turn it in to a regular winner. But probably the biggest thing was Warren's ambition. He wants to

be the de facto team in the BTCC in terms of the way the team operates, the staff that they have, the drivers – he wants to win and he knows that in order to win, investment has to be made. He is not shy of that and I honestly think he is a new breed of team owner."

As well as feeling extremely comfortable with his choice of drive for 2015, Plato is looking forward to going up against Turkington, who won the most races last term. "There is no doubt that Colin is a world class driver and he will be right up there. A great driver is a great driver, no matter what the car is so he will be on the button. He will be fast and that is what we want. We want both him and I at the sharp end trading lap times and trading places, because ultimately that is what will help push the whole thing forwards."

There will be no secrets kept, either. In an effort to make the whole operation progress as quickly as possible, all the drivers will work together. "It has to be like that to help everyone," adds Plato. "I have never driven in a team when it has not been like that – apart from the odd occasion with Yvan Muller – and I can't imagine being in a team that operates that way. It has got to be transparent and [Colin] will do things that I will learn from and vice versa. That is good for everyone."

It was looking like Turkington could have been left out in the BTCC wilderness again after claiming the crown, just like he had been when he lifted his first title in 2009. But a long-standing relationship with Scott – Turkington drove one of his cars in a test at the end of 2013 – finally bore fruit. For the Northern Irishman, it was the technical back-up that helped swing the deal.

"Having my engineer Kevin Berry there was a significant draw for me," explains the 32-year-old. "He was the one piece of the puzzle that I wanted. I like the idea of

having that consistency with my engineers. Going to a new team is always going to be very challenging but having a good ally there in your corner will make a big difference. He went there at the end of the season, so we both understand the big project that we are undertaking and there is a lot of work that has been done, and still there is a lot more work to be done on the engineering side. We haven't underestimated the challenge.

"There is nothing that beats experience, and Kev has front-wheel-drive experience with NGTC cars from his time at Triple Eight Racing and has rear-wheel-drive experience from WSR and, most importantly, he knows what I like from a car. With a new engineer, it can be hard to translate what you like and what you feel but, with Kevin, I can hopefully take some steps forward pretty quickly."

As for facing up to Plato, renowned as one of the toughest men on the BTCC grid, Turkington is ready for battle – although he knows he might have some ground to make up in the early part of the season.

"If you'd have told me at the last round of last year that I would have been lining up alongside Jason this season, I would have laughed at you. I wouldn't have taken you seriously but it has happened," he muses. "Jason is a front-wheel-drive touring car specialist and I am a rear-wheel-drive touring car specialist so there is a lot that I have to learn from both Jason and Aron. I hope with the combination of drivers, we can move the car up the road pretty quickly. I am not going to BMR just to try and beat Jason. That is one part of it, but it is not all of it. I am just going to go there, work hard and do my best."

And doing its best is what the BMR team will be striving for this season. With the strength of the ingredients it has thrown into the mixing pot, its best could well be good enough. ■

THE PROS AND CONS

Jason Plato

Age: 47 **Lives:** Oxford
Pros: Always in the mix at the end of the year; has experience at galvanising teams; huge draw with the public; qualifying pace; racecraft
Cons: Hunger to win can put him in risky situations (although has calmed this down recently); can get drawn in to spats with other racers; can get wound up easily with any perceived advantage for rival cars

Colin Turkington

Age: 32 **Lives:** Portadown, Northern Ireland
Pros: Blinding speed; clean and precise racer; knows how to build a championship points tally; technical feedback; fitness
Cons: Has only really experienced success with Dick Bennetts at WSR; can be seen as a soft touch by feisty rivals; needs to raise his profile with the general public

"We want the BTCC title"

WARREN SCOTT



Best of rivals: the pair fought out the 2009 title



Kevin Berry has joined the BMR crew from WSR

Photos: LAT and Jakob Ebrey

TIN-TOP TITANS



Plato and Turkington will join Scott (c) at Team BMR

WHEN THE BTCC STARS COLLIDE...

Jason Plato and Yvan Muller VX Racing Vauxhall Astra Coupe, 2001

This was the mother and father of all fall-outs and Plato and Muller came to blows on the track. Following an acrimonious team orders row in 2000, there was bad blood and they took lumps out of each other in 2001. It all came down to Brands Indy and, as Muller's car caught fire following an off in the treacherous conditions, Plato bagged second place in the last race and the title.

James Thompson and Yvan Muller VX Racing Vauxhall Astra Coupe, 2002-2004

There is something of an urban legend in the BTCC, never confirmed nor denied by anyone, that Triple Eight had a contract clause somewhere that Muller was the chosen driver.

No nonsense Yorkshire man Thompson wouldn't have cared if there was, because he only drives one way. It was one-one in terms of titles going in to the very last race in 2004 at Donington, and the pair were nose-to-tail battling it out for the crown. Muller won but Thompson, who was trailing in third, needed the fastest lap point to nick the crown. He did it – and put one over on the Frenchman by a single point.



Jason Plato and James Thompson SEAT Sport UK SEAT Leon, 2006

Thompson was only recruited for half a season, as he was spending the rest of his time campaigning a Leon in the World Touring Car Championship. He alternated the drive with Darren Turner. Thompson took part in six meetings and won three rounds – but even though he and Plato are mates, they couldn't help tripping over each other at the final meeting at Silverstone in October. But by that stage, Plato's slim title hopes had faded anyway.

Fabrizio Giovanardi and Matt Neal VX Racing Vauxhall Vectra, 2008-2009

Neal was prised away from the family-run Team Dynamics with a big money offer from Vauxhall to join the reigning champion Giovanardi in the Triple Eight-operated squad. Giovanardi went on to score back-to-back crowns in 2008, but Neal struggled to fifth with only one win – although his points helped secure the makes' and teams' crown for VX Racing. Neal only won once in 2009 too and finished fourth in the points, one place behind his Italian partner – although the team repeated its sweep of silverware



Matt Neal and Gordon Shedden Honda Yuasa Racing Honda Civic, 2012-2014

When Neal took the crown ahead of Shedden in 2011, he looked apologetic. He knew that his teammate's time was coming. So it proved in 2012, when the duo fought out a battle. It was the Honda pair and Plato who went toe-to-toe in the showdown, with Shedden prevailing by over 20 points



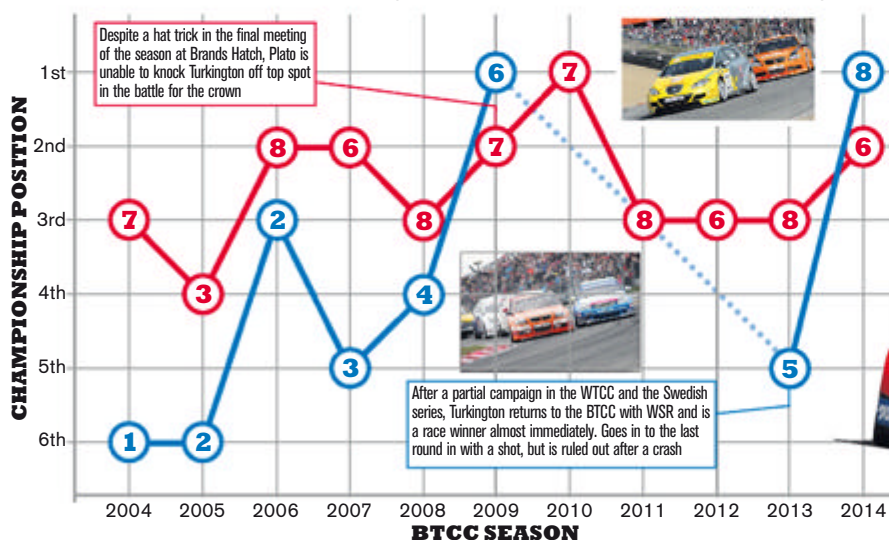
TALE OF THE TAPE

How the champions compare...

TURKINGTON	VS	PLATO
275	STARTS	455
2002	DEBUT	1997
2	TITLES	2
32	WINS	88
11.64	WIN PERCENTAGE	19.34
2164	POINTS	4067
92	PODIUMS	194
34	FASTEST LAPS	79
12	POLES (from timed session)	47

PLATO VS TURKINGTON

This is how the two drivers have stacked up against each other since they first raced on track together



Turkington fends off Plato

RALLY SWEDEN REPORT



BY DAVID
EVANS

Ogier makes it two, but only just after a late mistake denies Mikkelsen a maiden win

Sebastien Loeb coming back for a Monte thriller, the world's biggest car maker confirming its World Rally Championship return; the start to 2015 couldn't get any better. Then Rally Sweden happened. Sublime? Nah, it was way better than that.

It had a Swede winning stage one, for a start, as WRC2 star Pontus Tidemand made the most of an early start position on the Karlstad superspecial to win the opener.

Did that mean it wasn't going to be as bad as Sebastien Ogier feared running first on the road? Time would tell. Popping over the border for a Norwegian Friday, Ogier drove like a hero through the first morning and led by nine seconds.

The Frenchman was quietly satisfied with what he'd achieved, but at the same time he was well aware of what was to come. The crisp ice surface that the 1536 studs beneath his Volkswagen had happily grabbed hold of would be gone as the rest of the WRC runners and the Rally Sweden Historic cars came through, to chew the road up.

Had it been an advantage to be first in? "I don't know if it was an advantage, but I don't think it was a disadvantage," he smiled.

At that point, Jari-Matti Latvala was his nearest challenger, but the Finn was struggling to find confidence in his car in anything but the super-quick sections.

Latvala's cause was about to be helped by a wiper problem, which limited Ogier's visibility in the afternoon. Worse was to come after the bonnet flew up and cracked the bottom left of the screen. But still, Ogier stayed out from. With one Friday stage remaining, he was 2.9s clear of Latvala.

Remaining in Volkswagen's 2014 specification car, Andreas Mikkelsen was a further 8.6s down, with Mads Ostberg still gathering his thoughts after putting his Citroen off the road to avoid an inebriated spectator who decided to walk across the stage at precisely the wrong moment.

He was 15.6s behind his Norwegian countryman, but 11 of those had been lost avoiding the tanked-up fan.

Thierry Neuville hadn't had the best of days. His Hyundai's gearbox was struggling to cope with the wheelspin and not selecting ratios cleanly. Otherwise, he was doing all he could.

"It is what it is," he said with a shrug at lunchtime. "I am pushing and some of the time we are in the ditch. We could maybe go two seconds faster, but then we could also be even more in the ditch..."

Neuville hoped for more consistency from the surface as the day wore on. He got more than that.

Mikkelsen moves ahead

Second time through Torsby turned the rally on its head.

An hour or so after crossing the border back into Sweden, leader Ogier careered into a junction way too quickly. A last-minute grab of the handbrake got the car turned in with

the apex almost taken backwards. A right-rear impact with the snowbank fired the front-right of the car into the bank. Last year, he spent four minutes digging his Volkswagen out, this time it was only 30 seconds. But it was enough to change things up.

Two minutes behind him on the road – and unbeknown to him – Latvala had taken the lead. With no splits and no idea of the fate that had befallen his VW team-mate, Latvala kept on pushing.

Too quick into a fast right – one of the final corners of the day – he too was pinged into a ditch in true Swedish style.

Latvala kept the throttle wide open, hoping, praying that his Michelins would find some leverage. They didn't. His extraction took eight minutes.

"I think," Latvala said solemnly, "I am the first victim of the rule changes for the split times."

Naturally, he accepted the blame and offered a very lengthy, detailed and worthy explanation of how he'd ended up dropping 39 places in 9.18 miles. But it made little difference. Not even the solace of a much improved place on the round three road in Mexico came as any consolation at this point.

So, step forward Mikkelsen.

His face was a picture when he was informed of his P1 status at the end of the day. "OK," he smiled, "that makes it more interesting."

By the time he reached Karlstad for the Friday night superspecial, he'd had a chance to think more about it. And he decided not to think about it.

"I did that last year," he said. "I thought too much and it was a mistake. I'm not going to do that again. I'm just going to drive as fast as I can. There's still a hell of a long way to go."

Neuville was 19.1s behind in second, Ostberg another 0.3s down on him and Ogier 5.3s away from the podium and 24.7s off the front. Who was the one Mikkelsen would be watching?

"Seb never gives up," he said with a smile.

But Ogier would remain first on the road on day two and, with the temperature warming further, the Swedish stages offered his studs little of the icy bite they'd enjoyed across the border 24 hours earlier.

Mikkelsen was bang on it through Fredriksberg, nudging his lead towards the half-minute mark. But he was right about Ogier, who hit back with a brace of scratch times of his own in the next two, easing his way past Ostberg and Neuville.

A spin in Mikkelsen in the most inconvenient of sections in Vargasen cost him 16s. "I couldn't get it turned around," he said. "We had to go about 50 metres back up the road to find somewhere to turn. It wasn't exactly calm in the car at that point."

The podium fight was now a three-way scrap, however, after Ostberg clobbered a bank in SS11 and knocked the left-rear tyre clean off the rim. Fourth beckoned.

Neuville flies

Neuville would not be budged quite so easily. Just as he had the day before, his speed built on a more consistent surface in the afternoon. As he had in the morning, Neuville took two spares and fitted new covers for the final stage of the day. In Vargasen, second time through, he put them to very good use and flew. He certainly flew at Colin's Crest – the legendary jump named after McRae. In terms of miles per hour, the i20 just made use of a third figure on the speedo in time for wheels up.

Forty-four metres of Sweden were untouched before he landed.

"It was a bit of a struggle to get it around the next corner," smiled Neuville. "It was a bit loose, but we made it."

And he barely lifted to the finish.

Fastest. The new leader – but not without a word from his co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul.

