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MEEKE'S NEW CHALLENGE
P24

SEASON GUIDE
P27

TOIVONEN'S FINAL WIN
P28



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IN THIS ISSUE

"I hope positive steps have been taken"

GOFF GETS PLUM WSR BMW DRIVE



P6

WRC PREVIEW

- RUNNERS AND RIDERS ■ MEEKE'S CITROEN PLAN
- SEASON GUIDE ■ TOIVONEN'S LAST WIN



P22

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL



P20

Historic race and rally news	13	Karting	32
Autosport Show highlights	20	Sporting Scene	33
WRC preview: The teams	22	Letters/Comment/What's On	34
WRC preview: Meeke	24	Classifieds	36
WRC preview: Events and info	27	Wanted: New shoes please... we've worn through ours at the NEC. Apply: MN	
WRC preview: 1986 Monte	28		
Dakar Rally report	30		
Rally reports	31		



FOR MOTORSPORT NEWS STAFF CONTACT DETAILS PLEASE SEE P35

VW WRC boss switches to McLaren, but

CAPITO: MOVE NOT A SIGN OF VW PULLOUT



Capito has dominated the WRC with Volkswagen and Ogier (left) for the last three years

By David Evans

Volkswagen Motorsport director Jost Capito has vehemently denied his move to McLaren has anything to do with the German firm's current road car crisis.

Capito, 57, will join the Woking team as chief executive officer as soon as a suitable replacement can be found at Volkswagen. The German told *Motorsport News* his decision to leave the squad he has built into a dominant force in the World Rally Championship was the hardest of his career.

"It's a big challenge, but that's me, I am always interested

in a challenge," he said.

"I heard that people are talking about different reasons for me taking this new job, but I can tell you here and now for sure: there is nothing wrong with Volkswagen Motorsport. My decision to move is because of the challenge, this is not a situation which has come around in the last three months since the diesel [emissions] issue. I first talked [to McLaren] about the possibility for this in the early summer.

"Volkswagen's programme in the WRC is safe and we need success on this side more than ever right now. Of course, we try to save some budget, but the commitment is the same."

The end of last season was rife with speculation regarding Volkswagen's future in rallying. Fellow Volkswagen Group brands Audi and Porsche have lost a car each from this year's Le Mans entry list in an effort to save money in the wake of the emissions scandal. Volkswagen Motorsport is understood to have lost 30 per cent of its budget for this year, but that will be absorbed

in a downscaling of the team's on-event hospitality on European rounds. Three Polo R WRCs – for Sebastien Ogier, Jari-Matti Latvala and Andreas Mikkelsen – will start every one of the 14 WRC rounds this year.

There are also concerns due to the timing of Capito's exit from Ford in 2012. He left the role of director of motorsport shortly before Ford announced its departure from the World Rally Championship.

Despite last week's announcement, Capito said he doesn't expect to be vacating his Volkswagen office any time soon: "We wanted to make the announcement, to get the news out there, so that we could stop the rumours. Now the process has to start to try to find somebody to replace me. I don't know how long that will take, but until that is done and I am happy with the way that's done, I won't be going anywhere. I will be here for the next three or four rallies, it could be longer – I don't know.

"For now it's business as usual with Volkswagen. You know, it's



Polos are set to stay in WRC

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com and LAT

says Polo effort is safe



kind of like with the children. You bring up your children and, at some stage, they have to leave the home and go on their own. As a parent, you want to make sure the children are well prepared for what is coming and that's what I want to do with Volkswagen."

McLaren suffered a disastrous 2015 campaign in its first year with returning engine supplier Honda, only beating Marussia in the Constructors' table. Asked if he thought it was a risk swapping the super-successful WRC outfit for the troubled Formula 1 team, Capito said: "It's a risk, but I'm used to that. It was a risk when I left Ford to go to Volkswagen in 2012. Looking back to that time, it was all good with Ford. We had the ST, the race cars and I had a great job – but Volkswagen was a challenge."

"It was a completely new job when I went to Volkswagen, I had to put the place in the sat-nav, I had no idea where I was going and I didn't know any of the people who worked there. And it will be the same when I go to McLaren. "It was a very difficult decision

to take. This was the most difficult [decision] in my career and it will be the biggest challenge in my career. But it's McLaren."

Capito, who replaces Jonathan Neale at McLaren, is known in the F1 paddock. He worked as chief operating officer at Sauber in the 1990s and was in charge of Ford's global motorsport programme when the Blue Oval supplied Jordan with engines.

"Anybody who works in our industry knows that F1 is about McLaren and it's about Ferrari, and the chance to run the McLaren team is not one that you can say no to," he added. "For people who live in our world, it would be impossible to say no to this. McLaren deserves to be in a better position than it is right now."

Capito has moved through all aspects of motorsport and with different manufacturers, including spells at Porsche and BMW.

"You know, I am a little bit like a gypsy," he said. "I have been around many different formula in motorsport. But one thing is

sure, it is never easy to win. This doesn't change whatever you are doing – the challenge is to keep the team motivated and ready to win."

"This week, we start in Monte Carlo looking for a fourth title with Volkswagen and that will be just as tough – if not tougher – than the ones we have won before. When you are the hunted, it is never easy. We start from scratch again this week."

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson paid tribute to Capito and the six world titles he has won in the last three years.

"He'll be missed," said Wilson, who worked with Capito – and won two world titles with him – when Ford was involved in the WRC. "It was great to work with him and to fight against him. What I'm also pleased with is that, once again, the World Rally Championship gets recognition as Formula 1 turns to us for its solutions."

Capito follows David Richards and Jean Todt from team management in the WRC to the F1 paddock.

CAPITO'S CAREER



Capito was Porsche's head of motorsport organisation from 1989 until 1996



Between October 1998 and September 2001, he was COO at Sauber



As Ford motorsport director, Capito lifted the 2006 WRC manufacturers' crown...



...before doubling up with more Focus success the following season. He left Ford in 2012



Capito joins McLaren F1 squad after its troubled first season back with Honda

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

Manor passes test

Manor's new Formula 1 car has passed its final crash test at the first attempt. The Banbury-based team is now ready to test its first new car since 2014, after racing a modified year-old car last season. The 2016 car features a current-spec Mercedes engine and the team has been aided by a technical partnership with Williams. The team has also hired ex-Ferrari designer Nikolas Tombazis as its chief aerodynamicist.

No Aston F1, yet

A deal for the Aston Martin name to feature in F1 via a tie-up with the Force India team has been put on hold. A deal to rename the outfit Aston Martin Racing is now unlikely to happen until 2017. "It's flattering for a company like Aston to be talking to Force India, to want to partner with us and come into Formula 1, but the story isn't final there yet," said the team's chief operating officer Otmar Szafnauer. "We're still in communication with them all the time, and definitely it [the deal] is not dead."

In-season testing

Silverstone and Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya are set to each host a two-day mid-season F1 test this year. The planned tests will take place the week after grands prix at those venues, so the Spanish test will be on May 17/18 and the British one on July 12/13. This year's sporting regulations limit teams to four days of in-season testing and each must allocate at least two of these days for young drivers.

Button's helmet

Jenson Button took to Twitter to decide his helmet design for this season. He created a poll for fans to decide between his traditional Union flag helmet from 2013, or the mainly white and red design he used last year. Nearly 36,500 people voted and 71 per cent favoured Button's classic design.

OBITUARY

Mike Salmon 1933-2016

Former Le Mans racer Mike Salmon has died aged 82.

He started the 24-hour race 13 times during his career, achieving a best result of fifth in 1963, sharing a Ferrari 330LMB with Jack Sears.

The first of Salmon's Le Mans races was in 1962 with his own Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato. He also raced a Ford GT40, Aston Martin V8 and a Ferrari 512BB in the French enduro.

Salmon's career as an amateur driver spanned six decades and included a British Touring Car Championship race victory in 1965 in a Ford Mustang at Snetterton. He was still competing into his 70s.

Salmon was also a sales director at Maranello Concessionaires before setting up a dealership in Jersey focusing on Ferraris and Alfa Romeos.

TODT WANTS ENGINE CHANGE

Meetings this week to find cost-cutting solutions for F1



F1 cars will be louder in 2016

By Rob Ladbrook

FIA president Jean Todt is expecting positive news of the future of Formula 1 engines this week after holding crunch talks with motor manufacturers.

Todt was due to meet with F1 manufacturers Mercedes, Renault and Ferrari on Monday and Tuesday of this week as *Motorsport News* closed for press. The meeting represented the deadline for the brands to put forward new solutions to tackle the cost, supply and performance of the current power units going forward.

The current engines are believed to cost in the region of 20million euro (£15million) per season and, since the established manufacturers voted down the FIA and Bernie Ecclestone's suggestions of bringing in a budget unit as an alternative, Todt set the current suppliers the task of finding ways to change things.

"I want to put people in front of their responsibility," said Todt at last week's Autosport International Show. "I asked engine manufacturers to come back on some proposals to address some of my concerns over the powertrain. I am unsatisfied with the situation for clear reasons, we will see what will be the next steps.

"Let's try and be optimistic and hope we are discussing with sensible people

who understand the problem and who participate to solve the problem. I hope positive steps have been taken."

More noise

One, smaller area of Todt's concern is with the noise of the current V6 power units.

Last year, the World Motor Sport Council approved changes to the exhaust system to add a separate exhaust wastegate tailpipe to duct gases and create extra volume.

Williams' Pat Symonds said he hoped cars would be up to 25 per cent louder this year.

"In the past everyone has run wastegate pipes into the main [exhaust] tailpipe of the engine but we have to separate them this year," he said. "Before, we had a pipe joining the turbo wastegate to the main exhaust, which acted like a silencer. Getting rid of that will make it louder.

"With the wastegate closed you'll perceive it at around 14 per cent louder; but with it open it'll actually be 20-25 per cent louder, so quite significant.

"We haven't heard the cars on circuit yet, but I think we may hear a few of the old signature noises from the turbos, the

whistles and the pops – but we will have to wait and see."

New rules doubt

Another area of discussion will centre on the new technical rules for 2017.

The sport's heads want to make cars up to five seconds per lap faster by adding bigger tyres, more power and different aerodynamics.

However, in the last eight months since the plans were tabled, many of the radical changes have reduced to make them more feasible.

Symonds added: "We now have a car that is two metres wide and has larger tyres – 300mm front, 400mm rear – it has an attractive look to it but the bodywork was meant to be 1800mm and has come down to 1400mm, which is what we have now.

"It was going to have a very big diffuser, but that has been made smaller and is basically the same as now. In fact the underbody of the car is very similar.

"We still have more freedom around the front bargeboard area, but it's a bit of a halfway house from the original proposal."

Todt is in talks with engine makers



Wolff launches scheme to help women into racing

Former Williams Formula 1 test driver Susie Wolff has launched the Dare To Be Different initiative that aims to boost female participation in motorsport.

Wolff retired from racing after last year's Race of Champions but has now set up this scheme with the UK's governing body, the Motor Sports Association.

It encourages women to become involved in all aspects of the sport and not just driving.

Dare To Be Different will run five events this year that will act as motorsport taster sessions.

"When I decided to hang up my helmet it was very clear that I wanted to give something back," Wolff said.

"I wanted to make sure that I could pass on everything I'd learned because many people saw me as a role model, as a trailblazer, but the truth was I was just a driver trying to make it to the top of my sport.

"But if my story inspired others then I thought to myself, 'OK I have to do something with that', that's where the idea of Dare To Be Different was born.

"We just want to open up the world of motorsport and show that it's not quite as male dominated as it once was and there are many opportunities out there."

Briton King secures GP2 return with top team

Manor Formula 1 test driver Jordan King will remain with Racing Engineering in GP2 this year.

The 21-year-old Briton finished 12th in the standings in his first season in the category in 2015, taking a best result of second at Spa.

"I've kept the continuity with the same team, so there aren't any excuses," he said. "The pressure is high, but I feel confident I can do it."

King added that he's unsure of what his exact role will be with Manor this year, having spent three days testing with the team in the post-season test in Abu Dhabi at the end of last year.

● Meanwhile, ART Grand Prix has announced that Sergey Sirotkin will join the team this year. The Russian finished third in the series last year with Rapax.



King is with Racing Engineering

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HUFF JOINS HONDA IN WTCC SHAKE-UP

Former World Touring Car champion Rob Huff will switch to Honda for this season, after leaving Lada.

The 36-year-old Briton spent two years with the Russian manufacturer, finishing 10th in the standings each year.

He won the title with Chevrolet in 2012, after spending eight seasons with the team, and will now join former Formula 1 driver Tiago Monteiro and Norbert Michelisz in an expanded three-car works Honda line-up.

Huff replaces 2009 champion Gabriele Tarquini in the team, despite the Italian finishing two places higher in the standings than Monteiro.

Huff first sampled a Honda Civic in Macau last year when he contested the TCR season finale.

"Over the past few seasons, I've become very used to seeing the Civic WTCCs in front of me, so it's terrific to have the

chance to race one this year," Huff said.

"I won't be happy to finish my career as only a one-time world champion, and there's a tremendous opportunity with Honda and JAS to correct that statistic.

"I traced a JAS-built Civic TCR at Macau last year and it was a very well-built and fast machine, so that gives me plenty of confidence that we'll have a strong season. I can't wait to start testing."

Huff had previously said that Citroen's dominance of the category in recent years has been detrimental to the series but added that Volvo joining the championship for 2016 should help make a more exciting battle behind the Citroens.

"As much as we needed Citroen to come, we need them to leave [2016 will be Citroen's final year] because they're just too strong for anyone and the problem is that ultimately they have done the most amazing job," he said last month.



Huff has left Lada Sport to join Honda for the 2016 WTCC campaign



Bell and team-mates were denied a podium finish in the final corner last season

Briton Bell rejoins Bentley team for Bathurst attack

British GT ace Matt Bell will return to the factory Bentley Motorsport team for this year's Bathurst 12 Hours in Australia.

Newcastle-born Bell, the younger brother of Le Mans star Rob, will share a Continental GT3 with factory drivers Steven Kane and Guy Smith to form an all-British trio for the February 7 event.

Bell made his debut at the Mount Panorama circuit last year and finished fourth after a late tangle with an Aston Martin in the final

corner cost the crew a podium.

"We're going back to win this year," said Bell. "We almost achieved it last year, but now we have the bit between our teeth to get back there and take it this year.

"Last year was my first visit to Bathurst. The combination of super fast and super tricky corners make for an exhilarating lap.

"At the top of the mountain section you have these fourth- and fifth-gear corners and there is no margin for error."

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



Jack Harvey is still aiming to seal an IndyCar drive for 2016 despite missing out on the Schmidt Peterson Motorsports seat that went to Mikhail Aleshin. The Briton, who has finished runner-up in Indy Lights for the last two years, is in talks with Bryan Herta Autosport and Dale Coyne Racing. Harvey said that if a deal doesn't materialise he could make the switch to sportscars...

British sportscar driver Johnny Mowlem will contest the full IMSA SportsCar Championship season this year in the Prototype Challenge class. He will share a BAR1 Motorsports Oreca-Chevrolet FLM09 with Matt McMurry... Toyota's new TSO50 HYBRID World Endurance Championship car ran for the first time at Aragon last week. The new LMP1 machine's first run "went well" according to a Toyota

spokesman, but no further information was given. The full technical details for the new car will not be released until a formal launch in March... Former Brabham Formula 1 designer Sergio Rinland has become a technical advisor to the project to revive the team. Rinland replaced Gordon Murray as the team's chief designer in 1986 and will now assist with the plan for Project Brabham to race in sportscars...



Harvey in IndyCar talks



WRT Audi R8 triumphed

Audi tops Dubai 24 Hours pack

The Team WRT Audi of Laurens Vanthoor, Michael Meadows, Stuart Leonard and Alain Ferte won an eventful Dubai 24 Hours last weekend.

The quartet had to fight back from being one lap down after losing three minutes while queuing for fuel early on, but benefited from a host of problems for their rivals.

Scuderia Praha's Ferrari 458 crashed with a slower Ginetta when in contention, while the Land Motorsport Audi built a comfortable lead until running out of fuel and then suffering a gearbox fault.

The most remarkable performance of the weekend went to the Black Falcon mechanics. They worked through the night to prepare last year's race-winning chassis, which had been on display after a fire for the squad's new Mercedes SLS AMG in practice.

Oli Webb, Adam Christodoulou, Abdulaziz al Faisal, Oliver Morley and Frank Montecalvo stormed through the field from 98th, and last, on the grid to finish an incredible second.

Century takes debut enduro win in Dubai

British GT squad Century Motorsport triumphed on its 24-hour racing debut, winning the GT4 class of the Dubai 24 Hours.

Century head Nathan Freke shared the team's Ginetta G55 GT4 with British GT team-mate Anna Walewska, Tom Oliphant and Aleksander Schjerpen. The crew qualified second in class before hitting the front during the race. They had to contend with a fuel tank issue and a brake pad failure in the 18th hour, but held on to win and finish 24th overall.

"I'm delighted, and it's even more special as it's our first attempt at a 24-hour race," said Freke. "The car ran faultlessly, even though we had to drive hard to make up some lost time. It's a dream come true."

Ginetta also took second in the class with Colin White, Matt Nicoll-Jones, Stephen Fresle and Hunter Abbott aboard the CWS G55 GT4. The second Century car of Ollie Jackson, David Pattison, Ruben Anakhayan and Jake Rattenbury finished seventh in class after a collision.

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

IN BRIEF

M3 Cup interest

There has been a significant amount of interest in the 750 Motor Club's new M3 Cup series, with at least 19 cars set to take part in its inaugural season this year. "It's the right car at the right time," said the club's competition manager Giles Groombridge. "It's also an iconic car and you don't have to buy lots of expensive parts for it!"

Butel returns

MSA Formula driver Jack Butel will return to the series with JHR Developments this year. He had a difficult year in the series in 2015, switching from SWB Motorsport to JHR part way through the season. "I'm so glad that I'm racing with JHR," he said. "It's an amazing team and I'm happy to do another year with them. Because I only joined JHR halfway through last year we didn't really get to grips setting up the car to my specifications, but now we can hit the ground running in 2016."

Macmillan GT4

New squad Macmillan Racing is aiming to enter British GT this year with an Aston Martin Vantage GT4. The team has been founded by David Macmillan, Richard Dencer and commercial partner Simon Sanderson. The trio share a vision of helping to develop young talent along the road to eventually running cars at Le Mans in 2019. Former Indy Lights winner and IndyCar racer Dillon Battistini will be helping with driver development.

GOFF GETS PRIAULX'S SEAT AT WSR FOR 2016 BTCC ATTACK

Race winner swaps to BMW 125i M Sport

Goff will take over Priaulx's BMW



Goff: ready for move

By Matt James

Jack Goff will switch from the factory MG team to race a WSR BMW 125i M Sport in the 2016 British Touring Car Championship.

Goff has spent three seasons in the BTCC, each in a front-wheel-drive car, but believes he will have no trouble adapting to WSR's rear-wheel-drive machine. He

was part of the factory MG team last season, and took the MG6 to his first BTCC victory at Snetterton in August.

Goff will drive the IHG-backed machine used in 2015 by Andy Priaulx. "I have plenty of data to study and I will have quite a lot of test days before the season, which is something I haven't had before," said the 24-year-old. "I have the onboard videos to look at from last

year too - but a car is just a car. I think I should fit in fine."

Goff said the opportunity to link up with WSR and BMW was unmissable. He added: "BMW is a great brand and WSR is a fantastic team. The deal came together quite quickly and I jumped at it. The combination is so tempting, and it is a chance to race at the front of the grid."

Goff is likely to join WSR's 2015 drivers

Rob Collard and Sam Tordoff in the team. WSR boss Dick Bennetts said: "We are very excited with IHG Rewards Club's decision to take Jack onboard, as we have watched him develop into a top BTCC driver in the last couple of years.

"The BTCC is shaping up for another great season. With Jack joining WSR it will further strengthen our strong line-up in our BMW 125i M Sports."

Rob Austin signs up to lead Handy Motorsport team's BTCC attack

Team boss Simon Belcher says signing Rob Austin up to lead the Handy Motorsport British Touring Car Championship team this season is another building block in the outfit's long term future in the top flight.

Austin has moved from his own Rob Austin Racing squad to join up with Belcher and race a freshly built Toyota Avensis for the 2016 campaign.

Austin will move his crew from Rob Austin Racing to Handy and the operation will assisted

technically by Speedworks Motorsport, as has happened for the last two seasons.

"I'm really excited to be joining forces with Handy Motorsport," said Austin. "Through this deal we're combining the best bits of both teams - I will have my regular guys working on the cars and I will have my engineer from 2015, Matt Taylor.

"We should be able to do a really good job with the new Toyota and spring some surprises.

"There will be some adapting

back to front-wheel drive but, as Colin Turkington [two-time BTCC champion] has proved, if you can drive you can drive. This really is a perfect opportunity."

Belcher said: "By signing Rob, this is another signal of intent for the team. We are here for the long term and we have a five-year plan to take us to the next level. There are a lot of shared visions between Rob and Handy Motorsport. By aligning ourselves together, we can get there faster."



Austin has moved across to Handy team

Barnicoat and Newey move to F3

Brits Ben Barnicoat and Harrison Newey have both secured their places on the grid for this year's FIA Formula 3 European Championship.

Barnicoat has signed for the returning Hitech Grand Prix team for his maiden F3 campaign. The Racing Steps Foundation-backed man will join F3 race winner George Russell and Nikita Mazepin at the squad.

"When I did my first test at Jerez in December, I was impressed with the team before I even got in the car," said Barnicoat, who was fourth in the FR Eurocup points with Fortec last term. "They're professional and their set-up is amazing - you get the real sense that they're here to win.

"The staff they've recruited are impressive [including former Prema Powerteam engineer John McGill] and John

was a key factor because he has a relationship with Racing Steps.

"I've known George since we started karting in Cadets and we've been fighting each other all the way through. We'll be pushing each other all the way, which is good."

Newey, the son of Red Bull Racing aero guru Adrian, has signed with Van Amersfoort Racing. Newey was a race winner in the BRDC Formula 4 Championship last year, finishing second in the championship.

"The team will be the ideal grounding for me to gain as much experience as possible with a new car and mostly new tracks," said the 17-year-old.

Newey will line up alongside fellow Briton Callum Hott at Van Amersfoort. Hott has switched from Carlin to VAR for his second Euro F3 campaign.

McNish protege Martin joins Fortec for MSA Formula campaign

Reigning Formula Kart Stars champion Ross Martin will race for Fortec in MSA Formula this year.

