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THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

JANUARY 8 2020 ■ EVERY WEDNESDAY £3.60

ALL-FINNISH LINE-UP FOR M-SPORT

And Brit Greensmith gets part-time deal P2-3



Northern Irishman faces up to his future challenges



MEEKE ASSESSES LIFE AFTER THE WRC

By Sergio Lillo and David Evans

Five-time world rally winner Kris Meeke is chasing new challenges after admitting his full-time World Rally Championship career is finished.

The Northern Irishman lost his Toyota seat at the end of last season and is now considering events like Dakar.

Present for the start of this year's Dakar in Saudi Arabia, Meeke said: "For me, full time in the WRC, I think it's finished. I would have loved to continue, but as the situation [has happened] like this, I'm realistic. I look to the future and there are many things to challenge me."

Full story, p12-13



THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT
MOTORSPORT NEWS

JORDAN READY TO ATTACK FOR 2020 BTCC CROWN

NEW BMW SIGNING AIMING TO DELIVER HIS SECOND TIN-TOP TITLE P18



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Jordan's pursuit of a second BTCC title



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WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE WRC?

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Castle Combe's 70th anniversary

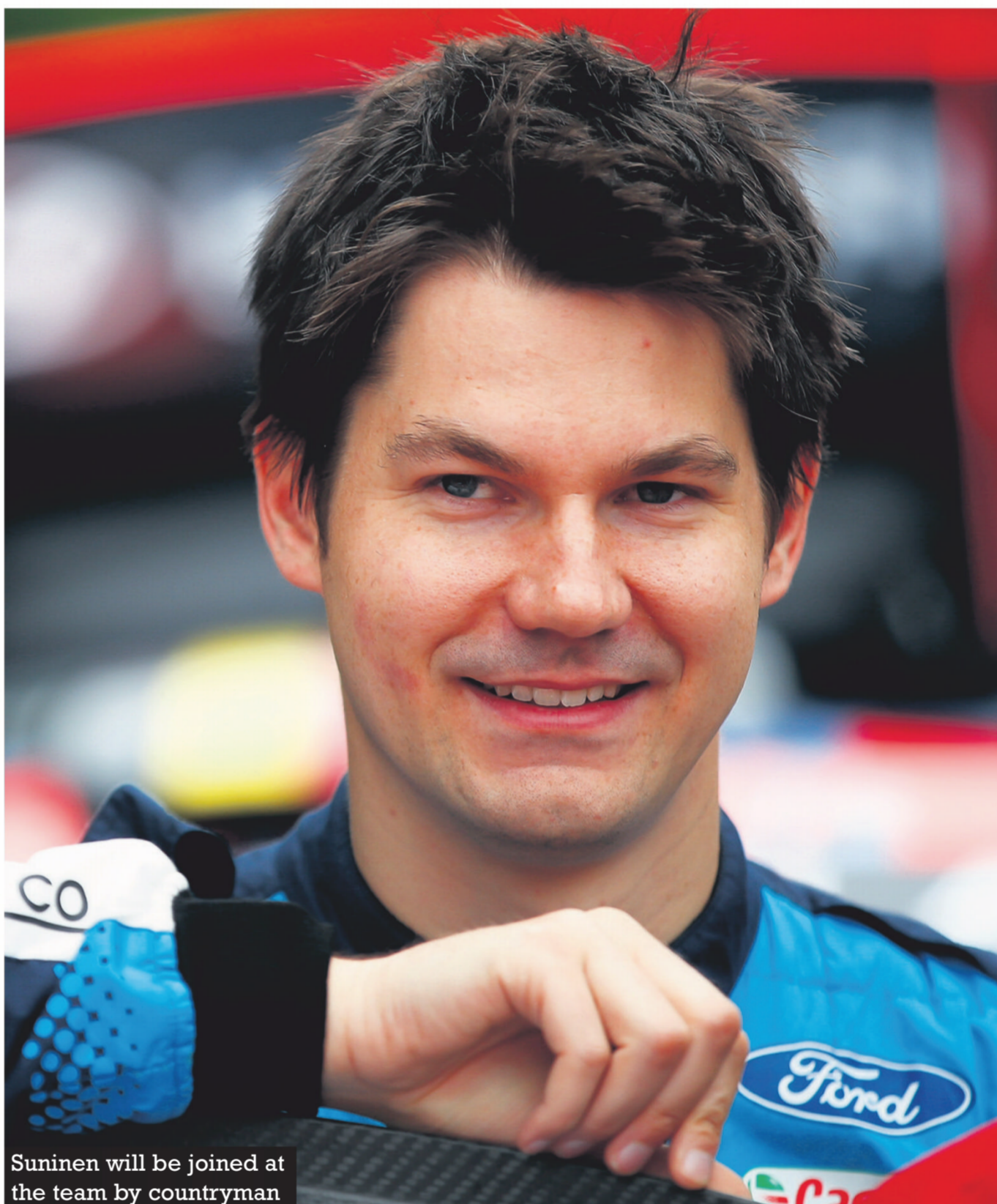


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Suninen will be joined at the team by countryman

By David Evans

M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC will undergo a significant engine upgrade from the fourth round of this year's World Rally Championship – a move team boss Malcolm Wilson says will be enough to power the Cumbrian car back to the top of the timesheets.

Talking to Motorsport News after confirming former Citroen star Esapekka Lappi would be joining him at Dovenby Hall, Wilson was in optimistic mood about the season ahead.

"We know where we are coming into this year and I'm looking forward to it," said Wilson. "We won't have three cars on every round, so we won't be in the position to fight for the manufacturers [title], but we will have some target events where we'll be looking for victories."

Lappi lost his seat when Citroen departed the WRC at the end of last year, but quickly made the journey to Cumbria to meet Wilson.

"Esapekka was one of the few current drivers that had never driven for me," said Wilson. "Beyond saying 'hello' to him in the service park, I'd never really met him. We sat down and talked things through and I could very quickly see that he would fit in to what we're doing here and the environment we have in the team."

Wilson had multiple options for his lead car in 2020 – options which could have included such high profile stars as Kris Meeke,



Wilson has lauded his squad



Lappi: M-Sport debut in 2020

Craig Breen, Jari-Matti Latvala and Andreas Mikkelsen – but he admitted the 2017 Rally Finland winner, who has driven for both Toyota and Citroen previously, was the obvious choice.

"He's got good experience of the WRC," said Wilson. "He's a proven rally winner – there's a mindset thing that comes with that. Like I said, I think he'll settle in quickly with the team and he'll find our car pretty easy to drive. There were a few different guys around, but this one wasn't a difficult choice once I'd sat down with him."

Lappi joins countryman Teemu Suninen as M-Sport's main strike force this season, returning the squad to an all-Finnish frontline.

"I know we've had a good connection with the Finns with the likes of Marcus [Gronholm], Mikko [Hirvonen] and Jari-Matti [Latvala]," said Wilson.

"I've had them all here, but this Finnish connection was never really on my mind. It's maybe a good story for you, but it wasn't one of the things I was looking for.

I just wanted the strongest team."

Rally Finland will be one of M-Sport's target events for the season ahead, however, as the British team chases a first win on the world's fastest rally for a decade – Latvala's 2010 success being the last time the team celebrated in Jyväskylä.

"We've got a big test planned [before] Finland," said Wilson. "Teemu showed some mega pace in Finland in 2018, but it wasn't quite there last year. We've got an upgrade coming for the fourth round this year which will make a difference – especially somewhere like Finland."

That upgrade was originally planned for Rally Chile, but the loss of the Concepcion-based event means the revised engine specification will be seen for the first time on Rally Argentina in April.

"This is the biggest change we've made to the engine since we started work with this car [in 2017]," said Wilson. "It's a big step. As you'd expect, we've worked closely with Ford on this, with

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP TO GALVANISE THE WRC?

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



M-Sport says tweaks will make the Fiesta a winner

LAPPI READY TO HELP M-SPORT TAKE A STEP FORWARD IN 2020

Finnish driver lines up alongside Teemu Suninen for Cumbrian squad

Ford doing a lot of the modelling work on the engine. When it comes, we'll have more power, torque and driveability – like I said, it will make a big difference. Once we've got that in place, I don't see any reason really why we shouldn't be challenging [for victory] on all remaining rounds of the series."

Lappi admitted he was grateful for Wilson's show of faith when there were so many drivers available for the season ahead.

The 28-year-old said: "M-Sport Ford has a real passion for rallying and there were a lot of talented drivers available for this seat, so I'm very happy they put their trust in us – giving myself and Janne [Ferm, co-driver] an opportunity to show what we can do in 2020."

"I'm really looking forward to discovering the Fiesta. I can't wait to get started, and hope we can push for some strong results."

Suninen will start his second full season in a factory Fiesta and he's delighted to have a fellow Finn alongside him.

Suninen said: "It's really great to be in a team with Esapekka because he was something of a hero to me in my childhood. When I started go-karting as a teenager in Finland, he was in the same team and winning the championship. Three years later I was able to do the same, and now we're both in rally and both back in the same team!"

The two Finns will start every round of the championship, while their British team-mate Gus Greensmith will join them for nine events (see sidebar).



Suninen scored M-Sport's best 2019 result with second in Italy



The last M-Sport Finland victory was Jari-Matti Latvala in 2010



Greensmith learned fast in the 2019 campaign

Greensmith: I will be fitter and faster in 2020

M-Sport managing director Malcolm Wilson has urged British star Gus Greensmith to learn from the season ahead.

Greensmith, 23, will drive a Ford Fiesta WRC on nine rounds this season, starting with Monte Carlo later this month.

The Manchester driver subbed for an injured Elfyn Evans twice last year, but Wilson said it was his debut aboard a World Rally Car in Portugal that surprised him.

Wilson said: "I must admit the pace he showed

in Portugal was far better than I expected last year, but this season's got to be all about the experience. He had a few starts last year, but now he knows he's got nine rounds, so he can go in there without the pressure of having to show what he's

capable of and just find some consistency with a more strategic approach. A top-six would be nice, but he's got time to build up to that."

Beyond the French Alps, Greensmith will start in Mexico, Argentina, Portugal, Sardinia, Finland,

Turkey, Germany and Wales.

Last season, after showing great pace in Portugal and Finland, both events ended in frustration. Rally Germany, however, delivered ninth overall on what would be his final 2019 Fiesta WRC outing.

Looking forward to the season ahead, Greensmith said: "I have been waiting for this opportunity my whole life. Now I have it. I owe a lot to everyone at M-Sport and Ford who has helped me progress as a driver, but there is a lot more to come."

"During the off season I have made some big improvements to myself outside of the rally car. I have never been fitter. I have never been faster."

Greensmith:
nine rounds



RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

Joking Norris

McLaren's Lando Norris says he was "too jokey" at times in his rookie Formula 1 season and needs to find a better compromise with more focus in his sophomore year. Norris and team-mate Carlos Sainz have shaken up F1 with their bond off the track, while Norris's social media in particular has led to a huge fanbase early in his career. "In some ways I think I've almost been too relaxed, and had too much fun," Norris said. "Maybe sometimes I've pushed it a bit too much in terms of making it too jokey, and not focusing as much as I should."

Vital cost cap

Ferrari believes Formula 1 needs to develop a stricter budget cap over time to reinforce the championship's economic viability, otherwise it is "slowly going to die". A budget cap of \$1.75 billion will be implemented from 2021, but will not apply to engine development or driver salaries, while other exemptions such as the company's top three earners will also be allowed. Ferrari's CEO Louis Camilleri said: "I think we've reached a relatively good compromise in terms of the cost cap, which today applies to the chassis. In time that budget cap should encompass more of the car, the power units, the drivers as well, various other things. Because ultimately if the sport is not economically viable, it's slowly going to die."

Poor directors

Racing Point driver Sergio Perez thinks Formula 1 TV directors are "not doing a great job" of capturing the most exciting on-track moments during grand prix weekends. Perez overtook Lando Norris on the final lap of the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, which also meant he beat Norris to 10th in the drivers' championship, but the pass was not shown on the live broadcast as race winner Lewis Hamilton was completing his final lap. Asked to assess F1's current state, Perez said: "The main problem in my opinion is a difference across teams. The problem is that they don't show it [midfield battles] on TV. I think that directors are not doing a great job. But the race in the midfield, it is unbelievable."

Williams sale

Williams has agreed to sell a majority equity stake in sister company Williams Advanced Engineering. Founded in 2011, WAE is the engineering services business of the Williams Group that owns the Formula 1 team. It employs over 300 people working in 40 different technology projects and the stake will be sold to an independent private equity firm controlled by EMK Capital. Williams said it will retain a minority interest in the WAE business. WAE was the sole battery supplier for Formula E from its first season in 2014 until season four in 2018.

KUBICA TO BE ALFA RESERVE

Ex-Williams driver lands F1 test role with old squad

By Valentin Khorounzhiy

Robert Kubica will join the Alfa Romeo Formula 1 team as a reserve driver for 2020, with his backer PKN Orlen coming on board as a "co-title sponsor".

In 2019, Kubica made his return to the F1 grid with Williams following a long absence triggered by his life-threatening rally crash.

The 35-year-old scored Williams's sole point in what proved to be a miserable season for the team, with Nicholas Latifi taking his place for 2020.

Kubica was linked with a simulator role at Haas and Racing Point, but will join Alfa instead. His new role was revealed at the same time as "a multi-year partnership" between the team and Polish oil company PKN Orlen was announced, which will mean the squad competes as 'Alfa Romeo Racing ORLEN' this year.

"I am really happy to be starting this new chapter in my career as I join Alfa Romeo Racing ORLEN," said Kubica, who raced for the team when it was known as BMW Sauber from 2006 to '09.

"This team holds a special



Pole drove for the BMW Sauber squad between 2006 and 2009

place in my heart and I am pleased to see some faces still here from my years in Hinwil.

"Time and circumstances are obviously different, but I am convinced that I will find the same determination and hunger to succeed. I am looking forward to helping Alfa Romeo Racing ORLEN make the next step forward."

During Kubica's time with BMW Sauber, he won the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix and finished in a personal best fourth place in that year's drivers' championship.

Alfa has retained an unchanged race line-up of Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi for 2020,

and has confirmed that its next F1 challenger will be called the 'C39'.

"We are also delighted to welcome Robert back home and we cannot wait to start working with him," said team principal Frederic Vasseur.

"He is a driver that needs no introduction: one of the most brilliant in his generation and one who displayed the true meaning of human determination in his fight to return to racing after his rallying accident.

"His feedback will be invaluable as we continue to push our team towards the front of the grid."

LECLERC HANDED FERRARI CONTRACT EXTENSION UNTIL 2024

Charles Leclerc has extended his contract with the Ferrari Formula 1 team, in a deal that means he will stay at the squad until at least the end of 2024.

Leclerc joined Ferrari for 2019 after just one season in F1 with Sauber, replacing Kimi Raikkonen alongside Sebastian Vettel.

He secured Ferrari's first win of the year in the Belgian Grand Prix in September, although victory in Bahrain in just his second race for the team was on the cards until a late engine issue.

He went on to win again in the Italian Grand Prix, and finished fourth in the standings ahead of his four-time world champion team-mate Vettel.

Leclerc also grabbed seven pole positions, the most achieved by any driver in 2019.

"I am very happy to be staying on with Scuderia Ferrari," said Leclerc. "This past season, driving for the most illustrious



Leclerc outperformed team-mate Vettel in first season at Ferrari

team in Formula 1 has been a dream year for me.

"I cannot wait to enjoy an even deeper relationship with the team after what has been an intense and exciting 2019. "I'm keen to see what the future holds and I can't wait to get going again this season."

Team boss Mattia Binotto added: "With each passing race last year, our wish to extend our

contract with Charles became ever more self-evident and the decision means he will now be with us for the next five seasons.

"It demonstrates that Charles and the Scuderia have a firm future together."

Leclerc established himself as the leading Ferrari driver throughout the season, and his partnership with Vettel became one of the focal points of the year.



Kubica's F1 comeback with Williams in 2019 was difficult

Verstappen hits out at variable decisions

Max Verstappen says stewarding in Formula 1 is the same as refereeing in football, as personal interpretation will always play a key role in decisions.

Verstappen was at the centre of the FIA's clear shift in policy this season, after his aggressive last-gasp overtake on Charles Leclerc to win the Austrian Grand Prix was investigated but no punishment was given.

At the next race in Britain, Verstappen and Leclerc went wheel-to-wheel again in another fierce fight that ended without either driver being penalised, as the governing body and its stewards began to set new

Red Bull driver is unimpressed

precedents within the rules to allow for harder racing.

Verstappen said: "The thing is, it's the same in football isn't it? You have different refs and some give a yellow card easier than others. It's the same like that.

"Of course, you know, it's a rulebook. But then still the stewards have a little bit of a say of what you're actually going to apply.

"When you go into like a Champions League match or a Premier League match, the ref can be different.

"Sometimes you can get away with a yellow card and then the other ref gives you a red, and you're like 'what was going on?'. It's exactly the same, I think, in Formula 1."



OUR GUIDE TO THIS YEAR'S AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL SHOW



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'What next for struggling WRC?'
Possible solutions to rallying's troubles, p22



MORRIS UNVEILED AS WORKS BENTLEY DRIVER FOR 2020

British GT champion will tackle Intercontinental GT Challenge campaign with manufacturer

By Stephen Lickorish

Former British GT champion Seb Morris has become an official Bentley works driver and will contest the Intercontinental GT Challenge series with the manufacturer this season.

Morris, 24, claimed the British GT title with Bentley squad Team Parker Racing in 2017 alongside Rick Parfitt Jr in his second season after switching from single-seaters. Since then he has contested a number of series and races in Bentley machinery, including the Blancpain GT Series. He was 11th in the British GT standings in a JRM Bentley last year.

"This is such amazing news, I can't thank everyone at Bentley enough for putting their faith in me to become one

of the 'Bentley Boys' for 2020," said Morris. "We've worked so, so hard to get to this point, which truly is a dream come true, and I am unbelievably proud to represent Bentley as a factory driver this year.

"Now, it's time to work even harder to make the absolute most of this incredible opportunity and to repay all of those who have supported me. I cannot wait to get to work with Bentley and the guys at M-Sport ahead of the new season, we established a fantastic relationship last year and I'm confident we can build on that and enjoy a successful and rewarding season on the world stage."

Morris's 2020 IGTC season begins with the Bathurst 12 Hour next month and also includes the Spa 24 Hours and races at Indianapolis, Suzuka and Kyalami.

Photos: LAT

Morris will form part of Bentley's factory line-up



QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

MotorSport Vision Racing will again be the organising club when Formula E returns to London later this year. The electric single-seater series last raced in the UK back in 2016 – when MSVR was also involved – but will be back at a new circuit based in and around the ExCeL Centre in July. MSVR will be responsible for recruiting scrutineers, marshals and recovery vehicles...

