

RALLY MEXICO SPECIAL

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MOTORSPORT NEWS



OGIER IMPERIOUS

M-SPORT MAN'S MASTERFUL MEXICO P20

LOEB

STUNS ON WORLD RALLY RETURN



CALLS FOR FRENCH STAR TO RELAUNCH FULL-TIME ASSAULT

By David Evans

Nine-time champion Sebastien Loeb's explosive comeback to the World Rally Championship in Mexico last week has prompted calls for the Frenchman to make a fuller return to the series.

Citroën star Loeb led Rally Mexico for three stages and was only ruled out of the P1 battle when he suffered a puncture on the second day. He admitted his performance had exceeded what even he had thought possible after finishing in fifth place.

Team-mate and full-time Citroën driver Kris Meeke said: "It's like the boss is back and I really like the way this has lifted the team. Could you imagine the strength we'd have had if we'd had him all this year and Craig [Breen] in the third car?"

Loeb is slated to return for the Tour de Corse next month and Rally Spain in October. There is talk that his 2018 programme could be expanded to include Rally Germany in August.

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P27

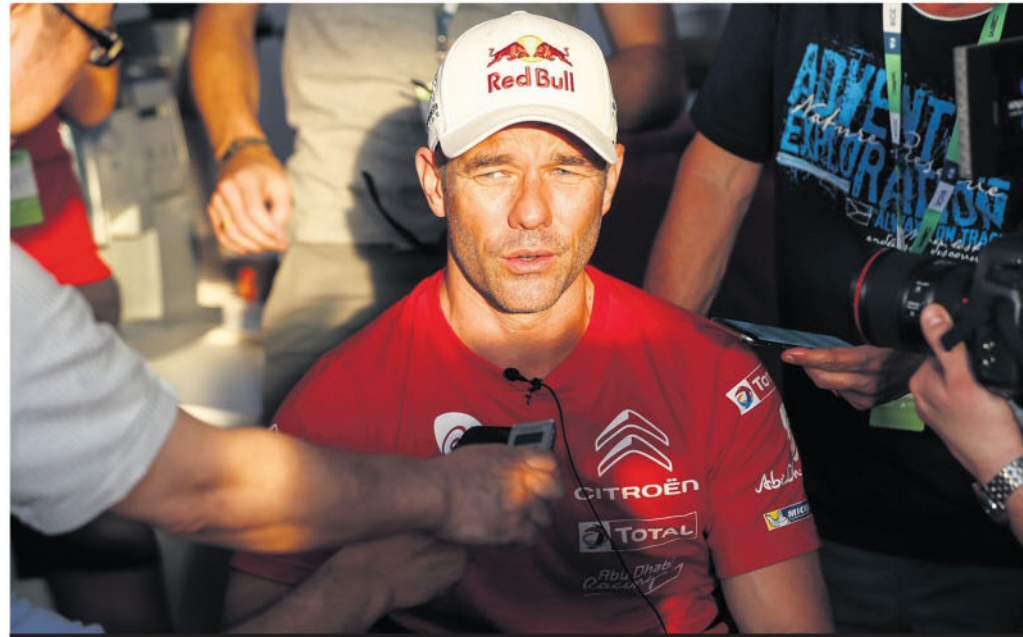
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Briton Kris Meeke wants Loeb to come back for the full season with Citroen next year



The return of the nine-time world champion had a positive impact on the Citroen team

By David Evans

Citroen team principal Pierre Budar and lead driver Kris Meeke are hoping to convince Sebastien Loeb to make a longer-term return to the World Rally Championship following his astonishing comeback drive at Rally Mexico last week.

Nine-time champion Loeb surpassed his own expectations when he turned back the years to lead Rally Mexico for three stages and only a second-day puncture spoiled his chances of a seventh consecutive win in Guanajuato.

Loeb told *Motorsport News*: "The speed in Mexico was what I hoped for. What I wanted was to be in the fight; you know if you are just one step behind then you are always that step behind, but I wasn't. It's been good, more than I expected."

Loeb and Meeke were in the top three for five stages in what was Citroen's strongest team performance since the start of last season. By the end of the event the French squad was third in the manufacturers' championship,

just one point behind last year's champion, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team.

Meeke told *MN*: "The effect Seb's had on the team has been pretty incredible to be honest. We've all been able to feed off the energy he's come in with - me especially. Right from the start of the race the feeling has been strong, in fact from the test we did in Spain. After that we were able to work through the set-up and we were both going in the same direction. It's been so positive.

"I've said all along that I want him back in the team and this event just reinforces that. If I had the chance to do a full season with him then I just know I would learn so much. He's come in and done an exceptional job and I'm looking forward to seeing what he can do in Corsica. It's like the boss is back and I really like the way this has lifted the team.

"Could you imagine the strength we'd have had if we'd had him all this year and Craig [Breen] in the third car? There's no doubt we'd have been right at the sharp end in the race for the manufacturers - so

why not push that for next year? We could be a very, very strong team if we could convince him to come back and do a bit more."

Asked about his intentions in the World Rally Championship and whether he would consider a longer-term return, Loeb added: "At the moment, I am doing rallycross with Peugeot and I cannot do everything. And also, when I retired from the full championship I know the reason why [one key reason being the travel] and that has not changed. Now I come, I drive and it's cool, but to do all the championship, I don't know - it's not the plan."

Rally Germany is an event which doesn't clash with anything for Loeb, but the Frenchman raised his own issue with the Saarbrücken event. "The trouble with that one is that it's in the summer holiday," said Loeb. "I'll be on the beach."

Team principal Pierre Budar was delighted with the pace Loeb showed and he reiterated Meeke's thoughts on the impact he had on the team and his desire to see him driving one of his cars more often.

Experts say Frenchman should target 2019 programme with Citroen

MEEKE PUSHES FOR LOEB TO MAKE FULL-TIME WRC COMEBACK



Loeb's pace shocked on Saturday in Mexico



"I don't know one team who wouldn't want him for 2019"

Pierre Budar

"We have an agreement for three rallies, this is the deal so far," Budar told *MN*. "We will go through this year and after Corsica and Spain we will have the opportunity to talk again, so let's see what is possible then. But I don't know any team manager in this service park who would not want this guy in their team full-time - it's the same for us."

"Mexico has been an extraordinary proof of his performance. We have seen he is still very fast and he has shown just how well he is able to deal with this new car. When he took the lead on the second day, it was in the middle of the fight when everybody was pushing so hard, we didn't expect him to be so fast

so quick. We knew he could do nice things, but I thought it would take more time. Now we look to Corsica and after what we have seen here, why would we say he cannot win that rally [Corsica]?"

M-Sport Ford World Rally Team principal Malcolm Wilson said Loeb's Mexican return had fully justified a possible full-time return in 2019. He told *MN*: "On the performance we've seen from Seb here on this event, you would absolutely have to consider him for next year - you couldn't not!"

Wilson added that he was surprised at Loeb's ability to maintain front-running pace.

"I said I thought he would finish on the podium," Wilson said, "but maybe I didn't expect the speed we

saw on Saturday when everybody was that bit closer on the road.

"The big difference from when Marcus [Gronholm] came back and did Sweden with us [in 2010] is that Marcus hadn't been doing anything for the previous two years. He hadn't been in a car. Marcus had the odd good stage, but he didn't have the consistency of speed. The difference for Sebastien is that he's been regularly competing at the highest level in the World Touring Car Championship and in rallycross and another big thing is that he's still been working with Daniel [Elena, co-driver] in Dakar, so that relationship has remained. But it's still remarkable what he's done at the age of 44."

Meeke distressed despite podium finish

Kris Meeke delivered a harsh assessment of his third-placed performance on Rally Mexico.

Meeke, who won the Leon-based event 12 months ago, suffered a series of spins and then put his Citroën C3 WRC on its side on the final morning.

Asked to describe his rally, Meeke spelled it out for *MN*. He said: "It's been s**te. There were too many errors from me. I had the car, I had the road position and the pace to win and I wasn't able to convert it. I'm frustrated as hell, but I'm frustrated as hell with third place, that's not a bad sign. I've got no excuses here."

Meeke still sits fourth in the points, three points behind Andreas Mikkelsen, but 24 adrift of championship leader Sebastien Ogier.

As revealed in *MN* last month, the Citroën should take a step forward in terms of gravel set-up with revised geometry in time for Rally Argentina. Citroën's technical director Christophe Besse has departed the team to focus on running his own motorsport company. The team has yet to name his replacement.



Meeke wasn't pleased with his performance

STANDINGS

World Rally Championship 2018
After 3/13 rounds

POS	DRIVER	CAR	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Ford Fiesta	54
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai i20	52
3	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)	Hyundai i20	35
4	Kris Meeke (GBR)	Citroen C3	32
5	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Toyota Yaris	31
6	Ott Tanak (EST)	Toyota Yaris	26

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

Rosso goals

Toro Rosso can revise its goals for this year after exceeding its expectations in pre-season testing. The team's new era with Honda engines got off to a solid start, with the team completing the third highest mileage, behind just Mercedes and Ferrari. "The initial brief was that Melbourne might be tough, but actually we now think we're definitely in the fight for points," said driver Brendon Hartley. "It's a tough midfield battle, but it's been a really positive start and the goal has to be points."

Kubica's joy

Robert Kubica says he's very happy with Williams and is already enjoying his new test and development role. The Polish star may have missed out on a dream comeback race drive, but says he's learning new things from a different approach to F1. "If you think where I was just 12 months ago things have changed a lot," said Kubica. "I'm enjoying my position here, it's giving me a lot of challenges and also opportunities to see the team working, to see many different things. When you are a race driver, you just see things in race driver mode."

Mad Leclerc

Charles Leclerc gave himself a dressing-down for throwing his Sauber at the scenery in what he called "a really stupid mistake" on the final day of testing. Leclerc lost almost five hours of running after he lost control of the C37 at Turn 12 while on a personal-best lap and spun into the gravel, lightly hitting the tyres. "I'd be more disappointed if I'd done it in Melbourne," he said. "I've learned a lot but have a lot more to learn. I just feel angry at myself. I went a bit over the limit and the error cost me quite a lot."

Funny fuel

Red Bull boss Christian Horner has backed his team's relationship with its fuel and oil supplier after it came in for criticism from Mercedes chief Toto Wolff. Wolff said he found it odd that Red Bull uses ExxonMobil for its Renault engine, while the works team uses BP/Castrol. Red Bull is the only one of F1's six customer teams to use a different supplier to its manufacturer. "We see it as an advantage," said Horner. "Their products won three grands prix last year. Obviously there are burdens because they're a different supplier to the works team, but it just means more dyno testing. We wouldn't do it if we didn't see a technical advantage."

VETTEL LEADS FERRARI



Vettel shattered the current lap record

By Robert Ladbrook

Sebastian Vettel has shied away from making a prediction on his title chances this season, despite Ferrari comfortably locking out the fastest times during last week's second Barcelona test.

Vettel topped the mileage count, completing 425 laps over the final week of testing, and also smashed the track's unofficial lap record with his day three 1m17.182s benchmark being 1.2s under the previous fastest Spanish GP lap.

Kimi Raikkonen topped day four, running just a tenth behind Vettel as both Ferraris finished well clear of the pack in the combined times.

Despite the team's impressive early pace, Vettel played down the results, saying: "It's the wrong thing to do, just look at the timesheets. It's just one time, over one lap, and there's more than one lap to do this season."

"Obviously, our target is to be up front, but this is the wrong time to say anything.

For now the important thing is that our car is working the way we want, the way we expect. But I think we can still do better."

Raikkonen added he felt there was more to come from the SF71H: "I'm sure if we wanted to go faster, we could have, but it doesn't mean anything here. In two weeks everybody will know where everybody is. Until then we are only guessing."

Behind the Italian machines, Fernando Alonso and McLaren set the third fastest overall time, despite a test again disrupted by issues. The Woking team recorded the least mileage of anybody, with Alonso stopping twice across his days for engine changes. The team reported a mixture of battery issues and a persistent oil leak. Alonso's final afternoon lap on the hyper soft Pirellis was just 0.6s shy of Vettel's outright best.

Daniel Ricciardo was fourth quickest on a promising test for Red Bull, with the Aussie being the first to lower the lap record with his day two effort.

In contrast, Mercedes had a quiet yet

Hamilton gained mileage



productive final four days of running. The team recorded the most mileage across all eight days of testing this year, but Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas languished just eighth and 10th in the overall times respectively.

The team did not run the hyper softs all week, and suffered some blistering on the softer compound covers. The vast majority of its mileage was done on the

medium tyres, with the team showing strong long-run pace throughout.

"It's been a really positive test," said Hamilton. "We got through everything and reliability was great. We're happy with the information. It's still difficult to know exactly where we are in comparison to Red Bull and Ferrari, and we won't know fully until the first race, but I think we're well equipped."



The Red Bull looked well sorted in testing

Mercedes admits that it has an eye on the developing Red Bull as a threat

Mercedes has singled out Red Bull as the team that it is most concerned about being a threat to its title hopes this year.

The Milton Keynes team enjoyed a productive final four days of running in Spain, with Daniel Ricciardo being the first driver to lower the track's unofficial lap record to go fastest on day two.

Mercedes' technical head James Allison told Sky Sports: "I think there's three

quick teams and there's no doubt that Red Bull are going to be people that we're going to be fighting with this year. As testing goes on you get a better idea of where things stack up. Even now you can say there's some blurriness, so it's not possible to say if we've got our nose in front or not, but we can say it's close.

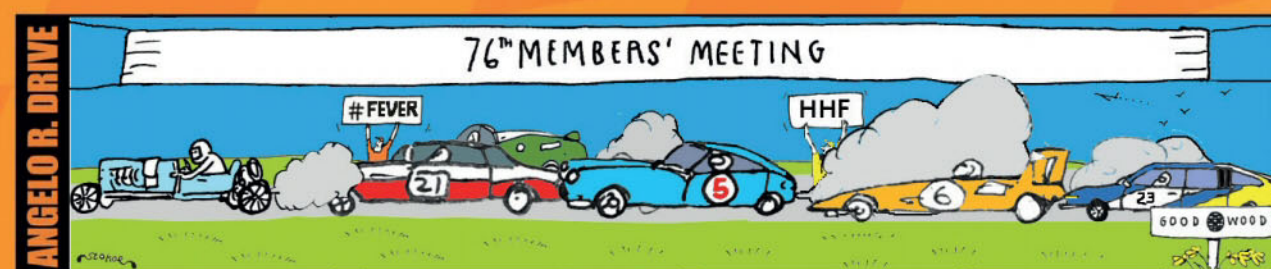
"Looking at what they [Red Bull] have brought here, I'd say they still have some

bodywork to bolt on, and I don't know what their engine plans are. Nobody really sandbags in testing, you're here to test, and you're only going to have a valid test if you see what your car can do."

Ricciardo added: "We're certainly more ready than last year – and probably every year before that since I've been at this team. We're going to the first race having confidence to push the car on the limit."

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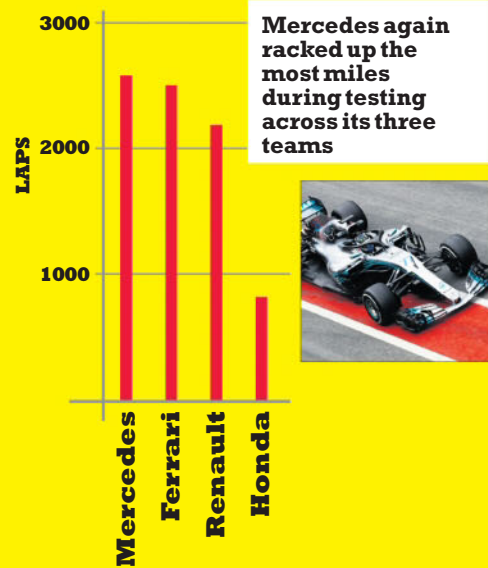
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TEST LOCKOUT



Alonso was fast, but the McLaren was fragile

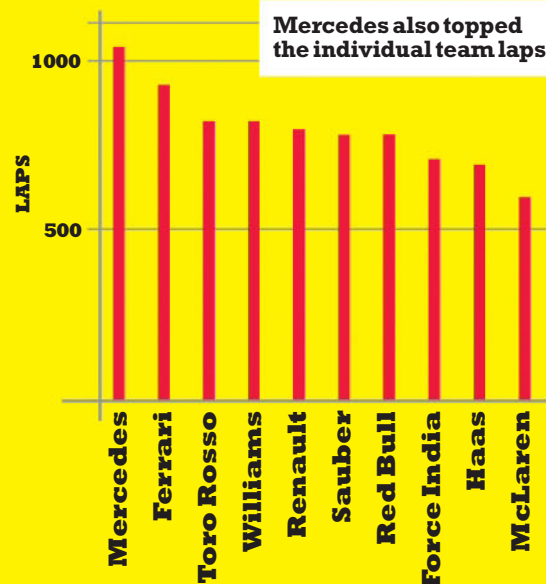
TOTAL LAPS BY ENGINE



Mercedes again racked up the most miles during testing across its three teams



TOTAL LAPS BY TEAMS



Mercedes also topped the individual team laps

TESTING TIMES

Date: March 6

Weather: Warm, dry Mood: Let's just hope it's better than last week...

POS	DRIVER	CAR-ENGINE	TIME	GAP	LAPS
1	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1m20.396s	-	171
2	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1m20.596s	+0.200s	86
3	Max Verstappen	Red Bull/Renault	1m20.649s	+0.253s	130
4	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m20.808s	+0.412s	91
5	Pierre Gasly	Toro Rosso/Honda	1m20.973s	+0.577s	54
6	Kevin Magnussen	Haas/Ferrari	1m21.298s	+0.902s	95
7	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	1m21.432s	+1.036s	48
8	Carlos Sainz	Renault	1m21.455s	+1.059s	91
9	Sergiy Sirotkin	Williams/Mercedes	1m21.588s	+1.192s	42
10	Sergio Perez	Force India/Mercedes	1m21.643s	+1.247s	93
11	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber/Ferrari	1m21.706s	+1.310s	120
12	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren/Renault	1m21.946s	+1.550s	38
13	Lance Stroll	Williams/Mercedes	1m22.937s	+2.541s	86

Date: March 7

Weather: Warm, dry Mood: Oh, it is better than last week!

POS	DRIVER	CAR-ENGINE	TIME	GAP	LAPS
1	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull/Renault	1m18.047s	-	165
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m18.400s	+0.353s	90
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1m18.560s	+0.513s	85
4	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1m19.541s	+1.494s	66
5	Brendon Hartley	Toro Rosso/Honda	1m19.823s	+1.776s	119
6	Fernando Alonso	McLaren/Renault	1m19.856s	+1.809s	57
7	Carlos Sainz	Renault	1m20.042s	+1.995s	88
8	Romain Grosjean	Haas/Ferrari	1m20.237s	+2.190s	78
9	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	1m20.242s	+2.195s	49
10	Lance Stroll	Williams/Mercedes	1m20.349s	+2.302s	63
11	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	1m20.758s	+2.711s	102
12	Esteban Ocon	Force India/Mercedes	1m20.805s	+2.758s	130
13	Charles Leclerc	Sauber/Ferrari	1m20.919s	+2.872s	160
14	Sergiy Sirotkin	Williams/Mercedes	1m22.350s	+4.303s	80

Date: March 8

Weather: Warm, dry Mood: Wow, a Mercedes hasn't been fastest yet...

POS	DRIVER	CAR-ENGINE	TIME	GAP	LAPS
1	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1m17.182s	-	188
2	Kevin Magnussen	Haas/Ferrari	1m18.360s	+1.178s	153
3	Pierre Gasly	Toro Rosso/Honda	1m18.363s	+1.181s	169
4	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	1m18.675s	+1.493s	79
5	Carlos Sainz	Renault	1m18.725s	+1.543s	69
6	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren/Renault	1m18.855s	+1.673s	151
7	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber/Ferrari	1m19.244s	+2.062s	148
8	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m19.296s	+2.114s	84
9	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1m19.629s	+2.447s	73
10	Robert Kubica	Williams/Mercedes	1m19.629s	+2.447s	73
11	Sergio Perez	Force India/Mercedes	1m19.634s	+2.452s	159
12	Max Verstappen	Red Bull/Renault	1m19.842s	+2.660s	187
13	Lance Stroll	Williams/Mercedes	1m20.262s	+3.080s	67

Date: March 9

Weather: Warm, dry Mood: This is tight. Bring on Melbourne!

POS	DRIVER	CAR-ENGINE	TIME	GAP	LAPS
1	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	1m17.221s	-	157
2	Fernando Alonso	McLaren/Renault	1m17.784s	+0.563s	93
3	Carlos Sainz	Renault	1m18.092s	+0.871s	45
4	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull/Renault	1m18.327s	+1.106s	92
5	Romain Grosjean	Haas/Ferrari	1m18.412s	+1.191s	181
6	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	1m18.825s	+1.604s	104
7	Brendon Hartley	Toro Rosso/Honda	1m18.949s	+1.728s	156
8	Esteban Ocon	Force India/Mercedes	1m18.967s	+1.746s	163
9	Charles Leclerc	Sauber/Ferrari	1m19.118s	+1.897s	75
10	Sergiy Sirotkin	Williams/Mercedes	1m19.189s	+1.968s	105
11	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m19.464s	+2.243s	97
12	Lance Stroll	Williams/Mercedes	1m19.954s	+2.733s	27

McLaren admits poor preparation hurt test

McLaren Racing head Eric Boullier has admitted that the squad's testing troubles arose because it "didn't do a good enough job" in terms of preparation.