The Allan McNish protege won a fully-funded drive in the series as a prize for claiming the Formula One Management-backed karting title.

The Scot has completed a significant amount of testing

for the team at the end of last year and was quickly on the pace. "I'm looking forward to working with Fortec, it is a championship-winning team," said Martin. "The test in Valencia was a great way to get to know everyone."

He added that the prize drive to compete in MSA Formula is a great opportunity.

"There's no other thing like it at any level in British motorsport," Martin said. "The MSA and Ford have put together a great championship with phenomenal drivers."

Martin becomes the second driver confirmed as part of Fortec's line-up, with Racing Steps Foundation-backed Alex Quinn already announced.



McNish and Martin (right) ready for cars

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'The G57 will be faster than LMP2'
Ginetta's new car, p11



Photos: Jakob Ebrej



New Arrinera GT4 could run in UK

POLISH SQUAD AIMS FOR BRITISH GT ENTRY

Poland's first ever racing car has been launched and it could compete in British GT as soon as the end of this year.

The Arrinera Hussarya GT4 features a 6.2-litre centrally located V8 engine, capable of producing up to 650bhp. The rear-wheel-drive car's body is made entirely from carbonfibre and weighs 1250kg.

The car's testing programme is now set to begin, and it is planned to be ready to race by the end of this year. Alongside

the 24H Series, British GT is a potential category for the car to run in.

"British GT is a possibility," said Arrinera's CEO Greg Pekala, who has previously helped develop the Lotus Evora GT4 and has also worked with Mosler in the category. "I've worked in the championship and I know a lot of people there. In Europe, I think it's the best national GT series so it's a good place to be.

"We now have a big testing

programme planned and the aim is to do a few races [possibly in British GT] at the end of this year and then do a full season next year."

Pekala describes the car as being "modern and very up-to-date". It features a number of bespoke parts, including its push-rod suspension.

"I'm very pleased with the car," added Pekala. "Now we can improve it over the next few months [based on the testing]."

Arrinera has signed two

young Polish drivers as brand ambassadors. Maciej Dreszer is a race winner in VLN, while Gosia Rdest contested the 2013 BRDC Formula 4 season, finishing 18th in the points in her maiden year in cars.

"I would love it to race in the British GT Championship," said Rdest. "British GT is a great place to test the car because of the level of the teams, level of the championship and level of the drivers as well."



BGT has 32 entries

British GT sells out 2016 grid in record time

This year's British GT Championship has sold out of grid slots, three months before the start of the 2016 campaign.

Last week's Autosport Show brought a raft of announcements from teams and drivers and British GT manager Benjamin Franassovici confirmed that 32 paid entries have been received.

British GT organisers are now compiling a reserve entries list, and can cater for additional cars at circuits with a higher grid

capacity, such as Silverstone GP or Donington Park.

Franassovici said: "This is probably the earliest we've sold out. It seems we fill up at least two weeks earlier every year."

"British GT has a lot of appeal and momentum and the growth of GT4 has been very noticeable.

"The entry is split 50-50 between GT3 and GT4, so it will be the largest GT4 grid ever. We'll try our best to accommodate more teams as and when we can."

Tolman signs Ginetta man for British GT

Tolman Motorsport has completed its British GT line-up by signing Ginetta factory racer Mike Simpson and Ian Stinton to crew its second car.

Tolman will strengthen its links with the Leeds marque by running two factory assisted G55 GT3 machines this year. It will field long-term works driver Simpson and Stinton alongside GT4 graduates Luke Davenport and David Pattison in its other G55.

Simpson, who scored the G55 GT3's maiden podium finish at Oulton Park last year when sharing with Steve Tandy, said: "Tolman has a great track record with Ginettas so it's going to be an exciting year with them as our factory backed team."

Team head Chris Tolman added: "Factory backing from Ginetta is quite a coup for my small team and the pressure is now on for us to make all this work."

Stratton returns with two Lotus Evora GT4s

Stratton Motorsport will run at least two Lotus Evoras in British GT this year in partnership with UltraTek Racing, with James Nash again spearheading the team.

Former touring car race winner Nash will again partner Richard Taffinder in one of the GT4 cars, while Tim Eakin will drive another alongside Martin Plowman – who contested the opening round with the team last year.

Taffinder and Nash finished 18th and 19th in the class standings in 2016. "Last year was a good learning curve with the



Nash will lead Evora team

car and we learned a lot," said Stratton boss Roger Bennington. "We've now got high hopes as we've got consistency."

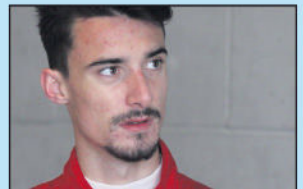
Stratton is still finalising its full line-up and could run another Evora and Aston Martin Vantages in the GT4 class.

Single-seater man Moore gets McLaren gig

Former BRDC Formula 4 star Struan Moore will move into GT racing this year after securing a place on the McLaren GT Driver Academy scheme.

Moore, 20, will handle a McLaren 650S GT3 in a European series alongside fellow newcomer Alex Fontana from GP3, and McLaren scheme returnee Andrew Watson.

While Moore's exact campaign has yet to be determined, McLaren has a history of running its young drivers in Britain. It placed Northern Irishman Watson and Scotsman Ross Wylie in British GT with the Von Ryan Racing team last year.



Moore joins GT Academy

Moore was fifth in BRDC F4 in 2014 before contesting the Japanese F3 Championship last year.

McLaren GT boss Andrew Kirkaldy said: "Despite being young, drivers hungry for a new challenge are moving from single-seaters with a wealth of experience and a very high level of skill."

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMIES

"This will help the sport be inclusive"



Wolff was at the Autosport International Show

It was great to bump in to Susie Wolff at the Autosport International Show as our paths hadn't crossed that much since she was taking the very first steps on her motor racing path in Formula Ford and Formula Renault at the turn of the century.

Now she's retired from driving, her next project, as she was keen to tell me all about at the show, was the Dare To Be Different campaign that she is throwing her weight behind. She is fronting the scheme, backed by the national governing body, the Motor Sports Association, to promote women in motorsport.

This isn't just another campaign to find female racing stars. The premise of this scheme is to show younger females the opportunities that exist in motor racing across all areas of the sport: be that engineering, media, driving and within the industry.

The plan is to create an online community that will offer advice and support to girls who want to get involved in the sport, and there will be a series of seminars held throughout the United Kingdom for girls aged eight to 14 to highlight the opportunities to the next wave of talent.

Several high-profile females who have already made their names within the sport will be available to offer encouragement and support.

Wolff said: "Our main aim with Dare To Be Different is to drive female talent. This is an ambitious and long-term project that will build an online community of women from all over the world. It will connect them through a shared passion and empower them to become the next wave of role models, while also providing access to some of the most successful female names in the sport.

"Our UK events for young girls will boost awareness and demonstrate the varied and exciting areas of the sport – showing that they too can dare to be different."

Sadly, it is true that sexism does still exist within the male-dominated world that is motorsport – although those shackles are being gradually shaken off. A lot of people involved in motor racing are of a certain generation when this attitude was more prevalent but, with each passing season, fresh blood enters motor racing and the industry that surrounds it. It means those with a blinkered view are being slowly drowned out, which is a great thing.

Wolff's campaign is something that hasn't been tried before and that is a great reason people should get behind it. Anything that helps motor racing be more inclusive will have a beneficial impact at every level in the future.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

BMW entries

Organisers of the new BMW 330 Challenge are expecting an entry list of at least 20 cars for its inaugural season. BMW Race Days confirmed that 10 full sets of control parts have already been purchased, while more entries are on the horizon. The 330 Challenge uses the E46 330ci model and is designed as a step up from the successful BMW Compact Cup. Among the early entries is Compact Cup dominator Steve Roberts.

Radical award

Radical Cars took home the award for the best overall stand at last week's Autosport International Show. The British marque showed off its new Radical RXC GT3 and Spyder variants as well as its 1000th SR3 chassis and novice-focused SR1 Cup challenger.

Triple TVRs

Having won last year's TVR Challenge with Alex Champkin driving, the David Gerald Sports Car Team will defend its title with a three-car line up. Team principal Mike Luck heads the Chimera RV8 line-up and will be joined by former karting ace and Eurocar racer Rob Kerkhoven, who will be returning after a brief respite from racing. Novice racer Daniel Norman-Smith completes the line-up.

Will Palmer joins ART for Euro FRenault

McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Will Palmer will step up to the Formula Renault Eurocup this year with the ART Junior Team.

Palmer, who dominated the BRDC Formula 4 Championship last term, will contest the full Eurocup 2.0 contest as well as the Northern European Cup series with the French outfit.

The 18-year-old won 12 of the 24 F4 races he contested last season and made his Eurocup debut during the Silverstone event.

Palmer said: "I'm really looking forward to racing in Europe next year for the first time, especially in a series as competitive as the Eurocup."

"By combining a programme in Eurocup with one in NEC I will have the opportunity to learn a huge number of high-profile circuits in Europe, including Monaco, which will be an incredible track to race at."

"I have experience of working with ART from Silverstone last year and it's great to be with them. They have a long and successful history in the series and I am confident we can hit the ground running when the season gets underway."



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Fewkes is pleased

CLIO CUP TIES UP BTCC SUPPORT SLOT UNTIL '19

Tin-top class inks new deal to stay on lucrative TOCA package

By Stephen Lickorish

The Renault UK Clio Cup will remain part of the British Touring Car Championship support bill until at least the end of 2019 after signing a new three-year deal with BTCC organiser TOCA.

Renault UK's championships have a long association with the BTCC, appearing alongside it since TOCA took over the running of the series in 1992. Since then the Clio Cup has established itself as a major BTCC feeder category, with

half of the 2015 touring car grid having raced in Clios.

"This is good for Renault UK as it has been there with TOCA since it started," said championship manager Will Fewkes. "It's great to have the security of this deal for the teams, drivers and sponsors."

Renault UK communications director Jeremy Townsend said: "BTCC events are without question the only place we would wish to position the Clio Cup in order to generate the levels of exposure we seek."

"We are grateful to TOCA for

their professionalism and look forward very much to continue working with them and building on the BTCC's huge success story into the future."

BTCC series director Alan Gow said: "The Renault UK Clio Cup was truly re-energised in 2015 and ended the year on the crest of a wave with some superb action on-track and a title race that captured the imaginations of many motor racing fans. Renault are racers through and through so we are delighted that their Clio Cup will remain an integral part of the BTCC's race weekends."

Fewkes added that things are looking positive for the 2016 season, with a number of new cars sold over the winter. Grid numbers reached a two-year high at the end of 2015, and could be surpassed this year.

Fewkes also said that he doesn't see the new B-TEC Development series for older Next Generation Touring Cars as a threat to the Clio championship's success. "I don't think it will be a problem," he said. "You can't go straight from karting to driving a touring car, you still need steps [like Clios] in between."

Ladell rejoins WDE for Clios

Charlie Ladell will remain with WDE Motorsport in the Renault UK Clio Cup this year.

The 19-year-old finished fifth in the standings last year and was a regular top six finisher, but is aiming to take a significant step forward in 2016.

"I'm definitely targeting the top three in the championship and know the areas where I need to improve," said Ladell. "I need a fraction more pace in qualifying and better consistency in my results. With that I know the podiums, and hopefully even a few wins will start to come, although the Clio Cup is massively competitive."

WDE boss Wayne Eason added: "Continuity plays a huge part in achieving the big results so we are delighted to have Charlie joining Rory [Green] with us again. Charlie's speed and aggression last year were very evident – on occasion he even had our triple champion Paul Rivett looking over his shoulder – and with some nurturing he could very definitely become one of the top names on the grid in 2016."

Sutton shines on prize Renault R.S.01 test

Renault UK Clio Cup champion Ashley Sutton completed his prize test in a R.S.01 at Vallelunga in Italy last week.

Sutton completed 15 laps in the 550bhp car during the test, which was on his 22nd birthday.

"I knew it was going to be fast but not that fast!" he said. "The grip levels in this wet in the morning were incredible but then it dried and we were able to put slick tyres on and the whole

performance was out of this world. It's the best birthday present I've ever had. The cornering was phenomenal and it is by far the fastest car I have ever driven – I think I'd need to try an LMP1 car to better it. I had a huge grin on my face on my back to the airport and it's still there."

Sutton added that he intends to announce his 2016 plans in the next few weeks.



Sutton handled one of the R.S.01 monsters last week

HHC backs out of Ginetta GT4 Supercup

Leading Ginetta team HHC Motorsport will not run any cars in the GT4 Supercup this year.

The team's drivers Carl Breeze, Jamie Orton and Will Burns finished second, third and fifth, respectively in 2015 but the outfit will instead concentrate on Ginetta Junior and BRDC F4.

"We've decided not to run any cars in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this year," said team boss Charlie Kemp. "Instead we want to really focus on Ginetta Juniors and BRDC F4 and do a better job of getting good drivers in for the junior series."

"With the new car in BRDC F4 we want to put a lot more resources into that, as well as run four or five cars in Ginetta Juniors."

HHC won both titles last year. Kemp added that the team is considering entering a different series in 2017. "We might do something in between Juniors and BRDC F4," he said.

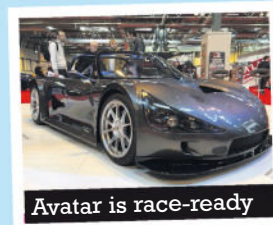
Avatar ready for race distribution

British sports car firm Avatar took the covers off its Roadster at the Autosport Show and the car will be suitable for road use and track competition.

The Roadster is marketed as a track day car but will come with the option to add race-specific parts.

As part of its development, the car was tested at Castle Combe and has competed at the Wiltshire circuit in the hands of designer Dylan Popovic, where it claimed class wins in the Castle Combe Sports and GT Championship.

"I've personally raced the first one we were developing last year in the Castle Combe Sports and GTs, so it's had a fair deal of track use during its development phase," said Popovic. "It's probably done a



Avatar is race-ready

thousand laps around Castle Combe in terms of getting it established so it's a capable car.

"We can offer a track option which will basically upgrade the brakes, suspension and shocks, that sort of thing and supply a full rollcage, and the race option will delete the windscreen and come with more aero so it would be basically a bigger splitter and a big wing, slightly more aggressive diffuser, that sort of thing. We have all the bits on the shelf, it's pretty much as people order it, it's available."

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Aston Martin classes get British GT slots

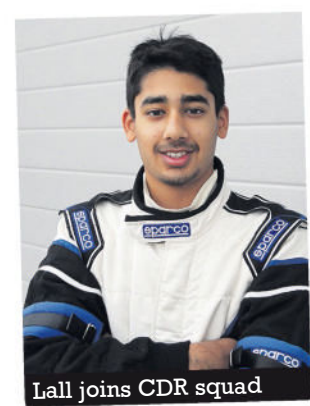
The Aston Martin Owners Club's Innes Ireland Cup and 50s Sports Car series will appear on the British GT support bill at two rounds this season.

The historic categories will share a grid at the Oulton Park and Silverstone British GT meetings this year, as well as having races at AMOC's events.

The renamed Aston Martin GT Challenge – formerly the GT4 Cup – and Intermarque series will also appear alongside British GT at three events in 2016.

More details have been announced about the new classes in the GT Challenge, with two divisions open to non-Astons. The Multi-Marque GT4 Cup will cater for any other GT4 car, while the Multi-Marque Challenge is for all post-1995 sports and saloon cars.

Aston Club Racing director Roger Bennington said the changes have been well received and have generated a lot of interest. "A lot of people have older cars that don't fit anywhere else," he said. "But they would fit into the Multi-Marque Challenge."



Lall joins CDR squad

American racer signs up for BRDC F4

American Quinlan Lall will race in BRDC Formula 4 this year with Chris Dittmann Racing.

The 16-year-old has raced in the F2000 Championship in America for the last two years and finished sixth in the standings in 2015, taking one win.

Lall had a successful test with the team at Silverstone last year and will now make the move to the UK.

"I feel extremely pleased and honoured to be part of BRDC F4," said Lall. "It appealed to me specifically because of the new car and the tracks the championship is going to this year. When I worked with Chris and the team at Silverstone we had great chemistry and if we continue our course of development with the new car and our own relationship, then I think we can have a good run at claiming the title."

Chris Dittmann added: "We carried out a two-day test with him towards the end of last year where he instantly gelled with the whole team. We were very impressed with his performance over the two days but also his focus and detailed feedback."

FACTORY SYNCHRO HONDA TO GET FULL BRITCAR CAMPAIGN



Car is 85 per cent factory components

Honda has only had a single race

By Rob Ladbrook

Synchro Motorsport will race its new factory-backed Honda Civic Type R in this year's Britcar Endurance Championship.

The team, which is run by volunteers from the Swindon Honda factory, built the majority of its new challenger from standard parts and also received help

with its rollage from the marque's factory outfit, Team Dynamics.

The Type R made its racing debut in the Race of Remembrance at Anglesey in November of last year where it finished second. The car is likely to be raced by Martin Byford, Alyn James and Dan Wheeler this season.

Team manager Robin Tremblin said the team expected to compete in Britcar

this season, while also planning outings in the Creventic 24H series races at Silverstone and Barcelona.

"This year, we've provisionally agreed to do it [Britcar]," he said. "The Civic is 85 per cent factory parts and even the majority of the suspension is standard. We could have gone and built a fully bespoke racing car, but we wanted to keep the car as close to production spec

as possible as it's an advert for what the Type R is capable of.

"Endurance racing fits with us because it means that the team involvement is huge in the races; it's not just a sprint race, there's a lot of involvement from the pit crew. The new Britcar team [headed up by Claire Hedley] has a very clear idea of what they want to do with the championship and we want to be part of it."

Eastwood links with Redline for Carrera Cup

Porsche Carrera Cup GB Scholar Charlie Eastwood will drive for the championship-winning Redline Racing team this year.

The 20-year-old was selected as the 2016-17 Scholar in November and follows in the footsteps of previous winner Josh Webster, who also raced for Redline in his rookie season.

Eastwood tested with three teams at the end of last year and decided that Redline – whose drivers have won the title every year since 2009 – was the right team to race for.

"It's the best possible position to be in," said Eastwood. "I wanted to give myself the best

chance to try and do something this year and I feel that's with Redline.

"I've only tested the car in the wet but I was on the pace and it's still the same car just with wets on it."

While Webster won the championship overall in his first year in 2014, Eastwood is likely to face a much stronger grid in his maiden season following the series' rejuvenation last year.

"I will focus on trying to win the rookie championship this year, with it being a two-year scholarship," he said.

Eastwood joins reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Tom Oliphant in Redline's Pro driver ranks.



Eastwood signed

Tucker expects 11 UK V8 machines

Former Britcar boss James Tucker expects 11 cars to participate in this year's inaugural UK V8 Series.

The series, which is aimed at replicating Australian V8 Supercar touring car racing, will use identical Holden Commodore VEs that previously competed in Bahrain and in select Britcar events at the back-end of 2015.

Tucker confirmed that 11 cars are currently being prepared ahead of this year, with another 11 on their way to the UK, and a further four being built from scratch.

"We are going for 10 or 11 cars for this year, but the 11th will be mine," said Tucker. "They'll slot onto grids for various championships as a separate class – so it would be class five for Britcar, and we're



New UK V8 machine

aiming to do the Silverstone date with Claire [Hedley, new manager of Britcar]."

An initial calendar of seven rounds is planned for 2016. Tucker hopes that the series will grow sufficiently this year to be able to run on its own in 2017. All rounds are set to be one-day events, with at least two races. The race duration is set to range between 25 minutes and an hour in length.

"We're planning to run on our own next year but we still want to award points for this season," added Tucker.

Endurance series planned by 750MC

The 750 Motor Club will launch a new endurance series this year for production sport and saloon cars.

A three-race calendar has been announced for the Club Enduro category, with two-hour races at Donington Park and Snetterton, and a 90-minute contest on the Silverstone International track.

Teams can be made of up to three drivers in one or two cars, and there will be three classes based on a car's power to weight ratio.

"There is still a gap in the market for endurance racing on a budget," said the club's competitions manager Giles Groombridge. "With Club Enduro, each round costs £595."

"If it's well supported we will try to roll it out in 2017 as a proper clubman endurance championship. We would plan to have a feature race, something like a 12-hour race."

The club trialled an endurance race at Snetterton last year, which attracted 22-car grid, and has had a good level of interest already.

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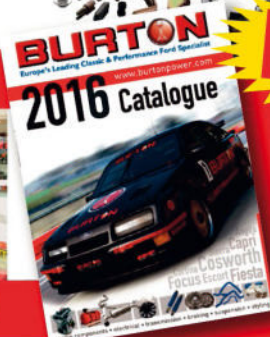
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'Autosport Show highlights'
MN's best bits, p20



Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Five-year Ginetta deal for Robertson

Rising star Charlie Robertson will abandon his plans to graduate into LMP2 racing this year after inking a five-year deal to become a factory Ginetta driver.

The 19-year-old from Surrey was announced as a works driver alongside marquee regular Mike Simpson last week. Robertson will join the Leeds outfit to head-up test and development of the new G57 sports car, as well as taking on a coaching role. He is expected to race the G57 when its programme is decided.

Robertson won last year's LMP3 title in the European Le Mans Series alongside Olympic legend Sir Chris Hoy. The pair tested an LMP2 machine late last season, but any plans to move up will now be put on hold.

"I have to think about the bigger picture and becoming a factory driver for one of the world's biggest race car manufacturers is too good a chance to turn down," said Robertson.

"It's disappointing that LMP2 won't happen now. There still may be a chance for Le Mans if Nissan [Hoy's main backer] decided to field a car for Chris. But there was a limited future in doing LMP2 and eventually the money and the chances would run out. This way I can have a full racing programme and get paid for doing what I love."

The ex-McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist won the Ginetta Junior title in 2012 before lifting the 2014 GT Supercup crown.



Robertson (r): works deal

New tyre limit for National FF1600

The British Racing and Sports Car Club's National Formula Ford 1600 Championship will bring in strict tyre limits to cut costs this year.

For the first time, the championship will introduce a mandatory limit of one set of Avon tyres per race weekend for each car. There had previously been no limit of the number of tyres used.

National FF1600 coordinator Ian Smith said: "Cost is crucial in club motorsport and anything we can do to keep the playing field level and budgets down is a good thing."

"Previously drivers could throw new tyres at their cars every session if they wanted and we don't want things getting stupid."

Cliff Dempsey, who is hoping to run cars in both National FF1600 and the Super Series, said: "It's a great idea and should be wheeled out to all FF1600 competitions, including the Festival and Walter Hayes in my mind. For drivers that want to win the biggest bill was always the tyre one. This evens things up for those with less budget."

