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MOTORSPORT NEWS

MEEKE STARS ON MONTE...



FULL MONTE CARLO RALLY REPORT P20

...BUT OGIER TAKES HAT-TRICK



'NEW' EVANS DOMINATES R5 WELSHMAN STARTS 2016 WITH A BANG P12



MOTORSPORT NEWS ISSUE **KT3011** JANUARY 27 2016

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Briton stuns with pace in Monte Carlo,

MEEKE



Meeke flew on early stages of Monte Carlo

By David Evans

Kris Meeke would have taken last week's Monte Carlo Rally to the wire if it hadn't been for the gearbox problem aboard his DS 3 WRC, according to Citroën team principal Yves Matton.

Meeke, who was vying to become the first British driver since Vic Elford in 1968 to win in the French Alps, retired from the lead fight after a rock tore the sump guard off the bottom of his car and punched a hole in the gearbox. Leading at the end of the first day and through parts of Friday, Meeke was still

chasing Sebastien Ogier when he was forced out after SS12.

Matton pointed to Meeke's tyre option for Sisteron as the final Saturday stage and said that would have helped cut the deficit to Ogier ahead of Sunday's finale.

"Kris was taking the supersoft tyre in Sisteron," Matton told *Motorsport News*. "We saw how quick Stephane [Lefebvre, Meeke's team-mate who was fourth fastest] was on these tyres. I think Kris would have come through and brought the gap to Ogier down to about 10 or 15 seconds."

"For sure, it would still have been difficult, but he would have been right in the fight to the finish. He would have brought more pressure to Sebastien and then who knows what can happen?"

Matton added that Meeke was blameless for the incident: "He was very unlucky. If he had cut the corner maybe five centimetres more, then it might have been OK. But this is all hypothetical now."

Meeke admitted he was

shocked by the impact, saying: "That sump guard is held in place by six eight-millimetre bolts. It takes a hell of a force to move those."

"As well as that, the impact punched a hole the size of your fist in the side of the gearbox. I've never seen anything like that before, when you had a look, you could actually see the cogs inside the gearbox. It was a big impact and we felt it inside the car, but it was in a cut that everybody was taking."

Meeke explained the immediate aftermath of the impact, adding: "We got some warnings straight away and the power went. The intercooler pipe had been pulled off and straight away I could smell gearbox oil. It was pretty clear we were going to be stopping."

Ogier was the first to commiserate with his rival.

"When I heard something about him hitting the rock, I said immediately: 'It's there.' I knew," said the Volkswagen driver. "I took the cut, everybody took this cut - you had to take this cut. On the first round, I



Matton: happy with Meeke

but bad luck ends his charge

ROCKS MONTE



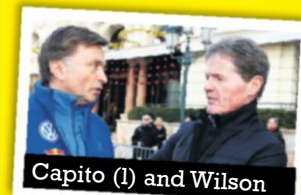
Meeke's charge brings big praise

Beyond the compliments of Sebastien Ogier, Kris Meeke's efforts on last week's Monte Carlo Rally drew universal praise from rival team principals.

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson said he was impressed with the consistency the Northern Irishman had shown.

"This has to be Kris's best drive ever," said Wilson. "He's kept the pressure on Seb all the time and he's never looked ragged or looked like making a mistake. I must admit, I've been very impressed with the speed and the consistency."

Hyundai's Michel Nandan echoed those sentiments, adding: "Kris has driven some very, very good stages on this rally. Incredible, I would say. Incredible the times he was performing because the roads were really tricky and whether he was on the Tarmac or on the ice, he was always there. It's good that he comes to Sweden: we look forward to this one now."



Capito (l) and Wilson

passed over it and the rock touched the bottom of my car. Maybe it's different if you pass over the middle of the car, I don't know. On the second pass, I took it a little bit different and it didn't touch. But it's unlucky."

Ogier was also quick to praise his rival's pace on only his third Monte Carlo Rally in a World Rally Car.

"I feel sorry for Kris," said Ogier. "He did a great job this weekend, he drove very fast and we both found a good rhythm. This weekend was definitely a strong performance for Kris, I don't know if it was his best one or not, but definitely it was a strong performance."

Meeke was just 26 seconds off the lead, having scored another fastest time on the test immediately preceding the 10-mile St Leger les Melezes-La Batie-Neuve test where his event ended.

"We were going well on this rally," said Meeke. "Whether or not we could have taken the fight to Seb, we'll never know – it's fair to say he still looked to have a bit more. And, let's not forget, the

final day was always a bit more of a Tarmac rally and trying to take that time out of him in those conditions would have been hard. Having said all of that, when you're on the Monte and you're 26 seconds off the lead, then you're always going to be in with a shout."

Much was made during the last week of Meeke's upturn in confidence, with questions asked over whether that was linked to his new three-year deal.

Meeke said: "I don't know about that, but it does feel a bit different to how it was at times last year. I felt this kind of confidence on Rally GB last year and I think this is an extension of that."

"It's different to earlier, to places like Argentina, where we took the win. OK, on the first day we drove in Argentina, but after that it was all a bit nervy. It wasn't like that on this one, this time we were more relaxed and we were able to keep the speed and I could keep my head."

Meeke admitted there was a concern of lack of match fitness. Once he's through next month's Rally Sweden, he's not competing

for the next two rallies. "Sure we will miss Mexico and Argentina," he said, "and maybe that will cost some match fitness, but at the same time we're going to be in the [2017] car for so long that we will be getting some serious mileage. This will make up for it."

The Citroen driver added that his time with the French team was also paying dividends.

"This is my third time in Monte with this car," said Meeke. "This is a rally which is all about experience, so that's going to help. And, don't forget, the Monte has always been a strong event for this car."

Meeke is hoping to carry his strong pace into the next round in Sweden next month.

"I have experience of Sweden now as well," he said. "I've set some fastest times on that rally. I've got good confidence and I'm feeling happy in the car, so now let's see what can happen. There's no question that we will be pushing, it's just a question of whether it will all come together."

Full Monte Carlo report, p20



Sebastien Ogier enjoyed the competition with Meeke

RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrej

F1 ROUND-UP

Haas backs US

Formula 1 team owner Gene Haas believes that the Circuit of the Americas in Austin can overcome its financial difficulties and continue to host the US Grand Prix. The track is currently struggling after the state of Texas reduced its subsidy for the GP from \$25 million (£17.5 million) to \$19.5m (£13.65 million). The track also lost money when it had to cancel the Saturday of last year's GP meeting due to adverse weather. Haas said: "There are concerns but it's a beautiful track and they have invested a lot of money so I don't think they'll scrap it. No matter what happens, the track will survive. I cannot imagine it not being used."

Stoffel keen

McLaren reserve driver Stoffel Vandoorne is confident that his move into the Japanese Super Formula series will boost his chances of an F1 drive in 2017 and not hinder them. Vandoorne is wary of suffering the same fate as Kevin Magnussen, who did not race last year and left the team when his chances of an F1 seat dried up. Vandoorne said when asked about how his position with the team compared to Magnussen's: "We are different. Kevin came off the back of an F1 campaign and was reserve for a season without possibilities to race anything beside that. If the Super Formula deal goes ahead I will also get some racing experience."

Kvyat happier

Daniil Kvyat reckons he understands F1 better after his difficult 2015 season. Kvyat struggled for consistency in his second season in the sport last term. He will be retained by Red Bull Racing this year alongside Daniel Ricciardo. Kvyat said: "At the end of my rookie season [with Toro Rosso] there were no mistakes, but sometimes they happen. I had to forget about my final positions and just focus on the driving. I had a much better understanding of everything."

Fry joins Manor

Former Ferrari engineering director Pat Fry has joined Manor Racing as engineering consultant. Fry had worked for Ferrari for over four seasons but left the team at the end of 2014 after a restructuring. Fry will also link-up with ex-Ferrari man Nikolas Tombazis, who will act as Manor's chief aerodynamicist.

Refuelling re-banned

Refuelling will not return to Formula 1 in the near future, despite a surprise return to the agenda. FIA president Jean Todt said that mid-race refuelling was again being looked at 2017 onwards. However F1's Strategy Group shot down the idea on cost grounds during meetings in Geneva. Williams' Pat Symonds said: "We saw better racing when we banned refuelling."



Aitken tested with Arden

BRITISH ACE AITKEN GETS GP3 GRADUATION

Double Formula Renault champion signs for Arden and targets F1 feeder title

By Rob Ladbrook

Rising British star Jack Aitken will graduate into the GP3 Series this year with Arden International.

Aitken enjoyed a successful 2015 campaign, landing both the Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup and ALPS championships with the Koiranen GP team.

The 20-year-old had been weighing up a move into either GP3 or the Formula 3.5 V8 series for this year, but opted for GP3 after a strong test run with Arden in Abu Dhabi last

November where he topped the times in a session.

Aitken joins fellow Briton Jake Dennis at Arden for a full GP3 Series assault.

Arden general manager Julian Rouse said: "We first worked with Jack in 2013 in the Formula Renault 3.5 young driver test and he was already impressive then. Now he has finished his studies and has had the chance to fully focus on racing in 2015, and the performance from him has been outstanding.

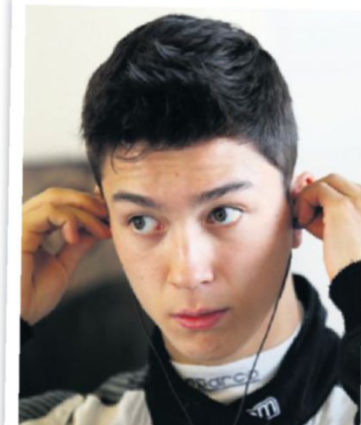
"We had a very good test in Abu Dhabi [last year] and

it showed that Jack is clearly ready to challenge for race wins in his rookie season in GP3 so we are really looking forward to continuing our success."

Ex-McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist Aitken added: "I became close with the guys at Arden early in my career so I'm really excited to be racing with them. Having come off the back of a championship-winning year in a very competitive series I'm keen not to rest on my laurels and take the fight to the next level."

CV

Jack Aitken
Age: 20 **From:** London
2016 GP3 Series with Arden International
2015 Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup, champion.
 Formula Renault ALPS, champion
2014 Formula Renault Eurocup, seventh
2013 Formula Renault NEC, second
2012 Dunlop Intersteps Championship, third.
 Formula Renault Winter Series, second
2006-2011 Karting



Aitken won two 2015 FR titles

Team BKR joins B-TEC Development line up

Team BKR will enter six cars in the new B-TEC Development Series after forming a link up with Team BMR.

Clio team BKR will enter four of BMR's VW CCs and also two Vauxhall Insignias. They will all be fitted with Swindon Racing Engines tuned two-litre turbocharged motors.

The series will cater for older-spec BTCC machines and will feature 12 races taking place at six club meetings across the year, starting with Brands Hatch on March 26/27.

Team BKR tried to get a licence to enter the BTCC at the end of 2014 but failed. Team head Nico

Ferrari said: "[Team BMR boss] Warren Scott and I were really close to getting a package together last year which would have seen us entering the BTCC and returning an Insignia to the grid. For various reasons, this plan didn't work out but now I am more excited by this new opportunity, which gives us the chance to work alongside the biggest team currently in the BTCC."

The team has yet to confirm any drivers. Ferrari said: "For any driver who is serious about progressing to the likes of the BTCC or even making a return, there is no other place to be."

Former Mini champ Smiley makes BTCC move with Team Hard

Team Hard bosses have targeted regular top 10 finishes in the British Touring Car Championship this season after signing former Mini Challenge champion Chris Smiley.

The Northern Irishman, who contested the Volkswagen Scirocco R-Cup in 2014, will drive the squad's updated Toyota Avensis, which features a new lighter chassis.

Team principal Tony Gilham said: "We have followed Chris's progress closely, and everyone who has worked with him knows he is a talent. The BTCC is very competitive and we know that, but there is no reason we can't regularly be in

the points. That has to be our target for the season."

Smiley, who tested a Triple Eight Racing MG as his prize for winning the Mini Challenge's Best of British Award, said he was looking forward to the progression. "The NGTC cars aren't hugely different to the Minis or the Scirocco," he said. "They're both turbocharged and front-wheel drive, but the touring car is weighted very differently and the suspension behaves much differently as they aren't production cars so they feel more racy. I also have to learn about the tyres because this will be the first time I've raced in a series with

two different tyre compounds. It all adds to the challenge but I can't wait to get going."

● Team Hard has bought two Ginetta G55s to run in the GT4 division of the British GT Championship this season. It will operate the cars alongside 14 Volkswagen Racing Cup machines. "Team Hard wants to be represented on all rungs of the ladder, and putting a GT programme in place made perfect sense for us," said Gilham. "Single-seaters are becoming prohibitively expensive but we want to help young drivers up the ladder. By adding a GT programme to our BTCC attack, we have all of the bases covered."

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*'Sports 2000 will
race at Le Mans'*
New venue for Brits, p8



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Euan Cameron and LAT

GT CUP BOSSES PLAN NEW LMP3 SERIES



LMP3 cars will form part of new category

LMP3 cars could get their own class in the UK as early as this year after both the GT Cup and Britcar organising bodies each unveiled plans for new open-prototype series.

Bute Motorsport, which organises the successful GT Cup Championship, has begun work to run a mini-series of events for sports-prototypes this season before a full schedule in 2017.

Bute plans for the series to have three classes, with the top tier dedicated to LMP3 machinery, class two for FIA CN-spec sportscars and the third category operating for marques such as

Radical, Aquila, Saker and Riley.

Tyre supplier Pirelli has already backed the plans and Bute is working with MSVR to decide on dates to run pilot races alongside the GT Cup at its GP circuit rounds at Brands Hatch, Silverstone and Donington Park.

Bute Motorsport technical director Phil Boland said: "The new GT3-spec cars are costing up to half-a-million euros or over so we see this as an opportunity because there are plenty of people out there in the market for a serious racing car who don't want to be spending that kind of money. LMP3 fits

that bill perfectly so why not have them racing in a UK championship?"

"LMP3s are currently limited to just the European Le Mans Series, but they are good to run for thousands of miles so having a series like this allows teams to gain extra competitive mileage and find more value for drivers."

United Autosports will make its LMP3 debut this year with a pair of Ligier JS P3 chassis. Team head Richard Dean said: "We love the concept of a national prototype series and I'm convinced it is a category that could grow and grow.

"LMP3 cars are probably the best value for money racing car out there at the moment and it's a natural progression for GT drivers so it makes sense to have them racing in Britain. We'd certainly run cars in the category and support it."

Britcar will also run a new four-round Dunlop Prototype Series this year, targeting cars such as the Ginetta G57, Radical RXC and CN-spec cars. One-hour races are planned at Silverstone, Donington Park and Snetterton before it concludes with a two-hour event at Spa-Francorchamps.

Gasly joins Prema for GP2 campaign

Red Bull F1 protege Pierre Gasly has joined Prema Power team for his second season in GP2 this year.

The 19-year-old Frenchman will line up alongside Antonio Giovinazzi at Prema, which is gearing up for its first campaign in the F1 feeder category.

Gasly scored three pole positions in last year's championship, but failed to win a race. He finished eighth in the standings.

"We could not have selected a better driver for our maiden GP2 Series campaign," said Prema team boss Rene Rosin. "Gasly is a talented and skilled driver who delivered convincing performances in all the championships he has entered so far. I'm sure he will make his experience count and go a further step this year."

Gasly, who is continuing as a reserve and test driver for Red Bull Racing F1, added: "My priority is clearly to win GP2 and I couldn't be with a better group of people than Prema."



Jackson ran with Graff team

Jackson closes on LMP3 deal after test

BRDC Formula 4 ace Tom Jackson is closing on a deal to join the LMP3 class of the European Le Mans Series this year after a test with Graff Racing.

Jackson, who was third in last year's BRDC F4 points with Chris Dittmann Racing, joined the French team for a two-day test at Paul Ricard last week. He handled its Ligier JS P3 chassis as he aims for a move into sportscar racing.

"The Ligier was just amazing. It's hard to describe how good it felt," said Jackson, from Maidstone. "It had a lot more power than the F4 car and I had to make changes to the way I drove in terms of throttle application as I was getting wheelspin out of some of the tighter turns.

"By far the most impressive thing was the handling though. Despite the car being heavier than a single-seater it was so responsive. Tiny movements on the wheel made it respond.

"When I first started racing my aim was always to compete at Le Mans. Sam Hignett from Jota Sport advised me to do single-seaters for experience and I have that now. LMP2 teams look for F3 experience, but that costs a fortune and LMP3 is the perfect middle step."

Jackson said he was in talks with Graff and other teams over putting a race deal together.



Norris (left) fought hard with Daruvala at Teretonga Park

Victory puts Norris on top of the Toyota Racing Series championship

MSA Formula champion Lando Norris grabbed the lead of the Toyota Racing Series championship in New Zealand with victory at Teretonga Park last weekend.

British teenager Norris came into the weekend third in the standings and had a mighty battle with Force India F1 protege Jehan Daruvala over the series' second race weekend.

Norris grabbed pole for the

first race but lost out to Daruvala at the start. Norris snuck back into the lead before being bunched up into the pack by a safety car. Daruvala took the chance to snatch the lead and the win.

Pedro Piquet started race two on pole and led from lights to flag to score his first TRS victory as Norris fought up to second. Daruvala could only manage fifth.

Norris began the final race, which counted for the Spirit of a Nation Trophy, on pole and made no mistake this time to head the field throughout. Norris had to deal with two safety car periods, but held off Brendon Leitch in a two-lap sprint to the flag. Daruvala was 17th after a collision.

Norris leads the championship by 34 points from Artem Markelov. Daruvala is sixth.

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



Jacques Villeneuve has left the Venturi Formula E team after just three races and will be replaced by Briton Mike Conway. The 1997 Formula 1 world champion failed to score a point in any of the opening races and the team said on Twitter there had been a "disagreement over the future direction of the team". Conway will make his debut in next month's Buenos Aires round but has previously tested a car for Dragon ahead of the inaugural season in 2014...
New two-litre, four-cylinder engines

will not be introduced to DTM until 2019. The new engines were the centrepiece of the incoming Class One technical regulations that were due to be introduced for the start of 2017. But Audi, BMW and Mercedes have had concerns about the cost of developing new motors in such a short time so the new rules have now been delayed... The Abt team will switch from running Audis to Bentleys in this year's Nurburgring 24 Hours. The team will field a pair of works-supported Bentley Continental GT3s in the enduro in May.



Jacques Villeneuve has parted company with Venturi FE team

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Hornby to JHR

Ginetta Junior driver Kyle Hornby will switch to the JHR Developments team for this season. He finished third in the rookie class in 2015 with R&J Motorsport, taking two overall podiums. "I can't wait to get back out on track: this winter seems to have been one of the longest of my career," said Hornby. "I had a great debut season in 2015, and this year I intend to be a major contender for the title."

Roberts returns

Cameron Roberts will join Hornby at the JHR squad this year. He raced for TCR in his rookie season in 2015, and took a best result of sixth at Silverstone. "I'm feeling incredibly confident, I know I've got the pace and ability, and now I have a great bunch of people around me," said Roberts.

Crosbie signs up

Doug Crosbie will contest a full National Formula Ford 1600 campaign after purchasing Ian Parkington's Van Diemen RF13. Crosbie finished third in last year's Northern FF1600 points and won the Star of Anglesey title aboard his family run Van Diemen JL13. He contested just a handful of National Championship rounds around his university studies, but will now contest the full 16-round national schedule.

Truck calendar

The British Truck Racing Championship will run a nine-round schedule this year. The championship begins at Brands Hatch with a three-day meeting over the Easter weekend of March 26-28. Other rounds are at Pembrey (April 23/24); Thruxton (June 11/12); Nurburgring (July 2/3); Donington Park (July 23/24); Silverstone (August 13/14); Snetterton (September 10/11); Pembrey (October 15/16) and Brands Hatch (November 5/6).

Fun Cup defence...

Defending Fun Cup champions Racelogic.com will have grand prix technology behind them this season. Team boss Julian Thomas will have Jon Tomlinson rejoining them this year, a senior aerodynamicist with Renault F1. The line-up is completed by novice David Denyer, a systems analyst with Red Bull Racing.

...and new tyres

This year's Fun Cup also has a change of tyres, having gone to the Chinese-manufactured Giti firm. "The brand is new to Europe and they supply us with one set pattern," explained Fun Cup's Paul Rose. "We tested them at Oulton Park at the end of last year, they are a softer compound with stiffer sidewalls."

LYDDEN HILL WON'T RUN CLUB RACE MEETINGS

No circuit racing events for 2016 after new noise order



BARC SE ran last event at Lydden

By Stephen Lickorish

Lydden Hill Circuit is not scheduled to hold any club race events this season.

A combination of rising costs due to an FIA-required multi-million pound improvement and a new noise abatement order has made it difficult for clubs to host events at the Kent track.

Last year, just two club meetings were scheduled at the venue, both organised by the BARC's South East Centre. One of those events was cancelled

because of the rising costs.

Now the introduction of a 100-decibel noise limit from the local council has prevented the club from returning. Lydden formerly had a limit of 105dB.