The MCL33 was redesigned on a short timescale over the winter after McLaren only confirmed its move to Renault engines last September. During testing the team lost time with a failed wheelnut, cooling issues, battery and turbo problems across the eight days and recorded the least mileage of any team.

Despite this the car has looked quick, with Fernando Alonso setting the third fastest outright time on the last day.

Boullier said the new car's design was "ambitious" and defended the team's design strategy.

"We want to be competitive and we have an ambitious design around the car - you can see that it's a little different from the other



McLaren didn't have a good test

Renault-engined cars," he said. "So far we had minor issues, but I think that was because we didn't do a good enough job to prepare the car. We were a little stretched in terms of lead time and delay, but we are very quickly getting back to normal."

When asked if he could be sure the team would be on top of reliability by Australia, Boullier responded: "Not 100 per cent because we have not run as much as we wanted, so there will be a higher risk of failure somewhere. But a good rebuild of the car will help to fix a few of the issues we've had."

QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

Sebastian Bourdais claimed the opening win of the IndyCar season at St Petersburg after a dramatic collision between Alexander Rossi and Robert Wickens with two laps to go. A late full course yellow allowed Rossi to close on long-time leader Wickens and Rossi attempted a pass into Turn 1 but lost grip and slid into Wickens, spinning him out of the race. This allowed Bourdais to win, from Graham Rahal, while Rossi still claimed third... Kevin Harvick claimed a third NASCAR Cup

victory in succession after emerging on top of a late four-way battle with Kyle Busch, Denny Hamlin and Chase Elliott to triumph at Phoenix... M-Sport will help assist Jaguar with the new I-Pace electric series that will support Formula E. The Jaguar I-Pace eTrophy will become FE's first regular support series from the 2018/19 season and, while Jaguar Land Rover's special vehicle operations department will build the cars, M-Sport engineers will help to run them on race weekends...

British drivers led the way in the opening pre-season Formula 2 test at Paul Ricard with European F3 champion Lando Norris setting the fastest overall time and topping two of the three days. British ART drivers George Russell and Jack Aitken were quickest on the final day... Formula V8 3.5 champion Pietro Fittipaldi will make his World Endurance Championship debut this season with the DragonSpeed LMP1 team. The 21-year-old will contest the Spa and Fuji rounds in the team's BR1 prototype as regular driver

Renger van der Zande has clashed IMSA commitments. Toyota regular Stéphane Sarrazin has left the team to join SMP's LMP1 programme, while Alex Wurz will come out of retirement to test with Toyota in the prologue as three of the manufacturer's regular drivers have clashing commitments... Ex-Formula 1 racer Vitaly Petrov will contest the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup this year in an ASP-run Mercedes-AMG GT3 alongside his WEC season with the SMP LMP1 team...

Perez says Force India needs a step up to be able to compete in the midfield fight

Sergio Perez says Force India has its work cut out to try and get back to the front of F1's midfield battle after its new car struggled in testing.

The team opted to run a simplified version of its 2018 challenger in testing before bringing in a sizable update package for Australia.

"We definitely need a good step for the first race and hopefully that will come and we can be competitive from then onwards," said Perez.

"It's hard to judge where we are, but I don't think we're leading the mid-pack. But it only matters where you finish at Abu Dhabi."

RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT, Gary Hawkins, Jakob Ebrey, Dan Bathie

OBITUARY

Henry Hope-Frost
1970-2018

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR 'H'



F1 personnel gathered during Barcelona test

Tributes to Henry Hope-Frost have poured in from across the motorsport world after the journalist and broadcaster was killed in a motorbike accident last week aged 47.

'H' had a long association with *MN*'s sister title *Autosport*, where he started out in the ad sales team before moving over to the editorial staff and then into becoming 'The Voice of *Autosport*' through his work on the stage at Autosport International, where he interviewed the great and the good to thousands of visitors.

As well as his work with *Autosport*, Henry had been a regular fixture at Goodwood, and this meant he'd had dealings with just about everybody at some point in time.

As a life-long motorsport fan he was quite literally living the dream. He'd been expelled from Stowe School for repeatedly bunking off to watch cars testing at Silverstone, and this 'fever' (his trademark word) for the sport made him an incredibly knowledgeable and enthusiastic journalist.

A tribute was organised at the final Formula 1 pre-season test at Barcelona, where a memorial photograph was taken in the paddock with many of Henry's friends and colleagues.

Jenson Button was among those to pay tribute on Twitter as he said: "You could always tell how passionate Henry Hope-Frost was about motorsport when he interviewed you, it felt so natural like you were having a good old chinwag with your closest mate. Sending love to his family."

● A special tribute is planned at this weekend's Goodwood Members' Meeting where 'a minute of fever' engine revving will take place before the F5000 demonstration. HHH and #FEVER stickers will also be on sale with donations going to the family. A crowd funding website has also been created to help raise cash for Henry's wife Charlotte and three young boys. It can be found at justgiving.com/crowdfunding/friendsofhenryhope-frost.



HHF was master of the Autosport Stage

Coates and Rivett back for another Clio season

Renault UK Clio Cup race winner Max Coates has switched to the frontrunning Team Pyro squad for this season, and three-time champion Paul Rivett will also be back.

Coates has contested the last two seasons of the Clio Cup with Ciceley Motorsport but has now moved to Pyro – the team that has powered the champion to the title eight times in the last 10 years.

The 24-year-old is confident of launching a title bid in his new surroundings having finished third and fourth in the standings in the last two seasons.

"Ciceley wanted to concentrate more on their touring car operations [as the team has expanded to run two cars] so I was looking for a new team," explained Coates. "The engineering side we had at Ciceley was great but maybe Pyro bring a bit more experience and a different take on how to do things. We've got a good strong team and there's no reason why we shouldn't be fighting for the drivers' and teams' championships.

"You look at the races last year and I had the joint most fastest laps. My race pace was very good and qualifying is where I need to work on."

Meanwhile Rivett is confident about his chances with last year's champion Mike Bushell graduating to the British Touring Car Championship.

"I think we are in with a cracking shot this year of winning the title," he said. "I came close last year when I was second and I would like to go one better in 2018. It's looking good, every year as a team we have got stronger and stronger.

"For me to move to the next stage, which would be touring cars, is so much money and it's such a big step. The most important thing for me is to be out racing and if that's not in touring cars the next best thing is the Clio Cup as it's such a great series."



Simmons was race winner with Arden

Simmons heads JHR's British F4 driver line-up

British Formula 4 race winner Ayrton Simmons will spearhead JHR Developments' line-up in the category this season.

Simmons starred in the final round of 2016 as he claimed his first podium, before taking a win at Brands Hatch last year and finishing seventh in the standings. He will now move to JHR after spending the last one-and-a-half seasons with Arden.

Simmons will be joined in the JHR line-up by Manuel Sulaiman – who took one podium with the squad in a partial campaign last term – and karting graduate Josh Skelton.

"I think we've got a very good team," said team boss Steve Hunter. "This will be Ayrton's second full season and, from what I've seen so far, he's an incredibly talented driver with a lot to offer. With Manuel, he has done seven rounds last year and I'm sure he's going to be up there fighting for it as well. He had a lack of testing during the last year so we were trying to maximise every race weekend he was there for.

"Josh has been a very good karter at a high level. There's a learning process to go through, but I expect him to be fighting for rookie wins."

The JHR team is also in talks with drivers to run a fourth car in the series this year.

Motorbase makes return to Carrera Cup for first time in seven years

British Touring Car squad Motorbase Performance will return to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB for the first time since 2011 this year.

The team has a history of success in the category with its drivers having taken 26 victories – third on the all-time list for Carrera Cup outfits. In recent years, the team has focused on the BTCC as well as competing in British GT and the Blancpain GT Series with an Aston Martin Vantage GT3.

But after withdrawing from British GT for 2017, the team will now return to Porsches this season. It will run former Radical racer Dan Vaughan in the Am class and could expand to run a second car.

"We are delighted to be back in the Porsche paddock – it is a brand that suits us very well, and it is a championship that we have had big success in," said team boss David Bartrum. "With the new car coming for 2018, this was the perfect time to rejoin the series.

"I have been really impressed with Dan so far, and he is a great fit for the team. We have the capability to run a second car and we are talking to some drivers, but it might be that we just run one – we are a bit late in the day announcing our plans."

● Former BTCC racer Richard Hawken will also be on the grid after joining the Slidesports squad. Elsewhere, JTR has completed its line-up after signing 2016 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion from In2Racing.



Radical racer Vaughan will drive for returning squad



Harper will complete a demonstration run in iconic Porsche 935

Porsche Junior Harper gets to drive 'Moby Dick' at Goodwood

Porsche Junior Daniel Harper will showcase the famous Porsche 935/78 'Moby Dick' at the Goodwood Members' Meeting this weekend.

The model was the final version of the 935 and missed out on victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1978, producing up to 850bhp and reaching up to 228mph on Mulhannet straight.

Third in Ginetta Junior last year, Harper switches to Porsche Carrera Cup GB in 2018 with JTR after being selected by Porsche as its new Junior and was approached by the manufacturer to drive the car during the Goodwood meeting.

"Being given the chance to drive the incredible Porsche 935/78 'Moby Dick' is simply

amazing and I can't thank Porsche enough for the opportunity," said Harper.

"The 935 will be by far the most powerful car I've ever driven, as well as the most expensive, so I will certainly be on my best behaviour."

Harper's first test outing with JTR was curtailed earlier in the month due to poor weather.

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

F3 racer Moore returns in Nissan GT3

Former BRDC Formula 4 title challenger Struan Moore will contest his first full British racing season since 2014 when he joins the British GT Championship at the wheel of an RJN Nissan GTR GT3.

Moore will share the GTR with 2014 British GT4 runner-up Devon Modell for the full British championship. He was a race winner in BRDC Formula 4 in both 2013 and 2014, before heading to Japan to chase a career.

He spent last year racing with Nissan in the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup.

The Nissan entry brings the British GT3 grid to 13 cars, with six manufacturers represented.

"I'm really excited to be back racing in Britain and the British GT Championship is somewhere I've always wanted to race, so when the chance came up I jumped at it," said Moore.

"I'd hadn't met Devon until this week and I know we'll get on. He's got a strong record in GT racing, and I feel I've progressed as a driver with each season I've done.

"It's a very strong field this year but the championship has to be our aim."

● The UltraTek Racing Nissan team will be back up to two cars in British GT4 after signing Stephen Johansen and Jesse Anttila to share its second 370Z GT4. Johansen graduates to GT4 having raced in the Volkswagen Racing Cup, while Finnish racer Anttila has competed in British Formula Ford and European GT4 competition, and had one outing with the team in British GT last year. UltraTek's second car will be handled by Martin Plowman and Emmerdale actor, former BTCC racer Kelvin Fletcher.

MALVERN AND JONES GET NEW MERCEDES

Team Parker will run brand new AMG GT4 after Porsche swap



The new AMG GT4 in its livery

By Robert Ladbrook

Nick Jones and Scott Malvern are targeting a significant climb up the order in this year's British GT Championship after confirming a switch to a new Mercedes AMG GT4.

Jones and Malvern will enter their third British GT4 campaign with one of the new German machines, which will be run by title-winning outfit Team Parker Racing.

The duo has previously campaigned a Porsche Cayman Clubsport GT4 but struggled to score results in the machine, which was subject to a string of performance-focused upgrades from Porsche tuner Manthey.

Malvern, a former champion in both British Formula Ford and Formula Renault BARC, said the arrival of the AMG could be a game-changer for the pair.



Malvern (left) and Jones are hopeful

"The Mercedes really is a huge step up for us," he said. "We tested the car at Portimao over the winter and it's clear that Mercedes has worked closely with its factory teams and drivers. The end product is a really well rounded race car.

"Given its size it would be easy to think it'd be just a straight-line warrior, but actually the balance of it is brilliant, so I think it will suit the British tracks really well.

"The Porsche hid a lot of what we were doing last year. Nick is improving constantly, but it's hard to be noticed when your machinery isn't quite quick enough.

"This year we'll be competitive and we'll be up there fighting for both the Pro-Am championship and I believe we can be in the mix for outright podiums and wins."

Jones added: "The Mercedes gives us every chance to progress. It's great to drive and is a different experience to the Porsche. I feel I'm driving better than ever, so hopefully we'll get a few test days under our belts before Oulton Park and hit the ground running."

The car will be the third new Mercedes in British GT4, joining Fox Motorsport and Richardson Racing, which has yet to confirm its drivers.

● The new ERC Sport British GT team will expand to field a new Mercedes GT4 in international racing this year. The team, which has been set up by engineer Keith Cheetham, plans to run a Mercedes AMG GT4 in selected endurance races across Europe and America, with outings in Creventic's 24H Series planned. The new car has been ordered by Lee Mowle, who also owns the AMG GT3 he races in Britain alongside Dutchman Yelmer Buurman. "It made sense to have one alongside the GT3," said Mowle. "GT4 is growing so rapidly, and it's also so accessible, it's perfect for endurance racing. The GT4 version is very comfortable, without being too much like a road car."

Norma heads to UK LMP3 Cup

A second marque will compete in the UK LMP3 Cup in 2018, as the Mecatech squad has confirmed it will field its Norma M30 in the championship.

The car – which won last year's Michelin Le Mans Cup with the DKR Engineering squad – will be driven by Bradley Smith and Duncan Williams. Smith finished second in the prologue race the series held at Snetterton in 2016.

"We've tried the Ligier and the Norma and they're both

fantastic cars," said Smith. "Norma's had strong results in Europe and the factory is keen to work with us and offer lots of support.

"We're not just entering this for a bit of fun: we're going for the championship, so we're looking for every advantage we can find. We are working closely with Norma and hopefully we can be fast and up the front for the first race."

Williams added: "I've driven at a fair level in quick cars and I think the Norma will suit me."



First non-Ligier entry for series

Drivers criticise Hankook for 12 Hours at Silverstone

Drivers in the Creventic 12 Hours at Silverstone have criticised the wet weather Hankook tyre which they claim was too hard for the cold and wet conditions at the circuit.

The race was run on a newly-resurfaced track which offered low grip. Also ambient temperatures were low and heavy rain hit the first part of the two-part race late-on. During this time several cars spun and crashed as drivers struggled to get sufficient temperature into their rubber.

"The trouble with Silverstone is it's high speed, aquaplaning's always been an issue," said Jonny Mowlem.

"They've resurfaced the track and the cold conditions with the hard wet that Hankook have are just a recipe for basically being a passenger in the car when you hit puddles.

"With their wet compound tyre they need to look at maybe having a slightly softer compound. That would probably work everywhere because of the

chances of it raining in somewhere like Dubai [is low]."

The Creventic series is aimed mainly at amateur drivers, and racer Nicolas Minassian said: "It is already difficult for a pro! Imagine for someone whose day-to-day job is not a pro, it's even harder."

Hankook motorsports director Manfred Sandbichler said the majority of drivers reported that the tyre worked.

"The tyres are the same for everyone. Now the job between my engineers and team engineers is to adjust the car with the tyre," he explained. "When you speak with 10 drivers you have maybe two, maybe three, who complain. The others say it is OK."

"Therefore I understand the drivers' complaints but if you talk with the same drivers today [when the conditions had improved] you will hear no complaints anymore."

The series visits Navarra (Spain), Imola, (Italy), Portimao (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain) and Spa (Belgium).

Osborne secures factory McLaren role as Tolman takes over three 570S GT4s

Joe Osborne will twin his attack on this year's British GT Championship with development work on McLaren's forthcoming 720S GT3 racer after being signed by the British manufacturer.

Osborne will share a 570S GT4 with regular team-mate David Pattison in British GT this season as part of a three-car entry from the Tolman Motorsport team.

In addition Osborne has landed his first full factory role, joining

Ben Barnicoat as the Woking firm's newest works driver recruits.

"It's a chance I've been working for all my life and I've never been so excited, or in such good shape, for a race season before," said Osborne.

"This year will be all about David and I going for the GT4 title, that's the full focus, but alongside that I'll get to work on the development of the new 720S GT3 with Ben and Rob [Bell]. That will bring a whole new area of experience

to my driving and I can't wait. It's great to have the consistency of the same team and team-mate in British GT. David improved hugely last year so he's ready to put a title challenge together this year."

Tolman has also been contracted to run the extra two 570S GT4s for McLaren's young drivers. Mike O'Brien will share one car with Charlie Fagg, while Jordan Albert will share the other with Lewis Proctor.



Osborne headlines big McLaren entry

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RACING NEWS



Legends will have more than 30 cars

Champion Treherne will return to Legends in 2018

Former Legends champion Stephen Treherne will return to the series among a bumper grid of over 30 cars for 2018.

The 2011 champion will race a rebuilt car under the Pro24 banner for owner Craig Phillips in selected rounds.

Although doubtful for the second meeting at Brands Hatch, which clashes with the expected birth of his child, Treherne – who last raced in 2013 – will clash with the likes of reigning champion John Mickel and last year's runner-up, Ben Power.

"Last time I raced John I beat him in 2011, but there are some very quick drivers out there," said Treherne.

"I promise myself not to get into a car unless it's put together very well. I'm looking forward to it."

One driver will earn a prize drive in Handy Motorsport's BTCC Alfa Romeo Giulietta, owned by Treherne's former Legends team-mate Simon Belcher this year. The winner is chosen by judges based on "performance, presentation and sportsmanship".

Connor Mills, 2016 runner-up, is set to contest the full season in '18 after doing one round last year.



Brown won Ginetta GT5 Challenge

JCW Mini move for Ginetta GT5 champion Brown

The 2017 Ginetta GT5 Challenge champion Lewis Brown will compete in the Mini Challenge this season with AReeve Motorsport.

The 19-year-old, who took seven wins last season on his way to the title, will make his debut in the JCW class at Oulton Park on March 31.

"I'm really excited for the 2018 season and I can't wait to get started in the new car," said Brown, who became part of the British Racing Drivers' Club Rising Stars programme in January.

"The grid is shaping up to be a seriously competitive one and it'll be a good test of how much I've developed as a driver competing against them all at some of the best tracks in Britain.

"The car itself is going to be quite a change from the Ginetta G40 I've become used to. I'm confident I can adapt to it though and get a good start to the year."

● Charlie Butler-Henderson is targeting a second Mini Challenge JCW title this year after confirming his return to the championship with Mini UK VIP Team. The 39-year-old won the Challenge title outright in 2015.

BRITISH F3 RULE CHANGE ALLOWS MONGER TO RACE

Carlin will be able to enter fourth car for teenager



Monger tested with Carlin

By Stefan Mackley

Carlin has been given special permission to run a fourth car in BRDC British F3 this season, opening the door for Billy Monger to race in the series.

The series' rules state teams can only run three cars, but Monger's "exceptional" case – following a double leg amputation because of a Formula 4 crash last year – has meant an extra car could be entered for him.

Group operations manager Giles Butterfield from MotorSport Vision, which operates British F3, said: "The rules are three drivers per team but the Billy Monger situation is utterly exceptional in our opinion, we're very keen to help his rehabilitation.

"Obviously there are unknowns such as how is he going to get on, how is he going to fund it? But everyone is hoping the effort and money to make the fairytale come true is worth it."

Monger has been testing with Carlin – alongside Nicolai Kjaergaard and Sun Yue Yang, who have already signed with the team, as well as karting ace Clement Novalak – but Monger has yet to officially announce he will compete in British F3.

He said: "I just want to make sure the funds are there and Carlin have been enquiring about running me as a fourth car, so there are a couple of things that need to fall into place.

"Judging by our pace in the car we're near the sharp end of the grid."

Monger's car has been adapted so that he can operate the throttle with a paddle on the steering wheel but still uses a brake pedal.

Butterfield is confident there is no advantage or disadvantage to Monger using such a system, stating: "It's a level playing field: if Billy wins he will be winning on merit."

Small changes have also been made to the Tatuus-Cosworth car used in British F3 following recent FIA directives and in the wake of Monger's accident.

The upgrades include a longer carbon fibre rear impact structure with a slightly modified diffuser and at the front a machined-from-solid anti-intrusion bulkhead will be fitted.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Steve Jones, Oliver Dutton

IN BRIEF

Popular Se7ens

Mini Se7en frontrunners Charlie Budd and Lewis Selby will join an increased Mini Miglia grid of over 30 cars in 2018. Budd clinched his first Se7en title last year after a season-long battle with Selby, both stepping up to the faster Miglias along with fellow title rival, Ashley Davies. Champion Rupert Deeth returns, as do race winners Kane Astin, Alfie Brown and Aaron Smith. Ten Libre entries are expected while the Graham Hill Trophy returns for drivers aged under 17.

Wilcox/Hudson

GT Cup stalwarts Adam Wilcox and Nigel Hudson will remain in the series for the 2018 season in a JMH Automotive Aston Martin Vantage GT3. The team has been part of the series since 2008 and claimed several victories last year. Hudson returns with the title on his mind in what could prove his final season of racing. "I think the GT Cup format is really good and I enjoy it," Hudson said. "I want to win more races this year even if we can't have the championship and have some fun as well."

Doohan travels

British Formula 4 racer Jack Doohan will dovetail his season in the British Touring Car support series with a partial campaign in Europe. The son of motorbike racing legend Mick will also compete in five meetings across the German and Italian F4 categories with the Prema squad.