"He told me to calm it down a little bit," said the leader. "We were flat out in a place which was maybe not so flat out. We touched [the banks] a couple of times and he told me. It was a good idea from him! It's good to be here.



RALLY SWEDEN ESSENTIALS

Date: February 12-15

Base: Karlstad

Weather: Snow, compacted ice, but a tad warmer than usual at two degrees. Still needed thermals though...

Distance: 190.18 competitive miles, 895 total miles

KARLSTAD

Running five on the road, we never had the road perfect, but we also didn't have it so bad. We saw the condition got worse in the morning, but improve in the afternoon – I would say it was more or less equal for us all. But I am the only one who didn't make the mistake yet. OK, some small things which maybe cost 15 seconds or something, but nothing big."

But could he win? Would he risk everything for the win?

"I haven't decided yet," he lied.

Of course it was all or nothing. And, at the end of day press conference, he'd come to his senses: "I want to win this rally."

Interestingly, Neuville identified Mikkelsen as the big threat, feeling he could manage Ogier with 9.6s in hand and just shy of 30 miles left to run.

Like Latvala on the first day, Mikkelsen felt his Polo wasn't playing ball in the twisty sections on Saturday, so he elected to change the rear differential on his car overnight. "I'll go back to the settings I used

last year," he said. "I know they worked."

Ogier wasn't overly concerned about the gap between him and Neuville. They were in the same ballpark. And, crucially, the playing field in that ballpark would be level on Sunday.

"I expect equal conditions with the guy I am fighting with," said Ogier. "So I am very happy for that."

Final showdown

And so, to Sunday. Ogier was fastest on the opener, while Neuville's progress was hampered by an intercom problem. Mikkelsen admitted he might have been too cautious in the quick stuff through Lesjofors, but his time was still good enough to move him back to the lead.

Despite winning the stage, Ogier remained third, but not for long. Fastest in SS20, he eased his way past Neuville and narrowed the gap to the leader to just three seconds.

With one stage remaining, the top three were split by just 4.6s.

But before they could get stuck into the

second running of V... was a trip back to Hag... merely heightened the... somewhat inevitably...

Volkswagens now run... Neuville did his bes... games, announcing:... now, they have the pr... difficult, but if I have... then I am happy to do...

And back to your co... And Ogier and Miki... sides of the Volkswag... leader went into the H... relaxed with his man... and family, while Og... in the team's technica...

When it came to bol... cars, it seemed Volksw... information pact mig... as both sets of mecha... did their bit to hide w...

When Ogier depart... engineer Gerard Jan...



Neuville's i20 beat issues to lead mid-rally

'A fastest time was an achievement'
Meeke's run rated, p25



ROUND 02

OGIER'S LATE CHARGE EARNED WIN AFTER MIKKELSEN'S ERROR

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Ogier's late charge earned win after Mikkelsen's error

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centred on the
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"The road has changed
essure now. It will be
to take more risks
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kelsen went to opposite
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that was going on.
ed service, his car
de Jongh wandered

over to Mikkelsen's side, but was immediately hoofed out. He and Richard Browne, his opposite number on the Norwegian side of the squad, smiled at each other. Briefly. Three seconds was the gap with a shade under 10 miles to run. And, 3.5 miles in, there was nothing to split them. Three miles further down the road and Ogier had stolen 0.6s. Ogier got to the finish. "I have done all I can," he said, looking slightly bewildered as he sought news of his rival. At just that moment, Mikkelsen was being dug out. The dream was dashed. First was now just third, with Neuville moving back up to second place. Mikkelsen was stunned at the finish and devastated in service. Ogier's genuine and heartfelt plaudits meant little to the man who had come so close to his maiden WRC victory. But you couldn't take it away from Ogier. He was magnificent. Again. *Continued on page 24*



VW's Ogier consoles Mikkelsen

STAGE TIMES

- SS1 SSS Karlstad 1 (1.18 miles)**
Fastest: Tidemand 1m 32.1s
Leader: Tidemand
Second: Ostberg +0.3s
- SS2 Torsby 1 (9.32 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 8m 36.6s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +2.0s
- SS3 Rojden 1 [Sweden-Norway] (11.81 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 9m 59.4s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +7.8s
- SS4 Finnskogen 1 [Norway] (13.05 miles)**
Fastest: Latvala 11m 03.1s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +6.2s
- SS5 Kirkenær 1 [Norway] (4.45 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 5m 26.7s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +9.1s
- SS6 Kirkenær 2 [Norway] (4.45 miles)**
Fastest: Protasov 5m 34.4s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +3.3s
- SS7 Finnskogen 2 [Norway] (13.05 miles)**
Fastest: Latvala 11m 04.3s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +1.0s
- SS8 Rojden 2 [Sweden-Norway] (11.81 miles)**
Fastest: Mikkelsen 10m 01.1s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Latvala +2.9s
- SS9 Torsby 2 (9.32 miles)**
Fastest: Neuville 8m 40.4s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +19.7s
- SS10 SSS Karlstad 2 (1.18 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 1m 34.5s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +19.1s
- SS11 Fredriksberg 1 (11.28 miles)**
Fastest: Mikkelsen 10m 33.9s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +27.3s
- SS12 Rammen 1 (14.14 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 11m 36.5s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Ogier +22.7s
- SS13 Hagfors Sprint 1 (1.16 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 1m 51.2s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Ogier +20.8s
- SS14 Vargasen 1 (15.30 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 13m 34.1s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Ogier +1.7s
- SS15 Fredriksberg 2 (11.28 miles)**
Fastest: Neuville 10m 27.6s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +8.7s
- SS16 Rammen 2 (14.14 miles)**
Fastest: Meeke 11m 38.5s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +6.7s
- SS17 Hagfors Sprint 2 (1.16 miles)**
Fastest: Kubica 1m 57.1s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +7.3s
- SS18 Vargasen 2 (15.30 miles)**
Fastest: Neuville 13m 24.4s
Leader: Neuville
Second: Mikkelsen +1.5s
- SS19 Lesjofors (9.32 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 9m 05.8s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Neuville +3.8s
- SS20 Varmullsasen 1 (9.86 miles)**
Fastest: Latvala 8m 14.1s
Leader: Mikkelsen
Second: Ogier +3.0s
- SS21 Varmullsasen 2 (Power Stage) (9.86 miles)**
Fastest: Ogier 8m 05.6s
Leader: Ogier
Second: Neuville +6.4s

DAVID EVANS

"Why should Rally Sweden need to head to the north?"



Go north. Two words the organisers of Rally Sweden must be sick and tired of hearing. But, as temperatures refused to head south of zero, they came out again last week.

This time, though, the north-sayers were wrong. The rally worked perfectly. No stages were lost, no grumbling done. And, let's face it, two degrees with a dollop of wind chill's not exactly balmy is it. I will admit, though, I was disappointed. I came, like I always come, for the drama of minus 20 and the feeling of my eyes freezing shut.

That didn't happen. So, conversations began among the drivers and team principals about what should be done. For the first time, I felt there was genuine sympathy with the rally organisers, rather than frustration at their event letting the WRC down. The drivers were content with the ice on the roads. OK, the snowbanks became increasingly fragile as the event progressed, but as M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson said, that added to the challenge.

"If you come here," said Wilson, "and drive in minus 20 with plenty of snow, you have rock-solid snow banks, perfect ice and great conditions. It's a lot easier to drive in that weather than it is in this. It's right for people to say this isn't the same challenge, it's a bigger challenge because you have to try and manage the studs in the tyre and you have to be neat and precise; you daren't lean on the banks in case they collapse and pull you into a ditch."

Friday's Norwegian stages were better because they are further north and run at higher altitude. So, if Norway enjoyed better conditions, why not revamp Rally Norway?

Trouble is, there's just not the appetite for a WRC round in Norway there once was. When the Hamar-based event ran for the second and final time in 2009, it ran with the fanfare, bells and whistles of an event teeming with solid government and regional support. But the books didn't balance and we didn't go back.

Rally Sweden is a conservative, sensible event that knows its place, its fiscal position and doesn't try to be anything it's not. It's a well-run economically viable rally that delivers a fascinating sporting contest. Sweden should be congratulated for making a great rally out of limited resources, both natural and pecuniary.

And, for those pointing the event in the direction of Kiruna, Sweden's northernmost town (100 miles inside the arctic circle, great roads, more snow than you could imagine and, as I sit here, temperatures dropping near minus 15), you might like to know that all that glitters is not gold. Kiruna's in danger of sinking into its own iron ore mines. A move there could, quite literally, sink the Swedish without a trace.

RALLY SWEDEN REPORT

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

RALLY ESSENTIALS

Day one: 77.39 miles; 10 stages

Weather: overcast, -3 to 4 celsius

- WRC2 driver Pontus Tidemand leads in his Ford Fiesta R5 after the Karlstad superspecial on Thursday night.
- Sebastien Ogier is fastest on the first two forest stages to move into an immediate lead over team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala. Windscreen wiper problem costs him time in SS6, but top three turned upside down in Torsby where the top two go off the road.
- Andreas Mikkelsen hits the front at the end of Torsby, holding a 19.1s lead over Hyundai's Thierry Neuville, who benefits from both the Ogier and Latvala Polos spending time in a snowbank.
- Mads Ostberg is the lead Citroen in third place, but the recent Rally Finnskog winner is left furious by a drunken spectator wandering down the middle of the road on the second run through Rojden. The Norwegian goes off the road to avoid the chap and drops 11 seconds in the process.
- Stages seven and eight are not the best for the top Brits as both Kris Meeke and Elfyn Evans spend time in the snowbank and rule themselves out of potential end of day top fives.
- A rear differential problem leaves Robert Kubica's Ford Fiesta RS WRC in front-wheel drive only for the last couple of stages, while Hyundai new boy Kevin Abbring enjoys a baptism of fire when he went into a snowbank on the first stage proper. Thereafter the Dutchman impresses hugely on his snow rally and World Rally Car debut.

End of day one

1 Mikkelsen/Floene 1h 14m 03.6s; 2 Neuville/Gilsoul +19.1s; 3 Ostberg/Andersson +19.4s; 4 Ogier/Ingrassia +24.7s; 5 Tanak/Molder +1m 06.2s; 6 Paddon/Kennard +1m 37.1s.

Day two: 83.77 miles; 8 stages

Weather: overcast -2 to 3 celsius

- Mikkelsen leads all day until the final test, where Neuville steals the advantage with a superb effort through the final Vargasen stage.
- On his way to the front of the field, Neuville's Hyundai breaks the record for the Colin's Crest jump as he leaps and lands a 44-metre flight - take off speed is 101 mph.
- Ogier remains at the front of the field courtesy of this year's new rules and is frustrated by the state of the road in Fredriksberg - especially after the historic cars have been through between the two world championship runs.
- Ostberg's hopes of remaining in the podium fight disappear when he clobbers the left-rear of his DS 3 WRC in the morning. The resultant puncture costs him 40 seconds and confines him to fourth.
- Evans and Meeke continue to level their learning curves, with increased pace from last year. Both rue the time they spent in snowbanks the day before. Meeke and Kubica both set their first-ever fastest time on a snow rally round of the WRC.
- Petter Solberg wins the Rally Sweden Historic for the third year in succession. The two-time FIA World champion uses a Ford Escort Mk II to take three minutes out of an Audi quattro A1 in 80 miles...

End of day two:

1 Neuville/Gilsoul 2h 29m 54.5s; 2 Mikkelsen/Floene +1.5s; 3 Ogier/Ingrassia +9.6s; 4 Ostberg/Andersson +53.4s; 5 Tanak/Molder +1m 29.2s; 6 Paddon/Kennard +2m 35.7s.

Day three: 29.02 miles; 3 stages

Weather: overcast 2 to -3 celsius

- Ogier wins epic three-way final-stage fight to take 28 points from Sweden.
- Evans tops the all-Brit battle for sixth place courtesy of a minor Meeke mistake on the final stage.
- Ostberg is the biggest top 10 mover on the last day. Unfortunately for the DS 3 driver, it's in the wrong direction as he spends more than five minutes stuck in a Lesjofors snowbank.



Evans grabbed a fine sixth late on

The battle behind

A week on from winning Rally Finnskog, Ostberg's Sunday afternoon demeanour was rather darker as he headed back across the border and home to Norway. He could have won this one and, perhaps, should have won this one. He needed a clean break from any lingering misery from a troubled 2014 and a second career WRC victory would have done just that. Fourth simply didn't have the same ring as first, but it was a considerable improvement on the 10th he ended up with after he buried the Citroen in the snow on the final day's opener.

That mistake allowed Ott Tanak into fourth, richly deserved following an exceptionally mature drive through the weekend for M-Sport.



Paddon got his best finish

Paddon's high five

Dani Sordo's seat in the number eight Hyundai i20 WRC had the look of a poisoned chalice as Hayden Paddon made his way through Friday. Sordo's set-up had been cemented for some time when he fell off his mountain bike and opened the door for the Kiwi - the specification stays for Mexico and Argentina, courtesy of transmission pairing regulations. Paddon couldn't get to grips with it.

The South Islander drives his cars straight, while Sordo prefers a degree or two of angle at the apex. The team did all it could with the car, but this time it was the driver who would have to give. "I changed my driving style," said Paddon, "but it wasn't easy. Starting to throw the car at the corners in these kind of conditions can be quite a risky business. But we managed it. This was all we could do here."

However, 'all he could do' was better than he'd ever managed before in his WRC career. His fifth place wasn't a bad way to open his 2015 account.

Hyundai's third car - in the hands of Kevin Abbring for the first time - was also delivered to the finish full of experience. Abbring broke both his snow rally and World Rally Car duck with 11th place overall. He and

British co-driver Sebastian Marshall showed pace and potential aplenty.