"The noise limit makes it difficult," said BARC SE's competitions secretary Rod Birley. "The new limit is considerably lower and is a reduction of about 30 per cent.

"Drivers won't pay to modify their cars for just a single round, especially when they have to buy Front Head Restraint [or HANS]

devices this season. We love Lydden, and in modern racing if a venue isn't used it closes and we don't want that. We'd love to return in 2017, but some hurdles have to be removed first."

Lydden's noise restriction does have a three-day exception, meaning the world RX round is safe. But the track's calendar otherwise is sparse. Track bosses have submitted a further planning application for additional developments as they hope to diversify activities to generate additional income.

Track head Pat Doran told MN: "We've been working with the local authority and community to try and get the best for everyone, but the noise abatement order was a big thing as it has reduced what we can do.

"I think we can find a way forward and the club race meetings can return. We invited everyone to come and we're certainly not turning people away [from running events]." *Additional reporting by Kerry Dunlop and Rob Ladbrook.*

● Lydden's new fight, page 26

Deegan swaps Stock Hatch for Miglias

Reigning Stock Hatch champion Shayne Deegan will switch to the Mini Miglia Challenge this season.

Deegan has won the 750 Motor Club category for the last two years in a Citroen Saxo and will now race in Peter Baldwin's multi-championship winning car.

"I traced the Mini last year at Snetterton and got on quite well, beating the driver who won the championship, Kane Astin," said Deegan. "The plan is to give it a good go and challenge for the title and hopefully that would bring some opportunities for the future."

Deegan said there are a few differences between the categories that he is aiming to quickly adapt to.

"The Stock Hatches run on road tyres while the Minis are on slick racing tyres so that will be a challenge to get used to," he added. "It's also 300kg



Deegan in Mini switch

lighter and more powerful."

● The Miglias have banned four-way adjustable suspension dampers for this year to cut costs, with only two-way adjustable dampers now allowed. Mini Se7en commercial manager Colin Peacock said: "Four-way adjustable kits can get horrendously expensive and by going back to two-way kits we can keep the series accessible and reduce costs. It means we don't go down that route of the championship being decided on technicalities of set-up."

United Autosports heads to GT Cup

United Autosports will run a joint campaign in the GT Cup Championship and the new Michelin Le Mans GT3 Cup with its Audi R8 LMS ultra GT3.

The Anglo-American team will field Phil Burgan in four rounds of the GT Cup series, while Burgan and team co-founder Zak Brown have also entered the GT3 race run in support of this year's Le Mans 24 Hours in June.

Burgan said: "I'm really looking forward to working with United Autosports again and doing some GT Cup races, but racing at Le Mans will be hugely exciting."

Brown added: "I haven't raced GT3 since mid-2013. I've done some historic racing at Le Mans and I love the track. I have a great relationship with Phil so it should be a fun season."

Kart star Fewtrell joins Carlin for MSA

British karter Max Fewtrell will race for the championship-winning Carlin squad in MSA Formula this season.

The 16-year-old won the Trofeo Andrea Margutti KFJ series in 2014 and has also starred in the German KF category.

Fewtrell made his car racing debut in the MRF Challenge at the end of last year and picked up a third place in Dubai. He's currently 11th in the standings.

"I'm really excited to get going," he said. "Carlin is a really big name in motorsport, all the little details I learn with them will definitely help me throughout my career. I couldn't really ask for a better place to start my career in cars."

Carlin boss Trevor Carlin said: "We're extremely happy to have Max in the team. He's shown great pace in testing so

Robertson gets Jam Sport deal

Ford Fiesta Championship runner-up Scott Robertson will graduate to the Renault UK Clio Cup this year with Jam Sport.

The 25-year-old Scot comes from a racing family as his grandfather Walter starred in sportscars and GTs, while his father Steve was successful in Formula Ford 2000.

Robertson raced for Jam Sport in Fiestas and will now partner Ant Whorton-Eales and Tom Grundy in its Clio team.

"I've seen the UK Clio Cup in action on the British Touring Car Championship support bill and really want a piece of it," he said. "A number of drivers I've raced against have made the step up to it and now it's my time to make that step."

"I've raced with Jam Sport in the Ford Fiesta series and have seen just how determined they are, and having Ant and Tom as benchmarks is going to help me no end."

Jam Sport team principal Jamie Going said: "We've seen some terrific form from Scott and feel now that the time is right for him to graduate to the Renault Clio Cup."

"He is a real talent and we are hopeful of having three cars fighting for wins and podium results in the championship this season."



Fewtrell: strong testing

far, and despite his young age he has demonstrated real maturity in the car.

"As his first season in car racing, no doubt 2016 will be a steep learning curve but Max has all the necessary skills to be able to be competitive from the outset."

Fewtrell is the third driver to be confirmed for Carlin, after James Pull and Devlin DeFrancesco.

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'Lydden needs to diversify to survive'
Future of Kent track, p26



Photos: LAT and Steve Jones

FIELDING TARGETS MSA FORMULA TITLE



Fielding will return with JHR

Fielding starred in 2015

MSA Formula race winner Sennan Fielding is plotting a title challenge this year as he returns with JHR Developments.

The 20-year-old finished fourth in the standings in 2015 and took three wins, but suffered a lot of bad luck during the season. He is now aiming for a more consistent year to fight for the title.

"I genuinely believe we're going to have a great season together," he said. "In 2015, we encountered some bad luck

early on which put us on the back foot and meant we couldn't capitalise on the pace we had.

"It's clearly going to be another tough season with an extremely high-calibre field of drivers and teams, but the title is unquestionably our goal. For that, we'll need to win races, score regular points and podium finishes – which was one of our trump cards last year – and we'll also need a little bit of luck, which is something we lacked in 2015.

"We've got the car really

dialled in now, so there's no reason at all why we can't fight for the championship. I've known Steven Hunter [team boss] for a number of years and have a strong relationship with the whole team, which means we can hit the ground running as soon as testing begins."

Hunter added: "I've got a lot of faith in Sennan as a driver. He is almost part of the fixtures and fittings at JHR [the team also ran him in Ginetta Junior]. He is a good lad and a great

driver. We learnt a lot over the course of last year and made a lot of improvements. We had quite a few issues with the car at the start of the year, but were winning races by the end and it bodes well for the future. We should have a strong team and it's all starting to come together."

Fielding will again be partnered by Jack Butel in the team and Hunter said that another couple of drivers should be announced in the next few weeks.

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMES

"UK circuits are facing an uphill battle"



Lydden Hill is hugely popular with race fans

The tale of Lydden Hill's current struggles, as you can read in *Motorsport News's* special feature on page 26, are a grim marker for motor racing in this country.

There are lots of stories about motor racing circuits struggling with noise problems. It's happened at virtually every track you can think of in the United Kingdom – even at the home of the British Grand Prix, Silverstone.

For the motor sport fan, it is perplexing.

These issues have only really come to light over the last 15 years. Before that, people who moved close to a motor racing circuit expected noise every other Sunday.

That is the nature of what happens at a motor racing circuit and if a home owner hadn't done their due diligence before moving in to a new abode well, that was their problem.

But there is a change in public attitudes these days. Everyone seemingly has a right to complain, but the worrying thing is that councils and authorities are giving these people oxygen and are giving traction to complaints.

I recently heard a story from someone high up in the British Automobile Racing Club, which has been at the heart of several of these fights. A resident had complained about the noise emanating from the Pembrey circuit in South Wales. The council took it very seriously, and sent out a noise inspector to take readings from the garden of the affected property.

When the council official returned to check the readings from the monitor, he was unable to get an accurate reading because the sound of the babbling brook at the bottom of their garden was too loud. And I am not joking.

Lydden Hill is a real gem in the motor racing landscape, and the work the venue and its organisers have done to protect and promote racing, and in particular rallycross, in this country has been vital. For them now to have to battle red tape is infuriating.

Look at the struggle Wimbledon Stadium is facing too: while that is nothing to do with noise, it is yet another troubling situation. Motor racing doesn't seem to feature on any council's agenda as a valuable asset to the community and that is an attitude that needs to change. A circuit, and the associated events it hosts, brings in finance to a local area. Motor racing is an asset that regional authorities need to treasure, rather than seeking to slap it down at any opportunity. How many more blows can motorsport take?

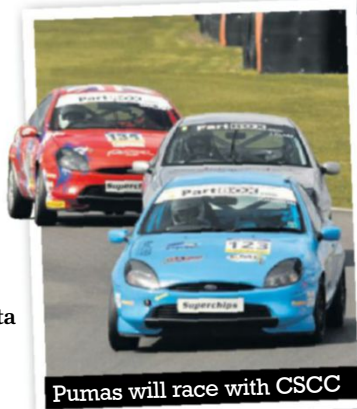
Puma Cup joins Ford Racing UK promoter

The Ford Puma Cup will undergo a format shake-up this year after series organisers joined forces with race promoter Ford Racing UK.

Puma Cup owner EMC Motorsport has partnered with Ford Racing UK, which runs the successful Ford Fiesta Championship to help grow the popularity of the series.

The Puma Cup operates for production-spec 1.7-litre 130bhp Pumas and was established in 2013. It has held races within the Classic Sports Car Club's Tin Top series since, but will now split to form its own grid. Races will still be held at CSCC meetings.

For this year the class will run a mixture of endurance races and sprint events. Three of the seven rounds will be 40-minute races, allowing



Pumas will race with CSCC

drivers to share a car, while the other four will be 20-minute sprint races.

Ford Racing UK's Kevin Shortis said: "The Puma Cup has a lot of potential because the cars are cheap, powerful and a lot of fun. You can build a car for less than £3000 including the cost of a donor car so it's terrific value."

CDR signs first Kenyan BRDC F4 driver Wahome

Jeremy Wahome will become the first Kenyan driver to race in the BRDC Formula 4 Championship after signing with Chris Dittmann Racing.

The 17-year-old formerly contested the Formula BMW Asia Cup series before testing the older-spec Ralph Firman-built F4 car in late 2014. Wahome tried the new Tatuus-Cosworth car at Brands Hatch in November.

"The new car is quite easy to get

used to, although it's not easy to drive," said Wahome from Nairobi. "The team did really well last year [with Tom Jackson and Omar Ismail]. I enjoyed working with the team, the mechanics and driver coach Kieran [Vernon].

"I want to do well in F4 this season and eventually move up to F3 next year. But there are a lot of competitive drivers and teams, but the overall goal is to get podiums."

Spires graduates to Clio Cup with PP team

Anton Spires will graduate to the Renault UK Clio Cup this season with PP Motorsport and will also receive support from Westbourne Motorsport.

The 23-year-old contested selected rounds of the Clio Cup Race Series last year but previously won the Road Series title with Westbourne.

"It's great knowing I'll be on the UK Clio Cup grid in 2016 – I hope with Westbourne's input we can work towards top 10 results and maybe even the top six by season's end," said Spires. "Seeing Paul Streater, who I raced against in the Clio Cup Series, do so well on his Clio Cup

debut [at Brands] last year has certainly given us confidence."

Westbourne will offer technical assistance to Spires and PP ahead of a full return to the category in 2017. The team last competed in the series with James Colburn and Devon Modell in 2014, with Colburn finishing fifth in the standings. Team boss Richard Colburn said: "We get on well with the people from PP so are looking forward to working with them. This gives us a really good way back into the UK Clio Cup after a year away and sets us up for our plans to have a three- or four-car team on the grid in 2017."

Maximum takes over the Volkswagen Cup

Maximum Motorsport will take over the running and promotion of the Volkswagen Racing Cup this season after entering a partnership with Volkswagen Racing UK.

The team headed by Stewart Lines already operates the VAG Trophy, and the VW Cup will now join it as an MSVR registered series.

The VW Cup will remain on the British GT support bill at six of its seven meetings this year, only missing the Brands Hatch opener. Instead, the VW Cup season will begin at Donington Park.

By bringing the two

Volkswagen categories under the same team, it is intended to create a ladder for drivers to progress up.

"The fit for us to run this alongside our VAG Trophy series makes absolute sense and brings a lot of efficiencies behind the scenes," said Lines. "We've got a great relationship with the Volkswagen Racing UK team, which will ensure that we have a smooth handover and bring together the best from both of our organisations. All of which will be great news for drivers and teams as we move forward."



AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

RACING NEWS

Photos: Steve Jones, Dave Ayres, Jakob Ebrej, Gary Hawkins

Burns back for GT4 Supercup bid

Ginetta GT4 Supercup regular Will Burns will switch to the Douglas Motorsport team for his third attempt at the championship this year.

Burns, 25, finished fifth in the points last season with the HHC Motorsport team, but will move across to Wayne Douglas's squad for this year after HHC decided to withdraw from the series.

Weston-super-Mare man Burns has previously been runner-up in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge in 2013. He scored 11 podium finishes last season.

"I'm looking forward to working with Douglas Motorsport and I'm focused on using my two years of experience in the GT4 Supercup to fight for the title this year," said Burns.

"Having [former champion] Carl Breeze and Jamie Orton as teammates in 2015 helped me learn that consistency is key to a title fight. I'm aiming for maximum points each weekend, but I know that regular race wins aren't always the key to winning titles."



Burns in with Douglas

SPORTS 2000 WILL HEAD TO LE MANS AFTER EURO TIE-UP



Competitors in the Sports 2000 Championship will get the chance to race at Le Mans this year after the club announced a new European tie-up.

The Sports Racing Car Club has linked with French organiser HVM Racing, which runs the Proto Cup for similar two-litre sports cars. The deal means that UK Sports 2000 drivers from all three classes – Duratec, Pinto and Historic – will get a guest grid slots for HVMR's meeting on the Le Mans Bugatti Circuit on September 23-25. SRCC is also in talks with HVMR to

allow its Historic class cars – produced pre-1985 – to join the Grand Prix de Pau Historique race on the famous French street circuit on May 21/22.

Sports 2000 head Colin Feyerabend said: "Traditionally we've always run a European race, but they can prove costly if we don't fill the grid. With this tie-up we can open the door to Europe more easily as we're running with local cars, which makes it more financially stable."

"Le Mans is the ultimate place to race a sports-prototype so we're expecting big interest for that date."

Feyerabend added that the SRCC was exploring tie-ups in other areas of Europe, including Germany. A date at Hockenheim has been tabled for 2017.

Sports 2000's UK schedule includes key changes for this year, including a return to Snetterton 300 in support of British GT on August 6/7, and going back to Castle Combe for the first time since 2011. "The calendar offers a blend of tracks and we're hopeful of good grids," added Feyerabend. "The recession caught up with us quite late, but drivers and cars are coming back out now."

CALENDAR

2016 Sports 2000

| DATE | VENUE |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| April 23/24 | Silverstone International |
| May 28/30 | Oulton Park International |
| June 11/12 | Thruxton |
| July 3 | Donington Park |
| July 17 | Castle Combe |
| Aug 6/7 | Snetterton 300 |
| Aug 27/28 | Brands Hatch GP |
| Sept 23-25 | Le Mans Bugatti |
| Oct 22/23 | Brands Hatch Indy |

BMW Race Days classes introduce £12,000 prize fund to reward clean driving this season

Both the BMW Compact Cup and new 330 Challenge series will benefit from a share of a new £12,000 prize fund aimed at promoting good driving standards this season.

BMW Race Days, which organises both the Compact Cup and fledgling 330 category, has put up £6000 for each championship to reward drivers who

race fairly and cleanly.

The prize fund will be divided up across each series' rounds, and will then be awarded to drivers up and down the grid by a random draw at the end of each weekend.

The Compact Cup will award £850 per weekend, with the 330 Challenge getting £1200 per weekend due to it having fewer rounds in its first year.

Organisers are planning to use a system whereby drivers are placed into three groups according to their average finishing positions over a weekend. Each group would then have its own draw for a share of the cash. Drivers involved in any driving standards issues would be excluded from the draws.

BMW Race Days head Paul

McErlean said: "We were given the cash by a series backer and wanted to reward drivers with it, but if you just reward race winners you can only give something back to a narrow percentage of the grid."

"We've never had a problem with driving standards, but this incentive acts to reward drivers who keep out of trouble."



Popular BMW Compact Cup will put up £850 per weekend



ERS will join up with German race event

Endurance Racing Series adds Nurburgring Nordschleife to calendar

The Endurance Racing Series will race on the Nurburgring Nordschleife this year as part of its five-event calendar.

Entering its second season, organisers are planning to run a three-hour event alongside an as yet unconfirmed German club on October 16.

Starting with a round at Rockingham on April 23, the series will switch from the two-

and three-hour events it ran in 2015 to double its track time with six-hour events at every round – aside from its Nurburgring outing – which will include a day-dusk race at Anglesey and a day-night race at Snetterton to end its season. "Last year we were running three-hour races and we were the only ones doing that," said series boss David Hornsey. "This year

some competitors have moved in to that space, so to give our customers something unique, but also to avoid treading on our competitors' toes, we decided to switch to six-hour races."

"We're very lucky that of some of the most iconic circuits around the world, we're within distance of two of the best – Spa-Francorchamps and the Nurburgring Nordschleife."

CALENDAR

2016 ERS

| DATE | VENUE |
|----------|--------------------------|
| April 23 | Rockingham |
| May 14 | Anglesey |
| July 24 | Snetterton (300) |
| Oct 16 | Nurburgring Nordschleife |
| Nov 4/5 | Snetterton (200) |

"We'll be working with the RCN [Rundstrecken Challenge Nurburgring] and we'll be joining the grid with them – it should be a fantastic event."

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HISTORICS

'GT and Sports Cars
will celebrate'
Tenth anniversary, below



DOWN THE PUB WITH

JOHN BRINDLEY

Age: 82 Lives: Northampton
Retired racer

He raced for more than 30 years

"I lived and raced in Australia in the 1960s and then raced all sorts of cars in the UK, including Production Saloons, British Touring Cars, Thundersports and historics. In 1979 I had a Lotus 23B and won the first race at the first HSCC meeting at Donington Park. In 1980 and 1981 I had a Lotus 22 Formula Junior and the 23B together."

He raced with John Foulston

"They were very good days and that's what I liked to do best and I was fortunate to be successful. One year, in 1981 or 1982, I picked up six trophies in one night; how fortunate was that? I raced for John Foulston for six years up until his death in September 1987."

They hit it off straight away

"I knew Martin Covill very well and John asked Martin who he would recommend to drive for him. Martin suggested two people and I met John one lunch time. He asked me what my favourite lunch was and I said a cappuccino coffee and a smoked salmon sandwich. He said that's exactly what he liked and about 40 minutes later he said I was going to drive for him. It was a great opportunity and I said I'd do my best."

They had a lot of success

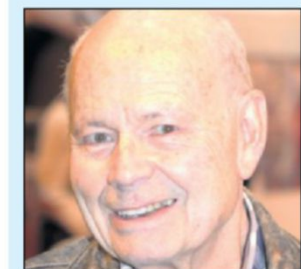
"I raced the Can-Am cars, like the McLaren M8F, and the Thundersports Lola for John and it was fantastic. He was pretty brave and determined to do well. After two years with him, he wouldn't drive a car unless I'd got it set-up to suit his driving style."

He wasn't there the day Foulston was killed

"He bought this McLaren M15S Indycar and I told him it was lethal. I tested it for him twice. I still get quite upset about it and the day he was killed was the first time he went testing without me. I'd been there every time he went testing."

There was a final footnote

"When John died, in his safe were five letters and five cheques and his wife Mary said mine wasn't the biggest cheque but it was the nicest letter. It was addressed to: 'A dear friend who taught me to race and win.'"



Brindley: fortunate man



John Grant will race his fabulous McLaren

CAN-AM CELEBRATION TARGETS 50 RACERS

Ground-shaking monsters set to headline Silverstone's showpiece

By Paul Lawrence

As many as 50 Can-Am cars will line up at the Silverstone Classic in July to celebrate the 50th birthday of the category.

Nick Wigley, promoter of the event, has confirmed high competitor interest in the pair of races for some of the most powerful sports-racing cars ever produced.

"It's been fantastic and there is huge excitement about it and my ambition is to see 50 cars on the grid," said Wigley. "We've called it Can-Am 50 and we're aiming to get 50 cars."

The Silverstone races, first revealed in *MN* last July, will feature a total of more than 300,000 horsepower and the leading cars will be approaching 200mph on the run down Hangar Straight.

The Can-Am series started in 1966, running to Group 7 regulations with little or no restriction on power and aerodynamics. By the late 1960s, seven-litre Chevrolet engines were common and Porsche later ran the 1000bhp open-cockpit turbocharged 917.

In Europe, the class evolved into Interserie, but the heartland of Can-Am racing was in North America, where the series

ended after the 1986 season.

On the grid will be John Grant, chairman of the British Racing Drivers' Club, in his McLaren M8C/D. Grant suffered a huge accident in the car at Brands Hatch in 2010 and has only raced it once since it was rebuilt. But he says the chance to race at Silverstone will tempt him back into the 1970 car. "I can't wait to be part of it," said Grant.

Formula Juniors flock to celebrate HSCC's landmark anniversary

A record entry of 120 Formula Junior single-seaters is the target for the HSCC's 50th anniversary meeting on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit on July 1-3.

