THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

FEBRUARY 22 2012 ■ EVERY WEDNESDAY £2.80

BRC'S FRESH LOOK

HUGE SEASON PREVIEW P24

SCHUEY'S NEW RACER

GERMAN HAS FIRST RUN IN 2012 MERC

P5

Schumacher drove W03 at Barcelona

F1

BTCC champion says he can beat Plato again after test in revamped Civic

NEAL HAILS 'AMAZING' NEW HONDA

By Matt James

BTCC champ Matt Neal thinks his new Honda Civic is a winner.

The Honda Racing Team driver tested his new mount for the first time last week and said: "I know it will be quick straight out of the box."

Car revealed, p2-3

Neal will drive all-new Civic in 2012

BTCC

BRIT STARS IN LATVIAN ICE RACE – IN A LADA! P30

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Caterham new boy Vitaly Petrov on F1 team switch

Mat Jackson says team familiarity can be the key

Finnish ace gets an Citroën DS3 R3 for BRC title bid

MN finds out everything about the two-wheel future

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Champion buoyed after first test with

NEAL: "I WILL BE QUICK OUT OF THE BOX"

By Matt James

British touring car champion Matt Neal believes that his new Honda Civic BTCC challenger will win this season's title after his first run in the car.

Honda Racing Team ace Neal drove the two-litre turbocharged car at the Motor Industry Research Association's test track in Leicestershire last week and said that the reworked car, which is built to the Next Generation Touring Car regulations, can be a winner.

Neal will race the Team Dynamics built and run car alongside team-mate Gordon Shedden. "This car feels amazing already," said Neal. "It is so planted to the road and it is clear that it has masses of grip. That is going to give me confidence to push in the races."

Neal said that the early start to the test work will help the Japanese manufacturer steal a march on the others over the opening part of the season: "We would have gone to Spain to test, but the weather here has been mild so we are going to try and get as many days in the UK as possible. We want to be more than ready when the season begins."

The opening round of the 2012 Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship will take place at Brands Hatch on March 31/April 1.

Gordon Shedden (left) and Matt Neal will battle for the 2012 series

Champ's aero work

Neal said that the day's running at MIRA was able to give Team Dynamics a good baseline for the model that will be used in 2012.

The Honda has been reworked since the victorious campaign in 2011. The Japanese firm has introduced a new-shape road-going Civic and the Honda Racing Team has taken the chance to build a brand new Next Generation Touring Car as a result.

The new NGTC rules, which will continue to be phased in over the course of 2012, require teams to use a raft of controlled parts in an effort to keep a lid on costs within the UK's blue riband tin-top championship.

The cars will feature a mandated gearbox, brakes, clutch, electronics and subframes among other standardised parts.

Neal explained: "We did some runs on the intermediate layout at MIRA and that is a faster track where you can really learn about the straight-line speed and the aerodynamics of the car. It felt pretty good out of the box even though some of the parts on the car are still development ones until we get the final bits.

THE CIVIC IN THE BTCC

2002: The Honda Racing team, which is run by Mike Earle's Arena International operation, builds two top flight Type Rs for Andy Priaulx and Alan Morrison. Priaulx takes the hatchback's first win at Knockhill (below) and is fifth in the points while Morrison scores a victory in the final round of the season and is ninth. **Wins:** 2

2003: Morrison is joined by Matt Neal and Tom Chilton in the works team. Neal is third in the points with six wins. Morrison is fifth while Chilton is ninth. **Wins:** 6

2004: Honda withdraws as a factory team. Arena continues to field a car for Chilton. Team Dynamics builds up two versions for Neal and Dan Eaves. Neal is fifth in the points, Eaves eighth and Chilton ninth. **Wins:** 4

2005: As Dynamics swaps to running the Integra, only Chilton's Arena car remains. Four wins for Chilton help him to fifth in the standings. **Wins:** 4

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HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, LAT, Honda Racing

new-spec touring car

FIRST PICTURES

NGTC Civic is a complete rework from last year's car

WINNERS LIST

All-time BTCC manufacturers wins

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Ford	241
2	Vauxhall	130
3	**Honda**	**121**
4	Chevrolet	110
5	BMW	66
6	Jaguar	51
7	Seat	44
8	Renault	38
9	Rover	33
10	Nissan	25

Wind tunnel tests have helped to refine new Civic

Neal gave his new machine a shakedown at MIRA

BTCC WHO GOES WHERE

The likely line-up for 2012

DRIVER	TEAM-CAR
Jason Plato	Triple Eight Race Engineering MG6
Andy Neate	Triple Eight Race Engineering MG6
Andrew Jordan	Pirtek Racing Honda Civic
Jeff Smith	Pirtek Racing Honda Civic
Matt Neal	Honda Racing Team Civic
Gordon Shedden	Honda Racing Team Civic
Mat Jackson	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
Aron Smith	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
Liam Griffin	Motorbase Performance Ford Focus
Rob Collard	WSR BMW 320si
Nick Foster	WSR BMW 320si
Tom Onslow-Cole	WSR BMW 320si
TBA	Special Tuning Racing Seat Leon
TBA	Special Tuning Racing Seat Leon
Lea Wood	Central Group Racing Vauxhall Vectra
Dave Newsham	ES Racing Vauxhall Vectra
Chris James	ES Racing Vauxhall Vectra
TBA	Techspeed Chevrolet Cruze
TBA	Techspeed Chevrolet Cruze
TBA	GSR BMW 320si
Tony Gilham	TBA Honda Civic
Frank Wrathall	Dynojet Toyota Avensis
Tony Hughes	Speedworks Toyota Avensis
Adam Morgan	Speedworks Toyota Avensis
Ollie Jackson	AmD Tuning VW Golf
Rob Austin	Rob Austin Racing Audi A4
TBA	Rob Austin Racing Audi A4
John Thorne	Thorney Motorsport Vauxhall Insignia
Dan Welch	Welch Motorsport Proton Gen-2

Plato's car will be a Triple Eight MG6

"The power of the engine was good, and I was so impressed with the way the car generated grip. There are some small niggling problems that you get from any new car, but none of them are related to the bits that Team Dynamics has built and they didn't stop us from completing a full day of running.

"We know how to build title-winning cars because we did it with the S2000 Civic and before that with the Honda Integra. I expect this car to be able to do the same."

Quick out of the box

The Honda Racing Team started work on its 2012 machine back in November last year and that means it has a much bigger lead in time to the 2012 season than any of its rivals.

The new factory MG programme was only revealed at the end of January, although Triple Eight Race Engineering has been working on the two MG6 challengers since just before Christmas. Other teams will be starting with a combination of new cars or older S2000 cars with new-specification engines.

Neal said: "By starting our build programme with the new car very early, it gives us a number of positives. It means that we have been through all the issues with building up a new car, and there were a few, and it also means that we will be able to get plenty of miles on it before the first rounds of the season."

The turbo boost levels of the NGTC cars will be increased in 2012 to encourage the competitiveness of the machines. The cars also use bigger wheels and tyres, and Neal said that the initial running would be used to get on top of the new regulations.

"We have worked hard on the engine mapping and we are playing with the boost levels to see how that affects the handling of the car," said Neal. "We want to improve the engine mapping to give us a better power delivery with more boost while working on the durability of the engine.

"The bigger tyres also mean that we have to think about tyre wear and the weight of the car, so there is plenty to learn that you are only able to do by putting miles on the car. That means we are going to get a head start on the others by actually being out there on the circuit. I am optimistic that the groundwork that we have already been able to do means that we will have a title-winning car on our hands."

2006: James Kaye and Mark Proctor represent the model in smaller teams, and Kaye scores a remarkable podium finish at Oulton Park. **Wins:** 0

2007: Team Dynamics launches the new-shape Civic (above) for Gordon Shedden and Neal to drive. Shedden finishes third while Neal is fourth in an impressive debut season. **Wins:** 5

2008: With Neal's switch to Vauxhall, Chilton and Shedden lead the way for Honda. Shedden takes two triumphs but is only seventh while Chilton is ninth overall. **Wins:** 3

2009: Dynamics swaps between Shedden, Johnny Herbert and James Thompson for its lead Civic and Thompson takes three wins. Honda supports the team. **Wins:** 3

2010: The Honda Racing Team, as it is rechristened, takes second and third in the points as Neal is runner up. **Wins:** 10

2011: Neal wins his third title with seven wins ahead of Shedden, (below) who takes six wins over the 30 races in the car, which is fitted with the new-spec two-litre turbocharged engine. **Wins:** 13

2012: Honda is the first manufacturer to fully commit to new-look Next Generation Touring Car rules.

MAT JACKSON TO SPEARHEAD MOTORBASE ATTACK ON PAGE 6

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND UP

Tost: wow me
Toro Rosso head Franz Tost insists that he will be patient with F1 rookies Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne, and has stated that he expects both to have a two-year stint with the team before thinking about switching to Red Bull. Tost said last week: "I doubt either will go into RBR in 2013 as the standard there is very high and it's hard to attain the wow factor they are searching for in just one season."

Pirelli compounded
Pirelli has revealed the compounds it will run for the opening three grands prix this season. The Italian firm will supply teams with the soft and medium tyres for Australia, the medium and hard for the Malaysian GP at Sepang. It will return to the soft and medium set-up for the Chinese GP.

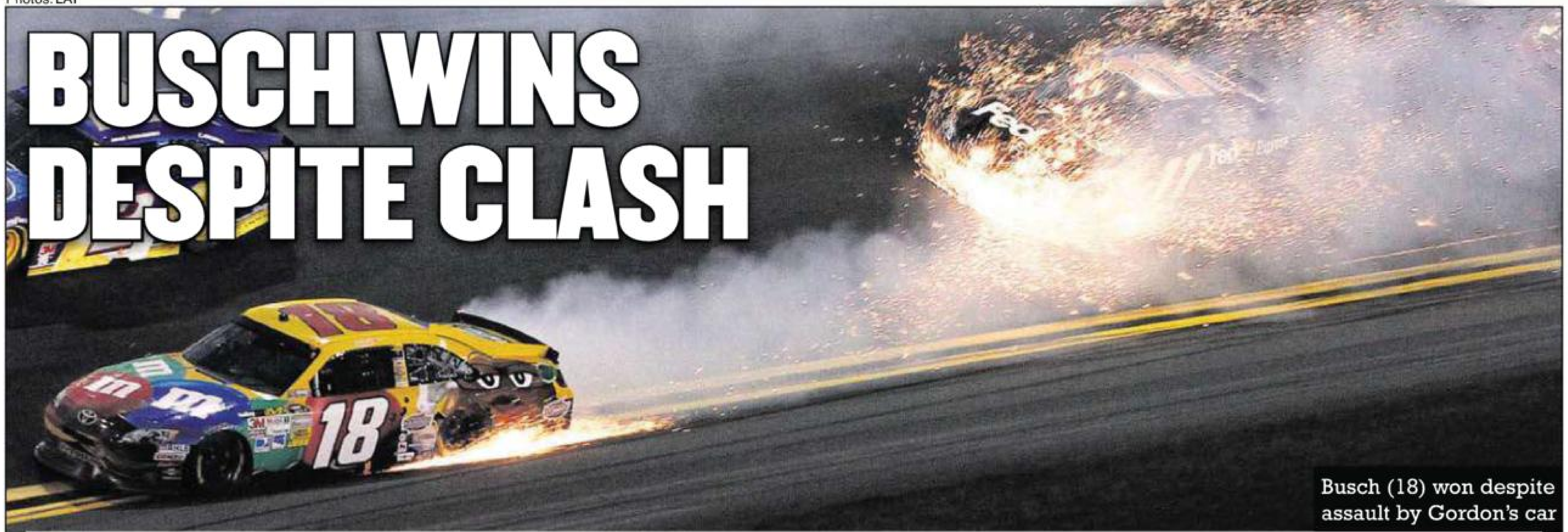
HRT skips test
HRT has opted to skip this week's official test session in Barcelona to ensure that its new car makes the grid this year. HRT's new chassis has been delayed by failure to meet all of the FIA's crash test criteria, which must be satisfied before the car can run. Therefore the team will miss all four days this week and hopes to debut the car in time for the final test early next month.

Bottas tested
Valtteri Bottas has been handed his first chance to impress in the new Williams-Renault FW34 during the next test at Barcelona. GP3 graduate Bottas will drive the new machine during the second day of testing today (Wednesday). Bruno Senna was due to drive on the opening day yesterday. Pastor Maldonado will take over for the final two days.

Moss pays tribute
Sir Stirling Moss has handed Sebastian Vettel a lofty compliment, by saying that the young German reminds him of the great Juan Manuel Fangio. "Vettel is outstanding, but then he has got the best car, which is fair enough because the best driver gets the best car," Moss told *Reuters*. "Fangio went around and took what [seats] he wanted and one took whatever was left." Moss and Fangio were team-mates at Mercedes in 1955.

Photos: LAT

BUSCH WINS DESPITE CLASH


Busch (18) won despite assault by Gordon's car

Kyle Busch won a tempestuous NASCAR Budweiser Shootout race at Daytona last weekend, despite being involved in this high-speed accident with rival Jeff Gordon.

Busch was in second place at the start of the penultimate lap when Gordon tagged him from behind. The contact forced Busch's car into a slide, which showered sparks behind him. An unsighted Gordon then drifted high before colliding with Kurt Busch and Jimmie Johnson, which pitched Gordon's car against the barrier and then into a series of rolls.

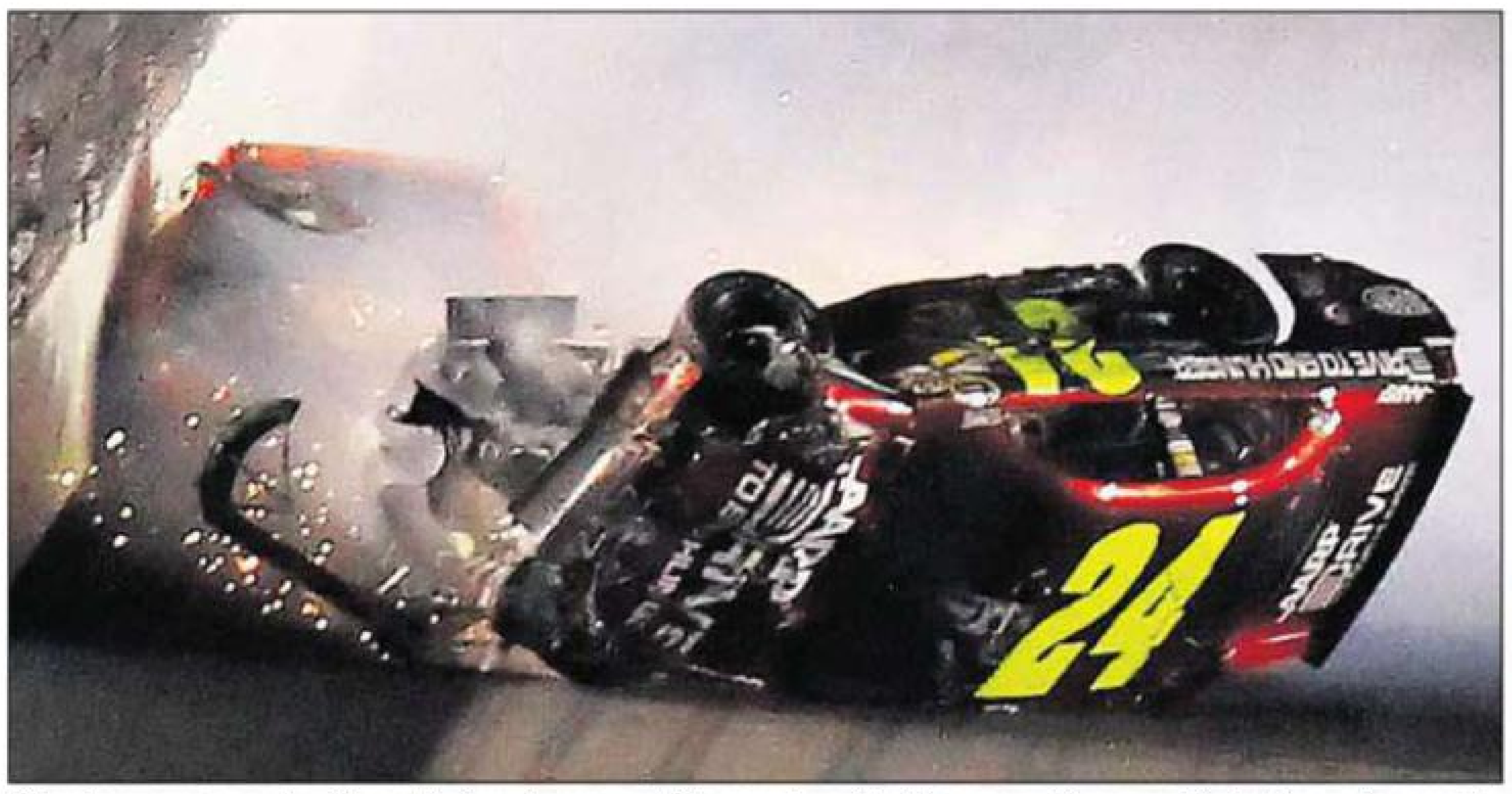
Gordon was uninjured in the crash, bar a cut to his finger as he attempted to climb out of the upsidedown machine.

"You've got the adrenaline from the race, the adrenaline from the wreck and I remember sliding on my door and thinking 'Man how am I going to get out if it stops like this?" said Gordon. "Then it started to flip and I didn't care about that anymore.

"It's a testament to the safety of these cars. I wish I had listened to the rescue crews telling me to wait until they turned the car over. When you're upside down and see steam and fluids and I knew that would take a few minutes longer."

At the restart Kyle Busch passed Tony Stewart at the final turn to win by just 0.013s.

●Carl Edwards secured pole position for the Daytona 500 in the following qualifying session.


Gordon emerged without injury bar a cut finger despite his car rolling multiple times in crash

PETROV: I CAN HELP CATERHAM EVOLVE

Russian replaces Trulli at the former Team Lotus squad and is bullish over its chances

By Rob Ladbrook

Renault outcast Vitaly Petrov believes that he can help Caterham move up the grid this year after landing a race seat with the team.

The Russian was unveiled at the squad formerly known as Team Lotus last week. The 27-year-old's appointment means that veteran Jarno Trulli has been ousted from the squad following months of speculation surrounding his racing future. Petrov joins Finn Heikki Kovalainen.

"This is a very exciting day because I am joining a team that made its F1 debut in the same year that I did," said Petrov. "Caterham has grown from being one of the new teams to being capable of fighting for points and the passion that [team boss] Tony Fernandes has for moving forwards is infectious."

Petrov will get his first taste of the team's new CT01 machine in the second pre-season test at Barcelona this week. He added: "From what I've seen our new car is another good step forward from 2011 and now I cannot wait to see how it feels when we get to Barcelona.

"I would also like to take this chance to thank all my fans and partners for their support and their patience."

Trulli's absence means that this season will be the first since 1970 that there hasn't been an Italian driver on the grid.

Petrov is in with Caterham for third year of F1 racing

Ferrari's Stefano Domenicali said: "Jarno Trulli only ever had a few chances with a car that could show his talents. It's sad to not see any Italian drivers on the grid but we have two in our academy at Ferrari.

"Both Raffaele Marciello and Brandon Maisano will be given chances to progress."

INSIGHT INTO FIESTA JUNIORS >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 20

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"The past four years have been a whirlwind"
Matt Bell, GT racing's rising star, P23

Photos: Mercedes and LAT

NEW MERC HITS TRACK

Schumacher has tested in Spain

Mercedes has taken the wraps off the car it hopes can propel Michael Schumacher back to the top step of the F1 podium.

The W03 was officially launched in Barcelona yesterday (Tuesday), but the German firm had already conducted a day's running at the Spanish track on Sunday (February 19). It was able to run the new car as it had only used up three of the permitted four days running at the previous F1 official test at Jerez, where Schumacher and team-mate Nico Rosberg were using the 2011 car.

The Brackley-built machine also lapped Silverstone's South circuit last week in the hands of Schumacher for some filming work before it was taken to Barcelona. Reports say that Rosberg and Schumacher were able to undertake 200 trouble free miles in Spain.

Mercedes was due to take part in the second four-day F1 group test, which was scheduled to kick off at Barcelona yesterday (Tuesday).

Mercedes sporting boss Norbert Haug said that lessons that the firm had learnt over its last two seasons in F1 would materialise on the W03.

"I wouldn't say that the car is a new start," said Haug.

"We had three podium finishes in the first season but last year we did not head in the right direction. We had some highs, but over the course of the year it wasn't good enough. We need to learn, we need to develop our team and I am sure we can do that."

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

World Touring Car ace Gabriele Tarquini reckons that Seat's new engine is a race-winning unit after testing the powerplant at Valencia last week. Tarquini ran one of the new 1.6-litre turbocharged engines in his Lukoil Racing Leon chassis. Tarquini said: "I'm impressed by the engine. It's a big step forward with a much wider scope of power"... The leading rookie in this year's FIA Formula Two Championship will win two days of fully-funded testing as part of a new prize structure for the series. Drivers who have contested less than two F2 events prior to the start of this season are eligible as are drivers new to the series. The overall champion will again receive a test seat with the Williams F1 team... **The FIA has ratified changes to the LMP1 regulations for this year's inaugural World Endurance Championship. The new rules mean that only the lead car from each manufacturer will be able to score points toward the makes championship. The change is designed to enhance the fight between Toyota, which is running a single car, and Audi, which is running two...** British teenager Philip Ellis will race in the F3 Euro Series this year with new team GU Racing. Swiss-based Ellis won the Scandinavian Formula Lista Series, which used Formula BMW Mygale chassis... **Ferrari young driver Raffaele Marciello will also move into the F3 Euro Series after completing Prema Powerteam's line-up. The 17-year-old was third in Italian F3 last year. He joins Daniel Juncadella, Michael Lewis and Sven Muller at the team...** Jenzer Motorsport has signed Romanian driver Robert Visoiu for its GP3 Series team...

Audi: lead car gets points

Nasr eyes GP2 crown with leading team DAMS

Nasr: will join DAMS

British Formula Three champion Felipe Nasr has set his sights on fighting for the GP2 Series title after joining champions DAMS.

Brazilian Nasr has agreed a deal to join the French squad, which ran Romain Grosjean to the GP2 crown last year. Nasr will join Davide Valsecchi at the team.

Nasr took seven race wins on his way to the British F3 crown. The success took him to his second car racing title in five years of competition. Nasr, 19, said: "I'm very happy that we managed to get the details worked out to move into GP2. After racing in Italy in 2009, and the UK for the past two years, I'm now heading to France to be part of a great team.

"I have so much to learn but I have a very strong team-mate in Davide and I am in the right place to learn many of the tricks of the trade for getting success in GP2.

"I know many of the tracks on the calendar from both F3 and Formula BMW, but it will be tough getting out of the British cocoon that I've been so comfortable in. I have no words to describe how happy this deal makes me and I look forward to working with DAMS to prove my worth this year."

Nasr has eyes on the GP2 crown

● Nasr's countryman and F3 rival Lucas Foresti will switch to the Formula Renault 3.5 series with DAMS. Foresti, who was seventh in British F3 last year, said: "I've made progress with the team." He will partner Arthur Pic.

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THE VOICE OF MOTORSPORT

SIMON ARRON

"Often the best stories lie outside of F1"

Greaves has a strong team

The return of European football meant there was no space in the mainstream press, last week, for a compelling 5-5 draw in south-west London, on a pitch below the Heathrow flight path.

It was a landmark occasion to mark the 70th birthday of Trevor Skewis, father of former *MN* editor Mark and possibly the only man whose sporting CV includes playing semi-professional football for Canterbury City and rallycrossing an NSU Prinz. He fancied five-a-side as a birthday treat and assorted *MN* writers, past and present, gathered to participate in a three-generational contest that extended from Trevor to my 20-year-old son Tom.

The sporting family motif moved to a (slightly) higher level a few days later, when Martin and Alex Brundle launched their Le Mans 24 Hours bid, with the Zytek-Nissan that Greaves Motorsport will run for them and Lucas Ordoñez.

I enjoy playing competitive sport with my son, but suspect the latter is rather less bothered, so I asked Alex how he felt about the concept. "I think the father and son thing probably means more to dad," he said. "I just see it as a great opportunity and know dad will be a fast, reliable team-mate." Technically, Alex was present when Brundle Sr shared the Le Mans-winning Jaguar XJR-12 in 1990, although at that point he was still a few weeks from being born.

Martin might be the team's headline name, but it's a fascinating line-up for reasons other than the obvious family tie.

There wasn't much motor racing interest in Spain prior to Fernando Alonso's invention, but Ordoñez grew up with the sport. His father competed in rallies and older brother Victor won the national Formula Toyota title in 1999. He moved on to compete in the Nissan World Series, but results tailed off. "At one point his sponsor Repsol talked about putting him in F1, with an all-Spanish line-up alongside Pedro de la Rosa at Arrows," Lucas says, "but nothing ever came of it."

Lucas entered the sport on winning the inaugural Nissan/Sony PlayStation GT Academy in 2008. The idea was to turn a computer gamer into a racing driver, initially for the 2009 Dubai 24 Hours, but he did so well that Nissan felt it would be unfair to let things drop after one event. Ordoñez has since finished second and fourth in the European GT4 series. "A few years ago I thought it might be a good idea to fill in an on-line entry form..." he said.

Formula One always monopolises the headlines, but the best stories often lie elsewhere.

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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Morgan savoured Avensis test

Morgan tests Toyota

Ginetta GT Supercup champion Adam Morgan got his maiden run out in a British Touring Car Championship machine with his first pre-season test with the Speedworks team. Morgan ran in a newly-built NGTC-spec Toyota Avensis at Donington Park. Morgan will contest the full BTCC as his prize for winning the G55 class of the Ginetta series. "I loved the Avensis. I covered about 30 laps and got more confident with each one," he said. Morgan will line-up alongside Tony Hughes.

Brazilian's air miles

Thiago Calvet will contest the Ginetta Challenge Championship again this year, despite having a 10,000-mile round commute for each race. Calvet will race a G40 for the Optimum Motorsport team. The 25-year-old Rio de Janeiro-based driver will fly to the UK for each round. Optimum head Shaun Goff said: "Thiago is an exciting driver to work with and he finished last year strongly with three podium finishes in the last four rounds so I expect him to be a fierce competitor from the start this year."

Blanckley to GT

Former British Touring Car racer Simon Blanckley is the latest driver to sign up for the GT Cup Championship this season. Blanckley, who raced a Honda Integra in the BTCC in 2007, will drive a Porsche 997 GT3 run by his Sibsport concern. "They are very different to touring cars," he said. "They are proper racing cars in my opinion and they are very challenging to drive. I think we can target wins from the start."

Larger Mini grids

Mini Challenge bosses are expecting more than 20 cars to line-up for the first round of the series at Silverstone on April 14. An increase in interest in both the top-flight R56 JCW class and the budget Club Class has led to a rise in entries. Challenge head Paul Harvey said: "Things are looking positive. Drivers are waking up to the fact that we offer good, close racing for a reasonable budget. I'm confident we'll have an even stronger grid than last season."

Flux discount

Adrian Flux Insurance Services has partnered up with the BRSCC. AF will offer all BRSCC members a discount of 15 per cent on insurance policies this year.

Lynn's cancellation

The inaugural European F3 Open winter races at Paul Ricard Circuit in France last weekend were postponed due to a shortage of officials on hand at the former F1 venue. Briton Alex Lynn was due to race with Motul Team West-Tec and had posted the second fastest practice time, but the meeting was deemed too low on staff to run and was canned by force majeure. The races will now be run at the track on March 2/3.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey/LAT

JACKSON STAYS WITH MOTORBASE FOR 2012

Focus driver expects to be a title contender as leading squad expands

Jackson: fourth in 2011 points

By Matt James

Mat Jackson believes that staying with the Motorbase Performance team will give him the platform to mount an attack for the 2012 British Touring Car Championship.

Jackson will begin his campaign in the team's two-litre turbocharged Ford Focus and Liam Griffin and Aron Smith will join him in the Kent-based team in an expanded three-car BTCC campaign.

Henley-in-Arden man Jackson, who finished fourth in the points standings last season, said: "We have consistency with the programme and the team is so hungry to win. We have worked hard at getting more pace from the car and we showed last season that we can push hard. We have to win it – we aren't in the series for any other reason. It is going to be hard to predict what is going to happen with a raft of new NGTC cars out there on the grid though."

Jackson: title hopes

Team head David Bartrum said: "We are delighted with the driver line-up that we have here. Mat is a proven winner and we have two guys with lots of potential in Liam and Aron. This marks a step forward for the team and we have three drivers who will be able to push each other on.

"Aron is an exciting prospect and has already been a points scorer in the series. He is definitely a Motorbase-type driver and Liam will be able to build on the experience he gained in 2011."

It will mark Griffin's second season in the category after he graduated from the Porsche Carrera Cup GB series. Former Renault Clio Cup racer Smith took part in one BTCC meeting at Knockhill last year at the wheel of a Triple Eight Race Engineering Vectra. He managed a top ten finish in the three races.

Team calls time on Carrera Cup series

Motorbase Performance has quit the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season after almost a decade in the category.

The Kent-based team has run cars for seven of the last eight years, but team boss David Bartrum said that the squad would now look for fresh challenges.

He said that Motorbase Performance could return to the British Touring Car Championship support series, in which it has won 26 races, in the future. "This isn't an ending, it's a sabbatical," said Bartrum. "The Porsche Carrera Cup GB has been a big part of our team in the past and Porsche will always be part of our future."

Motorbase won the teams championship in 2010 when its leading drivers were Michael Caine, Ollie Jackson and Charles Bateman.

Bartrum said that the team was looking at other avenues for the 2012 season and said that he would announce further plans shortly.

Dixon: Scuderia Vittoria's man

Natural leader Dixon out to claim Clio title

Renault Clio Cup frontrunner James Dixon will lead the Scuderia Vittoria team's charge for its first championship title this year.

Multiple race winner Dixon was last week confirmed as the fifth driver to join the team. SV has already added Vic Covey Jr, Finlay Crocker, Luke Wright and Ronnie Clos to its Clio squad this term.