New coordinator

Ginetta has appointed a new championships assistant to work across its range of series. Stephanie Bush joins the manufacturer having been part of the Masters Historic Racing organising team for the past four years.

Preston tribute

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club will pay tribute to a former stalwart of the club at its opening meeting (Silverstone, March 24/25). Tony Preston, co-ordinator of the Pre '66 championship, who won the category four times, died suddenly aged 68 last year. His Morris Minor will lead the Pre '66 field on a lap of honour during the green flag lap before the series' first race of the weekend.

Tom's Gamble on single-seaters

Tom Gamble, the reigning Ginetta Junior champion, will race in the BRDC British F3 Championship this season with Fortec Motorsports.

The 16-year-old has moved across to single-seaters after taking eight wins on his way to the Ginetta title last season.

"We spoke to Fortec and they offered us a good deal for what we could afford," he said.

"I would like to have a crack at it [single-seaters]. If it doesn't go as well as we hope we can always go back to saloon cars.

"The car is a lot different to drive but it's just about getting used to it."

Former British Formula 4 driver Harry Webb has also been confirmed in the series with Chris Dittmann Racing.

Double R also confirmed Krish Mahadik and Pavan Ravishankar for this year.



Gamble has joined Fortec

Birley aims for Escort track return at Easter

Rod Birley is aiming to race his rebuilt Ford Escort WRC at the Brands Hatch Easter Monday meeting, following extensive damage from a 130mph crash last November.

Birley's Escort hit the Brands pitwall following a collision with Graham Crowhurst in the Modified Saloons Championship. Birley also suffered three broken ribs and a bruised spleen.

The 2016 Modified Saloons champion hopes it will make the first round on April 2.

"Hopefully we can get things [together for that]," Birley said. "It depends on how quickly the remaining things get made.



Ford Escort WRC was damaged

"I was hoping to get out for the first round of the Classic Thunder [March 24/25] but we're not looking very good [for that].

"The car is now straight! We didn't think it was going to be salvageable, but the rollcage had remained intact and didn't bend or kink.

"We've taken the opportunity to do quite a few upgrades to the car. It's going to look quite a bit different."

Supercup move for Gordon-Colebrooke

Monoposto frontrunner Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke will complete Century Motorsport's Ginetta GT4 Supercup line-up for 2018.

He makes the switch from single-seaters, having also raced in selected outings with Porsche and SEAT machinery in the 24H series over the past three years.

The 2014 Monoposto 1600 champion joins fellow rookies Angus Fender and Michael Crees for the team's three-pronged attack, and intends to be a consistent

Monoposto action

frontrunner after a positive maiden test.

"Working with iZone Driver Performance, we talked about it as they have worked with people like Nathan Freke and Tom Oliphant," he said. "I had a test at Brands Indy, which went very well, and now I'm eager to get going.

"I'll take it step by step. I'd like to say I'd be at the sharp end."

Gordon-Colebrooke was impressed by the car, adding "it has a very good front end, so I found it easy to adapt from there".



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HISTORICS

'Clark remembered
at Donington Park'
HSCC plans memorial, below



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Paul Lawrence

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

VAUXHALL CHEVETTE HSR

Current owner: Steve Rimmer

It has a good history

"FER 687W is an ex-works Vauxhall Chevette HSR and Jimmy McRae drove it in period; Jimmy did the 1980 Cork '20' Rally in it. The interesting thing about the car, which really added to the character for Ian Gwynne and myself, was that Bill Gwynne then drove it in the *Motoring News* Road Rally Championship with considerable success."

It is back in period specification

"The car arrived at Gwynne's house one evening in the early 1980s and Ian badgered his dad to take him out in it. It now looks exactly as it did 37 years ago. When Ian found the car, it was rotting in a container in Ireland. I remember watching these cars through the Lake District as I grew up in Preston."

Rimmer finally bought it

"I said to Ian that we should try and buy it. The guy in Ireland sort of knew what he had but didn't know exactly what. When he found out that Bill Gwynne had driven it as well as Jimmy, he knew he had us on the hook and it took a while to buy it about 10 years ago."

It has been restored by BGMsport

"It was rallied in Ireland, notably by Austin McHale who won the 1983 Irish title with it after Bill used it, and then it was stood for some time. It ran as course car on an Irish event in 1996. It needed a heck of a lot of work as it had been stored for 20 years. We did a complete restoration over time and it came out at Race Retro in 2016. It's nice to have it back and in original period specification."

It will be used

"We like to bring it out for people to see. I don't want it to just sit on stands and I want it to be used in a way that will give enjoyment to the fans. Having Jimmy McRae back driving the car is great fun. With these cars, when anything comes up in terms of spares or anything from period, we'll keep our eyes open and move quickly because we may not get a second chance."



Vauxhall Chevette HSR



Pryce (inset) will join Nick Elliott (above)



BRC MAN PRYCE JOINS BHRC TRAIL

Ford Escort Mk2 challenger to enter Rally North Wales

By Paul Lawrence

World Rally Championship aspirant Osian Pryce will head a stellar Ford Escort Mk2 historic entry on Rally North Wales on Saturday March 24, the opening round of the MSA British Historic Rally Championship.

Pryce won the WRC-supporting Drive DMACK Cup in 2016 and

continues to seek the funding to compete at world level. In the meantime, he will realise a long-held ambition by driving an Escort Mk2-BDG on his home event with his regular co-driver Dale Furniss alongside.

"My parents live on the edge of the Dyfi complex and I won the rally overall last year," said the 25-year-old. "We always want to support the event and driving

an Escort is something I've always wanted to try. I just want to have a bit of fun."

Escorts have always been in his family and his father bought an Escort when Osian was 13 for him to drive on private ground. They now plan to rebuild that car into historic specification.

For Rally North Wales, Pryce has hired a car from Grant Shand at Rally Xtreme and says that the

pace at the head of the historic field will be fierce.

"The top historic guys are in a league of their own," he said. "People like Nick Elliott and Marty McCormack. I want to have as much fun as I can and then I want to go back to the WRC as that's where I need to be." However, another rally in an Escort later in the year remains a possibility.



Mallock: Six decades

Six decades of Mallock to be celebrated at Superprix meeting

Sixty years of the Mallock marque will be celebrated this year and the focal point of the season will be at the Legends of Brands Hatch Super Prix on June 30/July 1.

It was in 1958 that Major Arthur Mallock sold the first chassis for his simple but devastatingly effective sports-

racing car, then known as the U2.

The company that grew from Arthur's passion is the world's oldest race car manufacturer in the same family ownership as his son Richard and grandson Charlie continue to head the operation.

The Brands Hatch celebrations will centre on a round of the

Classic Clubmans Championship where Mallocks dominate the entry. "We're planning to bring together former Clubmans racers and cars from across the Mallock story," said Richard.

A new website telling his remarkable story has been launched at arthurmallock.com.

Classic Porsches for Brands Hatch

A race for classic Porsches from two decades will mark the 70th anniversary of the company at the Festival of Porsche at Brands Hatch on Sunday, September 2.

The Porsche Classic Trophy will be open to all models built between 1953 and 1973, including the 356 and 911, as well as rarities like the 550, 904 and Group

5 and 6 racers from the late 1960s and early '70s. The grid will include the 1965 911 SWB that Porsche Cars GB is running in historic racing this season.

Chris Seaward of the Porsche Club said: "With the amazing variety of cars that are eligible, the Porsche Classic Trophy should be a fantastic sight."

Plea for Chevron cars and racers

The Historic Sports Car Club has issued a call for period Chevron B8 racers to join in the 50th anniversary celebrations at August's Oulton Park Gold Cup.

The highlight will be a 40-minute B6/B8 race on Bank Holiday Monday, featuring a compulsory pitstop and optional



The Chevron will be marked at the Gold Cup

driver change. In addition, cars that are not race ready will be on display.

The HSCC's Grahame White said: "There has been a lot of interest in the race, including from

owners of cars who have not raced them regularly in recent times. We want to invite those who raced B8s when the model was new to be part of the celebrations."

New Bolster Trophy to relive a golden era with specials from the 1920s and 1930s

An unrivalled 30-strong field of one-off specials from the 1920s and 1930s will honour the memory of Autosport's John Bolster at Goodwood this weekend.

Bolster was technical editor when *Autosport* was first

published in 1950 and was a renowned journalist as well as an enthusiastic competitor. He built and drove his

Goodwood Specials fun



own hillclimb special called 'Bloody Mary' and enjoyed success both before and after the Second World War. Bolster died in 1984 and it is fitting

that he is remembered in the Bolster Cup, a new race for the Members' Meeting for British-built specials from Bolster's era. It was a time when specials were common at venues like Brooklands and Shelsley Walsh.

IN BRIEF

Busy Genecand

Swiss racer Ghislain Genecand plans to race as many as three historic single-seaters in the UK this season. He will start his campaign with a Crossle 16F in Historic Formula Ford at Donington Park on April 7/8 but also hopes to race his ex-Jon Reakes Surtees TS5 Formula 5000 and a March 76B Formula Atlantic car.

Jardine's season

TV presenter Tony Jardine will share the pre-'66 Mini Cooper of Andy Harrison in two-driver HRDC races this season. The Mini has been christened 'Whizz' in honour of recently retired Barrie 'Whizzo' Williams who will be team manager for the project. The first outing for Jardine and Harrison will be the HRDC test day at Goodwood on March 26.

Ford Escort fiesta

The annual non-competitive Kop Hill Climb on September 15/16 will feature the Ford Escort in the 50th year of the Mk1. For the 10th running of the revival of the original hillclimb near Princes Risborough, the organisers are hoping to attract owners of Escorts who want to take to the public road-based hill over the weekend.

Bumper Donington

The timetable for the Donington Historic Festival on May 4-6 has been announced covering 19 races from 14 grids. After qualifying on Friday, Saturday will feature 10 races concluding with the hour-long Jaguar Classic Challenge starting at 1755hrs. Nine races will fill Sunday's bill.

AGBO's Old Stager

A total of 58 cars are due to start Saturday's AGBO Historic Stages at Weston Park in Shropshire, the opening round of the HRCR Old Stager Championship and Mini Cup. A total of 34 Minis will compete although the Ford Escort Mk2 of Darren Moon is expected to set the overall pace. Joining the field are the Ferrari 308GTBs of Neil McMahon and Lee Jones.

Jim Clark cars

The life of Jim Clark will be remembered by the HSCC at Donington Park on Saturday, April 7. The club's opening race meeting of the season falls 50 years from the day Clark died in an F2 accident at Hockenheim and a one-minute silence will be held before the first race.

MG repaired

The MGB used by Jean Denton on the 1968 London to Sydney has been restored by the MG Car Club's MGB Register after being rescued from a scrapyard. It will be unveiled on the MGCC stand at 1100hrs during the first day of the Practical Classics Restoration and Classic Car Show at Birmingham's NEC on March 23.



MG has come back to life

GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING

PREVIEW

'Walker will borrow the Thunderbug'
Mark Walker's car swap, below

Photos: LAT, Paul Lawrence



IN BRIEF

Lamplough's back
Veteran racer and aviator Robs Lamplough, 77, will start another season of racing by entering his Brabham BT28 in the Derek Bell Cup for one-litre F3 cars. Half a century ago, Lamplough was racing a McLaren M4A Formula 2 car and was on the grid for Jim Clark's final race at Hockenheim in April 1968.

Thunderbug

With his 1905 Darracq still being rebuilt after a catastrophic engine failure, Mark Walker will borrow Thunderbug, usually raced by his son Hughie, for the Bolster Cup. Meanwhile, Hughie will instead handle their 1929 Frazer Nash-based Martyr Special. In the same race Nick Leston, son of 1950s and 1960s racer Les, pays homage to the 1920s American dirt track specials with his Lovell Elkhart Sprint Racer.

Hepworth on show

Among the Formula 5000s will be the 1969 four-wheel-drive Hepworth FF built by hillclimber David Hepworth. The late Bev Bond raced it briefly in the inaugural UK F5000 race at Oulton Park 49 years ago, but Hepworth had far more success as he twice won the British Hillclimb Championship. His sons will drive the car this weekend.

Skinner's Rover

Former NASCAR racer and star of the Goodwood Festival of Speed Mike Skinner will make his UK racing debut by sharing the Rover SD1 of Bill Shepherd in the Gerry Marshall Trophy. Now semi-retired, Floridian Skinner started racing in 1975 and enjoyed a lot of success in the NASCAR Truck Series.

Porsche collection

A remarkable line-up of eight Porsche 904 Carrera GTs, from 1964 and 1965, will make a special sight in the Ronnie Hoare Trophy race, the opening event on Saturday afternoon.

Fiesta replica

A replica of Alan Curnow's Datapost-livered Ford Fiesta from the 1980 British Touring Car Championship will race for the first time this weekend with touring car star Mat Jackson and owner John Mitchell.

Hoare highlights

The rare sight of all three Morgan SLRs and the sole Triumph TR4 SLR together on one grid will be a highlight of Saturday's Ronnie Hoare Trophy. The special-bodied Sprinzel Lawrence Racing development cars were first raced in the early 1960s and all four cars are due on the grid at Goodwood.

Minshaw collection

Jon Minshaw will field three cars at Goodwood, sharing the driving with his British GT team-mate Phil Keen. They will campaign a Jaguar E-type in the Moss Trophy, race the Lister Knobby in the Salvadori Cup and run Minshaw's Porsche 935 in the Group 5 demonstrations.



Minshaw will race Knobby

Stars will line up for the two-driver clash

BTCC STARS TOP GOODWOOD

Past and present heroes join Gerry Marshall Trophy

By Paul Lawrence

At least 15 current or former British Touring Car Championship racers, including five champions, will take on three former grand prix racers in a star-studded field for the Gerry Marshall Trophy race.

Saturday's programme wraps up with the wonderful spectacle

of Group 1 Touring Cars racing into the Sussex sunset.

The 45-minute two-driver race for the cars of the 1970s will create a unique atmosphere as headlights pierce the rapidly falling light following the race start at 1740hrs.

With nine BTCC crowns between them, Matt Neal, Colin Turkington, Jason Plato, Andrew Jordan and Tim

Harvey head the field and Neal is a former winner of the race, taking the spoils in 2015 alongside David Clark in the mighty Chevrolet Camaro. That partnership will be renewed this weekend to go up against the Camaro of 2016 winners Grahame and Oly Bryant.

Jordan and Nick Swift will be chasing another overall podium

in their diminutive Mini 1275GT, while Plato shares the Ford Boss Mustang of Craig Davies, Harvey returns to the wheel of a Rover SD1 and Turkington shares a Ford Escort RS2000.

Meanwhile *Top Gear* presenter Chris Harris has big shoes to fill when he partners Chris Ward in the JD Classics Rover. Ward and touring car

ace Gordon Shedden won the 2017 edition and Ward also took the Rover to victory back in 2014 at the first revival of the Members' Meeting.

Other stars in the race include former WTCC champion Rob Huff, former F1 racers Jochen Mass, Emanuele Pirro and Tiff Needell and sportscar aces Darren Turner and Nicolas Minassian.



Pacey-Hassan will race

Bentley derivative to make its race debut in the Bolster Cup

The one-off Bentley-based Pacey-Hassan Special will race at Goodwood for the first time when Bentley expert William Medcalf contests the Bolster Cup. Brooklands racer Bill Pacey commissioned Bentley guru

Wally Hassan to build a special with the aim of setting a new lap record at Brooklands. It was finished in 1936 and two years later, now supercharged, it lapped at 129mph.

"To race a car as special as this

for the first time at Goodwood is an immense privilege and also a challenge," said Medcalf. "It is a brute with lots of torque. I'm sure we can please the spectators with some close racing and maybe the odd bit of oversteer!"

10 GOODWOOD HIGHLIGHTS

This is the event without huge crowds and it has a much more relaxed atmosphere. There is plenty of space to watch the racing. It still features special Goodwood touches, including 100,000 daffodils planted around the venue to give it a feeling of spring.

The life of the late Dan Gurney will be celebrated by the Gurney Cup race for sports-racing cars from the 1960s. The eclectic grid will mark the diversity of Gurney's career by including Ford GT40s, AC Cobra Coupes, McLaren M1s and Lotus 23Bs. Gurney, who was a fan of Goodwood, died in January aged 86.

Did the earth move for you? It probably will when up to 30 Formula 5000s are unleashed in two groups each for some

rapid demonstration laps. These mighty five-litre monsters from the late 1960s and early 1970s have never before run in such numbers at Goodwood. It will be an assault on the senses.

The legend of Pre-War ace Rudolf Caracciola is honoured in a new race for the Members' Meeting, catering for sports cars of the 1920s and 1930s. The Caracciola Sportwagenrennen is packed with cars from Alfa Romeo, Bugatti, Maserati and BMW in the memory of one of the greatest drivers of an era.

Moby Dick on track at Goodwood! As part of the celebration of the Group 5 sports car era, the Porsche Museum is sending a couple of cars and the spectacular 'Moby Dick' version of the 935

from 1978 is a stunner. The name comes from the long tail developed for Le Mans, where it ran at 228mph from 845bhp, but faltered in the race.

For the energetic, a walk around the full lap is a must at this event. The views beyond Madgwick, at Fordwater, 'no-name' and St Mary's, are outstanding and offer a fantastic chance to see cars and drivers at full stretch.

The Ford GT40 remains one of the most desirable sports-racing cars ever produced and nine of them will race in Sunday's Gurney Cup. Shaun Lynn, David Hart, Joaquin Folch and Richard Meins are among the leading drivers in GT40s and they will go head-to-head with the fastest two-litre sports-racers in the talented



Gurney Cup GT40s

hands of Chris Goodwin, Andrew Hibberd and Michael Gans.

Back on the menu is a race for pre-'66 touring cars in honour of Jack Sears and by keeping the Ford Mustangs and Falcons away, it has set up a barnstormer. Andrew Jordan and Mark Sumpter top the Lotus Cortina pack with Steve Soper, Andy Wolfe and Henry Mann, while quality also pervades the Mini pack with Jonathan Lewis, Nick Swift and Chris Middlehurst.

The final element of the Group 5 era was for what were loosely termed special production cars,



Zakspeed Capri

taking little more than the silhouette of the production model. This weekend, a fantastic array of these cars from 1976 to 1982 will be demonstrated. BMW M1s, Zakspeed Capris and five Ferrari 512 BB LMs will all wow.

For the third year in a row, the one-litre Formula 3 cars of the late 1960s get a slot at the Members' Meeting and a 30-car grid will be aiming to replicate the 2015 race, which had one of the closest finishes in Goodwood history. Andrew Hibberd is chasing a hat-trick but friend and rival Jon Millicevic will have other ideas.

Mitchell fulfils a BRM P25 dream

Young Ben Mitchell will have the drive of his life when he handles a 1957 BRM P25 grand prix car in the Hawthorn Trophy race.

Having cut his teeth in Historic Formula Ford, Mitchell, 24, has built a reputation as a talented all-rounder but will now take on the rare 2.5-litre front-engined grand prix car from 1957.

"The BRM is owned by Robs Lamplough who has kindly asked me to drive it," said Mitchell. "I'm very much looking forward to getting behind the wheel at the Members' Meeting."

"A Type 25 BRM has to be one of the iconic 1950s GP cars, so to have the opportunity to race one is special and at Goodwood, even better!"



Goodwood favourite Emanuele Pirro will race the unique Ferrari 'Breadvan' in the Stirling Moss Trophy. The Italian ace will share the one-off 1961 250 GT SWB-based special with owner Lukas Halusa.

RALLY NEWS

Photos: NI:Media, LAT, Pro-Rally Photography



Renault Zoe has been developed, but is restricted where it can compete



New car likely to be an R5 base

ELECTRIC RALLY CAR PLANNED BY M-SPORT

Cumbrian firm has begun work on revolutionary rally machine

By David Evans

M-Sport has started building an all-electric rally car – a machine Malcolm Wilson wants to be capable of winning a one-day rally.

The Cumbrian firm began initial development work on an electric Fiesta earlier this year and aims to be testing the car before the end of 2018.

The car is aimed at the national market, but managing director Wilson says the ground-breaking technology will undoubtedly be used in the firm's future World Rally Cars at the end of the current cycle of technical regulations.

"You know what we're like at M-Sport, we're always looking for ways to challenge ourselves," Wilson told *Motorsport News*. "And this is the next step in technology in the sport. I'm not going to give you any of the technical details – I can't because we're working with other companies who share this vision and we've signed NDAs [non-disclosure agreements], but suffice to say we're on with it and if things continue to happen and we're able to continue and make progress then I would hope that we could have a car running this year. That would be

something in an R5 bodyshell, it wouldn't be the finished car."

Wilson has set his team the target of producing a car capable of winning a one-day national rally.

"At the moment this isn't about the World Rally Championship," he added. "All I'm interested in to start with is producing a car that's going to be capable of winning a one-day event at a competitive price."

"There's definitely a market for a four-wheel-drive car like this and I'm confident the technology is there to do it. If you look at a modern electric [road] car, they're capable of running for 300 or 350 miles between charges. A BTRDA round or an event at that sort of level is around 35 to 40 competitive miles with not a huge amount of road mileage."

Asked about the potential for moving

this technology into the WRC, Wilson said: "This is not on the immediate horizon for the world championship; don't forget we've got at least three more years of these fantastic regulations and nothing should come in and jeopardise that stability. But looking further down the road, we have to be looking at potential electric solutions and this is one of the reasons we're working on this."