The event is part of the three-

year Formula Junior Diamond Jubilee World Tour and will include three races for front-engined cars, rear-engined drum-braked cars and rear-engined disc-braked cars. The three grids will have capacity

for 114 cars in total.

Prime mover Duncan Rabagliati says he wants the weekend to be the biggest-ever gathering of Juniors. "The plan is to get over 100 cars and the target is 120," said Rabagliati.



FJunior will be at Brands

Entry boom for Future Classics

The Classic Sports Car Club is splitting its Future Classic series into classes for 1970s and 1980s cars to cater for growing demand.

With 100 cars registered last year, the club is hoping to build towards split grids, possibly as early as this season if support is strong.

"The cut-off date is 1990 and it is for production cars on treaded tyres," said the CSCC's Hugo Holder. "There is certainly potential to split the races into two grids."

The club's 2016 schedule includes a first visit to Thruxton (August 13/14), which will be covered in three hour-long programmes on Motors TV.



Toivonen's iconic Lancia

Toivonen to be remembered at Race Retro

The life of rally driver Henri Toivonen will be celebrated at Race Retro, at Stoneleigh near Coventry on February 26-28.

Toivonen and co-driver Sergio Cresto died on the 1986 Tour de Corse and their deaths contributed to the banning of Group B rally cars for 1987. The 30th anniversary of the accident will be marked by a feature display cars from his career including an example of the Lancia Delta S4.

Other cars on show will be the rebuilt Ford Escort Mk2 he drove on the 1979 Lombard RAC Rally, as well as an Opel Ascona, Porsche 911 and Talbot Sunbeam Lotus.

The display has been co-ordinated by Peter Clarke, owner of the Escort that Toivonen drove in 1979.

The event organisers hope that his younger brother Harri will be present along with former co-drivers Paul White and Phil Boland.

OBITUARY

Michael MacDowel 1932-2016

Michael MacDowel, one of Britain's leading hillclimbers of the 1970s and a prominent BRDC member, died last week at the age of 83.

MacDowel started racing sportscars in the 1950s and joined the Cooper team in 1956. He also raced single-seaters and made one grand prix start in an F2 Cooper T43 at Rouen.

After national service he became competitions manager at Jaguar and was central to the competition development of the E-type. He later started hillclimbing and went on to win the British title in 1973 and '74 in his Brabham BT36X.

He retired at end of 1979 but continued to serve the sport through work with the Motor Sports Association and BRDC.

IN BRIEF

MG Live gets set

MGLive, the major event in the MG Car Club racing season, will celebrate the heritage of the marque this year with two days of racing on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit on June 4/5. All of the club's race categories will be in action, including historic classes like Thoroughbred Sportscars and Equipe GTs, along with various guest categories.

Edwards outing

Matt Edwards will warm up for his British Rally Championship campaign by driving Peter Smith's Opel Kadett on the Red Kite Stages on February 21. Edwards will rally the rare Opel for the first time with Will Rogers co-driving and they will use the event to test the latest gravel tyres from DMACK. Edwards is expected to mix it with the leading Ford Escorts at the head of the historic field.

Young memorial

A memorial service will be held for Philip Young at Brooklands on Wednesday March 9. The founder of the Endurance Rally Association, and a pioneer of classic rallying, died in hospital in Bangkok on March 11 last year at the age of 66 following a motorcycle accident. The celebration is open to all but is by invite and anyone wishing to attend should contact nikki@endurorally.com

Baby F3s run

Ten races at seven events will make up the calendar for the 500cc F3 championship under the 500 Owners Association. The season highlight is a double-header at the Zandvoort Historic Grand Prix in early September, while the schedule concludes at the Castle Combe Autumn Classic on October 1. Teenager Peter de la Roche, who won at Goodwood last September, will defend his 2015 title.

Sutton in harness

Famous co-driver and rally team owner David Sutton will return to co-driving on this week's Monte Carlo Classique Rally. Sutton, 74, will partner Mark Butler in an original 1961 Lotus Elite on the event that runs in tandem to the Monte Carlo Historique. Butler is now the owner of Historic Motorsport Ltd, the company set up by Sutton.

Michael McKee

MN is sad to report the death of BRDC member Michael McKee, 82, who was once team-mate to Peter Arundell in the Team Lotus Formula Junior team. He enjoyed a lot of success but retired at the end of 1961 after some F2 races. McKee later moved to Monaco and set up the Monaco Fine Arts Gallery, which backed Ronnie Peterson's F1 March in 1976.

GT cars celebrate

The GT and Sports Car Cup will have a five-race schedule in 2016 to celebrate the 10th anniversary season of the race series for pre-1966 GT cars and pre-1963 sports-prototypes. The season starts at the Donington Historic Festival and takes in races at Silverstone and Brands Hatch before heading to Dijon and Portimao in October.

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

LATVALA HANDED A SUSPENDED BAN

Finn goes before stewards after hitting spectator on Monte



Jari-Matti retired from podium position

By David Evans

Volkswagen's Jari-Matti Latvala has been handed a suspended one-rally ban from the World Rally Championship after knocking a spectator down during last week's Monte Carlo Rally.

The Finn went off the road on the exit of a right-hander in the second run at the Lardier et Valenca-Faye stage. His Volkswagen Polo R WRC ran along a ditch on the outside of the corner before hitting a culvert, which threw the car up onto the side of the road. Latvala then drove into a spectator knocking him down. The spectator is not believed to have been injured in the incident.

Latvala denies seeing the fan. His rally ended when he ran out of time trying to fix the car's damaged suspension.

The issue is clouded by a written statement from WRC TV stage end reporter Julian Porter, who told the stewards: "Both driver and co-driver of the number two Polo were working on the front-left suspension when Jari-Matti called me over to tell me something. Jari said to me: 'When we went off we hit a spectator, we did not hit him hard, but can you please check he is OK?' And could I get in touch with somebody who could do this."

That statement put Latvala in contravention of Article 40.4 of the FIA

WRC Sporting Regulations, which states the crew is obligated to stop at the scene of an incident to check on the well-being of the spectator they have hit.

After reading Porter's words in the stewards' meeting, Latvala denied that was exactly what he had said.

Latvala recalled saying: "Can you go and confirm with the marshals that I haven't hit anybody."

The stewards decision states: "Upon being questioned who informed him and when he was informed that he had hit a spectator, he could not reply precisely."

The stewards fined Latvala and co-driver Miikka Anttila 5000 euro and handed them a one-event ban suspended until the end of the season.

Latvala apologised for the incident, saying: "I would first like to stress that I am very sorry about what happened.

We came off the very slippery road after a right turn, skidded into a ditch and came out in a field. My visibility was hampered briefly by thick steam from the engine and mud that had sprayed up from the ditch. I saw a spectator jump to the side and drove slowly back to the road. The team contacted me after the stage and informed me that I had touched a spectator. As I said, I am very sorry about the whole incident."

In a further communication from the team, 24 hours later, Latvala added: "My co-driver Miikka Anttila and I fully accept the stewards' decision. The safety of spectators and participants must take top priority at any rally. Miikka and I are in absolutely no doubt about that. We very much regret the incident and will do everything possible to avoid this kind of thing happening again in the future. At the same time, we are pleased that the spectator got off so lightly this time, and that nothing serious happened."

Volkswagen team principal Jost Capito said anybody who knew Latvala would know he would not drive away after knocking down a spectator.

"I believe him that he hasn't seen him," Capito told *MN*. "There was so much steam and mud in the screen. I think he saw something, but he did not see the guy on the bonnet. Jari-Matti is not the guy who would not stop if he realised he had hit somebody. You know, this guy is crying when a fly hits his windscreen."

On the subject of the conflicting reports to the stewards from Latvala and Porter, Capito said: "I don't think you can say every word, word-by-word. What this shows is what Jari-Matti's character is like. He was repairing

the car, but he wanted to know, if he hit somebody, he wanted to know if they were alright. I think that influenced the stewards to understand that Jari-Matti doesn't just care about the car and the rally, he cares about the people."

Despite feeling Latvala was innocent of contravening the FIA regulation, Capito said he thought the penalty was fair.

"If you do something wrong, it doesn't matter if you do it on purpose or not, you do something wrong," he said. "And it was not right. If he sees people around him, he could have stopped and asked: 'Is everybody fine?' That would have been the right reaction. This is why the decision is fair, it's not a ban."

Capito added that he was confident Latvala would recover from this blow, saying: "He is professional. He very much appreciates how the team handled it and stands behind him."

"The whole situation was handled totally professionally, on the PR side, on the technical side, on the human side. That helps Jari-Matti a lot to be in a good position for Sweden."

Volkswagen's attempts to contact the spectator to enquire about his health have proved fruitless.

"We went through Facebook and social media to try to contact him," said Capito. "We didn't achieve that, but the guys who were in the same place came back to us and said: 'It's OK, no problem'."

Ogier: No worry over Capito exit

World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier has no concerns about a potential dip in performance when Volkswagen team principal Jost Capito departs for McLaren later this year.

Capito's shock move was announced earlier this month and, while Ogier admitted he was surprised, he added that the move was a good one for his boss.

"It was a surprise for everybody," Ogier told *MN*. "I don't think anybody could expect this. But I immediately respect his decision. This is the decision of a guy who wants to have a new challenge and has the opportunity to work for such an amazing team like McLaren. I understand that he wants to do that. I can only wish him good luck and the same success he had with us."

Despite plenty of speculation, Capito told *MN* there is no news on when he will depart or who will replace him.

Ogier said he remained confident Volkswagen would make the right choice of replacement.

"For sure now we all hope that someone will replace Jost in the same way," said Ogier. "I'm not worried for this, I hope we have someone with the same commitment."

Capito is expected to remain in charge of the German outfit until a successor has been chosen.



Ogier: Jost Capito departure a surprise

▶ JEAN TODT ON THE FUTURE OF WORLD RALLYCROSS

▶▶▶ PAGE 27



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'Steve Furzeland was unstoppable in Somerset'
Brean Stages report, page 19



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

HYUNDAI CAN IMPROVE i20



Neuville scored a podium finish

Thierry Neuville is confident there is more to come from Hyundai's all-new i20 WRC on next month's Rally Sweden following its debut podium in Monte Carlo last week.

Neuville ended the event in third place, although he was two minutes down on rally winner Sebastien Ogier – with much of that time loss coming on a disastrous start for the team. The i20s were running too soft on Thursday and Friday, robbing the drivers of confidence.

Neuville said: "We cannot say we are on fire when we are two

minutes behind the winner, but we are learning more and we are improving the car. We are still missing mileage and knowledge but, with every kilometre, this is getting better."

The Belgian, who set two fastest times on Saturday, said he wasn't worried about the lack of pace on Friday and pointed at Sweden as a more realistic benchmark for the pace of the new car.

"I knew about the settings, I knew I wasn't confident and I knew I was still learning," he said. "We should be quicker in

Sweden with the rhythm. We have a good reference from last year and I hope we will be in the game from the beginning."

Team principal Michel Nandan added: "During the first days the car was not set-up for the conditions. It was our mistake. We should have done a full Tarmac setting."

Wholesale changes on Friday night offered a marked improvement for the weekend.

"The car is better than the old one," said Nandan. "There is no doubt about this. It's difficult to know how much closer because

of the conditions and running different tyres and then, of course, in the end of the event Sebastien [Ogier] was cruising. In Sweden we will know more about the speed from the car. It's an event where you will probably see how much we have closed the gap."

Neuville managed a problem with the centre bearing on the car's propshaft – which left him in front-wheel drive only for the final stage – to finish third, ensuring Hyundai ended the event joint top of the manufacturers' standings.



Meeke: missing events

Meeke won't lead every Citroen WRC entry, with drivers sharing

Citroen's three drivers will share the rallies contested by the French manufacturer – with Kris Meeke likely to miss some DS3 WRC competition in 2016.

While the French firm's programme for this season has been decided, team principal Yves Matton would not disclose anything beyond next month's Rally Sweden, or who would be driving for

the team. Meeke, Craig Breen and Stephane Lefebvre will share seat time in the World Rally Championship this year.

"The idea is to give approximately an equal amount [of competition] to the three drivers," said Matton. "I want to keep full flexibility and I don't want to talk about who will drive on which rallies or which rallies

we will compete on – just in case we make a change in our plans.

"What the drivers will do will be linked to our test programme as well. Kris will not do all of the rallies which we will do as a team."

China is the only long-haul event that Citroen is believed to be considering this season, with European rounds favoured.

Breen and Martin join Citroen for the first time to recce before Rally Sweden debut

Craig Breen completed his first event with the Abu Dhabi Total World Rally Team in Monte Carlo last week – but the Irishman was an interested observer rather than competing driver.

Breen and co-driver Scott Martin completed the recce in the French Alps and then remained with the team for the duration to familiarise himself with his new team and surroundings.

He will compete in a Citroen DS3 WRC for the first time at next month's Rally Sweden.

"It's just fantastic to be part of the whole team," he said. "The recce, everything was a great experience for the future. It's been so worthwhile to stay on for the rest of the weekend to see how these guys operate and to know which person is doing which job, when it comes to Sweden it should

be a fairly smooth transition in that regard."

Breen admitted working with a world championship-winning squad like Citroen was an eye-opener for the former WRC Academy and SWRC title winner.

"It's incredible," he said. "Doing the recce was so cool, Scott [Martin] and I came out to the car in the morning from the hotel and the car had been warmed up, all

the frost was gone from the screen – everything was absolutely ready to give you the best possible opportunity. All I had to do was deal with the round thing in front of me and tell Scott the notes.

"I was looking at the petrol gauge and thinking: 'Where shall we pull in and put fuel in her?' But then I remembered these guys will do that for us! I can't wait to get to Sweden."



Former Monte Carlo Rally winner Francois Delecour returned to the scene of former glories last week, driving a Peugeot 207 S2000. The reigning FIA R-GT champion starred on the event, finishing a credible 16th overall despite spending two minutes in a ditch on Saturday afternoon.

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"It's a chance to take the WRC to a new audience"



If any other round of the World Rally Championship required you to drive 300 miles to attend a ceremonial start and a couple of the Thursday night stages, there would be uproar. It wouldn't happen.

It happens every year on the Monte Carlo Rally. And nobody ever questions it. And nor should they.

In all honesty, the trip south from Gap to Monaco is about more than a ceremonial start, it's about the launch of the World Rally Championship season. There are those who growl about whatever-list celebrities descending on the principality to fawn over our sport, a sport about which they know nothing.

What's the point, they will ask, of superstar French footballer Jean-Pierre Papin or former world number one tennis player Caroline Wozniacki getting into a World Rally Car and doing donuts?

The point is profile. And the chance to take the sport to another level and another audience. Wozniacki was in town courtesy of her first round exit from the Australian Open, but her mood was brightened considerably after any number of 360s with world champion Sebastien Ogier.

"That was incredible," she said when she got out of the car. "It just didn't make any sense what he was doing! Unbelievable."

That's worth something to us. When she's back on tour, she'll spread our word. How can that be a bad thing?

The WRC can't afford to be either narrow-minded or proud when it comes to this kind of thing. Yes, we're on the up these days, but the championship still has a very long way to go before it gets back to the glory days and we'll take lip service from celebs of any standing.

Why am I defending the championship launch? I don't know. It was a great, well-run and worthy introduction to another fantastic Monte Carlo Rally.

And it was well worth the journey south. Then north. Then south.

The event's true value came across loud and clear talking to one of the many Monaco locals hanging out in Casino Square last week: Allan McNish.

An eight-day trip to America precluded any watching in the mountains, but the Scot wasn't going to miss out on the chance of some doorstep fever.

"Like the grand prix, this event is very important around here," he says. "Local people like to get involved. When I came in, one of the ladies organising things, she's one of the mums from school – our daughter goes to school with her son. This isn't just the elite of motorsport, it's a real community thing. I've got two children, a seven and a 10-year-old. When they come out of school and they come and have a look around, they get that smell, the vibe and a wee bit on inspiration and atmosphere. Then they'll go home and watch it on television and that gives them that first view of motorsport. That's what got you and me hooked."

Not to mention Wozniacki and Papin.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
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RALLY NEWS

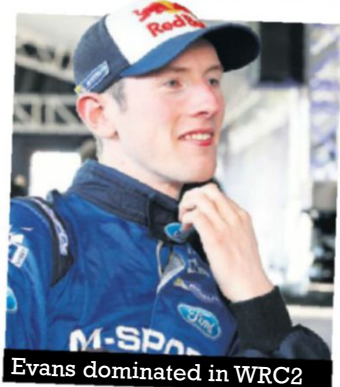
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WILSON=EVANS DRIVE 'BEST YET'

M-Sport boss hails Evans' fightback WRC2 victory in new R5



New Fiesta upgrade helped Evans to win



Evans dominated in WRC2

By David Evans

Elfyn Evans' fight back to world rallying's elite has begun with what team principal Malcolm Wilson described as his best drive ever in Monte Carlo last week.

The Welshman dominated WRC2 on his return to the series, winning the category by more than two minutes, despite losing more than four minutes with punctures on his Ford Fiesta R5.

Wilson said: "I've told Elfyn that this one was the best rally he's ever driven. He said he wasn't so sure, but, for me, it's

the consistency he's shown. In Corsica last year, we saw two fantastic stages and then he'd drop down a little bit; there's been none of that here, he's just stayed absolutely on it and annihilated everybody when he's had to. I really hope this is the start of the fight back from Elfyn and I think it is. He's been absolutely fantastic."

Evans, who was dropped from the M-Sport World Rally Team at the end of last season, was typically reserved in judging his own performance. He said: "This event has been really, really positive. Craig [Parry co-driver] and

I have worked together for the first time and by Friday, that was starting to feel second nature, which is so important for the relationship in the car. Craig and I are both happy with the progress we've made and we've certainly done the job Malcolm wanted – it's good from that perspective."

Evans' next challenge comes next month when he faces the Skoda factory squad – including local hero Pontus Tidemand – on Rally Sweden.

"Sweden's not going to be easy," added Wilson, "but Elfyn's got good experience of that rally and let's see. It's going to be very interesting."

M-Sport taking Evo upgrade orders

Ford founder Henry Ford would have approved of M-Sport's success with its 2016-specification Fiesta R5.

True to Ford's mantra, the car won on Sunday and sold on Monday. Actually, that's not exactly true: it led on Friday, was selling on Saturday and seriously selling on Monday.

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson was delighted with the step his team has made in the development of the R5 car.

"It's been the dream debut," he said. "We knew the car was a big step forward, but until we saw it in action and in real competition, we didn't honestly know just how big. It's fantastic. For me, this is the biggest advance M-Sport has ever made in the time we have been doing engines. We haven't made as big a performance gain with anything we've done before. And the really good news is that we haven't touched the car, it's run absolutely faultlessly through the rally."

Much of this first stage of upgrades to the Fiesta R5 are centred on the engine; the second stage – the chassis improvements – are coming in March.

"The good news for M-Sport is that we've been taking orders for cars over the weekend," added Wilson. "Understandably, people have waited to see what the car's like before picking up the phone. But they're calling now!"

Talking about the new car, WRC2 winner Evans said: "The car has come on leaps and bounds from where it started."

David Evans

Higgins and Drew set to miss opening Rally America snow round

David Higgins will miss the opening round of Rally America with his team electing to skip the event.

The Manxman – along with British co-driver Craig Drew – has won every event he has finished in Rally America going back to the penultimate round of the 2013 series. Subaru Rally Team USA has,

however, elected not to enter the Michigan opener.

Higgins is expected to tackle six American rounds this year as part of a wider programme of events.

"It'll be strange to miss SnoDrift," he said, having won the snow round for the last two years, "but we have a plan with the team this year

that will make the whole thing quite exciting. It looks like I might be doing more events and different events, including some more rallycross, which is really exciting."

Higgins has won the Rally America title for the last five years with Subaru's Impreza WRX STI.

Prodrive Golf wins Chinese Rally Championship with Atkinson

Prodrive is celebrating victory in the Chinese Rally Championship – the first full season for its Volkswagen Golf SCRC.

The Banbury-built Golf won the title on the delayed final Chinese round, the Jixi Rally, earlier this month. While the cars are prepared by Prodrive, they are run in the CRC by the FAW-VW team, with Chris Atkinson as lead driver and local Chen Dean

as number two. Atkinson won five from seven 2015 rounds, but the Australian is not eligible for the drivers' title, which can only be won by a Chinese driver.

Prodrive engineer Richard Thompson, who leads the programme, said: "This is a prestigious title for the local Chinese VW joint venture to win. With our technical support and a brand new car, the VW Golf SCRC, built

specifically to the regulations, the team and driver have now been able to achieve their goal. It has been a great team effort with Prodrive and FAW-VW engineers and technicians working alongside each other.

"We have now set our sights on retaining the title in 2016 and have already started work on building a fourth VW Golf SCRC in Banbury."

Lappi not threatened by Fiesta R5 update

Skoda star Esapekka Lappi is not worried about M-Sport's development of its Ford Fiesta R5 car despite Elfyn Evans' WRC2 Monte Carlo win.

Lappi was competing in the French Alps for just the second time in his career, but didn't use the event as a point-scoring opportunity. His times improved as the rally progressed.