The DS Techeetah Formula E team has suspended a member of its race team for allegedly violating its policy against any expression of "hate, bigotry or racism". In a statement released on Saturday, DS Techeetah said it had taken action following "content recently posted on a private social media account"... **Inaugural Formula Regional European champion Frederik Vesti will step up to the FIA Formula 3**

Championship with reigning champion Prema Racing in 2020. Seventeen-year-old Vesti scored 13 wins and 10 pole positions on his way to last year's title – also with Prema. German F4 champion Theo Pourchaire will also graduate to FIA F3, driving for ART Grand Prix... The 2016 Blancpain GT Sprint champion Enzo Ide is recovering at home after spending five months in hospital in his

native Belgium, which included a spell in an artificial coma. Ide was placed in the coma in August 2019 after being found in a confused state at home by his wife. He underwent several surgeries to treat a suspected head injury, and now that he has returned home he paid tribute to the medical staff who worked on him in a New Year message posted on his Facebook page... **Jacques Villeneuve will enter**

a team in the 2020 NASCAR Euro Series, as the 1997 Formula 1 world champion and his childhood friend Patrick Lemarie expand their young driver academy. Villeneuve and Lemarie founded the FEED Racing academy last year, when Villeneuve made his racing return in the Euro Series. The FEED team will enter two full-time entries for 2020 for Villeneuve and Lemarie.

OBITUARY

Junior Johnson 1931-2019

Daytona 500 winner and legendary NASCAR team owner Junior Johnson has passed away at the age of 88.

Robert Glenn Johnson Junior, born in 1931 in North Carolina, was one of the original moonshine smugglers whose modified cars laid the foundations of early stock car racing.

He began his stock car career in the early 1950s and soon became a regular NASCAR race winner, racking up 50 wins across his driving career, and was also a slipstreaming pioneer when NASCAR

introduced its 2.5-mile 'superspeedways', like Daytona.

Arguably his biggest racing achievement came during 1960, when he added the Daytona 500 to his resume.

His last race was in 1966, and following that, his team Junior Johnson and Associates hit its stride.

In the 1970s, Johnson steered Cale Yarborough to the 1976-78 titles, and then rising star Darrell Waltrip earned the 1981, '82 and '85 titles, as NASCAR began to become more commercialised and popular throughout the US.

The team ranks third in the all-time list for Cup Series wins behind Richard Petty Enterprises and Hendrick Motorsports.



Toyota says Peugeot's entry has stabilised the WEC

PEUGEOT COULD ENTER WEC BEFORE 2022-23

Peugeot has not ruled out racing its new LM Hypercar before the start of the 2022-23 World Endurance Championship season.

Jean-Marc Finot, motorsport boss of the marque's parent company PSA, stressed that the announcement of its return to front-line sportscar racing for the first time since 2011 in November stated that it would be back in 2022. This was widely interpreted as meaning the beginning of the 2022-23 season.

Asked if that was the case, Finot replied: "We have not said that – we have said we will arrive in 2022 but we have not said exactly when. We are keeping the possibility to race before."

Finot stressed that no decisions on when the Peugeot LM Hypercar will

make its race debut have been taken.

Peugeot's entry into the new LM Hypercar class of the WEC has "stabilised" the category, according to Toyota.

The confirmation of a third major manufacturer in Peugeot alongside the Japanese marque and Aston Martin is a crucial step in the development of the replacement for LMP1, according to Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon.

"This is really important news for hypercars," Vasselon said. "Two manufacturers in Aston Martin and us is not enough; two manufacturers is never enough because if one pulls out, you have a problem. Having a third manufacturer stabilises the category."

"Brutal" period coming for combustion engine racing

World Touring Car Cup supremo Francois Ribeiro has warned fans of combustion engine series to prepare for a "brutal, violent" period as the automotive landscape changes.

Volkswagen Motorsport, which backed Sebastien Loeb Racing's WTCR project in 2018 and 2019, announced in November it would end its factory support of any programmes using traditional combustion engines.

The FIA said it expected the electrification of WTCR to take "a few years", though the WSC Group that developed the TCR concept will launch an 'E TCR' series in 2020, which will be promoted by the Eurosport Events group behind WTCR.

E TCR will be the first multi-make tin-top series to utilise fully electric powertrains, and follows the example of Formula E and the off-road Extreme E series that is due to launch in 2021 in this regard.

Asked about Volkswagen's WTCR withdrawal and whether it might compete in E TCR, Ribeiro said: "Ask them. I guess it was that kind of message which is clearly a board-level message, [that] is now difficult to handle for Volkswagen Motorsport because to keep all the customers to which they sold cars and R5 cars and TCR cars, I think that telephone must have been burning for a few days. But it is what it is. And we have to live with it."

"If we all love combustion motorsport, and I think we do, the coming years will be brutal, violent. There will be decisions, in any championship, which will be so hard, so difficult, in every category of motorsport. Rallying, F1, touring cars, GT."

"The series that won't adapt to the energy transition of the automotive industry can die, even though we are all looking like this and saying, 'ah, WTCR's super-strong, [it has] seven brands, 26 cars.'"



Volkswagen has withdrawn from WTCR as it focuses on electric categories

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

IN BRIEF

Kohlbecker to TRS

National Formula Ford 1600 runner-up Spike Kohlbecker will compete in this year's Toyota Racing Series for Kiwi Motorsport. The American driver, who took three wins during the FF1600 season, will contest the New Zealand-based single-seater series, which begins at Highlands Motorsport Park next weekend. Kohlbecker is not the only driver who raced in the UK last year to tackle the category as BRDC British F3 racer Lucas Petersson will take part for R-ace GP.

Styles to F1000

Teenager Billy Styles will make his circuit racing debut in the F1000 single-seater championship this season. Styles is the second driver to sign up to the series who is part of Motorsport UK's Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme following Jack Tomalin. "We are pleased to be running two Motorsport UK AASE programme students within the championship this season," said F1000 championship manager Frazer Corbyn. "We offer an affordable and supportive environment for them to develop their racecraft in what is a very fast and competitive grid."

Parfitt confirms British GT exit

British GT champion Rick Parfitt Jr has confirmed he won't be remaining in the series this year.

The 45-year-old added the GT3 title in 2017 to his GT4 crown from 2013, and announced he would be taking a sabbatical after 2018, only to return last year with JRM and win the opening round at Oulton Park.

Parfitt is expected to contest a European programme in the renamed GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup.

Parfitt said on Twitter: "I'm hugely flattered to have been offered some amazing drives over the winter but have now narrowed it down to two serious deals. All I can say currently is that both are in European series and in very different cars!"

"As a result I won't be returning to British GT in the near future. I've had a great time there and made some amazing memories but I have definitely done my time! It's time to move up!"



Audi S3 driver took just five BTCC points

BLUNDELL RETIRES FROM MOTORSPORT

F1 podium finisher decides to hang up his gloves after tough maiden season in the BTCC

By Matt Kew

Mark Blundell has announced his retirement from full-time racing after a difficult maiden season in the British Touring Car Championship last year.

Blundell made 61 Formula 1 starts between 1991 and 1995 before switching to CART. He also won the Le Mans 24 Hours

in 1992 for Peugeot.

Blundell competed for the Trade Price Cars Racing arm of the AmD Tuning team in the BTCC last season. The 53-year-old endured a trying year in the front-wheel-drive Audi S3 saloon, scoring two points finishes across 30 races.

Blundell posted on Instagram: "Time to let the cat out of the bag and sign off from my racing

career. For 30 years I've given it my all behind the wheel, met the most amazing people and enjoyed moments I'll never forget."

Blundell has cited the pressure of increased work commitments, including a stable of drivers who he manages, as a big part of the reasons why he has had to step away from driving.

"Last year's BTCC adventure was exactly that and I loved the challenge of getting back behind the wheel... can't be too many grandads who have competed in the BTCC," he added. "I might still be found in the BTCC paddock this year one way or another."

Blundell told Motorsport News in 2019 that his return to a full-length campaign in

the BTCC had been the toughest year of his career.

"If you go back to the beginning of my life in motorsport in 1984, this is the worst season of my career without question," he said. "It is literally the worst season I have ever had. I have never been so far back for so long during the season, so this is incredibly difficult for me. It's painful."



Honda Civic driver was fourth in the standings last season

Cook targets overall BTCC title bid after staying with BTC Racing

Josh Cook says that remaining with the BTC Racing squad for another year in the British Touring Car Championship will give him the impetus he needs to challenge for the overall title.

The 28-year-old signed a last-minute deal to drive for BTC Racing at the start of 2019 and finished fourth in the championship table with three wins. He was also runner-up in the Independents Trophy standings.

The Bath racer joined the BTCC in 2015, but thinks 2020 will represent his best chance yet to claim the overall silverware.

"This will be the first time I have gone into a season with the same car as I have raced

in the previous campaign, and I think that is really important," said Cook. "Last year, we knew the FK8 version of the Honda Civic was a great car, but we were still getting to know it and that took some time."

"We will now be able to look at the data we have accrued over 2019, which was a strong year for us, and we will be able to go to a circuit and start from a strong foundation. I am very excited about what we can achieve and I am raring to go."

Joint team principal Bert Taylor said that retaining Cook on the driving strength was important to help the squad continue its progress through to 2020.

"When you look at teams like

WSR and Team Dynamics, its success is built on consistency and that is what we will have by retaining Josh for the new season," he said. "We were still learning last year, we were taking steps forward but there was still more for us to find. I think, by having the same elements in place, that will help us to push on."

"Finishing fourth with Josh last year was a real step forward for us, but we have got our sights set high and it is all about winning. We want to continue our upward trajectory into the new campaign."

BTC Racing will expand to three cars for its 2020 season, and the other two drivers are expected to be revealed shortly.

Thompson joins Trade Price Cars Racing squad to drive Audi S3

The Trade Price Cars Racing British Touring Car team has signed Bobby Thompson to drive one of its Audi S3 saloons in the 2020 campaign.

The team, which was new to the grid in 2019, ran former Formula 1 driver Mark Blundell and Jake Hill, with Hill winning a race outright at Knockhill in September. Hill has since announced that he will switch to



an AmDTuning FK2 Honda Civic Type R for 2020, while Blundell has retired from motorsport.

Thompson (left) will be entering his third year in the BTCC. He finished 22nd in 2019 with two top 10 finishes in a Team Hard VVCC, including a career-best sixth place in the opening round at Brands Hatch.

The 2017 Volkswagen Racing Cup title winner said: "As a new team, [Trade Price Cars Racing]

had a fantastic year with plenty of success on track, and my goal is to help them build on that in 2020 and fight for more trophies. I've been able to learn a lot during the two seasons that I've spent in the BTCC so far, and I think I've shown I have the pace to run inside the top 10."

"The goal now is to do that on a regular basis and I think it's something that we can do with ease based on how the car performed this year with Jake Hill."

Malvern and Jones opt for Bentley for 2020 GT3 graduation

Scott Malvern and Nick Jones will contest the GT3 class in British GT this year, remaining with Team Parker Racing.

The GT4 Pro-Am champions of 2018 had tested with multiple teams and manufacturers since concluding last season, but will stay in the familiar environment of Stuart Parker's 2017 title-winning outfit to drive the team's Bentley Continental GT3.

Jones admits that he "didn't expect" to make his GT3 bow

with Parker, but stressed that the continuity would prove helpful in his first season in the premier class. "There is a good atmosphere in the team and in the garage and it was important to keep as many things the same, so the only change is the class and the car," he said.

"We're going into the year with an open mind, looking to get on the podium and competing for wins. I might need a little bit of time at the start of the season,

but I feel relatively comfortable. I'm sure we'll be in the mix."

● British GT will have a first title sponsor this year since Avon's departure at the end of 2015, with investment provider Intelligent Money taking naming rights. Intelligent Money-branded windscreen banners will replace the fluorescent yellow and pink colours of recent seasons. GT3 cars will have a predominantly white banner, while GT4s will have a black background.



Large JCW Mini entry is expected

TOP GINETTA SQUAD ELITE TO JCW MINIS

Title-winning Junior and GT4 Supercup team plans expansion into new BTCC support series

By Stephen Lickorish

Leading Ginetta squad Elite Motorsport will expand into the JCW class of the Mini Challenge for this season.

Elite has been the team to beat in Ginetta competition in recent years with its drivers winning both the Ginetta GT4 Supercup and Ginetta Junior titles last season with Harry King and James Hedley, respectively. It had also won the 2017 Junior crown with Adam Smalley, while James Taylor won last November's Winter Series too.

The squad initially began competing in the 750 Motor Club's Sport Specials championship, building its own Elite Pulse car and is now set to expand into the Mini category when the series joins the British Touring Car Championship support bill this year.

"It's something we've been planning for the majority of last year," explained Elite team boss Eddie Ives. "I have two mechanics who have been wanting to work with me for a couple of years, they were an integral part of the Eurotech

Mini team two years ago who won it with Brett Smith. So they will look after the Minis and we've brought in some experience straightaway.

"Its move to TOCA [is a big reason for looking at it]. I can't speak highly enough about the support package with TOCA. It's the place to be if you want to be an up-and-coming racer in the UK at the moment.

"It's a bit of diversity in the team too – we now have a front-wheel-drive option for when they come out of Juniors. The timing was right for us to have a go at something else. Although Ginetta Junior is fantastic, the sad thing about it is they can only do two years in it. So it's good for us to have more options for the drivers."

Elite has signed up Lewis Galer – who tested with the team for Ginetta Junior several years ago – as its first driver, after he had a tough debut season in the Mini Challenge, finishing 16th in the standings. The team has also purchased a second car.

The squad will continue competing in Ginetta categories, already having a full line-up for the Junior series (see right) and the GT5 Challenge.

Elite aims to win Junior crown with rookie

Elite Motorsport plans to become the first team to power a rookie driver to the Ginetta Junior title this season after unveiling a line-up consisting entirely of racers in their first full season.

Elite drivers have won the previous two Ginetta Junior crowns but a driver has not previously taken the title in their first season in the category. Louis Foster was just eight points shy of achieving that feat with Elite in 2018, while rookie Zak O'Sullivan was runner-up last year.

Two of the team's six drivers – William Aspin and Ginetta scholar Tom Lebbon – contested November's Winter Series but, for the rest, 2020 will be their

circuit racing debuts. The remaining four drivers are scholarship finalist Tommy Pintos, William Vincent, the son of Formula Renault and Formula Vauxhall racer Chris, along with Seb Hopkins and Josh Miller – who both only turned 14 last month.

"There wasn't that many second-year drivers on the market this time around so I'm doing

what I can to try and win it with a rookie," said Elite team boss Eddie Ives. "We were out in Spain in December for a week with four of the six and all six will be back out there this month. I'm quite confident, I'm not thinking I'm on the back foot without a second-year driver."

Team will field six rookies in 2020 season



GT4 champion Tregurtha teamed up with Tilley from Brands Hatch

Tregurtha and Tilley back for full GT Cup campaign in GT3 Nissan

Former British GT4 champion Will Tregurtha will again team up with Grahame Tilley at the wheel of a Nissan GT-R GT3 for a full season in the GT Cup this year.

Tregurtha, who won the Ginetta Junior title in 2016 before taking the GT4 class crown the following year, teamed up with Tilley from the Brands Hatch round of the GT Cup last year, taking a win in their

opening weekend together.

That partnership will now continue for a full season in 2020 as the Triple M Motorsport-run car will again tackle the series.

"Being part of the GT Cup championship has been a revelation to me, this is competitive GT racing, with slick and professional organisation, but with a friendly and supportive atmosphere," said Tilley.

"Will Tregurtha will be supporting me as my driver coach and co-driver for the pitstop races. My car will again be prepared by Triple M Motorsport and over the winter they will be updating some aspects of the car to make it even more competitive."

As well as the GT Cup outings, Tregurtha also competed in ADAC GT Masters in an Audi R8 LMS GT3 last year.



Prototypes will have guest class

Revolutions to join Britcar for Spa WEC

Revolution prototype machinery will appear at the Spa round of the World Endurance Championship this year after striking a deal with Britcar bosses.

Britcar will run two non-championship races alongside the WEC over the April 23-24 weekend and the Revolution Trophy will appear as a guest class as part of those contests.

The Revolution made its racing debut last season as a handful of cars competed in a series of trial races for the new Sports Prototype Cup. "We are proud to have this opportunity to race at Spa-Francorchamps on the same weekend as the World Endurance Championship," said Sports Prototype Cup promoter James Bailey.

"Since starting the Sports Prototype Cup, we have benefited from the kind support and guidance of Claire Hedley and her Britcar team. We are proud to join their guest class for this one-off event as well as having our own standalone races on the same day as many of their Britcar Endurance Championship's premium UK race events."

The Sports Prototype Cup will again feature both the Revolution Trophy and the Radical SR3 Trophy this season. A five-event calendar concluding at the Algarve circuit is planned.

New outfit joins Porsche Carrera Cup GB grid

Simon Green Motorsport will join the Porsche Carrera Cup GB for the first time this season and plans a three-car entry.

The team has previously run cars in a number of different categories, including Britcar, the GT Cup and Classic Touring Cars but will now move into the Porsche series.

SGM will field Lee Frost and Lucky Khara – who began last season in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup before switching to the Carrera Cup – in 2020 as well as a yet-to-be-announced third driver.

"To be joining the Porsche Carrera Cup GB is something the whole team is really relishing," said Green. "For me, from the first meeting I had with the team at Porsche Motorsport GB it was clear that it was an amazing opportunity for the team.

"It is great to have Lucky and Lee on board, this will be my third season working with both drivers. Having already collected the first car, the team has plenty of time to get to know the cars and the drivers can get the all-important seat time."

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Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Jim Moir, Steve Jones



Cosworth previously supplied F3's engines

MOUNTUNE CHOSEN AS NEW F3 ENGINE PARTNER

New two-litre motors for BRDC British F3 will retain same philosophy as old engines

By James Newbold

Mountune will supply the BRDC British F3 championship with new engines this year as the MotorSport Vision-run series continues with its package of upgrades.

The championship has run

with normally-aspirated two-litre Duratec engines prepared by Cosworth since its last significant upgrade in 2016, when it morphed from BRDC Formula 4 into its current guise.

The new Mountune engine will continue the same philosophy of its outgoing counterpart, which propelled

Matheus Leist, Enaam Ahmed, Linus Lundqvist and Clement Novalak to series titles, and complement previously announced aerodynamic and bodywork upgrades.

It marks a continuation of MSV's relationship with David Mountain's company, which celebrates its 40th anniversary

this year, having supplied Audi-based engines to the single-make FIA Formula 2 championship that ran between 2009 and 2012 and, prior to that, in Formula Palmer Audi.

"We are delighted to be providing the BRDC British F3 Championship with engines for the 2020 season and beyond, and

to restart our relationship with MSV," said Mountain, who founded the company in 1980.

Mountune is best known for its work with Ford products, but also built the two-litre boxer engine in the Team BMR Subaru that Ash Sutton took to the British Touring Car Championship title in 2017.

Aron joins Cliff Dempsey for National Formula Ford

American teenager Bryce Aron will race in the 2020 National Formula Ford 1600 championship with Cliff Dempsey Racing, having competed in the Formula Ford Festival with Oldfield Motorsport.

Aron finished third in last year's US F1600 championship, then failed to reach the final in the Festival after a throttle problem. Aron approached CDR about a 2020 drive and had the recommendation of Team USA Scholarship head Jeremy Shaw.

"They consistently had their three guys up in the top five [in 2019]," Aron said of the CDR team. "They have a really, really good driver development programme. From anybody I talked to who drove with them they all had positive feedback. We just had some bad luck [at the Festival with Oldfield].

I was tempted to stay but we had to examine all our options."