Dixon finished fourth in the Clio Cup during his first full season last year. He led the points for much of the year, taking four wins but late non-finishes blunted his charge.

SV head Danny Buxton said Dixon would be a contender this year: "James was the standout driver in the series last year so he's coming back refreshed and more determined than ever to make his mark this season.

"He was unlucky not to win the title last year. He learned a lot about keeping out of trouble and he is hugely motivated. James is a natural team leader and having him on the team will be a great boost to the more inexperienced guys."

Gilham gets a Civic for tin-top duties

British touring car battler Tony Gilham will switch to a Honda Civic for the 2012 season.

The ex-Porsche Carrera Cup GB man will embark on his second touring car season at the wheel of the Team Dynamics-built hatchback, which will be fitted with a Neil Brown developed two-litre turbocharged engine.

The 32-year-old said: "This is going to represent a step forward for me. It's a proven car and I will have a lot of support from Team Dynamics as well, so that will help me. There are lots of other exciting plans in the pipeline surrounding the car, but I can't say too much about them just yet."

Gilham raced a Triple Eight Vauxhall Vectra over the opening rounds of the 2011 campaign before switching to a Geoff Steel Racing BMW 320 for the final few rounds.

Gilham will race Civic

Motorcycle man becomes mouthpiece of BTCC

MotoGP commentator Toby Moody will take over the ITV microphone to voice the races of the British Touring Car Championship this season.

Moody, who has been commentating on motorcycle racing for the past 15 years, says he has a long-standing passion for four-wheeled motorsport and is an occasional competitor in hillclimbs. Moody, who is taking over from Ben Edwards who has switched to the BBC to talk about F1, will share the commentary duties with 1992 BTCC champion Tim Harvey.

Moody: BTCC new boy

"I've got big boots to fill – Ben was a class act – but when the opportunity came up I had to go for it," said Moody. "The chance to commentate on a major sport with the BTCC's following and for ITV Sport was too good to miss and I'm over the moon to have been offered the job.

"I'll still fit in every MotoGP round that doesn't clash with the BTCC this year. It's going to be a hectic but very enjoyable schedule...

"The British Touring Car Championship fascinates me. The action for the public is out of this world, plus the drivers are not wrapped up in cotton wool – they are free to speak their mind and that leads to some really interesting characters, incidents and story lines. It makes the BTCC a soap opera."

Ellinas is moving on to GP3 Series

Ellinas in with Marussia Manor for tilt at GP3

Formula Renault UK star Tio Ellinas will graduate to the GP3 Series this year with Marussia Manor Racing.

Cypriot racer Ellinas, who finished third in last year's FRUK points with two wins, completes the British squad's line-up alongside Dmitry Suranovich and Fabio Machado.

Ellinas started his car racing career back in 2009 when he entered the MSA Formula Ford Championship of Great Britain where he finished fourth overall with the JTR team. He took part in the GP3 test at Jerez late last year with the squad and set the fastest time on the opening day.

The 20-year-old said: "Marussia Manor is a winning team and I'm excited to help them build on their progress in GP3. I felt at home straight away and I can't wait to get back into the car."

Team head Pete Sliwinski added: "Tio did a great job during last year's test so he'll be one to watch."

storemags

MN'S BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 24

Storemags

'Cristofaro is due to make the switch to circuit racing'

Rally man tries Renault BARC, p9

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins

ADAM TARGETS SPA 24 HOURS

Adam's hopes are high after being wowed by uprated Aston

British GT star Jonathan Adam is set for his biggest year of competition this season and is targeting outings at both the Spa 24 hours and Le Mans.

Adam will race a new Aston Martin Vantage GT3 in British GT this year for the Beechdean Motorsport team. He will share the car with team head Andrew Howard. It will be former Clio Cup and Seat Cupra champion Adam's second season in sportscars after switching from saloon racing at the end of 2009.

The former British touring car driver has worked alongside Aston Martin Racing factory team Prodrive to develop the new GT3 machine and says that strong early testing with the car has prompted the team to expand its programme.

"The new car is such a step forward from the old DBRS9 and it's opened up a lot of doors for us so we're looking at a host of different races to try," said the 27-year-old from Fife.

"Our main target is to do the Spa 24 hours. We looked at it last year but didn't have the right machinery. The new car is faster, easier to drive and more consistent. It's ideal for a race like that. Also, the 24 hours will be huge this year because of the strength of the Blancpain Endurance Series so it's a great place for us to go to prove ourselves."

The team has also entered the Aston Martin Festival event, which supports the Le Mans 24 Hours in June: "The Aston race looks amazing and it's always been my ambition to compete at La Sarthe. Andrew is running the Vantage there and hopefully I can find the budget to partner him in the event."

Adam: hopeful for Spa

New Super Series prize to be named in honour of Formula Ford star

The most impressive driver in James Beckett's new Super Series Formula Ford 1600 contest will be awarded the inaugural Cunningham Cup, presented in honour of class regular Neil Cunningham.

The most outstanding driver across the four race series will win the new trophy.

New Zealander Cunningham was a former frontrunner in FF1600 competition and has contested all bar one of the annual Walter Hayes Trophy events since 2003. He has been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. His last race was at the wheel of an FF1600 car at Donington Park last September.

Series founder James Beckett said: "The Cunningham Cup will go to the driver who displays the best talent, results and sportsmanship. Neil is a friend and a Formula Ford legend."

Cunningham added: "I had so much fun in FF1600 and I'm really pleased to be associated with the Super Series."

Saxmax teen tipped for tin-top success

Saxmax graduate Jordan Annells has been tipped as a potential podium challenger in this season's Ford Fiesta Championship and also as a future star in the Renault Clio Cup.

Annells will race a Fiesta ST in the top class of the series for top team Daniels Motorsport this term. The 17-year-old has also reached an agreement with the Scuderia Vittoria team to graduate to Clios in 2013.

Annells made his debut in the Fiestas at the Formula Ford Festival meeting last October.

Pete Daniels said: "Jordan has been very impressive so far. He was on the pace at the Festival last year but his car suffered a broken front wheel hub, which made his race weekend difficult.

"He's definitely got the pace for the front row and this year in Fiestas will teach him a lot about racing on slick tyres before heading to Clios."

Menchaca got to grips with Renault machinery at Thruxton

Mexicans opt for British Renault programmes

Mexican racers Franco Aragonez and Diego Menchaca will both move into Formula Renault this year as part of the Escuderia Telmex's driver development programme.

Aragonez, 15, will join the Fortec team for an assault on the Formula Renault BARC Championship while Menchaca, 17, will join the Formula Renault UK Championship with expanding team MGR Motorsports.

Both drivers are backed by the Escuderia Telmex scheme, which is a long-term supporter of Sauber F1 driver Sergio Pérez and ex-GP3 champion Esteban Gutiérrez. Aragonez and Menchaca tested at Thruxton last week.

Menchaca, who is part of the FIA young Driver Academy, told Mexican website *Milenio*: "I don't know any of the tracks for my first year in Europe and, considering the available options, Formula Renault UK is a great platform. It will give me the knowledge to move forwards."

Son of Hot Rod legend set for Fiesta Juniors

Freddie Lee, the son of former National Hot Rod world champion Barry Lee, will contest this year's Ford Fiesta Junior Championship.

The 14-year-old, who has been competing in karting for the past five years, has signed up to participate in the inaugural 16-round series which will feature races at Silverstone and Brands Hatch. The championship caters for 14-16-year-olds and will feature at least 12 drivers.

Lee visited Castle Combe recently to test his car ahead of this year's championship and says that the Fiesta is very easy to get to grips with.

"I thought it would be a big step up, having been in karting, but the car is very easy to use," he said. "There is a decent amount of power and the handling is responsive. That will help new drivers get to grips with it quickly."

Lee will race in Fiesta Juniors

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMES

"MSV's F3 Cup has boosted entries for 2012"

Photo: LAT

Jean-Eric Vergne was 2010 British F3 champion

I would like to thank British F3 team boss Trevor Carlin, because he has indirectly given us one of the most intriguing subplots in Formula One this season.

Both of Carlin's British championship-winning graduates Daniel Ricciardo and Jean-Eric Vergne will lead the line for Toro Rosso. Whoever prevails can be certain to be groomed as a team-mate to Sebastian Vettel in the top rank Red Bull outfit. The spoils on offer are immense.

While that is going to be thrilling to watch, it also underlines the value of F3 and particularly the British F3 Championship. The series is trying hard to sustain itself and fight off the continued spectre of the F3 Euro Series. Despite some rocky times in recent weeks, it seems that the UK-based category will swim while some of the other championships out there are struggling to keep their heads above water.

There has been a certain amount of internal upset within the series with rival teams unhappy with Carlin's dominance, but there appears to have been a ceasefire, which is a good job when you are fighting the much more serious threat from the dwindling economy.

Then there is the huge success of MotorSport Vision Racing's F3 Cup, which has broken the mould this year in terms of boosting its entry levels (*see page 11*).

I am quite surprised at this, because it has always been a series I could never really figure out. It was always aimed at older-style F3 cars that were driven by clubmen. F3 cars of whatever vintage are never cheap to run – hence the series' doldrums in the middle part of the last decade when it was under the stewardship of the British Racing and Sports Car Club – and the more modern versions are very dependant on their aerodynamics. I always thought that if I was going to spend a lump of money on my national racing, I would at least want a car that moved around a bit to heighten the challenge. I have been proven wrong and MSVR's push to resurrect the series has helped it flourish. MSVR has direct links with the Monoposto Racing Club, whose races it runs, and it is a great stepping-stone.

By pushing F3, and tweaking its regulations for slightly more modern technology in 2012, MSV has a successful high-profile single-seater series on its hands. Should the internal strife within British F3 flare up again, who would bet against Jonathan Palmer's firm being in the right place at the right time to pick up the fall out? Or is that just me being mischievous?

ENTRY HIKE IN F3 CUP >>> P11

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RACING NEWS

New team targets British GT class win

The new Motorground team has targeted race wins in its maiden season in the GT4 class of the British GT Championship this year.

The Bexhill-based team has entered a single Ginetta G50 into the class and is in negotiations to run a second car. The team is a partnership between European GT4 racer Henry Taylor and experienced race engineer Tim Bullard.

Taylor will race the first car alongside a yet-to-be-confirmed team-mate.

Bullard said: "It's always been a dream to establish my own team and the deal with Henry gives us the chance to move straight into a top level series like British GT.

"I've worked with G50s for a few years and I know how to set them up and how to get the best from them so we have a solid base."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

RACING SWITCH FOR RISING RALLY STAR

Nick Cristofaro: 'There are a lot more opportunities in circuit racing'

FROM THIS...

Cristofaro used to rally...

...TO THIS

...but has tested a Renault BARC machine at Donington

By Rob Ladbrook

Rising rally star Nick Cristofaro is planning a shock switch to circuit racing this season after a test in a Formula Renault BARC machine at Donington Park.

The Pembrokeshire driver had a run in one of the Tatuus machines run by series regular SWB Motorsport. The 18-year-old was planning to contest the 1400cc division of the BTRDA Rally Series this year, but the late loss of a sponsor meant that he has opted to pursue a racing career this year instead.

Cristofaro was a star in junior rallying and shone in the Fiesta SportTrophy last year, leading the series for much of the season before dropping out due to funding issues.

"There are a lot more career opportunities within circuit racing whereas it's very difficult to progress in rallying," he said. "The Renault was so different from what I'm used to. It was so much faster and it was strange having to go faster to get the aerodynamics working.

"I haven't driven on a race circuit since I left karting so it was a lot to get used to. Nothing is signed yet and I also have plans to look at both the Clio Cup and Fiesta championships too."

Driver is changing codes

CV

NICK CRISTOFARO

Age: 18 **From:** Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire

2011: Frontrunner in Fiesta SportTrophy UK and Class N3 of British Rally Championship

2010: Junior 1000 Championship part-season

2009: Third in J1000 championship

2002-'07: Super One karting with titles including Welsh Cadet champion, Cadet O Plate champion, Cadet Celtic Kart champion

Webster: Renault UK assault

Renault BARC star to step up to UK series

Formula Renault BARC ace Josh Webster will graduate to the UK championship this year with Mark Burdett Motorsport.

Webster, who was runner-up in Renault BARC last year with Fortec Motorsports, will spearhead a three-car Mark Burdett entry in the BTCC support class. The 18-year-old joins Gabriel Casagrande. Webster ran with the team in last year's Finals Series, finishing third.

"The team did a great job last year helping me learn the car and we showed that we had what it takes to run at the front," said Webster. "I'll be going for it this year and the aim is the title."

Burdett added: "We've got a great relationship with Josh and he can definitely help us fight for the championship."

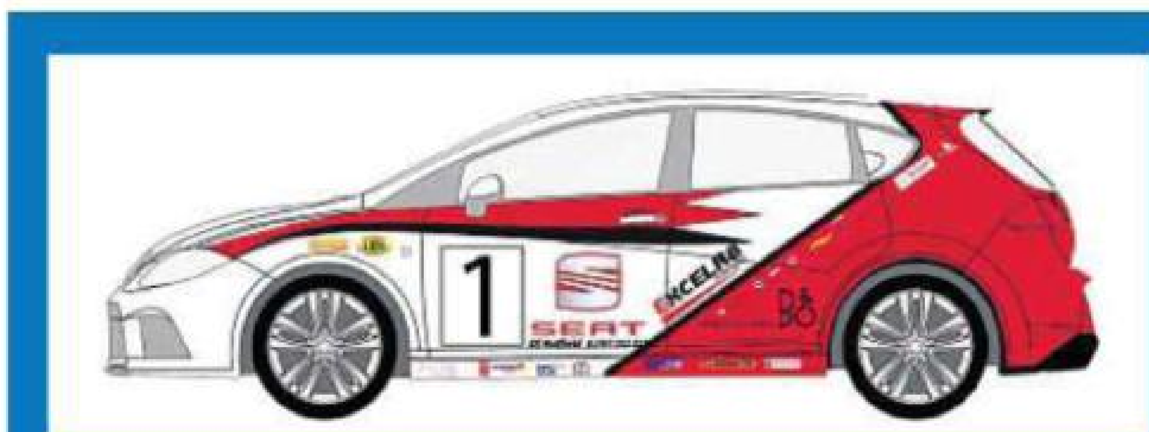
Richardson targets Porsche class crown

George Richardson will re-enter the Pro-am1 Class of the Porsche Carrera Cup this year.

Richardson will contest a third season of the BTCC support series with Parr Motorsport. The 19-year-old finished fifth in Pro-am1 with Motorbase Performance last year.

"I've had a good relationship with [Parr head] Paul Robe since I joined the series and the team's level of preparation is immense," said Richardson.

"I hope to learn as much as I can this year and put together a challenge for the class title."



Former Mini Challenge champion Luke Caudle will race a Seat Cupra for his maiden season in the Production Touring Car Trophy this year. The Londoner will drive for the ExcelR8 team. He said: "The Seat's got 100bhp more than I'm used to so it'll be a good step up."

British GT team to run three-car Renault squad

MTECH Lite will run three cars in the Formula Renault BARC Championship this year.

The squad, an offshoot of MTECH's British GT operation, has signed series returnee Sean Walkinshaw. It is also closing on a deal to run race-winner James Thorp, who finished third in the points last season, and is also talking to a third driver.

MTECH head Mike Edmonds said: "The grid for Renault BARC is looking really strong this year so we want to play a big part in the series. Sean had a tough season last year as it was his first in cars but we've already seen improvement. James will be a title favourite this year because he was sensationally quick. His feedback is excellent so he would be a real asset to the team."

MTECH Lite has three machines

Clio Cup racer rolls in testing at Thruxton

Renault Clio Cup newcomer Vic Covey Jr suffered a high-speed roll during testing at Thruxton last week.

Scotsman Covey lost control of his Scuderia Vittoria-run car heading out of Allard Corner early in his run. The car dug in and rolled before coming to rest upside down against the Armco.

SV head Danny Buxton said: "Vic was taken to hospital as a precaution for facial cuts but he's fine. He lost it on cold tyres and went in at about 105mph. The car held up fantastically and it was one of the worst Clio shunts I've ever witnessed. He'll still be fine to do the full championship."

Photo: Az Edwards

Vic Covey Jr's Clio Cup test at Thruxton didn't go exactly to plan: he rolled his car at Allard...

IN BRIEF

Quicker GT tyre

Avon Tyres heads say its new compound of tyres will lower lap times in British GT by more than one second this year. Avon says the new tyre is faster and more durable than the old version. Avon manager Mike Lynch said: "The new tyre has been developed using a wide range of cars and it's more consistent and more stable so drivers should feel comfortable pushing to the limit." Avon has also been appointed as the tyre supplier for the European GT4 Cup and Dutch GT4 series.

Kit Cars renamed

The 750 Motor Club has renamed its Kit Car Championship as the Sport Specials Championship for this year. The move reflects a change in regulations intended to open the series up to more one-off or modified 'specials' machines. Drivers using Yokohama tyres will also be eligible to enter prize draws across the series to win vouchers redeemable against tyres at George Polley Motorsport.

Smith tries saloons

Formula Ford 1600 regular Rob Smith had his first run in a saloon car with a Renault Clio Cup test for Total Control Racing last week. Northern FF1600 racer Smith shook down one of the squad's 220bhp machines at Oulton Park. The 19-year-old is now eyeing a move to tin tops. Smith's father Paul formerly raced for Alfa Romeo in the British Touring Car Championship in the 1980s.

From GTs to V8

British GT and Porsche Carrera Cup racer Freddy Nordstrom is weighing up a move to the RaceCar Euro Series this season after a test in one of the V8 machines at Ferte Gaucher Circuit. Nordstrom, a former Mini Challenge champion, said: "It was great fun to drive and definitely different from what I'm used to."

Britcar family

Father-and-son racers Peter and Matt Smith will enter this year's MSA British Endurance Championship with a GT3 spec Ginetta G55. The car will be run by new squad Redgate/Virgo Motorsport, which has been formed out of the former Le Mans Ferrari team. The car will run to raise awareness of British Kidney Patients Association, which has supported Peter through two transplants.

Eibach that

Suspension specialist Eibach will join the Volkswagen Racing Cup as an official partner this year. The firm will offer all drivers registered to the series a 50 per cent discount on race springs throughout the season. Milltek has also joined the series to offer 75 per cent off exhaust systems for models such as the MkV and VI Golf and the Scirocco.

Wagner rejoins

Scottish racer David Wagner will rejoin the Formula Renault BARC Championship this year with MGR Motorsport. The 19-year-old finished 11th in the points last year with the team. "After a strong first year it's important to build on that experience and fight for the championship this season," said Wagner, who had a run out at Thruxton last week.

HOW MATT BELL BECOME A SPORTSCAR STAR >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 23

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RACING NEWS

ROUND THE BEND WITH...

HUGH MARSHALL

Age: 60 **Lives:** London

Marshall is a household name in the world of TVR Racing and holds a record for the most races contested in the category.

It started in a pub...

Marshall's first steps into motorsport were the result of a meeting with friends in the Victoria Pub in London: "I had always been interested in motorsport and used to meet up with Tony Lanfranchi and Gerry Marshall in a pub in London. They introduced me to The Steering Wheel Club and helped me make some really good contacts in motorsport. By 1979 I managed to get a budget together for a drive in the Renault 5 Championship."

He set up his own team:

"I set up HM Racing in 1987 to compete in Thundersaloons. I raced in an Escort RS2000, co-driven by the likes of Rod Birley, Lanfranchi and Barrie Williams. In 1990 I expanded the team to run drivers such as Nigel Greensall and Chris Needell. I led the Thundersaloon series until the last round when we had a mechanical failure on our Opel Manta Pontiac."

He's been an instructor:

"I had been helping out Vauxhall and was offered an opportunity at Silverstone in 1996, helping out first-time drivers and coaching more experienced racers. I was able to off-load some of my knowledge to some great young drivers."

Then came the TVR era:

"I first tried a TVR Tuscan in 1998. I was offered a drive by WLA to run its third Tuscan at Donington and Brands Hatch. The cars were fantastic to drive and I took to them quite quickly, getting a few strong finishes but nothing too spectacular. Budget issues prevented me from racing them for a couple of years."

He has become a regular in the category:

"I found a budget and started racing TVRs for CDL. My best finish of the season was seventh at Rockingham although I had to cut it short again due to budgets. In the next 11 years I managed to get a number of drives in TVRs with lots of different teams. Last year I became champion in Class A and the overall Dunlop European TVR Championship."

He is a record holder:

"I have completed about 120 TVR races and am one of the only drivers who has been in the category since the beginning. I hear I hold the record for the most races started."

Marshall is a TVR racing nut

F3 CUP POISED FOR BOOM IN GRID SIZES

Surge in interest boosts entries for club series

Photos: Gary Hawkins

F3 Cup chiefs are expecting big grids

By Rob Ladbrook

Motorsport Vision Racing chiefs say that they won't stop pushing for capacity grids in the F3 Cup Championship this year after a surge of interest in the class.

The class, which will have championship status this year, has attracted 19 entries ahead of the season-opener at Oulton Park on April 9 (*see separate story*). The numbers are the highest the series has received since 2008, when it ran as BRSCC Club F3.

MSVR's David Scott said: "We've worked hard to create a strong overall package for the F3 Cup with an exciting calendar, a great prize and to open the series out to more cars. We've kept the budgets down and it's drawn a lot of new people in. We should have more than 20 cars at Oulton Park and we're aiming for even more as the year goes on."

MSVR has adapted the series regulations to include more modern F3 machines produced up until 2007 and has forged links with the Belgian F3 series to include a round at Spa Francorchamps. The overall champion will also win a funded day's testing in an FIA Formula Two Championship machine.

The series will also be open to the Toyota 3SGE-SXE10 engine, which is used in the European F3 Open. Mark Bailey, who runs an eponymous team in the series, said: "The Toyota engine has made the series great value for money. You get 2000 miles of running on a normal F3 engine between rebuilds whereas you can get 10,000 from the Toyota."

MotorSport Vision head Jonathan Palmer added: "I'm delighted with how the F3 Cup is growing. Formula Three is a vital development series in British motorsport and the F3 Cup allows drivers to learn this form of racing without having to find the huge budgets required for British F3. We've got a great mix of young drivers and gentleman racers."

CALENDAR

F3 Cup

DATE	TRACK
Apr 6-9	Oulton Park
Apr 28-29	Donington Park
Jun 15-17	Spa Francorchamps
Jun 30-Jul 1	Snetterton 300
Aug 18-19	Brands Hatch GP
Sept 8	Anglesey International
Oct 27-28	Snetterton 300

Radical champion Abbott to race in F3 Cup

Radical Clubmans Cup champion James Abbott will enter the F3 Cup this year.

Abbott, the son of Radical co-founder Phil, has bought a Dallara F306 which he will campaign alongside a Radical UK Cup entry. He will share a works-run SR8 with Shaun Balfe in that series.

Abbott, 18, tested a 2008-spec F3 machine in Spain last year. He said: "I loved the F3 car when I drove it. I'm keen to make a career out of racing and almost every driver that has done so has gone through F3 at some point.

"The braking and speed is about the same as an SR8 but the chassis dynamics are different. It'll be a real experience switching between the two cars on the same weekend when the rounds run together this year."

F3 Cup secures prime Easter Monday race

The F3 Cup will take centre stage during the traditional Easter Monday race meeting at Oulton Park on April 9.

The British F3 International Series has traditionally been the headline fixture for the event. But this year that series will race on Friday and Saturday to cut the costs of staying at the track until Monday. Racing does not take place at the Cheshire circuit on Easter Sunday.

"Traditionally we've always held F3 racing on Easter Monday so it's a great chance for the F3 Cup guys to become the headline event for the day," said MSVR's David Scott. "The British series teams dislike the expense of staying over on the 'dead day' so this deal works out for everyone."

Aston club: stability is key to entry rise

New Aston Martin Owners' Club promoter Duncan Wiltshire has called for a year of stability for the club this season to help grow its ailing race meetings.

Wiltshire, who heads up Historic Promotions Ltd, has been recruited by the club in an effort to revitalise its calendar this year.

AMOC has also joined up with MotorSport Vision Racing, which will handle all of the administration and organisation of its five race events this year.

Wiltshire said: "This year we need to look long and hard at the series and where they are going wrong, try to stabilise things and look to increase interest and grids gradually.

"The club has struggled to promote its meetings in the past and interest has waned. We'll bring in more stable regulations and listen to what the drivers and the club want in an effort to stop the downward spiral. We have some fresh ideas to try that will help the club retain its main ethos."

The AMOC runs series for both modern and historic car including the Aston Martin GT4 Challenge of Great Britain, Intermarque and Ferrari Owners' Club events.

Modern GT3 cars to run in GT Cup sprints

GT Cup bosses are expecting to attract up to four new manufacturers into the championship this year after opening the series up to current GT3 homologated cars.

The series has lifted its ban on current GT3 spec machines this year and has reported a boost in interest from makes wanting to run cars as a result. Offerings from brands such as Ginetta, Chevron, Mosler and McLaren could all appear on the grid this year.

GT Cup director Phil Boland said: "GT Cup is unique in the way that we are the only series offering people sprint racing for GT cars, meaning teams can develop their cars within three 20-minute races, instead of having to run them for longer periods of time without making adjustments.

"We wanted to refresh the series this year and GT3 is the largest sportscar class in the world so it made sense to offer the teams and drivers something different.

●GT Cup organisers have axed the endurance GT Trophy series this year. The series ran one and two-hour races.

Lotus on Track bosses trim length of enduro

Lotus on Track racers will end their season with a six-hour race instead of a 1000 kilometre event this year.

The season-closing 1000km race at Brands Hatch has been a popular event on the calendar. But for this year's event on November 10, the race will be shortened by around two hours. It will run later in the day to ensure more of it is run in the dark.

Lotus has added night running

Lotus on Track head Paul Golding said: "Last year the 1000km race finished before it got dark and racing in the night is one of the biggest draws of the event. This year we'll start the race at midday and run it for six hours, finishing just before the curfew so we get a few hours in the dark.

"A six-hour race means that it lowers budgets for everyone. We're going to run a 90 minute practice session on the Friday before to make up the lost track time."

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK >>>>>>> PAGE 35

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THE MILLINGTON CHALLENGE

REIS get connected MSA ASPHALT RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT	ENTRIES SECRETARY
March 11	Tour of Epynt (Brecon)	Baryan Joseph - Tel: 07895 085585 // Email: baryan@hotmail.co.uk	Robert Wilson - Tel: 07767 323998 // Email:wilsonrobbie@hotmail.com
May 11/12	Manx National Rally (Douglas)	Mark Quayle - Tel: 07624 479587 // Email: markq@manx.net	Hilary Moore - Tel: 07624 477152 // E-mail: manxnationalrally@manx.net
June 1/2	Jim Clark National Rally (Kelso)	George Hay - Tel: 07966 030596 // Email:george.hay@jimclarkrally.com	Dave Malthouse - Tel: 07792 226914 // Email: entries@jimclarkrally.com
June 22/23	Rally of the Midlands (Hinckley)	Richard Hinton - Tel: 01543 414152 // Email: richard@fct.uk.net	Heidi Rula - Tel: 07726 350812 // Email: entries@rallyofthemidlands.co.uk
July 15	ALMC Stages (Dublin)	Noel Devlin - Tel: +353 (0)86 2620771 // Email: coc@almcstagesrally.com	Deirdre Gallagher - Tel: +353 (0)86 1519697 // Email: entries@almcstagesrally.com
August 12	Tyneside Stages (Otterburn)	Andy Nicholls - Tel: 01665 578409 // Email: andy24061@talktalk.net	Maurice Mabon - Tel: 01665 602690 // Email: maurice@mabonm.freeserve.co.uk
August 26	Mewla National Rally (Builth Wells)	Brian Jones - Tel: 07974 948193 // Email: brian@epyntmc.co.uk	Keith &Trina Edwards -Tel: 01982 551246 // Email: mewla.rally@virgin.net
Sept 30	Patriot Stages Rally (Caerwent)	Jon Lougher - Tel: 07830 712538 // Email: jonlougher@gmail.com	Fiona Evans - Tel: 01873 881043 // Email: caerwentrally@aol.com
November 4	Cheviot Keith Knox Rally (Otterburn)	Charlie Tynan - Tel: 07881 828538 // Email: the.tynans@blueyonder.co.uk	Gordon Bradford - Tel: 07802 672950 // Email gordon.bradford@talk21.com

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HISTORICS

'The GT3 Cup Challenge isn't a white elephant'
Porsche series is on the up, p22

DOWN THE PUB WITH THIERRY NEUVILLE

Age: 23 **Lives:** Saint Vith, Belgium
The rising star of the Citroën WRC squad tackled the Boucles de Spa on Saturday.

Neuville is a big fan of the Boucles de Spa:
"This is already my third time at the Boucles de Spa. I did it twice before but not in a Citroën. Last year I drove a Peugeot. Now I really have to drive a Citroën and this was my first time in Spa with a four-wheel drive car. We were just driving for fun and trying to bring the car to the end of the rally."

He drove an older Citroën:
His Citroën Visa Mille Pistes is a 30-year-old car, and was an early four-wheel-drive rally car. "We rented the car from some friends and it has been completely rebuilt since it was last used. It was driven last year in Spa by Bruno Thiry and it has now had more work done and was ready to do the whole rally. Unfortunately we had engine problems on the last section, but there will be another year."

It was a big contrast to his Citroën WRC car:
"It is completely different to drive compared to the modern WRC cars but we can still have a lot of fun with it. It's not like a modern car. We needed to be careful with the gearbox, with the brakes and with everything, really. We had a lot of fun but we also looked a little bit after safety because there were a lot of spectators so the drivers had to be careful about this."

The Boucles is his home rally:
"Of course this is a very special event for me as it is near my home town of Saint Vith, which is six miles from Spa. There were a lot of spectators and fans from there and it was nice to drive for them and to give them some spectacle."

It was a relaxing break:
The Spa event fitted into a gap in his WRC programme with Citroën. "It was a nice relaxation from the WRC and there was no pressure. We were just here in Spa to enjoy the rally and to be with all the other guys. A lot of friends were driving as well and I was happy to be here."