GINETTA UNVEILS 'LMP2 BEATER'



Ginetta's new G57 sports car is capable of being up to three seconds per lap faster than an LMP2 machine, according to company head Lawrence Tomlinson.

The Leeds firm lifted the covers off its new sports-prototype during last week's Autosport Show. The new car is based on Ginetta's LMP3 design, but with upgraded aero, chassis tweaks and a new 580bhp 6.2-litre Chevrolet LS7 engine.

The first cars are likely to race in the European VdeV

sportscar class, with Ginetta in talks to field a works team in the championship.

Tomlinson said he saw a big future for the G57: "The G57 is a groundbreaking car for us because we always wanted to do a carbon-tubbed car and this one breaks the mould."

"We've put thousands of kilometres of testing onto the components already and the car feels great to drive. We've done the chassis, the aero, the engine - everything in-house so it shows our

full range of abilities.

"We want it to be three seconds faster than an LMP2 car around the Silverstone GP circuit, and we can definitely achieve that."

Tomlinson added that he expected the G57 not to be a limited production run. He said: "When we introduced the G50 and G55 they weren't homologated GT3 and GT4 cars and people said what will we do with them. Now look where they are. I see the G57 growing in the same way."

Radical targets GT3 homologation for RXC

Radical has applied to gain GT3 homologation for its RXC coupe machine.

The Peterborough marque has filed a request for National GT3 homologation and the accompanying paperwork with European review firm OSK. The RXC is eligible for consideration as it has a type-approved production run, which currently stands at 60 cars since the model's launch in 2013.

Radical already races the car in a guest class of the International GT Open championship, but company co-founder Phil Abbott said gaining GT3 approval would broaden the market for the car.

"Of the 60 RXCs we've built so far, 20 are road-going so it

fulfils the [homologation] criteria and we've submitted all of the necessary paperwork to make it happen," he said.

"It's about opening the options for customers. With National GT3 homologation the RXC can fight for championships and even do things like British GT if a customer chooses to. The car has proven pace."

● Radical took the wraps off its fastest car at the Autosport Show. The RXC Spyder runs a twin-turbocharged 600bhp Ford EcoBoost engine and weighs in at just 860kg. The car also features full carbonfibre bodywork, making it 50kg lighter than the coupe version. "It is our fastest car since the SR9 LMP2," said Abbott.



GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

ROB LADBROOK

"People asked what the G50 would do"



Ginetta G50 went on to become a huge success

The Ginetta G57: What's the point?

That's essentially the question I asked the firm's boss Lawrence Tomlinson immediately after he pulled the covers away from his new baby at the Autosport International Show.

In a nutshell, the G57 is an LMP3 car on steroids. When Ginetta and Juno founder Ewan Baldry began work on its original LMP3 design, the car was always heavily restricted due to the mandated specs set by the ACO and FIA. The cars weren't meant to be as quick as LMP2 machines, so had heavily restricted Nissan engines and limited aerodynamics aimed at preparing drivers for the next step up the prototype ladder.

Think of LMP3 as a 'junior' prototype.

But the chassis has always been very capable. It's crash tested to the same standards as LMP1, and is easily capable of handling more power.

Ginetta has taken the design and heavily modified it to unlock that potential. Gone is the 420bhp Nissan unit, replaced by a 580bhp 6.2-litre Chevrolet engine and the car wears a very different aero package. Ginetta says the G57 will be up to three seconds per lap faster than an LMP2 car.

All well and good, but what's it for?

That's the tricky bit, but Tomlinson coolly replied: "When we unveiled the G50 that wasn't homologated for anything and people asked what we'd do with that. But that went on to become one of the best-selling and successful sportscars in national motorsport. I see the same market potential for the G57. I mean, where else can you get a real prototype sportscar that's quicker than LMP2 for £200,000?"

Touche, Mr Tomlinson, touche.

If there's one marque you can back to make a new design concept work, it is Ginetta. The firm has established itself as one of the leading racing car manufacturers in the world, with a dedicated client base and its finger on the trends of global motorsport.

There is a gap for the G57. Regardless of its early stages, LMP3 will always be a limited marketplace. Until it can race at Le Mans or in the FIA World Endurance Championship, LMP3 will be limited to a few cars in the European Le Mans Series. Ginetta's decision to repurpose its design to widen that market is sensible business.

Ginetta can tap into the track day market, less restricted sportscar classes such as VdeV or the International GT Open, or even ultimately create its own sportscar feeder class. With a car boasting that much performance for that price the potential is there. And it's not like Ginetta hasn't done it before - look at its Junior Championship and GT4 Supercup. Why couldn't an extra rung be placed at the top of that ladder? Watch this space.



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NEIL SHANKS

Age: 38 Lives: Elgin
Co-driver and organiser

It's a family sport

"My father was involved in the sport at club level and that was how I started. I started doing navigational rallies at 13 or 14 and did my first stage rally as soon as I was old enough. I've always been a co-driver, when you sit beside good drivers, you know where your talents lie."

He's had a lot of success

"One of the most memorable rallies was my first win, the Scottish Rally in 2001. Dave Weston and I won it in a Group N car against World Rally Cars. That was special and really ignited the fire to go further. I've sat with a lot of good drivers. I won Group N in the British Championship in 2005 with Barry Clark, among other things."

He did the BHRC

"The chance to compete in historics is all down to Jamie Edwards. He suggested that I should speak to Tim Pearcey. I had nothing in the offing for BRC that year and I wanted to do some events outside Scotland, so we agreed to do the British Historic Championship in 2010. I'd never done a lot in rear-wheel-drive cars and it was fantastic. We did the Roger Albert Clark in 2013 and finished fourth after being on our roof in Duncombe Park. We had a brilliant last day in the Scottish borders and climbed up from eighth."

They've been to Belgium

"The level of competition and the atmosphere in the historic championship was brilliant and we did the full championship for two or three seasons. Then Tim started to look for some new challenges and we did the Boucles de Spa last year, which is a fantastic event. It's bonkers and nothing prepares you for it. Doing 125 miles in the day makes it tough and it is hard for co-drivers. But we finished in the top 20 despite six punctures!"

He's an event organiser

"I'm clerk of the course for the Speyside Stages, which runs in April this year. I also did two years as chairman of the Scottish Rally Championship and I'm now involved on the management committee."

He lives a long way north

"For the events in England and Wales I usually fly down from Inverness on a Friday after work and fly to Birmingham or Manchester to be in Wales by 2200hrs. I can fly back on Sunday. I'm a long way from everywhere!"



Shanks: historic co-driver

GRID RECREATION FOR HSCC CELEBRATION

By Paul Lawrence

A recreation of a 1966 grid will be a key feature of the Historic Sports Car Club's opening meeting of the season at Castle Combe (April 16/17).

To mark the club's Golden Anniversary year, the grid for the inaugural Griffiths Formula race for sports cars from 1945 to 1955, held on May 14, 1966, will be reformed. Wherever possible, the original cars are being tracked down and for those that are not available a car of the same make and model will feature.

Once the grid has been formed at lunchtime on both Saturday and Sunday, spectators will be invited to take part in a grid walk. Later, the cars will complete a parade lap and will also be on display in the paddock. Several drivers from the 1966 race are expected to attend.

Historic racing ace Neil Corner (Jaguar D-type) won the 1966 encounter from Chris Warwick-Drake (Lotus Mk10) and John Le Sage (Aston Martin DB3S).



Winning D-type was at the Show

The weekend will feature a full programme of HSCC racing as 10 of the club's championships get under way, some of them with double-header races. A 40-minute, pitstop race for the Guards Trophy will be the longest. "The response to recreating the first grid has been very

encouraging and it is wonderful to discover that some of the cars are still in the same ownership," said the HSCC's Grahame White.

The HSCC is also looking for drivers, family members and mechanics involved in the inaugural Griffiths Formula race to come and join in the

celebrations. For more details, please contact the club office on 01327 858400.

Other key events in the 50th anniversary season will be an extended three-day event on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit (July 1-3) and the Oulton Park Gold Cup (August 27-29).



Historic turbine Lotus racer to be restored for outings in 2017

Classic Team Lotus hopes to restore the unique Lotus 56B gas turbine grand prix car and have it running again during 2017.

The four-wheel-drive car was built in 1971 as a development of the 1968 Type 56 Indy car. But it proved heavy and uncompetitive and the project

was abandoned after two non-championship F1 races and three points-paying GP starts.

Emerson Fittipaldi, Reine Wisell and Dave Walker all raced the Pratt and Whitney-engined car before Lotus boss Colin Chapman pulled the plug.

Now, the team led by Chapman's son Clive hopes to return the car

to running order after a long period in storage.

"The restoration will have to fit around our customer work," said Chapman. "We'd like to have it running next year."

Demonstration runs at events like the Goodwood Festival of Speed will be the target for the unusual F1 car.

Early GP car field joins Donington Festival

The 80th anniversary of the 1936 Donington Grand Prix will be marked by a pre-1950 Grand Prix car and Voiturette race at the Donington Historic Festival (April 30-May 2).

The HGPCA will assemble a grid of period single-seaters for the Nuvolari Trophy race including Alfa Romeos P3s, Bugatti T35s and T37s, ERAs, Talbot-Lagos and Maserati 8CMs. In 1936, Richard Seaman and Hans Ruesch won the four-and-a-half hour Donington race in their shared Alfa Romeo 8C.

More early machinery will contest the 'Mad Jack' Trophy for Pre-War sportscars, run in memory of Richard 'Mad Jack' Shuttleworth, winner of the first Donington Grand Prix in 1935.

In all, 17 races will run across three days.

Manta crew switches to Escort for 2016 historic rally campaign

Brothers Simon and Alister Crook have acquired the ex-Richard Hill Ford Escort Mk2 for this season's British Historic Rally Championship.

Originally, they hoped to get their Opel Manta converted to

historic trim but eventually decided to switch to the Escort used by Hill on last year's BHRC.

"I've always yearned for a full spec car since starting rallying in 1980; it will be nice to have a few years in one," said Simon.

They will miss round one, the Red Kite Stages, due to their father's 80th birthday, so will join the BHRC for Rally North Wales. They will shake the car down on the Bovington Stages in early March.

Seasoned Yorkshire rally driver Charlie Gabb has completed the build of a Lotus Cortina Mk1 for historic rallying and tested the car recently. His plans will likely centre on northern forest events



IN BRIEF



Milner to Wales

Rising Yorkshire rally driver Adam Milner will venture into Wales for the first time next month to contest the opening BHRC event, the Red Kite Stages. Milner stunned the historic fraternity with his pace on the Trackrod Rally in his 1600cc Escort Mk1 (above), running well inside the top 10 on only his second rally. Co-driver Roy Jarvis has not competed in Wales for 20 years.

MGCC Calendar

The MG Car Club has announced a four-race calendar for its Iconic 50s series for sports and sports-racing cars of the 1950s. Aimed at MG T-Types and MGAs, as well as cars from all other manufacturers, the series starts at Donington Park (April 3) and takes in races at Brands Hatch (April 30/May 1), Silverstone GP (June 4/5) and Mallory Park (July 3).

Wilds reunited

Ex-Formula 1 racer Mike Wilds was reunited with one of his favourite racing cars at Autosport International when the Chevron B19 he raced for Richard Budge was on the HSCC stand. Wilds regularly raced the sports-racer two decades ago and current owner Jonathan Loader has now put period RJB Mining stickers back on the car (below).



John Coundley

MN is sad to report the death of 1960s sportscar racer, John Coundley, who died recently aged 91. Coundley raced through the 1950s but came to prominence in the 1960s when he twice won the Martini Trophy at Silverstone. He headed Jackie Stewart and Jack Brabham to win the 1964 Lavant Cup at Goodwood in a Lotus 19 and later raced a McLaren M1A before retiring in 1966.

F1 to Gold Cup

Formula 1 cars of the early 1960s will return to the Oulton Park Gold Cup in August and will headline the event alongside the Super Touring Trophy and the Jaguar Heritage Challenge. After a gap of several years, the HGPCA will return to the Cheshire track with two races for pre-1966 rear-engined GP cars.

Daytona for Brits

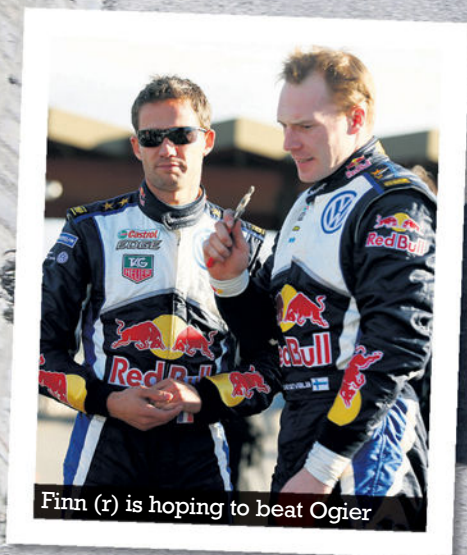
British competitors will again have the chance to race at Daytona in November in a trip co-ordinated by UK race organiser Richard Culverhouse. A range of races at the HSR Daytona Historics meeting on November 10-13 will accommodate historic and classic cars from the UK, with inclusive prices starting from around £3500. Details are available from Culverhouse via ukmotorsport@aol.com.

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

LATVALA DISMISSES 2017 TOYOTA DRIVE

Finn believes his future is at Volkswagen



Finn (r) is hoping to beat Ogier



By David Evans

Jari-Matti Latvala has confirmed his future lies with Volkswagen Motorsport, ending speculation of a possible move to lead Toyota's return to the World Rally Championship next year.

On the subject of a possible move to Toyota, Latvala said: "At the moment, my plans are with Volkswagen. It's great that Toyota is coming back to the championship, but for [20] '16, '17 and '18, I'm not thinking or considering Toyota. When you have the championship-winning car, it would always be very, very risky to jump out from that boat." Latvala, who will remain with the German team until the end of 2018, also says he has a fresh plan to try to topple his all-conquering team-mate Sébastien Ogier as the pair move into their fourth year with the Hannover squad.

The 30-year-old starts the season looking to alter the

balance of power within Volkswagen. In the last 39 rallies the pair have started in similar machinery, Latvala has won eight while Ogier has topped the podium 25 times. Latvala says the early 2016 rallies vital.

"In the first half of the season I have never been very successful," said Latvala. "I have usually had to wait for the second half of the year for the rallies where I go well. So now I have to play the tactics. And the tactics are to not try to be winning every rally, sometimes I have to take the podium and wait for the second half where I am more suited."

Latvala has won the last two Rally Finlands and he says he needs to find the same feeling the home advantage gives him on more rallies.

"I definitely need more rallies to be like Finland," he said. "Finland lifts me and boosts me and it gives me even more concentration. It's that concentration I need on

every rally. It has to be 110 per cent every time. This is the idea that I'm trying to work for; to make every rally the same: 110 per cent approach as Finland."

"Also, I must avoid the mistakes. Then it means he [Ogier] cannot afford to make any mistakes of his own. That gives pressure to him.

"If we can do that and sustain a challenge and a threat, then we can see what happens. But all I can do is concentrate on my own job."

Latvala, Ogier and Andreas Mikkelsen were all in the Alps for their pre-event set-up test late last week.

Latvala added: "Rally Monte Carlo is something very special every year. The conditions in the mountains can pretty much change from one minute to the next. The roads on the sunny side of a mountain are completely different to the shaded side, where they are often icy. The presentation alone – to be stood in front of the Royal Palace and

hopefully receive a trophy – is the ultimate motivation for me at every Monte."

Winner of the Monte for the last two years and hometown hero, Gap's Ogier said: "I cannot imagine a better rally with which to start the new season. For me, it is the most important rally of the year.

"The key factor is tyre selection. We drivers are very dependent on our ice spies. It is all about interpreting the weather conditions correctly and understanding the unique weather in the Alps."

Mikkelsen, who broke his duck with Rally Spain victory at the end of 2015, conceded this wasn't his favourite week of the year.

"I will admit that the Monte Carlo is not one of my favourite rallies," he said. "I finished third here last year, and that would be an outstanding result again in 2016."

Mikkelsen starts with new co-driver Anders Jaeger for the first time this week.

Tyres to play a key part in Monte Carlo

After an exceptionally warm winter so far, temperatures have plummeted in the French Alps, bringing snow and ice to the Monte Carlo stages in the last few days.

This week kicks off with minus 10 degrees and colder in the Hautes-Alpes. Good, that makes tyre choice more straightforward. It'll have to be the stud.

But that weather was Monday, Thursday and Friday? Five, six, seven, maybe even 10 degrees. The ice and snow will melt during the day, but what time will it start freezing again. And at what altitude. Which tyre now?

The drivers will have 20 soft and 24 supersoft compound tyres to choose from. On top of that, there's the heavily treaded winter option – with 12 of those available. Or there's that tyre with a stud. Twenty-four of these

can be used. But, if is that's not complicated enough, a driver can only use a maximum of 39 of those 80 tyres during the event.

Michelin tyre technician Hugues Pierron admits this week is the most stressful of the season for him: "The Monte is incredibly complex. You have to select the best tyres for up to three completely different special stages. You can never select the perfect tyres for all three stages. What you are looking for is the perfect compromise.

"That is why we have our people who are able to tell us accurately that it is snowing at kilometre one, that the route is drying out from kilometre six, and that there are patches of black ice from kilometre 20 to the finish. We are then able to make the tyre selection together with the driver."

David Evans

PETERHANSEL TAKES DAKAR VICTORY FOR PEUGEOT

PAGE 30



The Strength of Experience

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'Le Mans winner takes
MN Circuit rally win'

Jack Frost Stages report, p31



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

WRC GETS MORE TV COVERAGE IN THE UK



More than 100 hours of World Rally Championship coverage is being lined up for British fans this season – with Channel 5 stepping in as a frontline broadcaster.

Free-to-air Channel 5 will screen an hour-long show at seven in the evening on the Monday after every round of the championship, starting with its Monte Carlo Rally review next week.

In addition to that, Channel 5's

other station, Spike Network, will run all 14 magazine shows, offering news and insight into the WRC on the Saturday evening before each round.

Channel 5 will ramp up its coverage for October's Wales Rally GB, when there will be an end-of-day highlights show and the powerstage will be screened live.

Director of programmes at Channel 5, Ben Frow said: "We are excited to have such a

fantastic sports brand to build on our growing portfolio of sports content. The World Rally Championship attracts a hugely loyal audience and we look forward to showing action from rallies around the world."

BT Sport continues to offer in excess of 65 hours of WRC, including nightly reports from every day of every round and 30 live stages. In addition to the event timetabled coverage, BT Sport will continue to run

archive shows regularly. S4C's Welsh language Radio show will also return, offering further world championship coverage.

Rally GB managing director Ben Taylor said: "Top class rallying is one of the world's most dramatic sports and Channel 5's commitment will allow United Kingdom's viewers to follow more of the action as the WRC builds towards the legendary Welsh forests at the end of October."

Meeke will compete on at least five World Rally Championship events in PH Sport car

While Kris Meeke's full WRC schedule is yet to be confirmed, the Dungannon driver will compete in at least five events this term.

The PH Sport driver will contest the Monte Carlo Rally this week, before appearances in Sweden, Portugal, Poland and

Corsica. "The programme's not confirmed yet," explained Meeke. "But there's not much to be gained by going to events where we have quite good knowledge."

Meeke competes on the Monte for the sixth time, and has ruled out any talk of

targets ahead of the event.

"We're here for more experience of what is a very special rally," said Meeke. "I love the challenge of the Monte and, with the weather changing, this could be a really tricky one."

"This is definitely the start of a new chapter for me, it's

what I've been waiting for."

Meeke will drive an Abu Dhabi Total World Rally Team DS 3 WRC on up to 10 events this season, while stacking up thousands of miles of testing in the 2017 C3 WRC.

Meeke will be joined by Craig Breen in Sweden.

M-Sport will complete a full WRC season

M-Sport managing director Malcolm Wilson has confirmed to MN that the Cumbrian team will contest all 14 rounds of this year's WRC.

The two-time World Rally champions had been chasing funding and, on the eve of round one, the manufacturer entry has been confirmed.

Wilson said: "We have paid our entry fee and we will be at every round. It's good news for us. M-Sport has been a constant in the WRC since round one in 1997 and I really didn't want to miss a round this time around."

Wilson was quick to

pay tribute to the FIA and its understanding in the British team's position.

"Jarmo [Mahonen, WRC manager] has been very, very good," he said. "We have worked hard with the FIA to make this happen. Jarmo understood our situation and did all he could to help us."

Norwegian Mads Ostberg will tackle all rounds of the series, with Eric Camilli in the second Ford Fiesta RS WRC. Elfyn Evans stands by ready to step in for selected events.



Fiesta will be seen on all 2016 rounds



The three Peugeot 208 DKR machines dominated the 2016 Dakar

More to come from winning Peugeot 2008

Peugeot Sport director Bruno Famin says there is more speed to come from the 2008 DKR following its dominant Dakar performance.

Stephane Peterhansel won the event, and once the South American marathon enduro got past the prologue, the rear-wheel-drive Peugeots were never headed and set nine fastest times from 12 stages.

Shortly after celebrating Peugeot's fifth win on the event, Famin admitted he was already looking forward to next year – when he hoped to iron out some of the minor mechanical issues that struck during the

fortnight-long race.

"The results have surpassed our expectations because we came here just to show the performance of the car," said Famin. "We've achieved that objective well throughout all different types of conditions. That goes to show that we have accomplished the technical mission that we set ourselves. We have, nonetheless, found a few small mechanical issues, which show us that there is still a margin of progression left in our Peugeot 2008 DKR."

"We're absolutely delighted with this result and we hope to confirm it again next year."

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"The man who is going to change our world"



Let me introduce you to Florian Ruth. He's nothing special. Only the man who's going to change our world.

You might remember me banging on about cool Red Bull films like *The Art of Flight* and *The Crash Reel*; films that took a human angle on people skidding down a mountain on one or two pieces of wood and made them into emotion-packed cinematographic art.

And then we had the coverage of the World Rally Championship that was, theoretically, out of the same Red Bull Media House operation.

Except the WRC telly was, well, let's be honest here, it was pony by comparison.

Now before WRC Promoter types get all uppity again, I'm more than happy to accept that the nightly 30-minute report is a race against time that has no room for art.

The same cannot and should not be said for the hour-long review programme screened the week after the event.

Old ground.

Back to our new best friend, Ruth.