Oldfield Motorsport has confirmed it has added 16-year-old karting graduate James Crossley to its 2020 National FF1600 driver line-up, joining Milan De Laet.



Car will be upgraded for '20

Foster plots more events in Firman

Joey Foster is aiming for more frequent Formula Ford outings in 2020, after making just four appearances in 2019, in an updated Don Hardman Racing Firman.

Multiple Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy winner Foster, who switched to the Firman in late 2018, hoped to develop the car throughout '19 but due to time and budget only raced in the final two National FF1600 rounds plus the Festival and Walter Hayes.

"Hopefully we'll be doing more races than we did this year [2019], four's not enough," Foster said.

"Keith Bodicoat has created some great developments for the car and I've been working and progressing them with Ralph [Firman]. We've got a fair amount lined up."

Rory Smith, who finished third in 2019's National table with B-M Racing, is also unclear how many 2020 outings he will have as he is set to start a 'year in industry' for his university engineering course.

"From about July onwards I'll probably be in a job which might make things more difficult with testing and everything," Smith said.



Scottish C1s will feature a 90-minute endurance race in 2020

Tweaks to SMRC calendar with more away rounds and guest series

The Scottish Motor Racing Club has announced a revamped calendar for the 2020 season, with the Historic Sports Car Club's Dunlop Saloon Car Cup headlining a two-day meeting in July.

As reported in MN in November, the SMRC will return to a seven-round calendar featuring an away round for all classes except for Formula Ford 1600 at Croft at the start of June.

Scottish FF1600 will instead join the National grid at Anglesey for its own championship away round in August, while the Scottish Mini Cooper Cup has its

customary second away meeting at Kirkistown a week before.

The HSCC Saloons replace the Super Touring Championship which had previously held a place at the annual David Leslie Trophy in what Knockhill's director of events Stuart Gray described as "the best of Scottish motorsport" double-header.

"We've worked very closely with the HSCC over the last five or so years now and they recognised the enthusiasm there is for these sorts of cars, so we're thrilled to have them at Knockhill," he said.

Also joining the bill for the

round on the July 4-5 is the Modified Ford Championship and Super Lap Scotland, with over 60 cars expected to take part in the latter.

Gray also confirmed the return of the British Superkarts for the opening weekend in April, while the Northern Formula Ford 1600 championship and the Civic Cup join the September event.

Following a successful maiden season in 2019, the Scottish C1 Cup will add a 90-minute endurance race for the only reversed layout meeting in July, replicating the format of the Citroen C1 Challenge south of the border.

Riman returns rare Fiat 127 to action and plans more outings this year

Fiat Racing champion Martin Riman raced his Fiat 127 Sport for the first time in more than nine years at Mallory Park on Boxing Day, and plans to race the unusual car regularly in 2020.

The last outing for the 1.3-litre machine was in the final ever races for the Fiat Racing Challenge, also at Mallory, on September 19, 2010. The car has been stored since then

while Riman has turned his attention to racing Citroen 2CVs.

"The car has just been sitting for about the last 10 years, but we kept starting it up and thought we would do this," said the Coventry driver. "We just got it out of the barn and put on new brakes, windscreen and so on."

The 127 was one of around half-a-dozen such cars that raced in the Fiat championship

in the 1990s and early 2000s, but Riman hasn't found a home for it in recent seasons. However, after he "really enjoyed" his return-taking 18th and 14th in two Saloon Car races - he hopes to race the car more often this season.

"The Alfa Romeo championship has a class for anything Italian so I am going to look at that," he said. "It will be good to race it properly again."



Fiat Racing champion Riman took part in Plum Pudding event

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HISTORICS

'Goodyear to defend trophy'
Historic F2 man ready to return, below



DOWN THE WORKSHOP

LANCIA FULVIA

Current owner: Steve Graham



Graham has two Fulvias

It is a stage rally car

"We put the car together specifically for the Roger Albert Clark Rally in 2006 and it's run every time since. We did the first two as well, but not in the Fulvia. That car is pretty much kept for the Roger Albert and the odd other outing and we've run it at the Goodwood Festival of Speed."

It was the logical choice

"I'd only ever really rallied front-wheel-drive cars so when I wanted to go for an historic car, there was a choice of three: a Mini, a Saab and a Fulvia. I'm too tall for a Mini, I didn't fancy the two-stroke Saab, so it was Hobson's choice."

It has been a challenge

"We started off with three cars we picked up on eBay, which were all a mess, and then tried to work out what to do with them. It was a learning curve for a number of years, starting off with trying to fix the suspension. The first year we ran it, the car dragged so much on the ground that it wore a hole in the fuel tank."

A limited-slip differential was key

"So we got the suspension sorted and then had to decide what to do with the gearbox. We eventually moved to a close ratio box, but the big revelation for the car was fitting a limited slip diff. The steering box is horrible but at least with an LSD it does self-centre. But that was about a four-year battle to get it to that stage."

They now have two

"Now we've got two Fulvias as we also built a 1600 HF specifically to do Rallye Monte Carlo Historique, which we've done for the last 10 years. They look pretty much identical and we put all the knowledge we gained with the first one into the second car."

Parts are available

"Ian Chamberlain has done all the work and he went through a massive learning curve and has now become an expert on Fulvias as well as other cars. The Fulvia was the highest production car that Lancia ever produced: there were 130,000 of them. There are a couple of Italian fabricators who have started making replacement parts as there are a lot of people in Europe still running them."



Photos: Paul Lawrence

Hibberd found the Lotus on Instagram

FORMULA JUNIOR LOTUS TO RACE ONCE MORE

Successful ex-works machine restored and will return to racing

By Paul Lawrence

A time warp ex-works Lotus 22 Formula Junior will race again after spending the last 57 years in storage.

Chassis 22/J/3 is the ex-Team Lotus car mainly driven by Bob Anderson during the 1962 season, with notable results including third places at Monaco and Goodwood.

Now, it is owned by category expert Andrew Hibberd and he plans to reprepare it for racing. "I found it for sale via Instagram," he said. "We always wondered where the other works cars were. It needs a complete rebuild but we do plan to race it."

"The car still has its original parts including modified throttle pedal, all Lotus part numbered components,

Monaco-vented nose, Cosworth engine and so on," said Hibberd, who collected the car from Italy in November.

At the end of the 1962 season, the car was used to settle a bet at Monza after a journalist had suggested that Lotus had been using illegal engines. Works driver Peter Arundell went to Monza in December and set a time good enough for a new lap record. The cylinder head was

then removed, and the capacity of the engine was checked and found to be correct.

"The 22 was sold on the spot to a Milan racer," said Hibberd. "It then spent some time in a hair salon before being purchased in 1967 by the gentleman who I found the car with. The 22 then sat in the same Turin workshop until it left with me, 57 years to the day after leaving England."



Iconic F1 cars will grace Race Retro

Seven decades of F1 on Race Retro radar

Seventy years of Formula 1 will be marked at Race Retro on February 21-23 by a display called 'the greatest grid'.

The central display will feature ground-breaking F1 cars as well as those driven by iconic drivers since the start of the World Championship in 1950.

The plan is to display F1 cars that raced back in 1950 as well as cars from recent seasons,

including cars from Williams, McLaren, Lotus and Mercedes. Show director Lee Masters said: "The Greatest Grid will showcase the work of Formula 1 drivers, designers and engineers from most famous manufacturers."

The F1 cars will form the centrepiece display for the annual historic motorsport show at Stoneleigh Park near Coventry.

Juniors to centre Jim Russell event

The role of the Formula Junior category in the racing career of the late Jim Russell will be a feature of the Jim Russell Trophy race meeting at Snetterton on April 4-5.

The weekend will feature a grid full of the single-seater racing cars built between 1958 and 1963 in the opening round of the HSCC/FJHRA UK series. Both front- and rear-engined cars will reflect an important part of the Jim Russell story.

Russell was a Formula Junior racer in the later stages of his career and tackled the category in 1961 after recovering from injuries sustained at Le Mans.

He also used Formula Junior chassis in the formative years of the Jim Russell Racing Drivers' School.



Atkinson went from Daytona to Hampshire

ATKINSON SWAPS LMPC CAR FOR TRIALS CHALLENGE

Chris Atkinson went from racing an LMP car at Daytona in November to tackling a historic sporting trial in Hampshire over Christmas.

The Isle of Wight driver raced his 2011 LMPC ORECA-Chevrolet V8 at Daytona

during the Classic 24 Hour at the Florida track. He has been racing the sports-prototype with Masters in the US but plans to bring the car to Europe for the 2020 season.

"We had a lot of fun racing it in America but we're now

bringing it to Europe to race in Masters Endurance Legends," said the former Formula 5000 racer.

A month after Daytona, his next event was at the wheel of his early 1960s Cannon trials car.

IN BRIEF

Junior roster

The pan-European Lurani Trophy for Formula Junior will feature six events in 2020, including a return to the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit during the Masters Festival on May 23-24. It will be the first UK round for at least five years. Also on the calendar is a rare visit to the Misano track in Italy in June, while non-championship races are planned for Paul Ricard (April) and Pau (May).

Goodyear's return

Historic F2 racer Mark Goodyear will defend his Vern Schuppan Trophy win this season in his Lotus 59. He will achieve an ambition by racing at Spa and will also field a Lotus Elan in Guards Trophy races. Matthew Ryder is likely to share driving duties.

Thruxton thrash

The GT and Sports Car Cup will make its Thruxton debut this season with an enduro race during the Thruxton Historic Festival on June 6-7. The four-race series for pre-'66 GT cars kicks off at the Donington Historic Festival in early May. The GTSCC also includes a return to the Castle Combe Autumn Classic and a finale in the Algarve.

Museum flood woe

Just before Christmas, staff and volunteers at the Brooklands Museum worked into the night to move race cars due to the risk of flooding from the nearby River Wey. The museum suffered major floods in 2000 and 2013, so the Pre-War cars were moved. Around 20 cars were temporarily moved along with a dozen motorbikes, but the museum reopened as planned on the day after Boxing Day.

Asphalt calendar

Five closed-road rallies will form the calendar for the RACRMC Historic Asphalt Rally Championship this season. The year opens on the Clacton and Tendring Rally (April 26) and then takes in the Jim Clark Rally (May 30-31), the Harry Flatters (July 26), the Ulster Rally (August 21-22) and the Three Shires Stages (September 6).

HRCR Open Day

Saturday's HRCR Open Day at the British Motor Museum, Gaydon, will mark the 60th anniversary of the first venture into the forests for the RAC Rally. Cars on show from that event will include the museum's own class-winning works Austin Healey 3000 of the Morley brothers, along with the ex-Don Grimshaw Triumph TR3 that finished third in class. Also due are the Jaguar Mk2 that was fourth overall and the Austin Healey Sprite that was second.

Three take the win

There was a three-way tie at the head of the post-historic class at the Plum Pudding Historic Sporting Trial on December 29. Mark Howse, Steve Courts and Dave Oliver all ended the day on zero after cleaning all 18 hills at the Hampshire event. Stephen Barnes topped the historic class after dropping just four marks in his Cannon.



Howse was a joint winner

RALLY NEWS

TANAK RAMPS UP PREPARATIONS AT HIS NEW HYUNDAI HOME

World champion works with team to hit the ground running



Tanak said he was impressed with i20



Jarveoja (l) and champ Tanak

By David Evans

Hyundai has revealed its first official pictures of Ott Tanak's initial test of the i20 Coupe WRC.

Having driven the South Korean car for the first time in the French Alps for a single day last month, the Estonian will be back behind the wheel for his pre-event test ahead of Monte Carlo early next week.

While his priority is settling in to his third different World Rally Car in four years, Tanak says a solid start to his title defence is also vital.

Tanak said: "We have just won our first WRC title, but a new year means we start again from a blank sheet of paper. I will give all my experience to the team and together we will work hard to defend ours – and the team's –

titles. For Monte Carlo, I am always looking for a consistent start, to begin the season with a good feeling. For the season, everything is possible. I have a strong team behind me, so we will fight hard.

"It's never easy to change team as there's a lot of work to do. Firstly, to get to know the people, then, of course, to make yourself comfortable in the car, while adapting to conditions. We've been working with the team to be in the best possible shape for Monte Carlo."

Since the latest generation of WRC machines arrived, Tanak has become a fast starter to the season, taking two podiums from the first two rounds in 2017, one in 2018 and three podiums from Monte, Sweden and Mexico (including a win in the snow on round two) last year.

MEEKE: I AM READY TO LOOK OUTSIDE THE WRC

Northern Irishman wants to broaden his horizons in 2020

By David Evans

Kris Meeke will spend this season considering his options after accepting his full-time career in the World Rally Championship is over.

Meeke lost his Toyota seat at the end of last season and, while he remains in contact with Tommi Makinen's team, says the time has come to look elsewhere for his future in motorsport. He started the process with a trip to the start of Dakar in Saudi Arabia last week (see sidebar).

The Northern Irishman began his career in the World Rally Championship 17 years ago and took five victories from 104 starts.

Meeke told Motorsport News: "I think it's not possible [to continue in WRC]. At 40 years old, you know life can change a bit. It happened now. I'm still in talks with Toyota to be involved, maybe in some testing, we'll see. I keep my options open. I look at all the things that will give me passion."

Asked if he would be sad to turn his back on a full-time WRC drive, Meeke added: "No. I would have loved to continue, but as the situation arrived like this and it's like that, I'm realistic. I look to the future, there are many, many things to challenge me.

"[The] WRC has been my life from so long, it's a bubble and when you are inside, it's the most important thing to you. When you step outside there are many, many other challenges in life and in motorsport which can [test] you. So, yeah, I look to that and we'll see."

While it was a long shot, there remained a chance for Meeke to return to M-Sport, where he began his career as a designer at Dovenby Hall, before Esapekka Lappi was announced alongside Teemu Suninen in the factory Ford Fiesta WRC last week.

"When the market is like this, it's not possible [to drive at M-Sport]," said Meeke. "At this stage of my career, I have to be realistic with where it's at. I don't drive for nothing. I don't spend

200 days a year away from my family for nothing, so I think that's the case, as Lappi will take a salary from Citroen so he doesn't need any money. For me, full time in the WRC, I think it's finished."

Meeke lost out in a Toyota reshuffle sparked by Ott Tanak's decision to jump ship and move to Hyundai. The Estonian's move opened the door for Sebastien Ogier to sign for Toyota, where Welshman Elfyn Evans was confirmed alongside the Frenchman for the pair's third season together in four years (having been team-mates at M-Sport through 2017-18). MN confirmed Kalle Rovanpera would be driving a factory Yaris WRC last June.

Meeke remains highly regarded by Makinen and the Toyota squad and would likely be called off the bench should the need arise through the coming season. He will, however, face competition from the bench from Jari-Matti Latvala who is chasing sponsorship to tackle as many as five WRC rounds this season.

Additional reporting by Sergio Lillo



Meeke, who was second on Rally Germany last year, is looking at options



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'What prompted Citroen's withdrawal?' WRC's malaise investigated, p22



Photos: Hyundai, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



New boy is getting to know his new team



Meeke (l) and pal Despres (r)

Briton nearly lands a last-gasp desert co-drive

Kris Meeke came close to making his Dakar debut as a co-driver last week.

The Dungannon man was in the Middle East supporting his friend and Andorran neighbour Cyril Despres – the Frenchman had primed Meeke that he might be called into action alongside him. Despres' co-driver, adventurer Mike Horn, hit trouble on his last trip across the Arctic Circle and was delayed. For a while, there was a chance Horn wouldn't arrive in Jeddah in time for the start.

Ultimately, the Swiss was in place alongside Despres in the Red Bull Junior Team OT3 (turbocharged one-litre buggy).

Meeke said: "Cyril called me and he said: 'If Mike can't get off the ice, then we have a problem. Would you go?' I said: 'I'll go. My January looks quite free.'

"That was ultimately how I ended up here [in Saudi Arabia]. I still come with Cyril and the Red Bull team. It's a nice opportunity to come to see [the start]."

Asked if he would consider co-driving on Dakar, Meeke said: "Why not? Actually, I started very young as a co-driver in navigation rallies and I won a championship when I was really young. All this tulip diagrams and reading roadbooks, I have a feeling for that.

"Dakar is special, it's different, with way points, all the systems. But for me, if I ever want to do Dakar in the future, that would be a perfect opportunity to understand the navigation from the other side.

"I still want to do some competition. Dakar is, for sure, something I want to look at."

Manufacturers take a close look at the new Rally 3 class

The FIA has reported six makes showing active interest in the all-new Rally 3 category.

FIA rally director Yves Matton says he expects two of those firms to be competing with Rally 3 cars by next season. Pitched as a replacement for a once super-successful Group N category, rallying's latest four-wheel-drive class takes the one-litre or 1.2-litre turbocharged or 1600cc naturally aspirated engine car from Rally 4 (a JWRC-specification Ford Fiesta or Peugeot's 208 Rally 4, for example) developing just over 200bhp and mates it to simple four-wheel-drive transmission.

As Motorsport News outlined in October last year, the FIA has dictated the cars should cost less than £90,000.

Matton told MN: "We have three manufacturers working on the project and three others studying it and showing some interest. I can tell you, one manufacturer will show a car during next summer and I hope to have two [manufacturers] ready in 2021.

"I am very happy – to have this interest is quite incredible. It also shows the gap inside the range of cars that we have [after the] non-replacement of Group N. The manufacturers understand this very well and can see the business case around it."



What is the right path for four-wheel-drive?

Remember the FIA's last idea for bringing affordable four-wheel-drive rallying to the wider world? ORECA's R4 car took any car sized between a Fiat 500 and Subaru WRX and fitted it with the same 1600cc engine, transmission, brakes and suspension.

The kit of parts cost €108,000 (£91,000) with around €160,000 (£136,000) asked for a fully prepared car.

A Toyota Etios was built into an R4 car and made its debut on the 2017 Rallye du Var. Since then, a handful of cars and kits have been sold around the world – but the project is somewhat short of what was hoped for.

The R4 car has been renamed now as the R2 kit and it's hoped rival kit producers will help reduce the price.

Asked if he felt the whole ORECA R4 idea was a mistake, FIA rally director Yves Matton (below) said: "I cannot agree with you that it's a mistake – I still think the idea is a good one. One of the barriers of the success of this category is the price, it's the positioning of the product [close to the cost of second-hand R5 cars] and that's what blocked the product.

"It's not dead. The philosophy is not bad, especially for areas like Asia Pacific, where we have the AP4 cars – but we must reach another level of cost to make it happen."



Alonso hits early strife on Dakar Rally as a broken wheel costs him two-and-a-half hours

Fernando Alonso's hopes of a dream Dakar debut went south on Monday morning when the Spaniard was halted by a broken wheel aboard his Toyota Hilux.

The two-time Formula 1 champion was 11th fastest on the opening section of the Saudi Arabian event, but came unstuck on Monday's second test, a 300-

mile run from Al Wajh to Neom.

Forced to wait for his support crew, Alonso lost two-and-a-half hours and plummeted down the classification.

Argentinian driver Orlando Terranova took the overall lead when Motorsport News went to press on Monday evening. The Mini driver was second quickest

behind 2009 Dakar winner and Alonso's team-mate Giniel de Villiers.

Carlos Sainz sat second after a solid start in his Mini, with three-time event winner Nasser Al-Attiyah one place further back and just over a minute behind the Spaniard in third.