Brits fight on

Going into the final stage, just 1.4s separated Elfyn Evans' Fiesta from Kris Meeke's DS 3. Ahead of SS21, Radio reporter Emyr Penlan did his best to keep his interview unbiased, ending his discussion with the Dungannon man by saying: "Hope it goes well..."

Camera off... "Just not too well!"

It didn't. Meeke touched a snowbank, got pulled into the white stuff, buried the throttle and emerged again. Relieved, but 11.4s slower than his Welsh rival. Seventh place beckoned.

Both rued lengthier stays in the snow on the opening day, without which they could have been fourth and fifth. Evans' increased pace drew praise across the board and even the usually humble man himself accepted he hadn't done a bad job.

"I'm pretty pleased with what we've done," he smiled. "We've found some consistency and some speed on this surface. That's good."

Fiesta time

Just behind the British pair, Martin Prokop and Yuriy Protasov guided

their Ford Fiesta RS WRCs to eighth and ninth places respectively. Prokop was another victim of Torsby's thirstiest spectator on Friday night and, in avoiding the fella, the Czech driver damaged his car's gearbox. But it was a moment on the penultimate stage, when he landed the Fiesta on its side, that cost him most dearly, dropping him from sixth to eighth place.

Protasov had shown massive speed during the recce - being caught above the 70kph (43mph) limit 18 times! The Ukrainian maintained that pace into the stages and collected his first-ever WRC scratch time on Saturday's first run through Hagfors.

Robert Kubica's eventual classification in 20th position bears no resemblance to the speed he showed through the rally. The improvement in the Pole's pace was night and day from this event last year, but his hopes were dashed by a broken driveshaft on Friday - leaving his LOTOS-backed car in front-wheel drive for much of the rerun day one action. He was then saddled with a five-minute penalty for the final day, on discovery that his turbo had been over-boosting, albeit for a split-second. ■

Ketomaa masters Swedish snow

Jari Ketomaa is not a man to be often irked, but that question definitely got his goat. A Swedish reporter asked if he thought his chances of WRC2 success on Rally Sweden had been helped when Swede Pontus Tidemand went off on day one.

No, was the answer. With no further explanation offered.

Ketomaa did everything right in the snow; his Ford Fiesta R5 didn't miss a beat and the DMACK tyres worked a treat.

No, it would take more than jingoistic inquisition to cast a pall over the celebrations of Ketomaa and co-driver Kaj Lindstrom.

Undoubtedly, Tidemand's five-minute attendance in a Finnskogen snowbank eased stress levels around the Drive DMACK team, but Ketomaa was already 13 seconds clear when the former Junior WRC champion's Fiesta went off.

"I pushed hard on that first loop," said Ketomaa. "OK, no risks, but we were pushing. After that, it was

about controlling the rally. Last year was a tough one for us - we couldn't keep the studs in the tyres. This time it was much more straightforward."

Eyvind Brynildsen (Citroen DS 3 R5), Valeriy Gorban (Mini John Cooper Works) and Fredrik Ahlin (Fiesta R5) were all in the frame for the other podium positions, while Anders Grondal's hopes were dashed when he went off the road on the opening day.

Gorban ruled himself out of the class podium fight when he ditched the Mini in Vargasen first time through on Saturday. When Gorban did eventually return to the road, he did so right in front of Ahlin, much to the Swede's annoyance - and at the cost of one minute. Ahlin hadn't done himself any favours, however, with a spin on the morning's opener.

Brynildsen ended the event a worthy runner-up, just over half a minute behind Ketomaa. The Norwegian had pushed and tried to chip away at the gap, but he was



Jari Ketomaa enjoyed a straightforward run to grab WRC2 laurels

aware the man out front held all the aces and settled for second.

Gorban recovered to third, with Saudi star Yazeed Al-Rajhi an impressive fourth, having come straight to the snow from Qatar.

Citroen DS 3 R3 driver Ole Christian Veiby continued his impressive rookie season in the WRC3 series. The 19-year-old son of

Andreas Mikkelsen's manager backed up his third in class on the opening round in Monte Carlo with his maiden class win in the snow. However, he was the sole WRC3 entry in Sweden.

Twelve months ago, Ketomaa was a picture of dejection, having missed out of victory by 2.3s to Karl Kruuda. This more than atoned.

ROUND 02

DRIVER ANALYSIS BY DAVID EVANS



SEBASTIEN OGIER VOLKSWAGEN

Outbraking himself into one junction aside, this was the perfect rally for Ogier. Rattled by the running order row, he kept a lid on his emotions and then let rip with the perfect powerstage, breaking his team-mate's heart and showed why he's champion.



10/10

ANDREAS MIKKELSEN VOLKSWAGEN

Many expected him to be swept up by Ogier on Saturday – and a spin in Vargasen didn't help his cause. But he hung on, until the final sector of the whole event, when another spin dropped him to third place. Gutted doesn't come close.



9/10

KRIS MEEKE CITROEN

Made up for his Finnskogen mistake with the perfect run and a fastest time – quite an achievement for only his second ever snow rally – on day two. Closed on Evans' M-Sport Ford, but just missed out on sixth place when he clipped a snowbank in the powerstage finale.



8/10

MADS OSTBERG CITROEN

Looked a contender coming into the event, but knocked a tyre off the rim on Saturday morning and then went off the road 24 hours later, albeit while suffering gearbox issues. Not the Norwegian's finest hour on an event where he could really have used with a fine hour.



5/10

OTT TANAK M-SPORT

It's a mark of the esteem that Tanak is now held that all the frontrunners considered him to be the major threat at this event. Dropped it under pressure on the first stage proper, but afterwards looked consistent and quick – just not quick enough.



7/10

ELFYN EVANS M-SPORT

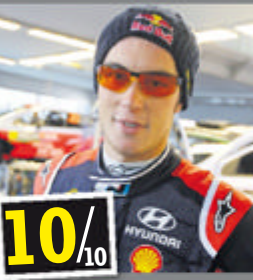
Is nine a bit high for a driver who dropped it on a tight left in Rojden? Maybe. Is nine a bit high for a driver who showed a bigger increase in speed than anybody else in the field? Not a bit. A brilliant event for the ever rapidly improving Welshman.



9/10

THIERRY NEUVILLE HYUNDAI

The only one of the leading drivers who didn't make a single mistake for the duration of the event. This was arguably the Belgian's finest performance in a World Rally Car – a drive worthy of a win. In the end though, he got the second best thing.



10/10

HAYDEN PADDON HYUNDAI

Drove superbly in a car whose set-up was a considerable distance from what he would have chosen for himself. Undoubtedly could have gone harder and faster, but instead took the middle line to gain experience and bagged his best-ever finish.



10/10



Tanak ended up in fourth place

VOLKSWAGEN

JARI-MATTI LATVALA

3/10

Volkswagen's pre-event test was done on very fast roads, which left Latvala's car working well in the high-speed, but offered little confidence in the twisty Norwegian stages. That paled into insignificance when he spent eight minutes digging in Torsby.

HYUNDAI

KEVIN ABBRING

8/10

A couple of visits to the snowbanks are part and parcel of a driver's first trip to Sweden and the Dutchman duly obliged. He dealt magnificently with a deep-end World Rally Car and snow rally debut – even managing the odd fastest sector time.

M-SPORT

ROBERT KUBICA

10/10

Monumental step forward from last year, where Kubica only had to look at a snowbank and he was in it. This time he looked quick and consistent. A broken rear driveshaft and time penalty for a minor turbo indiscretion cost him a potential top-five.

HISTORICS

PETTER SOLBERG

10/10

This bit would have been about Petter's brother if Henning hadn't lost five minutes and 10 places in Fredriksberg. Solberg the younger was on spellbinding form to take a third Historic win in his Ford Escort, 'edging' an A1 quattro by just the three minutes...

RESULTS

FIA World Rally Championship, round two of 13, Rally Sweden, February 12-15

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	2h 55m 30.5s
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+6.4s
3	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Ola Floene (NOR)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+39.8s
4	Ott Tanak (EST)/Raigo Molder (EST)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+2m 26.0s
5	Hayden Paddon (NZL)/John Kennard (NZL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+3m 31.5s
6	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/Daniel Barritt (GBR)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+3m 53.0s
7	Kris Meeke (GBR)/Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen DS 3 WRC	+4m 05.8s
8	Martin Prokop (CZE)/Jan Tomaneck (CZE)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+4m 26.0s
9	Yuriy Protasov (UKR)/Pavlo Cherepin (UKR)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+5m 32.2s
10	Mads Ostberg (NOR)/Jonas Andersson (SWE)	Citroen DS 3 WRC	+6m 50.9s
11	Kevin Abbring (NED)/Sebastian Marshall (GBR)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+7m 55.6s
12	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Mikka Anttila (FIN)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+9m 11.9s
13	Henning Solberg (NOR)/Ilka Minor (AUT)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+9m 32.7s
14	Jari Ketomaa (FIN)/Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)	Ford Fiesta R5	+9m 36.9s
15	Eyvind Brynildsen (NOR)/Anders Fredriksson (SWE)	Ford Fiesta RRC S2000	+10m 09.5s

Other notable finishers: 18 Pontus Tidemand (SWE)/Emil Axelsson (SWE) (Ford Fiesta RRC S2000) +13m 20.4s; 20 Robert Kubica (POL)/Maciej Szczepaniak (POL) (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) +14m 35.4s; 34 Eamonn Boland (IRL)/Michael Morrissey (IRL) (Subaru Impreza N4) +42m 53.9s. Starters: 46 Finishers: 40.



Rally Sweden went by with a big bang

CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier	53
2	Thierry Neuville	30
=	Andreas Mikkelsen	30
4	Jari-Matti Latvala	19
5	Mads Ostberg	14
=	Elfyn Evans	14
7	Ott Tanak	12
8	Hayden Paddon	10
=	Kris Meeke	10
10	Dani Sordo	8



Second win keeps Ogier clear at top

MANUFACTURERS

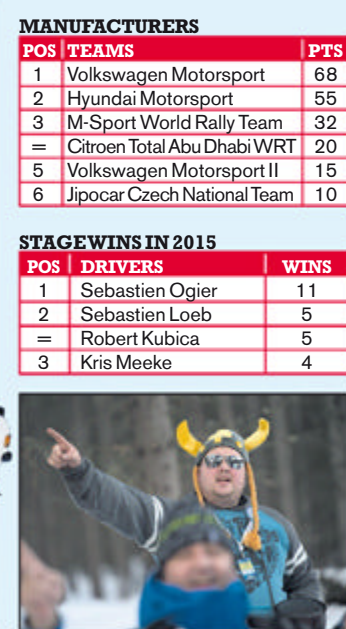
POS	TEAMS	PTS
1	Volkswagen Motorsport	68
2	Hyundai Motorsport	55
3	M-Sport World Rally Team	32
=	Citroen Total Abu Dhabi WRT	20
5	Volkswagen Motorsport II	15
6	Jipocar Czech National Team	10

STAGE WINS IN 2015

POS	DRIVERS	WINS
1	Sebastien Ogier	11
2	Sebastien Loeb	5
=	Robert Kubica	5
3	Kris Meeke	4



Solberg shone in Escort for Historic laurels



Fans were out in force in Sweden

NEXT RALLY

Who will benefit most from the running order rules to battle Ogier?

RALLY MEXICO MARCH 5-8

BTRDA ROUND ONE: WYEDEAN

Focus WRC driver Paul Bird stunned the opposition in the Forest of Dean. By **James Bolton**

Photos: Writtle Photographic and KBP Photography

IN BRIEF

Shoe string fails

Ninth seeds Jim McNeil and Tony Bassett retired in stage one with a broken throttle cable on their Subaru Impreza. They tried to fix it with a shoelace but that didn't work.

Welsh title hunt

Subaru Impreza WRC crew Hugh Hunter and Andy Marchbank took top points in the MSA Welsh Rally Championship. Bob Ceen was second and Paul Davy third, both also in Imprezas. Champion Alex Allingham retired early on with an alternator failure.

Group B is back

Many crews reported a boom in spectator numbers on the stages. "It was like the Group B days," said co-driver Dan Nieroda. "They were parting as we approached." Nieroda and Jason Morgan finished second in class B13 in their Mitsubishi Lancer E6.

Caution, deer

A herd of deer nearly halted Mick Quinn and Neill Carman. The Nissan Micra crew encountered the mammals late in the rally. "We had to slow right down and eventually they moved away," said Quinn. "I nearly hit one on the Trackrod last year so they must like me."

Just a moment

Ford Focus WRC crew Peter Stephenson and Chris Williams were hampered all day with a poor intercom system. "It's very frustrating," said Stephenson. "I've had more moments today than I've had in the last 20 years." They eventually finished 31st and 12th in class.

Peugeot for MG

Garry Wilson swapped his MG Metro 6R4 for a Peugeot 106 XSi. He and Martin Haggett finished fourth in Rally First 1.4. "These cars have a lot of lock," said Wilson. "So it's a bit of a challenge. The 6R4 is being rebuilt. I smashed it at Castle Combe."

Saved by mud

Colliding with a mud bank saved the day for Richard Gemmell and Matt Beebe. "We went a little wide," said Gemmell, "and there was no grip. It was like ice so we hit the bank and got stuck. But fortunately the mud bank kept us from going down a hill side." They went on to finish 100th overall.

Tar switch

Ian Barnard has made the switch from Tarmac rallying and ran his Vauxhall Nova in a forest for the first time last weekend. He and co-driver Richard Bonner finished 10th in the 1400S class. "It's a bit of a culture shock," said Barnard. "It's a totally different feel. We're going to do the new mixed surface championship this year."

