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MOTORSPORT NEWS

“WE’RE NOT SURE IF WE’RE AHEAD OR BEHIND”



ROSBERG BELIEVES FERRARI THREAT TO MERCEDES IS REAL P4

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Evans wins dramatic opener

BRC

BACK WITH A BANG...

...AND SO IS LATVALA



Finnish star tops Mexican marathon

PLUS VW COMMITS TO WRC UNTIL 2019



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German brand confirms its WRC entry

**VOLK
SAFE IN WRC**



**By David Evans
and Jim Holder**

Volkswagen has confirmed it will remain in the World Rally Championship until at least the end of 2019, despite its damaging dieselgate scandal.

Publicly, the team insisted the programme was never threatened by the road car emissions scandal. Privately, there were concerns that one of the team's three cars could be trimmed down – a consequence that has happened to sister brands Audi and Porsche's Le Mans efforts for this season. There was also a chance that the WRC team could be culled. Volkswagen's future for the next three seasons in the world championship was inked at a meeting in Wolfsburg at the end of last month.

Volkswagen Motorsport director Jost Capito told *MN*: "The old board approved the programme until 2019. But in November when the new guys were in we got the programme approved for this season and they said: 'You come back in the spring

and talk about the future'.

"So we went back to the board with our programme until 2019 and we got this approved as it was before – but this time with the new board. It's nothing new, but it's proof that the future until 2019 is done."

Two of those new board members backed the WRC at the Geneva Motor Show this month.

Jurgen Stockmann, VW board member for sales, marketing and aftersales, told *MN*'s sister publication *Autocar*: "The WRC is our sport. We have achieved incredible things in a short space of time in terms of results, and it is a motivator for the whole company in terms of how it shows us what is possible when a team works together."

"That team focus is critical to us, and it extends out to the many fans of the sport who follow us. Our Facebook page is enormous, with millions of people reached. It gives us a very passionate following and creates imagery that it's hard not to feel strongly about."

"We will stay in the sport."

Frank Welsch, board position

responsible for the Volkswagen brand's Technical Development, added: "We like very much being three times champions, and we have already started work on the next generation car for 2017, some time ago now. The commitment is there to carry on. We are committed to rallying for the next three years at least. We hope we will continue to be as successful as we are now against the new competitors we expect to see."

Capito to exit soon

The news that Volkswagen is now committed for the foreseeable future in WRC is likely to expedite Capito's departure for his new role at the McLaren F1 team.

Welsch continued: "Let me stress Jost is not leaving for any reason other than the fact he has been so successful. It's his success that has opened the door for him for a fresh challenge, and we are proud of that. Sooner or later, yes, there will be a new Capito."

Capito admitted that he's keen to get on his way to Woking.

"It's difficult," he said. "Of course, this job is great – but if

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, LAT

for another three years

SWAGEN UNTIL 2019



Ogier has dominated, but Jost Capito (right) is McLaren-bound

I had wanted to stay here then I would not have signed a contract [with McLaren]. And when I see what's going on, I would love to give my input quickly. We are working closely with McLaren and Volkswagen to find the proper solution that everybody is happy with. It's a very good atmosphere around this."

There had been speculation that Carlos Sainz could be returning as team principal, but Capito denied such rumours: "I am working with my bosses to find what is the best solution. For Carlos? You know Volkswagen is still a German-speaking company and if you're not fluent in German then it's a big issue. And anyway, Carlos has a contract with a competitor!"

"This meeting in Wolfsburg a week ago and this confirmation coming from the meeting was the basis to talk about the successor. When you know it's an approved programme then it's a totally different story."

Capito admitted he had been watching McLaren's efforts at pre-season testing in Barcelona.

Asked what he thought of the

progress his new employer had made he said: "I think there's still a lot to do and it's good. For sure there's a step from last year."

"There are so many more laps than last season's [pre-season testing] and the reliability is the first thing you have to solve. If you are driving then you can improve the performance, but if you are not making laps then you cannot improve. There's no doubt Honda and McLaren did a great job over the winter, now it has to get the full package really properly run together."

"I have not had any input to McLaren; first you need to understand. I am in touch with these guys, they sent me some stuff and told me what's going on and what's happening."

As Capito said, with the confirmation in place, a replacement is likely to be found quickly now. Some insiders hinted that, with six weeks before the next world championship round in Argentina, last week's Rally Mexico could well have been the German's final event in charge of the all-conquering VW squad.