Neuville: impressed in Spa

Photos: Paul Lawrence

BELATED BOUCLES DE SPA WIN FOR LOCAL

Van de Wauwer triumphs in self-built Lancia after 30 years of trying

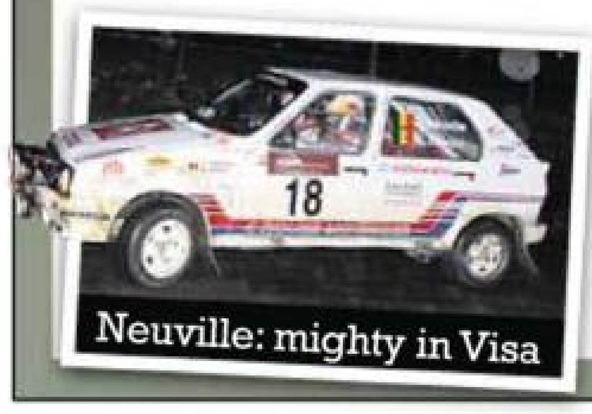
By Paul Lawrence

While many of the star names failed to finish the 54th running of the Boucles de Spa on Saturday, local man Jean-Pierre Van de Wauwer finally claimed the victory he has chased for 30 years.

Van de Wauwer's Lancia Beta Monte Carlo coped with wet and slippery conditions to head home the Porsche 911 of Raymond Horgnies and the 911S of Robert Droogmans. Out of the rally went numerous frontrunners including the Escorts of Didier Auriol (suspension), François Duval (transmission) and Stefaan Stouf (accident) along with the Citroën Visa Mille Pistes of Thierry Neuville. The Citroën WRC driver was battling for victory when sidelined with engine failure.

But it was an excellent performance from Van de Wauwer who had previously been runner-up five times.

Van de Wauwer deservedly won in mid-engined Lancia



Neuville: mighty in Visa

"I cannot find the words. This is the happiest day of my life," said Van de Wauwer. "I am doubly proud because I won with the car made with my own hands."

Among the British crews, Gwyndaf Evans hit alternator trouble with his Mazda RX-7 GpB car and missed a couple of tests while Guy Anderson collected a concrete barrier after a suspected puncture.

Björn Waldegård, meanwhile, took his Ferrari 308GTB to seventh, one place ahead of Le Mans winner André Lotterer (Porsche 911).

Waldegård was seventh in this exotic Ferrari 308GTB supercar

Healey and MG series align for Challenge

In the face of declining grid numbers, the Austin-Healey Club has dropped its race championship for 2012 and brokered a deal with the MG Midget Challenge.

The few 'Big' Healeys still active in the Austin-Healey series have a range of racing opportunities across historic racing.

The new series will be titled the Lackford Engineering Midget and Sprite Challenge. "We have a great-looking calendar. I'm sure that the combination of Midgets and Sprites together on track promises larger grids, good friendship and better and closer racing," said sponsor Robin Lackford.

Lyons ropes in a Longhorn for GP Masters

A Williams FW07 will race in historic Formula One races this summer 30 years after being used as a Champ Car in the US.

Frank Lyons plans to race the rare Longhorn Williams FW07 with Grand Prix Masters this season following the completion of an extensive rebuild.

"It's a big job but we hope to race it in 2012. It's a nice car," said Lyons, who may entrust driving duties to his son Michael for selected races.

In 1979, Frank Williams sold the rights to the FW07 design to the Longhorn Racing team in Texas and two cars were built for use in Indy-type racing, with one being raced by the legendary Al Unser.

One of the chassis, which featured heavier gauge materials, was imported into the UK in the 1990s, but has yet to race in Europe. Now, Lyons is having the car rebuilt in F1 trim ready for its European race debut.

Waldegård to headline show demonstrations

More than 50 of the most dramatic rally cars will be the big attraction at this weekend's Race Retro event at Stoneleigh.

On Saturday and Sunday, cars from Rallying with Group B will tackle a demonstration stage in the grounds of the Royal Agricultural Centre in Warwickshire.

The star driver will be Björn Waldegård, who will be out in a Porsche 914/6, while Russell Brookes will drive an Opel Manta and a Lotus Sunbeam. Genuine Group B cars will include Peugeot 205T16s, Metro 6R4s and Audi quattros while Andrew Beverley will field a Ferrari 308GTB.

Champion Brashaw graduates to Historic F2 with ex-Henton March

Reigning Classic F3 champion Jamie Brashaw will step up to Formula Two in the March 782 first campaigned by Brian Henton in the European F2 Championship. Henton went on to race for Toleman and Tyrrell in F1.

Brashaw acquired the car from Abba Kogan and has had a BMW engine installed ahead of a season in Historic F2 and the Derek Bell Trophy.

I wanted a new challenge and the chance to try new circuits," said the Rotherham racer after a shakedown run at Donington Park last week.

However, Brashaw will not turn his back on Classic F3 and will tackle selected races in his ex-Kenny Acheson March 783 and will also run his Historic FF1600 Merlyn.

Brashaw: emulating Henton

IN BRIEF

Sunseeker openers
The HRCR Historic Challenge and Mini Cup will have their opening rounds on Saturday's Rallye Sunseeker Historique. Seven Minis, headed by Clive King, will gather in Dorset, while Bob Gibbons heads the Historic Challenge in his Ford Cortina Mk2 after a mighty run on the Wyedean Historic Rally. The Escort Mk2s of Richard Lane and Rob Dennis head the overall historic field.

Shaw's new toy
Seasoned Historic F2 racer Robert Shaw had a first outing in his newly-rebuilt Chevron B26 at Donington Park last week. The ex-John Lepp car had been in the US for some time until Shaw acquired it and it's now likely to be seen in Martini Trophy races this season.

F40 get-together
The biggest ever gathering of Ferrari F40s will be another attraction at this year's Silverstone Classic (July 20-22). To mark the 25th anniversary of the F40, the Ferrari Owners' Club is organising the largest collection of F40s ever seen and had initially targeted 25 cars. However, response has been so good that more than 50 of the 1315 cars built will be on show.

Algarve switch
After three editions at the Portimão circuit, the Algarve Historic Festival will switch venues to run at Estoril after financial issues between the venue and the event promoter went unresolved. Estoril, home to the Portuguese Grand Prix from 1984 to 1996, is booked for the October 18-21 event, which will include races for the Stirling Moss Trophy.

Thiry fails to start
Belgian rally ace Bruno Thiry was denied the chance to start the Boucles de Spa at the weekend. After being forced to change the engine on Thursday, his Escort Mk1 from the Solo Concept team failed pre-event scrutineering over roll-cage problems.

'70s comeback
Masters Historic Racing has re-launched its '70s Celebration race series to encourage more touring cars, saloon cars and sportscars from 1970 to 1979 onto the grid for single 40-minute races or 25-minute double-headers. There will be invitation classes for lightweight Aston Martins and for period-style cars from the 1960s and 1980s. The season starts at Oulton Park on March 17.

Proffitt's new motor
After finishing second overall and first in category one of last year's British Historic Rally Championship, Rikki Proffitt will return this season with a fresh engine in his '65 two-litre Porsche 911. "I'm having a new engine built by at Gantspeed," said Proffitt. "They built the car originally for Richard Hudson-Evans and we hope to have it ready for the Mid-Wales Stages."

Rahal B16 on offer
After being on display at Rétromobile in Paris, the Chevron B16 'continuation car' owned and raced by former Indy 500 winner Bobby Rahal is now up for sale. "It has done its bit for Bobby and now it is time for someone else to enjoy it," said Kelvin Jones, who built the car in 2009 and is now handling its sale.

BOGIE'S SNOWMAN RALLY TRIUMPH >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 28

RALLY NEWS

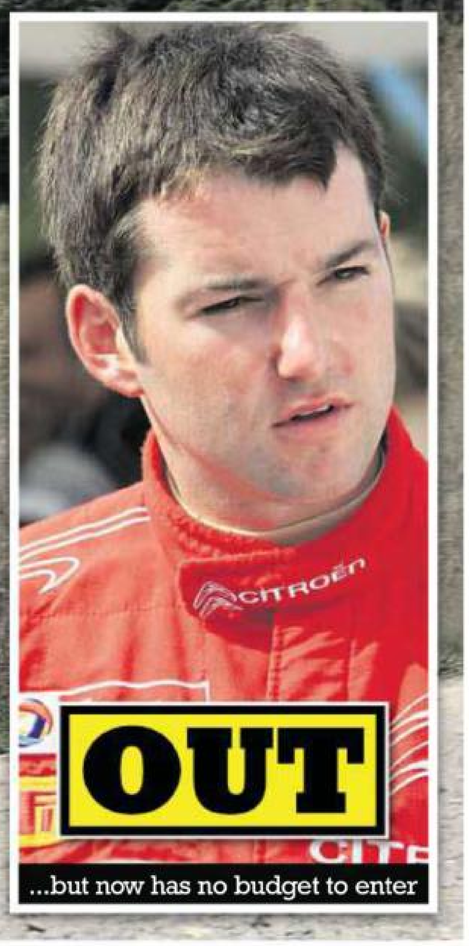
Photos: Jakob Ebrey

NIKARA UP FOR BRC TITLE CHALLENGE...

...but cash-strapped British star McCormack faces a season on the sidelines

Nikara has a new Citroën DS3 R3

McCormack shone last season...



...but now has no budget to enter

By Dan McCalla

Finnish ace Jarkko Nikara will fight for this year's British Rally Championship title, but last year's two-wheel-drive title winner Martin McCormack has been left without a drive for the start of the 2012 season due to a lack of backing.

Nikara has inked a deal to drive a Citroën DS3 R3 run by Autosport Technology on all six rounds of the BRC this season. The 25-year-old former Pirelli Star Driver will make his return to the BRC after a year away on Rallye Sunseeker this weekend, and his wealth of experience makes him a natural favourite for this year's title. The deal also reunites him with Kent-based Autosport Technology, which ran him in Britain in a Renault Twingo R2 in 2010.

"I've brought my own sponsors from Finland, but I know that the team is helping me a little bit, which is good," says Nikara, who competed on Rally GB last year in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9 that was run with help from Autosport Technology. "I'm doing the whole season and I will try to win the championship. That is the target. Last time I was in the BRC I was very close to winning the R2 class, so I hope I can claim a championship."

Team chief Richard Asquith says that his BRC efforts will be focused solely on Jarkko this year, and that the Finn has the talent to win the title: "It's something we've been working on for quite a long time. We know Jarkko from two years ago and we believe he can do the business. He showed his speed in the events he did in the Lancer last year in a car that wasn't exactly state of the art. It's good to have him back in the BRC in an R3 car."

The lateness of the deal being lined up means that Nikara has not had time to conduct a pre-Rallye Sunseeker test in the DS3, but is hoping to get a brief shakedown in the car prior to the season opener's ceremonial start at Poole Quay on Friday night.

Meanwhile, Ulsterman McCormack has been left on the sidelines having originally been hopeful of some factory backing from Citroën to fight for the overall title this year. McCormack won the BRC's Formula Two title for 2WD cars last year in a Saintéloc-run DS3 R3 with tacit backing from the French marque. However, extra help into 2012 hasn't been forthcoming, leaving him out in the cold.

"Basically, Citroën Racing don't have the budget to help me out, and Citroën UK's marketing spend means they can do odd events like Goodwood but they arent able to support a full rally season," said McCormack. "I don't have the budget to do anything myself and I lost one of my sponsors. There's not much I can do."

McCormack hasn't ruled out returning to the BRC on a one-off basis later in the season if he can find some funding, and has singled out August's Ulster Rally as one where he can shine after he fought for overall victory there last year.

"I've exhausted all avenues, and it's not really worthwhile trying to do one or two events unless it was something like Ulster where we can really make an impact," he said.

CV

JARKKO NIKARA

Age: 25 **Lives:** Saarijärvi, Finland
2011: Contests Finnish championship and selected WRC and IRC rounds in Mitsubishi Lancer E9
2010: Finishes sixth overall in Junior class of BRC in Renault Twingo R2, fifth overall on Rally Isle of Man
2009: Runs six WRC rounds as a Pirelli Star Driver
2008: Wins Fiesta SportTrophy round on Colin McRae Forest Stages
2007: Group N runner-up in Finnish championship
2006: Finnish junior champion
2004: Makes rally debut
2002: Starts competing in autocross

RALLYE SUNSEEKER ESSENTIALS

Starts: Friday February 24, 1750hrs, Poole Quay **Finishes:** Saturday February 25, 1805hrs, Bournemouth Pier **Competitive distance:** 66 miles **Stages:** 12 **Entries:** 74
2011 winners: David Bogie/Kevin Rae (Mitsubishi Lancer E9)

LEADING ENTRIES

NO.	DRIVER	CAR
1	Jarkko Nikara/Petri Nikara	Citroën DS3 R3
2	Mark Donnelly/Dai Roberts	Renault Clio R3
3	Alastair Fisher/Daniel Barritt	Ford Fiesta R2
4	Elfyn Evans/Andrew Edwards	Ford Fiesta R2
5	Jukka Korhonen/Mikael Korhonen	Skoda Fabia R2
7	Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead	Renault Clio R3
8	Callum Black/Chris Williams	Suzuki Swift S1600
9	Desi Henry/Niall Burns	Citroën DS3 R3
10	Osian Pryce/Iestyn Williams	Citroën DS3 R3
11	Jussi Kumpumäki/Jani Salo	Ford Fiesta R2

Donnelly is an R3 star

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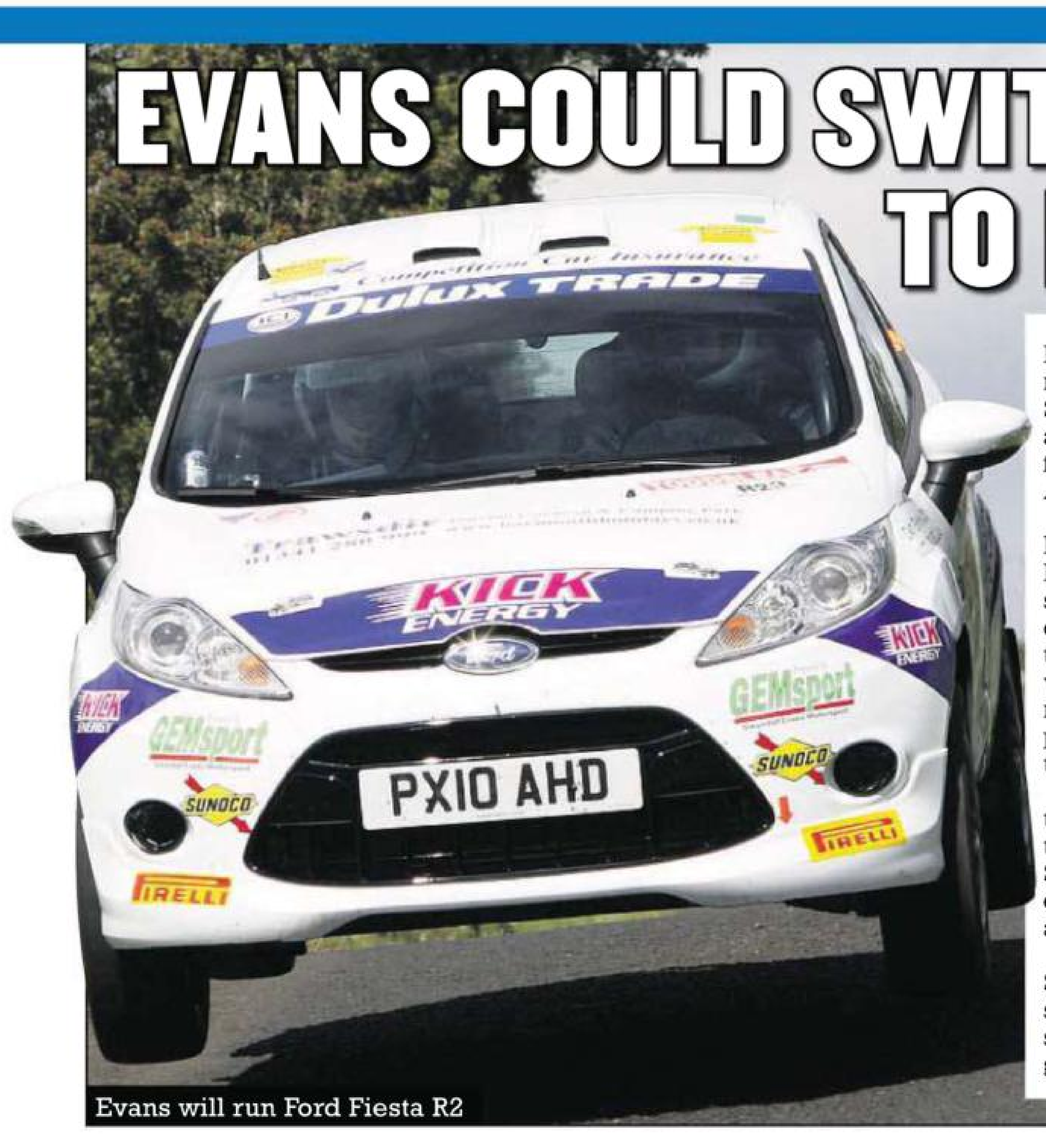
"The engines will have to keep revving"

BRC's two-wheeled future, p27

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

EVANS COULD SWITCH FOCUS TO BRC FIGHT



Evans will run Ford Fiesta R2

Last year's MSA British Rally Championship runner-up Elfyn Evans will contest Rallye Sunseeker this weekend in his Ford Fiesta R2, and says that the series could become his main focus this year if plans to compete in the WRC Academy fall through.

The young Welshman, second to David Bogie in last year's BRC in a Group N Subaru Impreza, is likely to contest the first two rounds of the British season before deciding whether to complete the campaign. Evans has been planning an assault on the WRC Academy since competing in selected world events at the end of last season, but the money required to do so and the necessity of paying half the season's budget up front is making that difficult.

"We're hoping to try and get the Academy deal tied up this week, but either way I'd still like to do the BRC," said Evans. "We'll definitely do the Sunseeker, possibly the Bulldog as it's my local event and we'll go from there. I need the mileage as I haven't driven the car since Rally GB."

Evans has been seeded fourth for Rallye Sunseeker, but isn't expecting to be on a par with some of the R3 cars. "It's a power rally where we'll spend a lot of time on the limiter, and there's some good drivers in the R2 class."

Production BRC scrapped after low entries

The Production BRC series won't run this year, after the series did not get the number of entries required by the Motor Sports Association.

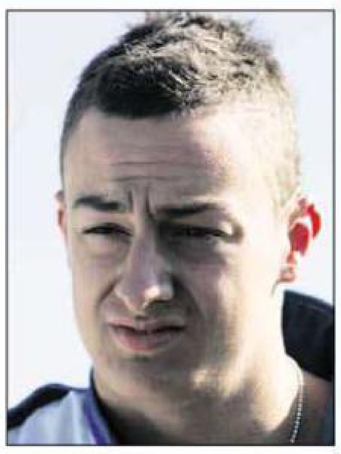
British championship bosses had hoped the series, due to run across the national events supporting every BRC round, would provide a home for four-wheel drive machines no longer eligible in the main series.

"It's disappointing that the pre-Christmas interest hasn't resulted in the number of entries required by the MSA to run," said BRC manager Mark Taylor. "However, every BRC event this year will feature a national rally that will be open to four-wheel drive cars and will deliver what competitors told us they wanted."

Rowe clear for BRC opener after roll

BRC Challenge champion Jack Rowe is in confident mood ahead of this weekend's Rallye Sunseeker, despite his car suffering light damage after he rolled last weekend.

The Doncaster-based driver was testing his Ford Fiesta R2 on the Riponian Stages in North Yorkshire when he rolled. "The car is alright," Rowe said. "It's just minor damage to the left wing and wing mirror. It'll be ready to go in a few days. It was feeling good, it's just been rebuilt and we were putting in good times. So we're all set for Sunseeker.



Rowe's car survived crash

It'll be a tough year but we should be all right. I've just got to use my head."

Rokland left to sweat on Fiesta R1 entry

Fiesta SportTrophy International Shootout winner Steve Røkland has been entered into Rallye Sunseeker this weekend, but his participation in the rally had yet to be officially rubber-stamped as *Motorsport News* closed for press on Monday.

The young Norwegian is due to drive a new Ford Fiesta R1 entered by M-Sport in an attempt to showcase the machine. However, as of Monday M-Sport officials had yet to receive the official homologation papers for the entry-level car that will allow it to run on international events such as BRC rounds. This has left Røkland facing a nervous wait to find out if he will be able to contest his first-ever rally outside Scandinavia.

Røkland is spending this season on a work placement at M-Sport as part of his prize for winning the shootout late last year. He is one of three R1-class entries made for Rallye Sunseeker, alongside Keith Cronin and Garry Pearson (both Renault Twingo).

M-Sport wants to run Fiesta R1

Free entry prize for four-wheel drive runners

Four-wheel-drive owners wanting to take part on both the Bulldog Rally in March and the Pirelli Rally in April will be able to compete to win one event to gain a free entry for the other.

Although the Production BRC series for Group N machinery has been canned (see separate story), both rallies are still open to 4WD cars, both homologated and non-homologated. Thanks to a link-up between the Wolverhampton and South Staffs Car Club and the Pirelli Rally organising team, the top 4WD car on the Bulldog on March 23/24 will get a free entry to the Pirelli Tour of Cumbria, the national version of the BRC event on April 28.

Conversely, the winner of the Tour of Cumbria will have his/her entry fee from the Bulldog refunded.

VIEW FROM THE WORLD STAGE

JERRY WILLIAMS

"Teams struggle to make their voice heard"

Viewed from afar, the WRC must currently look like an animated Breugel painting ... all confusion and concern, with seemingly little transparent purpose.

On the Monte, Jean Todt promised a new promoter before Sweden. Then Eurosport talks collapsed and his deadline passed.

Last week the FIA said a promoter will be appointed "within a month". But on the face of it, they've merely issued an "expression of interest" document for interested parties to scan.

The vital S1T tracking system missed the Monte amid suggestions it might be gone for good. Thankfully, a deal has now been done.

Events were told to make their own TV deals in the absence of a promoter. Sweden did so. Then rally organisers were told to desist in case they jeopardised a world-wide tie-up expected "within days".

Meanwhile the teams struggle to make their voice heard and now Rally Radio, one of the WRC's best innovations, has lost its pizzazz through an internal conflict.

It was Greg Strange whose vision set up the system. But what made the station compulsive listening was bringing together Rebecca Williams, Colin Clark and Chris Rawes.

Williams, affectionately known to all as Becs, ran the on-event studio (actually, it was usually a cubby-hole in Rally HQ); Rawes kept everything on track from the UK and Clark did stage-end reporting.

For rally fans at home this threesome had a dynamic chemistry: the super-excitable Clark bellowing his amazement to the world (Becsy! Becsy! Becsy! What IS going on here?); Becs trying to stop him going into meltdown and the "controller" Rawes interjecting dry wit.

But now all that's gone in a big bust-up. Becs and Clark were pursuing other projects in Sweden while Rally Radio was anchored by ex-BBC commentator Mark James and different stage reporters.

If you wanted information, yes, they provided it. Jamesy was OK, if a bit didactic. But where was the passion, the soaring voices ... the entertainment!

By contrast, in Monte Carlo the old team, plus George Donaldson, pumped out high-octane radio.

That's absolutely what you need. Unlike on telly, there are no exciting images to eyeball. The spoken words in your headphones are everything. And if they start to drone, all is lost.

I don't know how this situation will resolve itself. But for the good of the championship, it ought to end with Becs, Clark and Rawes back together.

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RALLY NEWS

Circuit of Ireland key to Barrable's plans

Rising star Robert Barrable said he will determine his 2012 programme after taking part in the Intercontinental Rally Championship-counting Circuit of Ireland Rally in April.

The Skoda-backed driver wants to make an impact on the April 6/7 event, which is being included in the IRC schedule for the first time this season.

The 24-year-old from Dublin said that he was aiming to tackle up to six IRC rounds this year in his Fabia if he could pull a programme together.

"We will make a decision after we see how we get on in the Circuit of Ireland round," he said. "If we have a strong performance it would hopefully give us the impetus and the backing to expand the IRC campaign with more rounds."

Barrable combined his challenge in selected events in the British Rally Championship with three rounds of the IRC in 2011 and finished in the points on the Ypres Rally.

Rally Finland to run full Ouninpohja

Famous Rally Finland stage Ouninpohja will be run in its full 21-mile length on this year's event for the first time in eight years – and the test will count as the bonus-points Power Stage at the end of the rally.

The super-fast forest test will be run twice in succession on Saturday afternoon (August 4) to conclude the 18-stage event, which consists of 187 competitive stage miles.

Much like last year, the rally will start on Thursday afternoon and run through to Saturday evening, with the opening loop on the Thursday taking place in the Lahti area, south of main rally host city Jyväskylä.

The use of Ouninpohja as a Power Stage makes it by far the longest stage to be used for bonus points since the concept was reintroduced last year. Normally, Power Stages tend to be between two and five miles in length.

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com and IRC

Skoda is defending manufacturer champ

SKODA TARGETS IRC MAKES CROWN

Drivers' title will not be the top priority for the Czech marque

By Dan McCalla

Skoda Motorsport boss Michal Hrabanek says the Intercontinental Rally Challenge manufacturers' title is the firm's top priority this season, ahead of the drivers' crown.

Although the Czech marque secured the IRC makes' crown last year, its policy of deciding its works driver line-up on an event-by-event basis hit Juho Hänninen's hopes of retaining his drivers' title. Hänninen narrowly lost out to Skoda UK dealer driver Andreas Mikkelsen in the title race last year, but Hrabanek said that Skoda's policy for works drivers Hänninen and Jan Kopecký will not change.

"Our goal for this season is to repeat last year's victory in the Manufacturers category of the IRC, and we expect the drivers of the factory Fabia Super 2000s, Juho Hänninen and Jan Kopecký of Skoda Motorsport, as well as Andreas Mikkelsen of Skoda UK Motorsport, to be the key contributors to achieving this."

Hänninen will push for title

Hänninen and Mikkelsen are both contesting the season-opening Rally Azores this weekend in their Fabia S2000s, and have a golden opportunity to bag some big points thanks to the relatively small entry for the Atlantic gravel event. Just nine Super 2000 cars will take the start in Ponta Delgada tomorrow (Thursday), with last-minute Peugeot entrants Bryan Bouffier and Bruno Magalhães the most likely challengers to the Scandinavian pair.

● Peugeot has confirmed that its 208 R4T will replace the 207 S2000 next season, with an R2 version of the car also being developed by the firm.

AZORES ESSENTIALS

Starts: Thursday February 23, 1330hrs, Ponta Delgada **Finishes:** Saturday February 25, 1730hrs, Ponta Delgada **Competitive distance:** 123.31 miles **Stages:** 14 **Entries:** 39 **2011 winners:** Juho Hänninen (FIN)/Mikko Markkula (FIN), Skoda Fabia S2000

LEADING ENTRIES

NO.	DRIVER	CAR
1	Juho Hänninen (FIN)/Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Skoda Fabia S2000
2	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Ola Fløene (NOR)	Skoda Fabia S2000
3	Bryan Bouffier (FRA)/Xavier Panseri (FRA)	Peugeot 207 S2000
4	Ricardo Moura (POR)/Sancho Eiró (POR)	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
5	Bruno Magalhães (POR)/Carlos Magalhães (POR)	Peugeot 207 S2000
6	Hermann Gassner Jr (GER)/Klaus Wicha (GER)	Skoda Fabia S2000
7	Sepp Wiegand (GER)/Timo Gottschalk (GER)	Skoda Fabia S2000
8	Rashid Al-Ketbi (UAE)/Khalid Al-Kendi (UAE)	Skoda Fabia S2000
9	Oleksandr Saliuk (UKR)/Pavel Cherepin (UKR)	Ford Fiesta S2000
14	Harry Hunt (GBR)/Robbie Durant (GBR)	Citroën DS3 R3

Atkinson will return to WRC for Mexico

Australian flyer Chris Atkinson will make his first WRC appearance in a World Rally Car for three years on Rally Mexico next month, where he will drive a Monster-backed Ford Fiesta RS WRC.

Ex-Subaru driver Atkinson hasn't competed at the top level since tackling Rally Ireland in January 2009. But he has close links to main Monster driver Ken Block, having made gravel notes for the American on the Tarmac WRC rounds that Block contested last year. Atkinson was formerly a driver for the Proton project, and was pipped by team-mate Alister McRae to the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship title.

Atkinson is one of 16 World Rally Car entries for the Leon-based event on March 8-11, which has attracted 30 cars in total, five more than last year. Mexican aces Francisco Name and Ricardo Triviño will drive a Mini John Cooper Works WRC and Fiesta WRC respectively.

Timing is assured for WRC crews this year

The timing and tracking system relied upon by World Rally Championship teams has been secured for the rest of this season after Stage One Technology struck a deal with the FIA.

The use of the S1T equipment had been thrown into doubt due to a financial dispute between the company and now-defunct promoter North One Sport. However, the Solihull-based firm has now reached a new agreement direct with the FIA to run its timing and airborne car tracking systems on all remaining rallies this year.

S1T had been contracted on a one-off basis to provide its services for Rally Sweden, while Rally Monte Carlo went ahead with an alternative system in place that was arranged by the Automobile Club de Monaco.

Two-time British Rally champion Keith Cronin will drive this strikingly liveried Renault Twingo R1 on Rallye Sunseeker this weekend. The Irishman is contesting the BRC season-opener as a one-off backed by Renault Sport, and has been seeded 15th for the Dorset event

Block will only fly on three WRC rounds

Block firms up triple World Rally Championship outings in M-Sport Ford

American showman Ken Block will return to the World Rally Championship this season, but will contest just three events as he branches out into other series.

The Monster Energy-backed star will drive an M-Sport-run Ford Fiesta RS WRC on Rally Mexico in March, Rally New Zealand in June and Rally Finland in August. But that will be as far as his WRC commitment extends in 2012 as his main focus will be on the US-based Global Rallycross Championship, where he will drive his self-developed Ford Fiesta HFHV.

Block also intends to compete on selected Rally America and Canadian Rally Championship rounds, starting with the Rally in the 100 Acre Wood in Missouri this weekend, where he will go up against Britain's Rally America champion David Higgins.