Monday's hero was local

rallying superstar Yazeed Al-Rajhi, who tore into the distance, opening a 17-minute advantage over the best of the rest at one point. He lost time towards the end of the section and was ultimately classified seventh.

This maiden Middle Eastern Dakar concludes a week on Saturday.

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"My personal favourite might be an odd choice"



There are some calls you just don't mind taking over the Christmas holidays. I took a few of those from Ian Gwynne.

Gavin, the Queen and Stacey were all put on hold when Ian called to ask my thoughts on an RS1 700T or an ex-Roger Clark Lotus Cortina. I could see the merit in both and choosing between them was almost impossible.

"We'll bring them both then," said Gwynne, settling the debate in the most fever-filled fashion.

In fact, Ian's firm BGMsport isn't just bringing those two stunning cars, he's packed out a couple of transporters with 14 of the most iconic and astonishing collections of rally cars ever seen on one road to one place. And the place? Autosport International at Birmingham's NEC this week.

Regular readers will be aware that we were hosting the launch of the World Rally Championship for the third successive season at ASI this week, but when that went south – for a number of unavoidable reasons – we turned our attentions to other ways to fill the rally section.

There's not much to top three factory WRC teams unveiling their 2020 liveries before your very eyes, but I think we might just have managed it. We've still got one of the works teams showing its new-season colours, the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team will pull the covers from its latest Ford Fiesta WRC. The team's management Malcolm Wilson and Richard Millener will be joined by drivers Esapekka Lappi, Teemu Suninen and Gus Greensmith to talk about the year ahead.

Beyond one of the three new cars, BGMsport and American rallyschool DirtFish has come up with 14 reasons to make you and I very, very happy in Britain's second city this week. Most of the cars belong to DirtFish owner Steve Rimmer and are tended beautifully by Gwynne's team of preparation experts.

My personal favourite? It's a slightly odd one, I must admit – not least when you consider it sits alongside a Stig Blomqvist RS200 and Markku Alen Fiat 131 Abarth in the transporter.

It's an ex-Fabrizio Tabaton Lancia 037, resplendent in its black and yellow Grifone livery. I know, it's not even in Martini colours... but that's part of the appeal. There's something about seeing these amazing, evocative cars in a different look. Tabaton used this car from mid-1982 right the way up until 1986, when he traded up for a Delta S4.

Come and enjoy it.

And come and see one of the absolute legends of our sport in Ari Vatanen. The 1981 world champion will regale us with tales of his time at the very top – and bottom – of his career.

Autosport International has and always will be the start of the season. Yes, Dakar's going on at the same time, but what's happening in the Saudi desert's just another talking point for Birmingham.

Remember, as well as the centre stage and the celebration of 70 years of Autosport, it's Hall 3 for the festival of fever provided by BGMsport and DirtFish.

RALLY NEWS

Route revealed for North West Stages

This year's North West Stages will be held across 14 stages consisting of 60 miles and all will be run entirely on closed-roads for the first time.

More than 100 guests attended the launch of the rally last week, including reigning European Rally champion Chris Ingram. The event is due to take place on March 20 and will begin with a ceremonial start from Garstang High Street.

Rally director Dave Read, who was recipient of the Motorsport UK Volunteer of the Year Award, told MN: "We're grateful for the fantastic support we've received from the community that's enabled us take the event to the next level as a 100% closed-road rally and is the opening round of the 2020 Protyre Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship.

"This year's route, that includes a mixture of fast-flowing fell roads and tight and twisty country lanes, should have something for everyone."

Regulations for the rally will be available on the event website from midday on Friday (January 10) and entries will open at 1900hrs on Monday (January 13).

Riponian Rally entries open

Entries are now open for the Riponian Rally, which will feature six stages consisting of 44 miles in the Helmsley and Pickering area of Yorkshire.

The event, which will take place on February 9, will use three stages, all in excess of six miles, twice. Road mileage has been reduced by 10 miles from last year as well.

Clerk of the course, Alan Hill said: "We were around the 65 [entry] mark until the last couple of years when we moved further east and now our entries are back in the 70s.

"Last year we just did a road closure to link two stages together. It worked well and we decided there were ways that we can extend our road closure to half a mile on two separate stages to reduce the number of stage venues we need to use [this year]."

The rally will start and finish at the Thirsk Rural Business Centre with a centralised service area at the Wombledon Airfield.

To enter, visit rmsc.org.uk/riponian-stages



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Roy Dempster, Martin Walsh

Hyundai i20 R5 was used by Wilson in 2019 as well

WILSON AFTER 'TOP RESULTS' WITH i20 R5

Hyundai will be rallied in Irish Forestry Championship by former Billy Coleman winner

By Jason Craig

Former Billy Coleman Award winner James Wilson says the opportunity to spend time driving a Hyundai i20 R5 on three occasions last year should reap rewards in the Irish Forestry Championship this season.

Wilson's best performance in the South Korean machine came on the loose surface Jim Walsh Cork Forest Rally with third place overall.

The 24-year-old – winner of the prestigious Billy Coleman Award in 2018 – also drove a Ford Fiesta R5 on the final round of the British Rally Championship, securing a fourth place finish.

However, he believes the i20 is a perfect fit for the forest-based Championship which starts on February 16.

"The Hyundai i20 was definitely

the car of choice for me," explained Wilson, who previously drove in the Junior British Rally Championship aboard a Peugeot 208 R2.

"When driving it and the Fiesta last year I just felt more comfortable in the Hyundai. I just clicked with the car straightaway, especially on gravel. That was down to me getting seat time in the car on gravel with help from the Motorsport Ireland Rally Academy. The focus in 2020 is the Forestry Championship, but I also want to learn more about the car. Things like its suspension and set-up."

The car itself – chassis 74 – took victory with Craig Breen on last August's Ulster Rally while Rhys Yates also piloted it at December's Monza Rally Show in Italy.

Wilson hopes his familiarity of the i20 can help him achieve strong results.

"When I enjoy the stages and I am driving well, I know that the times can be competitive," he said. "I will definitely be after more top results like the one we had in Cork [where he was third overall]."

"The reason for choosing the Irish Forestry Championship is down to the events and the people involved. They're both good. There is an all-round nice atmosphere about it. I felt it was important to give something back to Irish rallying and to stay this year. It was only right that I support the rallies and the motor clubs who have supported me."

Wilson confirmed that he also intends to enter a handful of closed-road rallies, including the Rally of the Lakes in Killarney, as well as Wales Rally GB if he can nail down the budget for the World Rally Championship round.



Wilson is also targeting closed-road rallies throughout 2020



Kelly lost his life on last year's Donegal International Rally

MANUS KELLY TO BE HONOURED ON DONEGAL MINI STAGES

This year's Donegal Mini Stages Rally will run over roads that were last used more than 30 years ago as well as honour the memory of Manus Kelly.

Clerk of the course Johnny Baird says that the stages have not been used for competitive action since the mid-Eighties, with crews set to tackle three loops of two Tarmac stages totalling 56 miles in the Termon area of the county on January 25.

"Some of the roads were used for the Circuit of Ireland

back in 1984 and some were used when the Donegal International visited the area two years later in 1986," he told Motorsport News.

"There is a really good mix of new and old roads. They have a bit of everything, they are fast-flowing in places and technical in others."

Baird has confirmed that interest in the first rally of the decade in Ireland is strong ahead of the closing date next Wednesday (January 15).

The event was cancelled in 2019 as a mark of respect to

Donegal driver Kelly who was fatally injured on the third and final day of the Donegal International Rally.

Baird has confirmed that organisers of the Donegal Mini Stages Rally plan to honour Kelly's memory.

"Nothing has been finalised yet as a number of ideas have been put forward by club members, but we will be doing something to remember Manus, definitely," added Baird.

"Manus was a great man and a great driver."



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'What will be at the NEC in 2020?'
Autosport Show preview, p20



EDWARDS OFFERS OUT SUPPORT IN BTRDA

Two-time British Rally champion wants to help drivers at the lower levels of rallying

By Luke Barry

BTRDA Rally Series bosses have welcomed 2018 Gold Star champion Matt Edwards' plans to provide on-event support and advice to all Ford Fiesta R2 drivers in the 2020 BTRDA Rallye R2 Cup.

In a bid to boost participation and to support those running the car in the UK and Ireland, an ME Rallysport van of parts will be present at every BTRDA forest round in 2020.

Two-time British Rally Championship winner Edwards told Motorsport News: "I've been involved with so many people that are moving from juniors or trying to make a step somewhere, [and] this [BTRDA] R2 Cup is for me the most obvious step. It just teaches all the right things as soon as possible."

Parts for the R2 machines are usually provided by M-Sport's manufacturing arm in Poland.

"Parts aren't going to be any cheaper than they are from M-Sport but I'm taking out the Polish factor so that they're there and available, [including] a 24-hour courier option," added Edwards

"I'm just trying to cover lots

of the bases that people are stuck with: get more cars into the BTRDA and we'll add to the one-stop-shop idea that I've been trying to create with various initiatives of my business."

Edwards is also aiming to provide incentives to the top three in the BTRDA Rallye R2 Cup, which could include a springboard into the BRC Academy for the winner.

"I want to be able to offer some parts vouchers for second and third, that sort of idea, and I'm trying to work with the BRC to get something for the winner. It's not going to be a brand-new R2T to do the Junior BRC in, but I'm hoping we can get them something to do the BRC Academy that runs for the old R2s, to get them the leg [up] into the BRC."

A free entry into the Wales Rally GB National is on offer to the eventual R2 Cup champion, with Edwards' incentives set to bolster that further.

BTRDA championship coordinator Ian Arden added: "We don't endorse it as an BTRDA thing but we see that he's trying to help drivers, so we're not going to stop him. It doesn't cross over with anything that we're doing."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Paul Lawrence



Edwards will offer support and parts for Rallye R2 crews

Hyundai i20 R5 test drive on offer for top ST Trophy junior as category joins MRF Mixed Surface Challenge

BTRDA Rally Series chiefs have unveiled a host of new prizes for the Ford Fiesta ST Trophy this year, including a Hyundai R5 test drive and a day with the Hyundai Motorsport team.

The ST Trophy will deviate from the rest of the BTRDA and join the new-for-2020 MRF Mixed Surface Challenge.

This will incorporate the Cambrian, Malcolm Wilson, Scottish and Nicky Grist Stages forest rallies as well as three Tarmac events – Tendring and

Clacton, Mewla and an Isle of Man double header – creating a separate Forest Cup and Asphalt Cup as well as the overall championship.

The top junior driver within the ST Trophy will win a test in a Hyundai i20 R5 courtesy of Craig Parry and onthepacenote.com, while the top junior co-driver will get to spend a day with Hyundai Motorsport. The top junior driver within the rest of the BTRDA will also be given the same prize.

BTRDA championship

co-ordinator Ian Arden told MN: "For a long time I've been, along with a few colleagues within the BTRDA, advocating that we haven't really got a, let's call it a second division British Rally Championship.

"Now we're keeping the costs down, but the events that we're doing [create] a proper mixed-surface championship, like the ANCRO used to be back in the day [but] for clubman basically.

"We've made a genuine link-up with the Formula 1000 Junior

championship so [there's] this ladder of progression where quite literally you can leave the juniors and come and do the Forest Cup for instance in a Rally First Fiesta. You can then grow into the STs and then the R2 Cup and beyond that you're into the BRC and going onwards and upwards."

The overall Fiesta ST Trophy champion will win a free entry into the Wales Rally GB National rally with along with a set of MRF Tyres to use on the event.



Citroen DS 3 R3T was rebuilt after violent Nicky Grist crash in 2016

Wheeler returns full-time in 2020

Citroen DS 3 R3T driver Chris Wheeler will return full-time to top-level national rallying this year when he contests the Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship.

Wheeler last mounted a full campaign in 2016, a season when he won the British Rally Championship's BRC3 class. However, a violent crash at the Nicky Grist Stages that July put both him and co-driver Yan Griffiths into hospital, with Wheeler suffering a broken knee and internal injuries.

Having rebuilt the DS 3 R3T during 2017, Wheeler and new

co-driver Shaun Layland in 2018 and '19 concentrated on regional rallies.

"It's really boosted our confidence to finish every rally we entered last year," said Wheeler.

"Now we feel we are ready to contest a major national series again.

"We looked carefully at the various championship options and feel the Asphalt championship gives the right balance of high quality competition and value for money."

The seven-round series starts with the North West Stages on March 20-21.

MN SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUKE BARRY

"A small gesture with positive connotations"



You'd be hard pushed to find a man who has dominated UK rallying headlines more than Matt Edwards has over the last few years. Since jumping up to a Ford Fiesta R5 at the end of 2016, it's been all about the Welshman.

Edwards played a pivotal role in swinging the 2017 British Rally Championship title towards Keith Cronin as he split Cronin and rival Fredrik Ahlin on the Isle of Man decider, before duly wrapping up the 2018 and '19 titles for himself, winning more than three-quarters of the events. He also bagged the BTRDA Gold Star title in 2018 and very nearly the Welsh Championship that same year too.

Clearly a good driver then, but you'd also be hard pushed to find a man who is more invested in UK rallying than Edwards is. A self-confessed bobble-hatter, Edwards' own rise from a clubman competitor to an international rally winner and champion depicts just some of the story. Think of a role that can be carried out during a rally; Edwards has done it.

This provides context to his latest venture to add to his repertoire of mentoring services. This season, a van of parts will be present at all BTRDA forest events offering supplies and advice to all Ford Fiesta R2 pilots in the BTRDA Rallye R2 Cup.

There's a wider aim here. Edwards wants to contribute to helping boost entry numbers in both the BTRDA and the BRC.

"Basically, I'm trying to get people from juniors into BRC and provide an easy mechanism to do that," he said. "I want the BRC to be a success and this is me doing my bit to help out at a grassroots level because I don't think you're going to get a newcomer [going straight] into BRC. This is my way of supporting the two championships that I've spent a lot of time in and around."

Of course, cynics will be quick to point out that there is a clear business angle at play. And they'd be right, but there are no false pretences here. Edwards isn't trying to claim he's a saint and that there's no commercial value in it for him.

But focusing on this detracts from the root of Edwards' plan. It's a small gesture with extremely positive connotations. The bottom line is it's rare to see a double British champion in any faction of motorsport as invested in their discipline as Edwards. Particularly in helping out a rung of the ladder beneath their current personal level.

Extra support for Fiesta R2 competitors. Potentially more cars out in the BTRDA and maybe even the BRC too. A bit of extra support for Britain's top national driver looking to continue his career. I can't foresee any losers.

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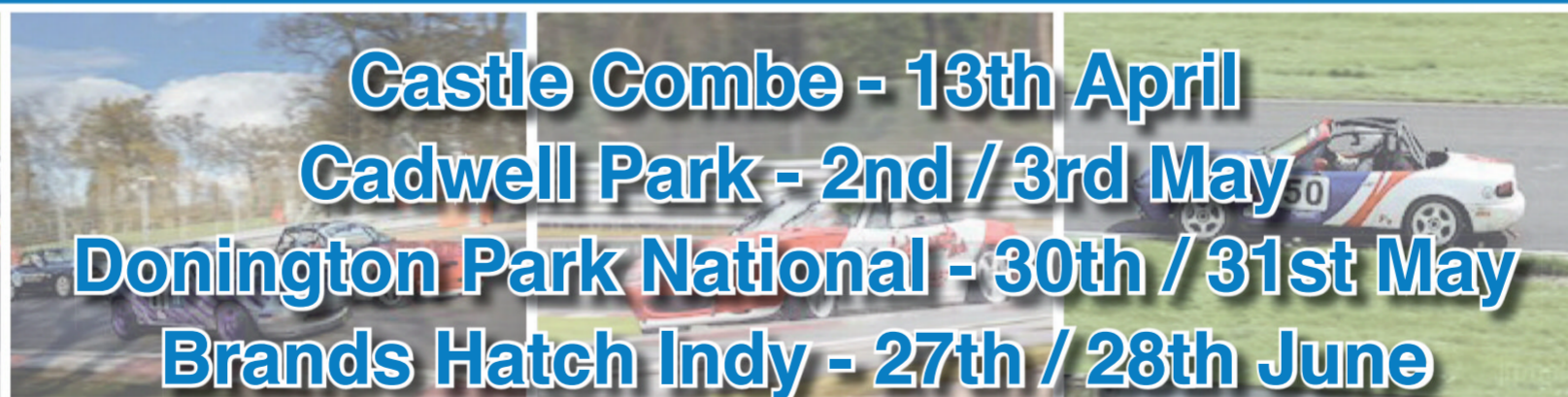
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RALLY NEWS

DONNELLY BACK TO IRISH TARMAC SERIES FULL-TIME IN 2020

Five-time champion will use Proton Iriz R5 and believes it will be a match for other similar machinery

Photos: Roy Dempster, Philip Stewart



Proton Iriz was used last year

By Jason Craig

Five-time Irish Tarmac champion Eugene Donnelly believes that the Proton Iriz he helped develop over the past 12 months is now capable of matching all other R5 machinery.

Donnelly has confirmed that he will tackle the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship in its entirety this season after refining the car's set-up with help from two-time World Rally champion Marcus Gronholm, with top R5 drivers Keith Cronin, Alastair Fisher and Desi Henry also offering their input.

Throughout the development of the car by Mellors Elliot Motorsport, Donnelly has also been working closely with MRF to introduce soft and medium compound tyres for Irish roads. He reckons the package has reached a point where it is on a par with all of the leading R5 cars.

"Ireland has been crying out for a competitive, homologated right-hand-drive car and we now have one," Donnelly told Motorsport News. "Where we have travelled since we started out with the Iriz is incredible. At the minute, the only car to beat in Ireland is the Fiesta – it is the benchmark – and the Iriz is as good as it. Now it is all about convincing drivers to make the switch across."

"It has a Reiger suspension, a Xtrac transmission, the engine from a Mitsubishi Lancer E10, and Cosworth electronics which is a huge advantage. Other R5s have some but not all of them."

"I am happy with the performance, as is Marcus. When he came to the test [before Christmas] I was fearing he would say it was slow but when he got out of the car he said 'I can see nothing wrong'. He confirmed it's equal to any R5 car."

Donnelly has already used the car on the Donegal International Rally and Cork '20' International last year, with the latter producing the better result with fourth overall.

He added: "For me the plan for 2020 is to return to the Tarmac Championship and rediscover the speed I was at when I won each of my five Tarmac titles. It is possible? Time will tell."

"I felt really comfortable in Cork and I had a good run in Donegal as well, coming 10th. I knew we were going to be a second kilometre slower than the other R5 cars but we were consistent throughout the weekend and since then we have continued to make progress on all fronts."

Donnelly will be joined on next month's Galway International Rally, the first round of the Irish Tarmac Championship, by Liam Egan, who has ordered an Iriz from MEM.

McLAUGHLIN OVERCOMES CAR PROBLEMS TO TAKE VICTORY

Turkey Run

By Jason Craig

Organiser: Maiden City Motor Club When: December 28
Where: Shackleton, County Londonderry Stages: 5
Starters: 78.

The Ford Fiesta R5 of Aaron McLaughlin and co-driver Darren Curran overcame engine overboost and oil sensor problems on the morning of the Turkey Run Rally which allowed the duo to claim victory.