Big return

Former Ford Escort Mk1 driver Dylan Davies returned to the forests for the first time in 18 months last weekend. He was in a Subaru Impreza with Llion Williams. "This is the first time I've been in the car," he said. "I've had some time out but we're here to do the whole of the BTRDA and the Welsh series." The crew were third in class B13 and 17th overall.

Road switch

Road rally crew Sam Davies and Adam Wilks have converted their Peugeot 205 XS so that it can compete in stage rallies. The Wyedean was Davies' second event, and his first on a forest rally, but they lost drive in stage seven. Davies said he'll continue to enter road and endurance rallies this year.

BIRD WALKS AWAY WITH IT



Nobody could live with Bird's pace last Saturday

STAGE WINNERS

SS1, Blaze Bailey, 3.26 miles
Charlie Payne/Carl Williamson
(Ford Fiesta S2000) 3m 01s

SS2, Speech House, 10.56 miles
Paul Bird/Aled Davies
(Ford Focus WRC) 9m 42s

SS3, Trelleck Common, 2.33 miles
Bird/Davies 2m 24s

SS4, Chepstow Park, 5.58 miles
Bird/Davies 5m 35s

SS5, Yorkley, 2.08 miles
Bird/Davies 1m 52s

SS6, Sallowvalls, 5.86 miles
David Weston/Kirsty Riddick
(Subaru Impreza WRC) 6m 26s

SS7, Serridge, 7.73 miles
Hugh Hunter/Andy Marchbank
(Subaru Impreza WRC) 6m 54s

SS8, Mailscot, 6.02 miles
Bird/Davies 6m 12s



David Weston was fast and consistent as he landed second position



Russ Thompson repeated his Production Cup win from last year's rally

Paul Bird and co-driver Aled Davies finished so far ahead of the pack on last weekend's Wyedean Forest Rally that they passed the final time control, claimed their trophy and sprayed their champagne before any of the other cars had returned to the finish.

It was a dominant display from the Ford Focus WRC crew and it was a firm marker ahead of the rest of the BTRDA Rally Series. Bird had led much of last year's championship but lost out at the final round. Now he's on a mission to wrap up his first major rally title.

And what opposition he has. Former champion Hugh Hunter was present last weekend, in his Subaru Impreza WRC, as was Stephen Petch in his Ford Fiesta R5+. In an S2000-spec Fiesta was Charlie Payne, and five-time MSA Asphalt champion Damian Cole was in his Focus WRC. And there was rapid youngster David Weston in his Impreza WRC. All were left trailing in Bird's dust.

Or mud... for this was a wet Wyedean. It rained through the early hours of Saturday morning and that left the stages wet and slick. It remained cold throughout the day, but there was no further rain. On the opening stage Payne and co-driver Carl Williamson set a blistering pace. They cleared the 3.26-mile stage a full 11 seconds faster than

anyone else. The next five cars were covered by the same margin. This was Payne's fifth outing in his S2000 and he says he's getting quicker every time by incrementally pushing to the edge of the grip on offer. It takes patience, especially when the corners are as slippery as they were on Saturday.

Unfortunately the car's launch control failed at the start of SS2, Speech House, and he lost 26s to Bird. Payne and Weston were joint second but Bird was flying; he had a 15s margin. Hunter and Cole were fourth and fifth, and local man Nik Elsmore was sixth. Elsmore was making a one-off return to the rally he won in 2001 and had Escort Mk2 ace Matt Edwards alongside him. They were in Edwards' Mitsubishi Lancer E9, and both were having a great time.

Payne was a second faster than Weston through the 2.33-mile third stage, Trelleck Common, and briefly made second place his own. But Weston pulled nine seconds on him through Chepstow Park and went into service seven seconds clear. Payne held third, Hunter was fourth and Cole was fifth.

"I stalled at a junction on stage two," said the rapid Weston. "That lost me a bit of time but it was good to do the same time as Bird through that last stage."

Less happy was Hunter: "We're trying hard but we had no brakes in Speech House, and we spun in Chepstow Park and lost 10 or 12s. I'm struggling with the handling, it's

"It's been a cracking battle all day long"

Smith wins class by 5s, below



RALLY ROUND-UP



First Wyedean winner Graham Elsmore loved new Ford Escort Mk2

A total of 167 competitors started the 40th Wyedean Forest Rally and 47 of them retired during the day.

Rally First had a bulging entry and the one-litre section was won by Mick Quinn and Neill Carman. The Nissan Micra crew finished 1m 18s ahead of Thomas Bayliss and Joe Jones, in a similar car. The **RF 1.4** class was won by Morgan Handford and Richard Davies, in a VW Polo, who finished 43s ahead of James Watkins and Carol Tomlinson in their Nissan Micra. And the **RF 1.6** class went to Mick Smith and Cavin Houldsworth in their VW Polo GTi. They finished just 5s ahead of James West and Steve Eggington in their similar car. It was a close fight between the two all day, and the gap was often just one second, but Smith, in his new car, stayed ahead.

Riddick siblings Keith and Mairi won **1400C** in their MG ZR by a huge 3m 27s. They beat Tim and Phill Banner, who competed in their Peugeot 205 Rallye.

Class **H1** had one starter and one finisher. That was Peter Lewis and Paul

Fife in their Austin Mini Cooper S. **H2** had three finishers, and first among them was Jeremy Easson and Mike Reynolds in their Datsun 240Z. They set third fastest time of all through Serridge.

Jake Scannell and Adrian Stevens won **H3** in their fantastic Mazda RX-7, but this was a closer competition. They were only 25s clear of David Dobson and Phil Sandham, who, like the other six finishers in the class, were in a Ford Escort Mk2. The **H4** class was won by Escort Mk2 ace Nick Elliot and David Price. Peter Elkins and Andrew Joll, having switched from their Focus WRC, were second.

Two cars were eligible for **N3**, and only one finished. The winner was Geno Cook and Ryan Jones, in their Ford Fiesta ST.

The **B10** division was won by Thomas Lloyd and Sherryn Roberts, in a Peugeot 205, and Graham Elsmore, who won the first three Wyedean Forest rallies, won **B11** in a Ford Escort Mk2. His son Nik won **B13** in Matt Edwards' Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

Throttle problems can't derail rapid Bennett

It was a dominant display from start to finish from Dave Bennett and Alistair McNeil in the 1400S class. They led from start to finish in their Vauxhall Corsa.

Ian Evans and Justin Brooks, in their Vauxhall Nova, were almost a minute behind by the finish and Ash Slights and Alex Lee were a further 22s back in their Toyota Yaris. Unusually for this class, which had 15 eligible entries, there wasn't much competition for the positions and the field was relatively strung out by the end of the day.

"It was tough," said Bennett at the finish. "We struggled with the engine, there's something wrong with the throttle position sensor.

We can sort it though, it's good to get home after six months off."

For Evans it was a triumphant return to the Wyedean after an eight-year gap, in which he's competed mainly on single venue events. For Slights it was his first time in the Yaris since last year's Malcolm Wilson. Since then it's had a thorough engine overhaul. "The car's been mint today," said Slights. "The clutch was a bit temperamental. I needed to get back in the seat."

The closest battle in the class was between Slights and Ryan Weston/Malcolm Wilson, in their Proton Satria. They tied on time after five of the eight stages, but then the gap between the two grew to 26s. "I lost

the power steering," reported Weston. "The last two stages were good but my arms are aching."

Fifth was Dave and Freddy Brick, also in a Nova, while Jordan and Paul Hone held sixth almost all day. The Hone crew had a small spin in their Nissan Micra on the sixth stage.

Seventh was Kieran Darrington and Pam Hilton. "We were off the pace a little," said Vauxhall Corsa driver Darrington. "We're down on engine power so we need to get it looked at."

Second after the opening stage were Toms Walster and Woodburn, in their Suzuki Swift. But they retired with a differential failure on stage two.

1400 SERIES



Dave Bennett stayed cool and calm despite engine concerns in Corsa

GWYNNESPEED



Champ Dan Moss won again

C2 ace Moss picks up spoils of victory

The GwynneSpeed Rally Challenge had a four-car field on the Wyedean Rally and triumphant among them was Dan Moss.

The series runs for near-standard Citroen C2 cars and Moss has got his version well-sorted. He won the title last year, the first time the series ran, and has made a perfect start to his 2015 season.

It could have been a different story as Ed Robinson and Iain Miller were 31 ahead of Moss after the first stage. But they went no further, retiring with a snapped track rod end in stage two. Ross Leach and Hannah McKillop were second after SS1 but slipped behind Moss after SS2. They then retired with a technical problem.

That left Moss in front until the end, while Stuart Cameron/Marc Neal followed them home, albeit nearly three minutes behind.

RESULTS

BTRDA Rally Series, round one of nine, 40th Wyedean Rally, February 14

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Paul Bird/Aled Davies	Ford Focus WRC	42m 25s
2	David Weston/Kirsty Rissick	Subaru Impreza WRC	+34s
3	Hugh Hunter/Andy Marchbank	Subaru Impreza WRC	+43s
4	Charlie Payne/Carl Williamson	Ford Fiesta S2000	+1m 06s
5	Nik Elsmore/Matt Edwards	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m 36s
6	Damian Cole/Jack Morton	Ford Focus WRC	+1m 49s
7	Stephen Petch/Ian Windress	Ford Fiesta R5+	+2m 01s
8	Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta S2400	+2m 12s
9	Bob Ceen/Andy Bull	Subaru Impreza WRC	+2m 29s
10	Russ Thompson/Andy Murphy	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+2m 36s

11 Pat Naylor/Ian Lawrence (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 12 Nick Elliott/Dave Price (Ford Escort Mk2); 13 Theo Bengry/Les Forsbrook (Subaru Impreza WRC); 14 Paul Davy/Roger Allan (Subaru Impreza); 15 Stephen Simpson/Mark Glenneister (Ford Fiesta); 16 Jason Morgan/Dan Nieroda (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 17 Dylan Davies/Lion Williams (Subaru Impreza); 18 David Bennett/Alistair McNeil (Vauxhall Corsa); 19 Graham Elsmore/Stuart Harrold (Ford Escort Mk2); 20 Peter Elkins/Andrew Joll (Ford Escort); 21 Peter Smith/Alan Walker (MG Metro BR4); 22 Nigel Drew/Pauline Nash (Subaru Impreza); 23 Thomas Preston/Jamie Forrest (Ford Focus WRC); 24 Mark Griffiths/Will Rogers (Ford Escort); 25 Ian Evans/Justin Brooks MBE (Vauxhall Nova); 26 Dave Jenkins/Graham Cox (Ford Escort); 27 Jeremy Easson/Mike Reynolds (Datsun 240Z); 28 Ash Slights/Alex Lee (Toyota Yaris); 29 Gunnar Karl Johannesson/George Gwynn (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 30 Martyn England/Dawn England (Mitsubishi Lancer E9).

Points standings: Gold Star: 1 Bird 30pts; 2 Weston 28; 3 Hunter 27; 4= Elsmore and Payne 26; 6 Cole 24; etc. Silver Star: 1 Elkins 30; 2 Griffiths 28; 3 Jon Ballinger 27; 4 Jamie Jukes 26; 5 Jake Scannell 25; 6 David Dobson; 24; etc. Production Cup: 1 Thompson 20; 2 Naylor 18; 3 Davy 17; 4 Geno Cook 16; 5 Darren Anderson; 6= Tom Naughton, Graham Butler, Roland Llewellyn and Kevin Pugh 1. 1400S: 1 Bennett 30; 2 Evans 28; 3 Slights 27; 4 Ryan Weston 26; 5 Dave Brick 25; 6 Jordan Hone 24; etc.

understeering and then oversteering. It's probably a mixture of me and the surface. The problem is I come to the corners and I don't know how the car's going to react."

Having confidence on the slippery surface was a problem reported up and down the field. Fortunately things dried out a little after lunch, and the grip level increased marginally.

Hunter was second fastest on stage five, and after stage six he'd reduced the gap to Payne to nine seconds. While Hunter was settling in to his return to forest rallying – his last Wyedean was in 2013 – Cole wasn't on the pace. He was 15s slower than the fastest time through

the sixth stage, and that meant he dropped behind Elsmore.

Meanwhile Hunter's march continued. He set fastest time on stage seven, the 7.73-mile Serridge stage, and moved in to third behind Weston. The remainder of the positions remained static through the top six. Stephen Petch, who'd struggled most of the day, passed Peter Taylor for seventh on the final stage. Taylor was in a Fiesta S2400, while Bob Ceen was ninth in his Impreza WRC.

Completing the top 10 was Russ Thompson, who won the Production Cup class. He and Andy Murphy, in their Mitsubishi Lancer E9, repeated

their result from a year ago. They were second fastest to Tom Naughton on the opening stage, but took the lead of the class on SS2. Naughton retired at service with a damaged crank sensor. "I'm very happy with that," said Thompson. "If Tom had stayed in the rally it would have been a good battle, I was only six seconds ahead. But I managed the pace in the afternoon."

Instead it was E9 driver Pat Naylor who took second in the class, and he fought Roland Llewellyn and Jamie Edwards, also in an E9, for the place. It was decided as fuel pressure woe forced Llewellyn's retirement after stage six when he was 2s ahead of Naylor. ■

STAR OF THE RALLY



There can be no doubt as to who was the Star of the Rally. Seeded in 21st, Nik Elsmore put in a startling performance in his co-driver Matt Edwards' Mitsubishi Lancer E9 to finish fifth. Home knowledge was a vital part of it, but you still have to do the job and stay out of trouble. That's harder when the stages are as slippery as they were on Saturday



Mick Quinn and Neill Carman won Rally First 1.0 in Nissan Micra

NEXT RALLY

Can Paul Bird repeat the feat at round two?