EX-RALLYMAN GOES ICE RACING »»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» PAGE 30

'Elliott wanted to finish in the top ten'
Wyedean historic angst, below

Plains Rally to return to Sweet Lamb stage

The Plains Rally will return to the Sweet Lamb complex for a stage and a service when this year's event runs in May.

The BTRDA Rally Series counter will feature the test, which will sit in between two stages that will run through Hafren. It joins Dyfi, Gartheiniog and a reworked run through SJR Motorsport's Woodyard on the itinerary for the single-day event on May 19.

Clerk of the course Graham Raeburn said: "Competitors praised the Hafren stage, so we will have two stages in Hafren for them. Having the service in Sweet Lamb enables this. Service crews will be able to view the stage."

Regulations will be on plainsrally.co.uk next month.

Stand-in co-driver bags class podium

Mitsubishi Lancer E10 driver Mike Threlfall gave Smeatharpe airfield owner Lloyd Stevens the drive of a lifetime at last Saturday's Kynaston Auto Services Stages Rally, after Stevens became an emergency stand-in co-driver.

Threlfall was due to have been partnered by his 16-year-old daughter Holly, but when she became ill, Stevens stood in. "Mike turned up in need of a co-driver, so Lloyd offered," said clerk of the course Andy Ballantyne. "He simply signed up for an MSA licence, borrowed a set of overalls and climbed straight in the car."

Despite a 70mph overshoot on the wet eighth stage, the partnership finished sixth overall and second in class.

Taylor will double up in 2012

Taylor eyes twin bid after Snowman push

Peter Taylor will complete the Scottish Rally Championship in the Ford Focus World Rally Car that he used to finish third in last weekend's Snowman Rally.

Taylor, 20, was returning to action after being seriously injured in a road accident last December, and feels fit enough to dovetail his BRC title assault in a Renault Clio R3 with a full campaign in Scotland.

"The car was excellent, it was an eye-opener being in a WR Car," he said. "There's a learning curve but we were getting quicker and we tried harder towards the end. The Snowman is a bit like the Monte Carlo Rally because you have to deal with the snow. Now that's out of the way, I can get used the car. I'm going to try to win the Border Counties Rally, the next round of the Scottish Championship. I've always gone well there."

Taylor said he had no discomfort from his injuries: "I was feeling it a bit during the day after but it's not too much of a problem."

Photo: Roy Dempster

Junior 1000 pace man will get a WRC factory insight

NORTHERN IRISH STARS GET WRC LINK-UP BOOST

The winner of the new Junior 1000 Rally Challenge that runs within the Northern Ireland Rally Championship will receive a day at M-Sport thanks to the backing of series competitor Fintan McGrady.

The prize will involve some tuition and advice from one of the Cumbrian firm's two factory Ford WRC drivers, Jari-Matti Latvala and Petter Solberg. McGrady has funded the prize to help encourage more young talent within the province into rallying.

"I've only arranged it for this year but I would certainly like the prize to be available every year," said McGrady. "Another three or four drivers are getting cars together for this year. We've had one round already but I hope we can attract more. We're hoping to attract some drivers from the English championship too."

The championship is open to young drivers aged between 14 and 16 and consists of six rounds, the first of which took place last weekend in Kirkistown. The technical regulations stipulate that the cars must have an engine capacity of 1000cc and must be unmodified.

The regulations are the same as the Junior 1000 Rally championship in England and Wales.

Seven crews took part in the inaugural round on the Magic Bullet Stages at Kirkistown at the weekend. Ben Crealey won in his Nissan Micra ahead of Kyle White (Peugeot 107) and Rhys Bunting (Citroën C1).

Photo: William Neill

Northern Irish rally driver Kyle Orr's World Rally Car debut ended in spectacular fashion when the engine in his Subaru Impreza WRC blew on the fourth stage of the Magic Bullet Stages at Kirkistown at the weekend. Orr was running inside the top ten overall before the failure meant the end of his day's competition

StageMag

REVELLING IN HISTORIC RALLYING

PAUL LAWRENCE

"Emotions were high on the Wyedean"

Few topics in motorsport raise as much debate as tyres. Right across the sport, competitors have strong views on matters of rubber and the conditions on the recent Wyedean Forest Rally brought the subject right back into the spotlight.

It was unquestionably cold on the Wyedean. It was one of the coldest events I've known in 44 years of rallying in what used to be my local forest. When I got out of my car at Serridge at 0800hrs on Saturday morning, the dash display told me it was minus eight. I half expected the display to add: "are you crazy?" When I got back into the car ten hours later, it was minus four, though in between I reckon it might have got as high as zero.

It was a tough day for everyone and the team at the Forest of Dean Motor Club deserve massive credit for once more running a fine event for 180 cars, despite conditions that made it difficult to stand up at times. Sheet ice was everywhere on the stages.

In these conditions, tyre choice is everything, as we had all seen on the 2010 Roger Albert Clark Rally. The prescribed 70-profile gravel tyres for historic rallying were clearly far from ideal and at least one prominent competitor on those tyres took the understandable decision to retire after slithering, bereft of grip, through the opening stage.

Others scurried around and sourced some 65-profile snow tyres, which were clearly better suited to the conditions. Nick Elliott and Dave Price, for instance, were running seventh overall after two stages in their Escort Mk2 and targeting another top ten overall finish. But by that point, everyone else had realised that snow tyres were the way to go.

There was no waiver from the MSA to permit the historics to run other than 70-profile tyres and the event organisers and scrutineers were left in an invidious position. Switching to 70-profile tyres or facing possible exclusion were the only options for competitors and inevitably emotions ran high. It was never anyone's plan to spoil the fun and, at best, it was an unfortunate oversight not to have sought the required waiver.

Thankfully, it is unlikely that the situation will be repeated.

The organisers of the Mid Wales Stages, which runs on some pretty high ground in three weeks' time, will have it covered with a waiver, just as they did a year ago when it proved to be a surprisingly mild day.

Now that the high emotions from the day of the Wyedean have settled a little, it seems logical to me that a suitable approach is made to the MSA to request a system where the waiver kicks in automatically when conditions are so severe.

After all, people that know more about this than me confirm that a snow tyre on clear gravel is a major handicap, so no one will run them unless conditions are as tough as they were 11 days ago.

AGREE/DISAGREE?
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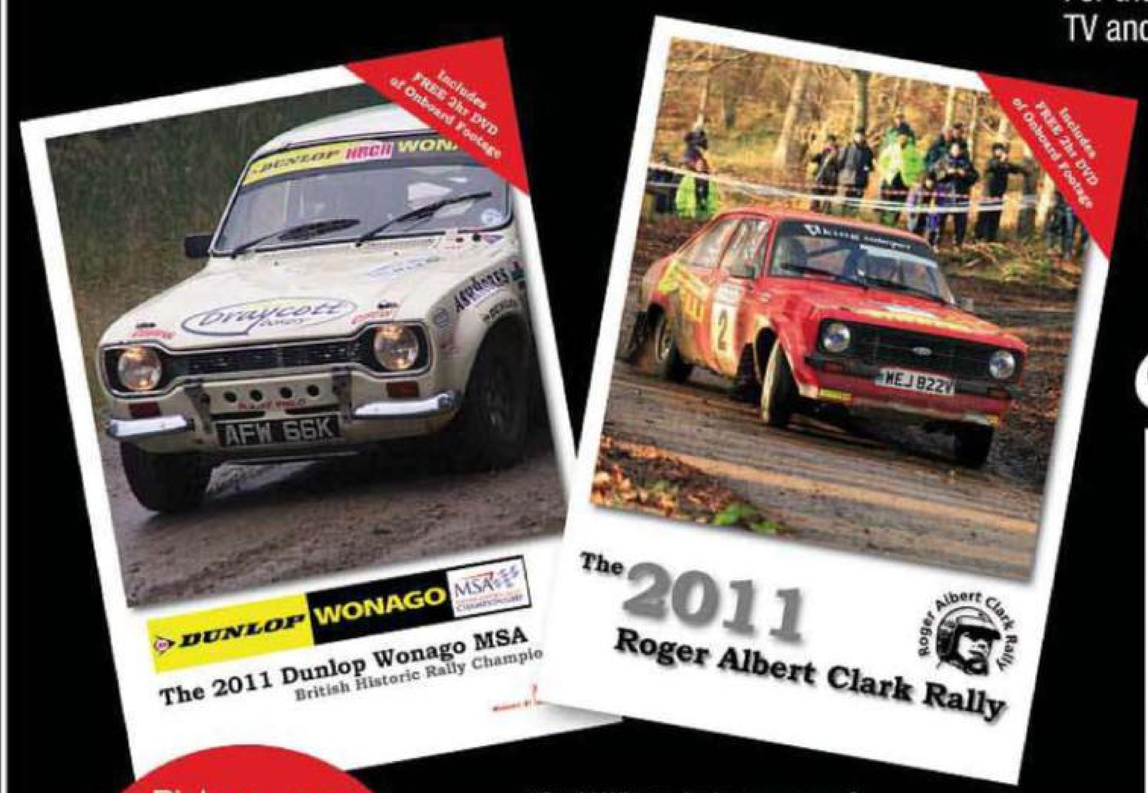

Pick up your copies from the R.A.C. Rally Stand at the Autosports Show and from the HRCR Show at Gaydon.

For the past few years, the Rally TV crew has been bringing you the very best rallying on TV and DVD, especially the Roger Albert Clark Rally and the Dunlop Wonago MSA British Historic Rally Championship. The coverage has been praised by spectators, media and competitors alike as 'spectacular' 'entertaining', 'passionate' and 'excellent'. Here is your chance to buy DVDs of these events, each two hours long and each complete with a FREE onboard DVD. Presented and produced by David Winstanley, these DVDs are the ones that you can watch over and over again!

What the papers say

"Historic rallying is booming, and it's not that hard to understand why. You can make all sorts of arguments about rule certainty, cost-effective cars and the lure of nostalgia - or you can just watch a host of Ford Escorts sliding around a corner with heaps of lurid oversteer.

If that makes you happy, then you'll love the 2011 Dunlop/Wonago.com MSA British Historic Rally Championship season review (£20 plus £2 postage, rallytv.co.uk). The two-hour DVD contains action from all seven rounds of the championship, and is topped off with a bonus DVD containing two-hours of on-board action.

It's all glorious stuff, and it's not even all Escorts. Being able to watch evocative Opels, Porsches and Saabs at full-tilt is stirring stuff from the outside, and the on-board DVD showcases just how fast and committed the top drivers in the BHRC really are... This is top viewing for anyone who enjoys their rallying."

James Attwood, Motorsport News

"David Winstanley's coverage of historic rallying in 2011 has been outstanding. He has really captured the atmosphere of the events and the characters in historic rallying. Sensational in-car footage completes the package."

Paul Lawrence

"Watching the DVD of our win on the 2010 RAC Rally made us realise just how special our victory was and it was a weekend that we will never forget."

Stefaan Stouf, Joris Erard, Winners 2010 RAC Rally

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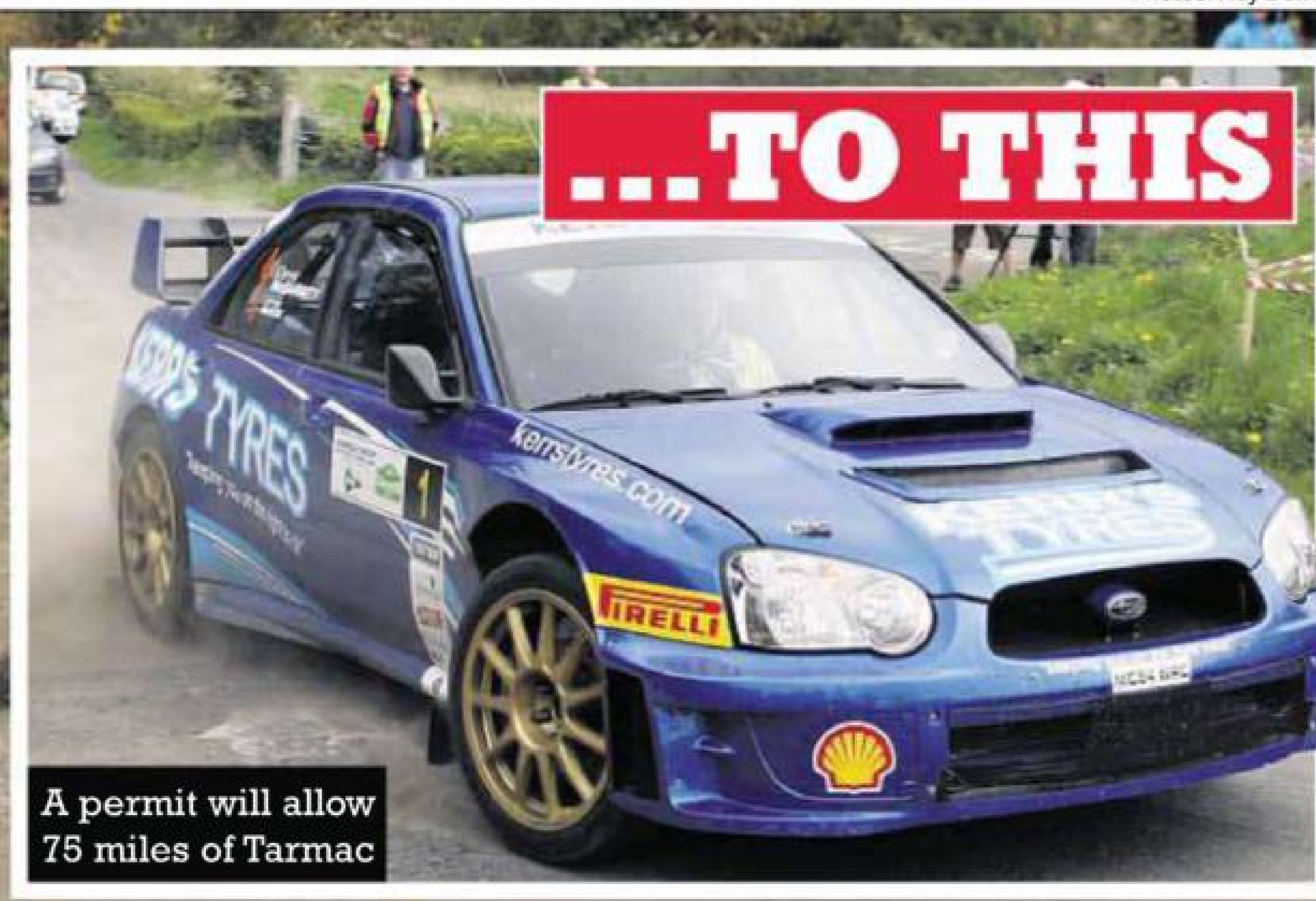
RALLY NEWS

Photos: Roy Dempster

The Down Rally has used gravel



A permit will allow 75 miles of Tarmac

IRISH FOREST RALLY TO SWITCH TO TARMAC

Down Rally undergoes format shake-up with new permit for closed-road stages

By James Bolton

The Down Rally will switch from a forest rally to a closed-road rally as a result of the event organisers securing a one-off road closure order.

There are only ten road closure permits available each year in Northern Ireland and the one that was previously used by Rally Ireland is being rotated among clubs in the area. The aim is to give different clubs experience of closed road rallies and to bring the events to different parts of the country. As a result, the Down event will move from its traditional October date to July 7.

Event spokesman Andy Gilmore said: "The Down Rally will still be based in Castlewellan as before. We'll have four Tarmac stages within a ten-mile radius of the town. The stages will be run twice so there should be about 75 stage miles in total. We're using the Hamilton's Folley stage from the Circuit of Ireland. It's 14 miles long so it should be a test. There are a lot of good roads that we'll use, some from the Ulster Rally and some from the Circuit."

Changing the event to a closed-road rally has resulted in a lot more work for the organisers. "There are hundreds of houses on the route and we have to talk to every person in those houses three times," he said.

"We just have to go door-to-door, which means it's a bigger challenge but everyone's very supportive of the rally."

Gilmore also revealed that he would be the clerk of the course on the event, having fulfilled the role on five previous Down Rallies: "I've been trusted with the roles mainly because I've experience of road closure events."

Regulations and entry details will be released in early May on rathfrilandmotorclub.com.

Fitzmaurice plots a new Subaru challenge

Irish rally driver Tom Fitzmaurice says he is using the Dunlop Irish National Rally series to get up to speed in his new Subaru.

Fitzmaurice bought the Impreza WRC S11 as he felt it was more reliable than his old Group N Mitsubishi Lancer E9. The Irishman will also enter a couple of Irish Tarmac Championship rounds, including the Rally of the Lakes in Killarney: "There's a good entry on the National, I'll be up against some good guys. I have no expectations but I want to see where I fit in among them all."

Colin Grant is running the car, which was driven by Chris Atkinson in the WRC and later by Valentino Rossi.

Fitz: Irish plan

Irish national series has entry level surge

Dunlop Irish National Rally bosses have cited a reduction in the number of rounds in the series as the reason for renewed interest in the series.

A total of 156 cars (including Juniors and Historics) have entered this Sunday's opening round, the Abbeyleix Manor Hotel Rally in Birr.

Richard Talbot, chairman of the Dunlop series sub-committee said "The reduction in the number of events from ten to eight, with the best six to count, has made the series a realistic goal for competitors. The Escort Mk2 Champions Trophy has caught the imagination. We have a championship that is attractive to a wider range of competitors."

Kevin Barrett is the top seed for Sunday's event in his Subaru Impreza WRC.

Rally men will get points for stage wins

Points tweak to encourage Citroën entrants

The Citroën Racing Trophy Ireland will feature bonus points for setting fast times on stages.

Series bosses will award ten points to the winner of each stage this year. The second fastest driver on a stage will get nine points, dropping to one point for setting the tenth quickest time. The winner of each Trophy round will get 100 points – which will be doubled for the season finale – with 90 for second place.

"We looked at the WRC Academy, which offers a point per stage, and decided to adopt it because of the way our numbers dropped off last year," said series organiser Raymond Moore. "Using this system if you retire after two-thirds of the rally you can still get points and the event winner might not get the most points. This system should help us find the fastest man out there."

The series kicks off on the West Cork Rally on March 17/18.

Injured servicemen begin Dakar training

The Race2Recovery team, which is made up of injured service personnel, has announced its programme for 2012 as it builds up to entering the 2013 Dakar Rally.

The team will enter the Tuareg Rally, which begins on March 18.

It will be the first international event it has contested. It begins and ends in Spain with most of the competitive mileage over seven days in Morocco.

The team will contest the Silkway Rally later this year, which runs from Moscow to the Black Sea.

Co-driver Corporal Tom Neathway said: "The Tuareg and the Silkway will be the first real taste of what we're likely to face on the Dakar. We're all apprehensive but we are also excited at the challenge. We've had incredible support so far from the public and the motorsport community."

IN BRIEF

Rally man's escape

Michael Glendenning was forced to miss last Sunday's Riponian Stages after his Subaru Impreza crashed out of the previous day's Snowman Rally, and was then hit by another car. He escaped without serious injury.

Allen's UK attack

American Nick Allen made his UK rallying debut on the Riponian Stages, driving one of last year's British Rally Championship Renault Twingo R2s run by Chris Birkbeck. His rally ended in retirement after six stages, when he was second in class.

A gong for Jones

Young Welsh driver Barry Jones was presented with the Gareth Hall Memorial Maximum Attack Trophy at the recent Association of North West Car Club awards. The trophy is presented to the ANWCC registered driver who, in the opinion of the judges headed by the Hall family, was the most entertaining to watch in 2011.

Mega Manx honour

Last year's Chris Kelly Memorial Stages Rally has been chosen as the ANWCC Rally of the Year for the 2011 season. The trophy, awarded to organisers Manx Auto Sport, was displayed last weekend at this year's running of the two-day Tarmac event.

Howe's my driving?

Rhondda-based Rob Howe is coming out of retirement with his Ford Escort G3 after a 22-year lay off and is looking for a navigator to guide him on selected Tarmac rallies. Interested co-drivers can reach Rob on 07795 999585.

New BRC app

MSA British Rally Championship bosses have launched a new app. The Ynil Ltd-produced app, which is available for free on Android and Apple products, will contain news, results and live updates from every BRC round this year.

Maggie Smith

Northallerton Automobile Club veteran and rally co-driver Maggie Smith passed away last week. Maggie was an integral part of the club for many years and was involved in the organisation of the Christmas Stages Rally.

Campbell to Mull

Rally of Scotland clerk of the course Iain Campbell has taken over the running of the Tunnocks Mull Rally. This year's event will take place on the Hebridean island on October 12-14.

Back from a bang

Ian Kenvin and Ian Meakin finished 15th overall and first Ford Escort on the Rali Cwm Gwnedraeth at the weekend, less than a year after destroying their car in a huge accident on the Epynt Ranges and having to completely rebuild it.

PAYNE TAKES SPOILS ON RIPONIAN >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 29

REIS Get connected

ASPHALT & GRAVEL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES 2012/13

BTRDA MSA

How do you secure the future of national level Asphalt and Gravel Rallying within the United Kingdom in the current fragile financial climate?

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For 2012 and 2013 the title sponsors of the MSA Asphalt Championship and the BTRDA Rally Series will be REIS and Get Connected. Both the Championship and Series will be branded to identify the sponsorship and will be known respectively as the REIS – Get Connected MSA Asphalt Championship and the REIS – Get Connected BTRDA Rally Series.

For the full schedule visit: www.reis.co.uk

Storemags

INSIGHT: FIESTA JUNIOR

Photos: LAT and Steve Jones

Class will cater for 14 to 16-year-olds

JUNIOR

SENIOR

There is a direct link to the Senior series

A TIN TOP BREEDING GROUND

Why a new junior championship is aiming to find the BTCC stars of the future

TOURING CARS

Motorbase has offered a BTCC test for the champion

BY JAMES BASS
REPORTER

For any young wannabe racing driver the route to the top is still not straightforward.

Talent aside, there are a number of factors to take into account. Do you choose single-seaters, tin-tops or perhaps even stay in karting to improve your racecraft? Budgets must be considered as well as the levels of competition in the chosen category. It's not a simple route A or route B decision.

One of the options now available to young car racers is the BRSCC's *Motorsport News*-backed Ford Fiesta Junior Championship, a series that organisers say has been designed to help breed future touring car drivers.

Competitors aged between 14 and 16 years old will contest 16 rounds using the popular Fiesta ST machine, which has been tried and tested by senior drivers in the well-supported Ford Fiesta Championship.

With Ginetta Juniors and 750 Motor Club's Saxmax classes catering for the same age bracket, the Fiesta Junior championship will be in their direct firing line.

Kevin Shortis, championship co-ordinator at Ford Racing UK, says that there is a gap in the market though that can be filled by the new Fiesta series. "We wanted to create a championship that is more in line with touring cars," says Shortis. "We looked at other series such as Ginettas, which are rear-wheel drive and more aligned to sportscars, and felt that the new Fiesta series can provide the right training for young drivers looking to go into tin-tops in the future. The car is front-wheel-drive and the series is affordable and more relevant in our eyes. SaxMax is another one of our competitors but it's an ageing model of car and we reckon the Fiesta is a more attractive option."

Like many championships, the Fiesta Junior series has taken a while to come to fruition. The MSA is limited to licensing four junior categories in total and each must adhere to strict safety regulations to protect young and inexperienced racers. The BRSCC previously ran the T Cars Championship, but after demise of that series in 2008 it has been able to use the available junior licence to start the Fiesta Junior category.

"It has taken us a while to get it all approved but we are finally there and ready to run the championship," says BRSCC chairman Bernard Cottrell. "We have worked closely with the MSA to rework the car and from now on all Fiestas being produced will be built to the junior spec, which will allow them to be easily modified for the senior championship in the future."

The MSA required a modification to the Fiesta's rollcage. Besides that, the junior and senior cars are no different. The engine still produces 150bhp and the gearbox and suspension are the same as in the senior car.

While a new series normally suffers from first year gremlins and small problems with the cars, due to the lack of track time, the Fiesta series is set to benefit from the progress made in the senior championship. It has developed into a thoroughbred racer over the years and with just a small modification to make the car suitable for juniors, new drivers will benefit from the development.

MotorSport Vision ARDS test driver Nico Ferrari recently visited Castle Combe to help introduce new drivers to the championship. He has helped develop the car over the past couple of years and says the Fiesta is suitable for first time racers.

"One thing you have to realise is that these junior drivers don't even have their driving licences, so being able to adapt quickly to a racing car is the key," he says. "The cars have proven themselves in the senior class.

"The adjustable suspension means that the drivers can tailor the car to suit their driving style. The set-up can be fine-tuned and the car is responsive and gives a lot of feedback. It is forgiving also, giving you the opportunity to save it if it goes slightly wrong."

Cost is always a factor for drivers moving into junior car categories. While many will be used to big budgets due to the cost of karting nowadays, value is still something that drivers are after in cars.

At around £25,000 per season it's cheaper than Ginettas, which is estimated to cost £60,000 for a drive outside of the new rookie class. But it's more expensive than Saxmax, which is tailored for drivers on a budget at approximately £10,000 per year.

But for the money series organisers believe that the Fiesta championship can offer more than its rivals on track. The 2.0-litre cars will run on slick tyres, unlike in Ginettas or Saxmax. This is aimed at helping young drivers get used to racing on the compound ahead of potential careers in touring cars. "The slick tyres are a real plus point for drivers wanting to get the true feel of a race car," says series organiser Shortis.

And the preparation for touring cars does not stop there either. Motorbase announced that the champion will get a test drive in a Ford Focus BTCC car. Shortis says that the incentive will help boost numbers. "We have around 12 drivers signed up but we are hoping for 15," says Shortis. "A prize like the test will give the champion a chance to sample some top class machinery and use the skills learnt in the Fiestas. Last year Paul O'Neill drove the car and as soon as he got out of it he said it was just like driving a 'baby touring car'. That's what we have aimed to create." ■

TECH SPEC

FIESTA JUNIOR CAR
Engine: 2.0-litre Duratec, 16 -valve
Power: 150bhp
Top Speed: 129mph
0-60mph: 7.1s
Torque: 140 ft lb
Transmission: Five-speed H-pattern
Suspension: AST, three-way adjustable
Tyres: 185/580 R15 Dunlop SP Sport

Teams are pleased with junior Fiesta's simplicity

Although it's a new championship the Fiesta Junior series will be supported by the likes of Advent, Daniels and WDE Motorsport this year.

The teams will prepare cars and are offering machines for hire. Pete Daniel, head of Daniels Motorsport, says the car is a perfect starting point for any racer. "The simplicity of this car is what makes it so great," says Daniels. "We are able to make a small modification to the senior car and then it's fit to drive in the juniors. That is attractive to drivers. It also works the other way, we make a small adjustment and its back ready for seniors."

Cottrell: behind series

INTERVIEW: NICK FOSTER

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, LAT and Writtle Photographic

FOSTER'S LONG ROAD TO THE TOP

The Hampshire rally driver turned racer has taken an odd path to the BTCC

BY MATT JAMES
DEPUTY EDITOR

It's unusual that a British Touring Car Championship racer's motorsport hero should be Ari Vatanen. But for WSR racer Nick Foster, it was the Finnish rally ace who made him realise that he wanted to compete.

"I had always been to watch the RAC Rally in the 1980s and I fell in love with it," says the 46-year-old Hampshire man. "People like Vatanen made me want to get involved."

Now, though, Foster is used to going door handle-to-door handle with Jason Plato and Matt Neal in the British Touring Car Championship. It is a long way from his days standing in the woods. He will return to the WSR team alongside Rob Collard and Tom Onslow-Cole in 2012 driving a turbocharged BMW 320si.

In the late 1980s, Foster decided that spectating wasn't enough and he wanted to make the jump into the sport. He joined 15,000 others and entered a Ford Sierra Rally Search competition to unearth new talent. After the hopefuls were whittled down through regional competitions, he went to the final at Boreham. He lost out to eventual winner George Donaldson, who is now Subaru's Group N co-ordinator.

"Despite not winning, I knew I had to do rallying," says Foster. "I love the feeling of having the car slide around underneath me and always enjoyed the gravel rallies the most. Getting on top of the car was such a great feeling."

After concentrating on building up his business, Foster took the plunge in the late 1990s and took part in the Silverstone Rally Sprint championship and contested Rally GB in 1997 in a Gp N Ford Escort and then a year later in a similar spec Mitsubishi Lancer E5.

"When I look back it seems incredible that, as an amateur, you are able to perform on such a big stage," says Foster. "Although I was in a Group N car, I was able to run on the same stages as the world champion and that is something you can't really experience anywhere else in the motorsport world. It also prompted one of my biggest disappointments in rallying. I was running on the fringes of the top 20 going in to the final day of the RAC in 1997 but I pushed too hard in the morning and I rolled in the fog. That was the one that got away for me – it would have been an amazing result."

After tasting the international stage, the desire was there to step up to the top flight of the sport but the backing wasn't. Reluctantly, he decided to focus elsewhere and left the sport behind. Foster said: "To jump from Group N to a World Rally Car was just impossible. When I do things, I want to do them properly and I couldn't put it together."

Foster's competitive urges weren't sated for long though, and he switched his attentions away from the stages and on to the circuits. In 2006, he took part in the Radical SR3 Championship. Foster says: "I wanted to experience what it was like to go wheel-to-wheel with other drivers. That's why I went circuit racing.

"It was a huge eye-opener for me. When you rally drive to any level, you learn all about how to control the car but you don't know anything about racecraft and that was the thing I enjoyed. You have to understand about how to defend your position and how to plan and plot an overtaking move on a rival. The Radicals are quick cars too, so I was getting used to the increase in speed too. There were things I could carry over from rallying, such as the feeling of competition, but that was about it and there were new things to find out about which made it more appealing."

With so much to learn, the next step in Foster's career was a crucial one. He tied up a deal to take part in the British GT Championship with RPM in a Dodge Viper in 2007 and '08. He was partnered with the rapid Nigel Redwood and was able to absorb the tricks of the trade from a faster partner. It is a mark of Foster's personality that he didn't have his nose put out of joint by lining up with a quicker driver but he used it as an opportunity to improve his own form.

"Maybe Nigel was a second and a half a lap quicker than me per lap at the start of the season, but I had full access to the data and that meant I would be able to see exactly where I was losing out," says the electronics company boss. "Then I realised I had to get the confidence in myself. If I knew the car could do it because Nigel was, then it was up to me to get more out of myself. It was a turning point for me and those were two invaluable seasons."