McLaughlin's decision to fit a bigger restrictor to the supermini's engine on the eve of the event almost backfired, placing his involvement in jeopardy. "We came here not really knowing what to expect," said McLaughlin, who eventually won by 35 seconds.

"It was a case of the car might be able to do it and it might not. We tested all night before the rally and couldn't find a fix. Today it was fine."

With the extra 30bhp and added torque, this allowed McLaughlin to go quickest on four of the five stages and become the first driver since Kevin Lynch in 2003 to win Maiden City Motor Club's Dog Leap Stages and Turkey Run rallies in the same year.

"It's a great feeling," added McLaughlin.

Second overall was Alan Carmichael, who was out for the first time in a right-hand-drive Hyundai i20 R5 since September's Galloway Hills Rally and admitted to being cautious given the ice-like characteristics of the stages.

A former winner around Shackleton, Barry Morris nursed his Darran T90 GTR+ over the finish line with a slipping clutch to take third overall and the top two-wheel-drive award from John Bonner's Ford Escort Mk2.

Results

1 Aaron McLaughlin/Darren Curran (Ford Fiesta R5) 34m53s; 2 Alan Carmichael/Ivor Lamont (Hyundai i20 R5) +35s; 3 Barry Morris/Declan Campbell (Darran T90 GTR+); 4 Niall Magee/Joe Devlin (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 5 Alan/Mark McGeehan (Mini JCW WRC); 6 Jason Mitchell/Kenny Bustard (Fiesta R5); 7 Chris McGurk/Liam McIntyre (Fiesta R5); 8 Anthony/Gary Cairns (Subaru Impreza); 9 John/David Bonner (Ford Escort Mk2); 10 John Bradley/Ryan Crozier (Escort Mk2)

Class winners: Joel Eakin/Nathan Ferris (Honda Civic); Paul Britton/Niall Devine (Impreza); Ronan Greene/Rachel Irwin-Greene (Vauxhall Nova); Daryn Devine/Sean McNamee (Civic); Conor/Chris Gillespie (Escort Mk2); Bradley/Crozier; Morris/Campbell; Magee/Devlin; McGeehan/McGeehan; McLaughlin/Curran; Karl Neely/James McKeefry (Escort Mk2).



Ford Fiesta R5 suffered engine overboost and sensor problems prior to the Turkey Run

BARRETT'S SHARE THE SPOILS AT MONDELLO PARK RALLYSPRINT

Carlow Rallysprint

By William Neill

Organiser: Carlow Car Club When: December 27
Where: Mondello Park, County Kildare Championship:
South East Stages Rally Championship Stages: 5
Starters: 119

It was a Joule-sponsored 1-2 finish on the Carlow Rallysprint with Ian Barrett's Casmat buggy the overall winner and Frank Barrett heading the rally cars in a Ford Fiesta R5 as 21.7 seconds split the pair.

Frank Barrett was a fraction faster than Ian by 0.03s on SS3 – not easy against specialist buggies on an open four-mile race circuit – as the Dubliner's drive secured the rally

category by half a minute from Enda O'Brien's Escort Mk2.

O'Brien was classified seventh overall, beating John Lynch in an S2500-spec Skoda Fabia who completed the rally podium.

Andrew Fanning was a further 10 seconds behind and continued to add to a varied entry aboard a Proton Satria. Pursuer Kevin McCarthy was actually faster on all but the opening stage but Fanning's early advantage was enough to hold the Mitsubishi Lancer E10 driver at bay.

Rallycross men Noel Greene and David Aiken knocked on the door of a top-10 finish in a Mitsubishi Mirage and

Vauxhall Nova respectively.

Despite not making a final round appearance, Mickey Conlon won the mixed surface South East Stages Rally Championship from rival Keith Power.

Results

1 Ian Barrett (Casmot) 22m31s; 2 Frank Barrett (Ford Fiesta R5) +21.7s; 3 Seamus McTigue (Casmot); 4 Willie Fitzpatrick (Semog); 5 Leo Doyle (Semog); 6 Patrick Delaney (Casmot); 7 Enda O'Brien (Ford Escort Mk2); 8 John Lynch (Skoda Fabia S2500); 9 Andrew Fanning (Proton Satria); 10 Kevin McCarthy (Mitsubishi Lancer E10).
Class winners: David Byrne (Escort); Francis Kelly (Vauxhall Nova); PJ Doyle (Peugeot 205); Philip McDonald (Honda Civic); Mark Hayden (Escort Mk2); Michael Linehan (Ford Escort G3); George Condell (Toyota Starlet); Thomas O'Rafferty (Nova); David Aiken (Nova); Noel Greene (Mitsubishi Mirage); Jack Byrne (Escort Mk1); John Barry (Austin Mini); Frank Barrett; Ian Barrett; O'Brien.

LONG OVERDUE WIN FOR JONES AND DAVIES IN WALES

Jaffa Stages

By Simon Gronow

Organiser: Carmarthen Motor Club When:
December 29 Where: Welsh Motorsports Centre,
Pembrey Stages: 5 Starters: 69

After moving into the lead on the second stage, Nigel Jones and Tracy Davies set a further two fastest stage times on their way to securing victory on the Jaffa Stages at Pembrey aboard their Subaru Impreza S9 WRC.

"I've been waiting for this for a long time," said a jubilant Jones, after the duo secured their first win together since 2010.

Bob and Mathias Fowden were fastest on stage one,

before retiring their Impreza WRC on SS4 after going off on the Beach Road, while two-time event winners Phil Turner/Simon Anthony dropped out of contention following a puncture on their Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

Therefore, it was left to the Lancer E9 of Craig and Kristina Jones to challenge the leaders, but a spin and stall on stage three left them in the runners-up spot. Third went to the father-and-daughter pairing of Huw and Rhiannon James, who were clear class winners on the debut of their new Ford Escort Mk2.

Richard Poole/Will Atkins had a good run to fourth in

their BMW E36 ahead of Steve Knibbs/Gerwyn Barry, who took a customary top-five finish in their Impreza. Eighth-placed Elian and Flynn Lewis were pleased to win the 1600cc class after snapping their Fiesta's exhaust.

Results

1 Nigel Jones/Tracy Davies (Subaru Impreza S9 WRC) 50m32s; 2 Craig/Kristina Jones (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) +46s; 3 Huw/Rhiannon James (Ford Escort Mk2); 4 Richard Poole/Will Atkins (BMW E36); 5 Steve Knibbs/Gerwyn Barry (Impreza); 6 Chris/Mark Jones (Vauxhall Chevette HSR); 7 Manfred Kampschulte/Mark Rowday (Escort Mk2); 8 Elian/Flynn Lewis (Ford Fiesta); 9 Rhodri Evans/Dean Wiltshire (Escort Mk2); 10 Marcus/Georgie Pagett (Nissan Micra).
Class winners: Pagett/Pagett; Lewis/Lewis; Neil Griffiths/Owain Thomas (Escort Mk2); Neil Jones/Alan Thomas (Vauxhall Astra GTE); James/James; Jones/Jones; Kampschulte/Rowday.

INTERVIEW



Jordan was unmatched in terms of race victories

JORDAN: PUTTING A SMILE ON MY FACE WITH BTCC GLORY

The BMW man is ready to become a fully-fledged factory driver as he seeks a second title. By Matt James

Anyone can prove anything with statistics. And many drivers can have a series of excuses, pointing to the 'what ifs' that could have changed their fortunes around. For 2019 British Touring Car Championship runner-up Andrew Jordan, there was none of that, although he had more cause than most to shine a light on his early-season misfortune.

Going into the Old Hairpin at Donington Park in April during the second of the 10 BTCC meetings of the year, Jordan's WSR BMW 330i M Sport slewed sideways after contact ahead of the chasing pack on the opening lap. The rear-wheel-drive car was hit by the unsighted Adam Morgan's Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes-Benz A-Class and then in the driver's side door

by Stephen Jelley's Team Parker Racing BMW 125i M Sport. Jordan was extricated from the battered machine and was taken to hospital complaining of chest pains. He was later released, but not before the three races at Donington had taken place.

That meant, with one fifth of the season gone, he had only taken part in a trio of rounds and he was already 42 points behind his team-mate Colin Turkington and 47 away from the leader at that stage, Ash Sutton in his BMR Racing Subaru Levorg.

"It is motor racing and things happen," says the 2013 champion. "It took the wind out of my sails and I knew that I had a huge mountain to climb to get back to the front, but I also knew that I had the best car on the grid. I am fully aware of the swings and roundabouts of the BTCC and that nothing is lost, so you just keep going."

"From that point forward, it was just about winning races for me. So long as

I had that as my target every time I got in the car, then the points situation would have taken care of itself. The fact that I finished only two points behind Colin in the points in the end shows that it was the right attitude to have."

He finished as runner-up in the points despite the fact he had tied with Dan Cammish's Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R on 318 points. But he secured second because he had taken those six wins – four more than Cammish and one more than his title-winning team-mate.

The accident at Donington Park might have knocked the stuffing out of his challenge but, in truth, it was the second blow to Jordan over the course of the campaign.

He knew early on in the season that his long-term backer Pirtek had decided to withdraw its sponsorship in motorsport. There was no malice in the decision, purely a shift in emphasis from the

bosses at the fixings and hoses manufacturer. The move was announced in May, but Jordan knew the writing had been on the wall for a while.

"I have been lucky to have such a loyal supporter over the course of my journey in the BTCC," he says. "But I know that things change. There was very little I could do about it. So, from the point that I knew Pirtek was going, I knew that I had to enjoy every single moment behind the wheel of a BTCC car because, after all, this could have been my last season at this level. So often you see drivers stepping out of a car, even when they have won a race or finished on the podium, and they look miserable as sin. I don't really get that, because racing one of these cars on the limit is an absolute pleasure and it is not something that everyone gets the chance to do."

"I just decided to take as much from the 2019 season as I could and I was

driving with a smile on my face. I knew from the first test at Brands Hatch just how good the car was so that put a spring in my step immediately. How was I not going to enjoy driving a car that good?"

It was clear that Jordan and the WSR machine gelled right from the off. His performance at the opening meeting at Brands Hatch had already delivered his first win of the year, and he was certain that this was going to be a big chance.

While the speedbump that was Donington Park interrupted his flow, it galvanised his opinion that the 2019 season was one to be enjoyed. The crash left him playing catch up in the points table, but it also meant that he went into the middle part of the season with less success ballast on his car than team-mate Turkington. Jordan still had to exploit the car and he did magnificently, with a run of four wins from six races in May and June.



A huge crash at Donington Park was a crucial moment



Jordan has now landed his dream drive for 2020 season

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Knockhill provided both highs and then a low...



Jordan and Turkington went toe-to-toe

Over the latter half of the year, the BMWs were pegged back by officials – or, to be more precise, the others were given a leg-up in terms of turbo boost and there was a change to the centre of gravity calculations on the rear-wheel-drive cars.

Both Turkington and Jordan faced an uphill struggle to remain as competitive as they had been and, by this stage, Jordan was carrying more significant weight into each meeting. And then came Knockhill.

Turkington is a master at playing the BTCC game but got tipped out of the second race in Scotland, which Jordan won. That shrunk the gap between them to four points and it was game on but what the BTCC gives with one hand, it takes away with the next. In race three, Jordan was thwarted by the punctured Subaru Levorg of Senna Proctor, which spun in from of him and took him out. Turkington scored six points to push

the gap out again. When the final margin of glory was just two points, it shows how critical each incident is in the UK's premier tin-top category.

With that near miss now in the history books, the last two months have been a whirlwind of meetings and deals for Jordan to try and get himself back on the grid for 2020. It happened in early December when BMW stepped up its commitment to the BTCC programme with WSR, and brought Jordan on board as a Team BMW racer for this year.

It is the realisation of a dream for Jordan who feels that the deal shows the work he put in over the last two seasons with WSR has been recognised. While he was pondering how to remain in the BTCC after Pirtek's withdrawal, he knew that the 330i M Sport was one of only very few seats he would have considered to remain in the series. As he said when he rejoined the squad

just before Christmas, it was his only realistic shot.

"I suppose I had put all of my eggs in one basket," says the 30-year-old. "I wasn't looking at any other options in the BTCC. There were other seats I could have looked at, but I am not motivated by purely making up the numbers. Winning is the only thing I am interested in, and that chance was with the BMW. It is a real validation that it has stepped up to support me, and it has gone above and beyond what it needed to do. I will keep the enjoyment that I have had throughout 2019, and hopefully add to it in 2020. I simply can't wait to get started."

He will have to wait until the last weekend of March for that to happen when the season blasts into life at Donington Park, the scene of his lowest point of the last 12 months. He is prepared to erase that from the get-go and land the big prize he has set his sights on. ■



Jordan and rival Cammish battled hard all season

ANDREW JORDAN'S 2019 WINS



Brands Hatch, race two

April 7, 2019

Jordan's first win of the campaign was a barnstormer. He lined up in 15th position on the grid due to the topsy-turvy weather in the opener, which had left all drivers with a quandary over tyres. However, the field lined up on dry rubber in race two despite the threatening clouds and Jordan made short work of the mid-order. He overtook five cars before the first corner and chipped away at the others. Josh Cook lost his early lead to Ash Sutton's Subaru before Jordan steamed through on lap 16 to power to his first win of the year.



Thruxton, race one

May 19, 2019

Making his return from his painful accident at Donington Park, Jordan was right back in the groove from the off. From the second row of the grid in race one, the BMW man made a peach of a start to depose Dan Cammish's Team Dynamics Honda by the first turn. The ballast-free 330i M Sport tracked Sam Tordoff's leading Honda for the opening part of the race before getting a strong run out of Church to assume the lead with four laps remaining.



Thruxton, race two

May 19, 2019

Now fitted with the top level of 54kg of success ballast, Jordan faced a tougher battle in the second race in Hampshire. Going from pole, he was comfortably in the lead by the time the cars reached the Complex for the first time, but his lighter team-mate Colin Turkington, with 36kg, had slotted into second spot. The pair of WSR cars remained close throughout but Jordan remained error-free and crossed the line



Croft, race one

June 16, 2019

Carrying just 6kg into the meeting following his success at the previous meeting at Thruxton, Jordan knew that Croft could be rich pickings. He planted the BMW on pole position and blasted clear to lead into Clervaux as the cars got moving. His team-mates were bottled up behind Chris Smiley's Honda and Tom Chilton's Ford Focus. That is the way the order remained and Jordan was more than 1.5s clear as the flag fell after 18 laps.



Croft, race two

June 16, 2019

From pole position and with full ballast, Jordan was again clear by the opening corner, using the rear-wheel-drive prowess away from the startline. Team-mate Turkington was once again left with the task of unseating Smiley's Honda from second place. He eventually managed it with a brave move at the Jim Clark Esses, but Jordan had checked out by that stage. Turkington closed in, but Jordan was 1.1s ahead at the end of the 15 lapper.



Knockhill, race two

September 15, 2019

From the second row, Jordan blasted into an immediate second place in the opener and set about leader Rory Butcher in his Honda Civic Type R. He chipped away and finally made a move going on to the final lap going into Duffus Dip. He failed, but it gave him a front-row starting slot for the second race. He used that to its fullest advantage to claim the lead in race two at the start and motor away to his sixth win of the campaign.

ASI PREVIEW

CUTTING THE TAPE

Autosport International is set to get the 2020s off to a flying start and MN picks out some of

You know the start of the motorsport season is not far away when it is time for the Autosport

International show. Forget about overindulging over Christmas and sticking to those New Year resolutions, now your attention can turn to four-wheeled action as the halls of the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre come alive and become the place to be for any motorsport competitor or fan.

As always, the diversity of motorsport in this country and beyond will be showcased at the event. From Formula 1 stars to karting, each discipline will be represented and there is sure to be something for everyone. Here, Motorsport News picks out the star names and key attractions of this year's show, which begins tomorrow (Thursday) for two trade days ahead of the crowds arriving on the public days on Saturday and Sunday.



Billy Monger, Johnny Herbert and Karun Chandhok open the show

Celebrating 70 years of Autosport magazine

Formula 1 may this season be celebrating 70 years since its very first race, but MN's sister title *Autosport* is also marking the same milestone. And, to honour the magazine founded by Gregor Grant back in 1950, a truly stunning collection of cars are set to grace Birmingham's exhibition halls.

Some of the most influential cars from the last seven decades will be in attendance for

punters to drool over. Unsurprisingly the all-conquering McLaren MP4/4 from 1988 and Nigel Mansell's title-winning Williams FW14B from 1992 feature, along with the Mercedes F1 W06 from 2015 that is among the most dominant of the Silver Arrows' machines of the last few years.

Other F1 classics include the Maserati 250F that took Juan Manuel Fangio to his final crown, the hugely significant rear-engined Cooper T51, the first car to use the

classic Cosworth DFV engine, the Lotus 49, and the last title-winning Lotus, the 79.

There are some iconic cars from the worlds of sportscars and rallying too as the Jaguar C-type, Porsche 917, Lancia Stratos HF, Jaguar XJR-9, Subaru Impreza and Audi R10 TDI will also all be on display.

The Ford Lotus Cortina and Sierra RS500 Cosworth ensure tin-top fans are catered for and the Lola T92 and T94/00 make up the American racing contingent.



Lotus 79 will be among the classic machines on display

BTCC driver announcements are expected at ASI this year



BTCC battlers will be on display

New category-backer Goodyear will shout loud about the forthcoming season in the British Touring Car Championship, with a host of big names joining the display at the show this year.

Colin Turkington, who is on the cusp of becoming the greatest BTCC driver of all time as he chases a fifth title in 2020, will be the headline act but, as ever in the series, he will have several others nipping at his toes to grab their slice of the limelight.

His two main nemesis from the epic 2019 campaign, WSR team-mate Andrew Jordan and Team

Dynamics Honda Civic Type-R battler Dan Cammish, will also be present at various points over the weekend to begin the psychological warfare that will underpin the new season, which kicks off at Donington Park at the end of March this year.

Up-and-coming stars Toyota's Tom Ingram and three-time 2019 race winner Josh Cook will also be on hand to reflect on the year just gone and look ahead to their prospects for the fresh challenge.

Other drivers will be around to answer questions, and the Goodyear BTCC stand will also offer the chance for selfies and autographs throughout the four days.

ON A NEW DECADE

of the key features of this year's show. By **Stephen Lickorish, David Evans and Matt James**

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrey, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Leclerc set to shine on the main stage

There have only been two drivers to have won multiple races in their second season of Formula 1 since the turn of the century. And one of those has gone on to win just the six championships so far. It is therefore fair to say Charles Leclerc is in pretty good company.

Leclerc can now be in your company too this weekend as he will open the final day of the Autosport International show on Sunday and will be appearing on the Autosport stage during the day.

The Monegasque driver made quite the impact in 2019 and well and truly rattled his four-time champion team-mate Sebastian Vettel as he took two wins and beat Vettel to fourth in the standings. Leclerc will again be one to watch in 2020 as he looks to become the established Ferrari team leader so ASI will provide a great opportunity to hear what he thinks ahead of the new season. And you can ask him about the key issues as he will take part in a question-and-answer session.

Leclerc will not be the only F1 race winner to be interviewed on the stage. British Racing Drivers' Club president David Coulthard and DTM boss Gerhard Berger will also be making appearances.