MALCOLM WILSON RALLY MARCH 7

BRITISH TO WATCH IN 2015

Photos: LAT

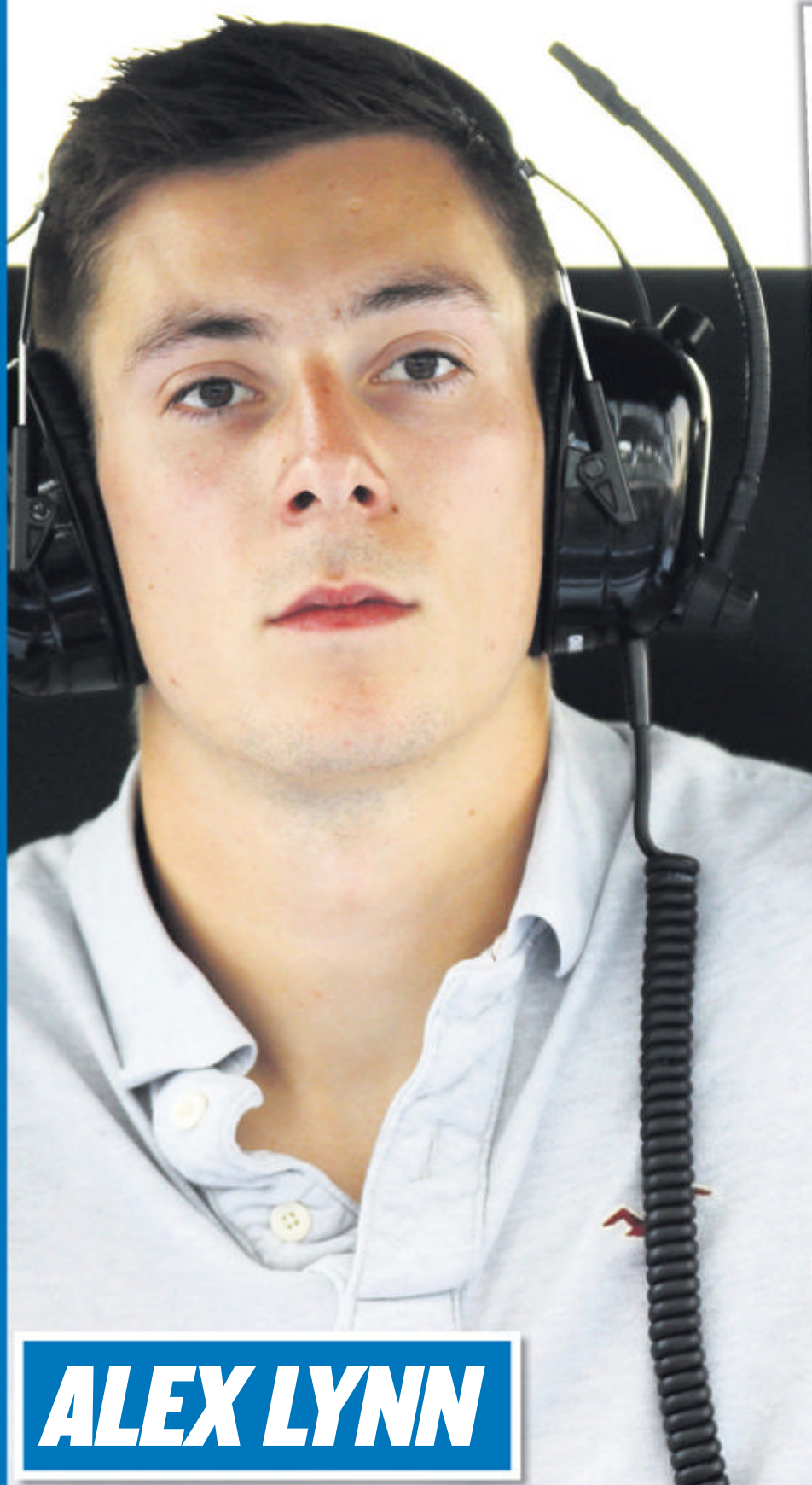
READY FOR THE



Lynn (r) joins the Williams F1 roster

NEXT GENERATION

We look ahead to the British talent that will hit the headlines in 2015



ALEX LYNN



Lynn has already tested in F1 for the Lotus team

CV

Alex Lynn**Age:** 21**From:** Ilford, Essex**2015:** GP2 with DAMS; official reserve driver for Williams F1 team**2014:** GP3 with Red Bull-backed Carlin, champion, three wins**2013:** FIA European F3 with Prema Powerteam, third, three wins; Macau GP winner; Toyota Racing Series with M2 Competition, second**2012:** British Formula 3 with Fortec Motorsports, fourth, one win; Macau GP with Fortec, third; selected FIA European F3 outings**2011:** Formula Renault UK with Fortec, champion, 12 wins; selected Formula Renault Eurocup outings with Fortec; Toyota Racing Series with Giles Motorsport, ninth**2010:** Formula Renault UK with Fortec, 10th; Formula Renault Winter Series with Fortec, champion, three wins**2009:** Formula Renault Winter Series with Fortec, 10th

Forget old sayings. Impatience is a virtue, certainly in racing drivers, and it is Alex Lynn's hunger to reach the top that has already started to rattle a few cages in GP2

The Brit was stacked in Red Bull's talent spiral and the energy drinks giant had helped him to the GP3 title in his maiden season in the category last year. But for him the only way to go further was to turn his back on the scheme. Far from being the risk it might sound, it was a calculated move that has so far brought him to one of the top GP2 teams for 2015 and led to a reserve driver role with the Williams F1 squad.

Lynn is forthright when he discusses his reasoning for jettisoning Red Bull: "I decided to pursue other avenues when the whole Max [Verstappen, third in last season's FIA F3, who nabbed a Toro Rosso F1 race seat] decision came out because it was tough to take. When I went in to last season I didn't expect to get the Toro Rosso F1 seat straight away, because Carlos Sainz was further up the ladder than I was and was doing well. But if I was not going to get it, I would have expected to have lost out to Carlos. Then maybe things would happen in the future and I would then be in a prime position. But when it was Max, I knew it was a problem because I had been queue-jumped by someone who is not only going to have one year at the top. My time span to reach F1 is within two years and I can't risk waiting."

And there's that impatience, an asset that the Essex driver has

shown throughout his career. He will take a certain satisfaction from beating his DAMS GP2 team-mate this year too. On the other side of the garage will be Frenchman Pierre Gasly, a Red Bull-backed protege who was runner-up in Formula Renault 3.5 last season. Elsewhere, there is last year's GP2 runner-up Stoffel Vandoorne at rival team ART. The UK's Jordan King, the British F3 champion of 2013 and a seventh-place finisher in last season's FIA F3 Championship, joins his countryman on the grid with Racing Engineering.

Whoever the opposition, cue bold statements from Lynn. "It is going to be tough, but it is something I look forward to. It is going to be a challenge but my aim is to go out there and win," he says. "If you go in to a championship thinking that it is going to be your learning year, what kind of mentality is that? If you go in to it trying to win then that is better. Why don't people try to do it from the outset? There is no point treading water is there?"

For Lynn, the carrot of the association with Williams is dangling temptingly.

He will drive the car during a test in Barcelona and will conduct simulator work. For him, it is just the beginning.

"I am under no illusion that if I don't win in GP2 then I will not be going to F1," he acknowledges. "It is just that simple for me – if I win, I will get there. If I don't – or come very close – then I won't."

He is certainly eager, and has put himself in the best place to perform. You get the feeling that for Lynn, nothing can come too soon.

Matt James



Lynn: GP3 champ

Photos: Jakob Ebrej

OLIVER ROWLAND



Rowland won two races in 2014

CV

Oliver Rowland

Age: 22
From: Barnsley, Yorkshire
2015: Formula Renault 3.5 with Fortec
2014: Formula Renault 3.5 with Fortec, fourth, two wins
2013: Formula Renault Eurocup with Manor MP Motorsport, second, three wins; Formula Renault Northern European Cup with Manor, fourth
2012: Formula Renault Eurocup with Fortec, third, one win
2011: Formula Renault UK with Fortec, second, four wins; FRUK Winter Series with Fortec, champion, four wins
2010: FRUK Winter Series with CRS Racing, seventh, one win



Rowland says this year will be make or break for him

This is my do or die year." The words of Oliver Rowland, who understands just how crucial this season is to his hopes of having a long motorsport career.

After overcoming concerns as to his commitment and weight after finishing second in the Formula Renault Eurocup in 2013, Rowland finished fourth in his maiden season in the FR3.5 Championship with Fortec last term. Standout results at Aragon and in the final race of the season at Jerez were bright points in what the Barnsley-born racer describes as "a bit of a disappointing year".

If Rowland wants to have the best opportunity of making it at the top of the sport, he knows that he must make a huge impression this season, which is why he opted to remain in the FR3.5 over a move to the GP2 Series.

"To switch to a series like GP2, you would have to commit to a two-year programme," Rowland says. "Staying in FR3.5, I feel we're the favourites. This is a really important year for me as I probably only have one more year left in the Racing Steps Foundation, and

then after that I will probably have to be picked up by a manufacturer, or if a chance came along in F1.

"I'm 22 years old now, I've had a few good years recently and the RSF has done a lot for me. There are younger drivers who they can support. This is my year to prove myself, and if I do that then I will hopefully be given a chance to carve out a career as a professional racing driver. If I do win FR3.5 then I will be a complete package that hopefully someone can take on board."

Rowland looks to the performance of last year's Renault champion, Toro Rosso F1 rookie Carlos Sainz Jr, and says he must go for consistency.

"Last year, Carlos and DAMS was such a competitive package," he explains. "At times we were as good if not better than them. There were a couple of hiccups throughout the year which held me back a little. I could have done a better job at times. Although I scored my best points total at the final weekend at Jerez, we were so fast at Hungary and [the penultimate weekend at] Paul Ricard. Only problems with the car held us back a little. Whoever we come up against, we can be competitive with and I feel I'm more mature as a driver this year."

"I know that I'm not going to be

quickest at every single race, whereas last season I think I expected that and frustration kicked in sometimes. This year, it will be about taking points and being consistent from races in which we're not the quickest. And then dominating when we are. If I do qualify fourth or fifth, I have to make sure that's where I finish as a minimum."

Rowland has undergone an extensive winter training programme, and says he's now fitter than he has been for years: "I've worked a lot on my fitness and weight, which is coming down a lot. That will enable me to have better focus on my racing throughout the weekend. I'm in better shape all round, both mentally and physically."

Despite Rowland's top opposition in 2014 now switching to other championships, he says he expects fellow Brit Dean Stoneman and his new DAMS team-mate, Eurocup champion, McLaren-backed Nyck de Vries, to challenge this year.

"There are always surprises," he adds. "Nyck will step up and has always been strong in whichever series he's raced in. Dean [Stoneman] is coming in too and that brings more credibility to the championship. He'll be strong, but I don't think as strong as the challenge that Carlos brought." **Russell Hayes**

EURO F3



Jake Dennis is hoping for a title tilt with Prema squad



Russell lifted the BRDC F4 title last season

As the balance of power in F3 terms swung to the FIA Championship and away from domestic series, the competition at the front of the European class has become a real proving ground for talent.

The fact that Max Verstappen was plucked from third place in the

standings in 2014 and promoted straight into a full-time drive in F1 with Toro Rosso has galvanised the rush to do the championship even more. The scramble for entries for 2015 left many teams disappointed.

Heading the charge for the Brits should be Jake Dennis, who has joined Prema Powerteam this term after his maiden campaign with Carlin. The RSF ace struggled to qualify well last season and he will have to rectify that if

he is to make an impact. He will also have to overcome strong team-mates, who will include the highly rated Felix Rosenqvist, Ferrari protege Lance Stroll and Frenchman Brandon Maisano. Dennis can race well and will have to prove it.

All of the other Brits are rookies to the FIA series. Top of the pile has to be reigning BRDC Formula 4 champion and McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner George Russell. He will pilot a

Carlin car and should be up to speed quickly – particularly if he learns from team-mate Antonio Giovinazzi, who is likely to be a title favourite.

Karting graduate Callum Hogg should turn heads. The Red Bull Junior Team racer is coming straight from the KF classes, where he won the European KF2 title, and has taken his first steps in car racing in the Toyota Racing Series in New Zealand. He has shown flashes of pace, but needs to

iron out some errors if he is to mount a serious attack.

London-born Alexander Albon, who carries Thai nationality too, joins the Signature team, while Sam MacLeod is at Team Motopark. Both teams are returning to the series for their first full campaigns since 2011, so will be short of set-up data of the newer spec Dallaras. That could prove crucial in such a competitive season.

Matt James

BRITS TO WATCH IN 2015

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrej



Brit will step up with AJ Foyt team

CV

Jack Hawksworth

Age: 23 **From:** Bradford, Yorkshire
2015: IndyCar with A.J. Foyt Enterprises
2014: IndyCar with Bryan Herta Autosport, 17th, one podium
2013: Indy Lights with Schmidt Peterson Motorsports, fourth, three wins
2012: Star Mazda with Team Pelfrey, champion, eight wins
2011: Formula Renault UK with Mark Burdett Motorsport and Atech Reid GP, fourth, one win
2010: Formula Renault UK Winter Cup with Mark Burdett Motorsport, third, two podiums



Hawksworth will handle car with a new aero kit this year

JACK HAWKSWORTH

British drivers have a fine record on the American single-seater racing scene and Jack Hawksworth is the latest Brit to establish himself in the States.

Having taken the Star Mazda title in 2012 and race wins in Indy Lights the following season, the former McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist stepped into IndyCars in 2014. It's fair to say his year as Bryan Herta Autosport's sole entry was a mixed one,

but there were flashes – notably a podium finish in Houston – that suggested there was more to come.