"I was lost for the driving early in the rally," he said. "I didn't understand how I should drive on this dirty, snowy places or icy places – I had never driven slicks on ice. I used the tips I picked up early and it got better in the second half of the rally. I am quite satisfied, to be honest."

On the subject of M-Sport's improved R5 car, he added: "I'm not worried. Why would I worry? I can't do anything about it at all, so what is the point to think about it. We have been doing some small things with the Skoda, we go step-by-step, but we have no big evolutions."



Lappi improved as he got to grips with the tricky surface

Lappi, who starred in last year's WRC2 season, said he welcomed Evans to the competition.

"For sure," he said, "he gives more weight or more value for the championship. It's nice to compare the times, if we can

match the speed. He has been in the World Rally Championship, OK not at the top, but sometimes quite close – it's a good extra."

Lappi funded the Monte Carlo drive himself, and will also attempt to fund a Rally Sweden entry.



Photos: Jakob Ebrej

MOTORSPORT NEWS
says...

Terrestrial TV is key for BRC

The deal to guarantee terrestrial TV coverage is huge one for the emerging British Championship; an announcement that competitors have been awaiting as eagerly as fans.

While ideally the TV deal would have come about a bit sooner to give drivers longer to pitch for sponsorship, the championship has been working hard behind the scenes to fund and choose the correct production company, which they believe they have found in Hayfisher.

It's hard to look past the company that has WRC and BRC experience; how many companies can boast that experience?

And the quality is really the key here. Rumours have been rife about where the coverage would end up, and a popular gossiping point has been live streaming. Whether you believe live streaming is the future of the sport or not – that's for a different debate – I think it's important the championship walks before it can run.

Embarking on a relatively unproven method of coverage would be unwise at this point, but easy to embrace as the championship has benefited from being so forward thinking.

Hopefully I don't sound too pessimistic, but this is in essence a new championship. New events, new organisers...

Scoring a reliable TV package will give some continuity to fans who can't get over to the likes of the Circuit of Ireland. But it also gives drivers and teams a sensible option of promoting their sponsors effectively, without having to trawl through the dark web to get it.

It's difficult to find any sort of middle ground in terms of opinion in where the BRC is going at the moment, it's all good. Let's hope that another sensible decision by the organisers yields the quality of coverage all the stakeholders in the championship deserve.

Jack Benyon

BRC to benefit from full TV package

BRC GETS CHANNEL 4 AND BT SPORTS TV

The British Rally Championship will benefit from TV coverage on both Channel 4 and BT Sports in 2016, *Motorsport News* can reveal.

The series will host a 30-minute programme on Channel 4, as well as a one-hour highlights package on BT Sport for all seven rounds of the new-for-2016 championship.

The organisers have struck a deal with Worcestershire-based Hayfisher productions, which is responsible for a number of motorsport TV packages, such as Formula E and the Blancpain GT series. The company has also worked in rallying before.

"We are delighted to be involved with the relaunched BRC and to have Channel 4 and BT Sport on board is a real coup," explained Richard Hay, boss of Hayfisher Productions. "We have

worked previously with British and World Championship rallying and it is great to be back involved with the sport once again. Rallying in Britain is on the up and it is fantastic to have the Championship on terrestrial television for the new-look 2016 season."

The deal comes at a strong period for British rallying, with Channel 5 announcing over 100 hours of WRC coverage earlier this month, including an extensive Rally GB package for the October-based event.

The BRC has had a number of homes in the past, including on *Grandstand* and *Top Gear* on the BBC, plus appearances on Sky Sports.

Ben Taylor – managing director of championship promoter, International Motor Sports – believes that the TV announcement is a key step

forward for the series.

"Achieving this fantastic broadcast package with Channel 4 and BT Sport is another important development for the championship," said Taylor. "The BRC is looking fantastic for the new season, with a great variety of cars, drivers and nationalities, and this TV deal underlines the strength of the series. The buzz is really back now and we can't wait to get started in March."

Channel 4 is the new terrestrial home of Formula 1 in the UK in 2016, meaning more motorsport fans are likely to be viewing the channel's programmes. BT Sports already shows the WRC, national rallying, and elements of circuit racing.

The exact time and day of each show is still under review, but is expected to be announced by mid-February.



Elfyn Evans will be in the spotlight in 2016

BTRDA rally championship survives on TV for each round with renewal of Special Stage Rally Review package

As well as the BRC scoring a new TV deal, one of Britain's major series has saved its TV coverage in the face of adversity.

The BTRDA rally championship, which served as the most prestigious UK championship in 2015 thanks

to the BRC's hiatus, will once again partner with Special Stage Rally Review.

While the deal isn't increased coverage – it's actually a reduction from an hour to just a half-hour in length – it's vital for the clubman championship to

remain on screen in light of competitors giving their sponsors air time and making national rallying viable. The home of the coverage – Motors TV – is also available on free view, making it more accessible.

The renewal has certainly been

popular, with likeable presenter Paul Woodford and producer Wayne Goldring (as well as the rest of the crew) becoming permanent fixtures; not just in the BTRDA but through other national championships such as the Motorsport News Circuit

Rally Championship.

The BTRDA has suffered the loss of REIS, one of its title sponsors, but the continued backing of Special Stages and its TV coverage is a welcome and necessary move on behalf of the championship. **Jack Benyon**

SUNOCO CHALLENGERS HEAD TO THE ROLEX 24 AT DAYTONA

This week the 2016 Sunoco Challengers, Jonny Adam and Paddy McClughan, head out to Florida to Daytona

International Speedway to prepare for their 'hard-earned prize drives' during the Rolex 24 At Daytona race weekend from 28th to 31st January.

Sunoco Whelen Challenge Champion Jonny Adam is ready to take on the twice around the clock endurance race at Daytona International Speedway. He will be driving in the Action Express run No. 31 Whelen Engineering Corvette DP with team mates Eric Curran, Dane Cameron and Simon Pagenaud, in the Rolex 24 At Daytona which starts at 2:40pm (EST) on Saturday 30th January.

In the support race to the Rolex 24, we will also see Sunoco 200 Challenge Champion Paddy McClughan take on the BMW Performance 200 race with team mate Chris Beaufait in the Racers Edge Motorsports No. 16 Ford Mustang Boss 302R. The BMW Performance 200 (CTSC) race takes place on Friday 29th from 1.45pm (EST), with grid walk and formation laps making up the ceremony ahead of the race.

Anglo American Oil Company Ltd continues to represent Sunoco Race

Fuels, Driven Racing Oil, PJ1, ISC racers tape, KLEERS motorsport range and its own bespoke 'R' products in Europe and the Middle East. 2016 is looking to be as an exciting year as before as they continue to fuel over 20 Championships. During 2015, the business moved to new purpose-built premises in Dorset encompassing 1,950 sq m specialist warehouse, workshop, bespoke blending facility and offices. This new location means they are now better equipped to serve their customers more efficiently than they have done before!

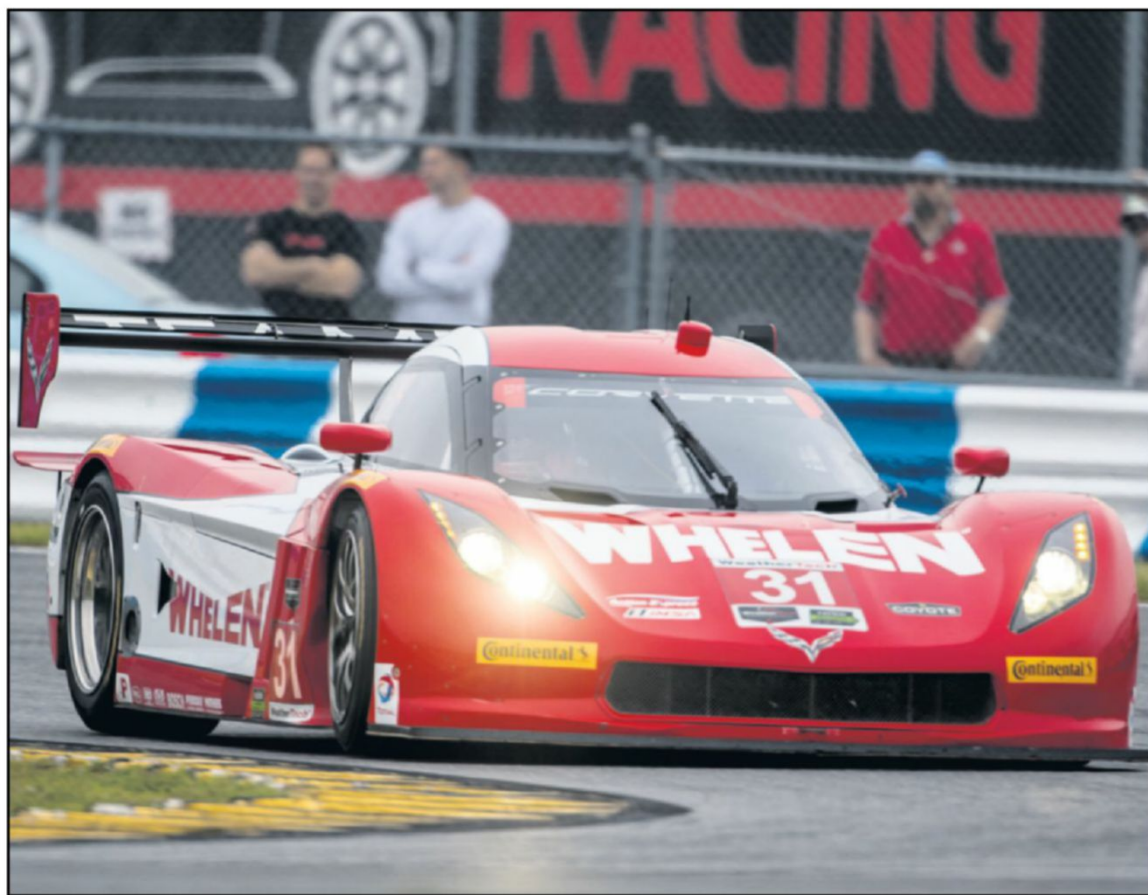
Anglo American Oil Company continue to run the Sunoco Whelen Challenge and the Sunoco 200 Challenge which have, for the seventh year running, proved a great success in with Jonny Adam and Paddy McClughan crowned the 2016 winners.

For any Sunoco Challenge enquiries please contact hannah@aaoil.co.uk

Company contact details:
www.aaoil.co.uk

Anglo American Oil Company Ltd.
58 Holton Road, Holton Heath Trading Park, Poole, Dorset, BH166LT.
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NB. We would like to offer our apologies about the incorrect article and details about Anglo American Oil Company/Sunoco UK which appeared in 14th January Motosport News.



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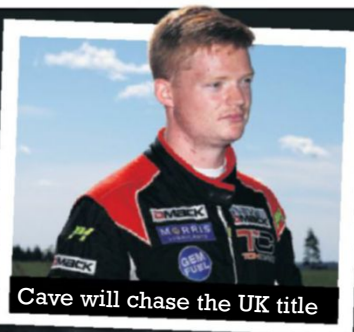
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'Ogier wins as Meeke suffers'
Monte Carlo report, p20



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, FIAERC.com



Cave will chase the UK title

CAVE ADDS MORGAN FOR FULL BRC IN '16



Cave has driven R5 at Rally GB

Drive DMACK Trophy frontrunner Tom Cave will switch to the British Rally Championship in 2016, partnered by British co-driver James Morgan.

Cave announced at the end of last year that he would definitely compete on the season-opening Mid Wales round, but has taken a step forward in committing to a whole campaign with Morgan this year in a Ford Fiesta R5 Evo.

"Predominantly I wanted to be back in an R5 and do a full season in an R5 car," explained Cave, who has done one-off events in an R5 car but not a whole season. "Four-wheel drive is always something I've felt really comfortable driving and I know I've got the pace to compete and to contest rallies outright. I just feel there isn't much to achieve in two-wheel drive now."

Cave has finished runner-up in the DMACK Trophy for two consecutive seasons, in 2014 his new co-driver James Morgan triumphed alongside Sander Parn.

"I've known James for a few years, and obviously there was that very intense rivalry [with Parn] in 2014 which was good. We were rivals but we did respect one another, and it's just come together at the right time for the both of us."

Cave and Parn went to down to the wire for the DMACK Trophy in 2014 – with the prize being a seven-round WRC2 campaign with the tyre manufacturer. Parn came out on top.

Morgan – who will continue to compete in WRC2 with Parn in 2016 – added: "We've been quite friendly outside of the car. We were rivals for 2014 mainly, but yeah it will be nice to [join Tom] and I'll still be with Sander in WRC2, it will be a busy year for me for sure."

Both Morgan and Cave have credited the BRC for the work done to reignite the series during its off-season, and Morgan believes that the entry for the opening round will be a surprising number.

"You look how many WRC2 cars are in Monte," he said.

"Potentially we could have more at the first round of the British Championship than the World Rally Championship so that shows a lot."

"It's gone the right way. The year out has helped the buzz around it. It's good seeing people committing, putting pen to paper rather than talking about it."

Welshman Cave will be looking to improve on his second-placed finish in 2012. He finished ahead of M-Sport driver Elfyn Evans, who is the favourite for the title in 2016 driving a similar Fiesta R5 Evo in the DMACK British Rally Team.

"Of course Elfyn is going to be match fit and the guy everyone is going to put their money on him to win," said Cave. "I've competed against Elfyn in the past and we were always on a similar sort of pace. Of course, he's come off the back of two years in a World Rally Car but to achieve and get where you want to go you have to beat people who are theoretically better than you."

INGRAM GETS EUROPEAN WORKS DRIVE WITH OPEL

British rally driver Chris Ingram will head a works Opel assault on the European Rally Championship Junior category in 2016.

The 21-year-old Ingram has competed in the ERC for the previous two years with a Peugeot UK-funded 208 R2, but will now move to the Opel team that claimed the championship with Swede Emil Bergkvist last year.

"It's a proper factory team and I'm really excited about that," Ingram told *MN*. "When I went to the factory it struck me that being a works Opel driver is a massive deal for me. Everyone in the factory is really behind the rally programme."

Ingram was targeted by Opel as the man to defend their Junior title as one of its closest challengers last year, and Ingram will join one of last year's drivers Marijan Griebel in the team for this campaign.

The third driver is ADAC Opel Rallye Cup winner Julius Tannert.

The Opel Adam R2 won four out of the six ERC Junior

rounds in 2015, with Ingram winning on Rally Azores for Peugeot. The Brit suffered from mechanical gremlins in his title pursuit, with an engine failure in Ypres before fuel pump trouble in Estonia.

The Manchester driver is hoping that this is his opportunity to take a first international title.

"This is the full package and I've been waiting for the opportunity to be in the best car, I've got that now and we need to go on and win the championship," he said. "It won't be easy but if we can get a good start in Latvia, we'll push after that."

Katrin Becker will join Ingram in the co-drivers' seat, after his previous co-driver Gabin Moreau has moved on to sit with WRC driver Stephane Lefebvre.

Ingram will only have one test in the car before Latvia.

He joins a long line of British Opel works drivers including Jimmy McRae, David Llewellyn and Malcolm Wilson.



Becker (l) joins Ingram at Opel

Works chance for UK driver AND THIS SPORT NEWS says...

In a landscape where young British drivers rarely land factory seats, this is a great development for British rallying. I remember speaking to Chris when he was campaigning an ill-equipped Renault Twingo on ERC events and the passion and self-belief was all there.

Now the Manchester driver has a real opportunity to shine. While ERC Junior doesn't offer the same prize structure it used to, it still allows proper drivers to shine and a test in an R5, which is huge. Maybe some of this year's entries into the series are unknowns, but so was Emil Bergkvist before he raised a few eyebrows with his performances last year. And he's someone who comes up often as one of the most promising talents in rallying.

Can Ingram follow?

Well Opel certainly think so. They've headhunted the Brit to lead the line this year, along with one of Ingram's thorns in the side from last year in Marijan Griebel. With the BRC looking great for young drivers, it's nice to have a young Brit in a European series, and hopefully Ingram can make the most of it.

If he does, it will be thoroughly deserved.

Jack Benyon

RALLY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Harris to Toyota

Automotive journalist Chris Harris has been confirmed as the driver of Toyota's entry into the British Rally Championship in its GT86. Harris, who has over 300,00 subscribers on his car reviewing YouTube channel, has previous rallying experience and will compete on the March 5/6 Mid Wales Stages.

Pryce joins MSA

Osiar Pryce has been selected as the latest member of Team MSA UK. The Welshman will benefit from the programme's one-on-one tuition and performance management. The team currently includes new Opel works rally driver Chris Ingram, as well as circuit racing drivers like GP2's Alex Lynn among others.

GoRally event

Former BTRDA and Scottish Rally Champion Euan Thorburn, along with reigning Scottish Rally champion Jock Armstrong, will headline the line-up at the inaugural 'GoRally' event at Newbridge near Edinburgh on February 4. The event is aimed at those who know little or nothing about the sport but would like to find out how to get started. Thorburn and Armstrong are examples of successful national drivers.

Rallying at Brands

Rallying will return to Brands Hatch this weekend after a year's hiatus, with 2013 winner Jeremy Straker leading cars away for the 2016 Brands Hatch Stages. The Rally forms part of the MN Circuit Rally Championship, which James Sharrock leads by 32 points. He starts as sixth seed, two spots behind the championship's second-placed driver Ashley Field.

Perfect honeymoon

Recently married Matt and Catherine Shinnors will start the Arctic Lapland Rally this weekend at car number 93, for a rally-based honeymoon. The couple are competing in a BMW 325i E36, having got engaged at the finish of the 2012 Barbados Rally.

Jamie Anderson to step up to BRC in new Fiesta R5

Jamie Anderson will compete a full British Rally Championship slate in a Ford Fiesta R5.

Anderson – who won the Woodpecker Rally last year in a Mitsubishi Lancer E5 WRC – made the decision to compete in the championship in December.

"We've been in talks since last year to get the car," explained Anderson.

"We went to look at the car at the end of last month and it arrived last week."

Anderson is hoping to get the Evo upgrade on the car which provides a power boost, but he's keen that the upgrade doesn't curtail his opportunity to test the car before Mid Wales on March 5/6.

"Now we have it, we want to do the upgrade," explained Anderson. "But we also don't want to be on the back foot for the start of the season. We're going to try and sort out a test now

before the beginning of the season."

Anderson pointed to the quality of the championship and drivers entered for the main reasons he's signing up.

"There's massive hype for the BRC, we were waiting to get our budget together and to see who was doing it and there's some real quality," he said.

"It's good Elfyn Evans is competing as that provides a boost for the championship and a benchmark for competitors. I don't think it will be fair if people judge drivers based on Elfyn's pace as he's had a lot of seat time at the highest level, but he provides a benchmark.

"The old car is up for sale but, thanks to Ice Drive Sweden and some other sponsors, we've got the new car. I decided that it was right now or never for having a go at the BRC. I'm 30 this year and I decided the time was right."

Anderson swaps WR Car for R5

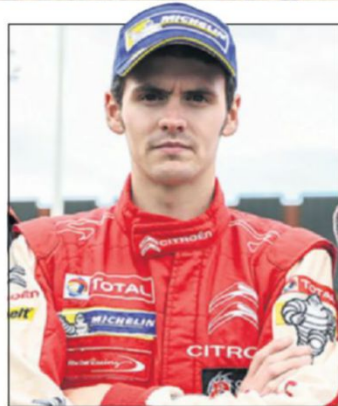


PRYCE HOPING FOR DMACK TROPHY DRIVE

Welshman must wait for selection committee



Pryce shone before retirements in JWRC



Pryce has Fiesta Trophy aim

By David Evans

Welshman Osiar Pryce will aim to get his World Rally Championship aspirations back on track this year by contesting the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy.

Pryce was a frontrunner in last year's Junior WRC and is desperate to land a place on this year's Fiesta-based series, which kicks off at the Rally of Portugal in May. DDFT numbers are limited and selection for this year's field will be made next month.

Pryce said: "The prize is obviously better in Drive DMACK than it is in the Juniors – you win seven rounds in an R5 car, whereas

it's only six in the Juniors. And, the DMACK series is cheaper and going to all the right rounds. We showed the speed to win Juniors in Poland last year and, of course, it would be amazing to get to Finland."

Pryce is no stranger to Ford Fiestas, having driven an R2 car on his first assault at the British Rally Championship in 2011. If he gets a place this season, this will be his first time in the new turbocharged R2.

After a season blighted by his Citroën's lack of reliability last year, Pryce added that the arrive-and-drive aspect of DDFT made sense.

"M-Sport has everything taken care of," he said. "Don't get me wrong, I like being

involved in the work on the car, but last year didn't go the way we wanted it to go. With M-Sport, the car's ready to go. Having driven Fiestas in the BRC, I know some of the people from M-Sport and they will do anything to help you out."

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson admitted Pryce is just the kind of driver he'd like to see in this year's DDFT.