Ruth's from the heart of Red Bull's cool cuts. Not much of a rally man, but a real movie-maker. Just what we need. And, he's 100 per cent WRC, his focus is firmly on making more watchable and more entertaining shows.

Understandably, we'll reserve judgement on the programme until we've seen a few. Let's let him get his skateboard parked and his feet out front of the bean bag before we start criticising – if there's anything to criticise.

Either way, good on WRC Promoter for putting Florian in the position to make a change. Another change is the employment of a full-time drone squad into the production outfit; that's another six people working on making the product event better.

And while we're complimenting the promoter – something we're not always terribly quick to do – we should say congratulations for landing a very encouraging television deal in Britain. You can stop scanning the listings pages from the depths of frustration trying to work out when our sport will be shown on ITV4.

It's simple: every Monday after a WRC round head to Channel 5 at 1900hrs and sit down for an hour of muddy fever. When putting together this story, I asked WRC media expert Mark Wilford to put together an estimate of how many hours the championship would be shown across Channel 5, BT Sport and S4C. He shot passed 100 hours in no time – and that's without considering any repeats or archive programmes. The real figure is probably double that.

It's been a long time since the WRC-following Brit has had so much action coming into his or her home without having to fork out to a satellite station for it.

And, as I said at the top of this column, this year's coverage should be more watchable than ever. It's not just about the cars and the corners. There's a real human aspect to the WRC and I look forward to seeing that come across in 2016.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

RALLY NEWS

Simpson confirms BRC entry in Fabia

Neil Simpson has confirmed his full-time return to the British Rally Championship, with his factory-specification Skoda Fabia R5.

Simpson, 43, hasn't competed on gravel in 15 years. He will be joined by young co-driver Elliott Edmondson.

Simpson made his name as a factory Ford and Volkswagen driver in the BRC in the 1990s. Since then he has spent time building the family business and is now ready for his works-supported return to British rallying's top flight.

He is, however, pragmatic about what to expect when he takes to the stages and goes up against some of British rallying's fastest and most exciting prospects.

Simpson said: "The car is awesome and we're really happy with the support we've had from the [Skoda] factory in the Czech Republic. We've done an event in it already and we'll do some more testing before the opening [BRC] round in Wales, but it's sensational; the engine's more tractable than the S2000 and the chassis is amazing."

Simpson chose the BRC over a selected programme of European Rally Championship rounds.

The final round, Rally Isle of Man, holds particular interest for Simpson. He finished second there the last two times he competed.

"There's some unfinished business over there," said Simpson. "The Manx is a great, great event with some incredible stages. And, with double points, it's going to be an exciting way to end the season."



Simpson has driven Fabia R5

MH REVEALS FIVE DRIVERS FOR BRC

Italian and female drivers among entries

Harris won class on Nicky Grist Stages last year

By Jack Benyon

MH Motorsport has named the five drivers who will tackle the DMACK Junior British Rally Championship and BRC 4 categories in 2016.

The outfit – run by Mike Harris – will field cars for Italian Umberto Accornero, female competitor Nabila Tejpar, Irish Tarmac historic champion co-driver Will Graham, six-time Rally GB entrant Roger Platt and 17-year-old Josh Cornwell.

All drivers will drive a variant of the Ford Fiesta R2, with Accornero in an R2T.

"There will be a point on events where we have five cars," explained Harris. "The BRC looks very exciting, the team has exploded quickly but we've made sure we have extra manpower. We have a good set of drivers and as long as they keep it on the road, our jobs will be easier."

Harris has just purchased an R2T from M-Sport Poland, which Accornero will use for five events. He will be

co-driven by Andrew Edwards.

Cornwell competed in Latvian rallies in 2014 before making selected BTRDA appearances last year. He is expected to run at the front of the 1600cc R2s with experienced co-driver Dai Roberts.

"It's something different for me," said Cornwell. "We'll struggle to match the turbo R2s in the 1600, but it's a good opportunity to show myself. This will be new for me because we didn't do the whole Latvian series so I've never

done a year in the same class."

Tejpar's experience in rallying lies with circuit rallies but she has been under the tutelage of Bill Gwynne at his rally school.

"It's my first year of doing a championship," she said. "I'm really looking forward to it. I did Phoenix Stages, Twyford, Snetterton: just single-venue events last year. I thought if we're going to do this, we may as well throw ourselves in at the deep end."

She'll be joined by Nigel Mummery's navigator Fiona

Scarrett for the season ahead.

Graham is hoping that 2016 is his year to show what he can do in the drivers seat, having co-driven for father Ernie last year.

"It's my first season as a driver. I've been co-driving for my dad Ernie in a Ford Escort Mk2, last year we won the Irish Tarmac Historic Championship, so now it's my turn."

Graham will be joined by Tim Sayer, while Platt and Ian Davies will enter the BRC 4 category.

Mellors is the first entry to the revamped British Championship

Ollie Mellors became the first official entry into the MSA British Rally Championship when regulations opened last Thursday.

The 20-year-old signed up at the Autosport Show, and will compete in all seven rounds in an ex-Chris Atkinson Proton Satria Neo S2000.

"It was good to be the first driver to sign up to the BRC at

the Autosport Show," said Mellors. "We're really looking forward to getting the season started in Mid Wales. I've got Ian Windress to do the whole championship with me."

Windress sat with Stephen Petch in his Ford Fiesta R5 last year, but will join Mellors as the duo will look to challenge some of the R5 cars.

"It looks like the competition

is really strong," added Mellors. "It's going to be hard to beat the R5s in an S2000 car but at the same time it's nice to have something to aim at."

"The likes of Elfyn Evans and David Bogie are good drivers. If we can get close to them, that would be nice. We're doing it for experience, to learn how to do notes and the recce, so it will be a learning curve for sure."

Vauxhall expands to three Junior drivers

Vauxhall Junior Rally Team has unveiled its drivers for the BRC, with the team expanding to three cars.

Motorsport Ireland Billy Coleman winner Rob Duggan, 2015 ERC Junior Mattias Adielsson and Australian Arron Windus are the three set to tackle the DMACK Junior British Rally Championship.

The team was initially set to run two cars, but the plan to award the drive to two finalists failed when Windus impressed Simon Mauger – who will run the team in 2016 – during the testing process.

Duggan has spoken of potential entries into the Junior World Rally Championship and Drive DMACK Trophy in previous months, but believes the BRC is the correct step to take for his career.

"The BRC is definitely the next step for me and we think it's the right move for us," said Duggan. "We've done the Ulster and Circuit of Ireland Rally, but the rest is new so it's a learning experience."



Duggan (l) and Adielsson (r) will partner Windus in the R2

Adielsson arrives in the BRC having finished eighth overall in ERC Junior after 2DNFs. He's hoping to follow in the footsteps of previously successful Swedes. "I'm here to bring Sweden back to the BRC," he said. "Obviously there is Stig Blomqvist and drivers like this so it's nice to bring Sweden back."

Simon Mauger believes the quality of the drivers made the decision difficult from the eight finalists.

"The selection process was difficult because of the quality of the drivers involved," he explained. "They all really impressed us. We've got a lot of responsibility to the drivers, they have their careers ahead of them."

The addition of Windus was only confirmed last Friday, and the team and driver told *Motorsport News* that they would attempt to be ready for the first round of the championship.

TMG-built Toyota will feature in the British Rally Championship

Toyota will enter the British Rally Championship this year with its Toyota GT86-CS R3.

The TMG-built car will run in the BRC 3 category, with current plans to contest the opening Mid Wales Stages with a view to competing in further events in 2016.

The car will be run on events by RallyPrep, which has watched the development of the BRC closely according to company director Neil Yates. "We're delighted to be

involved in bringing the Toyota GT86-CS-R3 to the BRC," he said. "We have followed its development closely and know that it will offer incredible value and entertainment for drivers and spectators. This is a fabulously designed and

GT86: Mid Wales



engineered car and I think it's a perfect fit for the new BRC."

BRC 3 consists of cars such as the popular Citroen DS3 R3, but the Toyota is the first confirmed entry for the class.

'Peterhansel wins Dakar Rally for Peugeot'

How French team bounced back, p30

Photos: Writtle Photographic and LAT



ARRON NEWBY TO DRIVE PAUL BIRD'S FOCUS WRC



Bird will get Newby in the Focus WRC

Paul Bird will put young driver Arron Newby in the seat of his Ford Focus WRC while he serves his two-year motorsport ban.

Bird finished runner-up in the 2014 BTRDA Rally Championship, but was banned recently having tested positive for cocaine and diuretics in his blood following a drugs test after the Nicky Grist Stages in 2015.

The Kelso driver is hoping to help out Newby – who hasn't competed in a WRC car before – by giving him the opportunity.

"The reason behind doing this is to support a young driver and to put something back into the sport," said Bird. "I've known Arron for a long time, he's a good friend to me and I rate him highly as a driver. I'm looking forward to seeing what he can do in this car."

Newby is looking forward to experiencing the 2008 Focus – but the duo has only confirmed a test so far. No events have been earmarked at this early stage.

"It started off as a joking text to blow the

cobwebs off the car," explained Newby. "However, it all turned serious in a few minutes and plans are in place for tests already."

Newby – a Manx champion – is hoping a trip back to the Isle is on the cards.

"Ideally, one main event to do would be the Manx National in May as I think I'm more suited to Tarmac, but in all honesty, I'd just be happy to get out in a proper WRC car on any event."

MN understands that Dom Buckley will continue to prepare the car on events.

IN BRIEF

Brean Stages entry

The Brean Stages Rally has scored an entry of just under 100 cars for the two-day run through the leisure park. Last year's winners Steve and Yvonne Fuzeland start as the number one seed for the event, which will be covered by FM Pulse Radio (104.4FM) this weekend.

Brown to Snowman

DMACK Junior British Rally Championship driver Blair Brown will compete on the Snowman Rally as a warm-up for this year's competition. Brown was last out on the Mull Rally, having competed on the Isle of Man previously. He'll campaign his usual Ford Fiesta R2T.

Rally Future forum

Ellyn Evans will attend the latest forum held by the MSA's Rally Future campaign next month. Evans will join 2014 BTRDA champion Steve Perez, MSA chief executive Rob Jones and

MSA safety delegate Nicky Moffitt at the February 4 event. It will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Warwick at 1900hrs.

Mid Wales open

After registrations opened for the British Rally Championship last week, regulations are out and the entries open for the first round of the season – the Mid Wales Stages. The March 5/6 event has been running since 1977 and features 68 stage miles, including stages from Wales Rally GB.

Stone debuts Fiesta

John Stone had a debut run in his new Ford Fiesta on last weekend's Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship Jack Frost Stages. The car is to S2000 spec and features a 2.5-litre Millington engine. Stone took it to seventh place. The Ford appeared in the series on the Neil Howard Stages: it retired in the hands of Roger Moran.

Tinn planning MSA Asphalt and Belgian runs

David Tinn is planning contest this year's MSA British Asphalt Rally Championship in his Millington-powered Proton Satria, along with selected Belgian asphalt events.

Tinn won two rounds of the the MN Circuit Rally Championship last year – at Cadwell Park and Rockingham – and will shakedown the car

before the Asphalt championship gets underway.

"The car is having work done at the moment before we give it a shakedown on the Jack Neal Memorial Trophy at Blyton next month," said Tinn. "We will be ready for the opening British round on Epynt."

Tinn finished third in the championship last year.



Higgins took BRC title in 2004 at the wheel of a Hyundai Accent

Higgins hasn't ruled out 2016 BRC return

British rally champion David Higgins has not ruled out a return to the BRC in 2016 following the championship's rebirth.

Manx-born Higgins won the BRC title in 2004, and has won five consecutive championships in America for Subaru Team USA.

Higgins moved to Wales – where he still lives – from the Isle of Man during his childhood. The BRC features rallies on the island, while the season-opening Mid Wales Stages has a route that passes his family home.

"We're not sure if we're free that weekend yet, there's no rally but there could be rallycross," explained Higgins.

"Mid Wales Stages is my home rally, and my second home rally would be the Manx, they are events we'd love to try and do. But we're two very small parts of a

very large team in America, they may want us to do something else, we don't know. But it wouldn't be through lack of trying from us."

Higgins' British co-driver Craig Drew added: "We love rallying in America, the last five years have been great but doing Rally GB was fantastic and getting back on the roads and stages we grew up rallying was great. Unfortunately it's not all up to us. People do follow us in America but it was nice to rally in front of our home fans."

Higgins believes the championship is set for success in 2016 having held a hiatus the previous year.

"It's a long time since there has been this much of a buzz about it," he said. "If half the people talking about doing it step forward then it's great."

REVELLING IN HISTORIC RALLYING

PAUL LAWRENCE

"Stop messing about and get back to rallying"



The Autosport Show is an annual chance to catch up with people away from the time pressure of competitive events.

This year's edition was no different and the MSA British Historic Rally Championship stand was doing a fine trade in visitors, coffee and banter.

Historic rallying, of course, is full of great characters. It is a discipline that attracts competitors from 18 to 80 years old and from those who have only recently started competing to those who go back a long way.

For Yorkshireman Peter Smith, who dropped by to register for the 2016 BHRC, this is a second bite of the rallying cherry as he returned to the sport after more than 20 years away and he's now one of British rallying's most prolific competitors.

Peter, now 66, started rallying in 1972, competing on road rallies in his works car as he set about building his caravan business. He mainly concentrated on road rallies and stopped in 1985 when his son Guy started racing karts as a junior. There wasn't enough cash to do both and so the rallying went.

Guy's rise through the sport to professional sports car racer and Le Mans winner with Bentley is well documented and when Guy's career was established Peter took to cycling for his competition against the clock.

However, it was a chance invitation for Guy in 2007 that led to Peter's rallying comeback. Guy was invited to present the North Humberside Motor Club awards in 2007 and Peter went along. The same old characters were there at the bar as they had been in 1985 and told him, in typical Yorkshire speak, to stop messing about on bicycles and get rallying again. The seed was planted.

Last year he contested more than 20 rallies and has another busy season planned for 2016. In February, he'll do three rallies in three weeks in three cars, starting with the Cambrian in a Subaru Impreza, followed by the Red Kite in his Opel Ascona and the Riponian in the Metro 6R4. The focus of the season will be BHRC forest events in the Ascona and the BTRDA series in the Impreza or 6R4. He also plans to tackle other events like the Salamandre Rally in Belgium, but gravel remains his surface of choice.

Business success with the company that evolved into Swift Leisure allows Peter to have a collection of rally cars, including a sensational Mazda RX-7 and another Opel or two. He says he loves every one of them, but the Opel Ascona has a special place in his affections as he road rallied one of them back in the heydays of road rallying in the 1970s.

With excellent pace and some cracking results during 2015, Peter says he'll carry on rallying as long as he can. He also quietly puts something back into the sport by supporting young drivers and helping one or two events. More power to him.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

HENRY LANDS A SKODA FABIA FOR 2016 SEASON

Choice of championship will depend on the year's early results

By Jason Craig

Ulsterman Desi Henry has said that early results will determine whether he challenges for honours in either the Irish Tarmac or MSA British Rally Championship in his new R5-spec Skoda Fabia this year.

Henry has confirmed his place on the startline for the first rounds of both competitions – next month's closed-roads Galway International Rally followed by the Mid Wales Stages in March.

Henry took delivery of the Skoda Motorsport-developed car last week after finding a new home for the Super 2000 Fabia he drove last year.

"I'll start both championships and, depending on how we do, a decision will have to be made about which one we follow after that," said Henry. "I would like to take the car to the Donegal Mini Stages and get some seat time in it before we head off to Galway. It should

be a good shakedown for us.

"With the new Skoda Fabia being turbocharged we should be that bit faster than last year. I'm really looking forward to getting a drive in it. It hasn't been seen, or used, on Irish roads before. It will be interesting to see how the it performs."

Both the MSA British Rally and Irish Tarmac Championships have gone down the R5/S2000 route and the response from competitors has been favourable – proof, Henry says, that it was the correct move. He believes competition at the head of the field will be the toughest it has been for a very long time.

"The new regulations are going to make for two very exciting championships," he said. "For Galway we want to be on the pace right from the off so the team is going to have to work hard on the set-up beforehand. This year represents our best possible chance to be competitive."

April's Circuit of Ireland rally forms part of both championships.



Fabia has been delivered to Henry

Triumph to compete in MN Circuit series

A unique Triumph TR7 will make its Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship debut at Brands Hatch later this month.

The car will be driven by Alastair Flack of Hamilton Motorsport, who has 17 years of rallying experience.

"The last time I competed in it was June, at the Abingdon Carnival," explained Flack. "We melted the engine, but it was only the second outing for the car and it's still very much in its infancy. We rebuilt the engine and it's all sorted now.

"We'll hopefully be doing the rest of the championship. We have an entry for Brands and two weeks after that we're going to Goodwood."

Flack has plenty of experience with TR7s, but this is the most modified car he has yet built.

"It's my fourth TR. I decided that all the modifications I had dreamed of putting in the last one should go into this one. It's 300bhp and very entertaining," he added.



Flack built V8 Triumph

Yamaha to Cross Country and Dakar

Yamaha has teamed up with Thorney Motorsport to provide works backing for the team, as it runs a MSA British Cross Country campaign ahead of a Dakar Rally assault in 2017.

Thorney Motorsport is run by ex-touring car driver John Thorne, who has extensive experience racing all-terrain vehicles, having competed in a Polaris and Arctic Wildcat.

Now Thorne will drive the Yamaha YXZ100R in the BCCC in preparation for the Dakar.

Yamaha will also support other teams, with a parts vehicle provided by Thorney Motorsport on hand at events.

Matt Bryant of Yamaha Motor Europe says Yamaha are committed to a long-term programme with the machine.

"Our plans encompass all elements of off-road racing – a factory team, development of customer cars, upgrades and a driver of the year award," said Bryant. "The YXZ100R is so good, we want the whole market to see it."



Sam and Josh used Ford Fiesta RS WRCs on Wales Rally GB in '15

Moffetts to contest full Irish Tarmac series

The Moffett brothers Sam and Josh will concentrate their efforts on the Irish Tarmac Championship and heavily revamped British Rally Championship this year.

The pairing plans to compete in all the Irish Tarmac rounds this season, as well as the BRC. They will compete in a pair of the latest-spec Ford Fiesta R5 Evos.

For 2016, it will boast a series of improvements, the biggest resulting in a more powerful 1.6-litre engine.

"We hope to have the cars before

Galway and get some testing done," Josh explained. "We got the chance to drive the newly upgraded car during a visit to M-Sport and both myself and Sam were hugely impressed with it. We looked at other options – but decided the Fiesta was the best."

He added that he was delighted to be driving a car created by M-Sport.

"It offers the complete package," said Josh. "As well as the car, their service for parts and their technical support is second to none."

Gallagher to use S8 Subaru Impreza on first Irish Tarmac round

Irish modified champion Declan Gallagher will enter the Galway International in a World Rally Car.

The deal to drive the S8-specification Subaru Impreza – which was used by Derek McGarrity to win the 2003 Circuit of Ireland – has been made possible with the help of Galway business 4x4 Exporter.

Speaking at the launch of the

Irish Tarmac Championship's first round, which takes place on February 5-7, Gallagher said he had taken a phone call just 24 hours earlier asking if he would drive the Impreza.

The car has been bought by former Tarmac champion Garry Jennings. Jennings said: "At the minute the plan is to hire the car out to those who want it for events – it's an investment for the team."

Gallagher has previously stated to *Motorsport News* that he wants to use an R5 or S2000 car in the Irish Tarmac series, while just before Christmas he sampled a McGeehan Motorsport Mini WRC.

In recent seasons he has campaigned a rear-wheel-drive Toyota Starlet to success in both the National Rally and Irish Tarmac series.

Wright hoping for 2016 title challenge with Fiesta R5 update

Former Billy Coleman Award winner Stephen Wright believes that he has the speed to challenge for a top-three finish on the Galway International Rally.

West Cork Rally podium finisher Wright is currently bolting the latest M-Sport Evo engine updates to his Ford Fiesta R5 and is hoping to have it ready in time for Saturday's New Year Stages Rally at Kirkistown, which he feels will serve as an ideal shakedown.

With a year of driving the R5 car under his belt, and improvements on the way, Wright is eager to get some points on the board early.

"I tested an upgraded car last month and it felt like a real step forward, so I hope that will be reflected in my stage times this season," he said. "We'll be aiming for a podium position in Galway – and at the moment I think it's a realistic target."

The Monaghan-based competitor has committed

to the Irish Tarmac Championship, one he says has the "best events and best stages" anywhere in Europe. Giving priority to R5/S2000 cars has also helped, he said.

"Recent changes are definitely going to make for a fascinating season and hopefully lead to a healthy level of competitors across all the categories," said Wright. "I'm probably an underdog for the title but it would be nice to spring a surprise."

LE MANS WINNER GUY SMITH WINS JACK FROST STAGES

PAGE 31



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RALLY NEWS

ROOKIE HOPEFUL TO MAKE HIS FULL RALLY DEBUT ON RED KITE

By Paul Evans

The 2015 Formula 1000 Rookie of the Year Tom Williams will make his adult rally debut in a Ford Fiesta R2 next month on the Red Kite Rally – providing he passes his driving test first.

Williams will be co-driven by Emma Morrison. The 17-year-old Oxfordshire art student finished sixth out of 23 Juniors in his first rally season last year in a Major Motorsport-run Nissan Micra.

Williams is now too old to return to the Junior category and is rushing to organise his road driving test before the Red Kite Rally begins on February 21.

Despite having only done the F1000 Tarmac events until

now, he will concentrate on gravel rallies in 2016, fitting them in with school work.

The son of David Williams, who rallied a Nissan 240RS in national events with great success in the late 1980s and '90s, Williams will test the M-Sport built Fiesta in mid-Wales, where family friend and Subaru Rally Team USA multiple American rally champion David Higgins will offer him tips and advice.

"The Red Kite will be my first rally on gravel so the aim is to learn, finish and not crash," said Williams. "The plan is to concentrate on gravel events, starting with small ones and building up to larger events. We're not going to do a championship in 2016; it's all about learning to drive on gravel."

Williams will feature in R2



Williams: Graduates from F1000s



Burns: Williams' godfather

WILLIAMS FOLLOWING IN GODFATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

That's Tom the rally driver", said a fellow pupil at Shiplake College, as Tom Williams walked onto the cricket pitch for a photoshoot in his rally overalls. It's a pretty cool school nickname, by anyone's admission.

In his first season of rallying, Tom won Rookie of the Year in the Formula 1000 series, after three fourth-place finishes in his Nissan Micra saw him finish sixth out of 23 drivers. Having turned 17 in December, Tom is too old to return to the Junior category, so instead the family has bought him a Ford Fiesta R2 in which he'll contest a variety of small gravel rallies to gain experience (see above).