Ferrari driver will be one of the stars to grace the stage

Rally cars to star

BGMsport has combined with American rallyschool DirtFish to provide one of the finest displays of original rally cars in the history of Autosport International.

DirtFish is the owner of most of the cars, but it's Ian Gwynne's Brackley-based BGMsport team that works on the preparation and restoration. A Stig Blomqvist Ford RS200 headlines the Hall 3 collection at Birmingham's NEC this week. But beyond the Blue Oval's stunning Group B motor, there are some of the rarest rally cars around.

An ex-Roger Clark Ford Lotus Cortina from the late sixties will sit alongside a Group 4 Ferrari 308 and a Markku Alen Fiat 131 Abarth. Alen's not the only Finn represented, with a Talbot Lotus Sunbeam from Henri Toivonen's career also in place.

British rallying royalty Colin McRae and Richard Burns are well represented too, with McRae's 2001 Ford Focus RS WRC present, along with the

Subaru Legacy RS he used to finish second on the 1992 Swedish Rally. For Burns, it's a 1999-specification Subaru Impreza from the first season of his second stint with the Prodrive team.

Further Ford action comes from Boreham's stillborn RS1700T and an M-Sport-built Fiesta R5 in DirtFish colours.

"It's been a real pleasure to put this collection together

[for Autosport International]," said Gwynne. "Working with these cars is a labour of love and the chance to bring them to a high-profile event like Autosport and have enough space to let people get in and around them is fantastic. "What I'm really pleased about is the way we've managed to cover six decades of rallying from the sixties right up to last year with the R5 car."

Some rare Group B rally cars including Ford RS200 will feature



Le Mans Esports race will be taking place this week

What else to watch out for at this year's show

As well as some of the most celebrated cars from the category's past, modern Formula 1 cars will also be on show with the traditional *F1 Racing* feature.

But Autosport International is about much more than just the global stars and iconic cars on display. It is also the place to speak to motor clubs, series organisers and individual teams about the coming season.

One important feature of the event is the Engineering Show on Thursday and Friday, where a plethora of companies attend to showcase their bespoke motorsport products and services. As well as this, there is also the regular Performance and Tuning Car show where there will be a selection of highly-modified machines to witness.

Other less traditional branches of motorsport will also be part of the show, with the world of Esports catered for too. There will be an array of gaming experiences for you to try, along with the latest round of the Le Mans Esports Series taking place.

Legends are live

The Legends Cars National Championship has a reputation for producing some dramatic racing as drivers battle in the pocket-sized machines. Fresh from celebrating its 25th birthday in 2019, six Legends racers – including

inaugural champion Tick Steward – will transfer from the race track to the NEC and thrash the cars around ASI's Live Action Arena.

The display is set to be an assault on the senses as it will also feature BriSCA Formula 1 cars, as well as top stunt drivers working

in collaboration with armed forces charity Mission Motorsport. The hour-long performance will be hosted by Sky Sports F1 commentator David Croft and YouTuber Miss Emma Walsh and is set to feature a special, secret finale. It is not to be missed.



BriSCA F1 machines are also part of the Live Action show

Legends Cars will play a key part in Live Action Arena



You never quite know what you will find in the NEC halls

INSIGHT



Citroen's withdrawal could prompt a WRC overhaul

DOES THE WRC NEED TO REINVENT ITSELF TO GO FORWARD AGAIN?

David Evans looks at the big challenges facing the top tier of world rallying

Standing roadside on a gravel rally, you grow accustomed to the sounds and sights coming your way. There's the initial, split-second lock-up as the left foot stabs the middle pedal, the frantic anti-lag clatter as the right foot rises from the throttle and the satisfying transmission clunk as cogs are descended on final approach. Finally, there's a flash of revs or the drag of a handbrake-induced slide to rotate the car at the apex.

Where to look? If you try to watch the approach, you're going to miss what's right in front of you. Neck muscles simply can't compete with the sheer speed of a current generation World Rally Car.

You need to understand what the World Rally Championship can do to people; it engenders outrageous emotion. It moves grown men to tears, like the bloke standing next to me in Portugal in June. The one word I fully understood was 'quattro'. Clearly, he was reaching back to the halcyon days of the mid-1980s. I nodded and smiled, but that worried me. Sure as bust followed Group B boom, those days were gone in an unsustainable four-year flurry.

Now, for very different reasons, I fear we could be heading down the same cul-de-sac. The last month or so has been among the most turbulent in the history of the championship.

A quick recap: we've lost Rally Australia, Rally Chile, this season's WRC launch at Autosport International, Citroen and now Skoda as a factory team in WRC2. No matter which way you try to spin it, that's a pretty shocking few weeks. But it's vital to take a step back and look at the reasons. Each one of those decisions is entirely independent.

Bushfires in New South Wales have nothing in common with rising subway prices and the ensuing violent protests in Santiago. Citroen's decision to depart (we're coming to that next) has nothing to do with Skoda wanting to back the

privateer drivers this season. And the launch? A date clash with an existing Toyota commitment in Japan and Hyundai's senior management meeting in Korea on the same weekend couldn't have been foreseen.

But that's not to say all's well with WRC right now. Opinion is divided in the service park on the value being delivered by WRC Promoter to the stakeholders. Certainly, you don't have to delve too deeply into the manufacturer pool to find a degree of negativity. Citroen's departure, it's claimed by many, was simply due to the lack of eyeballs on the programme.

I'm not so sure. According to its official communication, Citroen's departure was because Sebastien Ogier wanted to drive a Toyota next season. That's nonsense. Citroen was done with the WRC by the summer. That's why CEO Linda Jackson couldn't and wouldn't tell me anything about the hybrid commitment when I talked to her at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

What concerns me is that, when looking into Peugeot's next move in motorsport, PSA went for the World Endurance Championship rather than a hybrid WRC effort in 2022.

The lion on the bonnet has, let's not forget, roared louder and longer in rallying than racing.

Immediately, that point has unearthed a couple of major issues for rallying: hybrid technology, and the lack of young driver development. I'll come to those.

First, I want to put this Citroen story to bed. From the outset, the C3 WRC programme was underfunded and pretty much doomed to fail, courtesy of PSA chairman Carlos Tavares' policy of cutting budgets to the bone. And then cutting them again. How far did this go? A very long way. Starting the 2018 season, the team was reportedly given a pair of shorts and a couple of T-shirts in its hot weather kit. Need more? Recycle last season's threads.

It was the same story for testing and development. While the senior management requested a return to

former WRC glories, it simultaneously tied one arm behind the team's back.

Only now that Citroen's gone are we hearing more and more of the horror stories from 2017 onwards. Let's just say that the treatment of Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle (when they were sacked after crashing out of Portugal in 2018) was beyond harsh, given what they were trying to achieve with what they had in their hands. And the supremely hard-working team members deserved far more than a press release blaming a six-time champion for the end of the road. Their heart was in it, but Citroen's wallet was nowhere to be seen.

Oddly, in a media landscape that has evolved so much in the past decade, so many still put so much stock in being able to watch rallying on the telly. That argument's outmoded.

And anyway, last year's numbers showed that more than 825 million folk did manage to find the WRC on TV. Best bet? Head to All Live and 30-plus hours of live coverage. That's every stage, every service, every event. Granted, we should have had this a few years ago, but no matter, we've got it now and it offers exceptional opportunities for the armchair fan. The signal does go a bit wonky every now and then – but that's understandable given the terrain the series runs through.

“TV audience is not the only measure”



Oliver Ciesla

On the social-media side, the WRC's popularity continues to grow, with Facebook up 6% at 2.65m followers and Instagram rocketing by 68% to 1.19m.

WRC Promoter managing director Oliver Ciesla has heard the television rant before. Plenty of times.

“I don't say it would not be great to have more prominence on free to air,” he says, “but this alone is not the solution anymore. Like every form of entertainment in the world today, when it comes to television, either the market demands it or you buy the airtime – but this doesn't guarantee you the audience. Being on TV alone is only the first step. The second step is to attract the audience who then sits in front of the TV and watches it.”

And that's where social media is really working, in increasing visibility and driving the demand for the WRC.

The calendar is another bone of contention. FIA rally director Yves Matton is determined that the WRC should follow the road map that president Jean Todt laid out more than a decade ago. Remember that missive about putting the 'world' back into the World Rally Championship?

Matton says: “The championship needs to go to three new destinations: China, Russia and North America. And we will work together with the promoter to be able to go to these countries. The approach will be different, we will be proactive, we will go on the market and study how we can have a WRC event in America, Russia and China between now and five years. This is one of the stakeholder requests.”

Getting back to Japan this season is a big step, but everybody's aware that Matton's big three above – and arguably India – need sorting. Kenya and New Zealand are both interesting additions for 2020. I'm delighted to be back on Safari and the North Island for some truly fabulous roads, and the sporting aspect of those events is beyond question. But as a long-term economic solution for the championship, both are debatable: neither has a car market demonstrating

the sort of demand found elsewhere in the world and, while each will make significant contributions to the associated logistical costs, there's a school of thought that wonders if those two calendar slots could have been put to better long-term use.

Maybe there's another way of looking at the WRC's cost-benefit conundrum. Maybe it's time we looked at the cost of the current World Rally Cars. There's strong evidence that they're too expensive. Citroen's budget couldn't support a three-car entry under the current regulations. And the days of entry lists being padded out by a fleet of private cars are long gone. Mads Ostberg tried and failed; even Lorenzo Bertelli, scion of the Prada dynasty, couldn't make the numbers stack up.

The charismatic Italian, along with Martin Prokoc and Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi, all added to the WRC spectacle, even though the podium was largely beyond their reach.

Hayden Paddon knows more than most about trying to balance the WRC books. The Kiwi twice did a deal to drive an M-Sport Ford Fiesta WRC in 2019. Unforeseen circumstances meant he didn't manage it on either occasion, but he did the maths and is well placed to comment on the price comparison between an R5 and World Rally Car.

The cost of covering each kilometre 1.5 seconds faster in the fancier motor? Four times that of an R5. A full-on World Rally Car's going to cost around £230,000 to hire for a round, and if you want to buy one outright it's £750,000 – and it's once you own the car that things start to get expensive. Increased downforce is all well and good, but the by-product of the car being forced down is the alarming rate at which front splitters get chewed up and chucked out. What follows is another bill for thousands.

And what's going to follow the current car is even more concerning. The proposal for 2022 hybrids will result in the first million-pound World Rally Cars. That's nuts. And it's not what the WRC is about. For years we had a situation where

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Bringing fans to watch the WRC is a key component

the local hero could take on the international stars when they were in town in almost equal machinery. Remember Mark Higgins in a pukka Ford Focus RS WRC? Or Jorge Recalde in Argentina, Possum Bourne in New Zealand? Those drivers generated massive local interest and raised the domestic profile of individual rounds of the series. Those days are gone. And they won't be back any time soon.

Manufacturers have until the end of April to sign up for 2022. If the FIA doesn't get the necessary support, there's reckoned to be an increasingly attractive alternative being considered in the corridors of the governing body's technical department.

What's been the most successful category change in the history of the World Rally Championship? It's R5. Introduced seven years ago, seven manufacturers have homologated R5 cars and hundreds have been sold around the world.

The category has proved its worth for the second tier, so why not take it a step further and use it as a base for the top tier? Give the engine, currently with a 32mm restrictor, a bit more room to breathe, give the transmission a tweak and bolt on some aggressive-looking – but not necessarily effective – aero. Then take the most cost-effective battery and motor hybrid combo, feed it some biofuel and rejoice in 20-plus factory World Rally Cars.

It's possible I might have oversimplified, but the FIA is thinking along the same lines. Slashing the cost of cars by half and delivering considerably more manageable rebuild bills is understandably attractive.

The engineers in the service park are less keen. Put that proposal – albeit in a slightly more dressed-up form – to Toyota technical director Tom Fowler and he looks decidedly unsure. Asked to outline his primary concerns, he blows his cheeks out, very much in a how-long-have-you-got fashion. "I don't think an R5-based World Rally Car could deliver you a championship worthy of being

called a World Rally Championship," he says. "From a technical perspective, just slapping the aero from a current car on something else won't work – it's not going to deliver the performance and certainly you even need to be careful from a safety point of view.

"The regulations simply aren't aligned and we'd have to think carefully about what the R5 car was designed for. Putting more power into a car that presently isn't as highly developed from a safety perspective as the current World Rally Car is something to think about. It would be difficult to implement those [safety areas introduced into the World Rally Cars] backwards into R5 cars, while trying to upgrade the car into a hybrid World Rally Car at the same time. For me, a move like this would make things very messy."

It's a similar verdict from six-time world champion Ogier. He admits his grasp of the fiscal side of the argument might not be complete, but he can offer the ultimate insight into driving these cars.

"In one way those cars are more expensive, but they also provided a huge step in terms of the spectacle – more than any of the cars running before and in that respect it was a good move," he says.

"Maybe the cost is too much and it needs to be rebalanced to reduce that cost, but it's also important to have spectacular cars that the fans love to see and, if you ask the drivers, of course, we love to drive cars like these as well."

A big part of the those rising costs will come from the introduction of hybrid technology, and that brings frustration from some quarters. The WRC has made clear its intention to run cars in electric mode through towns, cities and service parks. Yes, there is the potential for a power boost in the stages, but that would come via FIA-controlled software.

There are plenty of cost-effective, off-the-shelf solutions to supplement the 1600cc internal combustion engine. Should teams fail to sign up to 2022 before the end of April, this is a real opportunity for the FIA to take a lead and deliver a set of rules that

might better reflect the current economic environment.

Whether or not those R5-based regulations could include intended plans for inbound manufacturers to scale production cars into World Rally Cars remains to be seen.

Your take on the cost argument for World Rally Cars would quite likely depend on your confidence in the series. There are those who fear the loss of Hyundai and Toyota if the series follows the R5 route, compounding fears that it has been cheapened in terms of spectacle and technology. The counter-argument of reduced entry costs could well attract more manufacturers to the table. It's the bird in the hand versus the two in the bush...

Doubtless, running an R5-based solution would bring back privateers and private teams – something the WRC has always embraced. Crucially, as well as serving the healthy gentleman-driver market, this could also revive young driver programmes.

The fact that Citroën was able to reach for the argument that there weren't enough drivers capable of winning the title shines the light on another significant issue for the WRC. Beyond Kalle Rovanperä and Oliver Solberg, where's the next generation? We have plenty of drivers paying for the privilege, but that's potentially costing rallying a cohort of would-be world champions.

This problem could be partly solved at the stroke of an FIA pen, if the governing body regulated third drivers to be younger than 25 and competing as part of a development structure within each of the teams. We're never going to stop drivers paying – it's folly to think we could, and their contribution helps sustain cars on the stages – but we need to be doing all we can to broaden the top of the tree beyond what is an annual three-way title fight.

And when you've got the branches at the top of that tree weighed down with talent, the car becomes even less important. Let's face it, those drivers would be spectacular driving wheelbarrows. ■



R5 machines, above here in the hands of Mads Ostberg, are cost-effective



Top privateers like Mark Higgins, here on GB in 2002, are a now rare sight

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INSIGHT

CONTRACT AND EXPAND: THE PITFALLS OF SIGNING A DEAL

Matt James looks at the troubles that can be avoided with good legal advice

It is the time of year that specialist motorsport lawyers are at their busiest. Deals are being done between teams and drivers, and contracts are being drawn up, amended and signed.

While news of a driver signing up for a team is a weekly occurrence over the closed-season, the effort and thought process which goes in to securing those agreements is immense.

Successful saloon racer and motorsport solicitor Sarah Franklin, who operates Sarah Franklin Solicitors in Kettering, is deep in the heart of many of the negotiations which are ongoing. She explains that the landscape for any agreement can be a rocky road.

“Generally a driver’s agreement is essentially a contract between the competitor and the team,” Franklin says. “These can, therefore, be as simple or detailed as the parties agree. To avoid any problems if and when things go wrong, it’s always best to ensure that they’re drafted by a legal professional. It’s better to agree things whilst both parties are getting on and happy rather than when they’ve gone pear-shaped...”

“There tends to be two main types of driver’s agreement. The first is where the competitor is paying the team to run them, either in a car owned by the competitor or a vehicle owned by the team. The second is where the team are paying the competitor to drive for them.”

Fighting fund

For a racer who is stumping up cash for their drive, this is where a very clear framework has to be set down. On many occasions, even in some of the UK’s highest profile categories, there have been instances of drivers walking away from a team at the end of a campaign with a string of debts littered behind them.

Most teams demand a lump sum payment – for the standard costs of running the car – at the beginning of the agreement and this will include a returnable deposit. That deposit would be used for any costs that are not the standard costs for running the driver, such as repairs.

There is also another method, which is demanding a specific amount per event, and that is usually payable in advance. Franklin explains: “You would expect to see details of what the ‘standard’ payment covers – preparation of vehicle, rental of vehicle (if appropriate), fuel, tyres, personnel costs, hospitality, team accommodation and so on.”

“There is often a standard fee for the preparation and the team running the vehicle, and then the driver has to cover fuel, tyres and entry fee separately. It’s really, really important that the agreement clearly states what is included and what is excluded.”

“If there hasn’t been any deposit payment and payments are only made after the events and the driver fails to pay anything, the team would have to pursue the driver for breach of the agreement.”

Sharing the burden

That option is all well and good when it is a solitary driver but in national racing, as well as in higher-profile categories such as the British GT Championship, there is an increasing appetite for drivers to share machines.

In British GT, there are two types of



Franklin is a successful racer on the tin-top scene



Franklin knows the legal pitfalls



Two-driver categories can present certain problems with contracts



Teams have obligations to drivers in terms of the equipment they supply

cooperation. There are the two amateur drivers who team up, and then there are the gentlemen racers who employ a professional to shoulder the burden of the work.

But what if one side of the alliance lets the team down – and that could be the professional or one of the amateurs? What if one driver has a magnetic attraction with the tyre wall which thwarts the other?

Franklin says that this could provide some choppy waters. She says: “If both are paying, you may see something in the agreement about who would be responsible for payment for damage if there was clear evidence that the driver was at fault – although that is more difficult to prove that you’d think. Was it an issue with the car that caused the problem? Was it the fault of another competitor? It is more likely that you’d just have to swallow damage equally if you were both paying drivers.”

The situation is different where a driver has been contracted by a gentleman driver to bring his skills to the partnership. “If you were the paying driver and the paid driver was under-performing, you would expect a clause that would enable a different driver to be brought in,” says Franklin. “This would also be in the paid driver’s agreement so they know what is expected of them.”

In the bank

The problem of drivers walking away from contracts that they have agreed at

the start of the campaign is a common one and it happens more frequently than most fans would expect.

This is where the legal system has to step in and the validity of the initial agreement is put under extreme scrutiny, perhaps demonstrating why solid legal advice for both parties at the beginning of a cooperation is crucial.

Franklin says: “If [a driver] has a valid contract and there’s been no breach by the team to cause the driver to walk away, the driver would be in breach of contract and could be sued.”

“The [initial] agreement should include something about interest payable on payments [that haven’t yet materialised] and any additional costs for pursuing a breach. If the agreement doesn’t deal with this, the law steps in and will make provision for basic interest at the current county court judgment rate.”