Another turning point was a friendship with former BTCC Independent Trophy holder Rob Collard. The pair met through business but formed a strong bond, which led to Foster sponsoring his Hampshire neighbour. Foster would go to BTCC meetings with customers to enjoy the hospitality, but it got him thinking. "You always watch and wonder if you could do better," says Foster. "I talked to Rob about it and to my wife Claire and decided to go for it. It is the most competitive racing in the country, it has a massive profile and it is evenly matched. It's a huge commitment in time and finance, but it's a three-year plan."

So, with the support of his family, Foster joined Collard at WSR for his maiden challenge in a rear-wheel drive BMW 320si. Last season, Foster was a revelation. After a couple of bit-part seasons in the GT Cup, the BTCC paddock was mostly unaware of Foster's background and didn't take him into consideration when looking for likely surprise packages, particularly in a car that wasn't among the turbocharged brigade. He excelled in damp conditions, when the car control grounding that he had from rallying proved invaluable, but it was unfair to say that it was the only time he shone. Three competitive races at Rockingham also netted points and he ended up ninth in the Independents Trophy standings.

"I learned so much over the year and I am ready to take another step in 2012," says Foster. "WSR is such a strong team and I am fully aware that Rob is the number one driver but he helped me too. I was able to tap into his knowledge.

"I want to improve in qualifying and on the opening lap this year," he says. "I was a little bit too circumspect in 2011. I knew I needed mileage so I would let people muscle past me because you can't learn a lot stuck in the gravel. I'd rather let people pass me and try to get them back towards the end of the races so that I had more miles. That will change in 2012. We have Rob and Tom in the team this year. Both are really talented guys and there is more progress to make."

Given the way Foster blossomed in 2011, there is little doubt that he is in the right environment to take another step forward this season. That means he will be targeting race wins, which will be great news for him – and does mean he might have to extend the timescale of that three-year plan. ■

Businessman Foster shone in damp conditions last year

Podium came in damp at Croft

Brit has tried to avoid trouble

British GT run in Viper

Foster shone on RAC Rally in 1997

Stevemags.com

Photos: Steve Jones and LAT

PORSCHE'S NEW CHALLENGE

Why club level series will be revolutionised in 2012

Drivers can get a cut-price taste of racing a Porsche

Mortimer won last season

Camaraderie is one of the cup's main appeals

Last year's Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge winner Oly Mortimer dominated the series on a shoestring budget.

The Scot won eight races with the small Tynecastle Garage team and did a lot of the engineering himself alongside the team. Mortimer says: "Even though the grids weren't great last year it was competitive.

"The car was quite easy to run and when we did have a problem with the gearbox, Carrera Cup outfit Team Parker Racing helped us out.

"The series had great camaraderie and I learned so much and it's amazing to think we spent under £40,000 running a GT3 Porsche. The series is the one place where you can do that and still compete against larger teams."

BY ROB LADBROOK
RACING EDITOR

Older Carrera Cup cars are catered for

When the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge was launched back in 2010, it was easy to think that it was more of a white elephant than a revolution for budding sportscar drivers.

The series has struggled to gain momentum for the two years. Grids have been modest and the class has slipped under the radar. This year looks like it will be a different story, though, as the German sportscar giant has opted to throw its weight behind the initiative.

When the GT3 Cup Challenge was launched it was a Porsche-blessed operation, which was run by the independent Porsche Club of Great Britain. Although Porsche put up some technical support and offered a Carrera Cup prize race for the outright winner, the series suffered from a lack of promotion and failed to shake off the image of being just another expensive club series.

The second year wasn't much better either, which prompted Porsche to step in. The entire series has been taken under the wing of Porsche Cars Great Britain, the firm that transformed the fortunes of the Carrera Cup, now one the UK's best supported sportscar championships.

The changes go far deeper than just a label on the series' logo too. Porsche's aim is to align the series closer to the Carrera Cup and transform the GT3 Cup Challenge into a breeding ground for younger drivers while also being a haven for gentleman drivers.

"We don't want the GT3 Cup Challenge to be a Carrera Cup clone. At its heart it is a club racing series and we will never move away from that ethos," says Porsche GB motorsport manager Marion Barnaby. "The last thing we want is for amateur drivers to think of Porsche as a scary manufacturer coming in to raise prices and dictate things when our plans are the exact opposite.

"Most manufacturers have a ladder of progression and focus on improving the top rung. Porsche already has the Supercup at the top so it seems right that we should go in the opposite direction instead and focus on the foundation of our ladder. It shows that Porsche has a dedication to its amateur drivers as well as its international stars."

Barnaby: wants racers

The focus for this year is on encouraging gentleman drivers. Barnaby points out that Porsche has sold almost 200 track cars into the UK alone and there are almost as many machines used for track days as competitive events. To encourage those drivers to come racing Porsche has pledged to supply a team of technicians to every round to assist with general maintenance and set-up advice across the grid.

"The series is designed to be a stepping stone for amateur and gentleman drivers to help them make the transition into racing," Barnaby says. "The 911 has always been a relatively easy car to maintain so it's a perfect club racing tool but making the step into competition is often a scary prospect.

"A Porsche can be quite complex in terms of set-up and driving style so we'll offer everyone guidance and assist with any technical problems. That service will allow drivers turning up with just a car and a trailer to get a similar level of support to a driver in a team. It takes the stress out of a race weekend and makes it accessible for drivers with a range of funding."

While the series will rely largely on amateur racers it has a dual purpose, doubling up as a feeder class for the Carrera Cup. Budgets are estimated to range from £30,000 to run an older model 911, up to around £80,000 to run a newer car with team support. That is under half the cost of the headline Carrera Cup championship.

"We often see drivers from non-GT series moving into Carrera Cup and they struggle to adapt to the 911 GT3 in such a competitive class. The GT3 Cup is also a platform for aspiring drivers to gain experience of the cars in a less stressful environment before moving into the PCCGB. It allows drivers to learn a new style of racing without spending a huge budget."

Porsche's administration of the class has also started to pay dividends. The series will now run on British Automobile Racing Club meetings and will be packaged alongside the popular Formula Renault BARC and Kumho BMW championships to create a mini-race package. In addition Porsche has arranged for the series finale to run alongside the Carrera Cup in support of the British Touring Car Championship rounds at Silverstone in October.

"We wanted to strengthen the link between the GT3 Cup and the Carrera Cup," says Barnaby. "We don't want our drivers to feel like the poor relation of Carerra Cup so we're splitting our resources between the two series, which will culminate in the two running together on the BTCC package.

"You cannot sit back and wait for drivers to come to you. We fully intend to go out and find drivers with 911s that aren't racing, find out why they're not and then tailor the GT3 Cup to suit those needs." ■

ESSENTIALS

PORSCHE GT3 CUP CHALLENGE

Class Structure:
Class One: For 997 model 911 GT3 Cup cars up to and including the 2009 model year. There will be two minimum weights to balance performance between the 2007/08 cars
Class Two: For all 996 model 911 GT3 Cup cars. Certain technical changes can be made to earlier cars to ensure a level playing field
Series requirements:
Licence grade: National B (minimum)
Budget: £30-£80,000
Organising club: British Automobile Racing Club (BARC)

CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
Apr 7/8	Snetterton
May 19/20	Rockingham
Jun 17	Thruxton
Jul 21/22	Croft
Aug 18/19	Donington Park
Oct 6/7	Silverstone*

*Denotes BTCC support round. All events are double-headers

LEADING TEAMS

TEAM
Team Parker Racing
Parr Motorsport
RedLine Racing
Celtic Speed
Juta Racing

Championship contact:
Darioush Gheissari: 0118 916 5012
gt3cupchallengegb@porsche.co.uk

Stormarch.com

storemags.com

PROFILE: MATT BELL

Photos: LAT and Jakob Ebrey

OUT OF NOWHERE

Matt Bell has had a rapid rise through the ranks of sportscar racing

Matt Bell is a key part of McLaren team

Brit will share car with David Brabham and Alvaro Parente

BY ROB LADBROOK
RACING EDITOR

Back in 2008 Matt Bell was just one of the 250,000 spectators that piled into the La Sarthe Circuit in France for the Le Mans 24 Hours. Fast-forward four years and the Newcastle man is gearing up to share a factory assisted McLaren GT car with one of the drivers who starred in that race.

This year Bell will join Australian sportscar star David Brabham and McLaren factory racer Alvaro Parente to campaign one of the Woking firm's MP4-12C GT3 machines in the Blancpain Endurance Series. The car will be run by the United Autosports team, which has supported Bell throughout his short career so far.

The past four years have been a whirlwind for Bell, the 22-year-old brother of Le Mans racer Rob, one he says that he never expected: "The last few years have been just amazing, it's been like a dream. It was only at Le Mans in 2008 when I sat down with my brother and said 'I want to be a sportscar driver, how should we do this?' I never imagined that only a few years later that I'd be sharing a car with David Brabham. I was back in the crowd watching him win Le Mans for Peugeot in 2009, and now he's my team-mate. It's difficult to imagine how things could get much better."

Bell made his racing bow in 2009 when he took to the wheel of a Ginetta G20 at Donington Park. That race was set up by Richard Dean, then managing director of Ginetta. Dean had been influential in helping Rob Bell up through the sportscar ranks and was keen to give Matt his first step. Bell Jr's first event didn't go to plan. In two bruising outings he managed a best finish of 15th, but his raw pace had shown his potential. Bell was on the podium at the fifth attempt.

That prompted Dean to take him on as a junior driver for the fledgling United Autosports squad when it was formed in 2010. Bell contested two events in the Ginetta G50 Cup before getting a shock call-up to international level.

"At the time [United Autosports co-founder] Zak Brown had his co-driver drop out so Richard offered me the chance to race one of the team's Audi R8 LMS GT3 cars in the FIA GT3 Championship rounds at Silverstone," says Bell. "It was only my 15th ever car race!

"I turned up to the event and was completely daunted by it all. The team had told me not to worry because at the time FIA GT3 was more of a gentleman's class, but as soon as we got to the grid I realised that wasn't the case. It was much more competitive than I was used to and it was a huge learning curve."

Key to Bell's rapid rise is the support that both the team and his brother have given him. Bell adds that he had the perfect infrastructure to learn quickly.

"My biggest strength is having Rob on the end of the phone," he says. "He's achieved so much in his career and is one of the best driver coaches out there. I've found myself having a mini coaching session with him over a family dinner. His advice is invaluable. United Autosports has such a depth of great engineers and coaching staff and Richard has given me so much support.

"It was a big step up to the Audi but the team does a lot of testing and simulator work, which really helps you to get to grips with a car, track or set-up quickly. From there it was all about getting my head straight and gaining confidence. The team has guided me the entire way. I couldn't have wished for anything better."

Bell's maturity as a driver showed during an early British GT race last year where he led the team to its first outright victory in the two-hour event at Snetterton. The race counted for double points and handed Bell and co-driver Mike Guasch the championship lead, which they retained for much of the year before slipping to sixth behind the faster Ferrari 458s in the final races.

"Getting my first win was such a relief," he says. "It paid the team back for all of the hard work and belief that they'd had in me. British GT was great because I learned in a competitive environment with drivers that were on my level, and there was also some top guys at the front that I had to push to keep up with."

That performance was also gratifying for Dean as it showed his belief in Matt hadn't been in vain. "Matt reminds me so much of his brother it's almost scary," says Dean. "He is so quick to learn and so determined to improve every time he gets in the car. He's naturally quick and a champion in the making. He has the potential to follow in Rob's footsteps."

Bell gets advice from boss Dean (l)

This year though is a bigger chance for Bell. The Blancpain Endurance Series is shaping up to be one of the most competitive series in the GT racing world with factory blessed entries from McLaren, Ferrari and Mercedes. His brother will also be on the grid in a Gulf Racing McLaren.

"This year is another jump forward for me," says Bell Jr. "Before I was always the junior driver, but now I've got superstar team-mates and I'm in the big leagues. The McLaren is also a different animal. So far I've only had a few laps on a wet track but the technology behind the car is stunning and the responsiveness of it is amazing. The Audi is a friendly car, but we'll have to push the McLaren to get on top of it. Having drivers like David and Alvaro around me will help me learn the ropes pretty quickly.

"My ultimate ambition is to share a car with Rob at Le Mans. This year I'll be racing against him, which will be interesting. I wouldn't be surprised if the coaching and tips start to decrease if I end up getting too close to him..." ■

Motorsport's gain was rugby's loss

While he's now established as a sportscar racer, Bell came very close to quitting motorsport altogether back in 2008.

He started his racing career racing karts as a teenager and became the British ICA champion in 2005 before stepping up to Formula A in 2006. He then quit to go to college and his passion for another sport nearly led him down a different career path.

"I used to play rugby for my school and my local team in Blaydon," Bell says. "I ended up being quite good at it and I loved the game. In 2007 I got an offer I couldn't refuse from Guinness Premiership Rugby Union team Newcastle Falcons, which offered me a place at its academy.

"The experience of working with the professional coaches was amazing but late in 2008 I suffered a nasty back injury which pretty much put an end to my dreams of making the first team. Luckily, I had motorsport to fall back on after that."

BELL'S RAPID RISE

Bell started racing career in Ginettas...

...and quickly stepped up to run a G50

Impressive outings led to an Audi role...

...and Bell's now upgraded to McLaren

StoreMags.com

BRC SEASON PREVIEW

FOUR INTO T

This season, two-wheel-drive cars will headline the British Rally C

Four-wheel-drive cars are a thing of the past in the BRC

CALENDAR

Rallye Sunseeker
When: February 24/25 **Where:** Bournemouth, Dorset
Stages: gravel tests in Dorset forests
2011 F2 division winners: Siim Plangi/Marek Sarapuu (Renault Twingo R2)

Bulldog International Rally North Wales
When: March 23/24 **Where:** Welshpool, Powys
Stages: gravel tests in classic Welsh forests
2011 F2 division winners: Mark Donnelly/Barry McNulty (Renault Clio R3)

Pirelli International Rally
When: April 27/28 **Where:** Carlisle, Cumbria
Stages: gravel stages in Kielder Forest
2011 F2 division winners: Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Citroën DS3 R3)

Jim Clark International Rally
When: June 1-3 **Where:** Duns, Scottish Borders
Stages: closed roads in Scottish Borders
2011 F2 division winners: Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Citroën DS3 R3)

Todds Leap International Rally NI
When: August 17/18 **Where:** Antrim, Northern Ireland
Stages: closed roads in County Antrim
2011 winners: Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Citroën DS3 R3)

International Rally Yorkshire
When: September 28/29 **Where:** Scarborough, Yorkshire
Stages: gravel tests in North Yorkshire forests
2011 F2 division winners: Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Citroën DS3 R3)

BY JAMES ATTWOOD
EDITOR

The British Rally Championship will look radically different when it begins in Dorset this weekend.

The four-wheel-drive machines that have dominated for the last decade or so are gone, and Britain's highest-profile rally championship will now be fought out by competitors in two-wheel-drive cars.

Getting rid of four-wheel-drive machinery was a bold move by series bosses to reduce costs and position the BRC as a breeding ground for future rally stars, and has provoked plenty of criticism from people who believe the British championship should include the most powerful machinery available.

As a result, there will be plenty of interest in how the new-look BRC fares on Saturday's season-opening Rallye Sunseeker.

Why two-wheel-drive?

In 2006 British championship bosses decided to remove the top class for World Rally Cars, in favour of Group N and Super 2000 machinery. The idea was that it would help cut costs and put the focus on younger drivers. The result was a qualified success. For example, Keith Cronin's back-to-back championships in 2009 and 2010 helped establish him as a major talent, but he failed to pick up the support needed to step up the international stage and spent last year on the sidelines. Such examples helped contribute to the decision to switch to a two-wheel-drive format.

"There were two major factors in switching to two-wheel-drive," says BRC manager Mark Taylor. "The first was that four-wheel-drive Group N cars were no longer being provided for by manufacturers, and Super 2000 or Regional Rally Cars were far too expensive to consider. During the World Rally Car era of the BRC, drivers with a big chequebook ruled the roost. Aspiring drivers might like to drive World Rally Cars, but the sport has changed.

"For rookies to get to the top is not straightforward, and they need to show talent. If a chequebook rules rallying, then a driver without much cash won't get the opportunity to show their talents or develop skills.

"The second point is the increasing number of manufacturers developing two-wheel-drive cars that are similar to those you can buy in a showroom. It's a unique opportunity to engage in dialogue with car manufacturers and in the long-term it's important to bring them into the championship. If we can get them involved as stakeholders they will have an interest in promoting and growing the BRC."

Taylor: BRC series chief

Arguably the finest era of the BRC was the late 1990s, when the series ran to the two-wheel-drive Formula Two rules. That prompted an influx of manufacturers, with marketing budgets totalling millions of pounds. While it's unrealistic to expect similar numbers to get involved in the current BRC, the fact the likes of Citroën, Renault, Skoda and Ford (via M-Sport) are all active in selling two-wheel-drive rally cars gives them an incentive to support the BRC's switch.

Will it benefit the younger drivers?

A key part of switching to two-wheel-drive is turning the BRC into a real proving and training ground for young drivers. Taylor says that drivers aspiring to the WRC can learn more relevant skills in two-wheel-drive cars than they can in Group N machines.

"If you run in a two-wheel-drive car properly you can learn all the skills you need to drive a four-wheel-drive car fast," he says. "Competitors with aspirations can see that. We want people to come from all over the world to do the BRC. We have six great events that are all unique, so our calendar is like a mini-WRC."

To use a racing analogy, BRC bosses have turned the championship into a proving ground like British Formula Three. Taylor says: "The difference between F3 and the BRC is that you can do the BRC by starting in an R1 class car – which is like a Formula Ford – and work your way up through the classes. By the age of 25 you can be British champion and have learnt all your skills properly over a number of years."

What has the reaction been?

That really depends on whether you drive a two or four-wheel-drive car. Those drivers who have been effectively ruled out of the BRC – such as reigning champion David Bogie – aren't happy, but it has spiked interest for those running two-wheel-drive cars.

Front-wheel-drive rallying expert Justin Dale, a frontrunner in the period when the series ran for Super 1600 and World Rally Cars, will drive a Renault Twingo R2 as course car on Rallye Sunseeker. He says: "It's a good move for the championship. It's certainly the best way to get people back in it, and it's good to see there's been a bit of interest this year. It's possible for a young driver to get into a two-wheel-drive car. It's achievable to get in an R1 class car and get out rallying without that much money or experience."

Notably, the BRC has received more attention from manufacturers than it has in recent years. Renault will have the most visible presence this year, with the French firm supporting the Twingo Trophy for both R1 and R2 cars and registering for the manufacturers' championship (which scores the top two finishing cars from each firm). M-Sport's Fiesta SportTrophy will continue in the R2 class. Citroën has signed up for makes' points and has been considering some form of works supported team of DS3 – although delays in project approval means that won't happen for this weekend.

Will it help drivers graduate?

When the BRC ran for four-wheel-drive cars, the progression from it was to move into the Production or Super 2000 world championships. But those series were dramatically more expensive than the BRC, and no young driver has successfully made the leap in recent years.

Switching to two-wheel-drive should mean that the BRC fits better into the framework that has recently been developed for young
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Photos: Jakob Ebrey

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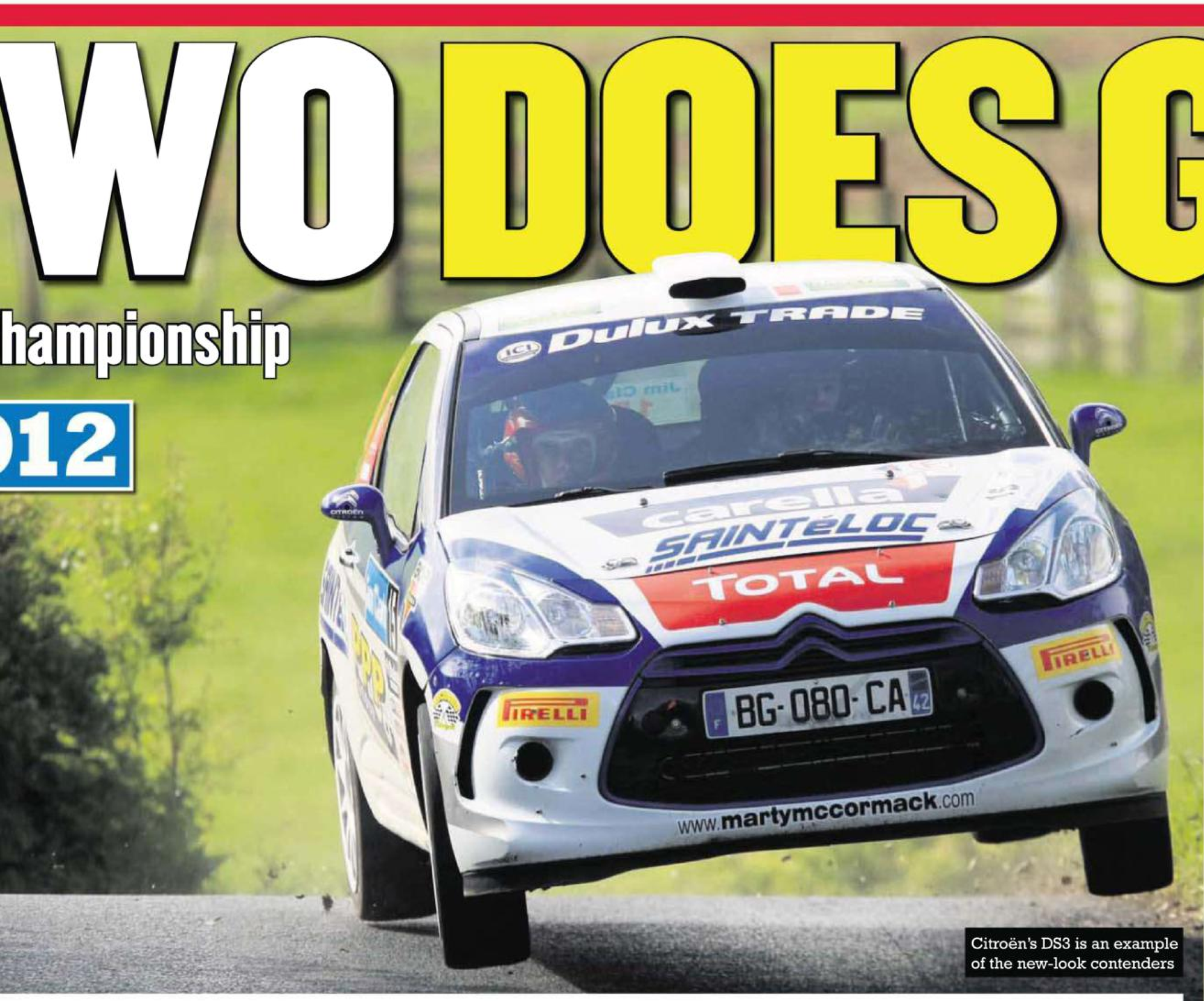

Citroën's DS3 is an example of the new-look contenders

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R3 and R2 divisions, the R1 class has been the biggest struggle for series bosses to sell. Designed as an entry-level category for young drivers to learn about international events at a low cost, several drivers have opted to skip past it and leap straight into R2.

Taylor says: "We're disappointed with the entry in Class R1, but we're hopeful it will pick up. The people who've decided to skip a step have made the wrong decision. The BRC is not a fast track. It's an opportunity for a driver to learn skills and their craft in an objective way. A challenge at the moment is that people want to run before they can walk. That's why the British Junior championship is aimed at 23-year-olds in R1 cars."

Will it reduce costs?

There's no doubt that running a car in the lowest R1 division of the BRC will cost considerably less than running a Group N or Super 2000 car. But if you want to win the BRC this year, you'll realistically need to be driving a car that competes in the top class, which means you'll need a Super 1600 or an R3 machine.

The class of the field is likely to be the Citroën DS3 R3, and the problem is that those cars aren't cheap. A DS3 costs somewhere around £90,000, which is about the same as a high-end Group N Subaru Impreza or Mitsubishi Lancer. But where the R3 cars benefit is in lower running costs. Because the R3 class allows for rally-bred parts to be fitted, they can be more durable than parts on production-based Group N machinery.

Reigning Fiesta SportTrophy champion Osian Pryce, who has upgraded to a DS3 this year, says: "The Citroën does cost a lot to buy initially, but we've talked with some people who run one and the running costs are actually lower than a Fiesta R2 because the parts are more durable."

Estimates obtained by *MN* suggest that a season running an R3 car will cost around £60,000-£70,000 (plus the cost of the car). That drops to £40,000-£50,000 for a year in an R2 car, and £25,000-£35,000 for an R1 car.

Long-time BRC squad Autosport Technology has run a pair of Renault Twingo R2s in the BRC in recent years, and this year will run a DS3 for Jarkko Nikara. Team boss Richard Asquith says: "It's much better from a cost point of view. You could run a Group N car in the BRC before and just about get away with it, like Adam Gould did, but you wouldn't be able to show your full potential. Two-wheel-drive solves a lot of those problems."

Varied marques in new BRC

What are entry numbers like?

One key theory behind switching to two-wheel-drive is that cheaper machinery should lead to an increase in entries.

As *Motorsport News* went to press, there were 25 entries for the international section of Rallye Sunseeker. Last year's event – when the championship had classes for two and four-wheel-drive cars – had 27. Both those figures include a number of non-registered drivers.

"We're two short of last year, but we had 12 four-wheel-drive cars last year and I know of more entries to come in future rounds this year," says Taylor. "We're happy with that response. The antagonists will always find excuses to knock what we're doing and say it's as cheap to run in an S2000 car, but we're bringing the entry costs down to where they should be."

The key for the BRC will be keeping entry levels high across the full season. Last season's championship was due to finish on Rally Isle of Man, but that was canned in part due to a lack of entries. Just three registered four-wheel-drive cars contested last year's Rally Yorkshire season finale. The hope is that the lower running costs – and greater competition – will keep more drivers in the championship for longer.

What does it mean for spectators?

This is the crunch question for those of you still pondering if it's worth the trip down to Dorset for this weekend's season opener.

Part of the criticism of the move is that many claim small front-wheel-drive cars are simply not as spectacular to watch as fire-breathing four-wheel-drive monsters.

But Asquith says: "From a spectator's point of view, I think a two-wheel-drive car being driven well is more exciting to watch than a Group N car. If you look back to the days of the old Peugeot 206 Cup, that had ten or 12 cars in it being driven by very good drivers and it was very exciting. I hope the fans take to it."

Former Ford motorsport boss Mark Deans, who is now helping the BRC with commercial works, adds: "We've got to get rallying back to where it's about the size of a driver's balls, rather than the size of their wallet. In the past, front-wheel-drive cars were dull to watch. But a young driver pushing to the limit in a current two-wheel-drive machine is spectacular. It can re-energise rallying. People need to come and have a look."

Donnelly ready to steal the limelight

The battle for the outright British Rally Championship title is shaping up quite nicely, with seven top-class cars out for Rallye Sunseeker – and more to follow in future rounds this year.

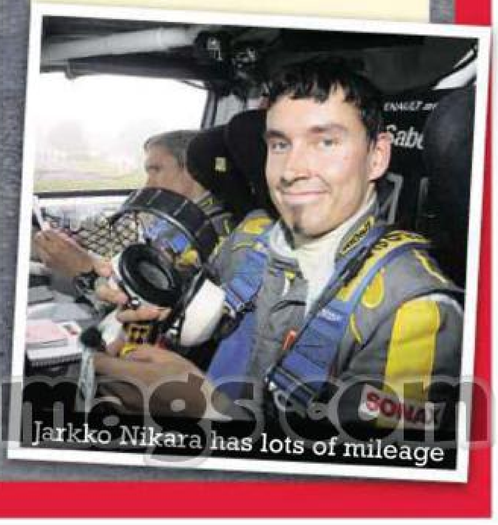
Based on his Formula Two title-winning form last year, Marty McCormack would be the favourite, but he wasn't on the Rallye Sunseeker entry list at time of press. The Northern Irish driver has been aiming to return in the same Saintéloc-run car backed by Citroën Sport that he drove last year, but there have been a number of delays in sorting out the finances of his plan, so McCormack has been left without a drive.

That could open the door to his closest opponent from last year, Mark Donnelly. The Northern Irishman has a year's experience of his Renault Clio R3 and knows all the events well.

Of the drivers in Citroën DS3s, expect great things from Jarkko Nikara. The Finn is quick, has done the BRC before and his Autosport Technology team always runs a great car. That could make it hard for less experienced DS3 rivals such as Desi Henry and Osian Pryce to get on terms with him.

Another intriguing driver to watch will be Callum Black. He struggled in his Suzuki Swift S1600 last year, but with extra experience and a host of development work on the car should be more of a force.

In the R2 class, Elfyn Evans is mightily quick in a Ford Fiesta R2, and will be worth watching on Rallye Sunseeker. But he is aiming to spend the year in the WRC Academy, so the likely contenders for the class title are BRC Challenge champion Jack Rowe (Fiesta R2) and this year's Pirelli Star Driver Jukka Korhonen (Skoda Fabia R2).



Jarkko Nikara has lots of mileage

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BRC SEASON PREVIEW

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

A NEW STRUCTURE

These are the cars that will be hitting the headlines in the BRC this season

INFO

The R3 class forms the top echelon of two-wheel-drive rallying, and as such it is more than likely that this year's British champion will come from this category. The turbo machines enjoy a substantial advantage in terms of power and torque over the R2-spec cars beneath them, which more than counteracts their heavier base weight. The new class has proved popular around Europe, and in the United Kingdom since IRC ace Bryan Bouffier gave the Citroën's DS3 its debut on the Ulster Rally in August 2010, despite the relatively high running costs of R3 cars compared to the categories below.