It's perhaps written in the stars that he'd take up rallying. His parents, David and Sadie, won the 2007 Peking to Paris Motor Challenge in a 1938 Chevrolet Fanguio Coupe. Indeed, David was well known in British national rallying in the late 1980s and early '90s for his exploits in a Nissan 240RS. And he is even better known for guiding Richard Burns from the Under 17 Car Club to become a World Rally champion. Burns was a man Tom Williams could call his godfather.

Tom is now following the same hard work ethos that Burns did.

There is no way Burns would have been allowed to start a round of the Peugeot Challenge unless every square inch of his 205 was immaculate, and now, 26 years later, it's Tom who has to prepare his own car, polished to his father's very high Genesis Design standards. And, like Burns before him, Tom has to learn to rally drive in an underpowered car on small events before there is any talk of moving up.

"I've always liked cars, and two years ago my dad took me to watch Rallye Deutschland and I've been hooked on rallying ever since," says Tom. "I did a couple of rally school driving days when I was 15, and one morning my dad left the house at 0500hrs. He'd done some research on how to start rallying and was off to see a round of the Formula 1000 series! There he met Simon Mauger from Major Motorsport, and that's how my first season of rallying came about.

"At 16, I was a little late into the Junior category, as most of the other drivers had done karting and were in their second year of rallying. It was great fun, I've made some good friends and I would have scored my first podium, had I not put the Micra up on two wheels on the last stage at Pembrey and missed out on third place by one second!

"I would have liked to return to Formula 1000, but now I'm 17 and too

old! Instead, we're going to concentrate on gravel rallies in 2016 in a Fiesta R2. I want to be competitive and not drive around at the back of the field, but I'm also under orders not to crash the car. We want to do small rallies, learn the trade and get quicker step-by-step."

The left-hand-drive Fiesta R2, with its sequential gearbox and more power, is very different to the Micra. Tom will have a number of driving training sessions with David Higgins. He's another British driver his father helped in his early career.

Under the guidance of Williams Sr, the multiple American rally champion once used to prepare his own Peugeot Challenge car out of the same garage that Burns did a few years before him.

They all became close friends, with Higgins doing gravel notes for Burns in the Asia-Pacific and World Rally championships.

"Nothing in rallying has changed since David helped the likes of Richard and myself in our careers, so his way

of doing things works as well now as it did all those years ago," says Higgins. "Nothing is handed to you on a plate. You have to do the hard work yourself and learn from the bottom up. So many people fall at the first hurdle or have too much too soon, but he didn't allow that to happen to Richard or myself and he's not going to let it happen to Tom either. It was a real honour when

David phoned to ask if I could help Tom. Tom wants to learn and do it right. He hasn't come into the sport too young, and the way British rallying is on the up, I think the timing could be just about right for him."

Only time will tell if Tom's rallying career takes off, but with a godfather and family friend in Burns and Higgins, he's got a better chance than most.

Paul Evans



Junior F1000 rookie of the year Williams

SHOW REVIEW

THE HIGHLIGHTS TO THE START OF THE 2016 SEASON

Motorsport News staff pick their favourite Autosport Show moments



Central stage housed Ford GT, Porsche 919 and Honda



Williams stand was a crowd-pleaser



Short oval show was a Saturday highlight for MJ

SHORT OVAL SHOW

MATT JAMES

One of the first things that fans came across as they entered the Short Oval section of the Autosport International Show was a display of Hot Rods through the ages.

Four examples were collected to highlight the progress of the sport since 1963.

The initial design was put together to create a cheaper version of stock car racing. By using a Fiat Topolino body and the nose of a pre-war Riley, Doug Warner came up with the cut-price car, which was to take part in non-contact racing.

Little did Warner (and friend Bill Morris, the boss of the Hednesford Hills Raceway) know just what a hit they would have on their hands.

Spedeworth, the short oval promotions experts, changed the format for its display this year with all of its categories mixed in together, and a vast array of highly successful machines were laid out next to each other. As befits this fan-friendly branch of the sport, none of the machines was roped off – it truly was access all areas. That enabled the fans to once again get a first-hand glance at some of the expert engineering that goes in to the chassis.

BriSCA F1 cars might look tough and mean, but that doesn't mean the graft that goes in to perfecting them isn't at a level higher than a number of circuit racing cars.

ADRENALINE ZONE

ROB LADBROOK

There is no greater lure into motorsport than the sights, sounds and smells of cars in full flow.

Sure, shiny show machines on stands do pique my interest – particularly if they're as truly stunning as the new Ford GT World Endurance Championship challenger, or even as intriguing as the grime-caked Le Mans-winning Porsche 919 Hybrid LMP1, both of which were found on the main Autosport Stage.

But static cars never truly have the same wow factor as their moving counterparts. My highlight for this year was the aptly named Adrenaline Zone. The Live Action Arena is great,

with its stunt shows and a variety of demonstrations, but having a go yourself really gives you something to remember. The area included a karting oval and a superb Thrill Ride attraction run by British marque Ginetta. For a few quid you could have a series of stunt laps in a G40R with a professional driver. The indoor setting acted as an amplifier for the revs, the tyre squeal and every pop and bang that makes the sport so exciting.

If you fancied club racing, outside the NEC you could try your hand at highly addictive Autosolo runs.

If you were at the show and didn't do any, you missed out.



Autotesting is very addictive



Thrill rides in Ginetta were a treat for the show-goers



Dunlop BTCC stand became a busy place



The F1 Racing stand showed off grand prix machinery

THE VATANENS

JACK BENYON



Ari Vatanen (right) also announced Vauxhall Motorsport men

As father-son relationships go, there aren't many more difficult dads to match in achievement terms than Ari Vatanen. His son Max will be pushing to follow in Ari's footsteps by winning the British Rally Championship in 2016. Ari won it in 1976 and '80 before going on to win the world title in 1981.

When Max appeared on the BRC stand to help launch the DMACK British Rally Team, which he will run with this year, the 25-year-old showed no sign of being star struck by Ari's achievements.

"I'm not Ari number two," declared the Finn. "I'm Max number one!" The steely belief the Finn is showing is every bit his father's. Ari had a number of challenging moments in his career, but his pace was always there (in fact, it still is if you watched him in an Escort at Rallyday). Let's hope Max shares those traits with Ari; winning the title 40 years after his father would make a fantastic story...

GRUNDY'S CLIO

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Before the show, it was announced that a Renault UK Clio Cup driver was launching his car's livery at the NEC. So what? There are a plethora of unveilings at ASI, what could possibly be significant about this?

Well, it was significant. And very unexpected. Tom Grundy's 2016 Clio has easily the most striking livery of any car in the category's history, and quite a few other series as well.

It has a great story behind it too. At Brands Hatch at the start of last year, Grundy was looking for a toy for his team boss's child. He found a NASCAR featuring a similar livery to what he'll be racing with this year and set about a design. First his helmet featured the pattern and now his car has it too.

"It's had a great response," says Grundy. His competitors certainly won't be able to use the 'I didn't see him in the mirrors' excuse now.



Tom Grundy's psychedelic Clio livery pleased our reporter

CAN-AM AT 50

PAUL LAWRENCE



Monster McLaren helped launch Can-Am's 50th anniversary

I always think that competition cars should get the hairs on the back of your neck twitching, even when parked. A Can-Am car just does that and when it fires up and runs, be prepared to be moved in every sense.

So, the presence of two of these early 1970s monsters on the Silverstone Classic stand was a real highlight of the show. In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the world's most outrageous

sports-racing category, a pair of races at the Classic will top a six-race mini-series in 2016.

On show was John Grant's stunning 1970 McLaren M8C/D and the even rarer March 717 of Richards Dodkins, a car developed by Chris Amon and Howden Ganley and raced when new by Helmut Kelleners. They looked spectacular, and vast, inside an NEC hall. At 180mph on Hangar Straight they'll be even more impressive.

SHOWMAN SOLBERG

DAVID EVANS



Solberg was a star attraction on stage and in the action arena

Ari Vatanen doesn't do much co-driving. Never really has done. So, when he stepped out of the right-hand side of Petter Solberg's Citroen Xsara WRC in Birmingham last week, it was quite a moment.

And the previous nine minutes had been quite a moment for the 1981 World Rally champion. There had been the obligatory donuts, big drifts, lots of speed and time spent on the happy stick and then, as the car was passing in front of the crowd, Ari was on his own in the Xsara. Petter was on the roof. Not much surprises AV these

days, but you get the feeling that did. Just a little bit.

"He is the showman," he said when he climbed out. "Everything is for the people and he really connects with them, I love this. But, at the same time, behind all of this, he is so professional in the preparation and everything he does. Petter is working very hard at what he's doing and he's making a great example to the younger drivers."

Listening to one hero talking so graciously about another one was a genuine privilege in Birmingham last week.

WRC PREVIEW



Ogier (centre) will lead VW for fourth season



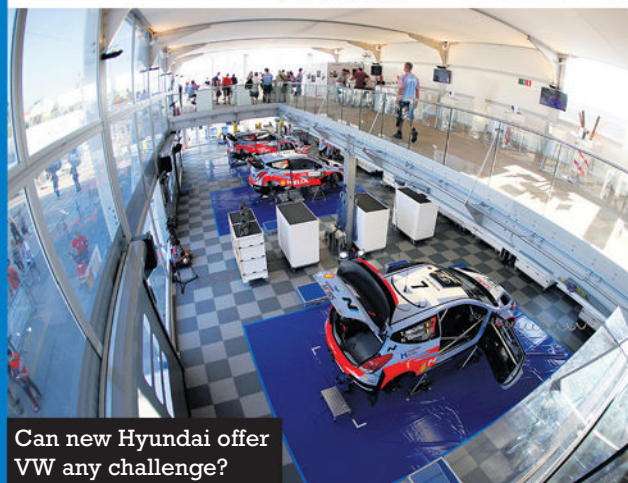
VW's Polo has only lost five rallies in its three years in the WRC

CAN THE FIA STOP OGIER IN 2016?

Is rulemaker's change Ogier's only obstacle? By David Evans



Ogier won in Mexico despite road sweeping



Can new Hyundai offer VW any challenge?



FIA has changed running order rules

Twenty-four words from Paris last September. That could be what defines this year's World Rally Championship. Seriously.

The communication from the World Motor Sport Council revealed a carefully worded and apparently innocuous statement designed in some part to send Sebastien Ogier directly up the wall.

Or at least it would have done 12 months ago. The world champion's far more sanguine about such things now. Another barrier in his way is another barrier for him to knock down. He laughs in the face of the FIA's barriers.

The words? "In the interests of both safety and fairness, from 2016 P1 competitors running under Rally 2 regulations will restart last in the P1 group."

Last year, P1 competitors running under Rally 2 regulations ran at the front of the P1 group on Saturday and Sunday. Translated, Ogier was relieved of his role of Saturday road sweeper when the likes of, for example, Robert Kubica or Lorenzo Bertelli retired on Friday.

Not this time. Those boys will be at the back of the pack. You lead the championship, you open the road on Friday and Saturday. Period.

Make no mistake, this is the FIA trying to even the field, trying to peg Ogier back. There were reportedly voices in that Place de la Concorde meeting that wanted the championship leader (Ogier) first on the road for all three days.

This kind of politicking and scheming against the supersonic Seb almost caused him to walk away from the sport 18 months ago. Fortunately for us, he stayed to provide the kind of WRC benchmark that has become a French tradition in the series for the last 12 years.

Ogier will rightly point to places like Sweden last year, where he won despite being up front for pretty much two days – Bertelli was ahead but shunted early doors Saturday. But this year will test his new level-headed inner peace as much as it will test his pace and performance aboard his VW Polo.

With all of the above accepted, this year offers Jari-Matti Latvala his best chance yet of challenging Ogier. His kit's cut from the same metal and the Finn comes with a new way of thinking this time around. For the first half of the year, Latvala's focus will be firmly on podiums.

Last year, he was blown away by the end of March. Returning from round three in Mexico, J-ML was 62 points behind his team-mate. You can't come back from that kind of deficit. Well, you can, but actually we all know you can't.

So this time around, it's a consistent and more conservative Latvala until Finland. When he gets home, he'll be back to his banzai best and chasing a hat-trick and his fourth win in Jyväskylä.

Andreas Mikkelsen will be in the mix this time around, but it's probably unrealistic to talk of a three-way Volkswagen fight for this year's drivers' title.

Now, Hyundai... what do we think? The New Generation looks quick and the team is certainly talking it up. Having delayed delivery by six months, it really has to be on the money.

It would be easy to talk about the World Rally Championship falling into a holding pattern, awaiting clearance to land in a world with more power, more downforce and even more fever in 2017.

That's not the case, certainly not in the case of the events, with a 50-mile stage in Mexico and a September trip back to China on the cards.

On the stages, if the i20 can challenge the Polo – and the indications are good – then we could be in for a classic season. Volkswagen and Ogier have really had it all their own way for the last three years, so it'll be fascinating to see how they respond to being beaten. Did I actually just say that?

And then there's the Alzenau sideshow: Thierry Neuville versus Hayden Paddon. Everybody's making all the right noises about there being no number one in the team, talking to them these days is almost like having a George Orwell novel quoted back to you.

But don't forget, some animals are more equal than others...

The struggle for power within that team is almost impossible to avoid and will provide a genuine spectacle this season. And the best bit is that they all have a genuine claim: Neuville was the undisputed team leader until mid-season last year, Paddon's on the up, doing everything right and has the management on side. Dani Sordo's the lovely bloke who will upset the order every now and then by caning the pair of them, and then there's Kevin Abbring waiting in the wings to pick up the pieces.

Can't wait. Mads Ostberg will, no doubt, be back on the boil with M-Sport. The Norwegian was caught between two stools last year, trying to please Citroen while risking the speed needed to hit podiums and potential rally wins. This year, he needs to focus his right foot and keep the Fiesta's throttle pinned. He knows the car, he knows the team and he's well worth a tenner on round two.

It's hard to know what to expect from Eric Camilli, but it'll be interesting to see how the dynamic plays out for the new boy – especially with Elfyn Evans warmed up and ready to leap off the bench at the slightest hint of a hamstring twinge from the Frenchman.

The rebadged Abu Dhabi World Rally Team will tackle the first two rounds with Kris Meeke, but after that, who knows. It could be six, it could be 10 rallies. This year is about next year for the Dungannon man and his Parisian Citroen team.

Either way, there's rarely a dull moment when Meeke's around and let's not forget Craig Breen makes his debut in a factory car this season.

Holding pattern? Are you kidding? ■

WRC TEAM GUIDE

Photos: mckleinimagedatabase.com

VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT POLO R WRC

The ones with everything to lose. But will they lose anything? In all honesty, it's very unlikely. Volkswagen has been quick to play down any improvements to the Polo R WRC for 2016. For sure, there's no revolution beneath the skin, but there will be tweaks, and tweaking something that's already nearly perfect can only make it... even harder to beat. Outwardly, Volkswagen's presence in the service park is likely to be toned down post-emissions crisis – let's hope that's the only effect of a scandal that rocked the automotive world last year.



1 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia

Earlier this month, the sport's official website listed Ogier as the 2016 World Rally champion. There must have been some who wondered whether it was really worth editing that particular page. Who can beat Ogier this year? Across the spread of the season, being brutally honest, nobody. There's always hope though, even if it is false.

2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila

Big year for the Finn this one. Big year for the Finn last year. And the one before that... On his day, Latvala's a match for his French team-mate. Trouble is, can we rely on one of the nicest Finns around to put together 52 of those perfect days to carry the fight to Ogier through 2016? Let's be optimistic. Let's say yes.

9 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger

Victory in Spain on the penultimate round last season will undoubtedly have relieved some pressure for the Norwegian, but a co-driver change at this level doesn't come without its potential pitfalls. Anders Jaeger's a new voice in his ear and that will take time to get used to.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT NEW GENERATION i20 WRC

Now the pressure's on. For the last two years, Hyundai has been able to deflect questions of its performance with a nod and a wink at the i20 WRC. That was the rally car team principal Michel Nandan was never that keen on building: it was always a compromise in terms of size, specification and development time. The New Generation i20 WRC is the real deal, this is the car Nandan and his Korean paymasters will want to be judged on. And, having bought themselves an extra half year (the car was due to be competing for the second half of last season), hitting the ground at anything less than flat-chat won't be acceptable.



3 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul

The Belgian must have thought he past all that proving himself stuff. And to listen to the team, and to Neuville himself, he has nothing to prove. Nonsense. This is a very big year for a driver touted as Ogier's only real competition just 12 months ago. Fortunately, he's super-talented and more than able to cope.

4 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti

There's absolutely nothing left for Dani Sordo (inset) to prove. He's not going to win in Sweden, he is, in fact unlikely to win on anything resembling a loose surface, but look out on asphalt – especially in Germany – where he'll be at the sharp end. And he'll be a reliable and solid source of points when required, perhaps the main reason he's #1.

20 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard

The coming man has arrived. And with his arrival comes expectation. He's got the big deal, the equal status and, from Sweden, the same equipment as his team-mates. This team is his for the taking, but he'll have to conquer Ogier's heir apparent, Neuville. That means winning some rallies along the way.

Kevin Abbring/Sebastian Marshall

We're not likely to see much of Abbring this season – potentially even less than last year – with him being buried under a mountain of i20 R5 and then 2017 car test and development work. When he does come out, he will at least be familiar with the 2016 car, having done much running in it last year.

M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM FORD FIESTA RS WRC

Tricky year this one for M-Sport. Like the rest of rally world, it's all eyes on 2017 as the sport gears-up for significant regulation change and all-new World Rally Cars. M-Sport's rivals Volkswagen and Hyundai can rely on significant resource to run the 2016 programme alongside the test and development effort for next season, but that's likely to stretch the Cumbrian squad – especially in September and October, when the intensity in both areas will go up a level. After a year with up-and-coming drivers, it'll be fascinating to see what a rally winner like Mads Ostberg can do with the Fiesta.



5 Mads Ostberg/Ola Floene

Like Mikko Hirvonen a couple of years ago, Mads Ostberg has decided to head home to M-Sport. It didn't work for the Finn, but Ostberg's in a different place in his career. And it's very important that he makes it work. He'll be happier at work in the Fiesta than he was in the DS3 and when he's happy, he's quick.

6 Eric Camilli/Nicolas Klinger

He might not have competed in a World Rally Car before, but Camilli (inset, above) does have a fair amount of mileage from testing TMG's Toyota Yaris WRC last season. He's only started 10 WRC rounds in his career. Equally, he's 28 and not short on life experience. Camilli's a gamble. Let's see if it pays off.

Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry

Big change for the Welshman, who will start the season in a slower car (Fiesta R5 not RS WRC) and with a different voice in his ear as Craig Parry replaces Dan Barritt. Evans has delivered some interesting pre-season fighting talk, now he needs to practice what he's preached after dismissing the decision to out him for Camilli.

ABU DHABI TOTAL WORLD RALLY TEAM DS3 WRC

Very much a scaled down programme from Citroen this season with PH Sport running the DS3 WRCs and Abu Dhabi Racing providing a chunk of the cash required to keep the cars on the road. Development testing at the end of last year indicates there will be upgrades to the DS3 for this season, but with Citroen's focus firmly on 2017, the chances of winning rallies are slim. The programme has yet to be confirmed beyond Monte and Sweden, but don't be surprised to see them on a fair few European rounds.



7 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle

Meeke's new deal will force a rethink of pressure-related press conference questions. With nothing to prove, Meeke (inset, above) can relax and enjoy the rallies he does this season, while saving the serious face for testing the 2017-bound C3 WRC, where there's massive potential for the Dungannon-Versailles alliance longer-term.

8 Stephane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau

Solid but not sensational is a fair way of describing the five events he did in a DS3 WRC at the end of last season. Lefebvre still has much to prove this year, but he starts 2016 with good experience of the rallies and the car he'll be driving. His programme starts in Monte, but that's as much as we know for now...

Craig Breen/Scott Martin

... actually, that last bit's not quite right – we know that Lefebvre will step aside and hand Breen the keys to the #8 car in Sweden. Like his French colleague, this is the biggest year of the Irishman's life. He has the opportunity he's dreamed of. Time to forget two troubled years in Peugeot's 208 and focus on what lies ahead.

DRIVE DMACK WORLD RALLY TEAM FORD FIESTA RS WRC

DMACK has been around the World Rally Championship for the last five years, but this is the first time it's committed to every round – let alone every round in a World Rally Car. The team's Ford Fiesta RS WRC is tried and tested and offers the firm the best possible opportunity to show what the product is capable of at rallying's highest level as it chases a full manufacturer programme for 2017.



12 Ott Tanak/Raigo Molder

The Estonian remains one of the fastest and most exciting prospects in world rallying. He struggled last season and looked like he might have blown his chance (for the second time), but he's back. What we need to see this season is more of the exceptional speed he showed in Poland and less time in Mexican lakes.

WRC PREVIEW: THE BRITS

Kris Meeke won't be at every round this year, but it's all about 2017, he tells **David Evans**

CAN MEEKE AWAKEN



Briton is happy to miss 2016 rounds to get new car right

Kris Meeke smiles at the irony. Finally, he gets the deal he's been dreaming of for much of his adult life... and he ends up doing fewer rallies than he has in the past two seasons.

And he couldn't be happier. Genuinely.

Instead of pounding 14 rounds of the World Rally Championship, Meeke will be clocking up somewhere north of 10,000 testing miles aboard Citroen's all-new C3 WRC.

He will be out on a handful of rallies, maybe more. But anything over and above that would, to Meeke's mind, jeopardise what really matters: next year. Twelve months from now, Meeke and Citroen need to be hovering somewhere just above the ground, ready to hit it hard. And very, very fast.

"The excitement of the announcement has passed now," says Meeke. "I wanted to get away a little bit over Christmas and I've done that. I needed to switch off. Now I feel satisfied and just really keen to get on with the job."

This will be a year of strange sensations. For now, nothing has changed. At the time of writing Kris and co-driver Paul Nagle are getting ready for their pre-Monte test. A day

in the mountains ahead of the start will help blow the last remaining festive vestiges away and focus them on the task in hand.

And after round one comes Sweden. But then the big gap: the long layoff as the WRC criss-crosses the Atlantic bound for Mexico and Argentina.

But by then, Meeke's mind will be elsewhere. "Around Argentina time," he says, "I'll have another job on [testing the 2017 car] and what's going on in Argentina won't even enter my head. Yes, it was my first win last year, but getting next year up and running is so important to me now."