"The deal came together really late," says the 21-year-old, who wasn't helped by budget issues during his rookie campaign. "We were quite competitive speed-wise early on, then we fell away. The good thing was that, as the qualifying pace dropped, the results picked up, which was a credit to the team, their strategy, and me learning IndyCar racing."

This year Hawksworth switches to the bigger A.J. Foyt operation, and he has a team-mate for the first time, in

the form of ex-F1 racer Takuma Sato.

"BHA didn't really have anything in place – I'm very happy Bryan's team is now going to be on the grid next year – and I went to Foyt and was really impressed," says Hawksworth. "I immediately knew that's where I wanted to be. It's a dream drive."

He also feels being in the squad with Sato, whose speed is not in doubt, is a positive: "I've only got good things to say about Taku. He's really quick and has a very good understanding of the car. He's a very easy guy to get along and work with."

Hawksworth also stepped into



Bradford ace took his maiden IndyCar podium in Houston



Harvey ran at the front in his first Indy Lights season

endurance racing towards the end of 2014. It's something he has an eye on, but single-seaters remain the focus.

"I came here to make my career in America and I've loved every minute of it," he adds. "I want to expand into GT racing, but at the moment there's no time to think of anything other than IndyCar."

The manufacturer-homologated aero kits, allowed on the Dallara DW12s for the first time this year, throw in an unknown variable. But Hawksworth is clear about his goals.

"It's really difficult with the new aero regulations to know where we'll be," he

says. "If we can understand the changes they'll bring, I don't see any reason why we can't challenge for poles and wins. My long-term goal is to win the IndyCar championship."

Also aiming for US success is Jack Harvey. The 2012 British F3 champion agonisingly lost the Indy Lights title on countback last year and returns for another shot in 2015.

There's (finally!) a new car to work with in the shape of the Dallara IL-15, but Harvey remains with Schmidt Peterson Motorsports and will start the year as one of the title favourites in a boosted field. **Kevin Turner**

FORMULA RENAULT



Rookie Barnicoat took the NEC title in 2014



Jake Hughes will team up with Koiranen GP this year

When governing body, the FIA, dictated that its own affiliated racing classes will carry greater F1-qualifying superlicence points over other international championships, Renault-powered series could have taken a big blow.

But instead of dashing off to compete

in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship this year, it hasn't stopped a flurry of Brits continuing their development in European Formula Renault racing this season.

Leading the assault in the FR2.0 Eurocup this year will be reigning FR Northern European Cup champion Ben Barnicoat, who will continue with the Fortec Motorsports squad after a hugely successful maiden year in car racing in 2014. The Racing Steps

Foundation-backed ace progressed well as his seat time increased last term, culminating with the title at the final weekend at the Nurburgring.

He could well be up against more experienced Brits, namely his team-mates – 2013 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Matt Parry and Jack Aitken. Parry had a disappointing maiden Eurocup campaign last year, and will want to prove any doubters wrong after a storming couple of years

in which he won the InterSteps and FR NEC crowns in successive years between 2012-'13. Aitken too will want to improve on just a single victory last year, which led to an eventual seventh place points finish.

Inaugural BRDC F4 champion Jake Hughes will look to mount a serious challenge to the Northern European Cup and ALPS titles this year, joining champion squad Koiranen GP for a dual assault.

He will be joined by British Formula Ford runner-up Harrison Scott. Former British Rotax karting champion and BRDC F4 racer Charlie Eastwood will also graduate to European Renault racing, but has yet to tie up a deal for one series.

Eastwood struggled to challenge in F4 last year and has been preparing for the upcoming switch with winter outings in the New Zealand Toyota Racing Series. **Russell Hayes**

Photos: DTM, Euro F3, LAT

TOM BLOMQVIST



Anglo-Swede impressed on test run in the M4 DTM



Blomqvist was a Red Bull Junior driver back in 2013

CV

Tom Blomqvist

Age: 21 **From:** Cambridge
2015: DTM with BMW
2014: FIA European F3 with Carlin, second, six wins; Macau GP with Carlin, DNF
2013: FIA European F3 with EuroInternational, seventh; Macau GP with Fortec, eighth
2012: F3 Euro Series with Ma-con Motorsport, seventh; FIA European F3 with Ma-con Motorsport, seventh; Macau GP with EuroInternational, 17th
2011: German F3, sixth, one win
2010: Formula Renault UK with Fortec, champion, three wins
2009: Formula Renault Sweden with Trackstar Motorsport, third, one win; Formula Renault North European Zone with Trackstar, third

Motorsport hasn't had a prime-time TV reality show, but if it did, young driver shoot-outs would be the climax to see who leaves and who remains. Talk about putting the pressure on.

It was just such an intense run-off that led to Brit Tom Blomqvist landing his place with BMW for this season's DTM. It is a big-time opportunity for Blomqvist, the son of former World rally champion Stig.

He battled it out with Alex Lynn, Sam Bird, Richie Stanaway and Robin Frijns at the end of 2014 to land the golden chance.

After realising the financial obstacles on the path to F1 were too great, Blomqvist looked elsewhere. He contacted BMW and was invited to drive – and is delighted he did.

"The factory at Munich is impressive," says the 21-year-old. "OK, Formula 1 sits at its own level and is the top of the tree, but the amount of expertise and preparation that goes in to the development of the DTM cars is huge. Outside F1, it has to be the next best programme to be involved in given the commitment of the manufacturers."

The DTM is full of hugely experienced drivers. It has a blend of those who have been to the top and have settled in tin-tops, and those who have fallen off the single-seater escalator and have forged a successful career in the category. For Blomqvist, with no saloon car racing experience, it will be a test.

"I am not going to set any specific goals, but I want to prove myself to the team, and the best thing I can do for them now is to help them to the manufacturers' crown," says Blomqvist. "If I can do that, I will have taken the first step towards repaying their belief."

Blomqvist is desperate to stay in the ranks of the tin-top elite for a while to come. While the barriers to entering F1 – namely the enormous finances involved – are too high for most drivers to hurdle, the DTM can prove a profitable hunting ground.

"I want to be around the DTM for a few years, certainly," says Blomqvist. "I think this is the start of a new journey for me, and it is one I want to enjoy. I am with one of the best manufacturers in motorsport, so why wouldn't I want to take the absolute most from it. I am itching to get started."

Blomqvist will have to wait until May to get his hands on the BMW M4 DTM when the season blasts into life at Hockenheim. In the meantime, he can reflect on the fact he has landed a chance that the majority of up-and-coming single-seater drivers would have given their right arm for.

Matt James



Blomqvist was a multiple European F3 race winner

STARS IN LMP1...



Le Mans will be saturated with Brits

DAVIDSON, CONWAY, JARVIS, TANDY, TINCKNELL, MARDENBOROUGH

The LMP1 entry list for this year's FIA World Endurance Championship makes for very interesting reading for British fans. This year at least one Brit will drive for each of the four LMP1 manufacturer teams. Out of the 11 potential winning cars at Le Mans, five will have British drivers.

Reigning world champion Anthony Davidson attempts to be the first British driver to defend an FIA world title since World Touring Car winner Rob Huff in 2013.

"The aim is definitely to defend the title," says Davidson. "The championship is a huge challenge. Each individual race is six hours and so much can go wrong in that time, things outside your control that can

cost you. The WEC is less intense than F1 in terms of politics, but possibly more of a challenge as a world championship purely down to the mileage. We were so proud to win against the level of competition we had last year, but this year is a new ball game with Nissan coming in. We've got to push hard to win again."

Mike Conway is an interesting addition to Toyota's full-time line-up. With Nicolas Lapierre being dropped last year, Conway proved an effective stand-in. The IndyCar race winner was victorious alongside Alexander Wurz and Stephane Sarrazin in Bahrain.

Oliver Jarvis has a lot to live up to as he replaces nine-time Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen at Audi this year. But Jarvis has proven his pace in sports cars and has been on the podium in two out of his four Le Mans 24 Hours events.

Nick Tandy, Harry Tincknell and Jann Mardenborough are the exciting rookies.

Tandy joins Porsche's LMP1 team to share the third 919 Hybrid with Nico Hulkenberg and Earl Bamber. It's the chance he's been waiting years for and he's keen to make it count. It will be interesting to see how his proven pace in a GT car translates to a prototype.

Tincknell was the surprise of Nissan's new programme. The ex-F3 racer lifted the LMP2 class title at Le Mans on his debut last year, but is unproven so far at the top level. "I still have a lot to learn in sports cars," he says. "It'll be a tough season as the championship is reaching a new level of competitiveness."

Mardenborough has shone in GTs and led LMP2 at Le Mans last year. His natural talent is evident and he should shine in his first full LMP season.

Rob Ladbrook

...AND ALSO LMP2



Matt Howson led KCMG's charge

WATTS, LEVENTIS, KANE, WEBB, BIRD, HOWSON, DALZIEL AND MORE...

Sixty six hours of racing will determine who will be the FIA WEC LMP2 champions in 2015, and there are a bevy of Brits who will be battling at the front of the pack.

Heading the British line-up will be the Strakka crew of Danny Watts, Nick Leventis and Jonny Kane. The trio, who have previously finished fifth overall at Le Mans despite being in the second division of prototypes, will field the Dome S103. The crew was due to appear last season but the project was set back by technical issues on the as-yet unproven chassis.

What has been proven is Oliver Webb's title-winning credentials. The reigning ELMS champ joins the newly

merged Team SARD-Morand team in a Morgan. The only weak spot for Webb, who is partnered by Pierre Ragues, could be the third driver. They will be selected from a reality TV competition...

Single-seater ace Sam Bird joins the Russian-owned G-Drive Racing crew alongside Roman Rusinov and Julien Canal. The Ligier chassis is proven and Canal and Rusinov came within a whisker of lifting the 2014 LMP2 drivers' silverware.

Matt Howson (KCMG Oreca 05) took three wins alongside Richard Bradley last year on



Bird has LMP2 chance

his way to joint third in the LMP2 points, and was only stopped from being further up due to two retirements outside of Howson's control.

Ryan Dalziel will twin his American racing schedule with a campaign in Extreme Speed Motorsport's HPD ARX-04b. A huge force in the USA, Scot Dalziel has been a stand out performer in Daytona Prototypes.

Jota Sport returns to the ELMS for another shot at the title with Simon Dolan and Greaves Motorsport has Johnny Mowlem back in its reworked Gibson 015S.

New to the ELMS this year is the LMP3 division, Brits flood the field and arguably the most exciting of the new crop is reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Charlie Robertson sharing with Olympic legend Sir Chris Hoy.

Matt James

KARTING ROUND-UP

'MacDonald led the weekend until the final'
Scot started from pole, below



Photos: RGMCC Media

IN BRIEF

AASE entries open
Aspiring young drivers can now apply for the next Motor Sports Association AASE programme, which will begin in September. AASE is delivered in conjunction with Loughborough College. Its athletes work closely with coaches, nutritionists and psychologists, and receive performance-based sessions in the technical and tactical elements of driving, coaching and the media. AASE alumni include Jake Dennis, Seb Morris, Matt Parry and Josh Webster. Go to msauk.org/development/msa-academy/aase to apply.

MSA Kart vacancies

The MSA is seeking nominations for individuals to join the specialist committees that represent the interests of the various motorsport disciplines. The MSA Kart Committee and Kart Technical Sub-Committee have vacancies available. All applicants must be members of an MSA-recognised motor club or Regional Association. There are no formal qualifications required other than experience in motorsport. The roles are voluntary.

Marshal training

A training day for kart marshals will take place on March 29 at Whilton Mill. It is open to all current and prospective marshals. There will be classes on dealing with fires, accidents, radio procedures, flags and team building activities. Anyone interested should email: kart-marshall-training@hotmail.com

KZ1 date change

The final round of this year's MSA British KZ1 Championship will now take place at Shenington on September 12/13. The Oxfordshire track had been scheduled to host the second round on May 23/24. That event will now take place at Llandow in Wales.



Gamble (c) won a free season's entry into EuroMax racing

GAMBLE: WINTER CUP WIN CAN HELP TITLE SHOT

Junior Rotax ace wins on European debut and now targets EuroMax crown

By Russell Hayes

Tom Gamble scored Rotax Winter Cup victory on his international debut last weekend, and will use the momentum to chase the European Junior Rotax title.

The 13-year-old scored the win at Campillos in Spain after starting on the front row for Sunday's final, and held off fellow Brits Jack McCarthy and Tom Canning to win by only 0.1s (see report,

below). Gamble recently joined the Dan Holland Racing squad after finishing third in British Junior Rotax with Mick Barrett Racing last term. Gamble wins a funded year in Junior EuroMax, which he will contest with Dan Holland's team.

"This is a fantastic result for me," Gamble said. "I wanted a podium finish but with lots of great drivers, it was always going to be tough. This really has changed my expectations, as I now have a great EuroMax prize."

Gamble said he used the weekend's earlier heats to line up places on the circuit at which to overtake, and used them well when he dropped down to third place in the opening stages of the final.

"I targeted the other drivers' weak points, but with so many Brits out there, I'd already raced most of the drivers as this is my second year in Junior Max," he added. "Although I've done a few British races so far with DHR this year, it was my first overseas race with them. The team

has lots of European experience, and I felt at home with them."

Gamble, the younger brother of reigning Ginetta GT5 champion George, said he expected mainly British opposition in his efforts to win this year's European title.

"My goal will be to win the Euro Challenge," he added, "but with eight Brits in the top 10 in the final, it really shows just how strong the racing is going to be. It'll be a tough fight."

ROTAX MAX WINTER CUP REPORT

Gamble and Lehane score the Winter Cup honours in Spain

Rotax Max Winter Cup: Campillos

By Russell Hayes

Organiser: RGMCC When: February 9-15
Where: Campillos, Spain Championship: Rotax Max Winter Cup Starters: 100

Tom Gamble marked his European Rotax debut with Winter Cup victory, as nine Brits filled the top 11 spots, including a podium lock-out.