R3

Renault's R3 car, the Clio

TECH SPEC

CITROËN DS3 R3

Engine: 1600cc turbo high-pressure
Power output: 210bhp **Torque:** 258lb/ft
Gearbox: six-speed sequential paddle-shift
Length: 3948mm **Weight:** 1230kg (minimum including drivers)
Brakes: ventilated discs, four-piston front, two-piston rear
Suspension: McPherson front, H-shaped axles rear

R3 ENTRIES

Citroën DS3: Jarkko Nikara, Osian Pryce, Desi Henry
Renault Clio: Mark Donnelly, Peter Taylor
Suzuki Swift (Super 1600): Callum Black

Citroën's potent DS3 motor

TECH SPEC

FORD FIESTA R2

Engine: 1598cc four-cylinder **Power output:** 172bhp
Peak torque: 134lb/ft **Gearbox:** five-speed sequential with limited-slip differential
Length: 3953mm **Weight:** 1030kg **Brakes:** ventilated discs all round, four-piston front, single-piston rear **Suspension:** Reiger adjustable dampers, standard rear beam

R2 ENTRIES

Ford Fiesta R2: Alex Parpottas, Matthew Cathcart, Jussi Kumpumäki, Niko Nieminen, Alastair Fisher, Jack Rowe, Ruary MacLeod, Elfyn Evans, Tom Cave
Ford Fiesta ST: Gethin Jones, Matt Cotton
Citroën C2: Christian South
Renault Twingo: Chris Ingram, Nick Allen
Skoda Fabia: Arron Newby, Jukka Korhonen

R2

The second tier Ford Fiesta R2

INFO

R2 is a longer established class than R3, and thanks to the ability of privateer teams to buy a road-going car and fit it out for rally use, it has proved extremely popular.

Most R2 machines cost around £30,000 to prepare from scratch, including the cost of the base car, and considering their diminutive sizes, Ford's Fiesta, Renault's Twingo and Skoda's Fabia are durable. The smaller power output from the 1.6-litre engines compared to R3 means that drivers need to keep their engines revving to extract performance.

There has been disparity in the power of the different cars, but an upgrade homologated for the Twingo R2 from March 1 onwards should bring it back on par with the Fiesta.

Skoda's R2 Fabia machine

INFO

A class that has only begun to emerge in the last few months, R1 is intended to be an entry-level class for drivers starting out in rallying.

The cars are close to road car specification, with an FIA-approved rollcage installed along with other minor tweaks. Rallye Sunseeker will be the first time that R1 cars have been seen on a British rally, with both the Ford Fiesta R1 and Renault Twingo R1 being homologated for the first time this year. Both M-Sport (Ford) and Renaultsport have put mechanisms in place so that their cars can be upgraded to R2 level.

R1

The new M-Sport built Fiesta

TECH SPEC

RENAULT TWINGO R1

Engine: 1598cc four-cylinder **Power output:** 133bhp
Peak torque: 118 lb/ft **Gearbox:** five-speed H-pattern
Length: 3607mm **Weight:** 1030kg **Brakes** ventilated discs at front, solid discs at rear **Suspension:** McPherson front, torsion beam rear

R3 ENTRIES

Renault Twingo: Garry Pearson, Keith Cronin
Ford Fiesta: Steve Røkland

Renault has a base-level Twingo R1

Classified advertising: 0208 267 5355

SRC ROUND ONE: SNOWMAN

Photos: Writtle Photographic

The Scottish champ started his season in style. By John Fife

BOGIE IS BEST IN BLIZZARD

Heavy snow didn't deter Bogie on the Snowman

IN BRIEF

Stuart's Sunbeam had oil trouble

Pirie leads Munro

Alex Pirie won Class Two in his Vauxhall Corsa by just over three minutes from Kenny Munro. Corsa driver Munro spun on the third stage and slid off on the fourth, but held on to second ahead of the Peugeot of Kevin Hay. Greg McKnight (Vauxhall Nova) went off on SS4.

Sunbeam survival

Willie Stuart was a lucky Class Three winner: his newly built Talbot Sunbeam finished with rattly big ends after it lost all its oil. Iain Haining was 14 seconds adrift in his Nova at the finish while Tom Hynd was the best of the Peugeots in third despite taking it easy with his newly built engine. Regular frontrunner Blair McCulloch was forced out in the first test with a broken driveshaft in the Nova.

Schoneville shines

Graeme Schoneville took 19th overall – his first ever top 20 finish – in the Class Four winning Honda Civic, although the back wheels were at a funny angle as he crossed the finish line. Graeme Smith was less than a minute behind despite the fact that he lost all his brakes in SS5 and did SS6 with one operational front caliper. Alasdair Graham was in the fight until his Nova hit trouble on the final stage with fuel problems. Euan MacKay's 106 stopped dead in the final test.

Davidson's class act

Stewart Davidson won Class Five in his Escort Mk2 after welding up the front anti-roll bar mount and suspension bracket after he hit something. Tony Thompson was the only finisher in Class Six, before packing up the Chevette and heading overnight to the Riponian Rally.

Seven-up for McLean

First time out in his new Honda Civic Type R, David McLean won Class Seven, but reckons he's buffed the car's underside to a dazzling shine, while class rival Allan Smith's Ford found a handy Focus-sized snow-filled ditch in the final stage.

Escort excellence

Keith Robathan was top 2WD runner in 11th overall, winning Class Eight in his Escort Mk2 from former Lancer pilot David Wilson, who was having his first run in a Mk2. Charlie Jarrett was the Class Nine winner in his Mk2 after class rival Ken Wood retired his V6 Dolomite with alternator failure.

Young runs free

Mitsubishi Lancer driver Rory Young capped an excellent fourth overall with first in Class Ten by one second from John McClory. "John beat me by one second on last year's Scottish," said Rory, "so that's payback!" Dougal Brown also capped a strong eighth overall with third in class, demoting John Morrison to fourth.

For someone who has no real plans for this year's rallying season, David Bogie has an unsettling way of showing it.

The Dumfries ace and co-driver Kevin Rae sped to what looked from the outside like an emphatic win over Mike Faulkner/Peter Foy and Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead, but as we all know only too well in rallying, nothing is ever that straightforward. So disregard the winner's one-minute margin, because everyone who finished Saturday's Arnold Clark/Thistle Snowman Rally was a winner.

Friday was cold, bright and dry, but later that evening it started to rain and in the early hours of Saturday morning, it snowed. The trouble was the weather was constantly changing. Tyre choice was not a lottery, it was more of a gamble than that! For instance, the start of the first stage at Meall Mor south of the Highland capital of Inverness was tackled in blizzard like conditions with flakes of snow being driven like daggers across the faces of the poor marshals. But on the other side of the hill, the sun beat down on a frozen, bleached landscape that dazzled the drivers.

In other words, it was simply a matter of giving the belts one last tug and going for it. After six and a half miles of the sleigh ride from hell, Mitsubishi Lancer E9 driver Bogie stopped the clocks 15 seconds faster than Lancer E6 man Faulkner. Third quickest was Reay MacKay, but his Subaru Impreza was already destined for retirement. A great plume of steam billowed from the car over the last mile as the water drained away through a loose connection and with service some 20 miles to the north, MacKay didn't want to risk further damage.

Euan Thorburn was another in trouble on his first time out in a 2001-spec Ford Focus WRC. "The chicanes were too tight and it cooked the clutch," said Thorburn. However, everyone in the 120-car entry was well warned just how tight the chicanes would be. Callum Macleod's MG S2000 fared little better. A throttle cable broke on the first stage and later on, electrical gremlins forced him out.

If the first stage was bad the next double run at Ord Hill was wicked. This slithery strip of gravel winds round the contours of a hill exposed to the elements and it caused mayhem, decimating the ranks of the later runners. Among the more notable scalps claimed by this treacherous two miler were Michael Glendinning (Impreza) and Alistair Inglis (Lancer), both of whom went off the road.

Then it was north to the 13 miler at Torr Achility – and as the drivers left service a blizzard was heading west. Four inches of snow greeted the frontrunners, deepening to six inches near the finish – and after a few cars, it polished. Even on this 'Celtic Cresta run' Bogie was uncatchable, but he had a wee bit of luck.

"I just touched the brakes on one downhill stretch," said Bogie, "and the car filled the road. With trees on one side and fresh air on the other, my first thought was 'this is going to hurt'. Somehow I got the car back in line."

Second quickest this time was Quintin Milne (Lancer E9), nine seconds behind Bogie. Milne's pace on the third and fourth tests had moved him ahead of Faulkner into second overall, but that would be as good as it got. He struggled on the final two stages and faded to ninth at the finish.

Conditions here dealt the survivors another blow. Chris Collie put his Impreza on its roof, Calum MacKenzie (Lancer) slid off and Donnie MacDonald (Lancer E9) was grounded in the snow with two punctures, while a whole string of others ended up in ditches. It was mayhem.

Conditions were little better as the crews headed south once again. Barry Groundwater (Lancer E9) was fastest through the new five-mile Boblainy test by two seconds from Faulkner. The Focus WRC driver took four seconds out of Bogie, while Craig McMiken (Lancer E9) bowed out of the rally with a broken driveshaft.

It was Faulkner who summed up a frustrating day best after the final 11.5-mile Glen Urquhart stage: "I put snow tyres on for stage five, and it was gravel. I put gravel tyres back on for stage six and it snowed." And boy did it snow on that final stage. In the 20 minutes from the end of Boblainy to the start of Glen Urquhart, the forest road turned white.

Bogie hit the front again, 17 seconds faster than Faulkner. Third quickest was young Peter Taylor, on his first time out in a Focus WRC. That result helped him vault from what had been a steady fifth to claim the final spot on the podium. It was a strong result on his first rally since he was a passenger in a serious road accident. "Today wasn't about times, it was about learning the car," he said.

Rory Young had a strong afternoon to claim fourth in his Lancer E5, ahead of John McClory (Impreza) and Groundwater.

This season opening victory has now presented reigning Scottish and British champion Bogie with a very tempting thought – the possibility of a record-breaking fourth successive Scottish national title. ■

Faulkner was rarely on the right tyres, but held on for second

RESULTS

MSA Scottish Rally Championship, round one of eight, Arnold Clark Thistle Hotel Snowman Rally, February 18

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	David Bogie/Kevin Rae	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	50m 03s
2	Mike Faulkner/Peter Foy	Mitsubushi Lancer E6	+1m 08s
3	Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead	Ford Focus WRC	+2m 43s
4	Rory Young/Allan Cathers	Mitsubishi Lancer E5	+2m 46s
5	John McClory/David Hood	Subaru Impreza	+2m 47s
6	Barry Groundwater/Daniel Paterson	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+3m 05s
7	Steven Ronaldson/Ian Arbuthnott	Subaru Impreza	+3m 14s
8	Dougal Brown/Lewis Rochford	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+3m 43s
9	Quintin Milne/Martin Forrest	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+3m 55s
10	Matthew Calderwood/Stan Quirk	Mitsubishi Lancer E7	+4m 02s

11 Keith Robathan/Ian Nicoll (Ford Escort Mk2) +4m 37s; 12 David Wilson/Dave Robson (Escort Mk2) +5m 05s; 13 Stevie Brown/Jack Morton (Impreza) +5m 14s; 14 Bruce McCombie/Michael Coutts (Impreza) +5m 19s; 15 John Morrison/Peter Carstairs (Lancer E9) +5m 27s; 16 Willie Stuart/Neil Ewing (Talbot Sunbeam) +5m 32s; 17 Ross McFadzean/Jane Nicol (Impreza) +5m 32s; 18 John Rintoul/Jim Rintoul (Lancer E9) +5m 35s; 19 Graeme Schoneville/Michael Hendry (Honda Civic) +5m 44s; 20 Iain Haining/Mairi Riddick (Vauxhall Nova) +5m 46s; 21 Fraser Louden/Abi Louden (Lancer E9) +6m 02s; 22 Brian Ross/Sean Donnelly (Lancer E5) +6m 24s; 23 Andrew Morrison/Nicola Morrison (Escort RS) +6m 31s; 24 Graeme Smith/Laura Marshall (Civic) +6m 41s; 25 Richard Stewart/Carin Logan (Impreza) +6m 45s; 26 Alasdair S Graham/Laura Stuart (Vauxhall Corsa) +6m 47s; 27 Gordon Murray/Danny Small (Impreza) +6m 51s; 28 Billy Miller/Ian Imlach (Lancer E3) +7m 03s; 29 Charlie Jarrett/Andrew Stevenson (Escort Mk2) +7m 07s; 30 Tom Hynd/Sue Hynd (Peugeot 205) +7m 10s. **Class winners, 2:** Alex Pirie/David Law (Corsa); **3:** Stuart/Ewing; **4:** Schoneville/Hendry; **5:** Stewart Davidson/Breagha Dobney (Escort Mk2); **6:** Tony Thompson/Paul Hudson (Vauxhall Chevette HSR); **7:** David McLean/Susan Hayes (Civic Type R); **8:** Robathan/Nicoll; **9:** Jarrett/Stevenson; **10:** Young/Cathers; **12:** Bogie/Rae. **Scottish championship standings:** 1 Bogie 30; 2 Faulkner 28; 3 Taylor 27; 4 Young 26; 5 McClory 25; 6 Groundwater 24; etc. **Next round:** Border Counties, March 17.

Storemags.com

RALLY REPORTS

Cope holds off a late charge from Colley

Chris Kelly Memorial Stages Rally

By Chris Boyde

Organisers: Manx Autosport **When:** February 17/18 **Where:** Isle of Man **Championships:** Eurocars Motorsport Manx, ANWCC Stage Rally **Stages:** 14 **Starters:** 53

John Cope scored a first win on Manx soil after prevailing in a thrilling finish.

Steve Colley/Graham Fargher led after Friday night's damp opener on Slieau Whallian, only for Sean Kelly/Emma Kennaugh to storm to the front. An overshoot on SS5 cost Kelly the lead, Colley sneaking back in front by a second overnight.

Cope, co-driven by Rob Fagg, was 42 seconds down after an overshoot on SS6, but scythed into the deficit in the Curraghs (SS7) on Saturday morning as Colley struggled on the wet roads, handing the lead to Dave Pattison/Andy Marchbank. Colley hit back on Druidale as Cope spun, but then the charge nearly came to nought after a moment on Staarvey (SS9).

After service Cope again swept through SS10, and took the lead when Pattison suffered a puncture on Staarvey (SS12) and Colley slipped back to fourth after a stall. It left one final run over Druidale and Sartfield, Colley's favourite stage. He set fastest time by an amazing 14 seconds to pass both Kelly and Pattison, but was two seconds short of overhauling Cope for the win.

Results

1 John Cope/Rob Fagg (Subaru Impreza WRC) 1h 32m 17s; 2 Steve Colley/Graham Fargher (Mitsubishi Lancer E8) +2s; 3 Dave Pattison/Andy Marchbank (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +4s; 4 Sean Kelly/Emma Kennaugh (Mitsubishi Lancer E7) +9s; 5 Kevin Davies/Dale Furniss (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m 07s; 6 Connor Corkill/Mark Perryman (Ford Escort RS2000) +3m 12s; 7 Stuart Egglestone/Helen Hall (Vauxhall Astra) +4m 31s; 8 Kex Walker/Danni Matthews (BMW 325) +5m 51s; 9 Andy Bird/Richard Pulleyn (Vauxhall Chevette) +6m 22s; 10 Rob Ellison/Leigh Jones (Mitsubishi Lancer E7) +6m 59s. **Class winners, Historic:** Davies/Furniss; **1400cc:** Kevin Vondy/Nick Kaighin (Vauxhall Corsa); **1650cc:** Gary Edgington/Pete Johnson (Peugeot 106); **Two-litre FWD:** Egglestone/Hall; **Two-litre RWD:** Walker/Matthews; **4WD/turbo:** Kelly/Kennaugh.

Photo: Kevin Money

Wyedean winner Payne took his second victory in a week

RESULTS

1 Charlie Payne/Craig Thorley (Ford Focus WRC) 37m28s; 2 Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress (Ford Focus WRC) +2m 02s; 3 Ian Joel/Graeme Wood (Ford Escort Cosworth) +2m 47s; 4 Jeff McNeil/Fred Roberts (Subaru Impreza) +4m 03; 5 Matthew Robinson/Nigel Hutchinson (Ford Escort Mk2) +4m 48s; 6 Warren Phillskirk/Garry Green (Ford Escort Mk2) +5m 04s; 7 Mat Smith/Neil Colls (Ford Ka) +5m 05s; 8 Mark Fowler/Chris Dewsnap (Subaru Impreza) +5m 33s; 9 Peter Smith/Paul Wakely (Ford Escort Mk2) +5m 54s; 10 Steve Marriott/Dave McLachlan (Subaru Impreza) +6m 26s. **Class winners, A:** M Smith/Colls; **B:** William Midgley/Jonathan Driver (Toyota Corolla); **C:** Dave Hemingway/Rob Hart (Ford Escort Mk2); **D:** Graeme Powell/Martyn Taylor (Ford Escort RS2000); **H1:** Bob Bean/Malcolm Smithson (Lotus Cortina); **H2:** Robert Close/Mike Reynolds (Datsun 240Z); **H3:** Robinson/Hutchinson.

PAYNE SCORES A SEVENTH

Riponian Stages Rally

By Peter Scherer

Organisers: Ripon Motor Sport Club **When:** February 19 **Where:** North Yorkshire **Championships:** ANCC, ANECCC, ANEMMC, EMAMC, Northern Historic, ANWCC Historic, Yorkshire Winter Challenge **Stages:** 12 **Starters:** 59

Charlie Payne secured his seventh Riponian Stages win on Sunday with another dominant performance in the North Yorkshire forests.

With regular co-driver Craig Thorley on the notes in their DMack-shod Ford Focus WRC, they pulled out a ten-second lead on the opening Boltby stage alone despite an overshoot in slippery conditions.

The lead continued to grow over the next five stages, with Payne reaching main service with exactly a minute in hand over Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress' similar Focus WRC.

Although Ian Joel/Graeme Wood (Ford Escort Cosworth) and Jeff McNeil/Fred Roberts' Impreza continued to hold onto third and fourth, Fiesta crew Jack Rowe/James Aldridge were catching them. The BRC Challenge champion picked off Ian Pashley/Steve Ashley (Mitsubishi) through Roppa and Riccal Dale, only to exit fifth place with a roll in Wass.

Keith Turner/Steve Ward also slipped down the order after hitting a bank in Wass and damaging the rear axle link, which brought the leading historic Escorts of Matthew Robinson and Warren Phillskirk into the top six.

Grip had been at a premium during the morning and a repeat of the same six stages brought the same problems. The lead quartet continued to hold station and Payne took his win by just over two minutes from Stephenson. Apart from a few slips and slides Joel and McNeil had troublefree runs in third and fourth.

Kalkwik Rally winners Mat Smith/Neil Colls had Class A sewn up all day in their Ford Ka, despite not having an intercom for the early stages, and finished an impressive seventh overall.

The battle in the Historic class was considerably closer. After they tied on the first stage Robinson/Nigel Hutchinson and Phillskirk/Garry Green began a day-long duel. Phillskirk then had the advantage until he caught a bank in College Moor, spun and stalled. Robinson eventually claimed the win by 16 seconds over Phillskirk.

Tim Pearcey/Neil Shanks ran fifth behind the Escorts of Peter Smith/Paul Wakely and Alan Hughes/Richard Wardle, until they hit a gatepost in Roppa.

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

By taking victory on the **Rali Bro Caron**, their second win within a week, Meirion Evans/Iwan Jones have established themselves as the crew to beat in Welsh road rallying this year.

The pair led all night on Saturday, establishing a lead at TC5, the first control at which all the top crews dropped time. By Petrol, two-thirds of the way through the event, they were 25 seconds up on Sean Crowley/Dorian Evans. The latter pair did manage to narrow the gap by six seconds at the Finish as Evans/Jones suffered a couple of overshoots but it wasn't enough to prevent Evans making the best possible start to retaining his Welsh Championship title.

A sharp snow storm towards the end of the rally caused difficulties for the latter half of the field. The organisers therefore took the decision to determine results on penalties up to the control preceding the section which caused the delay. This was the second time in three years that the Bro Caron had been cut short by snow.

Dale Glover and David Peters won Saturday's **XPart Rally** in dominant fashion for the second consecutive year. Glover/Peters made their mark from the start of the Endurance Road Rally Championship season-opener, taking their white Nova to the top of the timesheets on 17 of the 26 selectifs. They sealed victory in style by completing the final test over a minute quicker than any other competing crew.

Consistently quick times for Paul Tod/Simon Harris and Irish crew Eamonn Byrne/Anthony Preston kept them at the sharp end in second and third.

Daniel Byrne upheld family honour by taking a clear win on the **ALMC Endurance Trial** in County Dublin, with his Starlet more than three minutes ahead of Billy Coleman Award winner and aspiring IRC driver Robert Barrable at the end. Robert Woodside Jr won the Navigation Car class with former Autotest and Rallycross champion Dermot Carnegie taking the section for Retro cars.

Ian Mills, Lizzie Pope and Paul Phelan

Results

Rali Bro Caron

Organiser: Lampeter and District Motor Club **When:** February 18/19 **Where:** West Wales **Championships:** WAMC **Route:** 100 miles **Starters:** 80

1 Meirion Evans/Iwan Jones (Ford Escort) 2m 43s; 2 Sean Crowley/Dorian Evans (Ford Escort) 3m 02s; 3 Richard Jerman/Lowri Davies (Ford Escort) 4m 17s; 4 John Davies/Stewart Merry (Vauxhall Astra) 4m 30s; 5 Irfon Richards/Dai Richards (Nissan Almera) 4m 41s; 6 Adrian Jones/Dylan Jenkins (Subaru Impreza) 4m 48s; 7 Aled Humphreys/Dave Barnes (VW Golf) 5m 52s; 8 Steve Knibbs/Gerwyn Barry (Vauxhall Corsa) 5m 56s; 9 Owain Evans/Arfon Griffiths (Ford Escort) 5m 58s; 10 Richard James/Sasha Heriot (MG ZR) 6m 06s. **Class winners, experts:** Knibbs/Barry; **Semi-Experts:** Gari Evans/Marc Hughes (Ford Escort); **Novices:** Steffan Jones/Owen Rose (Ford Sierra).

XPart Rally

Organiser: Chelmsford MC **When:** February 18 **Where:** East Anglia **Championship:** Endurance Road Rally **Selectifs:** 26 **Starters:** 49

1 Dale Glover/David Peters (Vauxhall Nova SRi) 10,378 marks; 2 Paul Tod/Simon Harris (Suzuki Swift) 10,721m; 3 Eamonn Byrne/Anthony Preston (Toyota Starlet GT) 10,790m; 4 Mike Biss/Matt Fowle (Rover Metro) 11,066m; 5 David Lobb/Lizzie Pope (Vauxhall Nova) 11,187m; 6 Mark Dickinson/Oliver Dickinson (Rover 200) 11,309m; 7 Owen Turner/David Smoley (Rover Mini) 11,486m; 8 Mark Banham/Paul Haylock (Suzuki Ignis) 11,521m; 9 Ash Chapman/Kevin Ablitt (MG ZR) 11,554m; 10 Charles Thompson/Alex Jakes (Ford Puma) 11,594m. **Class winners, One:** Glover/Peters; **Two:** Tod/Harris; **Four:** Banham/Haylock; **Five:** Ben Smith/Matt Clark (Peugeot 106 Rallye); **Seven:** Will Rutherford-Child/Ed Rutherford (Vauxhall Astra).

ALMC Endurance Trial: Luttrellstown, Dublin

1 Daniel Byrne/Kevin Fagan (Toyota Starlet) 11m 58s; 2 Robert Barrable/John Rowan (Toyota Starlet) 15m 34s; 3 Willie Fenton/Dave McAulay (Toyota Starlet) 18m 30s; 4 Simon McKinley/Deirdre Delaney (Fiat Cinquecento) 19m 01s; 5 Damien Doran/Anthony O'Neill (Toyota Starlet) 19m 32s; 6 Mark O'Connor/Simon Quinn (Hyundai Accent) 25m 02s. **Navigation Cars:** Robert Woodside Jr/Dean Beckett (Mazda MX5); **Retrospective Cars:** Dermot Carnegie/Paul Bosdet (Ford Escort).

Furzeland finds his form and claims victory

Kynaston Auto Services Stages

By Ian Harden

Organisers: South Hams MC **When:** February 18 **Where:** Smeatharpe Airfield, Devon **Championships:** ASWMC Sealed Surface, South West Clubmans **Stages:** ten **Starters:** 49

After a recent frustrating streak of bad luck, Steve and Yvonne Furzeland returned to winning ways at last Saturday's Kynaston Auto Services Stages.

Mastering changeable weather conditions, including a mid-afternoon downpour that left competitors struggling for grip, the Subaru Impreza S12 pairing dominated proceedings. They set nine out of ten fastest stage times to beat Gary Le Coadou and Paul Hollingham (Toyota Corolla WRC) by more than a minute.

Furzeland jumped into a seven-second lead on stage one, making good use of his Impreza WRC's power in the dry conditions. He increased the lead throughout the morning with a string of fastest times, pulling away from top seeds Martyn and Dawn England (Mitsubishi Lancer E9). England in turn became embroiled in a close battle for second with Le Coadou and Steven O'Leary, the trio running neck and neck.

England's fortunes took a turn for the worse on stage seven when he was forced to retire with a broken rear diff. This moved David Parnell and Peter Creamer (Subaru Impreza) into fourth, pursued by Josh Payton and Marcus Mizen in their Ford Escort Mk2, the two-wheel drive crew making light work of the soaking wet track conditions.

A spin on the rainstorm-hit eighth stage spoiled Furzeland's perfect score of fastest stage times, but he still cruised to victory ahead of Le Coadou, who finally secured the runner-up spot when O'Leary spun and hit a trackside straw bale.

Results

1 Steve Furzeland/Yvonne Furzeland (Subaru Impreza S12 WRC) 50m 42s; 2 Gary Le Coadou/Paul Hollingham (Toyota Corolla WRC) +1m 07s; 3 Steven O'Leary/Michael O'Leary (Darrian T90 S2000) +1m 40s; 4 David Parnell/Peter Creamer (Impreza) +2m 18s; 5 Josh Payton/Marcus Mizen (Ford Escort Mk2) +4m 08s; 6 Mike Threlfall/Lloyd Stevens (Mitsubishi Lancer E10) +4m 10s; 7 Richard Davies/Gareth Wilcox (Escort Mk2) +4m 13s; 8 Richard Fishleigh/Kim Bruton (Escort Mk2) +4m 24s; 9 Jon Burnell/Scott Smith (Ford Escort G3) +5m 08s; 10 Ben Parker/Alf Chanter (Honda Civic) +5m 12s. **Class winners, A:** Chris Barter/Liz Johnson (Vauxhall Nova); **B:** Davies/Wilcox; **C:** Payton/Mizen; **D:** Paul Kynaston/Gary Bulley (Opel Ascona 400); **E:** Parnell/Creamer.

Fowden takes glory after duel with Davies

Rali Cwm Gwendraeth

By Ian Harden

Organisers: Gwendraeth Valley Motor Club **When:** February 19 **Where:** Pembrey, Carmarthenshire **Championships:** WAMC Tarmacadam **Stages:** six **Starters:** 69

Subaru Impreza crew Bob Fowden and co-driver Jason Sugden were pushed hard all the way by Lancer E6 duo Bryan Davies and Alun Lewis, just 13 seconds splitting the crews at the end of the rally.

Overnight rain made the surface at Pembrey extremely slippery in the opening miles, especially on the Beach Road section. Fowden put his four-wheel-drive Impreza to good effect, setting fastest times on stages one and two. But he was closely pursued by Davies and Richard Merriman/Kath Curzon's Darrian T90. Davies, complete with uprated brakes in his E6, upped his pace to equal Fowden on stage three and then beat his rival by one second on the fourth run.

Fowden responded to effectively seal victory on the penultimate stage, posting a time six seconds faster than anyone else. His cause was helped when Merriman's day came to an abrupt halt with a broken gearbox and Kitney suffered a spin and stall.

Merriman's untimely demise let Steven and Michael O'Leary into fourth place, the Darrian T90 crew having come straight from taking third at Smeatharpe on Saturday. Drive of the day came from Gareth Thomas and Richard Jones. Seeded at 48, the youngsters won Class Seven in their Honda Civic in their third-ever rally.

Results

1 Bob Fowden/Jason Sugden (Subaru Impreza) 54m 50s; 2 Bryan Davies/Alun Lewis (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +13s; 3 Geoff Kitney/Anthony Powell (Lancer E6) +1m 17s; 4 Steven O'Leary/Michael O'Leary (Darrian T90 S2000) +1m 57s; 5 Nigel Jones/Tracy Giddings (Impreza) +1m 58s; 6 Philip Turner/Simon Anthony (Impreza) +2m 48s; 7 Lyn Morgan/Karen Morgan (Peugeot 205 GTi) +2m 50s; 8 James Nicholas/Richard James (Vauxhall Corsa) +3m 19s; 9 Geraint Mathias/Dan Thomas (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m 27s; 10 Ian Godney/Ceri Simpson (Renault Clio) + 3m 57s. **Class winners, One:** Nicholas/James; **Two:** Thomas Lloyd/Louis Langford (Peugeot 205); **Three:** O'Leary/O'Leary; **Four:** Davies/Lewis; **Five:** Wayne James/Melo la Rosa (Peugeot 205); **Six:** Graham Watkins/David Percival (Ford Escort); **Seven:** Gareth Thomas/Richard Jones (Honda Civic).

McGarrity survives a spin to clinch big win

Magic Bullet Stages

By Brian Patterson

Organisers: North Armagh MC **When:** February 18 **Where:** Kirkistown, County Down **Championships:** Carryduff Forkdifts MSA Northern Ireland, Junior 1000 Rally Challenge **Stages:** six **Starters:** 75

Former Irish Tarmac champion Derek McGarrity revelled in the sheer 'get up and go' of his Subaru Impreza WRC S14 to lead from start to finish on last Saturday's Magic Bullet Stages at Kirkistown Race Circuit.

McGarrity decided to explore the limits of his Impreza S14 WRC's braking and overdid it with a spin on SS4, but otherwise he had a clear run. Second-placed Kevin Barrett was using the rally as a warm-up for this weekend's Birr Rally, the opening round of the Dunlop Irish National series, and his Subaru was in fine form. Derek McGeehan had a few small delays early in the day when he caught slower cars in his Mini John Cooper Works WRC, but as the day progressed he overhauled Ray Brammer (Impreza WRC).