Meeke's candid enough to admit that, given the choice, he wouldn't want to tackle all 14 rallies in 2016.

"It was never going to be an option for me to do all of the rallies," he says. "But I'm convinced that what I have is the best of both worlds. I want to be at the factory and working with the engineers all the time on this new car - that's the future. I have the chance to have real, genuine input into this car and this team's future. That's what I want to do. If I was away and doing 14 rallies, then I simply couldn't have the opportunity to have the same impact with the team that I want. Doing 14 rallies would be a hell of an undertaking and I'm just not sure there would be time for that."

"There's no doubt, this is the most exciting time of my professional life. All the time I've been at Citroen we've

been free-wheeling, for want of a better expression. Not now, Citroen's back and absolutely determined to get the whole thing back to where it was.

"I've been talking to the engineers in the factory and they're saying just the same thing. There's a buzz about the rally team again now, it's a completely different mindset. It's been difficult for them as well, trying to maintain motivation when there was no development coming and nobody really knew what the future held."

So, the French will be easy to spot in the Alps this week, they'll be the ones with a spring in their step and a knowing look in their eye.

Volkswagen's quick to tout its 2017 mule Polo, establishing an advantage in the propaganda war. But, as team principal Yves Matton pointed out last year, Citroen's in the same ballpark in terms of development. And when Hannover decamps to Leon and Villa Carlos Paz in the spring, it's just possible that the old masters might move past the nouveau riche in the test race to next year.

With that in mind, Meeke's relaxed about his event calendar for this year.

"We'll be doing six, eight maybe even 10 rallies," he adds. "Nothing has been decided yet. After Sweden, we'll probably go to events like Portugal, Poland we should be doing and maybe somewhere like Corsica. There's not much point in going to places like



Photos: mckleinimagedatabase.com and Gary Jones

A SLEEPING GIANT?

Finland, where I have a fair bit of experience of the rallies; obviously I'd love to go to Finland, but we'll probably be testing the new car there for a week or so. It's not like I'm going to be short on experience of those roads this year."

With the car run by PH Sport, Meeke is adamant his Abu Dhabi World Rally Team DS3 WRC will be run in 2015 specification. There is no development coming for this season.

Being a competitive soul, doesn't the fear of a bit of an ass-kicking from Volkswagen and possibly Hyundai worry Meeke?

"I'll be honest," he says. "It's not like we haven't had a bit of an ass-kicking for the last two years... It's going to be really different to the last two years; we've been pushing like hell to try to prove ourselves and try to get this opportunity for the last couple of seasons and now we have it."

"Don't get me wrong, there will be pressure, there's always pressure, but we're not going out to try to win these events. Of course we're competitive and we'll be trying, but there's no development on our car and we're on these rallies to stay sharp and get more experience. That's what it's all about for us."

"The others will go another step, certainly Volkswagen and you'd hope Hyundai would be stepping up a little bit with the new car, but we're not really there for the fight. That's not the point."

The point is to provide genuine resistance to the Ogier-Volkswagen domination of the World Rally Championship.

"I'm not denying that it's going to be a massive task," says Meeke. "Volkswagen is so strong, it would be phenomenal to be able to stand toe-to-toe with them in 12 months' time. That's what we have to be aiming for. I've always said that the only way to beat Volkswagen is to do everything, *everything* absolutely perfectly. Everything, from every side has to be spot on. It remains to be seen if we can do that, but certainly there's a lot of belief in this team."

The other thing Citroen has in spades is experience and experience of adapting to regulation change. The Parisians have been competing in the world championship almost since the turn of the Millennium, which means they've been through the process of transforming a fully active Xsara WRC into a car tuned via mechanical differentials; Citroen was also around for the downsizing from two-litre to 1.6 and few will forget the seamless transition from C4 WRC to DS3 WRC. The results speak for themselves. This is a team well accustomed to evolution.

So, it knows what the deployment of an electronically controlled centre diff's going to do to the new car. On top of that, Citroen has more data on what a 36mm – rather than the current 33mm

– restrictor will do to an engine boosting to 2.5 bar than its competitors.

That's the advantage of running a World Touring Car Championship programme; the C-Elysee has been a mobile dyno and data gatherer for next year's C3 WRC.

"I think we're in pretty good shape," says Meeke.

But what does good shape look like? He adds: "We've got a mammoth test programme ahead of us, but this time next year I want to be going to Monte Carlo with thousands of kilometres under my belt. That's what we have to aiming at."

And what does success in 2017 look like?

"The target has to be to be competitive, with the opportunity to win rallies on pace," he answers. "The championship's not necessarily a target for next year, but why not if we get the chance? In 2018, it's simple, we target the drivers' and manufacturers' championships."

Question is, will anybody have toppled Volkswagen or Ogier in the next 12 months. What would Meeke prefer a recently deflated and defeated Ogier and mates or a Frenchman looking to start his fourth consecutive title defence?

Meeke's not really biting. "We're building our future here," he says. "I'm not too concerned with who's fighting who for this year. We

have the slate wiped clean and ready for 2017, that's where we're at."

He's not getting away with it that easily. Come on, what's coming this year?

"I honestly can't see Sebastien being beaten," he says. "We'll have to see what Hyundai come up with, but for Hayden Paddon, maybe this is coming a little bit too early. For all the talk about him, he only finished ninth in last year's championship; can he challenge Ogier off the back of that? I don't think so."

"A lot will depend on Thierry [Neuville] and there has to be a question mark over whether or not he can get back to where he was. No, I can't see anybody troubling Ogier."

Jari-Matti Latvala?

"Jari-Matti has an incredible turn of speed," Meeke says. "You can't deny that, but he still hasn't been able to find that consistency. It's tough, but, no, I don't think he will beat Ogier."

So, Meeke will face a four-time champion on SS1 in a year's time. Maybe that's not so bad. Maybe Ogier will have become complacent about winning...

Meeke laughs: "I think you'll find that a driver winning the way he's winning is a driver full of confidence and a driver full of confidence is never easy to beat."

Just as well Meeke and Citroen have a year to practice then. ■



Breen had a tricky 2015 in 208

Contrasting fortunes: Evans and Breen

Mexico will be a lonely old place. After enjoying the company of a brace of frontrunning Brits for the last 26 rounds of the World Rally Championship, *MN* will be in Leon without Kris Meeke or Elfyn Evans.

Meeke's absence from the North American stages sits easily with him. The same cannot be said for Evans. The Welshman will contest Monte Carlo and Sweden, but after that his programme has yet to be decided. One thing's for sure, he'll start the year in a Ford Fiesta R5, not the RS WRC he ended last season in.

Whether you believe Evans has been harshly treated by M-Sport or not, one thing is absolutely certain. His demotion looks to have fired him up like never before.

He will spearhead an M-Sport assault on this year's WRC2 title – something which would help secure more customers for the Cumbrians – as well as fight for the revived British Rally Championship.

For Evans, a WRC2 title would act as a vehicle to, hopefully, return him to the front line of world championship action.

"My priority," he says, "is to be back in a World Rally Car as soon as possible."

What is it they say about not missing it until it's gone? Absence, it seems has already made Evans' heart grow fonder for what he's had for the last two seasons.

Evans, his new co-driver Craig Parry, and the revitalised Fiesta versus Esapekka Lappi in a Skoda Fabia R5 does have a tasty ring to it. This year's WRC2 race has some real spark to it again.

If there's one man Evans shouldn't talk to pre-season it's Craig Breen. The Irishman couldn't wait to get out of the second division and he couldn't be more delighted to have landed a big time seat with the Abu Dhabi World Rally Team.

Breen will be driving a Citroen DS3 WRC as team-mate to Meeke, starting in Sweden and continuing... somewhere.

"I don't know anything really about the programme," says Breen, in a tone that indicates he couldn't care less about the programme, not now he's got the right set of keys in his hand.

By some distance, this is Breen's biggest chance. It's not too much of a stretch to say the Waterford 25-year-old will go head-to-head with Stephane Lefebvre for the second Citroen seat in 2017. Some in Lefebvre's hometown might quibble with that, but if the team's top brass was happy with him, why would they have given Breen the shot in the first place? Surely it would be better just to give the seat and as much experience as possible to their chosen one.

The reason is, there is no chosen one, yet.

It'll be a toughie for Breen and co-driver Scott Martin though. World Rally Car outings were something of a rarity while they were struggling to find the finish – any finish – in Peugeot's 208 T16.

That said, this will be Breen's fourth start in Sweden and he finished ninth overall in a Fiesta RS WRC last time he was there in '14. The DS3's not renowned as easy to jump into, but Breen's adaptable. Especially when he's got sight of the golden ticket.



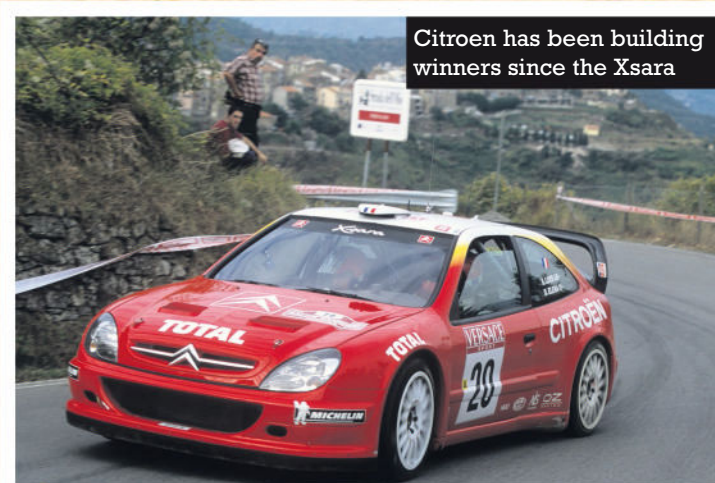
Meeke thinks fighting VW in '16 will be tough...



...but hopes to beat Latvala (r) and co with C3 in 2017



Much of Meeke's year will be spent with Citroen's test team



Citroen has been building winners since the Xsara

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WRC PREVIEW: SEASON GUIDE

Photos: mckleinimagedatabase.com



Monte provides the perfect and most scenic place to start the year

R1 Monte Carlo Rally

January 20-24

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Monaco/Gap

The world's best-known rally and the best place in the world to start the season. Monaco start leads the crews into two Thursday night stages on the road back up to Gap. After two days in the Alps, it's back south for a Sunday based out of the principality and including a run over the classic Col de Turini. Add in the usual mix of snow, ice and sunshine and you've got the perfect way to open 2016.

R2 Rally Sweden

February 11-14

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Karlstad

The season's only all-snow rally – providing the sub-zero temperatures play ball. When the weather's right, standing stageside to see cars coming at more than 100mph on a surface we could barely stand up on is a sight to behold. When it's raining, it's rubbish. And a stud-saving farce. Let's hope it doesn't rain. As usual, the crews will cross the border to Norway for the opening.

R3 Rally Mexico

March 3-6

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Leon

Mexico is one of the seasonal highlights, with the underground Thursday night crowd-pleaser in Guanajuato the perfect way to start one of the most colourful and entertaining events of the season. And that's never been truer than this year, when the organisers have planned a 50-mile

stage on Sunday morning. Sting in the tail doesn't come close.

R4 Rally Argentina

April 21-24

Last year's winner: Kris Meeke

Based: Villa Carlos Paz

Undoubtedly one of the best-supported motorsport events in the world. As an example of how much fever these folk have, the tents are up and the fires roaring on top of El Condor when the crews pass by on the recce... five days before they're back at full speed. There will, however, have to be a big improvement in spectator safety this time around.

R5 Rally of Portugal

May 19-22

Last year's winner: Jari-Matti Latvala

Based: Matosinhos

If the South Americans are looking for a model to follow in terms of how to make spectator safety work, they should look no further than Portugal. The Portuguese have done a fantastic job of moving their rally back to its heartland, while keeping hundreds of thousands of fans in line. Last year's Fafe powerstage was one of the televisual highlights of the season.

R6 Rally Italy

June 9-12

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Alghero

Sardinia's not Sanremo. Which is a shame because, historically speaking, Sanremo is rally town as far as Italy's concerned. That said, Sardinia's move from Olbia to Alghero has improved the event considerably and opened up the potential



Tyres will be key in Sweden

for a stage in the island's capital Cagliari. The jury remains out on the rough roads and this event's determination to be the new Acropolis.

R7 Rally Poland

June 30-July 3

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Mikolajki

Much of central Europe makes the journey to Mikolajki and the Polish lake district for this staggeringly fast rally. Last year's event was run in the middle of a heat wave, but if the rain comes – and it's not unheard of in this part of the world at this time of the year – then that can cause concern on the soft, sandy stages. One for the brave.

R8 Rally Finland

July 28-31

Last year's winner: Jari-Matti Latvala

Based: Jyvaskyla

Having popped one brave pill, it's worth keeping another handy for Finland and for the World Rally Championship's annual flying lesson. The recipe for this one is simple: straight roads, uber-quick corners and big crests. Then line up the full quota of World Rally Cars and watch them go ballistic. And, if a Finn wins, Sunday night in Jyvaskyla really is a sight to behold...

R9 Rally Germany

August 18-21

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Trier

The first asphalt encounter of the year and it's one of the most changeable and, if the weather turns wet, among the most technical and tricky, with widely varying grip levels available in the country lanes,



A 50-mile test on Sunday could make Mexico incredibly dramatic

military test tracks and vineyards. If Hyundai's New Generation i20 is on song, expect Dani Sordo and Thierry Neuville to challenge Volkswagen's authority at home.

R10 Rally China

September 8-11

Last year's winner: N/A

Based: Huairou

Seventeen years after the World Rally Championship left China, it's back and it's back at the behest of the manufacturers. China's massive – and growing – car market demands the presence of global motorsport series, which is why the WRC will land 40 miles north of Beijing in Huairou for a step into the unknown in September. The all-asphalt event will be new to all.

R11 Rally of France

September 29-October 2

Last year's winner: Jari-Matti Latvala

Based: Ajaccio

This event polarised opinion last year. Those who loved the compact and staggeringly popular (at least when Sebastien Loeb was in town) Alsace base couldn't come to terms with a nomadic Tour of Corsica – especially not in the torrential rain. But Corsica and its unique challenge of 10,000 corners is here to stay. Hopefully the organisers will get a dry run this time, allowing them to exploit what remains one of world rallying's gems.

R12 Rally Spain

October 13-16

Last year's winner: Andreas Mikkelsen

Based: Salou

Tried and tested format of a gazillion autographs followed by a run around a couple of Montjuic car parks works for a Thursday night loosener in Barcelona. Then it's a day on the dirt and a weekend on the asphalt on some great Spanish stages. If the powerstage stays the same as last year, we can expect Sebastien Ogier to have that Duesaigues left-hander nailed...

R13 Rally GB

October 27-30

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Deeside

Not the final round for the first time since 2012, but not the unpopular move to September – or even April – some feared. Will we notice a difference in conditions, coming forward a fortnight? Not a bit of it. There are rumblings of route changes (within the national boundary), with Andrew Kellitt toiling away in a darkened room to come up with an even more challenging itinerary than last year. Can't wait for one of the longest serving events on the calendar.

R14 Rally Australia

November 17-20

Last year's winner: Sebastien Ogier

Based: Coffs Harbour

If the championship does go down to the wire, expect plenty of running order bitching, with the man in the box seat penalised to the tune of two days at the front of the field. Running two months later than last year will probably weatherproof the event and guarantee 2016 a sunny sign-off on some of the most interesting and photogenic stages of the season.



Portugal controlled fans in 2015



Can Neuville (r) challenge VWs on home turf?



Finland has unique spectators for popular event



Britain's round changes dates

TOP 20 MONTE ENTRIES

NO.	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER (CAR)
1	Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2	Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
3	Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)
4	Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 WRC)
5	Mads Ostberg/Ola Floene (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
6	Eric Camilli/Nicolas Klinger (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
7	Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Citroen DS 3 WRC)
8	Stephane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroen DS 3 WRC)
9	Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
12	Ott Tanak/Raigo Molder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
16	Robert Kubica/Maciek Szczepaniak (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
17	Bryan Bouffier/Victor Bellotto (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
20	Hayden Paddon/John Kennard (Hyundai i20 WRC)
37	Lorenzo Bertelli/Simone Scattolin (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
32	Armin Kremer/Pirmin Winklhofer (Skoda Fabia R5)
33	Julien Maurin/Benjamin Veillas (Skoda Fabia R5)
34	Quentin Giordano/Valentin Sarraud (Citroen DS 3 R5)
35	Eifyn Evans/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)
36	Simone Tempestini/Matteo Chiarossi (Ford Fiesta R5)
38	Alain Foulon/Gilles Delarche (Mitsubishi Lancer E10)



Can Camilli make the most of his chance?

MONTE CARLO RALLY ITINERARY

Thursday, January 21

Ceremonial start Monaco 1815hrs

SS1 Entrevaux-Rouaine

(13.20 miles) 2018hrs

SS2 Barles-Seyne (12.66 miles) 2211hrs

Service Gap 2343hrs

Friday, January 22

SS3 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 1

(9.10 miles) 1021hrs

SS4 Aspres les Corps-Chauffayer 1

(16.01 miles) 1104hrs

SS5 Les Costes-Chaillol 1

(11.07 miles) 1140hrs

Service Gap 1255hrs

SS6 Corps-La Salle en Beaumont 2

(9.10 miles) 1501hrs

SS7 Aspres les Corps-Chauffayer 2

(16.01 miles) 1544hrs

SS8 Les Costes-Chaillol 2

(11.07 miles) 1620hrs

Service Gap 1735hrs

Saturday, January 23

SS9 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 1

(32.03 miles) 0804hrs

SS10 St Leger les Melezes-La Batie

Neuve 1 (10.64 miles) 0952hrs

Service Gap 1042hrs

SS11 Lardier et Valenca-Faye 2

(32.03 miles) 1203hrs

SS12 St Leger les Melezes-La Batie

Neuve 2 (10.64 miles) 1351hrs

SS13 Sisteron-Thoard

(22.74 miles) 1548hrs

Parcferme Monaco 1948hrs

Sunday, January 24

SS14 Col de L'Orme-St Laurent 1

(13.27 miles) 1057hrs

SS15 La Bollene Vesubie-Peira Cava

(13.27 miles) 1057hrs

SS16 Col de L'Orme-St Laurent 2

(7.50 miles) 1208hrs

Finish Monaco 1400hrs

WRC PREVIEW: 1986 MONTE



TOIVONEN'S LAST VICTORY

Peugeot was given a shock on the 1986 season opener. By David Evans

This was it. The one we'd been waiting for. Three years in the making, Group B was coming to the boil.

Rarely had a season been so eagerly awaited as 1986. Chapter one, the Monte, was billed as a straight fight between Peugeot and Walter Rohrl.

Why wouldn't it be?

In the hands of Ari Vatanen, the 205 T16 had slaughtered everything in its way in the Alps 12 months before. Admittedly, AV was missing – still recovering from his horrific Rally Argentina shunt the previous season. But Peugeot had world champion Timo Salonen, asphalt ace Bruno Saby and new boy Finn Juha Kankkunen.

Audi had Rohrl. And Rohrl had won this event on four of the last six occasions. Granted, the German might have been shown the way home by Vatanen in 1985. But that was in the evil-handling quattro Sport. He now had an even more powerful – 500bhp-plus – quattro E2, complete with insane aero, at his disposal.

Three Lancia Delta S4s lined up and were given lip service, but not an awful lot more. Anybody arguing in favour of the machine that had won on its debut in Britain the previous November was pointed quickly

in the direction of Markku Alen's car, which suffered a misfire on the concentration run from Sestriere. That engine-mapping problem would continue into the event, ruling Alen out at the midpoint.

Converging on Aix-les-Bains from six concentration runs, the Automobile Club de Monaco provided a classic route with six stages on Sunday (January 19) afternoon and evening. An overnight halt returned the crews to the competition for six more stages on Monday afternoon before a decent night's sleep. Tuesday morning started the run south through the Ardeche and through Tuesday night, arriving in Monaco on Wednesday afternoon. The final loop headed out of the principality late morning Thursday, concluding with a dawn arrival for a harbourside finish on Friday.

A proper Monte.

Lancia strikes early

And six stages in, a proper Monte upset for the French: Lancia was 1-2-3.

Henri Toivonen was on a mission. And there was more to this mission than met the eye. Twenty years before, Henri's father Pauli had 'won' the Monte in a Group 1 Citroen DS21.

Or at least he'd arrived at the finish fifth, only to move up the order when three BMC Minis and Roger Clark's Lotus Cortina were excluded for

trumped-up irregularities with their headlights.

Toivonen wasn't happy. And hadn't been for the duration of the 1966 event – right from when his recce car broke down on top of the Col de Turini. Toivonen telephoned team manager Rene Cotton, who suggested the best bet would be for Pauli to pop back to Paris and pick up another. That conversation had ended shortly afterwards.

And Toivonen's Citroen contract also went south when he elected not to go and pick up the winner's silverware at the finish.

This event meant plenty to the Toivonen family.

Hence the excitement when Henri ended the first night two decades on with a time half a minute faster than anybody through the Chartreuse stage. By the following evening and the 11-hour rest halt in Grospierrres, he was 1m41s ahead, with Rohrl his closest pursuer.

Neil Wilson, the man who co-drove Toivonen to RAC victory at the end of 1985, was working with Henri's brother Harri as one of the ice note crews.

Wilson recalls: "When we were on top of the Lancia, celebrating at the finish of the RAC, I told Henri it would be easier from now on."

Waiting to go into Burzet at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning, Toivonen

remembered that conversation. He told Wilson: "You were right, it's so easy now..."

Forced to give best to Saby's Peugeot in Burzet, that stage did spell the end of Rohrl's challenge. Stopping to change a puncture, he discovered the Audi mechanics had forgotten to switch the spare from the previous evening. Six minutes were dropped as Rohrl hobbled out of the test on three slicks and one studded Michelin.

Admittedly, Salonen was still just about within striking distance, but things were looking increasingly comfortable for the leader as he headed out of SS12.

Rogue Pug intervenes

Then everything went wrong. A spectator hurtled around a blind bend on the wrong side and slammed into the front of the #7 Delta. The fan was, ironically, driving a Peugeot.

The near-side front wheel was ripped from Toivonen's car, with extensive damage to the radiator, suspension and steering. The team worked frantically to rebuild the S4, chopping out parts of the damaged spaceframe chassis and welding in new steel tubes. Incredibly, the car was kept on the road and the repair would be refined as the event progressed – but there was nothing to be done about the fact that the left-hand side was now two centimetres shorter

than the right, providing wicked understeer on right-handers.