"This is the perfect step for Osiar," he said. "We've seen his pace last year and he showed what he could do when he used a Fiesta R5 on Rally GB a couple of years ago. What DDFT does for guys like Osiar is offer a cost-effective way into the world championship and it looks like we're in for another fantastic season of competition."

Thorburn enlists Peugeot 208 T16 R5 for 2016 BRC

BTRDA champion Euan Thorburn will join the reformed British Rally Championship in a Peugeot 208 T16 R5.

Thorburn competed in two ERC events last year – The Circuit of Ireland and Ypres – in a Ford Fiesta S2000, as well as a bit part BTRDA campaign.

The 2013 BTRDA and 2014 Scottish champion will compete in the car – bought from Peugeot Sport France – and it will be run by the Dom Buckley Motorsport team.

Although Thorburn has competed in the relatively similar S2000, his competition experience in an R5 is

limited. However, the Scot says that the team is expecting to be competitive.

"We're not going to make up the numbers, for sure," he said. "We're there to challenge, finish up as high as possible. It's going to be a learning curve for us but we're hoping to get close to the top."

"I had a run at Kirkbride at an open day, but apart from that just the two outings in R5s. They're all similarly regulated and I don't think there is too much between them. The best drivers will get the best out of them."

"Elfyn [Evans] is the benchmark. It will be a struggle to get near him but



Peugeot Sport car for Thorburn

we're all going to give it a try."

Thorburn, 29, will be joined by co-driver Paul Beaton, who joined him for ERC rounds last year.

They will compete on the Cambrian – the opening round of the BTRDA – as a test before the BRC-opening Mid Wales Stages.

Heartbreak for Weston as sponsors pull out and end full BRC season hopes

Ryan Weston Jr will no longer complete a full Junior British Rally Championship after losing two major sponsors.

The 19-year-old had been set to partner Meirion Evans in a Ford Fiesta R2T prepared by Melvyn Evans. With the loss of backing, Ryan's father Dave Sr admits

that the focus has switched away from an assault on the championship this year.

"We've lost two major backers we've had for years," explained Dave Sr. "Because of the way the economic climate is up here we're not likely to replace them."

"We're working away trying to do something and we may do some of the rounds, but we've got to be realistic."

Ryan Weston competed in the BTRDA last year, finishing fourth in the Kickstart 1400 championship in his Proton Satria.

'R5 could reign in a new era of competition for the ITRC'
Irish Tarmac Championship feature, p25

Photos: Writtle Photographic, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Meeke drove similar Mini



McCloskey was close to 2013 title

BTRDA RETURN FOR McCLOSKEY IN MINI

Northern Ireland's Connor McCloskey will contest the opening four rounds of this year's Ravenol BTRDA Rally Championship in an ex-works Mini World Rally Car prepared by McGeehan Motorsport.

Navigated by close friend and new team-mate Damien Duffin, McCloskey will open his account on next month's season-opening Cambrian Rally in North Wales, and follow that up with outings on March's Malcolm Wilson Rally, the Somerset Stages five weeks

later and the Plains Rally in mid-May.

Depending on performances and points gained at the halfway mark in the championship, McCloskey could return for the remainder of the season, which includes the Carlisle and Woodpecker rallies.

"We've just managed to sell the S11 Subaru Impreza I had," said McCloskey. "I approached Derek McGeehan about doing a few rallies in one of his Minis and he came back to us with a decent offer. I haven't actually

driven the Mini yet but Derek has taken me up the road in one and straight away I was impressed with it. I'm really looking forward to doing some rallies in a 1.6-litre World Rally Car."

He added he had considered the British Rally Championship: "It was a choice between the Northern Ireland Rally Championship and the BTRDA. I had looked at the British Championship, but the costs are just crazy, so that made my decision easier."

The deal has been made possible with the backing of a new team sponsor, which McCloskey is set to announce in due course. He will also receive support from the family business, Woodland Kitchens.

McCloskey is no stranger to the BTRDA, having finished a close second to Euan Thorburn in the 2013 championship. Six podium finishes – including three victories from eight starts – didn't go unrewarded as he went on to clinch the Welsh Forest Rally Championship.

MIN'S ROAD RALLYING EXPERT

IAN MILLS

"Road rallying still proving to be strong"



If road rallying has had an off season I failed to spot it. My last event of 2015 was the Roamerlite Novices on December 13 and the first of 2016 was VCRR's Winter Classic on January 2. There were not even three weeks off for me and no doubt there were 12 cars and scatters running over the Christmas period as well.

However, with all the championships working to the calendar year, this would seem to be a good point at which to look at what we might have ahead of us in 2016.

It's timely, as this weekend we have the Rali Mike Darowen Bro Ddyfi. Not only is it a counter for the Welsh, West Midlands and North Western Championships but it's also a contender for the longest rally title of the year award, as the small Dovey Valley club marshal their resources and combine their two regular road rallies into one manageable chunk.

The Welsh Championship has expanded from 11 to 13 rounds, with eight to score. All last year's events remain in the series; the only alteration being that Welsh Border CC has nominated the Border 100 in place of its Breidden Rally. The two new rounds will be Carmarthen's Autumn and Teifi Valley's Cilwendeg, both excellent events run by strong teams. The first half of the season has roughly one rally a month. However, in September, things get busy with four rallies in five weekends. This should be a decisive time for the destination of this year's titles. Once again, support for the championship comes from The Basic Roamer Company.

A new championship has recently been announced, the North Wales Road Rally Challenge. It's supported by Sbardun Parts and Accessories of Pwllheli. This is being run under the auspices of the ANWCC and consists of 12 rounds, basically all the National B road rallies being run in North Wales. It's an excellent idea and hopefully will see a good take up of competitors. It should do as it has some fine rallies on the list, all within quite a small geographical area. It's noticeable that many crews don't want to venture far from home; this will give them the opportunity to tackle a serious championship without having to travel too far.

Elsewhere, targa rallies seem to be in the ascendant. Tavern MC's Exmoor event last October was one of the best rallies of the year, but was probably at the top end of the scale of what can be done with the format. These rallies, apart from historic events, are all that keeps road rallying alive in much of southern England. Here, single venue targas attract large entries. It now seems likely that we shall have more targa rallies in Wales.

The death of road rallying has been predicted for over 50 years, but it's still going and proving quite healthy in many areas, so let's get out there and enjoy another year. Do you really want to sit at home and watch the rubbish that is Saturday night telly?

Manx memorial event cancelled

The Chris Kelly Memorial Rally due to run this Saturday has been cancelled due to a poor entry.

The Isle of Man event – which kicks off rallying on the island – had 30 entries.

A statement from the CKMR organising committee read: "It is with regret that the organising committee of the Mann Construction Chris Kelly Memorial Rally have to announce it's cancellation this year. "With only a week to go and 30 entries the economics of running the event would mean an unacceptable level of loss to the club. We made this decision now so we could advise competitors from the UK and not leave it until the last moment, which would not be good for all parties involved. "All entries and travelling costs will be refunded in full."



Nicky Grist is shown through the MSA process at the show

MSA launches marshal accreditation

The MSA has launched a new accreditation scheme for rally and cross country marshals in the UK.

The scheme gives marshals the opportunity to gain accreditation online, where their basic training can be completed in under an hour.

The training has been introduced as a supplement to the face-to-face marshal training days taking place across the country.

Former World Rally Championship co-driver Nicky Grist helped to launch the scheme and even took part

in some of the training on the computer at the recent Autosport Show.

"I think now, more than ever, safety is of prime importance and it's not just keeping the crews safe, it's keeping the spectators safe as well," explained Grist. "To make it this easy to be able to sign up so quickly and to be able to authorise marshals properly can only be a very good thing.

"This is just an initial sign up and basic training, but there's a whole world of things for them to learn and be trained in."

Fossey wins Next Big Step award ahead of 2016 tilt

Junior F1000 driver Ed Fossey is the latest driver to win the Next Big Step award previously won by Aaron McClure and Sam Bilham.

Fossey will be supplied with Yokohama tyres, tuition from past winners and money towards entry fees, and will step up to the BTRDA Mixed Surface Championship in 2016.

"I am delighted to win such an incredible prize," said Fossey. "The support is not only financial as the knowledge and experience from the Next Big Step team is very important. This has allowed me to put a programme together and it will help me develop as a driver, making the transition from the Junior series into a mixed surface National campaign."

Next Big Step founder Ian Arden added: "Ed has the whole package; he is quick behind the wheel but is also extremely dedicated to the sport. Having to come across from Jersey adds another challenge and we wanted to help him put a good season together."



Fossey has won the Next Step prize

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RALLY REPORTS



Photos: Roy Dempster, Ralliphotoswales

FURZELANDS DOMINATE TO OPEN 2016 WITH BREAN STAGES WIN



Engine rebuild did the job for the Furzeland

Brean Stages Rally

By Ian Harden

Organiser: Club Rally Sport West

When: January 23/24 Where: Brean Leisure Park, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset Championships: ASWMC Sealed Surface, AWMCC Heart of England; CMSG; Stages: 12 Starters: 96

Fast but consistent driving on a greasy stage surface paid dividends for Steve and Yvonne Furzeland, who got their 2016 season off to a good start by taking a well-crafted win on the Brean Stages in their Subaru Impreza WRC.

They beat Ian Godney/Christopher Gifford, also Subaru Impreza-mounted, by 1m08s, with Philip Hopkins/David Jenkins (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) in third position.

A winter engine rebuild gave Furzeland the ability to set the pace in the early miles. He was chased by the

Mitsubishi Lancer E9s of Phil Turner/Simon Anthony and Oliver Hopkins/Ashley Trimble. Godney held fourth place after the opening test but was challenged by Rick and Siobhan Bliss, the husband-and-wife team using their Honda Civic's handling to the full.

Unfortunately, the rally did not go well for third seeds, Gary Le Coadou/Bill Paynter. Plagued by mechanical problems, they languished in 83rd place after stage one. They tried to fight back but their Toyota Corolla WRC succumbed to a broken gearbox on stage four.

Despite a scare when his rear diff started leaking oil, Furzeland steadily extended his lead during Saturday afternoon. Godney changed onto full wet tyres and moved up to second place on stage three, overhauling Turner, who was feeling unwell. Immediately behind,

Philip Hopkins survived sliding onto the grass on stage four to hold Oliver Hopkins at bay. But Oliver, driving his new Group N Lancer E9 for the first time, fought back to finish Saturday 11 seconds ahead of his brother.

Sunday's grey overcast weather made the stages even more slippery, but the conditions failed to faze Furzeland, who stayed trouble-free on his way to setting fastest time on five of the day's six stages.

Godney's full-on spirited driving style started to catch him out and he had several collisions with stage-side obstacles. These included a tyre barrier that dented his driver's door, and a wheelie bin, which damaged the front end. On the final stage he still had hopes of pressuring Furzeland into a mistake. But they evaporated at the stage split; the Welshman spun his Impreza and the consequent time loss settled the

issue in Furzeland's favour.

Third-placed Philip Hopkins set a storming pace throughout the Sunday stages. Admitting to being over-cautious late on Saturday, he made amends with fastest time on stage seven and took third place on stage nine. "We've beaten a couple of WRC cars as well!" he happily announced at the finish.

Turner drove bravely to take fourth, despite continuing to feel unwell. He finished eight seconds ahead of Jim Munden/Andy Frost, the former Ford Escort Mk2 crew continuing their learning curve with their new Subaru Impreza. Oliver Hopkins rounded out the top six, ahead of Tim Self/Colin Mitchell. Their Impreza arrived at scrutineering straight from a pre-season engine rebuild.

Further down the field, Jack Gubb and new co-driver Matthew Davis (Vauxhall

Nova) won Class A, holding off the persistent challenge of Ed Lambert/Gareth Drayton (Peugeot 106). Class B went to Rick/Siobhan Bliss (Honda Civic) on their first ever rally together, while the ever-consistent Josh Payton/Marcus Mizen won Class C in their Escort Mk2. "We rolled it in Ireland last year, so it's been reshelled," said Payton. Geoff Bennett/Mike Stewart slithered their powerful Escort Mk2 to Class D victory.

Results

1 Steve Furzeland/Yvonne Furzeland (Subaru Impreza S12 WRC) 1h06m48s; 2 Ian Godney/Christopher Gifford (Subaru Impreza WRC); 1m08s; 3 Philip Hopkins/David Jenkins (Mitsubishi Lancer E6); 4 Phil Turner/Simon Anthony (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 5 Jim Munden/Andy Frost (Subaru Impreza); 6 Oliver Hopkins/Ashley Trimble (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 7 Tim Self/Colin Mitchell (Subaru Impreza S14); 8 Josh Payton/Marcus Mizen (Ford Escort Mk2); 9 Tony Munden/David Perrot (Subaru Impreza); 10 Rick Bliss/Siobhan Bliss (Honda Civic). **Class winners A:** Jack Gubb/Matthew Davis (Vauxhall Nova); **B:** Bliss/Bliss; **C:** Payton/Mizen; **D:** Geoff Bennett/Mike Stewart (Ford Escort Mk2); **E:** Furzeland/Furzeland.

McGarrity rules Kirkistown in Ford Fiesta WRC

New Year Stages

By William Neill

Organiser: 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland

When: January 23 Where: Kirkistown Race Circuit, County Down Championship: Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland Starters: 39 Stages: 6

On the debut of his DMACK-liveried Ford Fiesta RS WRC, Derek McGarrity won the New Year Stages at Kirkistown by 13s after leader Kenny McKinstry suffered bad luck and exited with a broken driveshaft.

A win at the Icebreaker earlier this month gave Subaru Impreza-man McKinstry added stimulus when it came to SS5 – with added gravel – but it was here where it all went wrong for him.

McKinstry, after dropping back on SS4, retired when his Impreza failed him and McGarrity/Kieron Graffin inherited the lead.

But it wasn't a foregone conclusion from there; Desi Henry was testing his Skoda Fabia R5 for both British and Irish championships with Liam Moynihan. The pair was ahead of

McGarrity heading to SS5, but lost time catching a car. With a single stage remaining McGarrity was on top by 11.4s and managed to hold on by 13.1s at the finish.

Almost a minute back, Kyle White was preparing for the Northern Ireland championship, which will stage round one at the venue next month. The former kart racer said he would go for it with two stages remaining after a consistent run.

He did, and secured a hard contested third place and was first two-wheel drive in his Citroen C2R2. The Belfast man revealed he would contest selected BRC rounds if budget allows.

George Robinson and Tommy Speers are no strangers to Kirkistown and, with a Mitsubishi Lancer E9, took 2.1s from White on the closing stage but it was not enough with a gap.

Also in the podium hunt in a Skoda Fabia S2000 was Alan Atcheson.

It was his first competitive four-wheel-drive outing after a small



McGarrity's new Fiesta WRC earned debut victory at Kirkistown

pre-event test. Despite a minor spin he finished fifth with Thomas Wedlock in the co-driver's seat.

Following two non-finishes at the back end of 2015, Matthew McGaffin rebounded to finish sixth and win Group N, co-driven by Sheena Buckley, in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

While the pair kept Niall Henry and John Rowan behind, the stage times remained close with two going Henry's way. The gap was 3.8s.

Irish Tarmac entrant Stephen Wright was due to battle Desi Henry's fellow ITRC R5, but the duel never reached a climax as a turbo fitting came adrift on Wright's

Fiesta R5 and he was out.

Josh McErlean and Thomas McErlean won the Junior fight by 35.2s from Peter Bennett.

Results

1 Derek McGarrity/Kieron Graffin (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) 28m38s; 2 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan (Skoda Fabia R5) +13s; 3 Kyle White/Sean Topping (Citroen C2R2); 4 George Robinson/Tommy Speers (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 5 Alan Atcheson/Thomas Wedlock (Skoda Fabia S2000); 6 Matthew McGaffin/Sheena Buckley (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 7 Niall Henry/John Rowan (Mitsubishi Lancer E10); 8 Alan Smyth/Mac Kierans (Suzuki Swift); 9 William Craighton/Liam Regan (Peugeot 208 R2); 10 Barry Morris/Denver Rafferty (Ford Escort Mk2). **Class winners** Josh McErlean/Thomas McErlean (Peugeot 107); Ian Dickson/Ashley Dickson (Fiesta ST); McGaffin/Buckley; Ronnie McConnell/Rachel McConnell (Nissan Micra); Alexander Cochrane/Harry Johnston (Escort Mk2); White/Topping; William McClurkin/Anthony McCann (Escort Mk2); Morris/Rafferty; Andy Johnson/Jim McSherry (Vauxhall Chevette); McGarrity/Graffin.

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Having won the final round of the 2015 Scottish Navigational Championship, Dave MacKintosh and Duncan Cameron opened their 2016 account with victory on the first event of this year's series, the **Aquarius Navigational Rally**. The pair took an emphatic win as they finished the event almost nine minutes ahead of their nearest rivals.

The Aquarius proved to be a matter of maintaining the correct route as most crews reported time consuming wrong slots. Matters were made more difficult by patches of thick fog along the route.

The runner-up spot was taken by the Peugeot 206 of Des Campbell/Christine Sanderson.

They finished two minutes ahead of Drew Barker/Stuart Waite, who were competing in an Audi A3.

The Clubman Rally was won

by the Saab 96 V4 of David Heirs/Maurice Millar.

From south of the border, Andy Whittaker/Charlie Tynan (Proton Satria) had been expected to go well on the event but they non-started due to the driver being unwell.

Ian Mills

Aquarius Navigational Rally

Organiser: Glenrothes Motorsport Club

When: January 23/24 Where: Fife/Perthshire Championships: HRCR

Premier Route: 120 Miles Starters: 14.

Results

1 Dave MacKintosh/Duncan Cameron (Ford Fiesta) 6m41s; 2 Des Campbell/Christine Sanderson (Peugeot 206) +8m50s; 3 Drew Barker/Stuart Waite (Audi A3); 4 Harry Merry/Graham Couder (Ford Fiesta); 5 Colin Christie/David Law (Suzuki Ignis); 6 Michael Davison/Josh Davison (Proton Compact); 7 Douglas Humphrey/Chris Loudon (Mini Cooper); 8 David Heirs/Maurice Millar (Saab 96 V4); 9 Jim Williams/Jean Bruce (Land Rover Discovery); 10 Stuart Cobb/Stewart Douglas (Toyota Yaris). **Class winners** Experts: Campbell/Sanderson; Clubman: Heirs/Millar.

MONTE CARLO RALLY



BY DAVID EVANS

The whole scene looked decidedly odd. Sebastien Ogier was on his hands and knees on the D214 just outside the village of La Batie-Neuve last Saturday. The Monte Carlo Rally leader and world champion had his iPhone out and was shining it up and under the front of Kris Meeke's Citroen DS3 WRC.

The Northern Irishman looked on disconsolately. The game was up.

Meeke had been called in. Teatime. Left with a ball, but nobody to play with, Ogier looked almost bereft.

For all the animosity and cross words of last season, the pair had found themselves sharing a higher plane in the French Alps last week. Nobody could touch them. The mutual respect was huge.

Meeke was understandably gutted at his early exit from a fascinating fight. Ogier, genuinely, wasn't far behind him.

Finally unburdened of the need to prove himself at every turn, Meeke appeared mildly amused by the collected media's necessity to pigeon-hole his pace. Was this because he had a deal?

In all honesty, he neither knew nor cared. What he knew and cared about was that, last Thursday night, he went to bed as Britain's first end-of-leg Monte Carlo Rally leader since Colin McRae 15 years ago.

Ogier was gracious in his appreciation of his rival's early speed, balancing his many compliments with the news that he'd been slightly more cautious than normal through the event's two dark stages.

Ogier v Meeke

Having been humbled by Sebastien Loeb on the road from Entrevaux to Rouaine last year, Ogier was happy to top the timesheets this time around. The weakening grip of winter meant the scratch time for the 13-miler was more than three minutes faster than last year.

Meeke's start hadn't been perfect. He caught a kerb on the inside of a corner early in the stage and that threw his Abu Dhabi car into a pirouette. Seven seconds were lost. But the cool remained.

And was put to good use in SS2, where Meeke went 11 seconds faster than everybody. That'll be the lead by 6.9s then.

What followed was a proper ding-dong day with the pair trading times and the lead – which changed three times on Friday. Meeke remained P1 for the first two stages of the morning loop, but couldn't match his rival on the road from Les Costes to Chaillol. That's the one passing a couple of miles of the Ogier family back garden, where the champ had grown up and dreamed of days like today.

Put the pair on the Pomeroy Road north of Dungannon and Meeke would fancy his chances of lifting a second or two from the Gap man.

Try as he might, Ogier simply couldn't get away. He couldn't shake KM off. Ogier was five seconds clear after SS6, Meeke hauled him back in and led again one stage later. Back on his home run, Ogier put 9.5s between the pair of them on Friday night.

Ogier smiled thinly back in service. "Every time I am a little bit careful," he said, "he is coming back at me. I have to push. I have to push hard."

He took another 10s out of Meeke on the 30-miler that opened the weekend, a repeat of that result on the ensuing stage put the gap two tenths north of half a minute.

"On a normal rally, you might think that was a lead," said Ogier. "This is not a normal rally, this is the Monte. That's not enough."

After half an hour of driving the longest stage of the event for the second time, Meeke had chipped four seconds out. He wasn't giving up.