The 13-year-old started on the front row of the final alongside Dean MacDonald, who had looked unbeatable earlier in the weekend. The Scot was fastest in qualifying on Friday and also scored Pre-Final victory. But despite holding the lead at turn one from the start, MacDonald would go on to have a disappointing final.

Gamble lost out on the opening lap, and was passed by Leonard Hoogenboom and Jack McCarthy in an early scramble. The Dutchman forced his way into the lead at turn two on the second lap, as F in Kenneally came off worst from an opening lap tussle on his European debut.

MacDonald's fortunes were to worsen on the third tour, as 10 drivers bunched up for the lead. MacDonald dropped two positions in one corner at the end of the lap to first Gamble and then McCarthy. The pair then made the same move on the following lap, as Gamble made the jump into the lead with McCarthy following through. MacDonald would lose further spots, demoted down to sixth with Alex Quinn making a great recovery up to eighth after starting from the back of the grid, and Kenneally also showing pace in his recovery after his opening lap problems.

Tom Canning, who started sixth alongside Jordan Brown-Nutley, was past Hoogenboom into third, and then passed McCarthy as the top four began to pull away. But he then made a mistake at turn six with four laps to go, allowing McCarthy back through and the Strawberry Racing driver began to close in on Gamble.

The DHR driver was forced to defend on the final tour, but took the flag first to break Strawberry

Racing's dominance of the title. Canning got a fantastic exit to the final corner and surged towards McCarthy, who was able to hold on to second by half a kart's length. MacDonald disappointingly finished 10th.

Pierce Lehane held off a late attack from Briton Brett Ward to take the Senior Max victory on his Strawberry Racing debut. Ward, who started fifth on the grid for the final, dropped to seventh on the second lap, as Josh Price was forced to retire early on with a mechanical issue.

Richard Verschoor, making his Senior debut, was up into second as Thomas Preining surged forward from 12th on the grid.

After taking fifth up the inside of Rinus van Kalmthout at turn 12 on lap four, Ward later took advantage of a tangle between Gary Donnelly and front row starter Denis Mavlanov, who both went wide at turn 15.

Ward passed both to move into second with Preining in third, as Verschoor dropped to fourth. With two laps left, Ward closed to within a kart's length of Lehane to produce a tense two-kart



Lehane (l) narrowly held off Brett Ward to win in Senior Max

battle. Lehane, who had earlier dominated the weekend, weaved and blocked, with the pair side-by-side at the chequered flag. He held on to win by 0.043s.

"I was catching him quite quickly but just not quickly enough," Ward said. "I fought through the field well, and hope it's a sign of things to come. After a terrible couple of heats, it's a shame I couldn't get the win in the final." Ferenc Kancsar scored DD2 victory.

Results

Junior Rotax, final (12 laps) 1 Tom Gamble (Dan Holland Racing) 13m 22.486s (52.86mph); 2 Jack McCarthy (Strawberry Racing) +0.131s; 3 Tom Canning (DHR); 4 Leonard Hoogenboom (Brand Racing); 5 Oliver York (AIM Motorsport); 6 Zak Fulk (Goles Racing). Fastest lap Fulk 1m 06.118s (52.95mph). Pole Dean MacDonald (Strawberry Racing) Heat winners MacDonald x2; Hoogenboom; Dikie van der Wal (Team TKP); York; Marta Garcia (BirelART). Starters 34.
Senior Rotax, final (15 laps) 1 Pierce Lehane (Strawberry Racing) 16m 20.741s (53.82mph); 2 Brett Ward (AIM Motorsport); 3 Thomas Preining (Team TKP); 4 Richard Verschoor (Team TKP); 5 Denis Mavlanov (KR Sport); 6 Gary Donnelly (Strawberry Racing). FL Preining 1m 04.874s (53.97mph). P Lehane. HW Lehane; Verschoor; Mavlanov. S 34.

Radical ace Smith in karting return

Radical European Masters champion Bradley Smith will return to his karting roots to compete in this weekend's X30 Senior class at the Stars at Whilton Mill club event.

The 23-year-old ended his karting career in 2012 after competing in both British and Belgian Senior Rotax racing.

Smith, who will run with his Mectech Motorsport team, may do extra rounds this year. He will have to dovetail any appearances around his car racing commitments in a Greaves Motorsport LMP3 in the European Le Mans Series.

"This is a good way of keeping sharp over the winter and helps the team gain data, as it will be entering drivers in this year's X30 Tour," said Smith. "The team has built up its own chassis but now it's moving into racing on the X30 engine, we don't have as much experience. I did lots of Rotax racing in the past, and I'd like to do more. The racing in Belgium is quite relaxed and the circuits are a bit bigger. It's also a good challenge. I'd be going over to Europe to race in national X30 competitions."

SPORTING SCENE ROUND-UP

ROUND-UP

Steven Ferguson's seventh win of the season clinched his fifth **Hewison Autotest** title in a row. Ten-time champion Eamonn Byrne finished 10s down at Swan's Cross, County Monaghan. Third place was a duel between class winners David Thompson and Timmy Lynch.

In the **Midland Navigation Trial** in County Longford, Colin Duffy and Sam Johnston took their first outright win of the season to strengthen their hopes of defending their National and Border championships. They finished 45 marks clear of their nearest opposition after a demanding night, with two difficult plot and bash sections taking a heavy toll. Semi-expert winners Aaron Duffy and Laurence Keenan took runner-up spot on a tie break from Mickey and Ciaran Tynan, with Derek Mackarel and Seamus McTigue as top novices.

In a close **Sporting Trial** finish in County Wicklow, Conor Peden took his third win of the season, beating Paul Needham by a single mark. Grade B winner Dara Fay beat fellow Wilson-Suzuki driver Jonathan Ralph into third, another four marks down.

Paul Phelan

RESULTS

Autotest: Swan's Cross

1 Steven Ferguson (Mini Special) 706.7s; 2 Eamonn Byrne (Mini) +10.2s; 3 David Thompson (Nova); 4 Timmy Lynch (Westfield); 5 Mark King (Nova); 6 Chris Grimes (Mini); 7 Ashley Lamont (Westfield); 8 Paddy Power (Mini Moke); 9 Alan Coyle (Mini Special); 10 Guy Foster (Mini Special); 11 Norman Ferguson (Mini); 12 Paul Phelan (Mini Special).
Classes, Byrne; Power; Lynch; Thompson; Derek Mackarel (Starlet Special).

Navigation Trial: County Longford

1 Colin Duffy/Sam Johnston (Subaru Impreza) 30 marks; 2 Aaron Duffy/Laurence Keenan (Subaru Impreza) +45m; 3 Mickey Tynan/Ciaran Tynan (Subaru Impreza); 4 Rory Coyle/Ciaran Coyle (Subaru Impreza); 5 Owen Murphy/Daire Hayes (Subaru Forester); 6 Derek Mackarel/Seamus McTigue (Subaru Impreza); 7 David Beamish/Muireann Hayes (Subaru Impreza); 8 Shane Dalton/Nigel McCloughry (Subaru Impreza); 9 Joseph Shinnors/Greg Shinnors (Subaru Impreza); 10 Fintan Larmer/Sean McCaffrey (Subaru Impreza); 11 Dermot Whelton/Mark McCarthy (Subaru Impreza); 12 Thomas Wedlock/Andrew Wedlock (Subaru Legacy).
Novices: 1 A Duffy/Keenan; 2 Whelton/McCarthy; 3 Trevor McConnell/Eoghan McCarthy (Subaru Impreza).
Beginners: 1 Colm Mohan/Conor Mohan (Subaru Impreza); 2 Paddy Sherlock/Oisin Sherlock (Subaru Impreza); 3 William Boxwell/Kieran Hayes (Subaru Impreza).

Sporting Trial: County Wicklow

1 Conor Peden (Peden-VW) 23 marks; 2 Paul Needham (Erskine-Honda) +1m; 3 Dara Fay (Wilson-Suzuki); 4 Jonathan Ralph (Wilson-Suzuki); 5 Fergil Gregory (Erskine-Yamaha); 6 Morgan Evans (Mog-Honda); 7 David Meeke (BD-Opel); 8 Percy Pennetfather (Erskine-Suzuki); 9 Richard Meeke (BD-Opel); 10 Dennis Burke (VW); 11 Ian MacWilliam (Erskine-Yamaha); 12 Eric Byrne (Erskine-Harley Davidson) 43m.
Grade winners: Needham; Fay; Burke; David Pain (Kilkenny VW) 61m.
"Junior Junior" Award: Bill Needham (Erskine-Honda) 81m.



Andy Scott in Brit return

ALBATEC FIRMS UP BRITISH ENTRY

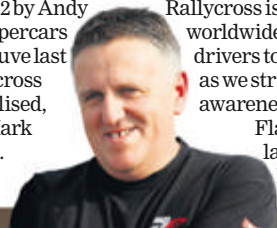
World rallycross team to run cars in domestic championship

By Hal Ridge

The Albatec Racing team will compete in both British and World rallycross events this year.

The team was formed in 2012 by Andy Scott, and ran Peugeot 208 Supercars for Scott and Jacques Villeneuve last season. While its World rallycross programme has yet to be finalised, the team will run Scott and Mark Flaherty in the British series.

"I think it's good that we're



running a two-car team in Britain, it should hopefully help raise the profile of the championship," said Scott. "I have unfinished business in the championship, having finished runner-up in 2011. Rallycross is most certainly on the up worldwide, so I feel it's important for drivers to support their domestic series, as we strive to further raise global awareness of our sport."

Flaherty returned to rallycross last year after a 20-year hiatus. He finished third in the Grand

Prix at Croft, where he drove an LD Motorsports-run Citroen DS3 Supercar. "My goal is to win the championship. I know that is a tall order, but we'll be going for it," he said. "I'm only doing seven of the eight rounds but I'll be trying my hardest and we certainly won't be holding back."

Flaherty will miss the season opener at Croft next month as he has committed to a rally in Majorca. "I have to drop one score and I'll definitely be at the other seven rounds, plus the grand prix," he said. "The cars should be competitive out of the box."

RALLYCROSS REPORT

Nitiss wins in Sweden in front of WRC fans

RallyX on Ice

By Hal Ridge

Latvian Reinis Nitiss won the second round of the Swedish-based RallyX on Ice series.

The championship runs for Supercar Lites machines and last weekend's event was more of a rally sprint, with cars being run side-by-side on the Karlstad superspecial stage of the Swedish World Rally Championship round.

Nitiss beat 2014 RX Lites

champion Kevin Eriksson in the final. "I made a few mistakes in the final," said Nitiss. "But when I noticed that Kevin had also made some mistakes, I knew the victory was safe."

Eriksson had a strong event and had beaten double World Rally champion Marcus Gronholm by just 0.07s in the semi-final stages. The Finnish star claimed the final podium slot almost by default as the third place knockout race between himself and round one winner Sebastien Eriksson was



Sebastien Eriksson rolled while Nitiss (r) took spoils

unable to take place after Eriksson had rolled his car in his semi-final.

Until rolling out of the event, Holjes victor Eriksson had set the pace. In the build up to the semi-final stages, Nitiss had beaten former WRC driver Tomas Radstrom and Janis Baumanis, while Eriksson had won against Thomas Holmen

and Simon Olofsson. Double World RX event winner Andreas Bakkerud had a tricky event.

He was knocked out by Gronholm, having earlier lost a rear wheel on a snowbank.

Results

1 Reinis Nitiss (Lites Ford Fiesta Mk7); 2 Kevin Eriksson (Lites Ford Fiesta Mk7); 3 Marcus Gronholm (Lites Ford Fiesta Mk7); 4 Sebastien Eriksson (Lites Ford Fiesta Mk7).

Strength to strength for World Rallycross

Organisers of the FIA World Rallycross Championship have reported a surge in popularity.

IMG took over the promotion of the European Rallycross Championship in 2013 and added rounds in Canada, Argentina and Turkey to turn it into a world championship. The TV audience grew by over 500 per cent and spectator numbers grew by 130 per cent.

"These latest TV figures are a great start but we'll continue to work on developing the championship's profile," said World RX managing director Martin Anayi. "Increased coverage on more available TV channels is going to be our main



Popularity of RX grows

target for 2015. We've seen a sharp increase in broadcast figures in only 12 months."

Former WRC champion Petter Solberg won the title last year. The first round is at Montalegre, Portugal on April 24-26.

TRIAL REPORT

Sporting trialist Josh Veale borrows his dad's car - and wins

Geoff Taylor Sporting Trial

By Duncan Stephens

Organisers: Hagley & District LCC When: February 14 Championships: MSA, BTRDA Starters: 25

Fresh from his Gold Star win last month, Josh Veale borrowed his dad's highly developed Sherpa and won the Geoff Taylor trial by a single point after a stunning round.

Ian Bell led at lunch after having gas injection fitted to his engine last month. Second was Peter Fensom. Both had

poor rounds in the afternoon, dropping Bell to second and Fensom to sixth. Veale showed his trickling skills and took the win having been fifth at lunch.

Simon Kingsley finished in third place despite nearly breaking the car near the end. The top six were split by just six points on a high scoring day. Local driver Dave Rance, who is normally seen gliding over the venue, climbed to fourth with a great round. Mark Milne, whose engine ingested half its filter, was fifth. With Fensom slipping

Truro welcomes new speed competitors

The Truro Motor Club will run its hillclimb mentoring sessions again this year.

The club had 18 people register for its first two Truro Speed Academy sessions in 2014, and nine of them went on to compete in the sport for the first time.