Polo's first WRC campaign came in 2013 and since then it has been the benchmark



Capito is off to McLaren

As exit nears, Capito calls for WRC change

As Jost Capito's exit from Volkswagen Motorsport nears, he urged the World Rally Championship to reconsider his planned radical change to the sport.

Capito said his concept of dividing the time gaps by 10 for the final day to provide closer competition remained key to the series' future growth.

He said: "I am still convinced dividing the final day gaps by 10 is still the best decision. For me, I strongly believe this is the thing to put WRC on the level of Formula 1 in the public eye."

After getting the green light from WRC Commission in September 2014, the plan was finally rejected by World Motor Sport Council.

Capito continued: "If we did this plan, the people would get interested because of this really exciting hour of rallying on Sunday and then they would become real rally fans interested in Friday and Saturday as well. They would become pure fans and the whole thing would move forward. With more interest from sponsors, manufacturers, everybody."

"There's nothing wrong with this idea, it's not like reverse grids or anything like that. This is not a revolution. If Seb [Ogier] is running first on Friday and Saturday, he would still have the chance to win on Sunday because the gap is never that big that he can't get it done on Sunday. This would be more sporting - what they have done to the running order [making the championship leader run first on the road] is more unsporting than this idea."

WRC manager Jarmo Mahonen - originally convinced by the idea - is more sceptical now.

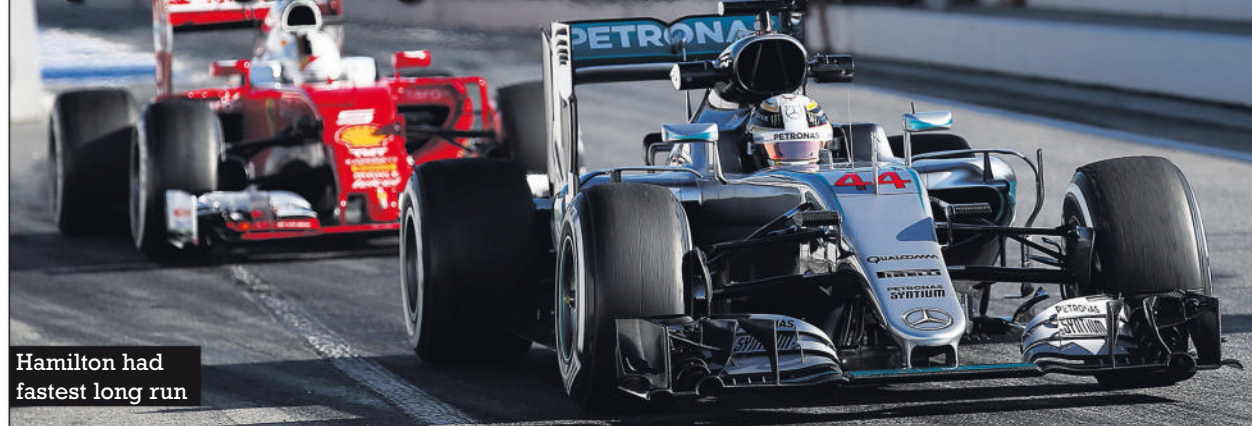
"For me this is a little bit too far away from the sport," he said. "For me we have to keep the fundamental elements of rallying. This is my personal point of view: if you are driving in the forests and doing your best for three days, then you decide everything on the last stage. I'm not sure."

"I understand everything from the potential exposure point of view, but aren't we walking away from the DNA of rally? We are going to have five manufacturers in WRC and I'd be very careful to decide something that goes so far from the DNA."

RACING NEWS

MERCEDES FEARS FERRARI

Top testing times go to Italians, but Merc gets the miles



Hamilton had fastest long run

By Rob Ladbrook

Mercedes is expecting a renewed challenge from Ferrari during the season-opening grand prix in Australia later this month.

Following the conclusion of eight days of running over the last two weeks in Barcelona, Mercedes sits comfortably at the top of the mileage counter with Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton, but topped the timesheets on just one day.

In contrast, Ferrari largely dominated the times, going fastest on six of the eight days, with Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen sharing top spots.

While Ferrari set out its stall to chase outright lap time from its new SF16-H challenger, Mercedes focused on reliability with its F1 W07. The Anglo-German team

didn't use either of Pirelli's super or ultra soft compounds, and largely only ran on the medium tyre – barring some short runs on the soft.