"It's vital that M-Sport is at the forefront of the development of electric-power technology in rallying. I guess in some ways, given the challenge for the future, you could say this is going to be one of the most important cars we've worked on."

Ahead of last week's Rally Mexico, Wilson attended the Formula E race in Mexico City and was impressed with what he found.

"I think there are definitely lessons we can learn from that championship," said Wilson. "It was a very impressive set-up in terms of the technology, investment and hospitality."

Ford Performance global director Mark Rushbrook admitted there was no urgency to rush into electric from the Blue Oval. He told *MN*: "As we



M-Sport boss Wilson has attended, and been inspired by, Formula E

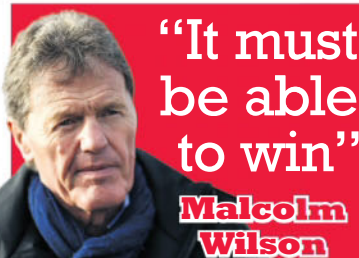
look at our road car cycle plan, there's definitely a split of internal combustion, hybrid and full electric and we need the same in motorsport.

"We don't necessarily want all the series we are in to go electric, we want a mix. In WRC we're looking for technology to continue to advance; is it ready for full electric now? No, but things like eTurbo [an electrically driven supercharger system] might make sense."

The WRC hasn't been the fastest to embrace and develop electric technology, despite Citroen getting it off to a good start with its C4 WRC

Hymotion4, which was revealed 10 years ago. The C4 harvested kinetic energy under braking and used a 125kw motor on the rear differential to deliver short bursts of torque under acceleration. The French firm showed the car at the Paris Motorshow in 2008, but it went no further than the concept.

An electric rally car has been developed in the UK under the Project eRally banner. The Renault Zoe has competed, but is currently restricted by Motor Sports Association rules to single-venue events, and is aimed at the Junior and Senior 1000 Rally Championship for one-litre cars.



"It must be able to win"
Malcolm Wilson

OGIER WINS, BUT OLD RIVAL LOEB STEALS THE SHOW IN MEXICO

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The Strength of Experience

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'Does the sport need to look to its past?'
Rally Minis are thriving, p26



M-SPORT TO FIGHT OGIER POWERSTAGE PENALTY



Ogier won, but lost out



Ogier will fight the penalty

The M-Sport Ford World Rally Team will appeal the penalty which cost Sebastien Ogier his four powerstage points at last week's Rally Mexico.

The Frenchman was penalised for touching the barrier in a chicane and had 10 seconds added to his stage time – that time ensured he would miss out on the points he'd taken for his second quickest time.

The stewards' decision was explained in a statement: "Car No 1 did not go around the elements of the chicane

as shown in the Road Book at box 18 of SS22."

The offence related to Ogier clipping the first part of a right-left-right chicane, with the stewards believing that the Frenchman gained an advantage from not being slowed by knocking the first element aside.

Ogier confirmed that the British team wouldn't be letting the matter rest. He said: "We are working on this [appeal] to explain ourselves because it was not deliberate at all. Before the

stage, it was me who asked for clarification on what would happen [if you touch the barrier]. I'm always the first one to try to fight for equal conditions and in this I wanted to be clear what would happen. I said to Julien [Ingrassia, co-driver] that we should suggest the organisers put water in the barrier [to make them heavier] I wish I had done this.

"If we had gained a lot of time from this, but I'm sure we can prove on the data that we can prove this isn't the case – it's

going to be one tenth [of a second] or two at the most. For me, this 10-second penalty is not in any way fitting with what happened."

The FIA's safety delegate Michele Mouton agreed with Ogier, telling *MN*: "As a driver, I think this is too much. Ten seconds is too much."

Clarification was sought following the first pass of the stage, where Hyundai driver Thierry Neuville clouted all three barriers in the chicane. The Belgian went unpunished.



Finland will have new route

Rally Finland ditches Ouninpohja in favour of fresh route

One of the most famous stage names in world rallying – Ouninpohja – will be missing from Rally Finland this year.

The organisers are planning a route which is 65 per cent different from last year – with 40 per cent of the 2018 itinerary never having been used before.

The Moksi and Urria – scene of Mikko Hirvonen's monster crash in 2010 – stages are back with the rollercoaster run

through Ruuhimäki being switched from the shakedown test to the rally-ending powerstage. Pihlajakoski is the only unchanged stage from '17.

While Ouninpohja won't be seen in its full glory, parts of the test have been included. Former winner and local hero Jari-Matti Latvala admitted he was sad to see the back of the stage.

"I think this is coming because the average speeds were going

so high last year," Latvala told *MN*. "And some of the people were complaining about the man-made chicanes, the organisers were forced to this a little bit. They are now going to use the smaller roads to slow the cars down and reduce the average speed, but for me they take out the best part of Ouninpohja – it's not going to be the same not going on the wide road past the yellow house."

FIA planning to change powerstage regulations

The FIA will make changes to the powerstage rules in an effort to stamp out teams taking a tactical approach to try to win the five bonus points on offer.

M-Sport Ford driver Sebastien Ogier took advantage of the rules to take penalties in return for a better place on the road at last month's Rally Sweden. The Frenchman took four points from the final round-two test as a result of dropping down the running order.

The FIA requested the teams avoid a repeat of that move in Mexico last week, but the teams were clear that while the rules exist, they will work around them.

Toyota driver Ott Tanak and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville both delayed their start to the stage in an effort to gain a better place on the road – leaving gaps in the live TV of Sunday's Las Minas test. Tanak won the stage and took the five bonus points.

MN understands a proposal was communicated from WRC Promoter, but not acted upon ahead of Rally Mexico. As a source within the teams pointed out: "The promoter saw this one coming, but it's not really down to them to make the rules – like it's not our job. This one has to be solved by the FIA."

FIA rally director Yves Matton confirmed to *MN* that the matter would be discussed at the next WRC Commission meeting in May. He said: "There is a clear process that needs to be respected."

Toyota says altitude hurt its Yaris

Toyota's Tommi Makinen says there's no hurry to fix the cooling issues which hit the Yaris WRC in Mexico last week, and is confident they were altitude-specific.

Like last year, all three factory Toyotas were hit by the combination of 30-degree ambient temperatures and by running at altitude of 2,500 metres. It was, however, a turbo problem which ruled Ott Tanak out of the fight for the win, while Jari-Matti Latvala stopped with an

alternator problem and Esapekka Lappi crashed.

"This is the toughest rally in the WRC," Makinen said, "and still we have something to learn – we're getting fed up with learning, but we will be back here next year with the solution for the cooling."

Makinen said future warm rallies, such as Sardinia and Turkey, could cause issues.

"We're not in such a hurry to make the changes," he added. "The problem we have is not coming at sea level.



Yaris WRCs all suffered

"The alternator problem [for Latvala] and the turbo problem Tanak had on Saturday, we don't understand these, it was strange. It's too early to say, we investigate and try to sort this out."

M-Sport confident that Barritt will be back for Corsica

M-Sport is confident that Dan Barritt will be fit in time for next month's Tour de Corse following his sixth-gear roll with Elfyn Evans in Mexico.

Barritt was diagnosed with mild concussion and advised not to continue after the fourth-stage crash. He is scheduled to be back in a Ford Fiesta WRC on Monday when the team starts its pre-Corsica test on the French island.

M-Sport Ford team principal Malcolm Wilson said: "It goes without saying that the priority is the rally – that's

where we need Dan fit – I'm not so worried about the test. Let's see how he feels."

On the subject of the accident, Evans admitted it was one of the biggest of his career. He told *MN*: "The cause of the crash was probably a bit of over-confidence in making the notes over the bumps. I should have taken some of the speed off: if we'd come down a gear we'd probably have got away with it, but we flew so far

and landed on the next jump. "It's a real shame, we were settling in well and the times were there. I was a little bit disorientated in the crash.

We rolled so quickly, I jumped out of the car and ran to slow down the next car. When the dust settled I saw the wheels were all still on and pointing in the right direction – so we jumped in and went. If I'd pushed the starter straight away, we might not even have lost 20 seconds."



GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"HHF endeared himself to everyone"



This column was supposed to be a colourful tale about a trip up El Cubilete, the 2,700-metre mountain which looks down on Guanajuato and Leon. It was supposed to be a story about when a Rally Mexico stage raced up the cobblestones to the top of this mountain which sits squarely in the geographical centre of Mexico.

There would probably even have been a line or two about the visit of Pope Francis – and the road built to ease his access – in 2012.

But things changed a bit when, on the way down the mountain, the telephone started to ring asking if I'd heard about Henry Hope-Frost's shocking and tragic accident.

As has become clear in the last week, Henry had a lot of friends in our world. A lot. It's not hard to see why. He was, without doubt, one of the most sincere and decent people ever to walk the earth.

That he walked the earth with his right hand poised over an imaginary handbrake endeared him to the world of motorsport.

At the start of this season, I called H to make sure he was up to speed with the plans to launch the World Rally Championship at Autosport International.

We agreed to sit down the night before and go through stuff. But the night before came and went and it became a quick chat over breakfast, an hour or so before the launch and the first driver came on stage.

He didn't need that chat. He knew everything about everybody anyway.

His dedication, professionalism, knowledge and broadcasting ability knew no bounds. For more than a few years, he would remind me every now and then... "Don't forget, find me a job in the WRC. I want to work in rallying." And imagine how good he would have been, offering context and comprehension like no other.

Since he started to work with Goodwood, the reminders stopped coming. That made me smile. He'd found that perfect place. It's impossible to imagine the bellow of a V8 reverberating across the Sussex Downs without a line of accompaniment from H.

The Festival and Revival will be tinged with massive sadness this year.

And not just for me, my children loved him as well. Catching up over those weekends was never easy, but he'd always arrive before us in a perfectly controlled drift having turned himself in on the handbrake.

Within minutes he'd have my wife and I in pieces before he turned his attention to the 'bin lids' and demanded to know all about their moment of the weekend.

My boy would stand and just gaze at him, hanging on his every word. My daughter, a girl not easily impressed by my world, conceded happily that Henry was the nicest and funniest of them all. How right she was.

Not long ago, I got a text from H: "Mate, listening to Rodders [Rod Stewart]... *Forever Young*. Always reminds me of Burnsie."

Me too. Only now that song will hurt that bit more.

It was an absolute privilege to work with Henry. And an honour to call him my friend. But as hard and horrible as it is to think of our world without him, that's nothing compared with what his family is suffering right now.

The last week has reflected admiration and affection from around the world. Henry was a legend. But to Charlotte and the HF Junior Team, he was one heck of a husband and daddy.

And that's where this tragedy cuts deepest.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
letters@motorsport-news.co.uk

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

MEXICO START CHANGE LED TO LOCAL PROTESTS

Plans to move the start from Guadalajara abandoned after local unrest



Start was held in Guanajuato

By David Evans

An angry reaction from the people of Guadalajara forced Rally Mexico organisers to rethink the use of the Zocalo Square Mexico City start at last week's Leon-based World Rally Championship counter.

Such was the disquiet from fans and the local population in Guanajuato, rally director Patrick Suberville and his team

were forced to wipe the capital city from the itinerary when planning this year's rally. Instead, the ceremonial start and first stage moved back to Guanajuato.

Suberville admits, however, he is keen on a return to Mexico City, or possibly Guadalajara, in an effort to take the start further afield and spread the event's footprint further.

Asked about the absence of the Zocalo Square stage from this year's timetable,

Suberville told *MN*: "There was a lot of pressure from the people of Guanajuato. They feel this is their event and they think everything is centralised and happens in Mexico City. There was a feeling that they were giving away their thing when the start went to Mexico City last year and they didn't want to."

The Rally Mexico office was bombarded with complaints from often angry locals.

Suberville added: "There were petitions, letters to the mayor, everything! The heat we took at the press conference from local media, it was pretty scary. We had guys shouting: 'Why did you take it away?'"

"On social media we were really heavily criticised too, but actually it was really nice to see how much the event means to people. We explained that it was just a promotional thing

[going to Mexico City] and it was not going to be a permanent fixture and they held us to this. At the same time, there are all sorts of elections going on, so Zocalo would have been more complicated.

"But I want to do it again. I would like to spread the start around, we could look at Guadalajara, which is a city of two million people that's only about two hours' drive away."

Ingram ready for his European challenge

Chris Ingram will begin the European Rally Championship season in a Skoda Fabia R5 after confirming a deal with the Toksport team.

Ingram drove the car for the first time at a two-day test in Wales as he prepares himself for next week's Azores Rally, his maiden outing in a four-wheel-drive car after landing a €100,000 [£89,000] prize from winning last year's ERC Junior Under 27 Championship in a works Opel. In addition to his ERC programme for this season, the Manchester driver is hoping to add the Rally Turkey and Rally GB rounds of the World Rally Championship.

"This is, 100 per cent, the biggest year for me," Ingram told *MN*. "I'm really happy to be working with Toksport, they're so professional in the way they go about everything. I have a

real opportunity this year and I have to make the most of it. The Fabia is a car which has shown itself to be capable of winning at this level and we'll have the latest specification customer car."

With Kajto Kajetanowicz not defending his third ERC title, Ingram identified Russian driver Alexey Lukyanuk as one of his biggest title threats.

"A lot of the guys out there have four-wheel-drive experience," he said. "I don't have that, but what I do have is experience of the rallies."

Ingram is hoping to contest an asphalt rally in Spain ahead of his second ERC outing in the Canaries to bring some experience of the Fabia R5 in asphalt trim.

Ingram has Skoda deal



The Ford Fiesta WRC will be further developed

M-Sport set for performance review with Ford

Technology from both NASCAR and GT racing will be used on M-Sport Ford's Fiesta WRC for the first time next week when the Cumbrian-built car visits Ford Performance in North Carolina.

Sebastien Ogier's car was flown from Leon to Charlotte before it continues its journey home across the Atlantic following last week's Rally Mexico.

"In terms of development for the car, we've got a lot planned," said M-Sport team principal Malcolm Wilson. "There's nothing specific coming in the next few rallies, but it's an ongoing, rolling process. We were down at Ford's climatic chamber in Dunton [Essex] after Sweden and then the car's going on all sorts of rigs for the first time in Charlotte straight after Mexico."

This is precisely the sort of enhanced co-operation Ford Performance director Mark Rushbrook talked about with Ford's increased WRC effort. Rushbrook told *MN* what the Fiesta WRC would be in for when it landed in Charlotte.

He said: "We have some advanced CFD [Computational Fluid Dynamics] tools which we have used in GT and NASCAR and we have our computer resources to run CFD simulation to help with the aero on the car. We also have engine tools for combustion and better airflow analysis. Ford Performance has been built for the last three years, not just as a marketing endeavour, but as a true base for innovation and with the Fiesta being a worldwide car, this is the right time to increase support and build momentum."

Mads Ostberg is latest WRC man to sign up for Otago Classic Rally in New Zealand

Mads Ostberg is the latest World Rally Championship driver to sign up for New Zealand's Otago Classic Rally – the Norwegian will drive a Ford Escort RS1800.

Ostberg follows World Rally champions Bjorn Waldegaard, Hannu Mikkola, Ari Vatanen, Juha Kankkunen, Miki Biasion

and Didier Auriol – as well as top Brits Jimmy McRae, Russell Brookes and Gwyndaf Evans – having competed on the event previously.

Ostberg, who returned to top-flight rallying with Citroen Racing at Rally Sweden last month, makes his competitive

debut in a rear-wheel-drive car on the south island event.

Ostberg, who will be co-driven by Stephane Prevot in the Escort, said: "Like a lot of drivers in Europe, I've heard great things about the Otago Rally and I'm really looking forward to driving there. New Zealand's roads are

world-famous, and I've heard the Otago Rally has some of the best. It will be difficult to go there for the first time and win, but I'm looking forward to the challenge of driving the classic Escort and partnering with Stephane."

The Otago Classic Rally runs on April 14/15.

'McLoughlin rapid on Epynt debut'
Tour of Epynt Rally, p18



Photos: Writtle Photographic, Songasport, Paul Evans, ADAC



Epynt winner is eyeing away rounds

EVANS FOR EXPANDED PROGRAMME

Melvyn Evans is targeting more rounds of the MSA Asphalt Rally Championship, including the Belgian and Irish rounds, after winning last weekend's Tour of Epynt (*rally reports p18*).

Evans won the event six years previous in the same car, and wants to back the championship by competing in it as often as possible.

The Welshman struggles to do events as he hires his machinery out on most of the major events in the UK and Ireland, but is hoping to find time after rekindling his enjoyment of his Subaru Impreza S12B.

The car, with the number plate ST56 SRT, has won the Donegal Rally the past

two years in the hands of Manus Kelly, and has won other big events in the Emerald Isle, notably the Circuit of Ireland in 2010 with Derek McGarrity.

"I am going to do a few," said Evans. "I struggle to do a full championship. I want to support the championship as much as I can. I'd love to do the Manx but the Plains is on the same weekend. We have cars on hire on both rallies. It's a busy weekend but I'll struggle to do that."

Evans supports the move to try different events by the series, which is heading to the Rally Van Wervik (Belgium), Down Rally (Northern Ireland) and the Manx National Rally.

Outside of the MSA Asphalt contest, Evans will also use the same Impreza on the Rally Tendring and Clacton.

"I want to go out and do Wervik and if things go OK we'll go to Northern Ireland. The next event I want to do is the closed-road rally in Essex.

"I enjoy the car and I've had the car so long, I know exactly what set-up we need to use and what to do, that makes life easier. We can go to any event and I pretty much know what will work. It's still a good and competitive car."

The MSA Asphalt Championship is returning after a hiatus in 2017, but despite the break over 100

competitors registered for the championship. The championship was streamed online for the first time, and reportedly received 114,000 views for its coverage – created by Special Stage TV – throughout the day.

● Jason Pritchard is set to use his regular Ford Focus WRC05 on the Manx National for the next round of the MSA Asphalt Championship. Pritchard used a Ford Fiesta S2000 to finish third on last weekend's Tour of Epynt. He won the Manx event in 2014, '15 and '16 in the Focus. Last year he suffered electrical trouble while leading.



Jones wants more outings

Jones back 31 years after title

After winning the championship 31 years ago, Mike Jones returned to the MSA Asphalt Championship last weekend on the Tour of Epynt and is hopeful of more outings this year.

The 67-year-old hadn't rallied for 18 months, but stepped in to navigate for Epynt newcomer Chris Ransley on last weekend's Tour of Epynt.

In tricky, wet and slippery conditions, Ransley finished his first pacenote event in 17th overall in his BMW M3.

Jones, from the village of Tumble in west Wales, has contested over 1000 rallies with over 100 different drivers since making his debut on the Swansea-based 1973 Doodle Rally.

He is best known for navigating Steve King to the 1987 Asphalt Rally title in an Opel Manta GTE.

"Having not rallied for 18 months, Epynt was the first time I'd had to wear a HANS device, so even at my age there are new things to be found," said Jones.

"I'm not sure what events I'll be doing next, but I'm keener than ever to do as many rallies as possible this year and I'm only a phone call away..."

In addition to being a experienced co-driver, Jones is also a fully qualified MSA steward.

Field can be a frontrunner in German series

Brit Fred Field is confident of fighting for wins in his second season of the ADAC Rallye Cup after coming close to winning stages overall on the opening round earlier this month.

On the Rally Saarland-Pfalz, Field went second quickest on two stages, allied to heavy snow and ice, beating R5 cars and R2 cars in the order in his Opel Adam Cup Car.

After a visit into a ditch, Field later hit a tree which ended his charge. Field is still confident of more top times this season.

"There was a patch of ice and

we understeered off," explained Field. "The three other cars that took slicks all went off in the same place but managed to miss the tree. We weren't so lucky.

"The pace was good and it's done my confidence a world of good. It's a bit of validation that I can and will go that quick again.

"There was ice on the recce, and then it snowed between the recce and the rally. The first two stages were my first on ice."

The next round of the ADAC Rallye Cup is the Sachsen Rally starting on May 25, which Field's car will be ready for.

Donington cancellation opens door for Stone

Following the cancellation of the Donington Rally 10 days ago, John Stone still has a chance to fight for Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship Class D2 honours.

Stone was going to miss the Midlands event, scheduled for March 4, because his Millington-powered Ford Fiesta suffered engine failure on February's Snetterton Stages.

However, the Donington event was axed due to snow and Stone is aiming to return on the Lee Holland Memorial Stages at Anglesey this weekend.

"I had a call [Monday] to say that the engine should be ready," said Stone. "Fingers crossed. It had a successful dyno session and we should be able to go and pick it up. They've turned it around quickly. I won't get to try it until Saturday so it's a bit last minute, but the best things sometimes are."

At the head of the field, Wil Owen will defend his victory from last year, while Chris West, Ian Woodhouse and Mark Kelly will continue their battle for the championship.

After the cancellation of Donington Park, crews head to Anglesey this weekend. After that, the series will head to Cadwell Park on April 8 and then back to Anglesey for the SMC Stages, the championship's former reserve event, on April 15.



Mull last ran in 2016

Mull planning for 2018 event despite uncertain future

The Mull Rally organiser is proceeding to plan its 2018 event, despite not knowing whether it will be able to go ahead due to insurance issues.

The event needs a law to be passed in Scotland similar to the one passed in England (April, 2017) and Wales (February, 2018) which devolves the power to grant closed-road permits to the governing body of motorsport in the UK, the

Motor Sports Association. The event is then covered by the MSA's event insurance.

A statement from the organiser read: "The guardians of the Mull Rally and Mull Car Club, are still working hard to make the 2018 Mull Rally happen, but as yet we can't say for sure when we will know if this will be possible.