Reliable form

While the team might demand, quite rightly, payments on time from the driver, there is also the other side of the coin.

At the beginning of any campaign, a driver might carefully select which team to align themselves with, but what if the pre-season promises by the squad evaporate as soon as the on-track action starts?

If a car proves to be unusually unreliable, or parts that are supposed to be in working order fail to perform, the racer has a right to complain.

“You’d usually expect a clause saying that the team need to perform their duties

to a reasonable standard that one would expect from a professional race team,” explains Franklin. “This is their side of the contract and what they are being paid for.”

“If the car broke down on lap one every race, there would be some serious questions needed to be answered. There are, of course, things that are often outside of the control of the team and things happen, but you wouldn’t expect this to happen regularly.”

“If it did, there would be questions about the preparation of the vehicle. If they haven’t fulfilled their part of the contract, the driver would be entitled to sue them for breach of the agreement.”

Outside the cockpit

Of course, not all that a driver requires happens on the track itself.

The level of support that a team can provide is also an area that needs to be specified and nailed down before the campaign has begun to make sure that there are no grey areas.

Younger, career-minded drivers are becoming increasingly aware that there is a need for a support network around them to make sure they are heading in the right direction, and a lot of this can come from within the team in terms of its back up.

Franklin says: “Agreements, certainly at a higher level of competing, usually include details of what support they are getting – this such as a dedicated mechanic, engineer or driver coach. There would usually be something

detailed for test days, and race weekends as the level of support may be different. There are often simulator sessions specified as well.”

Any other business

So that has taken account of most of what happens on track, but those are not the only issues to be assessed when entering into an agreement. There are myriad other complications, as Franklin points out.

She says: “You’d also need to think about confidentiality clauses, not slugging the driver or team off on social media, who has the right to the data from events and tests. There are details that can be ironed out such as how is the vehicle to be transported to the events, what hospitality would be made available, can either party bring the contract to an early end and, if so, on what basis.”

“Another thing is, does the driver have exclusive use of the vehicle – for example, can the team use it for testing other drivers or not? At what mileage should critical components be changed and can the driver insist on the changing of parts or is it the discretion of the team manager?”

As Franklin points out, the thought process behind these deals is intense, and the sensible ones are the teams and drivers who take their time to nail down these details before the first round of the year. If not, then Franklin and her colleagues will be pressed into action again... ■

Photos: Sarah Franklin, Jakob Ebrey

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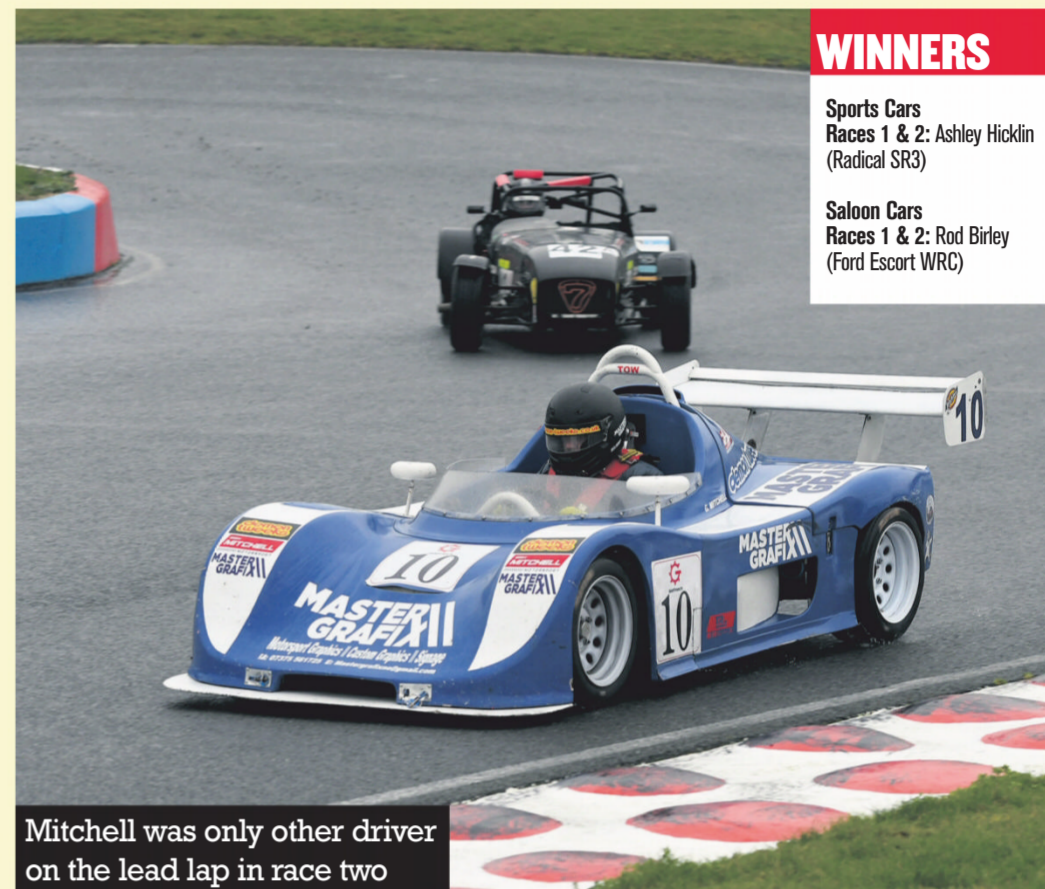
RACING REPORT

MALLORY PARK PLUM PUDDING: BRSCC BY IAN SOWMAN
DECEMBER 26

Photos: Steve Jones



Hicklin was dominant in the Sports Car contests



Mitchell was only other driver on the lead lap in race two

WINNERS

Sports Cars
Races 1 & 2: Ashley Hicklin
(Radical SR3)

Saloon Cars
Races 1 & 2: Rod Birley
(Ford Escort WRC)

HICKLIN AND BIRLEY ARE THE FINAL WINNERS OF THE 2010s

Ashley Hicklin and Rod Birley each took double victories at the final UK car race meeting of the 2010s at Mallory Park on Boxing Day.

Hicklin had the honour of being the very last winner to pass the chequered flag in the decade when his Radical SR3 came home almost a minute clear in the second of the British Racing and Sports Car Club-run Sports Car races after lapping almost five seconds per lap faster than any other car on the treacherously wet surface.

With the top 10 finishers reversed from the earlier race, Hicklin in race two had to scythe through from row five but he took the lead from Steven Barnard's spaceframe Audi TT half-way around the second lap. David Porter's SR3, which had started

Birley won both Saloon races

alongside Hicklin's car on the grid, was expected to provide a challenge but eventually finished a lapped third, ahead of Barnard and Caterham 310R driver Jon Curry.

Gary Mitchell, however, was the only other driver to finish on the lead lap in

his Global GT Light, in spite of picking up damage to his car in the first part of the race. The rallycross driver – who was also racing his Ford Puma in the Saloon races ahead of its appearance in the Autosport International Live Action Arena – passed Barnard around the outside at Lake Esses on lap five, only to immediately spin onto the grass, breaking the front splitter.

The earlier race was halted early after Nicholas Smith had the throttle stick open on his Caterham Roadsport, resulting in a headlong collision with the tyre wall at Gerard's Bend. Hicklin, who took the lead from Porter at the start of the second lap, was already comfortably clear, with Mitchell a distant third.

The opening Saloon Car encounter was also red-flagged

after Julie Walford's Renault Clio stopped in an exposed position at the exit of Gerard's Bend. Unsurprisingly, Rod Birley – who claimed pole position by placing his entry the earliest of anyone – was well ahead of the chasing pack in his Ford Escort WRC.

Adam Chamberlain (Vauxhall Astra VXR) was a strong second, up from row seven of the grid, in spite of having had a fallow season, and used the event as preparation for a return to Turbo Tin Tops this season. He beat Simon Ward – who showed him the ropes around Mallory a couple of years earlier – into third position.

The second race, with its partly-reversed grid, was a cracker. Having made a late entry and started the first race flat last, Oliver Barsby's Honda Civic led for almost eight laps until Birley – who started 10th – eventually

found a way through at Devil's Elbow. Simon Sheridan's Civic Type R was second for a long time, but was eventually classified fifth after Sheridan went straight on at Shaw's hairpin on lap eight.

Pickup Truck regular Ward was among the drivers to capitalise in his Vauxhall Astra GTE, and he moved into second – ahead of Barsby – at the hairpin a lap later before slashing Birley's advantage. When Birley got boxed in by a slower Citroen C1 at the hairpin four laps from home Ward pounced and led briefly, but Birley turned up the wick and blasted back ahead into the Esses on the next lap to take victory.

Barsby completed the podium, while Chamberlain emerged from a magnificent midfield scrap to take fourth from Sheridan and Carl Swan's Citroen Saxo.



RALLY REPORTS

SWANN AND McNULTY PROVE UNSTOPPABLE

Mini Tempest Rushmoor

By Ian Harden

Organiser: Sutton and Cheam MC/Craven MC When: December 29
Where: Rushmoor Arena, Hampshire Stages: 8 Starters: 46

Deciding to use a full wet-weather set-up on their Ford Fiesta RS WRC paid dividends for Robert Swann and Steve McNulty as they revelled in the slippery conditions at Rushmoor. They set the fastest time on all eight stages to win by 42s from Richard Weaver/Tim Sayer's Mitsubishi Lancer E6.

However, both crews were arguably upstaged by Scott Barnes/Bill Paynter as the Peugeot 106 pairing produced a storming drive, using their diminutive 1600cc machine's nimble handling to hold the rest at bay and take third place overall.

From the start, Swann's set-up gave him a clear advantage and he opened an 11-second lead after the opening pair of stages and was never headed thereafter. Runner-up Weaver

gelled quickly with stand-in co-driver Sayer and the duo chased Swann hard all day. A SS6 puncture after hitting a roadside kerb caused only a minor delay as they held on to second throughout the rally.

Barnes/Paynter's star performance combined consistent speed with mistake-free driving through the tight, twisty stages. Early on they battled for third with Dan Corner/Mark Regan (Peugeot 205) and Christopher/Anthony Newton (Vauxhall Nova). When the Newtons retired with gearbox problems on SS4, Barnes held off Corner's determined late charge by 11 seconds.

Results

1 Robert Swann/Steve McNulty (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) 23m55s; 2 Richard Weaver/Tim Sayer (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +42s; 3 Scott Barnes/Bill Paynter (Peugeot 106); 4 Dan Corner/Mark Regan (Peugeot 205); 5 Pete/Aron Rayner (Ford Escort Mk2); 6 Jordan Reynolds/Tom Wood (Ford Fiesta R2T); 7 Dominic Worsfold/Mike Engleman (Fiesta); 8 Peter/James Hedges (Escort Mk2); 9 Steve Finch/Aled Edwards (Fiesta R5); 10 Dave Edmunds/Dom Jeans (Lancer E6).

Class winners: Adam Quinn/Harry Nicholls (MG ZR); Worsfold/Engleman; Reynolds/Wood; Corner/Regan; Finch/Edwards.



Winning gap for Ford Fiesta RS WRC crew was 42s

Photos: rallygallery.com

FEATURE

Photos: Ollie Read, Castle Combe Archive



Combe is a haven for club racers

FLAT OUT AT 70 FOR CASTLE COMBE



Greensall blitzed the lap record

The 2020 season will be another landmark in the Castle Combe story as the Wiltshire race track reaches its 70th birthday. By **Paul Lawrence**

Of the continuously active UK race tracks, Silverstone is two years older and Brands Hatch first hosted car racing a few weeks before the inaugural Castle Combe race meeting on July 8, 1950. No other UK track has a longer history of motorsport.

Despite its 70-year history, Castle Combe remains fiercely independent under the control of the family of the late Howard Strawford, the man who rescued it from the brink of closure in the early 1970s. This season, it will be as busy as ever with the racing programme just the tip of an iceberg of activities that keeps it as an important generator of employment and income for the region.

The celebrations will run through the year before culminating in early October with the ninth edition of the Autumn Classic. To mark the 70th anniversary, the 2020 Classic will grow to be a two-day event over the weekend of October 3-4, topped by a quality line up of historic categories.

Centre stage in October will be the 500cc Formula 3 cars of the late 1940s and early 1950s for they are key to the story of the circuit's opening. The local Bristol Motor Cycle and Light Car Club was a pioneer of early post-war motorsport and started using a temporary circuit at Lulsgate Bottom Aerodrome in 1949 despite reluctance from the Royal Automobile Club.



Vince Woodman was a track star

An alternative venue was badly needed and contact was established with Kitty Maurice, owner of the land used as RAF Castle Combe during the war. With her enthusiastic support, the old perimeter road was used as the basis of a track and a 'behind-closed-doors' race meeting ran in July 1950. The first car winner was Jim Sparrow in his Morgan, ahead of Major Arthur Mallock.

The public was admitted for the second event in October and a 12,000-strong crowd watched Stirling Moss and Peter Collins battle in 500cc F3 Coopers. Racing continued through the 1950s, but facilities remained temporary and the section at Old Paddock was regularly cleared of slurry before racing as the local farmer fed his cows there between race meetings.

Through the 1950s, the profile of the circuit grew steadily and in October 1955 the Bristol club boldly ran a non-championship Formula 1 race, the only such race in the story of Castle Combe. An entry for Mike Hawthorn in a Ferrari-run Lancia D50 was turned down as the team wanted £750 start money and the race was won by Harry Schell in his Vanwall.

However, the F1 race proved to be a high-water mark for the 1950s as the full repercussions of the 1955 Le Mans disaster became clear. A major overhaul of spectator safety arrangements, including a spectator bank, was required and the Bristol club did not have the money. The club terminated its car racing lease in August 1956, but the circuit continued to host speed events and motorbike racing.

Finally, in 1962 Nick Syrett of the

BRSCC organised funding for a safety bank to be dug and car racing resumed in June 1962. Two years later, the failing track surface was renewed, and racing continued through the decade despite growing local opposition to the noise.

However, by the end of the 1960s, the combined challenges of planning permission and local objectors left the future looking bleak and closure at the end of 1971 seemed inevitable. But the widely held view that the end was coming was not the view of Howard Strawford, who had entered the circuit story after joining the BRSCC South-Western Centre following a relocation to Bristol with his job.

By 1969, Strawford was competition secretary for the region and soon took a pioneering role in trying to save the circuit from closure at the end of 1971. With his mix of charm, cheek, determination, stubbornness, humour and business savvy, the late Strawford succeeded where others had been prepared to throw in the towel. He adopted a 'slowly, slowly' approach and set about keeping the track open. Over more than a decade he fought planning and noise issues and worked relentlessly to turn Castle Combe's fortunes around.

Little by little, he took over the lease, bought land, increased the permitted usage and reinvested in the track to deliver one of the most remarkable success stories in British motor racing. The track became a way of life for Howard, his wife Pat and their two daughters and he solved one particular noise problem by buying the house



Future F1 star Nelson Piquet Junior explores the limits of the track in 2004



A field of 1950s 500cc Formula 3 racers take on the challenge in Wiltshire

close to the track at Westway.

Back in 2000, Strawford talked about his three-decade challenge to turn the venue around. "Owning a circuit makes you a jack of all trades," he said. "It might be a struggle to learn about advertising, public relations and promotion, but if you've been a salesman, you've got a fair idea. But that doesn't prepare you for putting up barriers and building cess pits. It certainly doesn't prepare you for dealing with legal matters about planning law."

Strawford was clearly a quick learner for all these issues, and many more, were conquered as he steadily transformed the venue from a scruffy airfield to a parkland setting with landscaping, trees and good facilities for visitors. Competitors came in strong numbers and carefully-constructed planning applications allowed the circuit to substantially broaden its range of events. Non-racing events, including race school, private hire and action days all added to the venue's profitability.

Of course, racing stayed at the heart of the calendar and the 1980s and 1990s delivered typically high-speed action around the sweeps of Combe. But Strawford knew that changes were going to have to come as speeds grew ever higher. On a memorable August Bank Holiday Monday in 1997, Nigel Greensall

smashed the outright circuit record in a Tyrrell 022 from Paul Stoddart's European Aviation team. Competing in a BOSS race, Greensall sliced nearly four seconds off the old record to leave it at 50.59s, just over 130mph.

By now, Strawford was planning change and for the 1999 season two new complexes were added: the Esses were built before Old Paddock and Bobbies (in honour of the late Bob Davies) was added on Westway. The changes paved the way for what Strawford considered the circuit's finest hour, when the British GT and British Formula 3 package came to town. Big stars of the future, packed crowds and a huge buzz made the events very special. "The first year in 2001 was the biggest thing we'd had in my time," said Strawford.

Sadly the noise generated by the GT cars, in particular, caused big problems and resulted in a noise abatement order. After four years, F3 and GT had to cease but over the ensuing 15 years the circuit continued to grow with an ever busier schedule of events.

Today, Castle Combe is a thriving, vibrant venue with motor racing at its core. Drivers, riders and spectators relish the challenge and excitement of this wonderful venue. Strawford died in February 2013 but his legacy lives on in safe hands. ■

SPORTING SCENE

BRITISH RX RETURNS TO CONTROL TYRE FOR 2020

Cooper Tires to provide rubber for revamped mixed-surface series

By Hal Ridge

Tyre brand Cooper Tires will be title sponsor of the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy for the next three years, series bosses have announced.

The move brings the series in line with the World and European Championships, along with the Nordic and RX2 series, in being supported by Cooper and using the brand's crossply rubber exclusively.

Toyo Tyres had been title sponsor of the British RX series in recent years, but competitors hadn't been required to use Toyo's products. From this season, competitors in the championship will need to run on Cooper tyres.

"The Cooper tyres are without doubt the best tyres for rallycross," said British RX boss and Lydden Hill

operator Pat Doran. "Cooper has worked relentlessly to produce a tyre that is now selected by all the major rallycross championships around the world.

"We've worked with them to produce a package that we believe offers the best rallycross tyre possible for all classes, while also offering value for money."

While single-make categories such as the Swift Sport championship and RX150 buggy series have used control tyres in recent seasons, the most recent control tyre used in the British RX Supercar category was a radial construction made by Kumho, last mandatory in 2009.

The British Rallycross Championship will be operated by Lydden Hill Race Circuit in 2020 after it won the tender process from the discipline's governing body, Motorsport UK.

2020 SCHEDULE

British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy

DATE	TRACK
April 12-13	Round 1 Lydden Hill
May 24-25	Round 2 Pembrey
June 20-21	Round 3 Valkenswaard, Holland
July 18-19	Round 4 Mondello Park, Ireland
Aug 30-31	Round 5 Lydden Hill
Sept 26-27	Round 6 Knockhill

*Provisional Supercar calendar, dates subject to change

All other classes*

DATE	TRACK
April 12-13	Round 1 Lydden Hill
May 24-25	Round 2-3 Pembrey
July 18-19	Round 4-5 Mondello Park, Ireland
Aug 30-31	Round 6 Lydden Hill
Sept 26-27	Round 7-8 Knockhill
Oct 18	Round 9 Pembrey

*Dates are provisional



Photos: Hal Ridge, Sean Hassett, mkpics.net

British Rallycross Championship racers will have mandated rubber in '20



Irish RX will use Mondello Park

Mondello Park only for Irish Rallycross competition as numbers are set to rise

The Irish Rallycross Championship will take place exclusively at Mondello Park this year, dropping the Tynagh circuit in the west of the country that has been used in recent seasons.