Pirelli estimates the lap time difference from the ultra soft to the medium to be between 1.8-2.3 seconds. Mercedes' Rosberg said the team had deliberately held back from outright speed runs in order to keep rivals guessing about its performance, but conceded Ferrari had looked impressive so far.

"We know that Ferrari is very close, they've been very quick," said Rosberg. "All of the teams have their strategists, so we know more or less what fuel the other teams are running and they know our fuel. So we know more or less where we are compared to Ferrari, that's why I say it's close. But we're not sure if we are ahead of them or behind them just yet."



Vettel: quick

Comparing race simulations between the four Mercedes and Ferrari drivers made for interesting reading, with Hamilton averaging the fastest stints, but less than 0.5s quicker than the slowest Ferrari on a similar tyre run.

"We have to see if this car can be a winner, but I think the first impression is very positive," said Vettel. "We are happy with the step we have made [over 2015], but in terms of reliability Mercedes seems very strong."

"We have tried to close the gap, which was quite big last year. I think we've done a good job during the last season and now I think the new car can close the gap even further, but we have to be patient a little longer to see."

The one blot on Mercedes' week came when Hamilton lost track time due to a transmission issue on the final morning. "Better to have it break now than in Melbourne," said Hamilton of the failure. "I've pushed the car here and there, but when we get to Australia we can really open it up."

WINTER TESTING: TEST TWO

Where: Circuit de Catalunya, Barcelona When: March 1-4

P	DRIVER	CAR	TIME	GAP	TYRES
1	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	1m22.765s		US
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1m22.852s	+0.087s	SS
3	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes	1m23.022s	+0.257s	S
4	Carlos Sainz Jr	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	1m23.134s	+0.369s	US
5	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	1m23.193s	+0.428s	S
6	Valtteri Bottas	Williams-Mercedes	1m23.229s	+0.464s	US
7	Nico Hulkenberg	Force India-Mercedes	1m23.251s	+0.486s	US
8	Max Verstappen	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	1m23.382s	+0.617s	US
9	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m23.622s	+0.857s	S
10	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	1m23.721s	+0.956s	SS
11	Kevin Magnussen	Renault	1m23.933s	+1.168s	SS
12	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-TAG	1m24.427s	+1.662s	S
13	Jenson Button	McLaren-Honda	1m24.714s	+1.949s	US
14	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	1m24.735s	+1.970s	S
15	Felipe Nasr	Sauber-Ferrari	1m24.760s	+1.995s	S
16	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	1m24.859s	+2.094s	SS
17	Pascal Wehrlein	Manor-Mercedes	1m24.913s	+2.148s	US
18	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	1m25.031s	+2.266s	S
19	Daniil Kvyat	Red Bull-TAG	1m25.049s	+2.284s	S
20	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	1m25.255s	+2.490s	S
21	Esteban Gutierrez	Haas-Ferrari	1m25.422s	+2.657s	SS
22	Rio Haryanto	Manor-Mercedes	1m25.899s	+3.134s	US

Winter testing: tests 1 and 2 combined classification

P	DRIVER	CAR	TIME	GAP	TYRES
1	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	1m22.765s		US
2	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1m22.810s	+0.045s	US
3	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes	1m23.022s	+0.257s	S
4	Nico Hulkenberg	Force India-Mercedes	1m23.110s	+0.345s	SS
5	Carlos Sainz Jr	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	1m23.134s	+0.369s	US
6	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	1m23.193s	+0.428s	S
7	Valtteri Bottas	Williams-Mercedes	1m23.229s	+0.464s	SS
8	Max Verstappen	Toro Rosso-Ferrari	1m23.382s	+0.617s	US
9	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-TAG	1m23.525s	+0.760s	US
10	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	1m23.622s	+0.857s	S
11	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	1m23.650s	+0.885s	SS
12	Kevin Magnussen	Renault	1m23.933s	+1.168s	SS
13	Daniil Kvyat	Red Bull-TAG	1m24.293s	+1.528s	US
14	Jenson Button	McLaren-Honda	1m24.714s	+1.949s	US
15	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	1m24.735s	+1.970s	S
16	Felipe Nasr	Sauber-Ferrari	1m24.760s	+1.995s	S
17	Alfonso Celis Jr	Force India-Mercedes	1m24.840s	+2.075s	SS
18	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	1m24.859s	+2.094s	SS
19	Pascal Wehrlein	Manor-Mercedes	1m24.913s	+2.148s	US
20	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	1m25.031s	+2.266s	S
21	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	1m25.255s	+2.490s	S
22	Esteban Gutierrez	Haas-Ferrari	1m25.422s	+2.657s	SS
23	Rio Haryanto	Manor-Mercedes	1m25.899s	+3.134s	US