"In the meantime we have planned a route to be put to

the council and are proceeding with the organisation, so that if the insurance problems can be resolved we have the road closures in place.

"We understand this is frustrating but we are doing all we can to make a closed road event on Mull 2018 happen.

"We will issue a further statement as soon as we hear any further updates."

The provisional date for the event is October 12-14.



Field showed pace in opener

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GRAHAM HILL



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RALLY NEWS IRISH TARMAC RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Kevin Money

MOFFETT TARGETS BIG RALLY WINS IN 2018

Reigning Irish Tarmac champ is favouring events, not championships this year



Moffett: big wins

SEEDING ENTRY LIST

West Cork Rally, Macroom, March 17/18

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley	Ford Focus WRC
2	Sam Moffett/Karl Atkinson	Ford Fiesta R5
3	Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly	Ford Fiesta WRC
4	Josh Moffett/Andy Hayes	Ford Fiesta R5
5	Robert Barrable/Damien Connolly	Ford Fiesta R5
6	Jonathan Greer/Kirsty Riddick	Ford Fiesta R5
7	Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan	Ford Fiesta R5
8	Eugene Donnelly/Mark Kane	Hyundai I20 R5
9	Daniel Cronin/Shane Buckley	Ford Fiesta R5
10	Stephen Wright/Arthur Kierans	Ford Fiesta R5

Moffett won three titles in Ireland last year in a Fiesta

By Jack Benyon

Sam Moffett will do less rallies in 2018, and is aiming for event wins in Ireland and Belgium rather than any championship assault as the Irish Tarmac Championship begins in West Cork this weekend.

Moffett achieved the unprecedented feat of winning the Irish Tarmac, Irish National and Irish Forest Rally Championships last year aboard a Ford Fiesta R5 and Fiesta RS WRC, but the Monaghan driver is scaling back this year and focusing on the big prizes.

He will return to the British Rally Championship for the first time since 2016 as he has won a prize event with M-Sport in his Fiesta, given to him for winning the ITRC last year. He has chosen to return to the Ypres Rally for the prize. His brother, Josh, will look to

emulate winning the three titles Sam took last year.

Sam, the elder brother, confirmed that "the end of the year wasn't enjoyable", as a focus to finish rallies to bag points didn't suit his approach.

"I can tell you exactly when the enjoyment went out of my rallying last year, it was when Alastair Fisher's engine blew in Ulster," said Sam. "Every rally from then on for the rest of the season was, just getting back, getting finished and taking points."

"Cork [20] was one of the best, racing Josh, but that only happened as everything was confirmed at the start [the ITRC was decided in Moffett's favour already by that point]."

"I want to go out and enjoy it more and be more relaxed. I'm not going to worry as much about the championship, I want to focus on just winning rallies."

The Irish Tarmac is set to begin its 40th anniversary celebrations by starting in West Cork, but there is one major name missing from the entry list, frontrunner Alastair Fisher. He will miss the start of the season due to other commitments.

"At the moment it's not a full season attack," said Fisher. "We'll see around the time of each round. You have your favourites there like Killarney, Donegal, Ulster, we'll see closer to the time."

In terms of competition for the championship, Josh Moffett is aiming to challenge his brother while Jonny Greer returns, although it won't be in his usual DS3 R5 (see below). Two drivers switching to Fiesta R5s, Robert Barrable (from a Hyundai) and ex-Skoda man Desi Henry are likely to be on the pace as both are set for a full season in the series.

Previous champion Eugene Donnelly

is on the entry list in an R5 Hyundai, while Daniel Cronin, brother of 2016 champion Keith, has been impressive in select outings in his Fiesta last year.

In the modified class, Kevin Eves' distinctive baby blue Toyota Corolla returns to head the entry list while a number of Millington-engined Ford Escort Mk2s will give chase as usual.

Two Prestone Motorsport News Junior British Rally champions punctuate the West Cork entry for one-off outings, with Rob Duggan a genuine challenger for modified honours in an Escort he has a strong record in.

The 2017 JBRC champion Callum Devine will use a Ford Fiesta R2T on the event to prepare for Corsica in his Junior World Rally Championship bid. He'll be chased for R2 class honours by his rival William Creighton, who finished second in last year's JBRC.

In Group N, multiple champion David Guest will be the man to beat aboard his Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

With the ITRC favouring R5 cars to be the top class to score points in the series, a WRC car is favourite to win the event outright.

Donagh Kelly is aiming for a fourth win on the event, but will be chased by Declan Boyle, who beat Kelly on last weekend's Mayo Stages.

West Cork is the opener after the February Galway Rally was cancelled due to financial implications of growing insurance worries in Ireland.

Long-time competitor Frank O'Mahony has been appointed as chairman of the ITRC's organiser, the Tarmac Rallies Organising Association, David Gray choosing to step down after seven years at the helm. Over 120 entries have been received for West Cork.

Kiernan will drive car similar to this



Kiernan samples Millington-powered Proton in West Cork

Irish Tarmac Modified Championship frontrunner Gary Kiernan will swap his Ford Escort Mk2 for a similarly-engined Proton Satria S2500 for the West Cork Rally.

Kiernan's Escort is getting a rebuild, and rather than miss

the event, Kiernan has hired the car – an S2000 Proton with a 2.5-litre Millington engine – with a view to purchasing in the future.

"If I like this I might buy one of them and see," said County Cavan driver Kiernan. "I wanted to try it out with a hire before I

buy. I'm hoping to test this week, the car is converted to right-hand drive for the event too.

"West Cork is one of my favourite events, the stages are good, very fast. I didn't want to miss it, so I took the chance to hire this."

Greer will drive Fiesta in Irish Tarmac

Irish Tarmac Rally Championship frontrunner Jonny Greer is set to start this weekend's West Cork Rally in a Ford Fiesta, as he awaits parts for his Citroen DS3 R5.

The parts needed for the DS3's engine are not available in time for Greer to run it on the Macroom event, and has ensured car preparation firm Melvyn Evans Motorsport has an R5 available.

"We wanted to be in the Citroen if possible," said Greer. "The provisional plan was to use the Citroen but we're waiting on parts coming from France for the engine."

"We're looking at doing the Irish Tarmac

Championship this year so we need to get out and get some points."

Greer confirmed that although not having any testing in a new car isn't ideal before the championship opener, there are positives for his David Greer Motorsport team.

"It's good for us to see where the strengths and weaknesses are in the other cars too. It's not ideal going to West Cork having never driven the car, but we'll see," he said.

Greer, partnered by Scot Kirsty Riddick, won the ITRC section of the Ulster Rally last year, finishing third overall behind Keith Cronin and Fredrik Ahlin.



Greer is awaiting parts for his DS3

RALLY REPORT

Photos: Writtle Photographic

ROUND-UP



Davies/Neil: Road win

After early class leaders Lloyd Morgan (Nissan Micra) and Will Mains (Vauxhall Nova) had retired their cars with coil and alternator problems respectively, Bill Paynter/Andy Hollingham were comprehensive winners of **Class 1** in their Peugeot 106.

The long journey from Scotland for John Macniven/Alexander Kermoder proved worthwhile as they won **Class 7** in their Subaru Impreza.

On their first ever stage rally, Tony Davies/Alistair Neil had a problem-free run to take the **Road Rally** class in their Vauxhall Corsa, while things were more eventful for Malcolm 'Tar' Jones/Rhys Jones. On stage four they survived brake failure on their Peugeot 207, costing them the class lead, which they vowed to get back. A steadier run over the remainder of the event helped them end the day in a class-winning 14th overall. On the driver's first event over Epynt and using their left-hand-drive Peugeot 208 R2 for the first time, Ed Fossey/Chris Sharpe-Simkiss had a peaceful run to finish second behind Jones in the 1600cc class. Roger Priestnall/Jamie Forrest had a good run to finish their Proton Satria on the driver's first Tarmac rally for 10 years.

Another Epynt newcomer, Rhys McLoughlin, enlisted the services of Michael Gilbey in the left-hand seat of his Peugeot 205 Maxi, and the plan was to just finish the event. Despite breaking a shock absorber the pair exceeded expectations by taking the normally-aspirated 1600-2000cc **Class 4** win. Earlier leader Steve Hopewell had to retire his forestry-specification Ford Escort on the final stage.

Following suspension problems on the first loop, a change of settings worked wonders for Richard Merriman/Kath Curzon, who moved into the **Class 3** (1600-2000cc) lead in their Darrian T90 as a result. With a comfortable lead, they backed off on the final, wet stage, only to arrive at the finish with the slenderest of class leads. Phil Turner/Ian Meakin had installed new Reiger suspension on their Ford Escort and struggled with the car's handling early on. With some adjustments, the handling was transformed and the pair ended the event just one second behind Merriman.

Behind class winner Huw Reed, Terry Brown/Den Golding were slowed with day-long brake problems, which occurred halfway through each stage, but they still took second in **Class 5** in their Ford Escort. Third went to Tony Rees/Geraint Thomas, whose Darrian T90 GTR suffered a jammed throttle and traction control issues.

MIGHTY MELVYN WINS ON EPYNT

MSA Asphalt Championship returns after hiatus. By Simon Gronow



Evans' Subaru return was fruitful

After a year's sabbatical, the MSA Asphalt Championship returned in style as Melvyn Evans beat a quality entry to take victory on the event that he sponsors, Port Talbot Motor Club's Tour of Epynt.

Partnered by Mark Glennerster, the 2009 champion was reunited with his Subaru Impreza S12B WRC – which he used to win the 2012 event – for the first time in two years. After initially sharing the lead with six-time champion, Damian Cole, he opened up a lead on the third of seven stages and wasn't to be usurped.

Second-placed Cole and co-driver Jamie Edwards were well clear of the rest in their Ford Fiesta RS WRC. Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke rounded off the podium in their Fiesta S2000.

Seven stages were planned, the first two loops consisting of two stages, which were then combined for stage three, before reverse runs for the sixth and seventh tests.

"We got through, but it wasn't brilliant," reflected Melvyn Evans over his run through the first loop, as he had his first run over Epynt in an Impreza WRC for six years. His times weren't too shoddy though, as he, Cole and Bob Fowden (Impreza S12B) shared fastest time on the opening test, before Evans and Cole tied for fastest on the second.

Cole had found the going "very slippery," and things weren't helped when the handbrake pulled out when a bolt broke, although repairs and a change to slicks were quickly completed at the following service halt.

Just four seconds down after SS2 were car number one, Fowden and Aled Davies, finding the Epynt chicanes a bit too tight for their liking.

Over the second loop, Evans felt more confident with his Subaru, as he took 11 seconds out of nearest challenger Cole, who felt a change from inter to slicks would be beneficial for his Fiesta. Fowden, who felt the stages had less grip than the first loop, was happy with his run, as he lay in third behind Cole.

On the longer SS5, Evans found his tyres to be going off near the end of the test, although things were still manageable as he reacclimatised to the Impreza. A time 15 seconds quicker than Cole suggested he was getting things right, while the Fiesta WRC driver thought his run hadn't been too bad, and was planning a change to harder tyres for the next stage. Unfortunately, the greasy conditions caught out Fowden, whose undamaged Impreza was stuck at the end of the New Road.

With Fowden out, Pritchard/Clarke were now up to third in their Fiesta S2000. After struggling with the handling early on, some suspension changes helped, as they survived a big slide at the telephone exchange on stage four on their debut in the ex-Nasser Al-Attiyah car.

Just behind were Stephen Simpson/Patrick Walsh, who wished their Fiesta R5 had the power of the Impreza WRC in which they won the event previously. As a result, they were driving hard, clipping a bale on stage four, which cost some time in their pursuit of Pritchard.

The change of direction didn't change things as Evans, who found the early part of the stage slippery, still beat Cole by nine seconds on SS6, before sealing an impressive win with another fastest time on the final stage, despite the heavens opening before the last test. "I'm happy, it's been a good run with no problems," was Evans' verdict of his outing.

For Cole, it would have to be second on this occasion, with Pritchard



Cole could not match Evans' pace

RESULTS

Tour of Epynt, MSA Asphalt Championship, round 1/7, March 14

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Melvyn Evans/Mark Glennerster	Subaru Impreza S12B WRC	1h04m58s
2	Damian Cole/Jamie Edwards	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+39s
3	Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke	Ford Fiesta S2000	+1m46s
4	Stephen Simpson/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5	+3m23s
5	Adrian Spencer/Matt Daniels	Subaru Impreza S11 WRC	+3m36s
6	Paul Kirtley/David Jones	Subaru Impreza WRC	+4m36s
7	Wayne Sisson/Max Freeman	Mitsubishi Lancer E10	+5m08s
8	Gareth James/Steff Evans	Ford Escort Mk2	+5m09s
9	Huw Reed/Anthony Hackett	Darrian T90 GTR	+5m25s
10	Richard Merriman/Kath Curzon	Darrian T90	+5m56s

Class winners: Bill Paynter/Andy Hollingham (Peugeot 106 Rallye); Malcolm 'Tar' Jones/Rhys Jones (Peugeot 207); Merriman/Curzon; Rhys McLoughlin/Michael Gilbey (Peugeot 205 Maxi); Reed/Hackett; Sisson/Freeman; John Macniven/Alexander Kermoder (Impreza); Tony Davies/Alistair Neil (Vauxhall Corsa); Cole/Edwards; James/S. Evans.
Points: 1 Evans 30; 2 Cole 28; 3 Pritchard 27; 4 Simpson 26; 5 Spencer 25; 6 Sisson 24.

finishing third as he got used to his car.

A gamble on slicks for the final stage didn't pay off for Simpson, who still finished a solid fourth. Once gearbox issues were resolved, Adrian Spencer/Matt Daniels (Subaru Impreza) moved up the leaderboard to finish fifth, as Rob Tout's Mitsubishi was seen parked up in the German Village, part of the ranges' training facilities for the military.

Not even a last-stage puncture could deprive Paul Kirtley/David Jones of sixth place in their Impreza WRC, while Paul Turner's Lancer succumbed to clutch failure and Mark Jones retired

his BMW with a broken throttle cable.

After stalling his Mitsubishi Lancer E9 on the first stage, things got better for forestry regular Wayne Sisson who, together with Max Freeman finished in a class-winning seventh overall.

Just one second behind at the finish were Gareth James/Steff Evans on the driver's first event for five years. Despite a broken manifold, the pair took their Historic class-winning Ford Escort to an eighth place finish, as Huw Reed/Anthony Hackett held on to their class lead despite a last stage puncture on their Darrian T90 GTR.

RALLY REPORTS

Photo: John O'Malley – This is Irish Rallying, KG Rally Pics



Boyle won to a stunning backdrop



Stuart Darcy pushed hard to win his class

BOYLE WINS IRISH NATIONAL OPENER

Mayo Stages Rally

By Martin Walsh

Organiser: Mayo and District Motorsport Club **When:** March 11
Where: Achill Island, County Mayo **Championships:** Irish National Rally Championship, Sligo Pallets Border Rally Championship
Starters: 88 **Stages:** 9

The stunning scenery of Achill Island off the west coast of Ireland provided a spectacular backdrop for the Mayo Stages Rally, the opening counter in the Irish National Rally Championship and the Sligo Pallets Border Rally Championship.

Declan Boyle (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) and his co-driver James O'Reilly survived a scare en-route to the opening stage when an electrical glitch threatened to disrupt their plans. However, they went on to win by 37 seconds. Second place went to another Fiesta RS WRC, that of Josh Moffett and

his co-driver Keith Moriarty, in a car that actually won last year's series with Josh's brother Sam at the wheel.

Desi Henry and his Cork co-driver Liam Moynihan debuted a Ford Fiesta R5 and finished third – 1m01.1s further behind.

With the electrical malady sorted, Boyle finished the short, snappy opening stage 2.3 seconds ahead of the Ford Focus WRC of Donagh Kelly, with Moffett 1.9 seconds further behind and 0.7 seconds in front of Henry.

Roy White (Fiesta RS WRC) beached his car on a left-hander within sight of the stage finish and the 2016 National champion was towed out before he rejoined under Rally2, albeit as a test.

Boyle arrived at the Keel service park that backed on to the Atlantic Ocean with a 16.2-second lead. Moffett was second – it was the first time since April 2016 that he had sat in the World Rally

Car, usually steering an R5-variant of the Fiesta. Henry slotted into third, after two years in a Skoda R5, he admitted that the Blue Oval had different characteristics, "but they are all very good cars," he quipped. He also added that he had to slow to avoid making contact with a sheep dog.

A spin on the second stage cost Kelly a place on the leaderboard but a puncture on SS3 ruined his day, relegating him to 47th.

Elsewhere, Joe McGonigle (Mini John Cooper Works WRC) was fourth – 38.4 seconds off the top spot as he found it difficult to find the correct set-up for his second outing in the car. Untroubled, Niall Maguire (Subaru WRC) and Aidan Wray (Mitsubishi), who led Group N, completed the top six.

By SS6, Boyle was 21 seconds clear of Moffett, who was marginally quicker through that stage. Henry in third

continued to tweak the settings of his new car as Kelly made some progress and was 18th with three stages remaining.

Boyle went on to record a fine victory and annexed the only available point from the Power Stage. Moffett took valuable points as he too chases a National title bid. Third-placed Henry was happy with his outing that was also a shakedown for next weekend's West Cork Rally. McGonigle, Maguire and Wray rounded out an unchanged top six, the latter winning Group N from Mark Boyle (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) and Paul Barrett (Lancer E10)

In the two-wheel-drive category, Stuart Darcy reeled in long-time leader Chris Armstrong (Ford Escort) on the final stage, even though his Darrian T90 lost its exhaust on the penultimate stage, and some gear oil on the final stage. The new Fiesta R5 of Brendan

Cumiskey was sandwiched between them as Kelly's recovery ended with 10th overall. Armagh's Jason Black (Toyota Starlet) was an emphatic winner of the Junior class, he also won the National Championship 'Drive of the Day' award.

Results

1 Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC) 50m41.4s; 2 Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty (Ford Fiesta WRC) +37.0s; 3 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan (Ford Fiesta R5); 4 Joe McGonigle/Ciaran Geaney (Mini John Cooper Works WRC); 5 Niall Maguire/Enda Sherry (Subaru WRC); 6 Aidan Wray/Kieran McGrath (Mitsubishi EvoX); 7 Stuart Darcy/Keith McCarthy (Darrian T90); 8 Brendan Cumiskey/Stephen McAuley (Ford Fiesta R5); 9 Chris Armstrong/Chris Melly (Ford Escort); 10 Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley (Ford Focus WRC). **Class winners:** Stephen Gallagher/Mark Tahery (Honda Civic); Ronan Denning/Karl Egan (Citroen C2R2); John Duffy/John Egan (Honda Integra); Wray/McGrath; Cumiskey/McAuley; Maguire/Sherry; Mark O'Finnegan/Brian McLoughlin (Suzuki Swift); Eamonn McLoughlin/Steven Boyle (Ford Escort); Lee McLoughlin/Emmett Kelly (Honda Civic); Paul Carron/Sean Brunton (Toyota Corolla); Brian Armstrong/Aodhan Gallagher (Ford Escort); Mickey Conlon/Ciaran McPhillips (Ford Escort); Darcy/McCarthy; Pat Kelly/Jonathan Kelly (Subaru Impreza); McGonigle/Geaney; Jason Black/Jack McKenna (Toyota Starlet).

Photo: William Neill

McGarrity continues incredible Bishopscourt record in Northern Ireland opener

Bishopscourt Stages Rally

By Jason Craig

Organiser: Ballynahinch and District MC **When:** March 10
Where: Bishopscourt Circuit, County Down **Championships:** Northern Ireland Rally Championship, Junior 1000 Rally Challenge
Starters: 71 **Stages:** 6

Derek McGarrity extended his remarkable winning streak at a rain-lashed Bishopscourt Race Circuit on Saturday to take an early lead in the Northern Ireland Rally Championship drivers' standings.

Despite being slowed on some of the stages because of a misting-up front window in his Subaru Impreza S14 WRC, he punched in quickest times on every test to take the victory by a minute and seven seconds.

The result means that McGarrity has

won at the County Down venue every year since 2012.

"It is great to win the event again," said McGarrity, who had Paddy Robinson navigating. "Those were really difficult conditions, but we didn't make any major mistakes and we kept out of trouble."

After indifferent starts in recent seasons, Alan Carmichael was delighted to get his title bid up-and-running by coming home second overall. A fresh set of sparkplugs helped cure an early misfire with his Mini John Cooper Works WRC and allowed him to climb into the podium places from seventh position.

Connor McCloskey, a previous Northern Ireland champion, made it a World Rally Car top three in his Fiesta.

The soaking conditions meant the Kilrea driver – who remains undecided about his plans for 2018 – slid off the track on a few occasions. However, he still only finished 1.8 seconds in arrears of Carmichael.

The mechanics in Mark Massey's team worked miracles to replace the recalcitrant gearbox in his car with two tests remaining. Massey duly repaid their efforts by leapfrogging the Ford Escort Mk2 of Bishopscourt newcomer, Barry Morris, into fourth. Under the circumstances, Morris was still happy.