Toivonen didn't escape unscathed either, hurting his hip in the shunt. He would spend the rest of the rally on painkillers.

The best pain relief came with the news that he was still ahead. Salonen had been kept at bay. For now.

There was nothing Toivonen could do when a stud punctured one of his Pirellis on the Col de Garcinets stage, just south of Gap on Wednesday morning. He dropped a minute and a half. The rally had a new leader.

France could breathe again.

There was more misery for Toivonen and Lancia on the following Sisteron stage. As usual, the start was mostly dry, with snow and ice waiting over the top and down the north-facing side. Just below the infamous and always ice-filled hairpins on the final push up to the Col de Fontbelle, Lancia waited for its men. A mid-stage tyre change was planned. Slicks were replaced by studs, but the Pirelli racer had been too hard and Toivonen wasn't able to get enough heat into them to lean on them fully. More time went Salonen's way.

The fightback

The bespectacled Finn drove into Monaco with a 33-second lead over Toivonen. He headed straight

Toivonen (inset) took great win for Lancia



Impressive line-up of marques started final season of Group B



An unhappy Pauli Toivonen 'won' in '66



Monte master Rohrl could not keep up

for the Beach Plaza hotel and a well-earned rest.

Toivonen? He headed in the opposite direction, towards the heliport on the other side of town. It might have been getting late in the afternoon, but he took off and headed north, bound for a Delta S4 practice car and tomorrow's first two stages.

He and co-driver Sergio Cresto completed a final recce of Col de la Madone and Turini. The benefits were two-fold: further improving their knowledge of the roads while simultaneously dealing Salonen a psychological blow as he enjoyed the Mediterranean sunset from his room.

The benefits were debatable when Salonen extended his lead on the opening stage of the final loop the

following lunchtime, exploiting the advantage his Michelin-shod T16 had in dry conditions.

As the route moved north and west through the Alpes Maritimes, the weather went south. Cloud, rain, sleet and snow moved in. By the third stage of the loop, Toivonen was back in charge. And back out front.

At the time, questions were raised about the defence Salonen put up in the face of a string of fastest times from his countryman. But the reigning world champion was a shrewd operator and one unwilling to risk all in the pursuit of a victory in conditions where he felt far from comfortable.

After a final early evening service in Monaco, the crews drove into the night for the last time. Another lap of the mountains awaited them before an 0700hrs finish.

Toivonen was, by now, in complete control and would finish the event more than four minutes ahead of Salonen. Typically, Pirelli had come up with the goods in cold, changeable conditions and, with all the other manufacturers looking to the French for their rubber, only Lancia and chiefly Toivonen benefited. Had it not been for that errant Peugeot after Burzet and slow puncture a few stages later, the margin could have been considerably bigger.

Hannu Mikkola made it three different manufacturers on the podium with his quattro third, one place ahead of the sister machine of Rohrl. Kankkunen played himself into his new job with fifth, albeit almost half an hour down after more than 10 hours of competition.

Saby overcame transmission trouble to ensure all three works 205s finished in the top six. But ultimately, the French went home empty-handed. There was no Vatanen-inspired miracle finish this time around. And Rohrl, well he'd already won the event for the final time.

For Henri, it was two from two after celebrating an RAC win in Nottingham.

"The rally was good for me," he said at the finish. "There were not so many mistakes and this rally went as we had hoped it would from the first stage, apart from the road accident after which we loaned Timo the lead for a while when we were coming south!"

The final chapter

Aged 29, Toivonen had the rallying world at his feet. He'd scored three world championship wins, but his Monte performance helped establish him as a title challenger in 1986.

A dropped valve on the next round in Sweden didn't help, but it was a

further pointer to the potency of the S4-Toivonen partnership – he led on his first ever attempt at the Karlstad-based event.

The tragic spectator deaths brought Lancia's Rally of Portugal to a premature halt. Which brings us to Corsica.

Not needed for the Italian firm's slimmed down 037 Safari entries (for Alen and Miki Biasion), Toivonen focused his attentions on making the Delta S4 as fast as possible for Corsica. He knew it needed to be quick to beat a T16 on the French island.

And he found something. Lots of things. Wider Pirellis, new springs, dampers and rollbars lowered the car by 2.5cm.

"I'm now only beginning to understand this car," he said after the test. "Lower than [it was in] Monte Carlo and 1.6 seconds per kilometre [faster], which puts us at least equal with the Peugeot on dry Tarmac."

We know what happened next. Toivonen and the Delta delivered on pace and were leading when tragedy struck.

That's another story for another day. For now, it's worth remembering what a stunning job he did on the Monte 30 years ago this week, his final World Rally Championship win. He did his family proud. ■

Not such a good start: Metro 6R4 and BX 4TC

Austin Rover's assault on the 1986 WRC got off to an inauspicious start, with both MG Metro 6R4s retiring early.

Buoyed by an exceptional third place on the car's debut – the 1985 RAC Rally – a couple of months earlier, drivers Tony Pond and Malcolm Wilson headed south to the French Alps with high hopes. The car might have struggled to match the powerful Audis, but it was 100kg lighter than the German machine.

And, potentially more driveable in the changeable conditions; the absence of a turbo limited power, but it also meant zero lag and gave near immediate throttle response for the Brits.

Unfortunately, neither Pond or Wilson had ever competed on the Monte before and would struggle against drivers with vastly more experience of the stages and conditions.

In the end, Pond was withdrawn after suffering steering problems on the first loop. The rack on his car was changed, but when it tightened again after SS6 – actually causing him to crash into the welcome to Aix-les-Bains sign, ARG team principal John Davenport took the decision to withdraw the car.

Wilson was running inside the top 10 when he retired in Burzet. His car lost drive to the rear on the way up to the col, with the front differential giving up on the way down.

Citroen was also starting on its WRC adventure with the BX 4TC. This car was almost as short on testing as it was on power and it came as no surprise when the mechanics were still working furiously on both cars before the start.

Philippe Wambargue's car retired on stage two when the hydropneumatic suspension collapsed. Jean-Claude Andruet made it through the first loop before going off the road on the second day. His exit was arguably hastened by similar suspension troubles.



BX 4TC was not a success



Mikkola, Toivonen, Salonen

DAKAR REPORT

PETERHANSEL WINS THE DAKAR RALLY

Peugeot dominates
on pure pace.
By David Evans



Unusually verdant backdrop for the winner



Last year's winner Al-Attiyah was second

RESULTS

2016 Dakar Rally

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Stéphane Peterhansel (Peugeot)	45h22m10s
2	Nasser Al-Attiyah (Mini/BMW)	+34m58s
3	Giniel de Villiers (Toyota)	+1h02m47s
4	Mikko Hirvonen (Mini/BMW)	+1h05m08s
5	Leeroy Poulter (Toyota)	+1h30m43s
6	Nani Roma (Mini/BMW)	+1h41m06s
7	Cyril Despres (Peugeot)	+1h53m04s
8	Vladimir Vasilyev (Toyota)	+2h01m45s
9	Sébastien Loeb (Peugeot)	+2h22m09s
10	Harry Hunt (Mini/BMW)	+3m11.30s

What a difference a year makes. Twelve months ago, Peugeot was nowhere. Its 2008 DKR an embarrassment to a marque that had ruled the Dakar between 1987 and 1990. Last Saturday, all of that was forgotten as Stéphane Peterhansel returned the French marque to the glory years with victory.

Ahead of the event, talk among the Velizy squad was of a step, not a leap. The 2008 DKR had been seriously overhauled through 2015, to the point that it was almost unrecognisable from its predecessor. And then Sébastien Loeb joined the team.

The nine-time World Rally champion raised expectation still further, but Peugeot Sport director Bruno Famin was determined to keep a lid on such optimism.

When Peugeot announced its Dakar effort in 2014, eyebrows had been raised. The team was striking off in a different direction with a rear-wheel-drive buggy-style machine, the like of which hadn't won since Jean-Louis Schlesser's Renault-engined self-built Buggy arrived in

Cairo from Paris via Dakar ahead of everybody else in 2000.

Since then we'd had seven years of Mitsubishi domination with the Pajero, a Volkswagen hat-trick with the Touareg and, most recently, a quartet of victories for X-raid's Mini All4 Racing. What did those cars have in common? Four driven wheels.

But, no, Peugeot was adamant; spaceframe chassis, enormous wheel travel and a gutsy three-litre twin turbo diesel engine sending everything to the rear was the way forward.

Certainly, in the sand, the Peugeot had the pace this time. With the taps open at pre-event testing in Morocco, the DKR had flown through the dunes.

But then El Nino arrived and changed everything. The weather phenomenon, based in the Pacific, was due into South America at the same time as Dakar started. After careful consideration of the potential diversion of emergency services, Peru withdrew from the route.

Four months out from the start, the Dakar organiser had to redraw great swathes of the itinerary. The most obvious enforced evolution was to include more mileage in Argentina. The Peruvian sands and deserts were replaced by more WRC-spec stages.

The Mini drivers rubbed their hands, knowing full well the first half of the event would suit them and their total-traction far better. Yes, the Peugeots might come on strong by Bolivia – but would they even still be there that far into the first week?

They certainly would.

Peugeot's first week was nothing short of astonishing. And so was Loeb.

Typically humble, Loeb had laughed off any talk of him running at the front

of the field on his – and co-driver Daniel Elena's – first Dakar. But that's precisely what he did.

After a troubled start, with spectators injured at the event's running order-deciding prologue and torrential rain forcing the cancellation of the first competitive test, the race finally got underway with stage two.

Even then, the planned 317-mile run from Villa Carlos Paz to Termas de Rio Hondo was slashed to 240 miles as the storms continued.

And that rain turned long sections of the road into a mudbath, with crews as experienced as former winner Nani Roma stuck for 45 minutes desperately digging his Mini out of the mud. The irony of the grip question was not lost as Peugeot's two-wheel-drive motors went into an early 1-2. With Loeb leading.

The Frenchman extended that advantage with fastest time on three of the first four stages. His natural ability and all-round brilliance was, it turns out, transferable to rally raids.

Team-mate Peterhansel admired Loeb's style and early speed, but pointed to the sand up north in Bolivia and out west towards the Chilean border. It was there, in the guts of this event, that the outcome would be decided.

How right he was.

Loeb lost the lead on stage six – where he was forced to drive for close to 50 miles with the throttle jammed wide open – but won it back the next day. On stage eight, however, his dream turned into a nightmare.

He went too quick into a dry riverbed and rolled the 2008 DKR.

The shunt was a sizeable one and the hour lost as he and Elena fitted a new

driveshaft and patched the Peugeot up would rule them out of contention.

Loeb said: "In quite a wide and fast river, I didn't see a channel and I came towards it at high speed. We hit the step as we came back out and that sent us into a series of rolls. We got out and pulled everything apart and finally we were able to get going after losing more than an hour. Our plan was always to come here to get some experience. OK, the first week went better than we expected as we were in the lead. For this to happen less than six miles from the finish [of the stage] is frustrating, but that's life. Now we have to carry on."

Another man who looked to be out of contention was Peugeot's other WRC megastar Carlos Sainz. The Spaniard lost 14 minutes with engine problems on the first stage. But in typical Sainz fashion, he refused to give up hope of a second Dakar win and pushed his 2008 to the limit as he battled his way back up the leaderboard.

El Matador's exceptional fightback was complete when he moved into the lead on the loop from Belen to Belen in the second week. That stage was shortened as temperatures moved dangerously towards 50 degrees, but Sainz kept his cool, moving seven minutes clear. Peterhansel, by his own admission couldn't keep pace with Sainz – even without suffering a puncture and getting stuck in the sand. He dropped to second.

The 10th stage, a 180-mile dash through the Fiambala dunes was seen as the final significant test of this event. After that, there was a three-day jaunt back down the world championship-spec stages into Villa Carlos Paz and onto the finish in Rosario.

Get through Wednesday January 13 and everything would be fine.

Despite an early puncture, Sainz was able to make the time back in the middle section of the stage and had piled an extra seven minutes onto his lead when disaster struck with transmission failure. He was towed out, but his race was run.

He, like so many before him, had been cruelly robbed by what remains the world's toughest rally.

Having enjoyed a 1-2-3 at the mid-event rest halt, Peterhansel was now up front without his wingmen. Admittedly, he did have an hour on nearest challenger – last year's winner Nasser Al-Attiyah – but nerves were never far away in the Peugeot camp, especially when he arrived at a refuel not meant for the cars in stage 10.

He was cleared of any wrongdoing by the stewards, but concern would be etched into the faces of the Peugeot team until the finish... where deep joy broke out among the Parisians.

They'd done it, winning nine from 12 stages Peugeot brought three from four cars home: first, seventh (for Cyril Despres) and ninth for Loeb. Twenty-five years after winning on a bike for the first time, Mr Dakar, Peterhansel, got victory number 12.

Behind them, Al-Attiyah drove his heart out, never giving up – not even when he rolled his Mini – on his way to second. Another former winner, Toyota's Giniel de Villiers was third, with Mikko Hirvonen in fourth place in another Mini. Britain's Harry Hunt delivered an exceptional top-10 result on his Dakar Rally debut.

But the real celebration was with Peugeot. What a difference a year makes. ■



Loeb crashed out of the lead

RALLY REPORTS



Photos: Kevin Money

SMITH'S LATE SHOW SECURES CROFT SPOILS



MOTORSPORT NEWS **CIRCUIT RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP**
IN ASSOCIATION WITH MSVR

The 2003 Le Mans winner Smith won

Jack Frost Stages Rally

By Larry Carter

Organiser: Darlington and District Motor Club
When: January 17
Where: Croft Circuit, North Yorkshire
Championships: MN Circuit Rally Championship in association with MSVR; North of England Tarmacadam Championship; ANCC; ANECCC
Stages: 8 **Starters:** 89

The first sub-zero temperatures of this unusually mild winter came just in time for the aptly named Jack Frost Stages at Croft Circuit.

Freezing conditions overnight and an odd snow flurry greeted the impressive cast, which had assembled for the fourth round of the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship in association with MSVR and they didn't disappoint.

With top seed and ex-winner Tony Bardy a non-starter due to problems with his Ford Focus WRC on a previous event, it was left to the more modern version of Guy Smith and

Patrick Walsh to uphold Blue Oval honour and, despite only securing a run as a reserve literally 48 hours before the start, they emerged victorious.

But it was by no means straightforward for the 2003 Le Mans winner. He was debuting the ex-Charlie Payne car and he did set fastest time on the opening stage, complete with intermittent icy patches as a veil of freezing fog blanketed the Yorkshire racetrack.

Scotsman Alan Kirkaldy defied his lowly seeding to set second fastest time just four seconds back in his Ford Escort on SS1, with ANECCC winners Barry and Michael Lindsay third up in Steve Petch's Mitsubishi, which they were using as their prize drive.

Smith extended his advantage as the fog lifted on SS2 as fancied runners Ashley and Fred Field found pace in their Darrin to stop the clocks second fastest and

move up to fifth overall. The Escort Mk2s of Paul and Jessica Swift and Kirkaldy/Garry Muir started a battle that would last all rally long, but for now, Kirkaldy held sway over Swift after SS2.

Smith was fastest on SS3, ahead of Field, with the Ford Focus WRC of Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress third quickest and showing good speed at their local event. By SS4, most of the ice had gone and, despite temperatures hovering around freezing, track conditions were improving, much to the delight of Field, who clawed eight seconds back off Smith going into the lunchtime turnaround.

By now, Smith's lead was at 25 seconds, ahead of the improving Field who, in turn, was 15 seconds to the good over Kirkaldy. Fourth was local stunt ace Swift, a further five seconds adrift, with Stephenson 11 seconds further back in fifth. Completing the top six

was John Stone/Tommi Meadows who were giving the Ford Fiesta S2000 (with a 2.5-litre Millington engine) a debut run.

With temperatures plummeting in the afternoon, Smith resumed his battle with Field and went fastest by a second on SS5 before Field responded to reduce the deficit to 22 seconds on SS6.

Behind these two, Swift and Kirkaldy were still hard at it and, after SS6, just four seconds separated the two powerful Fords, with fifth-placed Stephenson now coming under pressure from Barry Renwick/Steve Dargan in their Proton.

As dusk fell, Smith knew the final pair of six-milers were going to be crucial and his plan was to protect his lead, but with ice now starting to form, that wasn't going to be easy. SS7 saw him extend his lead to an important 30 seconds, as Field could only manage

third fastest behind a rejuvenated Stephenson, who had hoisted himself up to fourth overall behind Swift going into the darkness of the final stage.

As expected, Smith took it relatively steady to emerge third fastest as Field claimed his third stage victory, but despite his gallant effort, he always knew the rally was Smith's to lose in the latter stages in the four-wheel-drive Focus. The final deficit was 25 seconds.

Swift claimed the final podium spot exactly a minute further down, with the impressive Kirkaldy claiming fourth on countback having tied with Stephenson on times.

Renwick battled his way up to sixth spot, ahead of Stone, with the Subaru of David White/Kurt Doane in eighth.

The all-Renault Clio battle went the way of Steve Quigley/Tom Hutchings in ninth.

CLASS ROUND-UP

Class 1 went the way of Joe Cunningham/Marc Fowler (Vauxhall Corsa) by over two minutes after a day-long battle with the Vauxhall Nova of Andy Fawcett/Chris Purvis ended when they retired on the penultimate stage. It hadn't been all plain sailing for Fawcett as a fuel starvation issue hampered his bid on SS1 so he was playing catch up until he went out. Stephen Bethwaite/Ann Forster ended up as runners up, with the similar Vauxhall Nova of Andrew and Rachel Foster third.

Steven Irwin/Neil Bye took an easy **Class 2** win in their Vauxhall Nova, seeing off circuit racer Paul Sheard and co-driver Steve Hallmark in their Mazda MX-5 by well over a minute, while brothers Mark and John Gaskin swapped seats for this event and came away with third in their Citroen Saxo, just three seconds back.

Steve Quigley/Tom Hutchings won **Class 3** after a long battle with the similar car of Alistair and Joe Hutchinson as they were only separated by three seconds at the finish. Stuart Gilks/Michael Boyns claimed third in their Talbot Sunbeam, albeit a

minute further down. Alan Kirkaldy/Garry Muir headed **Class 4** and took the win nearly four minutes ahead of Mike Taylor/Martin Haggett (Talbot Sunbeam), with Mike Bayliss/Ken Bills third in their BMW. Fancied runners James Sharrock/Martin Kenyon stopped on SS5 to end their bid.

Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress (Ford Focus WRC) won **Class 5**, 38 seconds ahead of Barry Renwick/Steve Dargan (Proton Millington), with John Stone/Tommi Meadows (Ford Fiesta) next, half a minute down.

Class 6 went the way of Philip Thompson/Fred Roberts, who took the win by 10 seconds over the only other class finishers, John Nicholson/Peter Littlefield, both crews in Ford Escorts.

Results

1 Guy Smith/Patrick Walsh (Ford Focus WRC) 55m26s;
2 Ashley Field/Fred Field (Darrin T90 GTR+) +25s; 3 Paul Swift/Jessica Swift (Ford Escort);
4 Alan Kirkaldy/Garry Muir (Ford Escort); 5 Peter Stephenson/Ian Windress (Ford Focus WRC);
6 Barry Renwick/Steve Dargan (Proton Millington Satria);
7 John Stone/Tommi Meadows (Ford Fiesta S2000); 8 David White/Kurt Doane (Subaru Impreza); 9 Steve Quigley/Tom Hutchings (Renault Clio); 10 Alistair Hutchinson/Joe Hutchinson (Renault Clio).



Paul Swift impressed with podium in another rally outing



Steve Quigley gave the Clio a thrashing to ninth and another class win

KARTING

Photos: kartpix.net

More prizes for Academy Trophy

Several changes to the CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy have been introduced for this year, including additional prizes being added.

For 2016, the winner will be given free entry to the CIK-FIA World Junior Championship in Bahrain in November with one of the leading teams. On top of this, the top five overall will each receive free entry to a CIK-FIA championship of their choosing in 2017. The prize is estimated to be worth £1500 for each driver.

It had already been announced that the OTK Group had won the tender to supply chassis and engines – which will comply with the new OK-Junior rules.

The three round series – featuring competitions in France (Aunay-les-Bois), Portugal (Portimao) and Sweden (Kristianstad) – has received significant interest following the changes.

Drivers have to be selected by their National Sporting Authority (ASN) and so far 39 ASNs have expressed interest in the series, including the UK. A maximum of 51 drivers can take part in the category.

DUNLOP SECURES KART DEAL

MSA hands firm Cadet tyre tender

Dunlop will supply Cadets



Dunlop and MSA agreed a deal

By Stephen Lickorish

The MSA has announced its choices for several karting tenders, including Dunlop remaining as tyre supplier for the Formula Cadet class.

A new tyre will be used from 2017 to 2019 and will deliver a half-second increase in lap times.

Testing showed that Dunlop's proposed tyre was very durable, having been put through the equivalent of 500 laps in the

process. This means tyres could be used for multiple meetings.

The supplier has been chosen well in advance of the 2017 season to help manufacturers develop a new chassis that will suit the rubber.

"We were delighted with the level of interest from tyre manufacturers, and with the quality of all their proposals," said Simon Blunt, MSA general secretary and chairman of the selection panel. "This made the

selection process tricky, but thorough testing revealed that the new tyre proposed by Dunlop exceeded the criteria. This left the panel in unanimous agreement."

Meanwhile, the MSA has also revealed that Vortex (OTK) and Vega are its preferred engine and tyre suppliers for the MSA British Junior and Senior Kart Championships.

The Vortex engine is CIK-homologated, a requirement specified by the MSA after the

Junior series was suspended when the KF engines proved unsuccessful.

MSA Race, Speed and Kart executive Cheryl Lynch said: "There is no doubt that the MSA British Championships have suffered from the lack of a suitable CIK-homologated engine. However the fact that we now have a new homologated engine will rejuvenate the MSA British Championships and UK karting as a whole."

IN BRIEF

Easykart units
All Easykart Junior, Senior Lights and Masters engines will need to be serviced in-house in 2016. Due to a few isolated incidents with those serviced by other engine builders, it has been decided that all Easykart UK motors must be serviced and rebuilt by ACR Ltd. The company said: "This decision is to ensure and maintain a high level of service and quality to our clients and above all a legal and level playing field in Easykart UK." It was already obligatory for Easykart Cadet engines to be serviced in this way.