F1 TESTING MILEAGE

TEAM	TEST 1	TEST 2	TOTAL
MERCEDES	1953	1790	3743
TORO ROSSO	1293	1741	3034
WILLIAMS	1091	1385	2476
FERRARI	1021	1449	2470
SAUBER	1250	1174	2424
RED BULL	1067	1296	2363
FORCE INDIA	963	1290	2253
RENAULT	993	1252	2245
McLAREN	744	1310	2054
MANOR	735	665	1400
HAAS	813	558	1371



*ran 2015 car during first test

TOTAL MILEAGE BY ENGINE

MERCEDES	9872
FERRARI (2016)	5016
RENAULT/TAG	4608
FERRARI (2015)	4284
HONDA	2054

Lewis Hamilton slams new halo head protection device as new design splits opinion in the paddock

Formula 1's new halo cockpit protection device split opinion between the sport's top drivers after making its public debut in Barcelona.

Ferrari brought a prototype design to the final two days of running at the Circuit de Catalunya for both Kimi Raikkonen and Sebastian Vettel to briefly try. The FIA is intent on bringing in some form of driver

head protection for 2017 onwards, with the halo design being the current frontrunner to be implemented.

Ferrari's device was simply a prototype design, so ran without the hinged system a final fixture would have to allow drivers easier access to and from the cockpit.

The system received the biggest criticism from triple world champion

Lewis Hamilton, who posted a photo on Instagram of Raikkonen's car with the device, along with the message: "Please no! This is the worst looking mod[ification] in F1 history. I appreciate the quest for safety but this is F1, and the way it is now is perfectly fine." He later added: "I hope we have an option to use it or not because I will not be using it."

Raikkonen quashed initial concerns over the device limiting drivers' field of vision after his first run, insisting there was little difference.

Vettel backed the design: "I agree it doesn't look very nice, but if it helps safety and save lives – there would be at least two drivers who would still be around, Henry Surtees and Justin Wilson, if we had this system."



Raikkonen was first to run with Halo fitted

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'BRDC F4 could become British F3'
FIA considers change, p9



Photos: Euan Cameron, LAT

DRIVERS SLAM NEW QUALIFYING



Cars will qualify with new rules in Australia

Formula 1 drivers held crunch talks with rulemakers during testing at Barcelona last week to voice their concerns over the sport's new qualifying system, which will make its debut during the Australian Grand Prix later this month.

For this year F1 qualifying will be shaken up, with new rules meaning the slowest drivers within a session will be eliminated at 90-second intervals, instead of on their final lap times at the end of the session.

MN reported last week that the new system would not be introduced until the Spanish Grand Prix because of concerns over producing the necessary software. But F1 rulemakers have now confirmed

that it will be in place for Australia.

Under the new format, the three qualifying segments will remain, but drivers will now be required to stay on track in each session until they are knocked out. By the final 90 seconds of the last session just two drivers will still be on track to fight for pole.

The new format has been criticised by many drivers for being too complicated and 13 drivers met with F1 race director Charlie Whiting in Barcelona to express their concern, something that was emphasised by the rulemakers remaining undecided over the final format until late last week.

McLaren's Fernando Alonso (right)

said: "I'm sad for the sport because it doesn't look right from the outside when in one week we change the qualifying format three times. I don't think it's right. There are too many changes, and the complexity of the rules for the spectators are quite high. I was not in the meeting, but it's a unanimous thing. We want rules simplicity.

"All of my friends here in Spain want to switch on the television and watch battles, big cars, big tyres, big noise and enjoy the race."

Force India's Sergio Perez told Sky Sports News: "We're not happy with the rules. Let's

see if they can change it. For the fans it's very complicated. It's complicated for us already, so this just makes things more complicated. We feel the qualifying at the moment is really good. I don't think there's a reason to change that."

Williams team head Claire Williams said the new format must be

tried before it is criticised: "I'd like to get to Melbourne and see how it plays out and then comment on it. If it doesn't work, then fine. We tried. All we are trying to do is make the sport more exciting, which is what everybody wants."