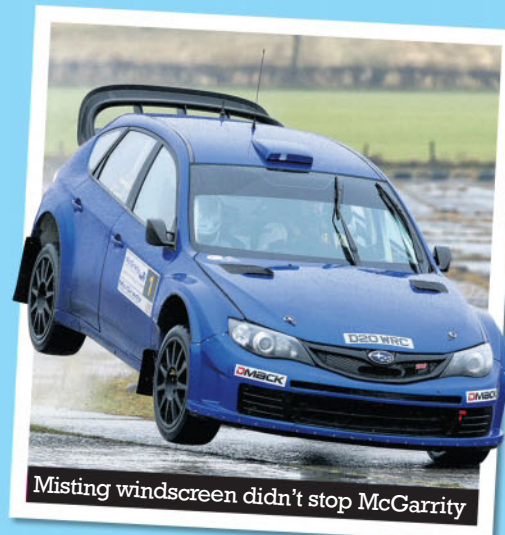
Subaru Impreza driver James Laverty conquered Group N, while Kyle White came top in the R2 class.

In the Junior Rally Marcus McElwee produced a fantastic recovery drive to

win from Peter Beaton. McElwee surrendered almost five minutes on stage one when his Citroen became beached on a tyre. Beaton in turn lost over five minutes on SS4.

Results

1 Derek McGarrity/Paddy Robinson (Subaru Impreza S14 WRC) 37m44.4s; 2 Alan Carmichael/Ivor Lamont (Mini John Cooper Works WRC) +1m07.2s; 3 Connor McCloskey/John Rowan (Ford Fiesta RS WRC); 4 Mark Massey/Niall Burns (Impreza WRC); 5 Barry Morris/Declan Campbell (Ford Escort Mk2); 6 Peter Bennett/Simon Jones (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 7 James Laverty/Paul Hughes (Impreza N12B); 8 Rory Young/Allan Cathers (Fiesta R5); 9 Denis Biggerstaff/Stephen Jess (Impreza WRC); 10 Kyle White/Sean Topping (Peugeot 208 R2). **Class winners:** Gareth Deazley/Stephen McCombe (Honda Civic); Laverty/Hughes; Gerard Hughes/Paul Hughes (Peugeot 205 GTI); White/Topping; Ian Green/Amanda Green (Peugeot 205 GTI); Morris/Campbell; Fintan McGrady/Jordayna Magill (Escort Mk2); McCloskey/Rowan; McGarrity/Robinson; Andrew Bushe/Chris McSherry (Vauxhall Chevette HSR).



Misting windscreen didn't stop McGarrity

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RALLY MEXICO



BY DAVID
EVANS

The champion prevailed, but the returning ace grabbed the headlines

A win? Forget it. Not going to happen. That was the verdict before the start of last week's Rally Mexico. And the verdict came in French. From Sebastien. But which one: Ogier or Loeb? Take your pick. They were of the same mind.

Those hoping for a return to civil war were wide of the mark. Partly because the Sebs had moved on from the bitterness and acrimony which reigned through 2011. And partly because of their individual situations.

Ogier told *Motorsport News*: "This rivalry is a bit behind us now, but it's been reactivated by the fans and maybe some of the media. The truth is, we're not really in the same race this week. We don't have anything to prove to each other and the targets we have are a bit different: we're here to make the best result for the championship and he's here to enjoy himself."

"The difficulty for Seb [Loeb] will be to overcome five years out of the rally and get the rhythm, for me the challenge is being near the front [in the start order]. I would be very happy to see the scenario to fight with him for the top [places], but this is nothing linked to what happened in the past – it would mean that we had both had a good rally."

They both had a very good rally. Ogier took his fourth win in six years in Leon while Loeb wound back the years to win stages, lead the rally and remind the world how and why he dominated the sport for nine years.

The return of the king

Five days before Christmas last year, Sebastien Loeb gave fans around the world the present they'd been hoping for: the news that he would be back.

A limited programme, three rallies, starting in Mexico. The countdown, not to mention the pontificating, began. His two-day test in Spain came and went but, as is the way with a closed test on a private road, there was no indication of where he would slot back in.

All eyes on shakedown. Here we go, the moment the world's been waiting for... and it's happening on three miles of gravel just outside Leon. Ready, what's it going to be?

Tenth. Tenth?

And 10th, almost a second per mile down on team-mate Kris Meeke. Oh, OK.

Meeke was the first to jump to the defence of his team-mate. "It's not representative," he said. "We've done this stage four times a year for the last five years, so 20 times and it's a really tricky piece of road. He came for the first time today."

So what did he think the following three days would bring?

"He has no idea himself, so how can we know? We've talked a little bit: he's asked a few questions, all the right ones! We were talking about some stage and the line through a corner and he said: 'Oh yeah, I saw that with Ogier in 2015, but he took a different line there in

'16... He's not been sitting at home twiddling his thumbs, he's done his homework for this. When the rhythm's right, he'll be there..."

The tunnels beneath the beautiful Guanajuato city is not the place to find rhythm. Loeb was 10th on the opener. The road from Duarte to Derramadero first thing Friday morning was a different story. Eleventh on the road, Loeb undoubtedly benefited from a line swept clear of much of the Mexican loose stuff. He was third. Next stage fourth. Then, in Ortega, second – just 1.9s off fastest.

The rhythm was coming. And it arrived on the second shot at El Chocolate with his first stage win since Sospel on a Monte Carlo Sunday three years ago.

"I'm happy with that," said Loeb. "This is one of the stages I never drove before, so to win this stage is really special for me."

And there was even better news in that the scratch time had moved him up to second place, just 14.9s behind Dani Sordo.

History will show that Loeb rarely spent long in the Spaniard's rear-view mirror. But this time the pair weren't sharing the same team. This time there would be no Guy Frequelin or Olivier Quesnel on the telephone reminding Sordo of his place in the team. Not that Loeb even really needed such a call.

Finally, the chance for redemption for Sordo. But could he stay ahead for more than half the rally?

The stress was beginning to tell on him. This was him at the end of the final gravel stage on Friday: "Sebastien is coming really fast on me. It's not easy you know!"

Saturday morning's opener would be crucial. Loeb knew it. Sitting at breakfast, he knew the team bus was waiting to ferry him to service... but there was time.

"Espresso, por favor," were the words for the waiter.

Loeb returned my smile and added: "This morning I need to wake up..."

Saturday was a different story; he would be seventh in, with Ogier (remember him and his theory on the Sebs not running close?) just two cars ahead of him. More immediately, Loeb was focused on the 7.2s deficit to Sordo and his own 3.8s buffer over Ott Tanak. His team-mate Kris Meeke was fourth, 17s behind with Ogier five behind the Northern Irishman.

Yes, Saturday was definitely worth waking up for.

The caffeine worked a treat. Sordo, bothered by less than perfect balance on the brakes and a car moving more than he would have liked, wilted. And Loeb was in.

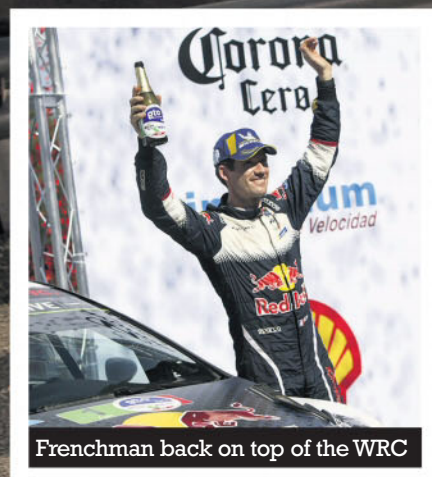
Sensationally, the 44-year-old was back to the front.

"I found the rhythm," said Loeb. "It's nice to be at the front and I want to keep pushing now."

Through Thursday and Friday morning there had definitely been an element of Loeb being the boy who'd left school, moved away and come back. He was finding his feet, feeling his way back in. But by Saturday, the old boy was firmly back. There was the fidgeting at the end of the stage, the adjusting of belts, the sip of water, the intensity and energy were all back. And behind those famous eyes was the absolute focus. With the crash helmet hiding the salt and pepper look up top, the face and features were the same as they'd ever been at the height of his WRC powers.

For three stages, Alsace was back at the centre of the rallying universe. But

OGIER O AS LOEB STUNS



Frenchman back on top of the WRC

Ogier was supreme on Saturday to lead

what the Guanajuatito stage gave with one hand in the morning it cruelly took back in the afternoon. Loeb clipped a small stone halfway through the stage and punctured the left front. He stopped to change it at the cost of two minutes, his lead, and the dream.

By that evening, he was kicking himself. His recent Dakar experience taught him that when a problem strikes, you stop immediately to sort it.

"It was stupid that I didn't go through the stage," he said. "We didn't think enough. We didn't think before about what we would do with the puncture and with the reflex of the Dakar and no knowledge of these tyres, we just pulled over."

Other Seb's super day

Going into Guanajuatito after lunch, Ogier had trimmed the gap to Loeb to 15s. He and Meeke were tied to the tenth. But coming out of SS14, Ogier had the lead with Meeke 3.8s behind; Sordo had suffered a similar deflation to Loeb. Having endured the strange sensation of the French media writing

Sebastien-oriented headlines not about him, he set about winning some stages and writing some headlines of his own.

And what a way to do it. Ogier was unbeaten on the dirt through Saturday afternoon in an absolutely stunning run. With victory firmly in his sights, nobody could touch the #1 Ford.

Coming out of El Brinco for the second time, Ogier pulled over to inspect the tyres. He couldn't help but smile as he did so.

"Ah, I have to say, this day has been really perfect," he said. "OK, in the middle stage this afternoon there was some sand around and it was sometimes quite difficult to be absolutely on the limit, but I was pushing all the time and it's nice now to bring the time."

For Meeke, there was more frustration. He'd spun the C3 and then been forced to drive back up the road in order to try and find somewhere to turn it back around.

"I had to drive back into my own dust," he said. "It was stupid, a stupid mistake. I couldn't find anywhere to

turn. We've lost 30s easily to him there. Not good enough."

That spin explained the thick end of the 37s gap between the top two at the end of the day, but Meeke wasn't interested in flattery of any form.

"No, today I have to say, Seb was right there," said Meeke. "I couldn't follow him this afternoon, fair play to him he had too much pace for us."

M-Sport's team principal Malcolm Wilson admitted he was impressed with the delivery of his team's first win in Mexico since Markko Martin's 2004 success.

"You look back to places like Portugal last year," said Wilson, "and you think: 'Yeah, that was impressive...'" But then he comes here and drives like he did today and it's just impressive all over again. He was masterful today. Really Superb."

Watching the footage, it's impossible to argue. Ogier was inch perfect on the line and his braking was simply breathtaking. A couple of times he looked like he might have overcooked it, but at the final,



Meeke was disappointed with third

'This was a strange event for the Norwegian'
Mikkelsen's drive rated, p23



ROUND 03

WIN TOP



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

STAGE TIMES



Tanak took Powerstage win

- **SS1 Street Stage GTO (1.57 miles)**
Fastest Neuville 2m06.7s **Leader Neuville**
Second Tanak +1.9s
- **SS2 Duarte - Derramadero 1 (16.19 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 17m08.9s **Leader Meeke**
Second Sordo +3.8s
- **SS3 El Chocolate 1 (19.54 miles)**
Fastest Sordo 24m05.6s **Leader Sordo**
Second Meeke +9.5s
- **SS4 Ortega 1 (10.71 miles)**
Fastest Sordo 9m33.2s **Leader Sordo**
Second Meeke +15.1s
- **SS5 Street Stage Leon 1 (0.69 miles)**
Fastest Suninen 1m03.7s **Leader Sordo**
Second Meeke +16.6s
- **SS6 Duarte - Derramadero 2 (16.19 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 16m56.7s **Leader Sordo**
Second Meeke +12.3s
- **SS7 El Chocolate 2 (19.54 miles)**
Fastest Loeb 23m54.2s **Leader Sordo**
Second Loeb +14.9s
- **SS8 Ortega 2 (10.71 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 9m24.8s **Leader Sordo**
Second Loeb +7.9s
- **SS9 Autodromo de Leon 1 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 1m37.8s **Leader Sordo**
Second Loeb +7.8s
- **SS10 Autodromo de Leon 2 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m37.3s **Leader Sordo**
Second Loeb +7.2s
- **SS11 Guanajuatito 1 (19.24 miles)**
Fastest Loeb 20m35.6s **Leader Loeb**
Second Sordo +5.1s
- **SS12 Otates 1 (16.39 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 20m26.9s **Leader Loeb**
Second Sordo +6.0s
- **SS13 El Brinco 1 (6.20 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 5m29.2s **Leader Loeb**
Second Sordo +2.9s
- **SS14 Guanajuatito 2 (19.24 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 20m10.1s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +3.8s
- **SS15 Otates 2 (16.39 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 20m05.1s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +34.5s
- **SS16 El Brinco 2 (6.20 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 5m24.6s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +37.1s
- **SS17 Autodromo de Leon 3 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 1m38.0s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +35.8s
- **SS18 Autodromo de Leon 4 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 1m36.6s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +35.2s
- **SS19 Street Stage Leon 2 (0.69 miles)**
Fastest Mikkelsen 1m02.7s **Leader Ogier**
Second Meeke +35.9s
- **SS20 Alfaro (15.11 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 15m23.7s **Leader Ogier**
Second Sordo +48.0s
- **SS21 Las Minas 1 (6.88 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 6m42.9s **Leader Ogier**
Second Sordo +55.2s
- **SS22 Las Minas 2 (Power Stage) (6.88 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 6m33.1s **Leader Ogier**
Second Sordo +1m03.6s

COLIN CLARK

"It's amazing how some look to deny greatness"



They were talking about it in the smoky bars around Leon while savouring their tequilas and necking their Coronas. They were even talking about it in the mountains of Mexico while clearing their cactus and packing their ponchos. The Mexicans like things hot, and this was one hot topic of conversation.

Should he back? Could he be good? Would he be able to win? Yes, yes and a final emphatic yes was the answer. OK, so Loeb didn't win here in Mexico, but for a glorious few hours on Saturday we allowed ourselves to believe that might just be possible. He rolled back the years to remind us of just why he is a nine-time champion and 78-time rally winner. It was thrilling, it was compelling and it was nothing short of bloody brilliant.

The last time the guy competed full time in the championship was 2012. How many other examples are there of champions returning after five years away and showing the new generation of rapid chargers the way forward? Not many at this level.

But what Loeb did here over three-and-a-bit days of pulsating hot rally action was way more than show a slightly sceptical watching world that he has lost none of his outrageously effortless talent. Oh yes he did so much more than that. For me he emphatically silenced those doubters who stubbornly refused to proclaim him as the greatest rally driver of all time. He only did it in one marque. He didn't have any competition. He was always in the best car. Amazing isn't it, how some people are always looking for reasons to deny greatness?

Well this time he was in a car that was built around another driver. It was a car that was on the same level as the competition. The opposition was truly world class.

And Loeb, after just a few days of testing, jumped into the right-hand seat and looked as if he'd never been away. It was a performance of character, of class. It was the performance of a champion.

And I guess there will still be some out there for whom Loeb's performance just isn't enough to convince them of his 'Greatest Driver of All Time' credentials. So what might silence those doubters once and for all?

How about a full-on tilt at championship number 10? I genuinely think that it's a possibility for 2019. And by the way, it might also be the catalyst that keeps Citroen in the World Rally Championship.

Loeb looked at home, Loeb looked relaxed, Loeb looked hungry and motivated and Loeb looked mighty competitive.



Loeb was sensational, and then forgot he wasn't on Dakar...

...final nanosecond he lifted his foot from the brake, turned in and tip-toed through. Brilliant.

Wrong T-shirt...

...he was more disappointment Meeke when he dropped to third... putting his Citroen on its side... Sunday morning - a move which... Sordo back up to second. Meeke will, perhaps, want a word... he gets home - he was no doubt... acted on his Saturday morning... time call to see his daughters... ing Dani Sordo T-shirts. ...ve never been as disappointed... third as this," said Meeke. ...be that's progress." ...do grinned as he was told of... -shirt story. "I know," he said, ...s told me. I told him he has good... ren - clever children. ...his result is good, but it was... plicated when I got the puncture... rday. I didn't have another spare... hen, so I couldn't push at the... e level. But second is nice."

continued on page 22

RALLY MEXICO



BY DAVID EVANS

RALLY ESSENTIALS

Day one: 97.98 miles; 10 stages

Weather: Sunny 17-30°C

- Hyundai's Dani Sordo is making the most of a cleaner road after starting 10th and leads from SS3 onwards. The Spaniard looks safe and surefooted at the front of the field, while his team-mates Andreas Mikkelsen and Thierry Neuville struggle. Championship leader coming into Mexico, Neuville struggles for grip first on the road, but fuel and power-steering problems cost time. Mikkelsen's not happy with the feeling from his i20.
- Sebastien Loeb is the story of the day, running second and winning SS7. His Citroen team-mate Kris Meeke is fourth, dropping back from second place after successive spins in the day's last two gravel stages.
- Toyota struggles with overheating Yaris WRCs for the second year in succession. Ott Tanak makes the best fist and drives brilliantly with the aid of his car's anti-lag system (that gets switched off because it creates more underbonnet heat) to run third. Jari-Matti Latvala stops with an alternator problem in SS9, while Esapekka Lappi has gone off the road on the second run through El Chocolate.
- M-Sport is enduring mixed fortunes. Sebastien Ogier contains the time loss from running second on the road to place his Ford Fiesta WRC fifth, but Elfyn Evans rolls out of an early third place and Teemu Suninen breaks the suspension on his car just two stages later.

End of day one: 1 Sordo/Del Barrio 1h47m55.4s; 2 Loeb/Elena +7.2s; 3 Tanak/Jarveoja +11.0s; 4 Meeke/Nagle +25.0s; 5 Ogier/Ingrassia +30.2s; 6 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +31.7s.

Day two: 87.90 miles; 8 stages

Weather: Very sunny 15-34°C

- Fastest time on the day's opener has moved Loeb into the lead, much to the chagrin of Sordo. The nine-time champion stays out front for three stages before he chooses to stop and change a front-left puncture and drops to fifth.
- Sordo's day is spoiled by another Citroen – Meeke's C3 – getting ahead of him in SS14 after the former leader is handicapped by a puncture.
- Sordo and Meeke are both passed by Ogier in that second run through Guanajuatito. The defending champion is on inspired form to leapfrog his way into the lead by 3.8s from Meeke after SS14. That gap mushroomed by half-a-minute when Meeke spins and gets caught in his own dust in SS15.
- Toyota's misery continues with Tanak retiring after limping through the opening stage of the day, reporting: "We only have 20 horse power..." Latvala and Lappi are back under Rally2 regulations for day two.
- Mikkelsen moves up the order courtesy of retirements, but he's still struggling for balance aboard the Hyundai. His troubles are nothing compared with Neuville, who drops two minutes with water ingestion in the day's opener.
- The bottom end of the top 10 has been invaded by WRC2 crews with Pontus Tidemand holding an excellent seventh with Britain's Gus Greensmith in eighth.

End of day two: 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 3h25m03.1s; 2 Meeke/Nagle +35.9s; 3 Sordo/Del Barrio +46.8s; 4 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +1m28.4s; 5 Loeb/Elena 2m19.7s; 6 Neuville/Gilsoul +4m44.6s

Day three: 28.87 miles; 3 stages

Weather: Even sunnier 16-31°C

- Ogier retains a grip on the event to take a comfortable minute-plus win from Sordo.
- Sordo is the only positional change on the podium through the final day and it comes after Meeke drops the C3 on the cobbles and tips it onto its side. The spectators heave the Citroen onto all fours and he's away again, minus the car's rear wing.
- Here's a sentence which will bring more pleasure to the Brit than the Finn, but Latvala's pursuit of Greensmith's eighth place is successful, with the Toyota Yaris WRC moving ahead of the Mancunian's Fiesta R5 on the day's opener.

Continued from page 21

There was definitely a feeling that Hyundai had escaped what could have been another troubled weekend. First on the road, Thierry Neuville was always going to struggle, but the Belgian endured one of his most problematic weekends in recent history. His i20 swallowed a load of water and stopped in its tracks. He then visited more than the odd ditch on his way to sixth place, two places down on a subdued team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen. Few had expected those two to be upstaged by the squad's asphalt specialist to such an extent.

Hyundai's team manager Alain Penasse found a bright side and looked on it. "We took points for second and fourth and we're still in the lead of the championship," he said. "That's not a bad weekend. Like Dani said, the puncture made it difficult for him and he was worried about not having a spare. But then again Loeb was in the same position and he didn't give a s**t and just got back on it..."

Toyota takes the heat

And anyway, if Penasse thought Hyundai could do better, he only needed to take a look across the service park at Toyota. For the second year in succession the Yaris WRCs wilted in the scorching North American heat.

Granted, it wasn't quite as bad as last season, but still all three cars struggled to deliver the power and response required through Friday's highest-altitude stages.



Ott Tanak's Toyota struggled

Hard-trying Brits take star turns

British drivers Gus Greensmith and Tom Williams played starring roles in the WRC support series in Mexico last week.

Greensmith delivered the perfect drive to the letter of the instruction from M-Sport team principal Malcolm Wilson. The Manchester driver, back in a Fiesta R5 for the first time since Wales last year, was keen to turn things up in his Ford, but he knew doing so would risk a solid haul of points from his opening WRC2 counter of the season.

"I was a bit scrappy in the first stage on Thursday night," he said, "but the atmosphere in that place was just something else – I've never known anything like it. Absolutely brilliant."