FEKC sells out

The Forest Edge Kart Club is set for another successful year, with all of its 126 reserved pit spaces already sold out. The Hampshire club is set to have large grids in its 177 and Junior Rotax classes, with more entries expected in the two months before the first race. The winner of the club's 177 O Plate event in July will get free entry to the Rotax Grand Finals.

YOU WERE THERE: MOTORSPORT NEWS READERS' PHOTOS

PAGE 34

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SPORTING SCENE

Photos: Hal Ridge, Colin Casserley and LAT

SHAKE-UP FOR BRITISH RALLYCROSS FORMAT

UK series to adopt points system used in FIA World Championship



British runners will score in every heat in 2016

By Hal Ridge

The British Rallycross Championship will feature a revised event format amid a host of changes ahead of the 2016 season.

The championship will move from the traditional three heats and finals race schedule to the heats, semi-finals and finals format adopted by the European and World Rallycross Championships.

The British RX series will be overseen by Tim Whittington, who will act as championship manager alongside his role as championship coordinator in the FIA World Rallycross Championship.

"There is a group of knowledgeable volunteers in the championship, it's important to harness their enthusiasm, together with the passion of competitors, to improve the way events are presented and develop the series," said Whittington.

"The FIA World Rallycross Championship has lifted the profile of rallycross in general. The MSA British Championship needs to capitalise on that.

"Changes in format will make best use of track time and offer drivers and fans more track action. Fundamentally it has all the components of a very good championship, it's just a question of putting it together properly."

Timed practice for the Supercar category has been scrapped and with it the bonus points for setting the fastest time. The bonus points for setting the fastest heat time will remain.

Five-time British RX champion Julian Godfrey has welcomed the move to a World RX-style format.

"Having all three heats count is certainly a good thing. It means you really have to think about the events, and it helps keep contact down to a minimum because the only way to qualify well is to do well in each heat," said the Ford Fiesta driver. "This format has worked very well in the world championship so it should hopefully work in the British too."

New BRX format explained

Competitors at each British RX event will get practice and three qualifying heats.

The top 16 qualifiers (after the three heats (all of which count towards the positions at the Intermediate Classification) will qualify for the semi-finals, with the competitors in the odd numbered positions starting in semi-final one (1-3-5-7) and the even

positioned drivers racing in semi-final two (2-4-6-8).

The top four finishers from each semi-final will graduate to the final. Championship points will be based on finishing positions at the end of the event.

Each of the heat races will be four laps long, while semi-finals and finals will be over six laps.

ROUND-UP

Snow meant a slippery start to Cambridge Car Club's **Roger Holmes Trial**. Christopher Pettitt and Robin Howard got off to flying starts, with Pettitt cleaning the first set of tests and Howard dropping just one point. Pettitt took the win.

Ben Cutting overcame an early lead by Hannah Ellis in Class 2A for the victory. A trio of Hillman Imps had their own battle at the top of Class 3. Dave Oliver led them home.

The combination of Pakie Duffy and Evin Hughes increased their lead in the Irish National Navigation Trial Championship by taking a five-mark win over Dermot Whelton and Mark McCarthy in the **1000 Shakes** event based in Macroom. Alan and George Shinnors helped complete another Subaru Impreza clean sweep in third. The winners took the lead on the second of four time cards and weren't challenged.

A pair of narrow victories in Waterford for Steven Ferguson extended his lead to seven points in his quest for a sixth successive **Hewison Irish Autotest** title in Carrick-on-Suir. On Saturday, the Tyrone driver ended the 12 tests 1.6s ahead of Eamonn Byrne. On Sunday, Ferguson's winning margin was 2.1s over Robin Lyons.

Results

Roger Holmes Trial

Organiser Cambridge CC
Where Harton, Cambridge When January 17
Overall winner Christopher Pettitt (Citroen Saxo).
Class winners Chris Judge (Saxo VTR); Ben Cutting (Nissan Micra); Robin Howard (Saxo VTS); Dave Oliver (Hillman Imp); Geoff Hodje (ROT Special); Jack Dockray (Saxo).

Cork Navigational Trial

Organiser Cork MC Where Macroom, County Cork
When January 16/17
1 Pakie Duffy/Evin Hughes (Subaru Impreza) 8 marks;
2 Dermot Whelton/Mark McCarthy (Impreza) +5m;
3 Alan Shinnors/George Shinnors (Impreza);
4 Owen Murphy/Daire Hayes (Subaru Forester);
5 Donal Healy/Denis O'Donovan (Toyota Starlet);
6 Aidan Sherry/Oisin Sherlock (Impreza);
7 Johnny Casey/Patrick O'Sullivan (Peugeot 306);
8 Keith McCann/Michael McCluskey (Impreza);
9 Ray O'Neill/Stephen O'Neill (Ford Mondeo);
10 Mac Kierans/Conor Boylan (Impreza).
CW Casey/O'Sullivan; Sherry/Sherlock;
Tim Hayes/Finian O'Donovan (Toyota Avenis).

Carrick-on-Suir Autotests

Organiser Carrick-on-Suir MC
Where Waterford City When January 16/17
1 Steven Ferguson (Mini Special) 618.2s; 2 Eamonn Byrne (Mini) +1.6s; 3 Robin Lyons (Mini); 4 Guy Foster (Mini Special); 5 Timmy Lynch (Westfield); 6 Mark King (Vauxhall Nova); 7 David Thompson (Nova); 8 Darren Quille (Westfield); 9 Paddy Power (Mini Moke); 10 Chris Grimes (Mini).
CW Byrne; Foster; Lynch; King; Seamus Anderson (Toyota Starlet); James Mansfield (Mini).
Sunday 1 Ferguson 689.0s; 2 Lyons +2.1s; 3 Byrne; 4 Foster; 5 Coyle; 6 Power; 7 Thompson; 8 White; 9 King; 10 Liam Croston (Nova). CW Lyons; Foster; Quille; Thompson; Anderson; Mansfield.

Block commits to World Rallycross

American Gymkhana, rally and rallycross star Ken Block will compete in the full FIA World Rallycross Championship this season.

The YouTube sensation's programme is being backed by Ford Performance, while his M-Sport Ford Fiesta will be run by his own team, Hoonigan Racing.

"I'm stoked to be able to compete for an FIA World Rallycross title," said Block. "I've really enjoyed my past six years racing with Ford and to renew my relationship with them moving forward, as well as receiving an increased level of involvement from Ford Performance to compete for WRX, I couldn't be happier."

Block has twice competed in World RX. He made the podium in Norway on his debut in 2014, and also made the final at Loheac in France the same year.

Briton Harris impresses in Chili Bowl outing

European and BriSCA F1 dominator Tom Harris was the top overseas driver in a field of over 300 entries in the renowned Chili Bowl Midget car event in Oklahoma, America, last week.

Harris, who was running in the event for the second season in a row, took third place in his heat on Thursday. That meant he lined up for the B feature, in which he finished seventh.

On Saturday, he just failed to make a transfer spot from his feature race by one place after a hectic battle with veteran racer Davey Ray, which saw Harris ride up on two wheels before slamming into the wall.

Harris recovered to finish fifth, one place ahead of Brad Loyet, a regular Chili Bowl racer and a

participant in the Race of Champions, which is open to the top 20 all-time Chili Bowl points scorers. "Last year was a big learning curve for me, but this year I felt I got to grip with the style of racing needed out here. It is a lot different than back home. My car owner Bob East told me to be a bit more aggressive and I was in the last race as I passed a lot of cars but just came up one short," said Harris.

East said: "He drove well, a vast improvement from last year. He has the talent but just needs more time in the seat."

Rico Abreu passed long time race leader Bryan Clauson in the closing stages to record his second consecutive Chili Bowl crown. Harris plans more US outings.



Tom Harris was lucky to survive this moment at the Chili Bowl



Warwick: Wimbledon hope

Warwick says the battle to save Wimbledon is vital for the sport

Former F1 driver Derek Warwick has lent his support to the campaign to save Wimbledon short oval from demolition.

Planners have granted permission for an 11,000 all-seater stadium on the site where the stock cars run. A group of short oval supporters has launched a campaign to save the venue.

Warwick, who won the stock car

world championship at the track in 1973, said he was behind the mission.

Warwick, who is president of the British Racing Drivers' Club, said: "I understand the pressures on real estate developers, but Wimbledon is a vital part of motor racing history. We should be able to protect it or at least make our voices heard because there is now

no other venue like this in the UK.

"We used to have some great tracks in the city. It is important that they are there so there is an awareness among the public. This could be the last circuit of this type in the country."

To sign up, go to change.org/p/save-wimbledon-stadium-from-demolition-save-oval-racing-in-london.

New owner pledges Tipperary upgrades

The new owner of Tipperary Raceway says he is aiming to bring high profile short oval meetings back to the venue after taking over the reins at the start of this season.

Damian Brennan has taken over the track and will start work on upgrading the facilities before aiming to tempt some of the sport's biggest events.

"There used to be some fantastic European nights at Tipperary, and we want to get those back," said Brennan.

"We will run coaches to the venue from all the nearby towns, offer special deals for kids and hopefully they'll want to come back and bring their parents. It is all about making it a family day out and reigniting the passion that exists for the circuit. There are exciting times ahead."

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

What to watch in the WRC

Plenty to look forward to, despite the obvious...

Let's be honest. Unless something pretty dramatic happens – or the FIA passes yet more rules to try and stop him – Sebastien Ogier will win this year's World Rally Championship. But that doesn't mean there's nothing to get excited about

First off, Kris Meeke is in a great position in 2016. Without any pressure, he can drop in with smash-and-grab raids on the series while simultaneously developing Citroen's new C3 WRC in the way he wants it. I wouldn't be surprised to see Meeke score a couple of impressive results, which would no doubt help build confidence ahead of The Big Push in 2017.

There's also Craig Breen against Stephane Lefebvre. You'd say the Frenchman is in pole position to be Meeke's team-mate next year, but a fired-up Breen could well make Citroen's decision quite difficult if he gets enough outings in the DS 3 WRC.

The Hyundai interest is two-fold. Will the Next Generation i20 be the leap forward the squad hopes (and needs)? And can Thierry Neuville reestablish himself against the up-and-coming force that is Hayden Paddon?

Finally, there is a lot of pressure at M-Sport. It's great the squad is doing the full year, but Malcolm Wilson will want Mads Ostberg and/or Eric Camilli to prove the new Fiesta really is as good as he says it is. And Elfyn Evans will be aiming to prove Wilson was wrong to drop him. An epic R5 fight with Skoda's Esapekka Lappi would certainly help.

Kevin Turner, Editor (Twitter: @KRT917)



LETTERS



Martin Dooley wanted to see a Benetton B186. Here it is...

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

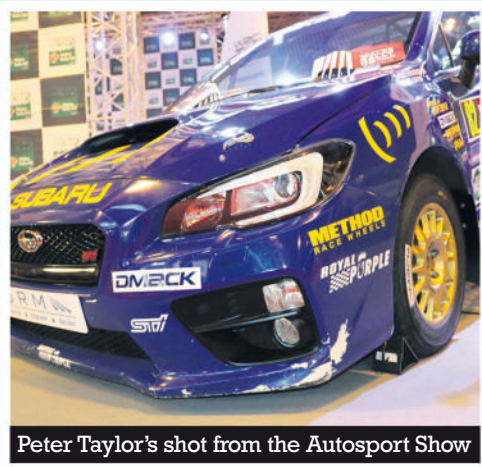
ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



Peter Atkins visited the F1 Racing stand at ASI



Spotted at the NEC: Colin Turkington and Paddy Hopkirk. By Mike Smith



Peter Taylor's shot from the Autosport Show



Stewart Farquhar's rally photo

Where's the Benetton?

In your feature about the best BMWs (*MN*, January 6), I would have liked to have seen at least a mention for the Benetton B186 and the McLaren F1, which redefined supercar or perhaps the invented the term hypercar.

Just my two penneth worth.
Martin Dooley
Via email

It's art: I like it

In your feature about the greatest racing BMWs (*MN*, January 6), I always liked the Roy Lichtenstein-painted E21 320i that raced at Le Mans in 1977. Also the Le Mans-winning McLaren F1 was one of my favourites.

Even though they never won anything, the art cars stand out in my memory too: the Warhol, Stella and Calder cars.

You picked the right ones in any case. The 1976 CSLs, the M1s and the Brabham Formula 1 race cars were all special.

Josh Giese
Via email

Where's Burns?

I read with great interest your article on Subaru's return to motorsport in this country with the Levorg model in the British Touring Car Championship (*MN*, January 13).

However, there was one glaring omission when you were writing about Subaru memories. The late,



Motorsport News, January 13

great Richard Burns' 2001 world championship win! Please can you put this right?

Dave Webb
Hull

Elfyn's done well

Hats off to Elfyn Evans for picking himself up quickly and launching into the BRC with DMACK.

What a year to be back in the BRC? No lame front-wheel-drive cars here, but proper near-as-you'll get to a modern WRC car with the R5.

There are loads of quality entries. The spectators will lap up seeing fierce competition.

It seems everyone is well behind this and congratulations to *MN* for involving itself with the new prize.

Richard Weaver
Via email

LISTINGS

RALLYING SATURDAY

■ **Kirkistown Circuit, Newtownards, Ireland**
New Year Stages Rally
Starts 0900hrs Admission tba
Web kirkistown.com

SUNDAY

■ **Brean Leisure Park, Somerset**
Brean Stages Rally

Starts 0830hrs Admission £5
(children under 12 free)
Web crswrallies.co.uk

SPORTING SCENE SUNDAY

■ **Wimbledon Stadium, Plough Lane**
Historic Stock Cars, Bangers, Rookie Rods
Starts 1730hrs Admission £15
(adults) £10 (concessions) £6 (children)
Web spedeworth.co.uk

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BOOK REVIEW

Scalextric: The Ultimate Guide
Adrian Norman and Roger Gillham
RRP: £49.95

Some books really are a labour of love, but often fail to generate wider appeal as not everybody shares the same hobby or interest to that of the author. However, chances are if you are into motorsport, you had a Scalextric set as a kid... or even still do as an adult – I know I do!

If you have an interest in one of the world's best-loved toys – or 'scale model racing simulation device' as us adult enthusiasts call it – then Scalextric: The Ultimate Guide, 8th Edition is seriously worth a look.

The book, written by Mini Challenge racer Adrian Norman and Roger Gillham, charts the history of the development of Scalextric, from the original tin-plate cars to the modern plastic versions and their powerful mini-motors.

The second half of the book is truly fascinating – it's a complete illustrated catalogue of every model car, set, track and accessory the firm has ever produced. It makes for a glorious glance down memory lane as you pick out every section you once had (or, ahem, still do have).

Presented in 700 glossy pages the book is a true labour of love, but it's likely to be something you'll love too. **RL**



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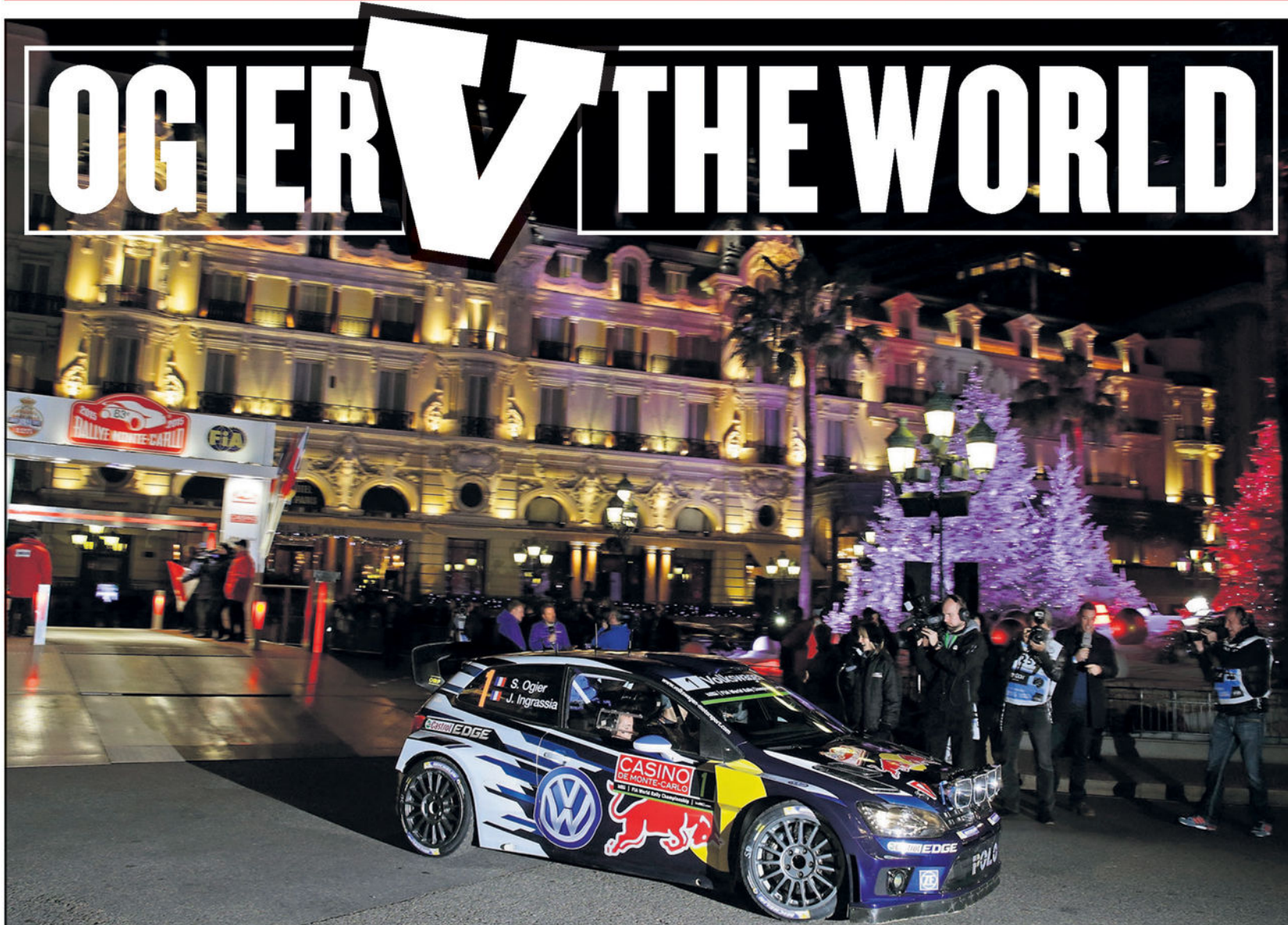
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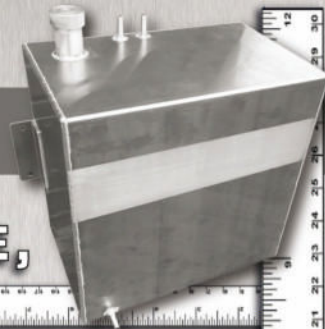
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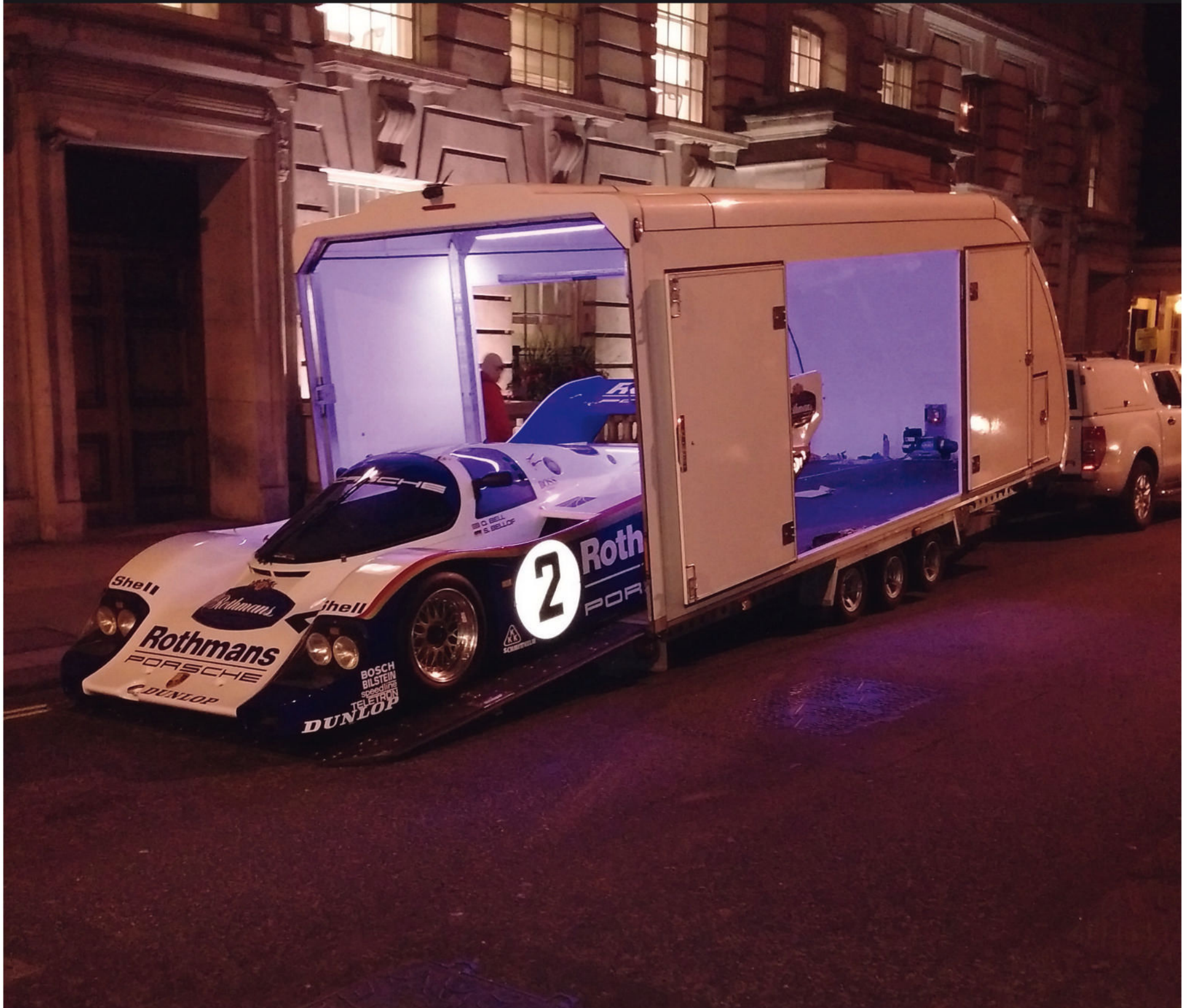
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