Conditions were cold and wet at the start and last year's winner Kenny McKinstry got off on the wrong foot when he spun his misfiring Impreza on the first stage. The car came to a halt with its nose against a barrier, so more time was lost slotting into reverse gear. A change of spark plugs brought McKinstry's car back to health, and he fought back from 38th to finish fifth. Another to make a bad start was 2008 Northern Ireland champion Connor McCloskey. He spun his Impreza on the opening stage, but unlike McKinstry wasn't able to mount a heroic comeback. He couldn't find grip with his Impreza's tyres and pulled out of the rally after four stages.

Former Ford Fiesta hotshot Kyle Orr was driving one of Kenny McKinstry's Impreza WRCs, his first run in a machine of this calibre. Following an early delay he managed a couple of top six times before the Subaru's turbo blew in spectacular fashion on the fourth stage.

Seven cars started in the new Junior 1000 Rally Challenge category, with Ben Crealey scoring a clear victory in his Nissan Micra from second-placed Peugeot 207 driver Kyle White .

Results

1 Derek McGarrity/James McKee (Subaru Impreza WRC) 25m 13.4s; 2 Kevin Barrett/Declan Tumilty (Subaru Impreza WRC) +38.3s; 3 Derek McGeehan/Laurie Smyth (Mini John Cooper Works WRC) +1m 02.6s; 4 Ray Brammer (Subaru Impreza WRC) +1m 07.2s; 5 Kenny McKinstry/Martin Cairns (Subaru Impreza WRC) +1m 11.7s; 6 James Gillen/Ken Sproule (Subaru Impreza WRC) +1m 18.9s; 7 John McGaffin/Lesley McGaffin (Subaru Impreza WRC) +1m 20.3s; 8 Drew Stewart/David White (Ford Escort) +1m 48.0s; 9 Kieron Graffin/Mark Massey (Mitsubishi Lancer) +1m 50.0s; 10 Trevor Ferguson/David McElroy (Subaru Impreza) +2m 00.3s.

Class winners, One: Michael Nutt/Sean Topping (Honda Civic); **Two:** Ferguson/McElroy; **Three:** Matthew Mason/David Crossen (Nissan Micra); **Four:** Simon Hemphill/Ciaran McMenamin (Vauxhall Nova); **Five:** Stephen Smith/Paul Finlay (Honda Civic); **Six:** Mervyn Williamson/George Hamilton (Ford Escort); **Seven:** Stewart/White; **Eight:** Simon Woodside/Stephen Dowds (BMW M3); **Nine:** McGarrity/McKee: **Nine B:** McGeehan/Smyth; **11:** Andy Johnson/Jim McSherry (Vauxhall Chevette).

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SPORTING SCENE ROUND-UP

BACK TO YOUR ROOTS

STOCK CARS: IAN HIGGINS

Grassroots motorsport is packed with enthusiasts who give their weekends up for a bit of racing. This week *MN* catches up with BriSCA F1 returnee Ian Higgins, also known as 'Captain Chaos'.

How did you get started in motorsport?

"I got started watching banger racing at Sunnyvale near Halifax in West Yorkshire in the early 1980s. I went with my family and one day this massive noisy machine went around the track. We chatted to the guy who was running it and he said it was an F1 stock car. The next weekend we went to Rochdale to see them race. I spent all my time in the pits watching. A guy from Alex McDade's car asked me to fill up a water bucket that was bigger than me. From then on I started working with Alex."

What was your first competitive car?

"My mum and dad bought me a go in a Frankie Wainman hire car and I loved it. When Alex McDade stopped someone else bought his car but eventually we got it and that was what I started racing in. My dad was the northern correspondent of *Stock Car* magazine and he did a couple of races to make sure it was safe but he was so scared he handed it over to me! That was at Belle Vue in 1983."

What was your most memorable moment in motorsport?

"The one that stands out was the 1988 World Championship semi-final at Crewe. I was ranked as an outsider but I came through to win the race from John Lund."

What was your funniest moment?

"There are so many memories and I've had so much fun. The funniest moment probably isn't from racing. It was when a load of drivers went to Tenerife on holiday. We found a kart track there and we went a bit wild. There was a kart with a bent chassis in the middle of the circuit and these Spaniards were chasing us around telling us we were mental..."

What do you love about stock cars?

"The power, the pure brute power. And the fact that within the rules we can move an opponent. Non-contact racing just doesn't appeal to me. I'm not sure I'd be able to race a non-contact car anyway – I wouldn't be allowed out on track! But it's the pure power of a stock car that mainly appeals to me."

Higgins: fan of contact sport

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Photo: Andris Kalkis

Holland's £240 Lada (l) and the car of Latvian Priedïtis

ICE RACING GLORY FOR BRITISH DRIVER

Rally driver Dave Holland takes five wins in Lavtian event in a £240 Lada

By James Bolton

A former winner of the Jack Frost Stages has become an unlikely ice racing star in Latvia after winning five races in a Lada he bought for £240.

British all-rounder Dave Holland is a regular competitor in endurance races in Eastern Europe. He took part in a race in Latvia recently, and was due to fly back to the UK to take part in the Eastwood Stages Rally at Mallory Park on February 5.

Holland was unable to fly back due to snow at East Midlands Airport the day before the rally.

"After the flight was cancelled I went into [capital city] Riga and found a racing circuit," said Holland. "There was some ice racing going on and it looked brilliant. I decided to find a car to enter the next weekend's event."

Holland found a Lada for sale for £240. After servicing it and putting on ice racing tyres, he entered the event, where he went up against 40 cars. The field included Andris Priedïtis, the Latvia 1600cc autocross champion.

"I didn't expect to do that well," said Holland. "The field obviously had some quality drivers in it. But I ended up winning all five of my races. They were ten laps each except for the final. That one was 12 laps and I lapped everyone except the guy who was second.

"Some of the drivers asked if I had a special gearbox and several said they're changing their spec for the next events. They also thought the tyres I was using must have been too good.

"It was refreshing to be so hands on with all the aspects of going racing. It's a long while since I had to work alone preparing my car, taking it to the event and sorting entrance."

Holland competed in another ice racing event last weekend but will have to curtail his efforts due to his business.

Because he was unable to start the Eastwood Stages his son Drew took over his car, taking a solid 12th place finish.

Holland (left) and Priedïtis

IRISH RALLYCROSS REPORT

O'CONNELL'S WIN, TRACEY'S TITLE

Irish Rallycross Championship: Mondello Park

By Paul Phelan

Organiser: Carlow CC **When:** February 19 **Where:** Mondello Park, County Kildare **Championship:** Motorsport Ireland National **Starters:** 48

Despite being forced to retire from the main event, George Tracey clinched his first Irish rallycross title last weekend.

Tracey only needed to qualify for the Super Final to put himself out of reach of nearest rival Ian O'Connelly. The Citroën Xsara driver duly took his usual win in the Supercar A Final and looked all set for his fifth 'double' of the season to maintain his unbeaten record. But on the fourth lap of the six-lap Super Final, his car's clutch cried enough and the Citroën ground to a halt. This let Lotus Exige driver O'Connell into a lead that he held to the end to score a surprise win.

Photo: Paul Phelan

O'Connell took shock win in the Super Final

RESULTS

Irish Rallycross Championship, Super Final: 1 Ian O'Connell (Lotus Exige) 4m 14.79s; 2 Willie Coyne (Opel Corsa) +6.67s; 3 Dessie Tierney (Opel Tigra) +7.21s; 4 Gavin O'Connell (Ford Fiesta) +14.13s; 5 Pearse Browne (BMW Compact) +14.6s; 6 Padraig Leeson (Vauxhall Corsa) +22.09s.

The Lotus driver was well clear of a good battle for runner-up spot, with Willie Coyne (Vauxhall Corsa) holding off Tigra driver Dessie Tierney.

Earlier, O'Connell and Coyne had taken the top placings in the Modified A Final, with Padraig Leeson next up in his 2.3-litre Corsa, ahead of Fiesta man Gavin O'Connell. This time, Eddie Peterson had the measure of Stock Hatch 16-valve points leader Graeme Colfer, leading from start to finish while Colfer worked his way through the field to second place by the end. In the eight valve A Final, Noel O'Brien kept his unbeaten record with a comfortable margin. Behind him was a tense duel between Stephen Morrin and Mark Halligan, who finished close together in that order.

Keith Kerrshaawe narrowly took the B Final to qualify for the A race where he finished fourth. For the second event in a row, James Fleming was master of the Junior Final in his Starlet, opening out a massive lead over the Micra-mounted opposition, with Sophie Byrne heading the pack. Mitsubishi Lancer E9 man Noel Greene won the Rally Car class from Des Ryan (Corsa).

ROUND-UP

Ian Bell made it two wins from two in the BTRDA **Loughborough Sporting Trial,** despite a stall. George Watson drove brilliantly to his best ever result, finishing five points behind Bell and taking the intermediate class ahead of Andy Wilks and Steve Courts.

Andrew Bell finished fifth in his new Hamilton's English debut. Stuart Perren had a superb day to win the novice class and also had his best result so far, completing the top ten overall.

Relative newcomer Fergil Gregory made it two victories inside a fortnight in the non-championship **Lincoln and Nolan Cup** sporting trial. He finished a single mark ahead of the opposition on a very closely matched day, with just three marks separating the top 12 drivers.

Now unbeaten in the last six Hewison **Autotest** championship rounds, Steven Ferguson withstood serious pressure for most of the day from former champion Sam Bowden to finish 6.4 seconds ahead. Ferguson needs a single point from the next four rounds to win the title.

Roger Holder, Kevin Belcher and Matthew Helm scored class wins in round one of the **BTRDA Autosolo Championship** at Castle Combe.

RESULTS

Loughborough Sporting Trial: Shelford
1 Ian Bell (Hamilton) 10 points; 2 George Watson (CAP) 15; 3 Andy Wilks (RCAP) 21; 4 Steve Courts (Facksimile) 24; 5 Andrew Bell (Hamilton) 29; 6 Dave Rance (Crosslé) 32; 7 Dick Gowen (Facksimile) 36; 8 Simon Kingsley (Crosslé) 37; 9 Dave Oliver (Facksimile) 38; 10 Stuart Perren (Facksimile) 50.

Hewison Trophy Autotest: Swans Cross, County Monaghan
1 Steven Ferguson (Mini Special) 641.8s; 2 Sam Bowden (Mini) 648.2s; 3 David Thompson (Nova) 678.8s; 4 Robin Lyons (Mini Special) 678.8s; 5 Guy Foster (Mini) 681.1s; 6 Mark King (Nova) 682.4s; 7 Paddy Power (Mini Special) 685.0s; 8 Norman Ferguson (Mini) 702.9s.

Sporting Trial: Lincoln and Nolan Cup, Moneystown, County Wicklow
1 Fergil Gregory (Erskine-Yamaha) 4 marks; 2 Paddy Cahill (Erskine-VW) 5m; 3 Joe McCann (JMcVW) 5m; 4 John O'Reilly (Erskine-Kawasaki) 6m; 5 Ollie Peden (VW) 6m; 6 Philip Erskine (Erskine-Yamaha) 6m; 7 Christopher Evans (ETE-Yamaha) 6m; 8 Alan Watkins (Watkins-Yamaha) 6m.

Rallycross bosses to evaluate new venues

Organisers of the Clubmans Rallycross Championship are evaluating three new venues in a bid to find extra circuits to race on.

Last year's championship visited Blyton Park on four occasions, but the owners of the Lincolnshire venue have decided not to renew its rallycross licence for 2012.

This has led the Clubmans championship, which is co-promoted by the BTRDA and Minicross Drivers Association, to visit Manby, a former airfield in Lincolnshire that runs single venue rallies. They have also visited Teesside Autodrome and an unnamed airfield in the north.

"We're looking at every option and there are three good possibilities," said a championship spokesman. "Obviously there's a long way from showing interest in rallycross to running an event, but we hope at least one of the three could be operational this year."

Teeside Autodrome in Middlesborough already hosts a number of track days, and features a 2.4-mile kart circuit. It currently has five different track layouts.

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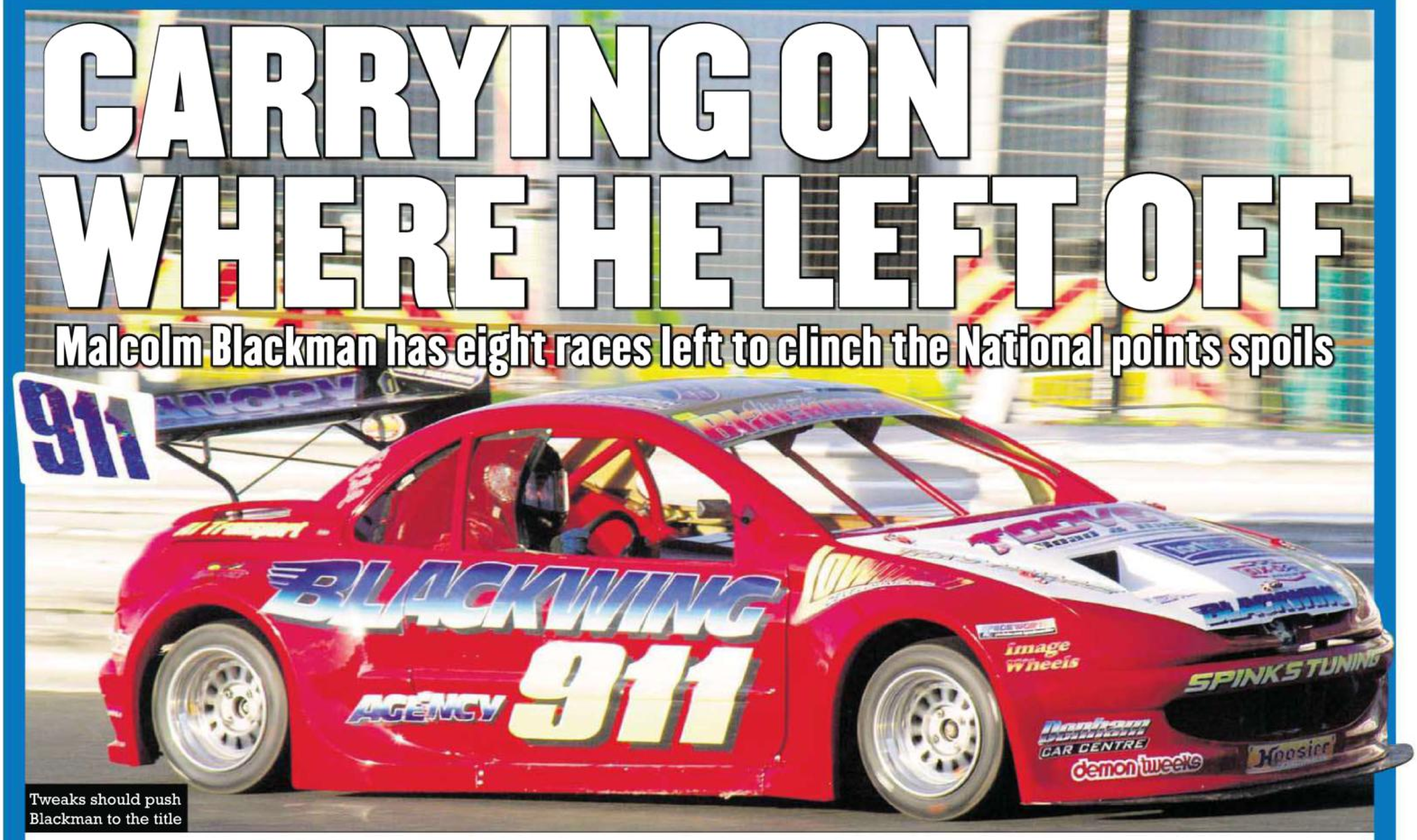
"We're looking at three good options"
Rallycross track hunt, below

Photos: Martin Kingston

CARRYING ON WHERE HE LEFT OFF

Malcolm Blackman has eight races left to clinch the National points spoils



Tweaks should push Blackman to the title

BY JAMES BOLTON
JUNIOR REPORTER

The winter months can be cold and bleak for racing drivers. Initially there's relief at having some time at home, then Christmas approaches. Eventually they start to look towards the approaching season.

The prospect of a new year, and maybe a new car, is enticing. Most of all, it's the opportunity a new season represents that grabs the driver's attention.

This isn't the case for all racers, though. In National Hot Rods, the winter break is just that: it's a pause in the middle of the season. When the Hot Rod circus descends on Northampton on March 11, they will be competing in round nine of the World Series.

So this season is in full swing, and one man has been unstoppable: Malcolm Blackman. The 39-year-old won his second World Championship last July and two weeks after that the 2011/12 season began. Blackman immediately finished second in the Scottish Open and ended the first half of the season leading the points standings.

He doesn't mind having to wait so long to begin the second half: "We do eight races, then have three months off, then eight races and then the World Championships. I quite like the two halves. It gives you a chance to restore the enthusiasm, as well as catching up with the family and taking a break from the travelling. Plus it gives the engine builder a break!"

CV

MALCOLM BLACKMAN

Age: 39 **Lives:** Langley, Berkshire
2011: NHR World champion
2007: NHR English champion, British Championship runner-up
2006: NHR English Championship runner-up
2005: NHR World and English Championship runner-up
2004: NHR World, European and English champion
2003: NHR English champion
2002: NHR English champion, European Championship runner-up

The National Hot Rod drivers and teams use their winters in much the same way as other racing drivers and teams. They work on the car and look for any way possible to squeeze more speed out of it.

"The winter has been very busy," says Blackman. "We've been trying to make the car faster. The Peugeot [206] needed updating, the chassis needed refreshing. It's nine years old now, which is quite old for a racing car. We've spruced it up, repaired it, serviced it and maintained it. We've had a few ideas for making it faster. We've got more torque out of the engine. I've got a new car which I could use, but we keep finding ideas for the old car."

Making the Peugeot quicker is important because Blackman wants to win the points race and get himself into a position to win a third World Championship: "We have a good head start going into round nine. We're trying to get the points championship this year but the car needs to be reliable. That's why we're sticking with the Peugeot. It's probably not the fastest, but it's quite reliable. We're hoping to get it out on track before the race at Northampton to make sure everything we've done over the winter is working as it should."

Blackman has a number of close rivals who will push him hard: "Everyone is trying to find an edge. Chris Haird has said clearly that he wants to win it. Matt Simpson won the European Championship and he's fast. There are a lot of good drivers. Willie Hardie has got a new car, which could come out and be very quick. If he has teething problems it would harm his chances but I'm sure he'll do some testing before we get to Northampton."

Testing is difficult in the bitter cold of winter, but it forms an important part of the preparation for the second half of the season, much more so than in other series. This is because drivers can't afford to waste a couple of races through poor reliability because the second half of the season is effectively an eight-race blast to the finish.

This has posed a couple of problems for Blackman: "The new cams should be better, we tried them at the last round in Birmingham and our engine builder, John Toovey, has worked on them more over the winter. But it's too cold at the moment to do any useful testing. The engine feels better in the cold as there's no grip, so testing in January and early February can give you a false picture."

Like all racing cars, it's the overall package that counts: "Everything's important, the shock absorbers, the tyres, the gearbox. It's a complete package. When the car handles well it absorbs more power and that allows you to have the confidence to overtake. The best drivers start at the back and you have 25 laps to overtake everyone else. It's brilliant for the spectators but it means the driver needs confidence in every aspect of the car."

So why has Blackman been able to perform so strongly this year? "We've got a good team at the moment," explains Blackman. "The work is done in the garage and we've got some good mechanics. The boys in the garage have made a big effort. And we have a great engine builder in Toovey. The engine is a big part of it and it's made a difference. Everyone in and around the team gets more enthusiastic when the results are coming in."

Blackman's success hasn't gone unnoticed, with his on-track rivals voting him as Driver of the Year. "It was nice to be presented with the award. I've had a good year but so has Chris Haird, Matt Simpson – there's a lot of drivers that look good. The guys in the garage appreciate it too," he says.

Blackman has achieved a lot in Hot Rods, but he has no interest in moving to other formulae. "I did saloon stocks years ago, and then two-litre saloons," he says. "I went on to Hot Rods from there. There was a chance to try a BriSCA F1 stock car around 2004-'05 and I thought about it, the chance came up through a mutual sponsor. I spoke to Frankie Wainman Jr about it but he said I was too big to fit in the car!"

There are other reasons why Blackman is happy where he is. The travelling is a lot less in National Hot Rods, with ten or 15 fewer meetings per year compared to stock cars. But most of all, he just enjoys winning: "My kids have started watching the DVD's of my racing. After 2004 I never thought I'd win the World Championship again. So many good drivers never win it. I enjoy the racing and I'm very fortunate to be able to do it." ■

Blackman has been a short oval frontrunner for almost a decade

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KARTING ROUND-UP

IN BRIEF

Vortex's engine aim

Leading engine manufacturer Vortex has announced that it will be developing a new range of engines with four-stroke specialist Tech F1. Vortex is renowned for its two-stroke units that are used in the KF1 world championship and other KF classes across Europe. However with the future of KF uncertain, new four stroke engines are being discussed as potential replacement motors.

A title for Kent ace

Buckmore Park and Bayford Meadows kart clubs have joined together to run the inaugural Kent Kart Championship this year. The series will take in six rounds, alternating between the two venues. It will cater for all ABkC classes as well as Junior Subaru and there will be no championship registration fees. The first round of the championship takes place on April 22 at Bayford Meadows. Go to buckmoreparkkart-club.co.uk for more information.

Dash for cash

KartForce, the charity that uses karting as rehabilitation for injured troops (*see right*), will be running a number of races at Whilton Mill on April 1 to raise money. There will be a maximum of 20 teams and a choice of either sprints, endurance races or a combination. It will be £75 per driver for a sprint (maximum of six in a team), £50 for endurance (maximum of six in a team) and £120 per driver for the two. Go to kartforce.org for more info.

Prize drive secured

Rotax karter Graham Roberts has won Formula KGP's guest drive prize. Roberts, who lives in Cheshire, has won a free online competition to win a drive in Super One. More than 200 people entered overall and now Roberts is readying himself to race in either the Shenington or Glan y Gors round of S1 this year. Roberts will be run by ACR and will compete on a Birel chassis.

Hall and Webb score

Harry Webb and Connor Hall took first and second in the junior class of the recent Rotax Winter Cup in Spain. Webb, who races for Strawberry Racing, beat Hall by just 0.5 seconds. Lars Lamborelle was third while Brits Jacques Lambert and Jack Bartholomew were 21st and 25th.

A date for PFI

The next round of the ABkC Winter Series run by Shenington Kart Club will take place at PF International this Saturday. The meeting will also run the O plate for KF classes. Go to abkc.org.uk for more information.

Italian date change

The fourth round of this year's KF1 world championship at Sarno on September 9, which will also run world cups for KZ1 and KZ2, has been brought forward by one week by the CIK-FIA to avoid a clash of date with the Italian Grand Prix. The event will take place on September 2.

Super Cadet at PFi

There will be a Super Cadet support race at this weekend's ABkC KF O plate meeting at PF International. It will cost £55 for race entry and £45 for Saturday practice. Contact Lesley Richardson at PF International on 07545 131099 for more information.

Photos: kartpix.net

Force India conducted a talent search in the country

The three victors will now tackle the British KF3 series

PRIZE WINNERS TO GET BRITISH SHOT

Lucky Force India candidates will race with Ricky Flynn's squad

By James Bass

The three winners of Force India's kart talent search will race in this year's MSA British Junior Championship with Ricky Flynn Motorsport.

Fourteen-year-olds Arjun Maini and Tarun Reddy will join 13-year-old driver Jehan Daruvala in this year's championship with RFM.

The trio took part in F1 team Force India's driver search last year, which offered young karters across India a shot at motorsport careers in Europe. Regional qualifiers and a grand final decided the overall victors. The competition was set up by team boss Vijay Mallya to answer critics who said the team was not taking on local talent.

The three drivers will race in KF3 in Britain but are also set to compete in international events such as the WSK series.

"It's something we are really excited about," said team boss Ricky Flynn. "It's a huge chance for us to help some truly talented young drivers. They achieved a lot over in India and deserve their chance. We will be helping them all we can and providing them with all the support they need in the British series. It's going to be a interesting season and we are all looking forward to seeing them race in the UK."

Besides the kart competition in India, the three drivers are not hugely experienced in the sport. In order to bring them up to speed, Force India has taken on former world champion karter Terry Fullerton to help out. He will work with the drivers throughout the year and says that they will need to get their fitness up to scratch if they are to compete with the best.

"They have good driving skills but their fitness is behind that of their competitors," said Fullerton. "We have to get that sorted before we can work on the racecraft. It will be a huge challenge but they have real potential as drivers."

MSA seeks kart star to represent the UK

Drivers hoping to compete in this year's CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy can now apply to the MSA for a chance to represent the UK.

The world championship series runs alongside the U18 world championship. It caters for drivers aged between 13 and 15 years old. Each year the MSA nominates a driver to compete in the championship, which will take in three rounds again this year.

Last year Ben Barnicoat was chosen by the MSA and received a fully funded drive in the series. He finished fifth overall.

"The CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy presents a fantastic opportunity for a young British karter to make their mark on the international stage," said MSA Performance Director Robert Reid. "We look forward to receiving applications for this year's championship although I know it will be tough to pick just one."

Visit msauk.org for details.

Harrison took Spanish victory

Scott targets Senior Max glory in 2012

Former KF3 racer Harrison Scott took victory on his debut in Senior Max at the Rotax Winter Cup recently and says he will be fighting for titles this year.

The 15-year-old recently signed with championship-winning outfit Strawberry Racing to contest the class and scored his first win with the squad in the event at Campillos in Spain. Charlie Eastwood and Ash Hand finished in second and third places.

Scott outclassed the likes of reigning champion Ed Brand and fellow frontrunner Sean Babington and now the Essex-based driver says he will be pushing for wins this season.

"It's always a confidence boost to get the first win," said Scott. "It means a lot. I adjusted to the class and don't think it's that different to KF3. The tyres are not as grippy and the engine performs slightly differently but it's a class I'll be able to get along with."

Roberts to make UK Superkart comeback

Ex-world superkart champion Trevor Roberts will make his return to karting this season after a year out of the sport.

The County Armagh-based driver will make his comeback in the MSA British Superkart Championship, which uses karts powered by a single cylinder 250cc engine. He previously raced in Divison One and competed in the CIK-FIA European Superkart Championship, which both used twin 250cc engines.

Roberts has experience in the single cylinder class and has won the championship twice in the past. He will race on an Anderson chassis for the Viper Racing UK squad. "I did not want to return to the sport without good equipment," said Roberts. "If I was going to be running at the back then there is no point. I knew Viper had the best equipment so the team will give me the best shot at winning a title. The British championship is very tough."

Roberts will make a race return

Tillett gets development job with Caterham

Former KF1 karter Laura Tillett has been recruited by Caterham to help develop the squad's new one-make karting series.

Caterham announced at this year's Autosport International Show that it would be running a kart series in 2013 to develop young drivers and help bring them up through the motorsport ranks.

Tillett will help Caterham develop the kart, which will use a Rotax-style one-make engine, and will assist in the specification and choice of tracks.

Tillett, 20, is closing in on a deal to race cars this year but says the Caterham project is something she is keen to get involved with.

Tillett said: "The series is a good idea as it will be a really level playing field and eliminate the advantage that big teams get over privateers in other championships."

Tillett: karting work

'His run was hit by engine problems'
Hanley's blow, below

SOLDIERS OF KARTING

How injured servicemen are ripping up the tracks

BY JAMES BASS
REPORTER

For just over 18 months now, injured servicemen have been enjoying competitive karting across the UK thanks to KartForce.

The charitable project, set up by ex-soldier Dave Player back in 2010, gives soldiers the chance to compete in karting on a level playing field with able-bodied individuals, offering a form of rehabilitation and normality to their lives.

This is done thanks to a unique piece of technology designed by Player, who has been wheelchair bound since 1991 following spinal injuries. Player has created hand controls that allow even triple amputees the chance to race. They can be fitted to any kart within 20 minutes and Player says the invention has helped change the lives of a number of injured servicemen.

"The problem was that there was no system suitable for a lot of the injured troops," says Player. "There were only hand controls on steering wheels. But the problem is that someone who has missing fingers or even only one arm could not use it. So I designed a new system that will allow a triple amputee to drive. It incorporates a handle bar, with the throttle and brake on the same side. The throttle can be controlled using two fingers, and the brake with the other two fingers, then he or she can drive with the same arm. Most of the handlebar set-ups will have the brake and throttle on opposite sides but it's very adaptable."

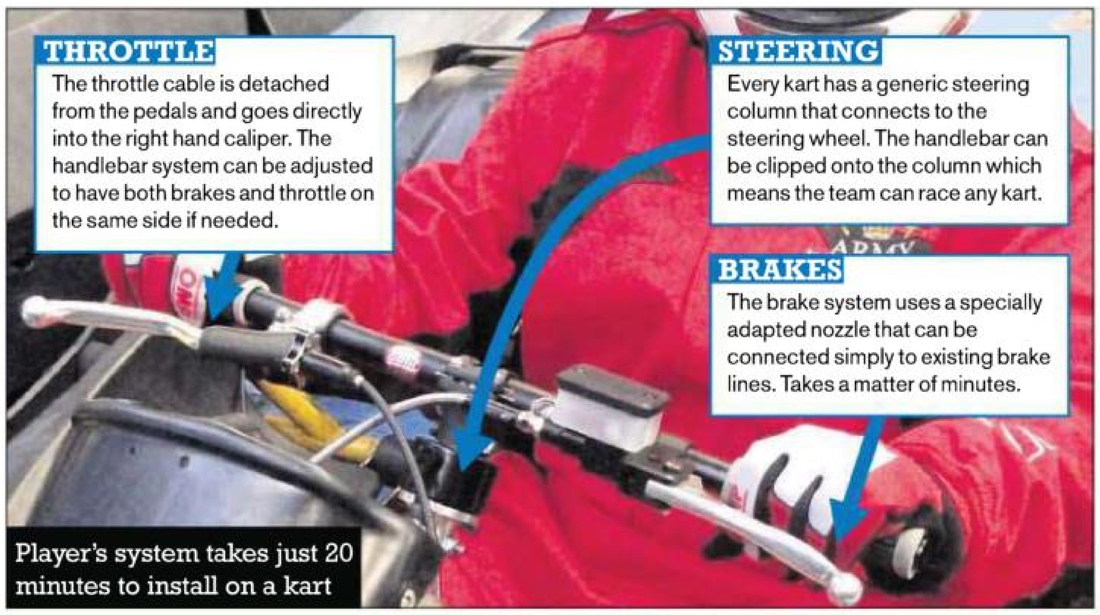
KartForce has been running a series of events at UK circuits over the past 18 months, pitting its own six-man teams against professionals and amateurs. The system has allowed the injured troops to compete with even the best karters on the circuits, and recently at an event in Reading one of the teams came second, just behind a team of Renault Clio Cup drivers.