Palmer: Renault test disastrous

British F1 rookie Jolyon Palmer has described pre-season testing as "a little disastrous" after a number of problems with his Renault.

He managed significantly fewer miles than team-mate Kevin Magnussen, with software glitches, gearbox issues and a hydraulic problem hampering his progress.

"It's been a little disastrous," said Palmer. "It's not what you want when you're a rookie and you want to turn up to Melbourne and do a good job. The baseline car at least is reasonable."

Palmer added it was important that Magnussen had managed to complete more miles.

"It's good because if he did the same number of laps as me, we're in trouble as a team," he said.

"It's good he had four trouble-free days, I wish I had four trouble-free days but it is what it is."



Palmer's car had issues



Haas lost vital track time with technical trouble in testing

Haas 'overwhelmed' by F1 after tough test

New team Haas endured a difficult second test at Barcelona last week, with owner Gene Haas admitting to be a "little bit overwhelmed" by F1's complex nature.

The American outfit had a successful first test the previous week but experienced a range of problems in the second one. Esteban Gutierrez suffered a fuel system problem on the first day, while he managed only three laps on the second day after gremlins with the turbocharger on the squad's Ferrari engines.

Then Romain Grosjean suffered brake-by-wire issues on

the third day, which caused a number of offs, leaving the squad completing fewer laps than any other team.

"The complexity of the cars and engines is way beyond anything I ever expected," said Haas. "So while it's a real challenge on one hand, on the other I don't think the fans understand how complex it is."

"Even I didn't know. I was kind of naive, too, about what goes into making one of these cars run. It is a very complex process, it is a complex car, it's a complex way to race cars and, right now, it's a little bit overwhelming."

THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP



The GP2 and GP3 calendars have been announced for this season. GP2 will support Formula 1's inaugural grand prix in Baku this year, as well as returning to Sepang for the first time since 2013. The

season will begin in Europe – at Barcelona – for the first time in five years, while rounds in Bahrain and Russia will not take place in 2016. GP3 will appear at Sepang for the first time, while it will not join GP2 in Monaco and Azerbaijan. Teams tested the new GP3 car for the first time last week (right)... James Jakes will join fellow Briton Will Stevens at Manor's LMP2 squad in the World Endurance Championship this season. Audi factory driver Rene Rast will compete for G-Drive Racing having been part of the German manufacturer's LMP1 team at Le Mans in 2015. Oliver Webb

has joined Team ByKolles's LMP1 effort. LMP2 title-winner Julien Canal, meanwhile, will leave G-Drive and instead race for Greaves Motorsport in the European Le Mans Series... Brad Keselowski won the NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway last weekend despite picking up a pitlane speeding penalty mid-race. The Team Penske driver passed Kyle

Busch, Jimmie Johnson and Joey Logano in the closing stages. Kurt Busch had controlled the race earlier on but he was also handed a pitlane speeding penalty, dropping him out of contention... Nick Percat was a surprise winner in the third V8 Supercars race at Adelaide last weekend. There was a red flag when a storm left the track awash but when the race was restarted Percat claimed his first solo win since 2011, grabbing the advantage by pitting earlier in the race.

Jamie Whincup won the season opener from James Courtney, with the duo switching positions in race two...

F1 rules deadline extended to April

The deadline to decide upon the future of F1's technical regulations from 2017 has been extended, despite outline rules for new and faster cars being approved.

The FIA initially wanted a concrete agreement on changes to cars from 2017 onwards by February 29 but, following meetings with the F1 Strategy Group and F1 Commission in Geneva, that has been extended to April 30.

The FIA approved bodywork changes last week, with cars set to become wider, faster and more aggressive. The main cause for the extension stems from the need to finalise cost-cutting and supply plans for power units. F1's four engine makers held lengthy talks over the winter trying to agree on a cap of 12million euro per season, but Bernie Ecclestone is also pushing for all engines to run identical power output.

A statement from the FIA World Motorsport Council said the deadline extension "will allow stakeholders the best opportunity to finalise all work – especially with regard to the power unit regulations focusing on four key areas of cost, obligation to supply, performance convergence and improvement of noise."

OBITUARY

Alan Henry 1947-2016

Alan Henry, one of the most respected F1 journalists and a former editor of *Motoring News*, passed away last week. He was 69.