"After the first stage on gravel, we kind of knew it was going to be tough to beat Pontus [Tidemand] and Malcolm [Wilson] had told us to get through and take the points and the experience. I would like to have pushed a bit harder, but the advice was sensible – this year is all about the championship and taking points for second is a good result. Yes, I know about the gap to Pontus, but



Neuville spluttered on to sixth place

All three cars retired and superallied. Jari-Matti Latvala struggled with the car, but Tanak coped manfully to run as high as third before his turbo failed – in what was thought a potential altitude-related failure. Esapekka Lappi's departure was more self-inflicted than the other two – when he went off the road on the opening day.

On his first time out in Mexico, the Finn was keen to get to the end untroubled, but fell foul of El Chocolate the second time through.

It was a similar story for his M-Sport Ford Fiesta-driving countryman Teemu Suninen, who battered the suspension

into retirement a stage earlier. Friday wasn't the best of days for the Cumbrian squad as Elfyn Evans tipped his Fiesta out of third and into a sixth-gear roll. Concussion ruled his co-driver Dan Barritt out of action for the remainder, while the car escaped remarkably undamaged beyond a bit of 100mph gravel rash.

The mood at M-Sport was buoyant on Sunday afternoon. Nowhere more so than in the Ogier Fiesta after his fourth win and seventh podium in Mexico.

"This is a special place for me," he said at the finish. "And this is another special result."

No doubt, somewhere in the back of his mind there was the memory of 2011. Seven years ago, having been told by Citroen management that he would follow Ogier home in second place, Loeb got to the start of the first stage on Sunday morning, exited his DS3 and opened the door of the leaders. He informed Ogier, in no uncertain terms, he wouldn't be slowing down.

Minutes later Ogier had torn a wheel off his car leaving Loeb to win.

Yes, yes, I know all those rivalries are behind them. But there can be little doubt there would have been a mile-wide smile of satisfaction on Ogier's face.

SUPPORTS



Tom Williams went to Mexico and endured "an eye-opening" event

Williams admitted he'd at least got the experience he came for – and then some.

"It's been an incredible event," he said. "From the moment we started the recce we've been learning. This has been a real eye-opener in terms of how tough a WRC round can be."

At the top of the WRC2 table, Skoda driver Tidemand delivered the utterly assured drive of a champion, extending his advantage early and then controlling it to the finish.

Chilean Fiesta R5 driver Pedro Heller was third behind Greensmith.

Hyundai development driver Jari Huttunen struggled with an ill co-driver in Antti Linnaketo on Friday morning, but the real damage was done when he retired with a damaged radiator in the afternoon.

Skoda youngster Kalle Rovanner also retired with radiator damage after hitting a stone in the middle of the road on Friday's opening stage.

DRIVER ANALYSIS BY DAVID EVANS



SEBASTIEN OGIER

M-SPORT FORD FIESTA

He's crying wolf again... Offering himself no chance ahead of the start, the champ drove his socks off through Saturday to nudge himself to the top of the timesheets. An outstanding drive.

10/10



ELFYN EVANS

M-SPORT FORD FIESTA

Brilliant for the first three stages, but caught out on the bumps in SS4 with the Fiesta singing along nicely at warp factor 10. The shunt did very little damage, but a bump on Dan Barritt's head ruled them out.

2/10



TEEMU SUNINEN

M-SPORT FORD FIESTA

Missed out on the chance to get through the whole route when he damaged the suspension on his car on the opening day. Thereafter the focus was very much on getting to the finish in one piece.

3/10



THIERRY NEUVILLE

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT HYUNDAI i20

Shocker of a rally for the Rally Sweden winner and championship leader coming in. Dropped time at a watersplash and then appeared to be driving a Hyundai magnetised towards the ditches thereafter.

4/10



ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT HYUNDAI i20

Didn't visit as many ditches as his teammate, but struggled to find the sort of rally-leading pace he showed last time out on the gravel in Australia. A strange sort of an event for the Norwegian.

5/10



DANI SORDO

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT HYUNDAI i20

For a driver who's not confident with varying grip levels, this was a superb effort. Led the event on the opening day but was ruled out of the battle for the win after a puncture in SS14.

9/10



KRIS MEEKE

TOTAL ABU DHABI CITROEN C3 WRC

By his own admission there were far too many mistakes this time. Recovered from Friday afternoon spins to get into the lead fight... only to spin his way out of it. At least he stayed out of the car parks.

6/10



SEBASTIEN LOEB

TOTAL ABU DHABI CITROEN C3 WRC

His only moment of the whole event came when he fell down the stairs in the hotel on the eve of the rally. With a C3 rather than flip-flops beneath him, he was brilliant.

10/10



JARI-MATTI LATVALA

TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Gave too much credence to an overheating engine on Friday, but that issue was overtaken by retirement-inducing alternator failure later that day. Bounced back to steal eighth place.

6/10



ESAPEKKA LAPPI

TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Slid off the road in a nobby crash on stage seven, forcing him into superally for the weekend. Not ideal on an event where you've been tasked with getting experience of all the stages.

3/10



OTT TANAK

TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Nobody set more fastest times than the Estonian, who took his fifth and final scratch after a tactical approach to the powerstage. Would have been in with a shot at the win had it not been for turbo failure.

8/10



TOM WILLIAMS

FORD FIESTA R2

It's hard to imagine a crew putting more effort into their rally than Tom Williams and Phil Hall. This family effort was on the brink of a maiden WRC class win when a fuse failed close to the finish.

10/10



MOTORSPORT NEWS STAR DRIVER



SEBASTIEN LOEB

Would he have held Ogier off without the puncture? Probably not. But still, the nine-time champion's return was exceptional. Genuinely not sure where he might end up, he found his form and drove like the old days.

MOTORSPORT NEWS WOODEN SPOON



ESAPEKKA LAPPI

The Finn's one instruction for his week in Mexico was to finish all the stages. Experience is everything on this event, so sliding off the road on a nothing 90-degree left in SS7 is not really acceptable.

RESULTS

FIA World Rally Championship, round 3/13, Rally Mexico, March 8-11

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Ford Fiesta WRC	3h53m58.0s
2	Dani Sordo (ESP)/Carlos del Barrio (ESP)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m13.6s
3	Kris Meeke (GBR)/Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen C3 WRC	+1m29.2s
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Anders Jager (NOR)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+1m48.4s
5	Sebastien Loeb (FRA)/Daniel Elena (MON)	Citroen C3 WRC	+2m34.6s
6	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+9m13.0s
7	Pontus Tidemand (SWE)/Jonas Andersson (SWE)	Skoda Fabia R5	+10m34.7s
8	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+15m47.1s
9	Gus Greensmith (GBR)/Craig Parry (GBR)	Ford Fiesta R5	+17m19.3s
10	Pedro Heller (CHI)/Pablo Olmos (ARG)	Ford Fiesta R5	+24m28.1s
11	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)/Janne Ferm (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+31m07.8s
12	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Ford Fiesta WRC	+33m16.3s
14	Ott Tanak (EST)/Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+1h02m52.8s
R	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/Daniel Barritt (GBR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	SS6/crash

CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier	56
2	Thierry Neuville	52
3	Andreas Mikkelsen	35
4	Kris Meeke	32
5	Jari-Matti Latvala	31
6	Ott Tanak	26
7	Esapekka Lappi	23
8	Craig Breen	20
9	Dani Sordo	18
10	Sebastien Loeb	11

MANUFACTURERS

POS	TEAMS	PTS
1	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	84
2	M-Sport Ford WRT	72
3	Citroen Total	71
4	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	67

NEXT RALLY

Champ Seb Ogier gets to perform at home...

TOUR DE CORSE APRIL 5-8



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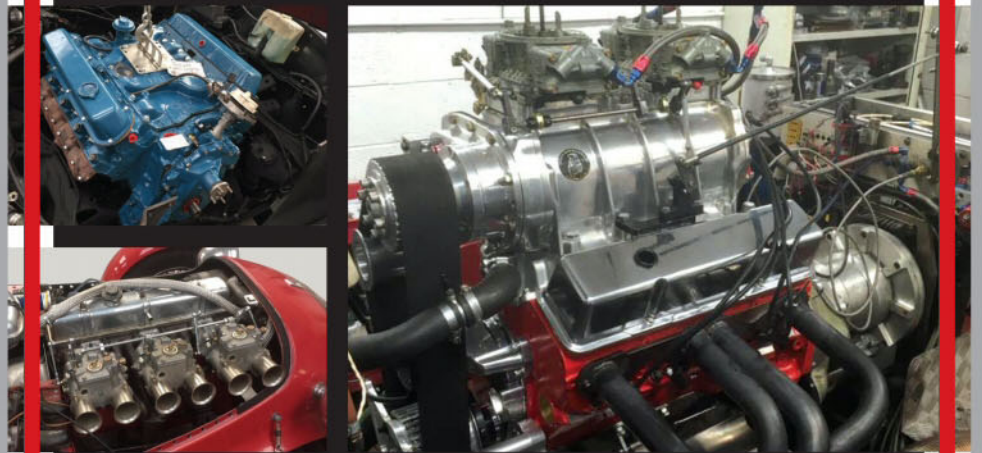


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RACING REPORTS

CREVENTIC 24 HOURS: BY GRAHAM KEILLOH
MARCH 9-11

Photos: Ollie Read

Simpson Ginetta G58 leads away the field


SIMPSON SQUAD IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN IN 12 HOURS

There are no Creventic overall race winners. Positions are given within classes so the Simpson Motorsport Ginetta G58 Prototype was in a race of one technically, not against the GTs.

But try telling Mike Simpson, Steve Tandy and Bob Berridge that as they beamed after a stunning comeback chase of the ROFGO Racing Mercedes GT3 to be first home in the inaugural Silverstone 12 Hours.

It was reflected also in a prank on Berridge in the final stint. "We kept telling Bob he was in second at the end," Simpson grinned. "He got out the car all cheesed off!"

As the only two P2 cars present, the Simpson Ginettas were expected to dominate. And one of them – driven by Andreas Laskaratos, John Corbett and Neale Muston – fell back with a variety of problems, which included damaging the floor off track and later replacing its clutch.

But Simpson, Tandy and Berridge were not set fair. Plenty goes wrong in endurance racing, particularly

when held in England in early March.

The woe started when Tandy had a heavy crash against a Hangar Straight wall in Thursday testing after a tyre blowout. This left him with a swollen knee and the car as a write off.

"The lads had to go back and get a car from the factory," Simpson explained. "It had only just come out of the container from Dubai, the lads stayed up all night, that was the car we ran! Bloody brilliant!"

They led the race's early laps but then rain fell and the Ginetta struggled for tyre temperature. It ended the first part – the race split between two segments on consecutive days – a lap adrift.

In Tandy's hands in the damp-but-drying part two it looked well on the way to recovering, but then more misfortune struck with five hours remaining with another puncture.

"There was a lot of debris everywhere, cars going off, coming back on," said Simpson. "Also the gravel, it's like shale so you imagine that going in the tyre – it's like a sledgehammer."

A long in-lap and resultant change left them three laps down. Did Simpson think they still had a chance?

"No, definitely not!" he said.

"I was sat in the BRDC clubhouse and I got a call from Bob saying 'come back we might need you shortly'. Then literally it was 'get in the car!' I fell over in the garage getting changed and everything; it was all going off!"

Soon they had further delay. "We pitted too early for slicks," Simpson continued, "the tyre was just too hard and the track was just too wet for our car. So we came back for wets. It was a right rollercoaster!"

From then it was flat-out running. And Simpson took the overall lead from the ROFGO Mercedes with just over an hour left.

"It's great to win a race like this," said Simpson. "I know we're the only prototypes in the race, but they're GT3 pro teams, we're semi-Pro and Am. It's tough."

The win yet looked under threat. There were suggestions that Simpson had completed more than the maximum

allowed stint time. But not so.

"I got downgraded to FIA Silver in January, so I could have done longer. It's the perks of getting old," Simpson said. "We had to go to race control with a copy of the driver grading. We knew what we were doing."

It was a day for comebacks, as an hour before losing the overall lead, an incredible stint by Stuart Hall in the ROFGO Mercedes had chased down the leading Forch Racing Porsche 911 GT3 piloted by Patrick Eisemann, wiping out a minute-and-a-half advantage and passing on the inside of Stowe.

This helped make up two laps lost late the previous day when Dan Brown spun at Vale in heavy rain and got his rear wheels stuck in the gravel. They also did almost all of part two with a broken diffuser after Charles Putman's Mercedes had hit them on the first lap of that segment.

In the end, Hall, Brown and Roald Goethe took the GT series win comfortably. "Everyone did their jobs, and I tried to pull my weight as well," said Hall.

WINNERS

7 Race Series	Berridge/Mike Simpson (Simpson Motorsport Ginetta G58)	Mercedes-AMG GT3)
Race 1: Phil Jenkins (Caterham 420R)		
Race 2: Lee Wiggins (Caterham 420R)		
Creventic 12 Hours – Proto Series	Roald Goethe/Stuart Hall/Dan Brown (ROFGO Racing)	
Creventic 12 Hours – GT Series		
Creventic 24 Hours – TCE Series	Ivo Breukers/Rik Breukers/Konstantins Calko (Red Camel-Jordans.nl SEAT LCR TCR V3 DSG)	


Simpson delighted with victory

ROFGO Merc won the GT class

BTCC champion Neal begins his season with Silverstone 24 Hours outing in a Synchro Motorsport Honda Civic

Were you to pick a motorsport series furthest from 24-hour endurance racing then the crash-bang British Touring Car Championship may be top of mind. So what on earth was triple BTCC champion Matt Neal doing taking part in the Creventic 24 Hours at Silverstone?

"With the Synchro guys really," he said. "It is a bit of solidarity as doing all it together with the Honda brand. I haven't done a 24-hour race in a long time, so it's great to come back and do it with the guys."

Neal took part in a Honda Civic in the A3 class, with Alyn James and Dan Wheeler. Yet endurance racing wasn't unfamiliar to Neal – and not just from his four Bathurst

appearances, the most recent a decade ago.

"I've done the Creventic before," Neal confirmed, "a couple of years back. I've done one or two."

He didn't have concerns about adapting either. "It's easier because it's less cut and thrust," Neal said when comparing endurance racing to the BTCC.

"You have to keep your eye on the mirrors a bit, the LMPs and GT3s can

arrive at you a bit quickly and divebomb you. Trying to be kind to the car as well when BTCC is just about speed.

"But I enjoy it, it's something different for me."

And Neal feels this is endurance racing's unique selling point.

"A lot of younger drivers are focused on a career," he added, "and the endurance events aren't

about a career, they're about participation, enjoyment, getting good track time. You get amazing track time. And diversity, you can progress up the grid with the pieces of kit available."

Neal had no pretensions about winning overall.

"The TCR cars are noticeably quicker than us," he admitted. "We're pretty quick down the straights but they've got us in the corners with the wider wheels and tyres."

"It was good," he said of his first taste of the car in qualifying. "I wasn't too sure how hard to push it, so just trying to get some solid lap times in. We're not the quickest in our class, but we should have reliability on our side."

But Neal didn't get his wish. The Civic was hit by engine problems in the race. It needed an engine change at the halfway mark when it was running third of

the A3s, which took 90 minutes. Then Wheeler brought the car in with more engine problems with 90 minutes left, and they were unable to return.

The race was won by the Red Camel-Jordans SEAT LCR TCR, driven by Rik Breukers, his father Ivo and Konstantins Calko. They had to recover when, after four hours, Ivo spun from the lead at Becketts and got stuck in mud, then having been pulled out, spun on recovery.

They dropped two laps behind the new leader, the Team Bleekemolen SEAT Leon driven by Sebastiaan Bleekemolen, Melvin de Groot, Robert Smith and Rene Steenmetz. The LCR trio overhauled the Leon by the six-hour mark and won by two laps.

There was lengthy overnight disruption due to fog, with several code 60 periods and a near five-hour red flag stoppage.

Neal's squad suffered with engine woes



FEATURE

Photos: RallyGallery, Paul Lawrence, Jakob Ebrej

Junior Mini series is hoping to reinvigorate rallying's grassroots. By Jack Benyon



Clive King has been rallying Minis for over 30 years

In a desperate bid to invigorate the grassroots and bring more competitors into rallying, does the sport need to stop looking forwards and instead focus on the past?

That's the idea of the Mini Sport Junior Cup, a championship which has been established to target 17- to 25-year-olds rallying on a budget. And if it follows its big brother, established is what it will soon be.

The big brother is the Mini Sport Cup, which has 34 registered drivers, all in historic and classic Minis, competing on the first round at the AGBO Stages this weekend.

As rally fans spend time searching for the next Peugeot Trophy and other single-make series at the peak of rallying's heyday, did any of them ever have 34 cars? It's an impressive feat.

"It has to be some sort of record, maybe it's a world record!" says Clive King, reigning Cup champion. "It's fabulous.

"My first car was a Mini and I've had one ever since. A lot of the people competing, it seems to be a love of the car that brings them out to compete."

The Mini Sport Cup has clearly established a formula that works. Stringent technical regulations keeps the competition close and the costs down. As the sponsor of the championship, Mini Sport visits each round with a huge raft of spares so that competitors don't have to. Drivers and co-drivers are competitive but encouraging and a good day's rallying is to be had.

"I think the main thing that has been achieved is that the events (see calendar box) are cost effective," adds King.

"They're non-damaging to the cars and the people who look after theirs and keep them in the garage can do that without worrying.

"We also go all over the country and to Belgium. We have one away round each year.

"The competitors are listened to and if we're unhappy with an event, we look at getting it

improved or finding another."

Off the back of the success of the burgeoning Cup – which runs as part of the Historic Rally Car Register's Old Stager Championship – the new junior championship has now been set-up, with the help of Mini Sport and, among others, the driving force that is Dave Thomas. It's easy to explain Thomas's love for the sport with one word: Mull. He lives there.

"It's my mission this year, to target the grassroots," says Thomas. After a short conversation, it's clear the man isn't deterred easily in his goals.

"It's the biggest single-make Tarmac championship around. We've got our heads down and we want to drive this forward.

"We want to encourage people to compete but we also want to get people into the service park to see what it's all about. We want to encourage everyone, navigators, women, not just young lads.

"It's a long haul, I know that. We only have one car in the series at the moment and two people building them. But once we can get three or four cars, we have a championship."

Thomas refers to 17-year-old Jack Hartley, who has built his Mini in the garage with his father to the junior regulations for £10,000.

Hartley's done two events in the car, having previously driven a Nissan Micra in the Junior Formula 1000 Championship for 14- to 17-year-olds. After also giving the Mini a spin in the Junior F1000s, Hartley has a surprising revelation about the 'new' car.

"It handles better than the Micra," he says. "We struggle with the Mini in the Juniors as it's an old engine trying to beat new ones, but the handling is better.

"It will be interesting to see how my times compare against the other Minis as mine's only one-litre."

When asked if, being the only Mini Sport Junior Cup entrant, would he be aiming at the more powerful 'senior' entries, he says: "That's the idea! We're using my car to promote the series and get more Juniors out there."

What the Mini Sport Junior Cup has going for it is a loyal

CALENDAR

HRCR Old Stager and Mini Sport Cup 2018

DATE	TRACK
Mar 17	AGBO Stages
Apr 29	Dixies Historic Challenge
Jun 10	Abingdon CAR-nival Stages
Aug 5	Solway Coast Rally
Aug 31/Sep 1	Tour of Flanders*
Oct 28	Cheviot Stages
Nov 24	Hall Trophy Rally

*Junior Championship will not visit this round

backer like Mini Sport, with Manx Rally champion Dan Harper – now in a Mini John Cooper Works WRC – on the company's books, it's full of competitors who are passionate for the sport.

Mini Sport's Rob Eastwood said: "The bonus of the Mini is there's no electronics to trick with. The idea is to keep the cost down and it's somewhere for the kids to go to get cost-effective rallying on an even playing field.

"The idea is to try and get the younger generation involved. Unless you have a motorsport background, you're not going to get a car for a junior and pay £25,000 to be competitive."

The other thing going for the cup is having someone as dynamic as Thomas, whose passion will go a long way to getting the notion that the cup exists out to the wider rallying community.

"I've had Minis my whole life, I drove around the world a few years ago in a Mini van," adds Thomas. "I've always been around them.

"I also did chase car for Paddy Hopkirk on the Monte Carlo Rally.

"I get so disgusted at parents throwing so much money at these other championships, we've got to turn it around and Mini Sport are trying hard to do something about it."

It's difficult attracting entries to any rally championship in the current climate, and there's a misconception that there aren't many good single-make championships out there. That's not true. The problem is there's too many and entries are spread across them rather than focused in one area.