"We're going to run at three venues," said club spokesman Dave Brenton. "Two sessions will focus on hillclimbing and the third on sprinting. The sessions focus on everything you need to know for beginners."

Dates are to be released, see trurodmc.co.uk for info. Truro MC was runner-up in the JLTMSA Club of the Year award last year.

●The Craven Motor Club will run a sprint on March 22 to raise money for the Combat Stress charity. The Hullavington Sprint is based at Hullavington Airfield, Wiltshire. The venue is Tarmac, and the £100 entry fee includes a £20 charity donation. Marshals are needed. For details see craven-motor-club.co.uk.



Iconic RS200 in Brit RX return

RS200 will run in Retro Rallycross

The Retro Rallycross Challenge will include an original Ford RS200 this year.

The ex-Trevor Hopkins car will be run by Terry Maynard, who has fully rebuilt it. The Retro series runs alongside the MSA British Rallycross Championship events.

"Fans want to see Group B cars as well as modern machines," said Maynard. "The Haynes RS200 is an iconic rallycross car but it has not been used in years and needs to be properly restored."

Maynard has previously raced a Triumph TR8 and a four-wheel-drive Sierra. The car will be joined by the similar machine of Bill Watson, who will compete in his RS200 replica. Rob Gibson will run a Group B Metro 6R4 in the series.

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Turkington's wait is over

BTCC champion will get chance to defend his title

Like many fans, I was beginning to get rather concerned at the lack of news from Colin Turkington about his 2015 British Touring Car Championship campaign. A surefire defence with WSR suddenly looked problematic when eBay withdrew its support and then we had an awful lot of silence. It's great one of the class acts will be in the field.

Not only that, but we have a proper head-to-head between Turkington and Jason Plato. The ex-MG man was also quiet during the winter, but there was always a feeling he would pull a deal together: he's very good at that. And now they are both at BMR, we'll get a proper contest between two of the best drivers on the grid, with no debates about FWD v RWD getting in the way.

The battle for Rally Sweden honours was also tantalising and Andreas Mikkelsen must be feeling heartbroken after throwing a win away. But Thierry Neuville was a real star and I really hope Hyundai can give him the equipment to take the fight to VW later in the season.

Kevin Turner, Editor (Twitter: @KRT917)



STAR LETTER

BTRDA: the way ahead

I have just returned from a brilliant day's sport on the Wydean Rally, and would like to congratulate the BTRDA on another fabulous event.

Amid all the arguments about what is the best way forward for the British Rally Championship, the BTRDA Rally Series stands tall as a category that encompasses all that is good about the sport. If anything, the lack of a top-flight championship in the UK has done nothing but bolster the BTRDA, and it can rightly claim to be the headline series in Britain at the moment.

I know the BRC needs to return, but I just hope bosses take a good look at the BTRDA and learn from its success. A series only thrives if competitors want to take part in it, and there is no lack of enthusiasm for the BTRDA. It is the right championship and it is run for the right people.

Peter Geller
Swindon

YOUR PICS



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A risk-taking spectator captured by Bob Sketchley on last weekend's Wydean Rally



Andrew Jordan's BTCC MG6 spits flame at Brands as he tests his new steed. By Gary Hill



Martin Fox snapped this Lancia Delta S4 action on the recent North West Stages event

LETTERS

False dawn

Having followed the opening F1 testing session of the season from Spain last week, I think that McLaren might be kidding itself.

Ron Dennis says there is no need to panic despite the fact that Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso completed far fewer laps than the other frontrunners. While I can understand that he is trying to paper over the cracks, teams rarely recover from such setbacks.

If a car is right, it goes right from the outset. Surely Dennis remembers 1988, when the MP4/4 blew the opposition away from the first moment it hit the circuit?

I feel McLaren could be in for a struggle this season, which is a real pity. The person I feel most sorry for in this whole situation is Alonso, who has gone from the proverbial frying pan into the Honda-powered fire...
Harry White
via email

It's all fair

Sebastien Ogier and the road order issue – remember that?

The Frenchman banged on endlessly last season about the likely penalty that running first on the road would give him. He argued that it would be impossible for him to maintain his dominance at the front of the World Rally Championship pack.

Well, guess what? Two rounds in to the 2015 contest, and Ogier is undefeated, has a healthy buffer at the top of the standings and looks on course to claim title number three. What was the big fuss all about Seb?

Admittedly, he made life tougher for himself in Sweden than it needed to be by driving in to a snow bank on Friday, but he still managed to win.

Ogier would be better served by letting his driving do the talking, no matter what

the rulemakers decide to do. He has the ability to overcome any handicap, I just wish he would do it with grace.

James Cooke
via email

High and wide

Like Matt James (*MN*, February 11), I also have many memories of Brian Jones in the commentary box at Brands Hatch, both as a spectator and club competitor in Modsports and Midgets in the 1980s. Brian knew most of us by name and his obvious enjoyment of the sport floods over the Tannoy.

I particularly recall the post-Winter clubbie gatherings in the paddock bar in the black hut in the corner of the paddock. John and Angela Webb would be at one end of the bar, racers Gerry Marshall and Tony Lanfranchi would be at the other and Brian would usually be holding court in the middle with the likes of us.

I am delighted that Brian's long term dedication and enthusiasm – yes, his commentaries do get very enthusiastic – has been rewarded with the John Nicol Trophy. Mr Jones, sir, you are a star.
John Baggott
Tunbridge Wells

Getting a chance

I was delighted that last week's *Motorsport News* (Feb 11) decided to highlight the influx of Brits into the top flight of sportscar racing.

This year's battle has the makings of a classic. I simply can't wait for Le Mans, and it has been more than a decade since we have had such diverse competition in terms of the works teams involved.

As Formula 1 struggles to keep the existing teams it has, the World Endurance Championship – which was one of the first to fully embrace alternative engine technologies – goes from



MN, Feb 11: WEC line-ups

strength to strength.

There aren't many decent seats in F1 unless a driver has £20 million in his back pocket, but there are plenty in the WEC. It offers proper factory drives to deserving up-and-coming drivers. That alone means it will outstrip F1 for competition this season.

Steven Waters
via email

Making a date

It has almost become an annual tradition.

I sit down on a Wednesday morning with a cuppa and my copy of *Motorsport News*, but none is as cherished as the February issue with my copy of the National Rally Calendar. Out comes the diary and the marker pens, and I can plot my movements for the season ahead.

Imagine my upset last week when, despite the promise on the front page, the calendar was not included. The cuppa went cold and the pens were unused. What am I to do now?

Am I supposed to spend my weekends in the garden centre with the missus? Please save me from this fate!

Bob Friend
Salisbury

Editor – MN would like to apologise for a production error that led to the calendar being omitted from last week's issue. We were as disappointed as you! Rest assured, the calendar is in this issue

WHAT'S ON

LISTINGS

SPORTING SCENE SUNDAY

■ **Mondello Park, Donore, County Kildare**
Autotest: Motor Enthusiasts' Club
Starts: 1100hrs
Admission: free
Web: motorsportireland.com
Contact: 00353 872 574 406

■ **Wimbledon Stadium, Plough Lane, London**
Oval Racing: 1300cc stock cars, bangers, rookie rods, superstox
Starts: 1730hrs
Admission: adult £14, child £6
Web: spedeworth.co.uk
Contact: 01252 322920

RALLY SATURDAY

■ **Dingwall Auction Mart, Rally:** Snowman
Rally Starts: 0850hrs
Admission: TBA
Web: snowmanrally.co.uk
Contact: 01463 225508

■ **Blyton Park Driving Centre, Lincolnshire**
Rally: Jack Neal Rally
Starts: 0930hrs
Admission: free
Web: cdmconline.com
Contact: 01427 628 922

■ **Fivemiletown, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland**
Rally: Spring Rally
Starts: 1101hrs
Admission: TBA
Web: omaghmotorclub.com

SUNDAY

■ **Rural Business Centre, Thirsk, North Yorkshire**
Rally: Riponian Stages
Starts: 0830hrs
Admission: £10 per car
Web: riponmotorsportclub.co.uk
Contact: 01765 640 546

■ **Abbeyleix Manor Hotel, Abbeyleix, County Laois**
Rally: Birr Stages
Starts: 0900hrs
Admission: free
Web: motorsportireland.com
Contact: 00353 87911 7707

All details correct at time of press but please check with event organisers before travelling



Spring Stages will blast in to life on Saturday morning

TV GUIDE

Let's go racing!! On Sunday, Daytona Speedway in Florida will vibrate to the sound of NASCAR and the legendary **Daytona 500** (1800hrs, Premier Sports).

The channel has just signed a deal to broadcast NASCAR exclusively live in the UK for the next three years. Other live action that will involve big slides and old-school tech is the **Legend Boucles** rally from Belgium. It's broadcast on Saturday afternoon (1400-1635hrs, Motors TV). And **Special Stage Extra** is on Motors TV tonight (Wednesday, 2030-2100hrs). Also worth a tuning in to is the **Monte Carlo Historic Rally**, on Motors TV (Friday, 2135-2235hrs), while the **Best of Rally Sweden** follows it at 2235hrs.

Of course, much of the motorsport interest this week will be focused on the north east of Spain, where the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya will roar (whisper?) to the sound of Mercedes, Renault, Ferrari and Honda engines as **F1 testing** continues. The second of the three



F1 testing is on the television

pre-season tests runs from Thursday to Sunday. At the end of each day Sky Sports F1 will carry a 15-minute summary at 2100hrs and a 15-minute paddock walk from Ted Kravitz at 2115hrs.

The teams are all counting down the days to Melbourne. It's coming ever closer... whet your appetite by watching highlights of last season's **Australian Grand Prix** on Sky Sports F1, Sunday at 2130hrs.

LIVE TV

NASCAR: Daytona 500

■ **Florida:** Sunday: 1800hrs
 Premier Sports

Rallying: Legend Boucles

■ **Belgium:** Saturday: 1400hrs
 Motors TV



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CAN McLAREN SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS?

WILL MERCEDES GO FOR A TIME?

PLUS

JACK HARVEY

INTERVIEW



BRIT ON HIS INDY LIGHTS TITLE TILT

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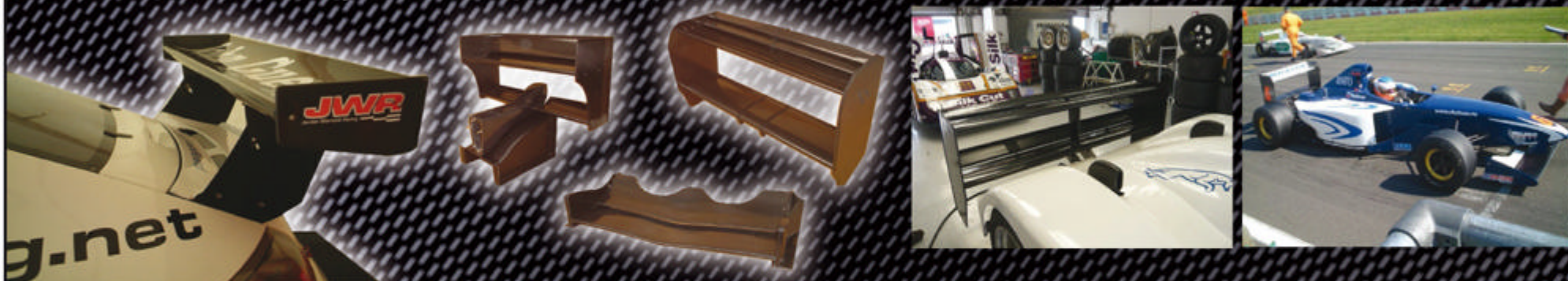
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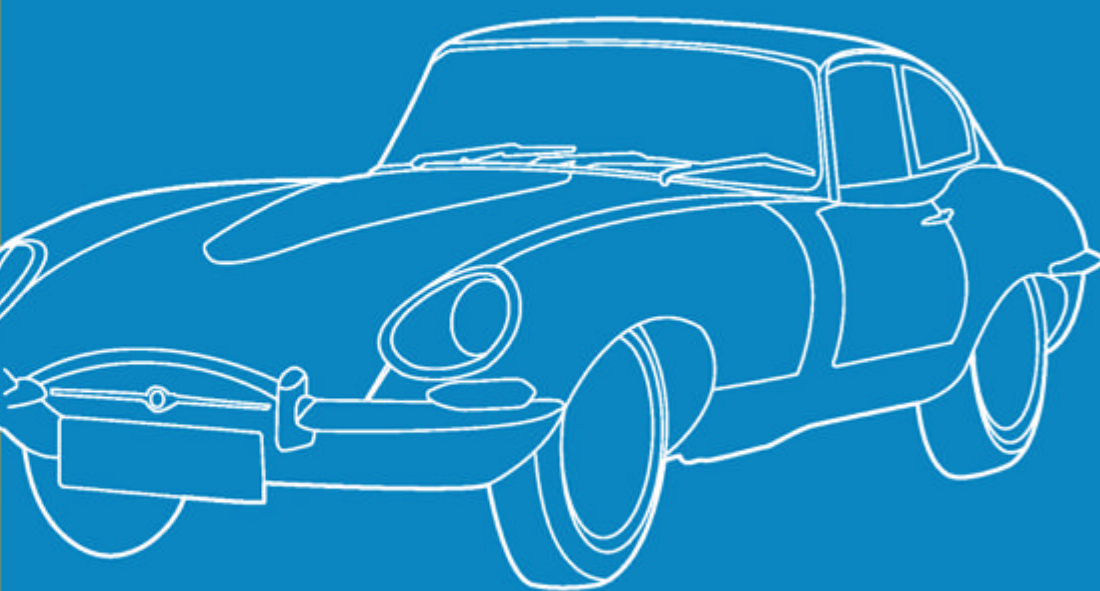
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