"We keep pushing," he said. "We have to keep the pressure on him. The car feels great, everything is working."

Near the end of the next stage, a slow left-hander – rounded with a tug on the handbrake – led the crews straight into an eminently choppable right. Everybody had chopped it first time through, leaving the corner cut marked well with mud.

Meeke directed the DS3 into the corner, hard on the power. Nanoseconds after leaving the asphalt and going across the apex, the underside of the Citroen impacted with a rock. The crack went through the car with such force it ripped the sumpguard from its six eight-mil mountings, slicing a hole in the gearbox as it departed.

Meeke barely had time to recover from the shock before the 1600cc motor went flat. A turbo pipe had been damaged. Then came the sickening smell of gearbox oil.

He limped to the finish and parked up down the road.

"There is a hole the size of your fist in the gearbox," he said, grimly. "You can see the cogs..."

Amazed and destroyed in equal measure.

Ogier took a look for himself and wasted no time in offering sincere condolences.

"I know this place," he said. "Kris did not deserve this. Everybody takes this cut. This is such bad luck. I am sorry for him. Really sorry."

Ogier played on. Meeke went home.

Britain's last winner

On the other side of the world, relief was mixed with regret. Vic Elford's standing as Britain's last winner of the Monte Carlo Rally remains intact for another, 48th, year.

"It's unbelievable," said the winner of the 1968 event. "I don't really understand it. It's not like Britain's been short of some great drivers.

Obviously we had Richard Burns and Colin McRae and both of them were in great cars, capable of winning the rally. And now we have Kris as well."

Elford's own victory came in a Porsche 911 – a car he'd been advised would never be suited to the Monte. Or to him.

"The year I won it was the first year they got rid of those stupid regulations designed to make sure Citroen always won," he said. "With no handicapping, the fastest car won. I'd really got to like the Porsche, it suited me and I could



Meeke flew in PH Sport DS 3

drive it quickly. In all honesty, I could have won the event three years in succession. If a blizzard hadn't come in and caught me on the wrong tyres in 1967 I would have won that year and then I crashed when, unbeknown to me, I'd moved into the lead near the finish in 1969.

"I'll be honest and I never really had any great problem with the event. It was tricky, but two things helped me win. The first of those was the implicit trust David Stone and I developed in each other. We developed pacenotes that were head and shoulders above everybody else's; David knew if I crashed, I was taking him with me!

"The other thing that won me the Monte was an extraordinary ability to go quicker than anybody else downhill. Anybody can go quickly uphill, but it takes real balls to go down the other side. I developed this on the 1967 Tulip

Rally, when we did two runs down the Ballon d'Alsace. At that time, this section was an absolute gift for the Minis – I beat Timo Makinen by a second and everybody else by a long way."

With the golden anniversary of British Monte success fast approaching Elford has grown increasingly relaxed about his record being broken.

"Maybe I'll talk to Volkswagen and see if I can't come and do it myself in a couple of years," he said. "But anyway, I'm really not too worried. Looking at the route for this year, with no Ardeche stages in there at all and no Turini in the dark, I'm not sure this is a real Monte anyway..."

Mikkelsen's gamble

Elford's thoughts on going downhill quickly were absolutely borne out by the Saint-Leger-les-Melezes to La Batie-

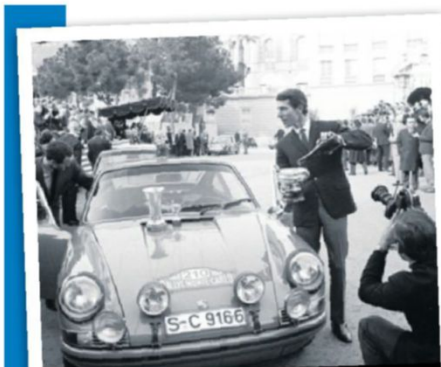
Neuve stage on Saturday. Starting from 1276 metres, the stage climbed rapidly up the side of a ski slope to the ski station near Ancelle at 1574 metres. From then on it dived down into the woods and steep got steeper, slashing altitude by 700 metres in just a handful of miles.

And, to make matters even more interesting, the top of the drop was littered with verglas. Tailor made for an air-cooled Elford attack.

What was even better was that this stage brought about the only genuine tyre gamble of the whole event.

The preceding stage, the 30-miler from Lardier-et-Valencia to Faye, was almost totally free from snow and ice and absolutely passable without the aid of studs. Studs were, however, compulsory when the event arrived on piste an hour later.

Almost universally, the crews



Elford: last British winner, in 1968

'New-look Evans dominated WRC2'
Supports report, p22



ROUND 08

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

← MAINS



Ogier celebrates the 33rd WRC victory of his career

started Gap shod with supersoft
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all-stud, balls-out banzai run. The
vegian had two studs in the boot
ad crossed left-front and right-rear
s on the car - supersofts on the
r two corners.
he headed out of Gap, there was
ge of excitement. Somebody
gambling. Somebody was
ng the game.
ughtered over the first 30 miles,
kelsen shipped 1m13s and a good
k of the metal, torn out on the
sphalt.

Continued on page 22



Mikkelsen had a good rally and came away with second place

STAGE TIMES

SS1 Entrevaux-Rouaine (12.57 miles)

Fastest Ogier 12m21.9s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Meeke +4.1s

SS2 Barles-Seyne (13.77 miles)

Fastest Meeke 13m06.1s
Leader Meeke
Second Ogier +6.9s

SS3 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 1 (9.03 miles)

Fastest Ogier 8m07.5s **Leader**
Meeke **Second** Ogier +6.0s

SS4 Aspres les Corps-Chauffayer 1 (15.88 miles)

Fastest Meeke 13m55.9s
Leader Meeke
Second Ogier +6.7s

SS5 Les Costes-Chaillo 1 (10.98 miles)

Fastest Ogier 9m23.6s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Meeke +1.5s

SS6 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 2 (9.03 miles)

Fastest Ogier 8m05.4s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Meeke +5.0s

SS7 Aspres les Corps-Chauffayer 2 (15.88 miles)

Fastest Meeke 14m16.9s
Leader Meeke
Second Ogier +0.8s

SS8 Les Costes-Chaillo 2 (10.98 miles)

Fastest Ogier 9m31.3s
Leader Ogier
Second Meeke +9.5s

SS9 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 1 (31.80 miles)

Fastest Ogier 30m47.8s
Leader Ogier
Second Meeke +20.1s

SS10 St Leger Les Melezes-La Batie-Neuve 1 (10.58 miles)

Fastest Mikkelsen 12m01.3s
Leader Ogier
Second Meeke +30.2s

SS11 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 2 (31.80 miles)

Fastest Meeke 30m26.6s
Leader Ogier
Second Meeke +26.8s

SS12 St Leger Les Melezes-La Batie-Neuve 2 (10.58 miles)

Fastest Neuville 11m39.6s
Leader Ogier
Second Meeke +29.1s

SS13 Sisteron-Thoard (22.59 miles)

Fastest Neuville 22m55.4s
Leader Ogier
Second Mikkelsen +1m59.7s

SS14 Col de l'Orme-St Laurent 1 (7.47 miles)

Fastest Ogier 8m15.0s
Leader Ogier
Second Mikkelsen +2m02.2s

SS15 La Bollene-Vesubie-Peira Cava (13.20 miles)

Fastest Mikkelsen 14m09.2s
Leader Ogier
Second Mikkelsen +1m48.6s

SS16 Col de l'Orme-St Laurent 2 (Power Stage) (7.47 miles)

Fastest Ogier 8m09.6s
Leader Ogier
Second Mikkelsen +1m54.5s

COLIN CLARK

"We already have a new Evans for 2016"



The World Rally Championship season opener in Monte Carlo never short-changes in terms of action, incident, drama and intrigue.

And boy, were we treated to a positive smorgasbord of rallying delights this time round in the Principality and the mountains inland from the glorious French Riviera.

From wild conspiracy theories surrounding the Kris Meeke 'rockgate' incident to under-performing Hyundai's; from surly Spaniards to Polish goodbyes, this Monte had the lot.

But for me, as a proudly British rally fan, there was one standout performance.

The sometime sublime but often infuriatingly frustrating Welsh wonderboy Elfyn Evans has had a funny old few weeks. I'm quite happy to say on record that my biggest disappointment at Rally GB was the lack of fight shown by Evans when faced with a do-or-die ultimatum from the bosses at M-Sport.

On the face of it, it was a cowardly capitulation. On the evidence displayed in Wales, no one could really argue with Malcolm Wilson's decision to cut his losses and look elsewhere for the next big thing in rallying.

But as is so often the case, in adversity, the human spirit digs into its darkest recess to reinvent itself.

Step forward the 2016 version of the man we once knew as Elfyn. This wasn't the timid, shy, retiring, apologetic, under-performing boy who quietly left the WRC service park in Deeside, bound for the nearest job centre.

The man with the Welsh flag flying proudly on the side of the R5 Fiesta in Monte had grown a pair. There was fight, there was grit, there was commitment, there was speed and, above all, there was a result.

His performance in winning the R5 category last week was nothing short of sensational.

A puncture in the very first stage would have floored a lesser man, not the new Evans. A stunning fightback was temporarily stalled by a second puncture in SS9. Again, he picked himself up and launched himself along Alpine passes with devastating effect. The win was hard-fought and richly deserved.

Right now I believe Evans, early as it may be in the season, has established himself as the hottest young property in the WRC field. He has class, style, speed and ruthlessness oozing from his once milky white pores. Keep this up and he might well have the pick of M-Sport, Citroen, Toyota and maybe even Hyundai seats come the end of the season.

The painful memory of the winter just gone is fading fast. The shoulders are broader, the stance wider, the heart bigger, the eyes wider. A new man stands before us.

NOW TURN OVER TO READ MN'S DRIVER RATINGS

MONTE CARLO RALLY



BY DAVID EVANS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

RALLY DEBRIEF

Day one: 98.26 miles; 8 stages

Weather: Sunny -9 to 6 celsius

- Sebastien Ogier and Kris Meeke engage in a fascinating battle, with the lead swapping four times in the early going.
- A particularly icy right-hander on Friday morning's opener rules Robert Kubica and Hayden Paddon out of proceedings. Kubica's approach is slightly more committed, he's understeered off at jogging speed. Paddon oversteers, dinks the tree at walking speed and stops half a mile up the road.
- Jari-Matti Latvala is steadfastly refusing to be pulled into the scrap for the lead and sits a minute down at the end of the day in third place. His rally is going to plan, but his plan's really not very fever. Andreas Mikkelsen suffers a big spin in SS7, but remains fourth.
- Shocking day for Hyundai, with the New Generation i20 WRC not looking any quicker than the old car. The verdict is the wrong suspension set-up, the cars are running much too soft. Thierry Neuville is quickest of the softies in fifth.
- M-Sport's first full day of the season is an indifferent one, with Mads Ostberg taking time to bed in with new co-driver Ola Floene. Eric Camilli sets a cracking fifth fastest time on only his fourth stage in a World Rally Car, but then rolls two stages later. Elfyn Evans is flying in the new R5 car – pummeling the opposition despite a puncture in SS1.

End of day one: 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 1h29m06.1s; 2 Meeke/Nagle +9.5s; 3 Latvala/Anttila +1m08.1s; 4 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +1m33.8s; 5 Neuville/Gilsoul +1m47.8s; 6 Ostberg/Floene +2m18.5s.

Day two: 108.90 miles; 5 stages

Weather: sunny -8 to 9 celsius

- Ogier leads throughout the day, after Mikkelsen's tyre gamble fails to pay dividends through the morning loop.
- Latvala retires from a relatively comfortable third place at the end of the second run through the long stage, moving Mikkelsen up to third.
- Third becomes second for Mikkelsen when Meeke becomes the second podium retiree in as many stages at the end of SS12.
- Mikkelsen's grip on that second place is loosened by a fast-improving Neuville. Thierry hooks his new i20 WRC up to win the last two stages (two minutes ahead, Ogier has begun a cruise to the finish following Meeke's departure), slashing the gap between the two Monaco mates from a minute to 12.5s. "Keeps it interesting for tomorrow..." offers Mikkelsen after admitting he'd been too cautious.

End of day two: 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 3h19m05.7s; 2 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +1m59.7s; 3 Neuville/Gilsoul +2m12.2s; 4 Ostberg/Floene +4m25.9s; 5 Lefebvre/Moreau +7m29.4s; 6 Tanak/Molder +10m42.3s.

Day three: 28.27 miles; 3 stages

Weather: sunny 1 to 12 celsius

- Ogier wins at a canter, celebrating a Monte hat-trick with an untroubled final-day dash through the Alpes-Maritimes.
- The race for the place behind him fails to materialise; Neuville reports a transmission noise on the way out of Monaco. A centre bearing problem manifests itself and robs the Belgian of drive to the rear wheels for the final stage and a bit. Mikkelsen is sure of second.
- The ailing Neuville has enough in hand to remain on the podium, bringing his car home 1m30s ahead of Ostberg's Ford Fiesta RS WRC. Ostberg has taken a sensible approach to his first event back with M-Sport. As the rally unfolds, he feels increasingly comfortable with new co-driver Ola Floene – but the pair admit it's round two and the trip around Sweden and Norway for their WRC day at home that is the real target.
- Stephane Lefebvre and Dani Sordo round the top six out. It's fair to say the Frenchman's happier with his score in the DS 3 than the disgruntled Spaniard, who simply couldn't get to grips with the New Generation...

Continued from page 21

Now, however, it was his turn. Had he made a terrible mistake? Or played a blinder. He was the only driver with perfect rubber at the front of his car; everybody else was compromised on at least half the corners courtesy of studs on only the left or right front wheel.

Mikkelsen threw caution to the wind, rocketed up the hill, took a deep breath across the top, before launching himself down the other side. Mikkelsen, like Ogier, could have been a professional skier; but neither had come down a mountain at anything like this speed.

Reaching the finish, Mikkelsen was wide-eyed. He'd given it everything. Risked the lot and won 43.9s, playing himself right back into a fight with team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala.

"It was a risk," said Mikkelsen. "After the long stage, my gravel crew called me to apologise. There was less ice in there than we hoped for; but it was really... interesting coming to the finish of the second stage. OK, we had studs, but it was right on the limit."

The next couple of stages would pretty much guarantee Mikkelsen a podium spot. Meeke's dramatic departure came at the end of the second run down the ski slope. Latvala's retirement was one stage earlier – but with significantly more fallout.

Stung too many times in the mountains, the Finn had steadfastly refused to be drawn into a fight. More than a minute down after the first full day, he was adamant everything was going to plan. When his Polo drifted



Ostberg took cautious fourth



Neuville made progress with new Hyundai

wide on an 11th-stage right-hander, the plan went out the window.

The car ran along the ditch before being vaulted into an adjacent field by a culvert. Vision doubtless clouded by steam, smoke and mud by the impact, the Finn floored the throttle in an attempt to return the car to the road. Unfortunately, he hit a spectator in the process (see *Rally News*). Latvala retired from suspension damage after the stage, but the debate detailed on our news pages will rage for sometime.

Latvala's one of the most likeable and sincere drivers in the sport and, for many, the concept of him being sufficiently cold-hearted to knock somebody down and carry on without stopping to check their wellbeing is out of the question. Others will point to the locked wheels, clearly shown on YouTube footage of the Polo shortly before it collides with the fan; if you're accelerating hard to get back on the road, you wouldn't be on the brakes.

Only Latvala himself truly knows and only he can be true to himself.

The new Hyundai

It's hard to talk of anybody benefiting from such an incident, but Mikkelsen and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville unquestionably did.

Ahead of the event, much was made of Hyundai's New Generation i20 WRC. This was the car team principal Michel Nandan told us wouldn't be coming until it was quick enough to fight with Volkswagen.

The boys in blue and orange didn't come close to the champions in the first half of the Monte. With much of the pre-event testing done on snow, the cars rocked up in Gap running much too soft. Added to that, the drivers were unwilling to stiffen them up and hunker them down into the kind of edgy racers that the almost-dry conditions would have allowed for.

The upshot of this was that Monte rookie Hayden Paddon was quickest of the Alzenau trio... in last year's car. The Kiwi's efforts in the night stages were undone by a disastrous first daylight test in the mountains. He slipped off the road on the same full-ice Friday morning right-hander that caught out Robert Kubica.

A Hyundai technician – the sort who'd been around long enough to see this kind of mistake time and again on these roads – said, sagely: "In those conditions, if you think you're going too slowly, you're already going too fast..."

Paddon returned and completed a weekend's apprenticeship without

further blemish to his character.

Miles away on Friday night, the weekend was also a significant improvement for the new, five-door i20s. The biggest change of pace came for Neuville rather than the distant Dani Sordo. The Belgian was winning stages and showing flashes of the form that carried him into his purple patch 12 months ago. The key this time around is to remain in it.

Last week's WRC opener did, of course, mean more than a few new faces. Or at least some different faces in different places, with three new driver and co-driver partnerships in the top five.

Mikkelsen and Anders Jaeger fared the best, while M-Sport returnee Mads Ostberg took a little longer to bed into a new language – Ola Floene read their notes in native Norwegian rather than the Swedish Ostberg had been accustomed to from Jonas Andersson. The Ford Fiesta RS WRC crew did, however, manage fourth, once place up on Stephane Lefebvre, who had Gabin Moreau alongside for the first time in the second Abu Dhabi DS3 WRC.

The story of rally had, however, been about the sister car and how close Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle had come to rewriting a 48-year-old piece of history. ■

Evans in control of WRC2 with new R5 Fiesta

Julien Maurin and Armin Kremer must have wondered what all the fuss was at the end of the opening stage last Thursday night. Elfyn Evans? Really? Nothing to worry about there. They'd both kicked him firmly into touch, the tune of a minute-plus.

Er... not quite. Driving nine miles with a front-left puncture was the reason the Welshman was ninth after his first stage in WRC2 in more than two years. Four fully inflated Michelins beneath him, he was almost half a minute faster than anybody else in stage two.

And he wasn't beaten on a stage again until he suffered another puncture in SS9. By then he'd rebuilt a minute and a half lead over Kremer and the second deflation dropped him five seconds behind the German Skoda man. One stage later, he was 49s to the good again.

In short, Evans was epic. And so was the evolution of

M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R5.

The Welshman, co-driven for the first time by Craig Parry, took a maximum points score from the opening WRC2 round, having controlled the rally throughout despite dropping four minutes with punctures. In more good news for Evans, he beat fancied Fabia R5 runner Esapekka Lappi by two minutes – the Finn wasn't registered for points.

Kremer was classified second in WRC2, while Junior WRC champion Quentin Gilbert was third despite overheating issues aboard his Citroen DS3 R5. Teemu Suninen was fourth, with Quentin Giordano fifth despite being nudged into an SS10 ditch when Jose Suarez sent his 208 T16 up the inside of Giordano's DS3 R5 into a hairpin. The stewards let that one go, but Suarez was fined 150 euros for trying to knock Giordano out of the way three stages later!

Regardless of the whacky races going on behind, Evans was untouchable. "It's good to get some points on the board," said the WRC2 winner, arms unfolded and with a big grin.

Ole Christian Veiby continued his run of good form, building on his maiden WRC3 victory in Wales at the end of last season with another win in Monte Carlo. Veiby employed the services of Jonas Andersson in the co-driver's seat for a one-off outing before the Swede joins Pontus Tidemand for the rest of the season and enjoyed a trouble-free event.

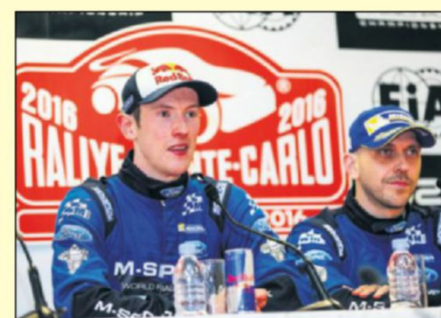
"We only had a puncture near the end of one stage," said Veiby. "Otherwise everything went to plan. It was great having Jonas with me."

Veiby won WRC3 from Peugeot Academy driver Jordan Berfa, who brought his 208 R2 home one place ahead of the similar machine of Italian federation-backed Fabio Andolfi.

SUPPORTS



Evans bounced back from two punctures and finished eighth overall for M-Sport



ROUND 08

DRIVER ANALYSIS BY DAVID EVANS



SEBASTIEN OGIER VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

We're trying to implement a tougher scoring system this season – otherwise we may as well just give Ogier 10 every time. He was, of course...ace.



9/10

JARI-MATTI LATVALA VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

Had a plan to go slowly. Went slowly as per the plan. Then crashed, skittled a spectator and retired trying to fix his broken suspension. Last week he told us he was 30 and past all this.



0/10

ANDREAS MIKKELSEN VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT II

The first driver to receive a 'special 10' for an outstanding effort – it comes for rolling the dice and running full studs on Saturday morning. Not to mention his flat-chat bravery going down the mountain on SS10.



10/10

KRIS MEEKE ABU DHABI TOTAL WORLD RALLY TEAM

Brilliant. Deserved far more than sitting at the side of the road watching the oil run out of his gearbox. Kept Ogier in his sights until retirement, something not even the great Loeb could do last year.