Irish Rallycross bosses have revealed a five-event schedule. It starts on March 8 at the Naas circuit, before round two

takes place on April 19.

The third event of the year will be run as part of the British RX 5 Nations return to Ireland, initially pencilled in for mid-July, a date that is yet to be confirmed.

The final two rounds will take place on October 4 and November 8. Having enjoyed an upturn in numbers in 2018, the

series struggled to attract participants last year and Mondello bosses suggested that the series could be unsustainable unless more support was received from drivers.

The season finale was better attended, and the Irish Rallycross committee and Mondello Park plan to keep the series alive this year.

Panis family rout in the Andros Trophy ice showdown as too much snow reduces event to a single-header

The Andorran weekend of the Andros Trophy ice racing series was forced to run over a single round last month when the first day of competition had to be cancelled due to a snowstorm.

When the action got underway on day two, it was father-and-son pairing Aurelien Panis and ex-Formula 1 driver Olivier who tied on points

at the end of qualifying.

Aurelien then went on to claim victory in the final ahead of his father.

Four-time champion and reigning title-holder Jean-Baptiste Dubourg qualified third and finished the final in the same position, one place ahead of DA Racing Renault Zoe team-mate Nicolas Prost.

However, it was Franck Lagorce who took fourth position in the final classification due to his stronger qualifying performance.

World Rallycross Championship star Andreas Bakkerud suffered a gruelling event and didn't make the Super Final.

Panis Junior's result extended his margin at the head of the standings.

He now leads Dubourg by 14 points ahead of the next event at Isola 2000 in France this weekend.

In the Elite category in Andorra there was an Audi A1 one-two for Stephane Ventaja and Julien Febreau, with Peugeot 208 silhouette racer Sylvain Pussier coming home in third position.



Panis Jr now heads the points table

DEW MAKING STEPS TOWARDS THE BIG PRIZE

National Hot Rod points table-topper Aaron Dew admits that his focus is not on claiming the competition he currently leads.

The Ginetta racer, who has a one-point advantage over Jason Kew as the series is on its mid-season hiatus, says that July's World Final at Ipswich is the prize he cherishes the most.

The Hot Rod pack battles all season long and accrues points at every meeting. There is an overall winner at the end, and second-generation short oval man Dew (his father Martin contested two-litre Hot Rods) is on target to grasp the English points glory.

But each racer is fighting to finish in the top 17 of the standings, which then books a racer their place on the

winner-takes-all World Final grid.

"It is nice to be ahead in the points, but that is not what we set out to achieve at the start of all this," says the 27-year-old from Stowmarket. "We know that qualifying for the World Final is the big goal for us."

A final win at Aldershot in September has been his highlight over the opening seven races, but he says a slightly different approach in his driving has given him the bigger results. "Before, it was all about going all-out in each race, but I have altered that a bit this time," says Dew. "Now, I think about trying to be consistent in the two heats, bank a good result and then start as high up as I can in the final. It's hard being a red-grade driver now, because I have to start from the back, so there is a lot more to think about as the races unfold."

There are things to think about in the

workshop too, as Dew is thinking about modifications he can make to the set-up to improve his Duratec-powered car's performance for the seven-race run in towards the World Final.

"We were one of the first to adopt the Ginetta and it has taken us a while to get it where we want it," says Dew, who began his career in karting. "But we have made some real strides. I am going to look at what we can do to the suspension to get a little bit more out of it when the racing resumes in March, but we are not far away."

The fact the World Final is on his local track also means his ultimate aim is something firmly on his radar. "I like the place, and we have a good set-up to allow us to use the outside line there, which is vital," he says. "Winning the World Final would be a dream come true."

Matt James



Aaron Dew (inset) was a winner at Aldershot and now heads the points

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MN SAYS...

M-Sport's fight to get back to the top

Lappi and Suninen, plus cameos from Greensmith, really need to click

M-Sport's announcement that it has selected Esapekka Lappi to partner Teemu Suninen in the World Rally Championship in 2020 wraps up all the seats in the leading teams, and it leaves several of rallying's big names facing an uncertain future. Chief among them is Northern Irishman Kris Meeke, who has now got to broaden his horizons to keep himself in the game.

Malcolm Wilson's line-up is interesting, and Lappi really needs to step up to the plate to regain the career momentum he had before joining the disastrous Citroen effort in 2019. Not only that, there will be big pressure on M-Sport, too, as it seeks to bounce back from a winless season – something it hadn't experienced since 2016. It is hard not to admire Wilson and his Cumbria-based team, which has held its own among the bigger-budget factory teams since Ford decided to stop supporting the squad as a factory effort at the end of 2012. If Lappi and Suninen (plus Greensmith for nine of the rounds) do manage to put M-Sport back in the winner's circle, don't underestimate the effort it has taken to get there.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



YOUR PICS

LETTERS@MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK

Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images



David Harbey sent in this photo from the Plum Pudding meeting at Mallory Park, knowing the way into Mike Stokoe's good books



Ben Lawrence, aged 10, went to the Plum Pudding Sporting Trial



Another from Ben Lawrence, with dad Paul in the background



Peter Atkins captured this Hyundai at Mallory Park recently



An unusual line! David Harbey's extra shot from Mallory Park



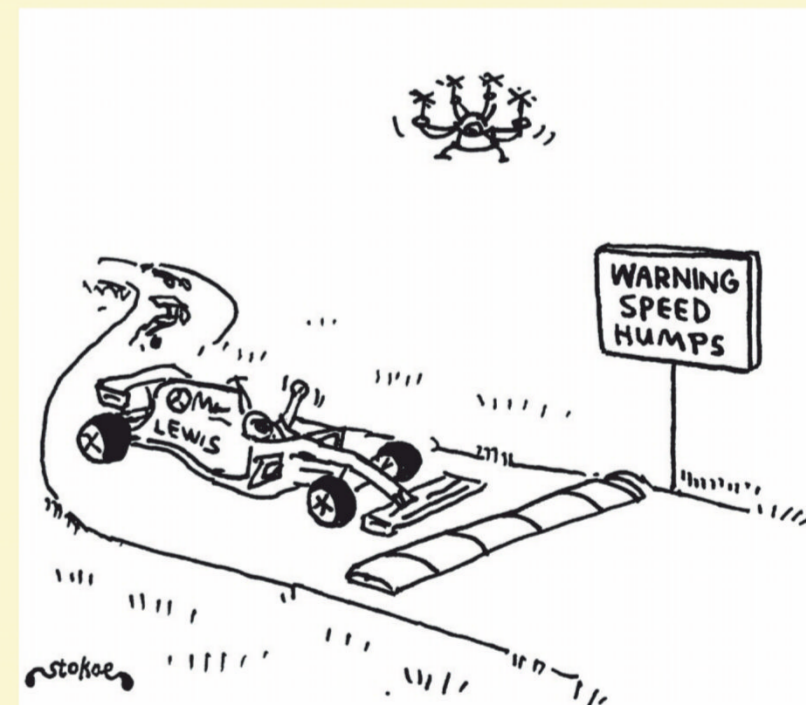
Rod Birley in full flight at Mallory, taken by Richard Salisbury



Hard-trying competitor on the epic LeJog, by Chris Noble

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"Toto, it's Max Verstappen who gives me the hump!"

GOT AN OPINION?

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TV GUIDE

The famous Dakar Rally began last weekend as two-time Formula 1 world champion Fernando Alonso got his first taste of the event, as fellow Toyota driver Nasser Al-Attiyah attempted to claim back-to-back Dakars and his fourth in total.

You can watch daily

highlights on Eurosport 2 throughout the week.

If you're in the need for more off-road action then fear not, as there is a review of the best moments from the 2019 World Rally Championship as Ott Tanak swept all before him to claim his maiden title in the series (Wednesday,

1715-1815hrs, BT Sport 3).

And for some circuit action, catch-up on the first two rounds of the 2019-20 Formula E season from Saudi Arabia as Brit Alex Sims took his maiden win in the category and with it the lead in the standings (Thursday, 0830-0930hrs, Eurosport 2).



Fernando Alonso made his debut on the Dakar Rally this year

TV DOCUMENTARY **SHELBY AMERICAN** BY MATT KEW

While making the 2016 documentary *The 24 Hour War* – a Netflix title on the Ford versus Ferrari battle at Le Mans during the 1960s – directors Adam Carolla and Nate Adams were faced with something akin to an embarrassment of riches.

The more research compiled and the more interviews conducted, it became clear that Carroll Shelby's story was worthy of its own standalone two-hour film.

That means, alongside the recent Hollywood blockbuster release of what was called *Le Mans '66* in the UK, Netflix subscribers can now indulge in the outstanding biopic *Shelby American*.

Whether it's because of his trademark chicken farmer overalls that paid homage to his rural roots, winning Le Mans as a driver in 1959, or the Cobra's and Ford GT40's countless successes, Shelby has long been thought of as an automotive hero. This documentary aptly and engagingly captures exactly why.

Viewers are thrust into his 24-hour French enduro success



Shelby American on Netflix

in the Aston Martin DBR1 alongside Roy Salvadori, against the backdrop of Shelby's genetic heart condition – which requires the consumption of nitroglycerin pills.

He endured a difficult start in life, growing up in the Great Depression and then enlisting during the Second World War, where he trained other pilots. As those that knew Shelby say, he always held a love of speed.

After the conflict, Shelby began racing MGs, Jaguar XKs and Allards as his chicken farm

began to thrive. But over two days he lost 20,000 birds to illness and was nigh-on bankrupt. The perilous Carrera Panamericana road race in Mexico looked like it offered a possible reprieve with its immense prize money, but he crashed his Austin-Healey and was thrown from the car.

Not deterred by his broken arm, Shelby continued to race with his cast taped to the wheel and then moved to Europe to learn how the likes of Ferrari and Maserati built their cars. It was after starting his race school at Riverside that things took shape and he hired the master mechanic that was Phil Remington. Told he only had five years to live owing to his ailing heart, Shelby decided to make hay and build his perfect car – the Cobra.

It dislodged the Chevrolet Corvette as America's finest on the race track and then, in Daytona Coupe trim, found another 25mph and 3.5 seconds per lap. The revised car would win Shelby the 1965 sports car manufacturers championship, giving Carroll his first piece of revenge against Enzo Ferrari,

who had dismissed him for his blue-collar beginnings.

Naturally, given Carolla's and Adams' repertoire, the development and success of the Ford GT40, MkII and MkIV receive extensive coverage in the documentary. Highlights include the Sebring 12 Hours in 1965, where Remington ended up drilling holes in the floors of his cars to drain the water and mechanics had to sit on tyres to prevent them floating away after biblical rainfall.

There's also greater context given to Ford's instructions to slow Ken Miles down in 1966, as executives wanted the story to be solely focused on the GT's triumph – not the first driver in history to win Daytona, Sebring and Le Mans, sportscar racing's triple crown, in the same season.

Shelby is now dead, but his quotes are interspersed throughout this all-star interviewee ensemble – including his lasting "guilt" that Miles didn't win and that "I've never had a loss hit me as hard as when we lost Ken".

After the success of the

Ford GT programme, Shelby entered something of a barren period. He took up a deal to run the Toyota race cars after the growth of the Sports Car Club of America, but the Peter Brock-led Datsuns annihilated the opposition and led to Toyota pulling the plug.

Amid the following oil crisis and emissions scrutiny, Shelby fell away from motorsport and instead indulged in chilli cooking. A heart transplant in the 1990s gave him a second wind and he was then instrumental in the Chrysler-led Viper and the financially-ruinous Shelby Series 1. But he enjoyed the twilight of his life back at Ford until he died in 2012. *Shelby American* is a beautiful racing documentary that's packed with archive footage. It really is one of motorsport's best biopics and above all else the interviewee line-up is staggering.

Of course, though, Shelby is the star of it, which Carolla and Adams are keen to impress: the final frames are of an 85-year-old Shelby donutting a Cobra. What a film, what a bloke.

NEXT WEEK

OUT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL SHOW 2020 REVIEW

THE CARS, THE STARS AND ALL THE NEWS FROM THE ANNUAL SHOWCASE

PLUS: ALL THE USUAL NEWS, VIEWS AND REPORTS

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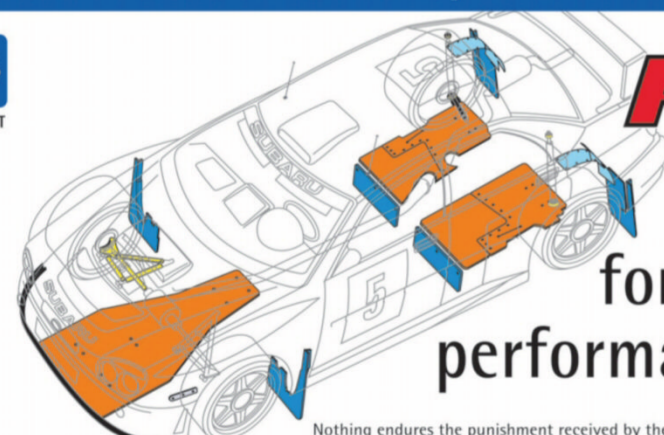
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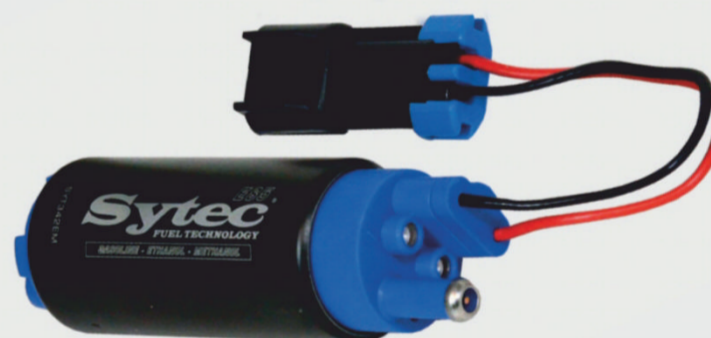
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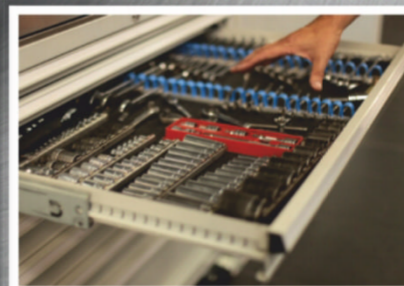
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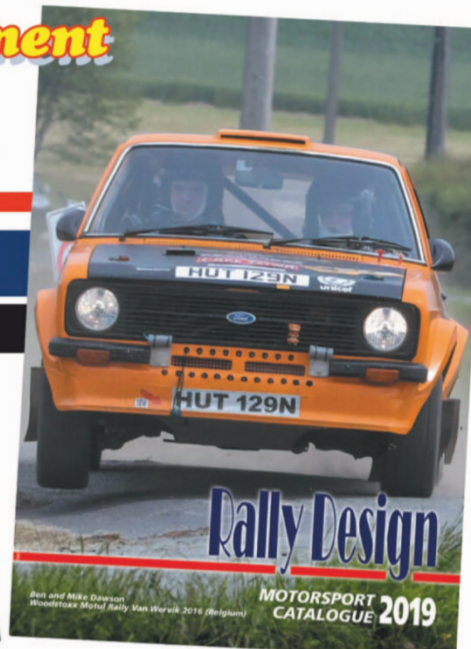
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TRANSMISSION PARTS, BLACKLINE

4-speed bearing type gearlever	£38.50	£46.20
5-speed bearing type gearlever	£40.50	£48.60
5-speed quickshift conversion kit	£13.50	£16.20
M10 ally 'Pro' gearknob	£14.90	£17.88
M10 white or black nylon gearknob	£12.50	£15.00
Propshaft, Type 9 - English or Atlas axle	£89.50	£107.40



Mk2 Front Wing £72.10 £86.52

Mk1 Mexico front wing, LH or RH	each	£265.22	£318.27
Mk2 front wing, LH or RH, std.	each	£72.10	£86.52
Mk2 front wing, LH or RH, RS2000	each	£175.00	£210.00

Full listing of all Mk1 and Mk2 body panels on our website

www.rallydesign.co.uk



X-Flow ally radiator £179.60 £215.52

X-Flow ally radiator	£179.60	£215.52
RS2000 (Pinto) ally radiator	£179.60	£215.52
13/235 oil cooler	£50.10	£60.12

Lockable fuel filler cap assembly £49.50 £59.40

Silicone hose kit, Mexico or RS2000 (available blue, black or red) £62.34 £74.81



WCP Interrupter pump £29.00 £34.80

WCP interrupter fuel pump		£29.00	£34.80
WCP solid state fuel pump		£19.00	£22.80
WCP injection fuel pump	from	£32.19	£38.63
Bonnet pin kits, stainless		£5.00	£6.00
Bonnet pin kits, alloy		£7.00	£8.40
Aerocatch	from	£31.00	£37.20
Avanti map light	from	£19.50	£23.40
Manifold wrap, 2" x 15 metres (50ft), Vermiculite		£29.60	£35.52
Roll cage padding, 3ft, B1 fire rating		£6.00	£7.20

M16 calipers to fit standard discs, pair	£89.00	£106.80
M16 calipers to fit vented discs (no spacers needed), pair	£98.50	£118.20
M16 caliper, shouldered bolts, set of 4	£10.99	£13.19
Group 1 vented discs (247x20), pair	£39.00	£46.80

M16 Calipers from £89.00 £106.80

4.25 ltr FIA plumbed-in fire system, full installation kit, FIA homologation EX 037.13 Kit £159.80 £191.76

Escort Laminated & Heated Screens

Escort Mk1 front laminated screen (incl. rubber)	£69.50	£83.40
Escort Mk2 front laminated screen (incl. rubber)	£69.50	£83.40
Escort Mk1 front heated laminated screen (incl. rubber)	£198.60	£238.32
Escort Mk2 front heated laminated screen (incl. rubber)	£198.60	£238.32
Escort Mk1 front screen rubber	£24.92	£29.90
Escort Mk1 rear screen rubber	£23.92	£28.70
Escort Mk2 front screen rubber	£29.08	£34.90
Escort Mk2 rear screen rubber	£29.08	£34.90
Laser windscreen chip repair kit	£13.90	£16.68
14" or 17" rear view mirror	£14.90	£17.88

Escort Mk2 Rubber Parts

Bonnet bump stop	pair	£6.20	£7.44
Bonnet rail bump stop, set of 4		£10.90	£13.08
Bonnet bump stop, centre-rear		£5.10	£6.12
Wiring loop bulkhead grommet		£6.90	£8.28
Bonnet release cable grommet		£5.20	£6.24
Steering column bulkhead grommet		£7.20	£8.64
Handbrake backplate dust boots	pair	£7.10	£8.52
Spedo cable bulkhead grommet		£5.20	£6.24
Throttle pedal pad		£5.20	£6.24
Shock and clutch pedal pads	pair	£8.00	£9.60
Shock absorber top caps	pair	£13.90	£16.68
Rear bumper side plugs, set of 4		£9.90	£11.88
Oil line bulkhead grommet		£5.10	£6.12
Brake servo rod bellows		£5.20	£6.24

PLEASE NOTE: All prices in Red are EXCLUSIVE OF VAT

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