The Mini Sport Junior Cup is a good idea, but will need a few entries to spawn the competition. Can it be done? Thomas and Mini Sport will work hard to do so, and have come up with a sensible, cost-effective formula. ■

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MINI SPORT CLASSES

CLASS	ELIGIBLE CARS
MC1	All Minis up to 1000cc
MC2	All Minis 1001 to 1300cc
MC3	All Minis over 1301cc including all cars with eight-port cylinder head
MC4	Later or classic Minis*
Junior	998cc Minis conforming to category 1, 2 and 3 historic stage rally vehicle regulations and complying with the technical regulations for the Mini Sport Junior Cup

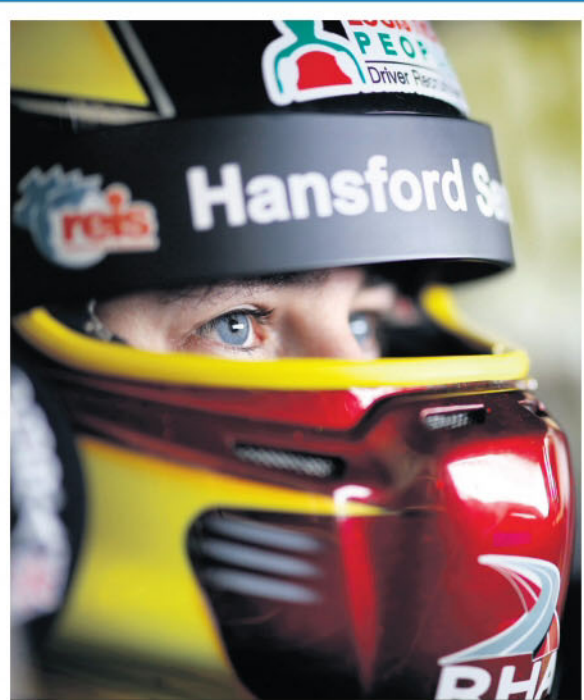
*Do not fully comply with the Historic classes but have A series engines and comply with all other MSA 2018 Year book requirements for special stage rallying. Vehicles in this class are subject to approval by the championship eligibility scrutineer.



Mini Sport Cup has a big entry

INTERVIEW

Photos: Matt Sayle Photography, Jakob Ebrey



Tom Ingram has his sights on more success in 2018



Ingram has run at Portimao

INGRAM LEADS THE NEXT WAVE

touring car Independents Trophy winner is ready to take another step to the overall title . By **Matt James**

There was a feeling of change within the British Touring Car Championship last season. Ash Sutton claimed his maiden title in the Team BMR Subaru at the age of 23, and Tom Ingram collected the Independents Trophy at just 24 years old. The older generation had been firmly put in their place.

Ingram's success highlighted his upward momentum in the BTCC. After he'd stepped into the Speedworks Toyota Avensis for the first time in 2014, there were podiums in season two, wins in season three and the title last term. Ingram has been gradually building up his CV.

While the Independents Trophy had been the main aim when Ingram set out his goals for 2017, there was a bitter-sweet aftertaste. Ingram had been in the thick of the title hunt over the beginning of the season. After three meetings, he had two wins and was sitting comfortably at the top of the points pile before a truly woeful run of incidents and damage at Oulton Park and Croft left him with only nine points from six races.

In a series which demands a constant churn of big points across each of the 30 races, it torpedoed a glimpse of outright glory.

FACTFILE

Tom Ingram
From: High Wycombe
Age: 24

BTCC track record
Starts: 120
Wins: 6
Podiums: 17
Poles: 2
Fastest laps: 2
Points: 827
Races led: 12
Laps led: 147



Winner at Knockhill in 2017

Ingram was the highest scorer in 2017 if you discount those two events.

"Having started the season so strongly, it was like there was something taken away from me," says Ingram. "You can't take away anything from what we managed to achieve in terms of winning the Independents Trophy. But we came flying out of the blocks.

"It was frustrating, because the non-scores that we had were mostly out of our control. They were difficult weekends and you simply can't afford to have those kinds of things happen if you are going for a title."

Despite that frustration, Ingram regrouped and kept the pressure up

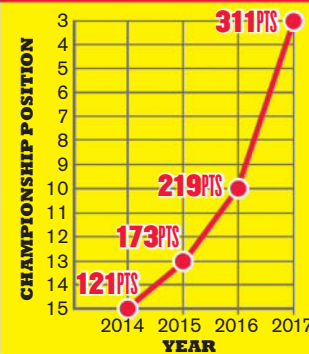
to grab third place in the points standings at the final showdown. That was a sign of what might have been.

"Even to maintain that level is going to be hard this year," says Ingram. "Look at Eurotech Racing with Jack Goff in the Honda Civic Type R, Sam Tordoff and Tom Chilton in the Ford Focus RSs at Motorbase, the threats are everywhere. To retain the Independents is hard enough, but we have got to be looking higher than that. We have got to set our sights on the overall title. It is the only way we can go."

Preparations have already begun for the 2018 season. The Toyota has been thoroughly refined since the engines were switched off at Brands Hatch, and Ingram has recently returned from several days running at Portimao in Portugal.

"Aesthetically, there is nothing different with the car this year: all the tweaks have taken place under the skin," says Ingram. "We knew the parts of the car that worked well, and we knew there were areas where we could improve. We have looked at each of those, and done some things inside the car – we have taken weight

INGRAM'S BTCC RISE



First BTCC season was in 2014

out that is further up [in the car] than it needs to be and lowered it."

Ingram says the reworked car has already shown its worth in the running in Portugal, which was affected by changeable weather. "We went to Portimao instead of joining a number of the other BTCC teams at Parcmotor Castelloli near Barcelona because it is a circuit I know well and we have used it before – I have done more laps there than I have done on some UK circuits," says Ingram. "We could get a decent back to back, and we have certainly taken some steps forward – but then again, so will everyone else."

While there have been alterations under the bonnet, there are some backroom changes too. Experienced engineer Geoff Kingston has left the team and Speedworks boss Christian Dick has promoted from within. Spencer Aldridge has been with the team since he was a teenager and worked alongside Kingston last season.

"His passion and knowledge is stunning," says Ingram. "And he is one of the three full time members of staff at Speedworks. That means he is a constant presence, rather than someone who only comes in at weekends.

"He has brought a fresh enthusiasm to the whole thing, and there is no doubting his work ethic. It is going to be a strong partnership – I am probably going to have to up my game," jokes the driver.

The fresh blood – including the likes of Aldridge too – will continue to put the older generation in the shade, and Ingram thinks this is a trend that is going to carry on this year.

"Of course you are just out there to get on with your job," says Ingram. "You want to win, but last year was the first year for a long time where none of the older guys lifted the major silverware and you can certainly see that trend continuing. As well as myself and Sutton, there are guys like Josh Cook and Goff out there too who are going to be strong this season.

"That is great for us. We want to keep winning and kick out all the old guys. There is a real breath of fresh wave coming through the BTCC now, and we want that to carry on into 2018."

Given the progress that he has made so far and the effort that has already been made towards 2018, there is every sign that Ingram will continue to be at the forefront of the BTCC grid. ■



The Toyota has been updated



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SPORTING SCENE

Photos: Sarah Watson, Hal Ridge



Solberg Hansen signs up for Junior RX attack

Marius Solberg Hansen will be the second Norwegian driver in as many seasons to compete in the MSA Junior Rallycross Championship this year, which gets underway at Silverstone.

Having competed in junior crosskart buggies in Scandinavia, 14-year-old Solberg Hansen will drive a Peter Gwynne Motorsport-prepared Suzuki Swift in the nine-round series this year.

He said: "The Swift is a lot of fun. I wasn't sure about the steering wheel being on the right-hand side of the car, but it was OK. I just have to re-learn my driving style from the crosskart because they are rear-wheel drive."

Ole Henry Steinsholt finished second in Junior RX last season and Solberg Hansen is targeting an overall podium by the end of the campaign.

He said: "I will just take one race at a time and learn the tracks."



Set Twingo will run at Silverstone

Thorne warms up in title-winning Twingo

Former British Super1600 rallycross champion Jack Thorne will debut an ex-European Championship-winning Renault Twingo in the opening British Rallycross round.

It will be a shakedown before a campaign in ERX, which gets underway in Barcelona next month. Thorne won the British RX Super1600 crown in 2014, and tested with Finnish team Set Promotion, run by Jussi Pinomaki, in Italy at the end of 2015.

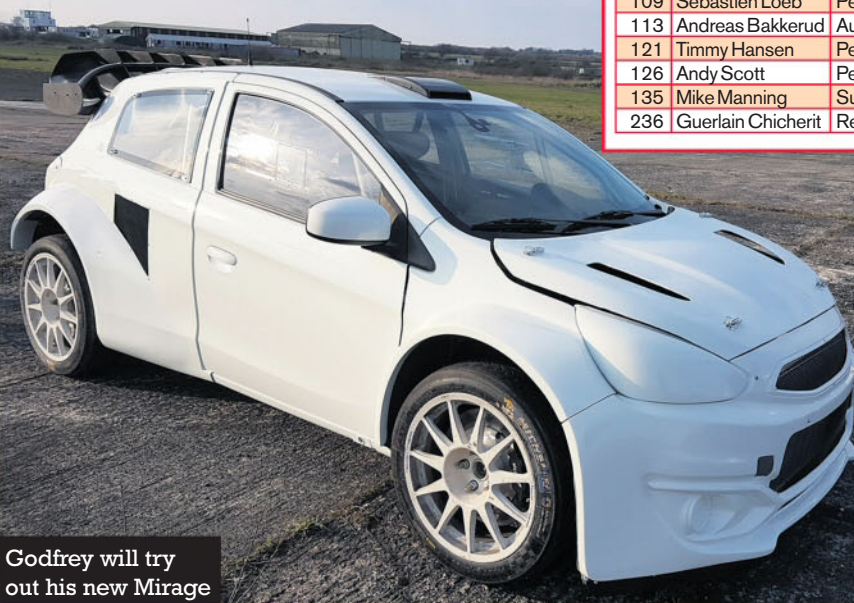
The car he will race this year won the Euro RX Super1600 title in the hands of Latvian Janis Baumanis in 2015.

"I'm really looking forward to this season, the Set cars are very good and if you want to go into Europe, you need proper machinery," Thorne said.

"Silverstone is more of a test weekend for us but I want to win."

GODFREY SWAPS TO MIRAGE FOR BRX OPENER

Five-time champ to try out Japanese machine



Godfrey will try out his new Mirage

ENTRIES

British Rallycross Championship 2018

NO.	DRIVER	CAR
2	Ollie O'Donovan	Ford Fiesta
3	Andy Grant	Ford Focus
4	Steve Hill	Mitsubishi Lancer E10
10	Kevin Procter	Ford Fiesta
21	Oliver Bennett	Ford Fiesta
34	Mark Higgins	Peugeot 208 RX
44	Mark Watson	Citroen Xsara T16
51	Julian Godfrey	Mitsubishi Mirage
95	Roger Thomas	Ford Focus
109	Sebastien Loeb	Peugeot 208
113	Andreas Bakkerud	Audi S1
121	Timmy Hansen	Peugeot 208
126	Andy Scott	Peugeot 208 RX
135	Mike Manning	Subaru Imperza
236	Guerlain Chicherit	Renault Clio RS RX

British Supernational rallycross race-winner Paige Bellerby will switch from her regular Lotus Exige to a loaned Vauxhall VX220 for the opening round of British RX this weekend at Silverstone, owned by her uncle Kevin Procter. The engine for the Lotus is not ready in time for the curtain-raiser, but Bellerby will revert back to her Exige for round two at Lydden Hill in a fortnight's time.



New Audi has been reworked



Ekstrom's new Audi Rallycross challenger tests

Mattias Ekstrom's works-backed EKS Audi Sport World Rallycross team revealed its 2018 challenger in the first official World RX pre-season test at Loheac last week.

The new Audi S1 features new rear aerodynamics, including the implementation of ducting in the roof and rear windows to feed air to the rear-mounted radiator. The arrangement moves away from the more traditional rear-quarter-panel ducting.

PSRX Volkswagen Sweden also ran its

2018-specification Polo at the test, while re-signed brothers Timmy and Kevin Hansen drove Peugeot Sport's new 208 WRX, but running was ended early by a crash for Kevin Hansen late on the second day.

Team STARD ran its Ford Fiesta Supercar for regular driver Janis Baumanis and former F1 tester Ma Qing Hua, while the G-Fors squad ran the Renault Clio that Guerlain Chicherit will race at Silverstone's British RX round this weekend.

Olsbergs returns to World RX with Fiestas

The Olsbergs MSE team will return to the World Rallycross Championship this season with a pair of new Ford Fiesta Supercars, driven by 2014 European Rallycross champion Robin Larsson and World RX race winner Kevin Eriksson.

Larsson also won the Argentine round of the World RX series in 2015, driving a privately-run Audi A1. He joined OMSE to compete in the recent Rally X on Ice series for Supercar Lites cars and won the third round in Norway.

Eriksson returns to his father Andreas' squad having driven for MJP Racing Team Austria in World RX last year.

The OMSE news was followed by confirmation that reigning World RX champion Johan

Kristoffersson will remain with Petter Solberg's PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team in 2018 for the defence of his crown.

The FIA released the full 15-car list of permanent World RX drivers last Friday. Ten additional round-by-round entries will be accepted in the World RX category at each event.

OMSE's new Fiesta, which ran at the official World RX test in Loheac last week, features a front-mounted radiator – similar to Volkswagen Motorsport's title-winning Polo – and inboard suspension, pioneered in a rallycross Supercar by OMSE with its GRC Honda Civic.

Eriksson will also race an RX150 buggy at the British RX event at Silverstone.

BRITISH RALLYCROSS PREVIEW

By Hal Ridge

Five-time British Rallycross champion Julian Godfrey will race a Spencer Sport-run Mitsubishi Mirage RX Supercar in the opening round of the British Championship this weekend at Silverstone.

The event will mark the first time that Godfrey has raced in the Supercar category in anything other than his multiple title-winning Ford Fiesta.

Godfrey's Julian Godfrey Engineering firm supplies the engine in the Swedish-built, Welsh-run Mirage. Following a successful 25-lap pre-season test at Pembrey last week, he will now race the car in the season opener on Silverstone's new rallycross circuit in a bid to showcase the car's potential.

The Mirage RX, built by MPart AB in Sweden, made its maiden appearance at round three of British RX last year and finished fourth in the hands of James Grint.

"We had a very good test last week at Pembrey, although the wet weather wasn't exactly ideal," said Godfrey. "The Mirage RX has a lot of power and it handles very well. We used the test to experiment with dampers, springs and anti-roll bar settings. We found some more traction by making the car a bit softer, I prefer my car's set-up to be quite soft. Even if it's dry at Silverstone this weekend, I think the set-up we have will work well."

It is not yet decided if Godfrey will switch back to his Fiesta for the second round at Lydden Hill, or remain with the Mirage as he bids for a record sixth British title.

"We want to showcase how competitive the Mirage is," he said. "There are some big names entered for Silverstone. The main aim is to try and finish as the top British driver, which is something I believe we can achieve."

Fifteen Supercars will line up for the British RX season-opener. Godfrey will be joined by title contenders Ollie O'Donovan (Ford Focus), Kevin Procter (Ford Fiesta), Oliver Bennett (Ford Fiesta), Andy Scott (Peugeot 208) and rallycross newcomer Mark Higgins (Peugeot 208).

World Rallycross Championship stars Sebastien Loeb and Timmy Hansen will race a brace of Peugeot Sport 208s. New EKS signing Andreas Bakkerud will return to the series to race an Audi S1, while Guerlain Chicherit will race a G-Fors Renault Clio. The international contingent is using the event to prepare for the British round of World RX at Silverstone on May 26/27.

ENTRIES

World RallyX Championship 2018

DRIVERS	TEAM-CAR
Mattias Ekstrom (SWE)	EKS Audi Sport Audi S1
Andreas Bakkerud (NOR)	EKS Audi Sport Audi S1
Guerlain Chicherit (FRA)	GC Competition Renault Megane
Jerome Grosset-Janin (FRA)	GC Competition Renault Megane
Niclas Gronholm (FIN)	GRX Taneco Team Hyundai i20
Timur Timerzyanov (RUS)	GRX Taneco Team Hyundai i20
Kevin Eriksson (SWE)	OlsbergsMSE Ford Fiesta
Robin Larsson (SWE)	OlsbergsMSE Ford Fiesta
Petter Solberg (NOR)	PSRX Volkswagen Sweden Volkswagen Polo R
Johan Kristoffersson (SWE)	PSRX Volkswagen Sweden Volkswagen Polo R
Sebastien Loeb (FRA)	Team Peugeot Total Peugeot 208
Timmy Hansen (SWE)	Team Peugeot Total Peugeot 208

Permanent individual competitors

Gregoire Demoustier (BEL)	Sebastien Loeb Racing Peugeot 208
Kevin Hansen (SWE)	Team Peugeot Total Peugeot 208
Janis Baumanis (LVA)	Team STARD Ford Fiesta

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MN SAYS...

How long until Loeb wins a rally again?

Citroen's part-time recruit is right back in the groove - and knocking on the door

It didn't take very long for Sebastien Loeb to answer the dozens of questions that his return to the World Rally Championship had thrown up. When he took the lead on day two, it looked like the fairy tale might come true.

Sadly he was thwarted by a puncture but speak to anyone in the service park: the mojo was back. The Frenchman was back in his natural habitat and he was clearly loving it. Now he has blown away the cobwebs, we have two (possibly three) more chances to see him in action this year and that has to be a delight for all fans of the WRC.

What's more, you can get a chance to see the great man at work at Silverstone this weekend when he kicks off his rallycross campaign with a run in the British Rallycross Championship as a shakedown ahead of the world competition. Take the chance to go and watch him either this weekend or when he returns on May 25/27. We are not overstating it when we say it is a chance to see a living legend.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



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!



Ric Wood's Zakspeed Ford Capri gets in test miles at Donington Park. By Rich Cranston



John Henderson's Ginetta shot from Croft



Camel Heights Trial, by Duncan Stephens



A classic Ford Escort Mk1 by Neil Kirby



Neil Kirby snapped this gathering of BMWs at a recent test session at Donington



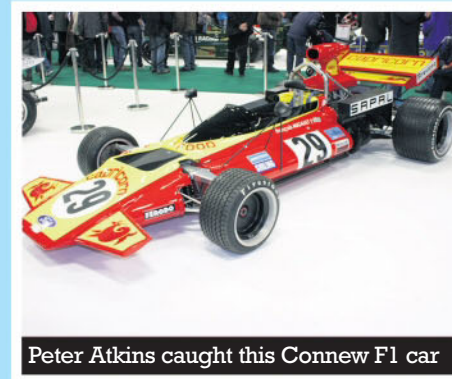
Rich Cranston's shot of Billy Monger



Ben Lawrence enjoyed Race Retro...



...and snapped this Carlos Sainz car too



Peter Atkins caught this Connew F1 car

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TV GUIDE



Sebastian Loeb returned to the World Rally Championship in Mexico and he made a splash

Take an in-depth look at the world-famous LAT photographic agency this week in documentary **LAT Images, An Enduring Legacy** (Thursday, 1430-1500hrs). Created in 1950 by Michael Tee, it's home to some of the

most renowned and popular images from motorsport history. On Friday, the latest instalment of **The Great History of the 24 Hours of Le Mans** comes from 1979 (2200-2230hrs), where Porsche would put in a

dominant performance as actor Paul Newman made his one and only appearance in the endurance race. Nine-time World Rally champion Sebastian Loeb made his return to the championship in

Mexico with Citroën. Watch how he took the fight to his fellow Frenchman Sebastien Ogier, and managed to turn a few heads in the process. Tune in on Saturday, 0830-0930hrs for all the best bits from Rally Mexico.



Formula E will visit Uruguay

LIVE TV

Formula E: Uruguay
 ■ Race: Saturday, 1830-2010hrs, Channel 5
 1900-2015hrs, Eurosport 1

NASCAR: Fontana
 ■ Race: Sunday, 1900-2330hrs, Premier Sports

LISTINGS

RACING

SATURDAY

■ Oulton Park, Cheshire

BARC meeting: Caterham Graduates, Legends, MGOC, CNC Heads Sports/Saloons

Starts racing from 1130hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs)

Admission adult £16, under 13 free **Web** msv.com

Contact 0843 453 9000

■ Snetterton, Norfolk

MSVR meeting: FF1600, Lotus Elise/Lotus Cup, Allcomers, Karts, Lotus Sprint

Starts racing from 1120hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs)

Admission adult £16, under 13 free **Web** msv.com

Contact 0843 453 9000

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

■ Goodwood, Sussex

76th members' meeting: Classic and historic races

Starts Saturday racing from 1620hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday racing from 0900hrs

Admission by advance ticket only **Web** Goodwood.co.uk

Contact 01243 755055

■ Donington Park, Leics

750MC meeting: Club Enduro, Toyota MR2, RGB Sports 1000, Roadsports, Bikesports, Classic Stock Hatch, Hot Hatch, MX-5 Cup, Bernie's V8s/Sports Racing and GT

Starts Saturday, racing from 1220hrs (qualifying from 0905hrs) Sunday, racing from 0930hrs (qualifying from 0905hrs)

Admission adult £16, under 13 free **Web** msv.com

Contact 0843 453 9000



Robert Barrable in action

RALLY

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

■ Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Quality Hotel Clonakilty West Cork Rally

Starts 1100hrs **Admission** free

Web corkmotorclub.com

■ Weston Park, Shropshire

Jasper's Bakeries Agbo Stages

Starts 0812hrs **Admission** TBC

Web owenmotoringclub.co.uk

SUNDAY

■ Ty Croes Circuit, Anglesey

Legend Fires Lee Holland Memorial Stages

Starts 0900hrs **Admission** £10

Web pendledistrictmc.co.uk

SPORTING SCENE

SATURDAY

■ Silverstone, Northants

British Rallycross

Starts 0930hrs **Admission** adult £15, under 15 free

Web rallycrossbrx.com

SUNDAY

■ Hednesford, Staffs

National Hot Rods

Starts 1330hrs **Admission** adults £16, concessions £13, children £7

Web nationalhotrod.com

Listings correct at time of press

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT



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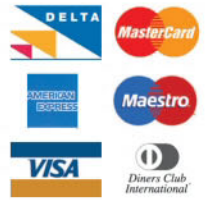
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