9/10

STEPHANE LEFEBVRE ABU DHABI TOTAL WORLD RALLY TEAM

Stronger second half of the rally, once he found confidence in the car and consistency from the conditions – another driver getting to know a new co-driver. Solid drive eventually netted fifth.



6/10

MADS OSTBERG M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

Had to cope with more than any driver in terms of a co-driver change – his notes came in a different language (Norwegian not Swedish) and style. He made it through and now focuses firmly on round two.



6/10

ERIC CAMILLI M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

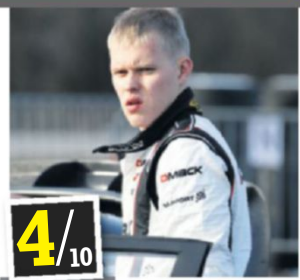
Fifth fastest on only his fourth stage in a World Rally Car was very impressive, crashing out soon after less so – especially on an event that demands experience. Caught out by same corner as Paddon and the rest.



4/10

OTT TANAK DMACK WORLD RALLY TEAM

The Monte's never been a favourite for the Estonian and rolling on SS6 did little to endear the French Alps to Tanak. Otherwise unremarkable run to seventh for the DMACK driver on the marque's new tyre.



4/10



Kubica suffered slow-speed hit

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

THIERRY NEUVILLE

7/10

Looked much more like his old self (not his old Monte self – that old self usually crashed) and could have pushed Mikkelsen in the race for second place had it not been for a prop problem on Sunday.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT N

HAYDEN PADDON

3/10

Baptism of fire for the Kiwi on his maiden Monte. Tapped a tree (can you tap a tree with a World Rally Car?) on the Friday morning opener and damaged the left-rear while fourth overall in the 2014-spec i20. Steady weekend followed but showed pace in out of date car.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

DANI SORDO

3/10

Nowhere on the first day as he struggled to find any confidence at all from the overly soft i20 WRC. Things improved first thing Saturday morning, just in time for him to whack the left-rear and puncture after going airborne.

PRIVATEER

ROBERT KUBICA

1/10

Understeered off on an icy right-hander. Front-left damage balanced front-right damage from the pre-event test. Elfyn Evans thumped the right-rear on his way through, leaving the left-rear of the Pole's Fiesta feeling a little unloved.

RESULTS

FIA World Rally Championship, round 1/14, Monte Carlo Rally, January 20-24

| POS | DRIVER/CO-DRIVER | CAR | TIME |
|-----|---|-----------------------|------------|
| 1 | Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA) | Volkswagen Polo R WRC | 3h49m53.1s |
| 2 | Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Anders Jaeger (NOR) | Volkswagen Polo R WRC | +1m54.5s |
| 3 | Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL) | Hyundai i20 WRC 2016 | +3m17.9s |
| 4 | Mads Ostberg (NOR)/Ola Floene (NOR) | Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +4m47.7s |
| 5 | Stephane Lefebvre (FRA)/Gabin Moreau (FRA) | Citroen DS 3 WRC | +7m35.6s |
| 6 | Dani Sordo (ESP)/Marc Marti (ESP) | Hyundai i20 WRC 2016 | +10m35.5s |
| 7 | Ott Tanak (EST)/Raigo Molder (EST) | Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +11m39.9s |
| 8 | Elfyn Evans (GBR)/Craig Parry (GBR) | Ford Fiesta R5 | +18m30.8s |
| 9 | Esapekka Lappi (FIN)/Janne Ferm (FIN) | Skoda Fabia R5 | +20m41.0s |
| 10 | Armin Kremer (GER)/Pirmin Winklhofer (GER) | BRR Skoda Fabia R5 | +20m43.9s |
| 20 | Felice Re (ITA)/Mara Bariani (ITA) | Citroen DS 3 WRC | +44m14.1s |
| 25 | Hayden Paddon (NZL)/John Kennard (NZL) | Hyundai i20 WRC | +47m05.7s |
| R | Bryan Bouffier (FRA)/Victor Bellotto (FRA) | Fiesta RS WRC | suspension |
| R | Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Mikka Anttila (FIN) | Volkswagen Polo R WRC | suspension |
| R | Kris Meeke (GBR)/Paul Nagle (IRL) | Citroen DS 3 WRC | gearbox |
| R | Eric Camilli (FRA)/Nicolas Klinger (FRA) | Ford Fiesta RS WRC | accident |
| R | Lorenzo Bertelli (ITA)/Simone Scattolin (ITA) | Ford Fiesta RS WRC | accident |
| R | Robert Kubica (POL)/Maciek Szczepaniak (POL) | Ford Fiesta RS WRC | accident |



CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

| DRIVERS | | |
|---------|-------------------|-----|
| POS | DRIVERS | PTS |
| 1 | Sebastien Ogier | 28 |
| 2 | Andreas Mikkelsen | 19 |
| 3 | Thierry Neuville | 15 |
| 4 | Mads Ostberg | 12 |
| 5 | Stephane Lefebvre | 10 |
| 6 | Dani Sordo | 10 |
| 7 | Ott Tanak | 6 |
| 8 | Elfyn Evans | 4 |
| 9 | Esapekka Lappi | 2 |
| 10 | Armin Kremer | 1 |

MANUFACTURERS

| POS | TEAMS | PTS |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| 1 | Volkswagen Motorsport | 25 |
| 2 | Hyundai Motorsport | 25 |
| 3 | Volkswagen Motorsport II | 18 |
| 4 | M-Sport WRT | 12 |
| 5 | DMACK World Rally Team | 8 |
| 6 | Hyundai Motorsport | 6 |

Lefebvre scored good points in his DS 3 as others fell away over the weekend

NEXT RALLY Who will be Ogier's closest challenger? **SWEDEN FEBRUARY 11-14**



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IRISH RALLY REVOLUTION

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R5 and S2000 rally cars can bring the competition back to Ireland. By **Jack Benyon**

CAN RULES REJUVENATE IRISH TARMAC CHAMPIONSHIP?



Boyle's WRC Fiesta will compete for Cup



Keith Cronin is heavily favoured in his Citroën DS 3 R5



Ireland has always had the latest machinery and great drivers

Rule changes don't always go down well with competitors and spectators. Humans are, after all, creatures of habit and change can be intimidating.

It's no different in motorsport, but rarely has a rule change been hit with such debate and mixed opinion as the Irish Tarmac Championship's decision to rule World Rally Cars ineligible for the overall championship.

World Rally Cars can still compete in the Irish Tarmac Championship, and if a WR Car crosses the finish ramp first on any of its rounds, it will be declared the winner of that rally.

The change comes with the addition of a new WRC Cup. Instead of scoring points towards the overall championship – which will be the preserve of those driving S2000 or R5-spec machines – the WR Cars score in their own division instead.

Any fans of the Irish Tarmac Championship will know that for as long as memory serves it has featured – and been won by – the most modern and quickest cars. The likes of Bertie Fisher, Austin MacHale, Andrew Nesbitt and more recently Garry Jennings have endeared themselves to rally fans across the world with their aggressive styles, throwing WR Cars around challenging closed roads with inches of leeway to spare.

Herein lies the main debate against the rule change: spectators want to watch the fastest and most spectacular cars and the drivers want to drive them. It's that simple.

The fact that the WR Cars can no longer win the championship overall

has upset many. Surely the fastest cars and drivers should win the title?

Modern times

The problem with this argument is that it doesn't factor in competition. For years, the championship's number of WR Cars has been dwindling to the point where the overall championship featured only a handful of the machines that competed on every round, or even a majority of rounds.

For that reason, the focus has slipped away from the championship and onto better-attended individual events, such as the Donegal Rally and Cork '20'. Even Donegal struggled to attract an abundance of WRC Cars last year.

Championship chairman David Gray is keen to point out that the series has responded to drivers who continually asked for better competition in the series.

"If you want to call something a championship – and the point was made many times – you need competition and this is what the guys asked for," says Gray. "Yes they all love their cars and love to drive them, but above all they all have a competitive streak in them, otherwise they wouldn't be rally drivers. We were failing to give them that competitiveness. So I think that is the cornerstone of the change."

If the opening round of the championship is anything to go by, then competition is exactly what the drivers are going to get. There will be a similar number of WR Cars (seven expected to start in Galway) as last year, with an added 14 R5 and S2000 cars to the Galway entry. And the strict FIA technical regulations mean the R5s are likely to remain

close in terms of pace, only adding to the competition.

On multiple rounds of the WRC last year, R5 cars in the right hands beat some of the less competitive WRCs. Gray believes that's also a possibility this year, and it won't just be the 'big' cars winning the events.

"I'm still waiting with great anticipation how the R5s will do on the Galway Rally because they are different cars than a year ago," Gray adds. "The Fiestas are up 30bhp and Keith Cronin [Citroën DS3 R5] can beat anybody on his day. There's a good chance R5s will win overall events this year."

"I don't want to come across as 'I told you so' as, at the end of the day, the drivers who have chosen to stick with the WR Cars are still my friends. I want to have them participating in the championship. As the season progresses, and as the R5 division really gets going, they could change their minds. These boys love competition."

Future perfect

Last year's champion Donagh Kelly won't be competing a full schedule this year due to work commitments,

"I think it's good for the sport"

Donagh Kelly



but he believes the rule change is the way forward, despite being the owner of a Ford Focus WRC.

"I think it's good for the sport," explains Kelly. "It's not just given the R5s a boost, it's given the WRCs a boost as well. Galway will be a good event. It will be interesting to see how it translates to the rest of the year but it's a promising start and if it reinvigorates the whole championship it will be good."

Kelly also believes the championship needs an injection of excitement, and that this doesn't have to be a permanent move. It's what works now.

"It needed a change, it became a bit stale and hopefully next year, if it gets enough momentum, most drivers will change within a couple of years to that category," he adds.

More cars

While Ireland has indeed benefited from having world-class cars, what good is a championship with only three top-class machines (and not always the same three) competing against each other?

Surely 10 similar cars fighting it out for honours is a more attractive prospect to competitors.

At least that's what R5 campaigner Jonny Greer believes, despite admitting to being biased because he runs an R5 DS3.

"The organisers took a lot of flack last year for going down this route, so it's good if it comes off," says Greer, who will be on the start ramp in Galway. "It's the right move. I haven't experienced the buzz around Galway in a long time."

The championship will also feature two rounds in the British Rally Championship this year – Circuit of

Ireland and the Ulster Rally. The BRC's similar move to R5/S2000s means the BRC drivers are eligible to score points in the Irish championship should they register, which could also bring an increase in numbers. There could be as many as 30 R5 cars at the Circuit of Ireland, which would provide an incredible spectacle.

WR Cars here to stay

The organisers have no intention of banning WR Cars and, as Gray explains, it was a mutual decision that should the cars win rallies on pace, they will still be declared the official outright winner.

This is by no means the death of the WR Cars in the championship. It's the rebirth of competition.

"The one thing the championship and the R5 boys – as I call them – agree on is they are very happy with the winner crossing the ramp first," says Gray. "It's a friendly championship and, going back to May when we had the first competitors meeting regarding the changes, it was made clear that the events can run whichever categories and classes they decide. It was made clear we would not interfere in the events if they wish to run WR Cars and if a particular car wins and he's the winner."

"If it's Jennings, Boyle or any other WR Car that wins the event overall, I'll be stood there clapping like everybody else. There's no issue there at all: the best car and driver wins the event."

Whichever side of the fence an individual fan sits on, Galway is going to provide one of the most competitive rallies in Ireland for some time. It could usher in a brave new era. ■

THE FUTURE OF LYDDEN

Photos: Kerry Dunlop

LYDDEN'S NEW FIGHT

Kerry Dunlop on the Kent track's problems

The future of Lydden Hill Circuit hangs in the balance pending the result of a planning application for a multi-million pound development.

Pat Doran, who heads Mansion Park, the company that has owned the circuit for the last six years, wants to build a three-storey hospitality centre, grandstands, a new admin block and 14 engineering suites to be accessed via a new entrance with easier access from the A2 trunk road.

The plans show great ambition, but the move is also being made out of a degree of desperation to keep the venue afloat. In recent years racing activity at Lydden has dwindled due to a combination of factors. The venue is now considered too pricey for circuit racing clubs to hire and run meetings, plus new noise restrictions have added an additional, unwanted, barrier to running events.

Diversification of activities is now the only way Doran sees a future for the circuit, and the facilities are needed in order for the venue to run new ventures. Non-motorsport related activities, such as using the venue to train police drivers (in road cars), cycle racing, camping, craft fairs and even hot air ballooning have all been suggested.

Doran explains: "I'm very confident [the planning application will be approved]. This has been something we've been working on for two-and-a-half to three years to get to where we are now. We've been working with the local authority and community to try and get the best for everyone.

"But if we didn't get it the circuit couldn't continue how it is. It will be back to being a track in a field that just held two or three events a year and would be mothballed. We want it to be a hub for the racing community."

Rallycross is successful at Lydden, which holds Britain's round of the World Rallycross Championship. But pure circuit racing meetings for cars and motorcycles have dwindled from around a dozen per year in the 1980s and early 1990s to just three in 2014. In 2015 only one motor race meeting was held: there are none planned for this year (see *Racing News*). So now there is very little income from circuit hire.

Many organising clubs now argue that they cannot afford to rent the circuit due to an increase in track rental costs, brought about in an effort to recoup some of the massive investment put in to originally secure the FIA World Rallycross round in the first place.

Since Doran took over he has pumped more than £1million into circuit improvements, including a new admin block, an impressive glass-fronted startline building for race control and media, a proper asphalt surface for the paddock, increased run-off areas and a host of cosmetic changes. And the staging of an FIA world championship round does not come cheaply...

The result has led to the rise in costs across the board. The two clubs that used the venue most – the South East Motor Sports Enthusiasts' Club (SEMSEC) and the BARC South East centre – are now unable to host events there. SEMSEC ceased racing in 2014 and, while BARC SE did run one meeting at Lydden last year, a second was cancelled on cost grounds.

"The problem with Lydden is a lot of little things add up," says BARC SE competitions secretary Rod Birley. "The track hire fees have increased, but it's all of the other costs that hurt more.

"For example, you have to use Lydden's own ambulance service, and that's gone up £1000, and it costs more to get officials, timekeepers, scrutineers there. When you add it all

up, it's cheaper to race at Brands Hatch. And drivers won't pay Brands Hatch entry fees to race at Lydden."

A recent noise restriction has also hurt club racing at the track. To bring in extra income, drifting events were held at the venue, but the additional noise caused complaints.

Lydden is now restricted to 100 decibels of noise instead of 105dB, and can only run six hours of track activity on a Sunday.

Birley adds that is perhaps the biggest restriction: "Many classes won't get under 100dB without modifications. Drivers won't pay out to fit silencers or baffling for just one round. It's actually a reduction of about 30 per cent.

"We had similar issues at Brands Hatch but the guys there worked so well with the council and a compromise was reached. The same needs to happen at Lydden.

"It's such a shame as it's a superb little track and we'd love to go back there. Lydden has its place in UK motorsport and we want to see it survive."

With the loss of drifting and the lack of income from racing clubs, Lydden must look elsewhere for revenue. There is a three-day exemption for the noise order, which should be sufficient to allow the world rallycross round to take place as planned on May 27-29. But should a compromise on this not be found, it leaves a question mark over the future.

Doran adds: "The noise abatement is a big thing. We can't hold drifting events anymore. That's a quarter of our turnover taken off. The only way we can make money is to diversify."

Now motorsport enthusiasts, organisers and competitors will have to wait with fingers crossed until mid-February, when Dover District Council should make its decision. *Additional reporting by Rob Ladbrook and Stephen Lickorish.* ■



Doran: confidence for the future



New control centre at Lydden



Drifting events have been lost



Rallycross attracts huge crowds

A history of the track in a field...

It is worth taking a brief look at the history of the circuit to have a better understanding of how it used to work so well for club-level competitors.

The original owner of Lydden Autosports track, as it was once known, was Bill Chesson. He was by no means a wealthy businessman, but a man with an overdose of vision, drive and enthusiasm for motorsport.

He started out in the late 1950s by buying up a handful of bangers, which he stored on farmland on the site of the present circuit. Then he marked out the field and rented out the cars to his mates to race for the day at £10 a time. Fans at the earliest public events soon learned to wear wellies because of sheep droppings.

Soon, Chesson was able to buy the field and he successfully staged stock car, banger and motorcycle grasstrack events until in 1965 he was able to lay down a hard surface for motor racing. The planned layout was to have been identical to the current circuit, but he ran out of asphalt at the bottom of the hill and he could not afford any more, so he simply turned it around to complete a kidney-shaped loop. The extra section up to North Bend was added later.

Very little was spent on the circuit during Chesson's ownership for the simple reason that he was reluctant to make any investment because he had to apply annually for planning permission to continue to race. There was no point in planning ahead.

Facilities were still very basic in 1983 when Damon Hill turned up to contest the Marlboro/Daily Express/Yamaha Clubmans Championship. Asked if she was worried about her son taking on the other teenage tearaways on two wheels, mother Bette said: "I'm much more worried about him having to use these ghastly toilets!"

Consequently running costs were minimal, which is why organisers such as the Thames Estuary Automobile Club, 750 Motor Club, Tunbridge Wells Motor Club, BARC and BRSCC, among others, could afford to race there regularly.

And when there was a brief gap in the fixtures Chesson simply formed his own group to organise his own events – the Astra Motor Club.

At one point in 1984, the 750MC, Astra and BARC staged meetings on consecutive weekends.

It's a far cry from Lydden's current predicament.



Lydden's development plans are bold



World Rallycross is headline event

TODT ON RALLYCROSS

Photos: FIA World Rallycross and Tim Whittington



BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONS

World rallycross is entering a seminal season. By **Hal Ridge**



Todt meets Reinis Nitiss and Andreas Eriksson

It is said that if a band's first album creates a buzz, then the second is likely to be successful too. However, the third is often not as straightforward. The difficult third album: do you stick with what you know works and risk people switching off and losing interest as they seek the next thing, or do you make changes to your act and take the risk of losing your roots and original fans?

It's a difficult balance that has to be managed. This year, the FIA World Rallycross Championship enters its third term with the coveted FIA World title that is only enjoyed by four other championships.

After two successful seasons of strong growth in terms of the quantity and quality of competitors, spectators, media exposure and live television presence, the third year will be crucial for World RX to continue its upward trend, while also ensuring stability for the series.

Jean Todt, president of the FIA, played a key role in granting the series' promoter, IMG, FIA World status for the 2014 season. Speaking at his first visit to a rallycross event in 26 years, in Italy at the close of last season, Todt told *Motorsport News* that he believes rallycross is heading in the right direction.

"I like it, because there's a lot of action and the races are short, so things go quickly. It's well programmed," he explained.

"I'm happy because this is a championship that has developed well. The competition is close, there are young drivers, professional teams and good cars. There are people working every day to get more television coverage, more website coverage, more spectators and it's going in the right direction. You have a lot of manufacturers who are involved. It's good to have drivers like [Petter] Solberg. It gives a level for the others. There are a lot of challenges and there is tight competition."

Todt is satisfied with the diversity of the machinery used in World RX, from both works-supported and privately funded outfits. "All the teams are run in a private manner," adds Todt. "Ford is represented, Peugeot, Citroen, Audi, Volkswagen... for a new world championship it's impressive, and especially with cars that are similar."

Asked which territories he would like World RX to travel to in the future, Todt said those decisions lie with the championship promoter: "It's not my job, my job is to give it direction, to give it strategy. Of course there is a championship promoter, IMG, which is doing a good job together with the rallycross commission. First we need to stabilise the calendar. It's very important you cover a minimum of three regions in the world to be a world championship."

Since its graduation from the European Rallycross Championship at the start of 2014, World RX has visited eight new venues. The 2016 calendar features just one new event

in Riga in Latvia. As managing director of World Rallycross for IMG, Paul Bellamy is charged with guiding the sport to continued growth. He agrees with Todt and has led the decision to bring the number of rounds back to 12 this season after a year of 13 events in 2015.

"Less is more in terms of quantity of events, and to not let costs run away that make it prohibitive and expensive for both competitors and also the fans," says Bellamy. "I don't see the value in putting loads and loads more events on the calendar. The bottom line is that this is a world championship sport and it's growing very quickly. This is a great spectator sport and potentially a great TV product, but it's not there yet."

Speaking about current rallycross venues and potential new territories, Bellamy explained: "The analogy I would use is a bit like golf. Golf tournaments are at completely different venues throughout the year that make up the tour. A mix of

traditional venues and new ones in the Middle East and China for example," he says.

"The ability to test athletes on different types of tracks or venues, just like golf courses, keeps World RX exciting. It would be boring if we had 12 F1 venues, but by the same token it would be boring to have just traditional rallycross venues. In order for teams and us to bring more people on board outside the traditional rallycross fans, you've got to go to facilities that they'd be used to with watching other sports but, at the same time, not to alienate the loyal fan base.