The money raised at the events is re-invested in the project and helps bring more servicemen into the sport. New recruits to KartForce can take part in introduction days and then are given the chance to race in the team events. The objective for the squad is to head into mainstream karting and this year Player says the team will be doing just that. "Because we can attach the system to any kart we can compete at any level," he says. "We are planning to race in Prokarts, which will have events all around the UK and is very competitive. We are also aiming to compete in some endurance events with the tri-service championship (army, navy and RAF.) We are also thinking about setting some world records in the future for hand controlled karting as there are currently none set. It would be amazing for the soldiers to set records and it's something we can definitely do."

Player's idea has helped offer karting to a number of soldiers who would not have been able to compete and he says that in the next few years the project could reach out to even more soldiers: "We have the infrastructure to build on and more soldiers are in touch. It's an important part of their rehab but most of all it gives them an opportunity to socialise and show they are as competitive as any able-bodied driver."■

Karts have hand controls

The KartForce crew has beaten able-bodied racers



Player's system takes just 20 minutes to install on a kart

Russell overcomes mid-race woe for victory

GardaWinter Cup
By James Bass

Organiser: South Garda Kart Club **When:** February 18/19 **Where:** Lonato, Italy **Championship:** none **Starters:** 208

Reigning CIK-FIA European KF3 champion George Russell took victory in the first major karting event of the year at the South Garda Winter Cup in Italy last weekend.

The Intrepid junior driver was the most successful debutant in the class last year and was determined to show his rivals that his pace this year would be no different.

After qualifying fifth overall for the prefinal, Russell was in a good position to secure a top grid spot for the final. But the likes of fellow Briton Connor Jupp and Sweden's Robin Hansson were among the drivers standing in his way.

After a good start Russell picked his opponents off one by one, and took the lead on lap three. A problem with the carb on his kart mid-race caused him to lose almost two seconds and give the lead to Hansson. The problem resolved itself and allowed Russell to take back the lead and secure pole for the final.

The top three from the prefinal, Russell, Hansson and Danilo Albanese, fought it out in the final ahead of the main pack, but for Russell it was a straight forward win. After some early pressure from his rivals he managed to open up a gap and held on to take his first silverware of the season.

Fellow Briton and Zanardi driver Callum Ilott pulled out one of the performances of the weekend with a tenth, while Connor Jupp suffered engine problems and finished 13th.

Another familiar face on the KF3 circuit last year was Max Verstappen. As many predicted he has made the step up to KF2 with ease, and took the win in the class last weekend.

Although Dennis Olsen and Antonio Fuoco both finished above him in the heats, it was in the prefinal where Verstappen made his move. After a strong start he tucked in behind Fuoco and managed to make his move at the two hairpins that end the lap. He made the same move on Olsen at the same place and secured pole for the final.

In the final his rivals worked hard to stay with the Dutchman in the early laps. Last year he showed that if he can get away from the pack there is no catching him and at Lonato it was a similar situation. Intrepid seemed to have got the set-up spot on as, like George Russell, Verstappen was able to get the most of the high-speed circuit. While Fuoco and Olsen finished second and third it was Tom Joyner who was the highest placed Briton in fourth.

Joyner, now racing with CRG on an LH chassis, qualified sixth and secured seventh on the grid for the final; a strong performance from the MSA British champion. Energy driver Sam Snell was eighth and Callan O'Keeffe scored 16th overall in his first race in KF2.

Former single-seater racer Ben Hanley looked like he would be taking the spoils in KZ2 after finishing second in the prefinal, but engine trouble in the final scuppered his chances.

This left TonyKart driver Rick Dreezen to take the win ahead of Arnaud Kozlinski and Anthony Abbasse.

Russell (inset) carried on his KF3 form and won again

RESULTS

KF3: 1 George Russell (Intrepid); 2 Robin Hansson (TonyKart); 3 Danilo Albanes (Energy); 4 Martin Kodric (Alonso); 5 Ilari Piispanen (LH); 6 Guillermo Russo (Alonso). **Fastest lap:** Gabriel Florescu (Zanardi) 43.83s (55.23mph). **Pole position:** Russell. **Starters:** 33.
KF2: 1 Max Verstappen (Intrepid); 2 Antonio Fuoco (TonyKart); 3 Dennis Olsen (Energy); 4 Tom Joyner (LH); 5 Oystein Helgheim (Formula K); 6 Dave Blom (Formula K). **PP:** Verstappen. **FL:** Verstappen 43.36s (56.85mph). **S:** 34.
KZ2: 1 Rick Dreezen (TonyKart); 2 Arnaud Kozlinski (PCR); 3 Anthony Abbasse (SodiKart); 4 Mirko Torsellini (CRG); 5 Marco Ardigo (TonyKart); 6 Marco Zanchetta (Energy). **PP:** Jonathan Thonon (CRG). **FL:** Ardigo 41.93s (62.34mph). **S:** 32.

EASYKART ROUND-UP

Sam Faulkner fended off Jenson Murchison throughout the heats and the finals in **Cadets** to take the Easykart E Plate crown at Whilton Mill. Murchison claimed the runner-up spot and Jake Severs completed the top three.

In **Juniors** Ronan McKenzie drove well to take the overall Junior E plate crown, beating Zack Nickson and James Lay.

Barnaby Pittingale lost out to Jake Hughes in the **Lightweight** final despite showing early promise. Luca Hurst claimed third ahead of the impressive debutant, Ian Williams.

Will Smith dominated his rivals in the **Heavyweight** class, taking both finals with ease to win his second E plate crown. Michael Roots was second with Mark Lawrence in third.

Result
Cadets: 1 Sam Faulkner 18 laps in 13m 33.14s (43.12mph); 2 Jenson Murchison +0.90s; 3 Jake Severs; 4 Ethan Hawkey; 5 Adam Sparrow; 6 Andrew Dutton. **Fastest lap:** Jenson Murchison 44.81s (44.10mph). **Starters:** 30.
Junior: 1 Ronan McKenzie 20 laps in 13m 35.52s (48.21mph); 2 Zack Nickson +2.84s; 3 James Lay; 4 William Stowell; 5 Thanassi Barnicoat; 6 James White. **FL:** Zack Nickson 40.29s (48.35mph). **S:** 30.
Light: 1 Jake Hughes 20 laps in 13m 11.34s (50.23mph); 2 Barnaby Pittingale +0.60s; 3 Luca Hurst; 4 Ian Williams; 5 Steve Youle; 6 AJ Morris. **FL:** Jake Hughes 39.32s (50.88mph). **S:** 30.
Heavy: 1 Will Smith 20 laps in 13m 26.88s (52.57mph); 2 Mark Lawrence +9.17s; 3 Michael Roots; 4 Joe Paterson; 5 Carl Churchill; 6 Roland Breadner. **FL:** Will Smith 39.95s (52.98mph). **Starters:** 30.

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STAR LETTER

Swedish TV praise

I don't know what the organisers had to do to pull together coverage for Rally Sweden, but they succeeded brilliantly.

It was the best coverage I've seen on MotorsTV so far. And putting Colin Clark and Julian 'The Guru' Porter together as commentators was positively inspired.

They work so well together, and are so knowledgeable and enthusiastic on the subject. They made the perfect pair.

How exciting it was to see Mikko Hirvonen and Jari-Matti Latvala competing against each other in different teams for the first time. I cannot wait for the next rally to begin.

Bring it on.

Sue Darrall
Birmingham

MN's Star Letter writer gets a fantastic T-shirt courtesy of our friends at Petrolthreads.

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MN SAYS...

Positive start for BRC

Quality entry will make for intriguing first round

Since British Rally Championship bosses announced a year ago that the series would switch to a two-wheel-drive format for 2012, there has been plenty of debate about whether it was a good move. Well, things are looking quite positive.

Saturday's season-opening Rallye Sunseeker will kick off with 25 two-wheel-drive cars. While that's not massive, it is only two down from last year when 4WD machines were allowed in. And what's very encouraging is the quality of the entry, with the new rules tempting the likes of Jarkko Nikara back to the championship.

There are those who still think the British championship should be about the biggest cars in rallying. But the time for that argument has passed: like it or not, the BRC is now a two-wheel-drive championship, and it's time everyone gave it a chance. Watching a string of young stars pushing to the limit for glory on the Sunseeker this weekend should be thrilling. See you in the forests.

James Attwood, Editor

LETTERS

Fast 50 feedback

Following your list of the Fast 50 drivers to watch (*MN*, February 1), can I mention Chris Anderson?

He competed in the North of England Tarmac Rally Championship in 2011 in a Ford Fiesta, finished first in Class Three and third overall in the Championship. He was third in Class Three of the SG Petch stage Rally Championship and won the Border Challenge Award.

In the first rally of this season in the NETRC, the Christmas Stages, he finished second overall behind Kevin Proctor in a Subaru Impreza WRC and was leading the championship until illness meant he missed the Jack Frost later in January.

The car is being tweaked for the next outing at Ingliston in May. He will contest the SG Petch championship and the REIS BTRDA Asphalt championship.

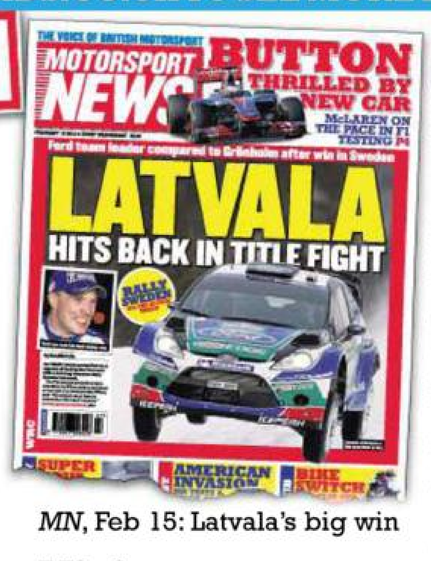
Stuart Anderson
Via email

Bishopscourt out

May I take you to task regarding the article in *MN* about Bischopscourt on January 18. You stated that the last car race meeting was held in 1968.

I have a programme dated June 12 1971, for an event organised by Ulster Automobile Club. I was at this meeting as my late husband Terry McNally was a competitor in his 997cc Ford Anglia.

Betty McNally
Via email



MN, Feb 15: Latvala's big win

Mini moan one

The more I read about it the more I begin to think how poorly Prodrive has handled the Mini project over the past year.

There was huge potential with a great car and a great driver in Kris Meeke. Apparently there were big sponsors who were interested but David Richards chose not to accept the offers. If he had we could now be seeing Kris Meeke in the Mini but now we have Paulo Nobre. Oh joy.

Paul Thompson
Via email

Mini moan two

What is wrong with BMW? Why have they dropped Prodrive from the Mini programme?

While David Richards says it is not an issue for the team to continue, this surely is a blow. First it lost Kris Meeke and then its factory support – this is hardly the way to go about winning the championship.

When VW comes in to the series, the interest in Germany will be huge. By sticking with Prodrive and Meeke, Mini would have had a massive head start on its rival.

But now, there is no hope. It makes no sense.

Brian Broad
Broadstairs

Wyedean thanks

On behalf of the Forest of Dean Motor Club, I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who made the Team GMF Wyedean Forest Rally a success, after the toughest conditions in 37 years.

All the officials, marshals and competitors/service crews. To our sponsors Team GMF, Hi Weir Engineering, Chepstow Racecourse, the local police forces and authorities, the Forestry Commission, and to locals for their help.

Paul Willetts
Chairman, Forest of Dean MC

Snowman support

The organising team of the Arnold Clark Thistle Hotels Snowman Rally would like to thank all officials, particularly the marshals, medical, rescue, recovery and radio crews who had to endure some atrocious weather conditions while undertaking their duties.

We very much appreciate their commitment and tenacity. Thanks also to the competitors, our main sponsors and individual stage sponsors for supporting us and we look forward to welcoming everyone back to the Highlands in 2013.

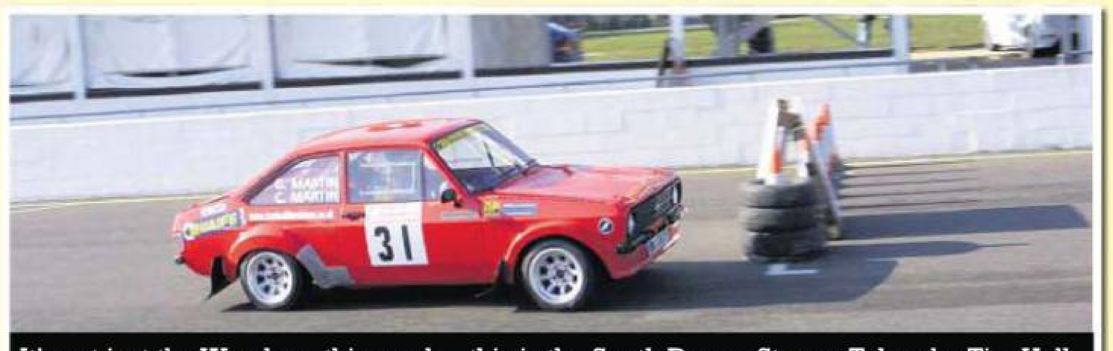
Neil Moir
Clerk of the Course

YOUR PICS

Subaru Impreza WRC driver Roger Chilman in action on the Wyedean Rally. Taken by Kevin Bridgewater

Mark Chappell snapped Justin Lawson...

...and lots of other cars on the Wyedean



It's not just the Wyedean this week... this is the South Downs Stages. Taken by Tim Hall

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WHAT'S ON

LISTINGS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Clio driver Donnelly will be aiming for glory on the Sunseeker

FRIDAY/SATURDAY

■ **Bournemouth and Poole, Dorset**
Rallye Sunseeker: British Rally Championship, BRC Challenge, HRCR Stage Rally, HRCR Mini Cup **Starts:** Friday 1750hrs, Saturday 0820hrs **Admission:** forestry stages £25 per car, Somerley Park £25 per car, service park £10 per car **Web:** rallyesunseeker.co.uk

SATURDAY

■ **Coventry Stadium, Rugby Road, Coventry**
Oval Racing: bangers, Micro Massacre, SuperStox **Starts:** 1130hrs **Admission:** adult £12, child £6 **Web:** spedeworth.co.uk **Contact:** 02476 542 395

■ **Ipswich, Suffolk**
Oval Racing: Open practice night **Starts:** 1800hrs **Admission:** adult £12, child £6 **Web:** spedeworth.co.uk **Contact:** 01473 612 423

SUNDAY

■ **Abbeyleix, County Laois**
Birr Stages Rally: Dunlop Irish National **Starts:** 0900hrs **Admission:** free **Web:** birrmotorclub.com Contact

■ **Mondello Park, Naas, County Kildare**
Autotest: Freeman Cup **Starts:** 1100hrs **Admission:** free **Web:** mondello.ie **Contact:** 00353 4586 0200

■ **Wimbledon Stadium, Plough Lane, London**
Oval Racing: 2.0 Hot Rods, Lightning Rods **Starts:** 1800hrs **Admission:** adult £12, child £6 **Web:** spedeworth.co.uk **Contact:** 01252 322 920

■ **Rectory Farm, Uppingham, Leicestershire**
Sporting Trial: Charles Pollard Trial **Starts:** 1030hrs **Admission:** free **Web:** btrda.com **Contact:** 01733 252 886

Details correct at time of press, but please check with event organisers before travelling to meetings

TV GUIDE

There is likely to be a big shunt in the Daytona 500

Racing is back. Finally, at long last, we can revel in some live wheel-to-wheel action every single weekend after what can often feel like an endless winter (especially if you're not a big rally fan).

And much like the WRC, the American racing season kicks off in earnest with its biggest events of the whole year. Just a fortnight after the Daytona 24 hours sportscar classic, all eyes are back on that particular corner of Florida seaside for the **Daytona 500,** the biggest NASCAR Sprint Cup event of the year (*see live listings*).

There are only two certainties about the race: anyone could win (see Trevor Bayne's shock success last year), and there will be a big accident. It's pretty much all decided in the last ten minutes, but there's plenty of goings-on throughout the race to keep you entertained. As an added bonus, MotorsTV will be showing coverage of the second-tier **Nationwide Series** this season.

Rally fans will enjoy a special evening of winter wonderland rallying that MotorsTV has planned for Friday. Full highlights of a dramatic **Rally Sweden** (2130hrs-2240hrs) will be immediately followed by a 90-minute orgy of classic rallying adventuring from last December's **Roger Albert Clark Rally** (2240hrs-0010hrs).

Some of you might prefer to see some of Britain's most committed clubmen going head to head with some real rising stars of sportscar racing. The **British GT Season Review** (Sunday, 0010hrs, 0310hrs, MotorsTV) is the perfect complement to any motorsport fan's Saturday night kebab.

NASCAR: Daytona 500
■ **Gatorade Duels:** Thursday, 1900hrs-2230hrs, Premier Sports
■ **Nationwide Series race:** Saturday, 1700hrs-2110hrs, MotorsTV
■ **Sprint Cup race:** Sunday, 1700hrs-2230hrs, Premier Sports
Highlights: Monday, 2100hrs-2200hrs, Sky Sports 3 [HD]

IRC: Rally Azores
■ **Preview:** Thursday, 2300hrs-2330hrs, British Eurosport
■ **Day one:** Friday, 2300hrs-2330hrs, British Eurosport
■ **Day two:** Saturday, 2330hrs-0000hrs, British Eurosport

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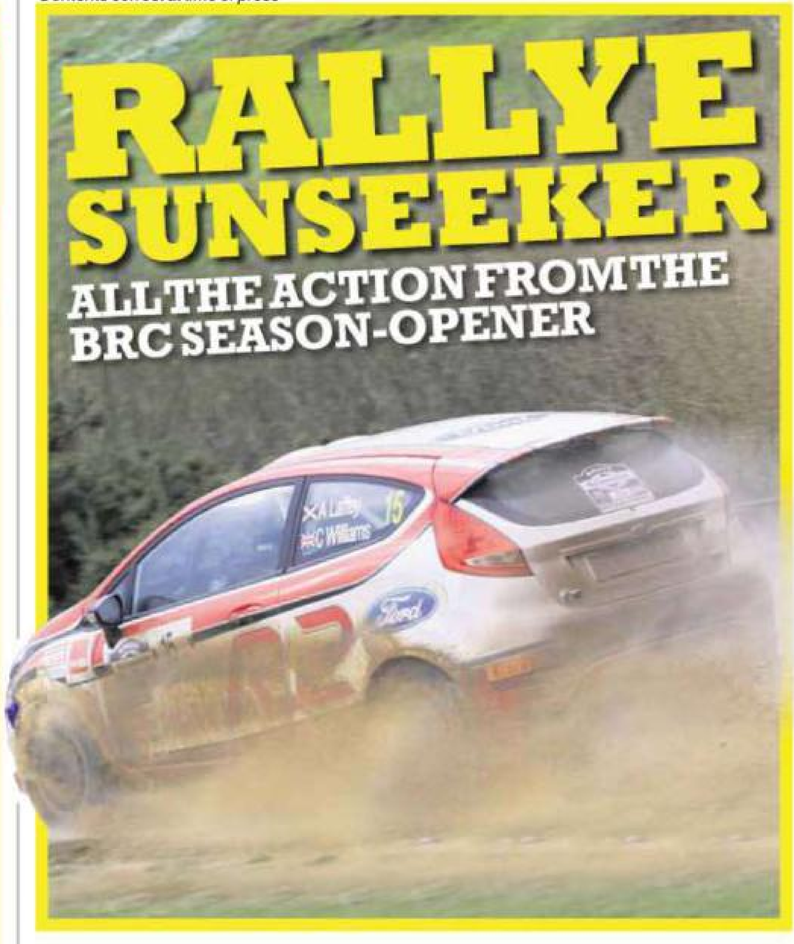

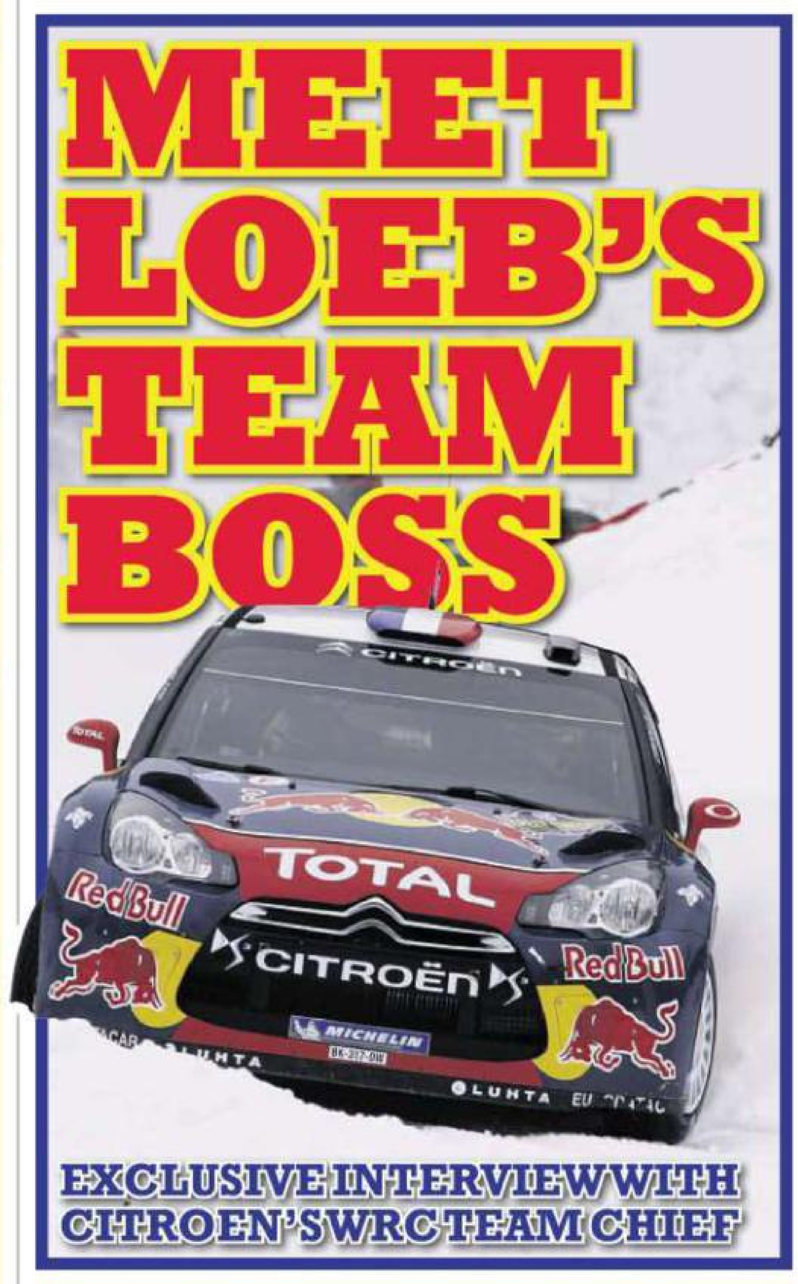

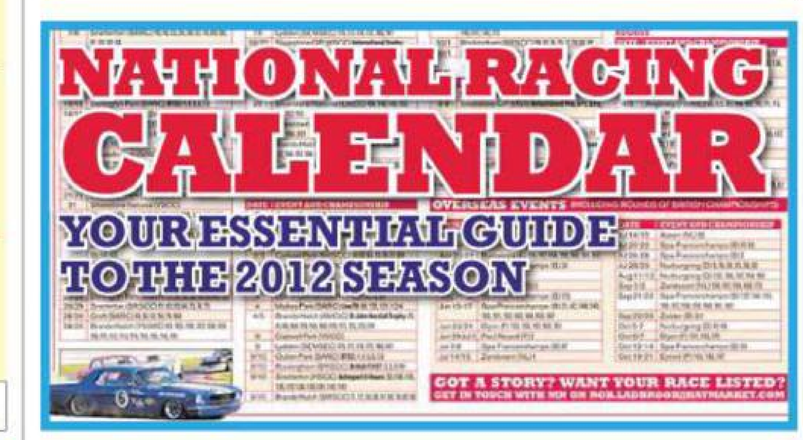

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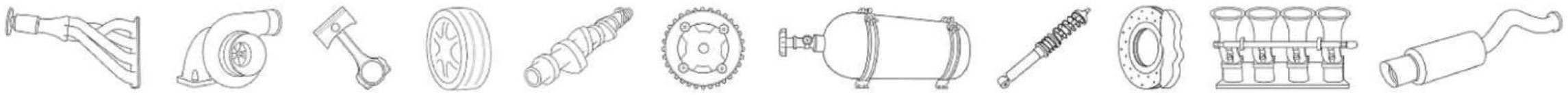

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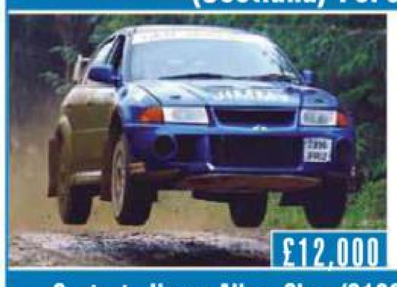

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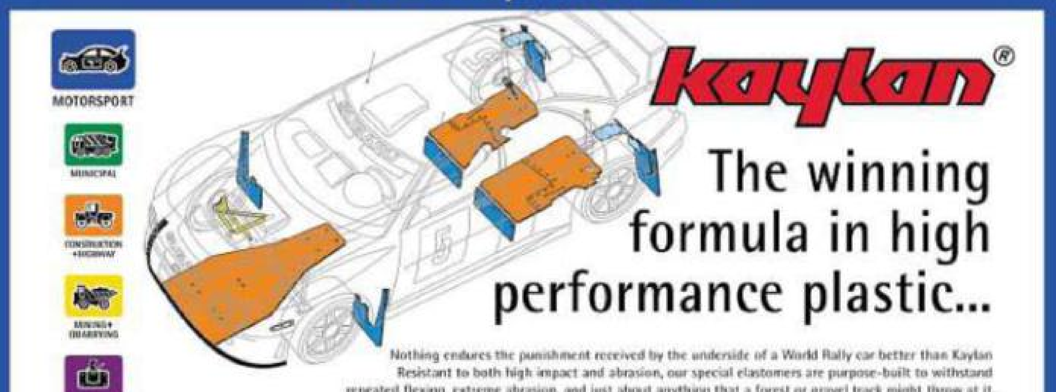

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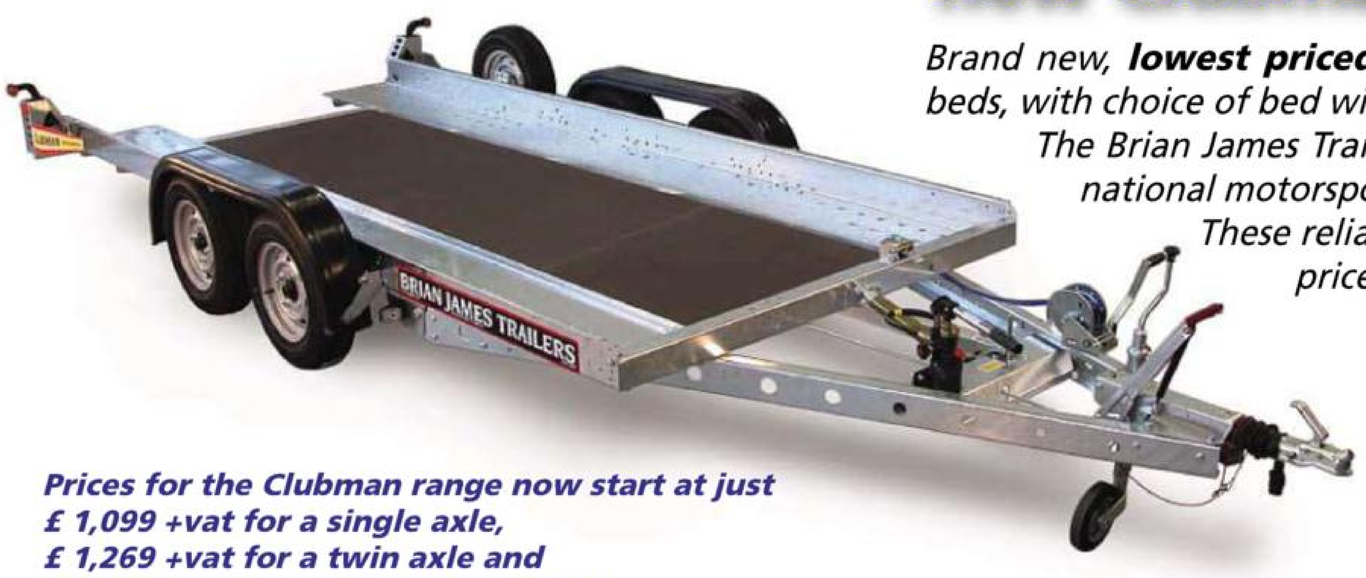

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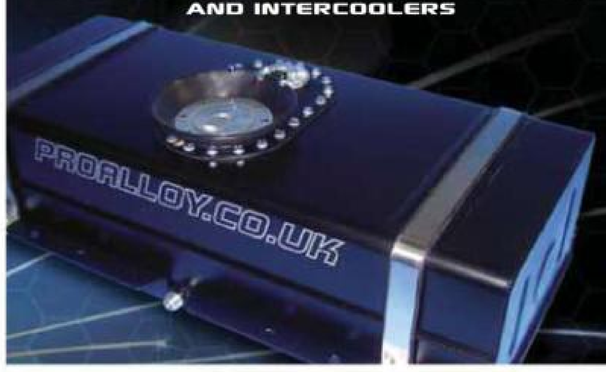

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