"Europe's in pretty good shape, we've got a lot of people interested in having an event in Europe. What that allows us to do is up the standard: the tracks, spectator and broadcast facilities. We've started to build up a successful event in Canada. Argentina has had some difficult starts, but things will be more challenging as you go further afield. I don't think we should put a lot more events in the calendar, but have stronger events. It's difficult to say how many that should be.

"We want to look at North America in some detail, Asia, China particularly would be very interesting, and there's always interest from the Middle East for motorsport. The other continent that doesn't have much motorsport is Africa. There are a couple of chances there that could develop over the next six to 12 months."

While working to ensure the core stability of the championship, new

television packages and audiences are key to Bellamy's plan. Last year, the World RX finale in Argentina was shown on free-to-air TV in the UK on Quest. It was the first time rallycross was shown on free-to-air TV since BBC *Grandstand*'s last rallycross coverage in September 1986.

"Our international broadcast footprint is really important," adds Bellamy. "That's why I'm delighted we've announced a deal in Sweden with SVT, that's very important as a key market for us. The strategy is to get more eyeballs on rallycross, and to work with free-to-air partners where we can because I think that's the way forward to get this sport in front of more people.

"We're working with broadcast partners who have a passion and motorsport strategy. In some countries that may not be free-to-air, but there's a live and a highlights show as well."

If any motorsport can work on television, it's rallycross. After all, that's why it was created in the first place. With interesting new drivers like Ken Block, existing competitors promising to up the ante and new teams in the shape of JRM Racing and Gigi Galli's new Kia outfit looking to join the party full time, that will only help with the amount of eyes viewing the sport on the box.

The third term of World RX will be important, but with both increased TV coverage and stability for competitors high on the list of priorities of those in charge, all the signs are that 2016 will be at least as good as its predecessors. ■

"It is a great spectator sport"



Paul Bellamy

Todt says that the powerful cars are the real stars in the World Rallycross Championship

Prior to the Italian round of the World RX last October, Todt last visited an FIA Rallycross event at Luneville, France in 1989 for a European Championship round.

At that stage, he was head of Peugeot Sport. Presented with a photograph by *MN* of himself with Jean-Pierre Nicolas and multiple European champion Matti Alamaki,

Todt recalled the Group B era, and thinks that part of the strength of rallycross is that it isn't so far removed from that period in the present day.

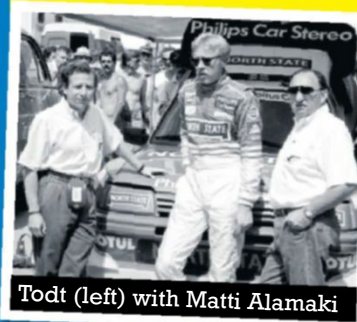
"The colour of my hair has changed a lot," he joked, examining the photograph. "They [Group B] were fascinating cars. I was in Finland recently, Imet Hannu Mikkola, Timo

Salonen, Tommi Makinen, Ari Vatanen and we spoke about Group B cars, which were absolutely fascinating. They have written part of the history of rallying.

"Times have changed but if you compare the current cars to Group B, there probably aren't so

many evolutions [in rallycross] compared to other categories. If you see a rally car now compared to

Group B, or a sportscar compared to how it was, or F1, WRX is a category that has not changed much. What you need is a wild car and as little driver aids as possible."



Todt (left) with Matti Alamaki



Iconic machines

SPORTING SCENE

Bakkerud lines up with Block's team

Three-time World Rallycross Championship event winner Andreas Bakkerud will race for Ken Block's Hoonigan Racing team in World RX this season as team-mate to the American star.

Norwegian Bakkerud graduated to Supercar in 2013 and won twice for Liam Doran's LD Motorsports team in the European Championship. He joined the OlsbergsMSE team for 2014 and won at Lydden Hill and at the Istanbul Park in Turkey. He also won the Italian round of the championship last season.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity to race alongside Ken and his team, that happens to be one of the best motorsport teams in the world!" said Bakkerud.

"I've been able to have a few good seasons back-to-back. Working with Ken and his team in 2016 is going to help me elevate my driving, plus I've always admired the way they handle exposing and marketing themselves. This whole thing is an incredible chance not only for myself behind the wheel this year, but to learn and develop myself for the future as well."



Bakkerud is a WRX winner



Weaver will return for a rallycross challenge

WEAVER TO STEP UP TO SUPERCAR CLASS

British touring car team boss to tackle British Rallycross top flight

By Hal Ridge

Power Maxed British Touring Car Championship team owner Adam Weaver will contest the British Rallycross Championship this season in a Ford Fiesta Supercar.

Weaver made selected appearances in the single-make Swift Sport category last season and has bought a Mk6 version of the Fiesta from Polish racer, Martin Wicik for the 2016 season.

"I love acceleration and I just really wanted to have a go in a Supercar," said Weaver. "With British Rallycross being generally single-day stuff, we

arrive on a Saturday night and race on a Sunday. I would struggle to find the time if we had to arrive at the track on a Wednesday night. Rallycross has a large audience and Supercar is obviously the main event. I'm not expecting to be anything special out of the blocks, but I want to have fun."

Weaver plans to contest a full campaign, but may miss the Belgian round of the series in July. His own team will run the car.

"There are no clashes with anything else," he added. "I may give the Belgian round a miss, as I certainly won't be challenging

for any championships. The guys are stripping and rebuilding the car at the moment, making it as good as we possibly can without building it ourselves. The Fiesta's got 595bhp and 825Nm of torque, so it's reasonably pokey. It's a reasonable spec with all the right bits."

Despite not considering himself as a title contender, Weaver says he won't be fazed by racing at the highest level in British rallycross.

"It's a big step, but ultimately it's still only got four wheels and the pedals are the same," he said.



Weaver has bought Fiesta



Weaver will make step up

Manning back to rallycross

Former rallycross Supercar racer-turned-hillclimb driver Mike Manning will return to rallycross this season in the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship.

Manning will race in the Production four-wheel-drive category in a Subaru Impreza.

"Having had a couple of seasons away from rallycross doing hillclimbing and sprinting, I'm itching to get back," said Manning. "I miss the racing alongside other cars and the battles on the track. I'm still committed to hillclimbing with my Ford Puma but the BTRDA Production class events don't clash with anything else and I've got four rounds on my doorstep at Pembrey. It also allows me to get back into it without spending a fortune. I can't wait."

The Welsh driver competed in the British Rallycross Super Modified category before moving to Supercar in an ex-John Maloney Ford Escort. He later reshelled the car into a Ford Puma, before switching to hillclimbing.

SUMMERS OPTS FOR A FRESH CHALLENGE

Hillclimb title winner looks to a new venture. By Matt James

Alex Summers caused something of a storm in the British Hillclimb Championship last season by claiming the title in his maiden season in the top flight.

It certainly wasn't something he thought was possible when he first graduated into the category for the most powerful over 2.5-litre cars at the end of 2014. He shared the Gould GR61X, powered by a Nicholson McLaren-tuned 3.5-litre V8, with five-time champion Scott Moran but thought he might have taken on too much.

"When I first tested the car at the end of '14, I just couldn't get on with it," admits the 24-year-old. "I was getting stuck in gear off the line and just couldn't get to grips with the car. I was wondering about the decision I had made. I went away and had a long think about it, visualising the techniques and going through everything in my mind. That helped it to click."

Having stunned in the up-to-two-litre

class with a 1.3-litre supercharged Hayabusa-powered DJ Firehawk with an outright victory in 2011, Summers was eager to move up, and sharing with part-timer Moran was an ideal platform.

He took eight wins across the 34 rounds during the season and he was comfortably clear of rival Trevor Willis at the season's end at Loton Park. It was a triumph for a family that is very involved in the sport.

His mother and father, Lindsay and Richard, are both well-known competitors and Alex's interest in the sport was fired from a young age. "I guess there was only one thing I was going to do," says the Sunbury Wells-based racer.



Summers and his mum and dad

"The Gould was a bit of a monster in terms of power, really," he explains. "It puts out north of 650bhp and when I first drove it, it felt horrible. If you drive it at 70 or 80 per cent, then it is all out of sorts. It felt like it had square wheels."

"It is not until you have the confidence to push it to its maximum that it comes alive. The grip is amazing and the power is great. These cars are just not designed to be driven slowly."

Summers certainly did get to grips with it and has cemented his place as the next wave of talent on the hills.

After achieving the biggest prize in the sport, the simple thing would have been to keep going in the same direction, but Summers clearly likes a challenge. With Moran stepping down due to business commitments, it meant that the reigning champion had to think again.

He will swap to a DJ Firehawk for the 2016 season, but this time fitted with an ex-DTM 2.5-litre V6 Cosworth engine. He will drive the car alongside dad Richard, and knows that there is, pardon the pun, a



Summers shared the Gould GR61X-NME with Moran in 2015

mountain to climb to reach the pinnacle again. "Of course I want to be competitive," he says. "But new cars do take a while to get on top of. We have got to be looking at this as a longer term project."

"We will probably spend the first part of the season getting to grips with the aerodynamics, the springs and the differential settings, things like that. Then we will find out if the engine, which puts out just under 500bhp, is good enough. There are lots of power hills so it might be that when we have the chassis sorted, we then change the powerplant."

It is a challenge, that is certain, but it is one that Summers says will give him an even greater satisfaction. "The most exciting thing for me is to win the championship in a car that I have developed. It is great to have won the title, but when you are in the best car you are expected to do well. I wanted the technical challenge and although I know it might be a while until we get the car to the place that we want it to be, but the journey will make it all worthwhile."

ROLL OF HONOUR

British Hillclimb champions

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 2015 | Alex Summers (Gould GR61X NME) |
| 2014 | Scott Moran (Gould GR61X NME) |
| 2013 | Scott Moran (Gould GR61X NME) |
| 2012 | Trevor Willis (OMS 25 Powertec) |
| 2011 | Scott Moran (Gould GR61X NME) |
| 2010 | Martin Groves (Gould GR55B NME) |
| 2009 | Scott Moran (Gould GR55B NME) |
| 2008 | Scott Moran (Gould GR61X NME) |
| 2007 | Martin Groves (Gould GR55B NME) |
| 2006 | Martin Groves (Gould GR55B NME) |

KARTING

'British star gets Ricciardo drive'
Jewiss' 2016 plans, below



Photos: kartpix.net and LAT



Jewiss won Super One Mini Max title

Jewiss joins Ricciardo Kart

Karting star Kiern Jewiss will race for Ricciardo Kart in the new OK-Junior class this year.

The 13-year-old is the reigning Super One National Rotax Mini Max champion and also won the IAME Cadet class in the 2014 Kartmasters Grand Prix.

Jewiss will now drive for Daniel Ricciardo's team that was launched last year.

For this season, Ricciardo Kart will be an official factory team using karts designed and made by Birel ART.

"I can't wait to start the season," said Jewiss. "So far the winter tests have been very positive and I would like to thank Ricciardo Kart for this opportunity and for its

support. I have a really good relationship with the team: we work towards the same goals and have the same vision."

Ricciardo added: "It's great having Kiern as a team member. A driver of his quality and background will be a great asset to our team. I and all the guys on the team look forward to working with him and seeing what results we can achieve together."

● Jewiss will be joined in the class by Fin Kenneally this year. The 13-year-old finished third in the Mini Max standings last year and also starred in the Junior Max Euro Challenge. He will now drive for the successful Ricky Flynn Motorsport outfit.

TOP SINGLE-SEATER TEAM FORTEC TO ENTER KARTING

By Stephen Lickorish

Leading single-seater team Fortec Motorsports will expand into karting for this season, fielding a four-kart team in the Formula Kart Stars Championship.

The team already has strong karting links through its driver academy and has also promoted several karting stars to its MSA Formula outfit. Now Fortec will run its own karting team for the first time.

"It's a natural thing to do," said team owner Richard Dutton. "We've got an academy for young drivers up and running and have got quite a few 13 and 14-year-olds in karting."

"It makes sense for us to run them ourselves and create that link to single-seaters. We will also run the winner of the championship in MSA Formula.

"We are now just putting together the team to make sure we have the right people in place."

Fortec will have FKS champion Ross Martin as part of its MSA Formula this year, along with fellow karter Alex Quinn, who won Racing Steps Foundation backing.

FKS managing director Sebastian King said: "Fortec Motorsports is without doubt one of the most successful single-seater teams with a worldwide pedigree. We are very excited to welcome them to the championship and, with it, the opportunities they present to all our drivers through their various single-seater operations and driver development programmes."

The drivers for Fortec's first season in karts are expected to be announced in the next couple of weeks.



Fortec will enter Formula Kart Stars



Fortec's Dutton

IN BRIEF

Academy
The MSA is looking for drivers to represent the UK in this year's CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy. The MSA pays the entry and registration fees for drivers it nominates into the three-round series that takes place across Europe. Applicants must have been born between January 1, 2001 and December 31, 2003 and hold a valid FIA Grade C Junior International Karting Licence. Eligible karters should send their motorsport CV to daniel.smith@msauk.org by February 2.

F100 engine
Club 100 Racing Ltd has taken delivery of the new engines for the F100 class. Drivers will get their first chance to test the new motors from Tal-Ko Racing on the pre-season test day this Sunday at Buckmore Park. There will also be a new exhaust system for 2016.

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

We're going to miss Meeke soon

Stunning Monte performance leaves us wanting more

In a rare moment of accurate predicting, I said last week that it wouldn't be a surprise to see Kris Meeke deliver some impressive performances in his 2016 part-season and he's started rather well! Meeke was the only driver remotely in Sebastien Ogier's league on the Monte and gave the event real interest for the first two days.

When news came through of his retirement, it briefly seemed as though he had been pushing too hard before crashing out. But the nature of his retirement – which even Ogier described as unlucky – removed blame from the Citroen man.

This all bodes well for next year, but what is a concern is how far off the rest were. With Meeke out of the equation, as he will be for much of this season, Ogier's advantage was measured in minutes. In fairness, there were some mitigating circumstances. Jari-Matti Latvala has never liked the season opener and will surely be better in later events, while the New Generation Hyundai is bound to improve as the team and drivers learn more about it. But even so...

The other talking point from the Monte was the relative performances from Elfyn Evans and his replacement in M-Sport's WRC Fiesta, Eric Camilli. It would be unfair to judge either on one round, but I suspect that Evans is already in a happier place than the Frenchman. Or than the Welshman was just a few weeks ago.

● As you will already have read, the plight of Lydden Hill is a worrying one. It might not be the biggest or most spectacular venues, but it is a great place to spectate, whether at its World Rallycross event or a humble clubbie. Here's hoping it survives.

Kevin Turner, Editor (Twitter: @KRT917)



LETTERS



Motorsport News, January 20

Girls in motorsport

I was delighted to see Susie Wolff's campaign to promote females within motorsport (MN, January 20), and even more pleased that it doesn't just concentrate on those behind the wheel.

Motorsport is a male-dominated environment, but that doesn't mean that it needs to be a male preserve. There is a career path for women in motorsport, and Mrs Wolff's campaign to shine a light for the gender is certainly a welcome one.

Garry Simpson
New Milton

A big hit

How did Kris Meeke's sump guard get ripped off? It must have been very poorly attached. The sump guard on my Ford Cortina GT Mk1 that I rallied years ago was bolted to the chassis...

Mike Mace
Via email

Spectator worries

Having watched some of the coverage on BT Sport and YouTube of the opening round of the WRC from Monte Carlo, two things became clear to me. The Monte Carlo event is a proper rally with drama, excitement, the unexpected and a real challenge from peak to creek.

Secondly, we are no further forward on spectator safety, with many harrowing images being shown. We will never be able to control spectators, and can never make rallying safe, unless we commit it to the sterilisation of single venue events or the safety of permanent circuits?

Andrew Lees
Via email

YOUR PICS



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Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



David Nelson's photograph of a Metro 6R4 at Croft



David Croft and Damon Hill. By Kevin Gibson



Joshua Barrett's banger racing photograph



Michael Ashcroft's picture from Autosport



David Brenton's shot of Truro Motor Club event



Autosport Show taken by John Henderson



David Nelson's pic from Jack Frost Stages



Paul Gomm sent this photo of his National Hot Rod

LISTINGS

RALLYING SATURDAY

■ Letterkenny, Donegal, Ireland
Donegal Mini Stages
Starts 1000hrs Admission tba
Web Donegalmotorclub.com

SUNDAY

Brands Hatch, Kent
Brands Hatch Winter Stages
Starts 0950hrs
Admission £16 (adults) £10 (13-15)
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Web brands Hatchstages.co.uk

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WWW.MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK/DIGITAL-EDITION

BOOK REVIEW

The Argentine Temporada Motor Races 1950 to 1960

Hernan Lopez Laiseca
RRP: £35

This work may seem a little niche, but it's all the better for that, providing an insight into a set of races that rarely receives focus.

The book covers the post-war Argentinian contests, for both single-seaters and sportscars, that attracted international entries. And right from European stars Achille Varzi and Luigi Villorosi's successful visit in 1947, the big names made their mark across

a range of different circuits, encouraged by prize money and opportunities to sell cars. These races were big.

Historic too: Argentina was the scene of the first world championship GP outside of Europe, the iconic Maserati 250F's debut (and first win), and the first world championship success for a rear-engined GP car.

There's also tragedy, including French ace Jean-Pierre Wimille's fatal crash in practice at Palermo in 1949 and the death of 13 spectators in the 1953 Argentinian GP – crowd control was often a problem.

But it's actually the non-championship events and rarely (if ever) seen photographs that make this a fine addition to the enthusiast's library.

The reports are sketchy in detail and there are no quotes, but author Laiseca relies on his subject matter. And it is interesting, for example, to read how Jose Froilan Gonzalez's Ferrari beat the mighty pre-WW2 Mercedes W154s in 1951, or find out about the errors that even the great home hero Juan Manuel Fangio made before famously bursting onto the European scene. **KT**



TV GUIDE



Don't worry letter writer Mr Martin Webb, the abhorrent days of missing motorsport-themed TV is over as the *MN* TV guide returns! No more *Call the Midwife* for you...

The first slot to book in the lounge this week is from our sister publication's show, **Autosport International**, which took place at the NEC in Birmingham.

A bevy of driver and team announcements took place, and nowhere in the country can you boast so much motor racing brilliance under one roof (Wednesday, 2100-0010hrs, Motors TV).

As live coverage goes, the closest you'll get this week is the as-live showing of the latest round of the **Andros Trophy** (Sunday, 1400-1535hrs,

Motors TV). The ice racing series has plenty of pedigree, and the absolute monsters manhandled around the track is a pleasure to watch.

Finally, why not check out highlights of the **Monte Carlo Rally** to go along with the extensive report in *Motorsport News* this week? Highlights are on Wednesday, 1930-2030hrs, BT Sport 1.

NEXT WEEK

OUT WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 3

CAN ROB HUFF HELP HONDA TO THE TOP?



BRITON'S FRESH CHALLENGE IN THE WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP



HOW A BRITISH OVAL STAR TURNED HEADS IN THE USA

TOM HARRIS USES HIS BRISCA SKILLS TO ROCK NORTH AMERICA

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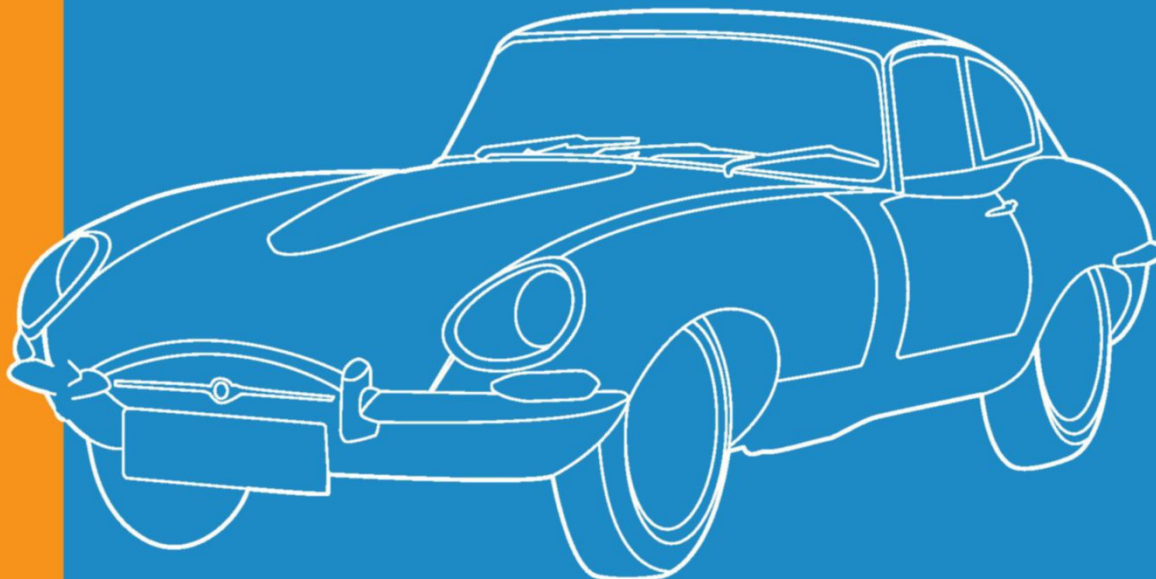
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