Like so many, Henry began his career as part of the contributor network. He had written in to the weekly titles complaining about a report that he'd read. He was told that if he thought he could do better, he should have a go.

And so his career began. But it was in May 1970, when Henry was dropping off his weekend's club report before carrying on his usual day job as a clerk at Barclays Bank, that his life changed. "I was ushered in to the managing director's office," he remembered in his recent memoirs. "The gentleman apologised that he would only be able to pay me £1500 a year and a company Lotus Cortina. At the time, I was earning £998 a year at Barclays. Life is full of difficult decisions and this was not one of them."

Henry became our F1 editor and then the editor from 1976 until 1979. He left to become a freelance working for many national newspapers and editor-at-large of *F1 Racing*. He also oversaw the *Autocourse* publications for several seasons.

Henry's contacts were at the highest level, and his ability to get to the point of stories while avoiding the politics, made him a hit with the readers.

MN would like to extend its sympathies to his friends and family.

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

JTR tests Dane

MSA Formula squad JTR ran Danish hot shoe Cato Poulsen for the first time at Donington Park last week. The 16-year-old is leading the Formula Gulf Championship and was previously a top 10 finisher in the Danish Formula Ford Championship.

Bradshaw back

Ex-Porsche Carrera Cup racer Tom Bradshaw will be back in one of the Stuttgart firm's machines again this season, as he will share Jonathan Evans' 997 Cup car in the GT Cup Championship. Both drivers tested the car at Donington Park last week. Bradshaw is also planning a few outings with father John in the family's historic Ford Anglia.

GT colours

British GT will introduce redesigned logos and race numbers for this year. GT3 cars will run with red backgrounds on their door race numbers, while GT4 will have black backgrounds.

Piquet's Rebellion

Ex-F1 racer Nelson Piquet Jr will join Rebellion Racing's LMP1 programme for the first races of the FIA World Endurance Championship and the Le Mans 24 Hours. The Brazilian, son of triple F1 champion Nelson Piquet, will share the number 12 Rebellion R-One LMP1 with Nicolas Prost and Nick Heidfeld for the season-opening Six Hours of Silverstone (on April 17), Spa-Francorchamps and Le Mans.

COOK AND SUTTON IN MG BTCC SEATS

Young British guns land factory drives with Triple Eight Racing

By Matt James

Triple Eight Racing has signed Josh Cook and Renault UK Clio Cup champion Ashley Sutton to race in the British Touring Car Championship this season.

Cook made his debut in the BTCC last season at the wheel of a Power Maxed Chevrolet Cruze and finished 15th in the points. He finished on the podium at Rockingham.

Former single-seater racer Sutton won the Clio Cup title in 2015, taking six victories and will make his debut in the category.

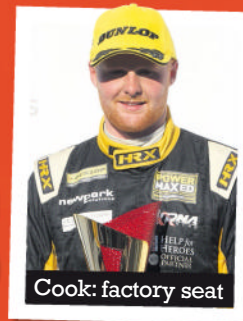
Cook said: "I'm over the moon to be working with a team and manufacturer that has such heritage. The introduction of the new RML components this season is bound to mix it up, and I'm coming straight off the back of a strong first season in the

BTCC. I want to keep the momentum."

Sutton, who has previously raced in Formula Vee and Formula Ford, said: "I am overwhelmed to have been given this opportunity as a manufacturer driver for MG with Triple Eight Racing in my first year of the BTCC. When we first joined the TOCA package back in 2014 I would have bitten someone's hand off if they said I would be racing in the BTCC in just two years' time. It has been a dream to compete in the BTCC for a full season from a very young age."

Team head Ian Harrison said he was pleased to have two younger drivers at the squad because it would fit in well with MG's brand image. "I have no doubts about either Josh or Ashley," he said. "They are both young, quick drivers and they are going to be pushing MG to the front of the field."

Photos: LAT, Jakob Ebrej



Cook: factory seat



MG will have a works presence



Old-spec British Touring Cars will have to wait for series

New B-TEC Development Series postponed but will schedule track events over 2016

The planned B-TEC Development Series, which is scheduled to be a touring car learning category for older-spec machines, has been postponed.

The initiative, which was designed to give aspiring teams and drivers an introduction to tin-top racing, was revealed in January. It was due to run at six 2016 club meetings and encompass 12 rounds. It was going to run for former BTCC

cars fitted with the older-specification GPRM-built standardised parts.

Over the course of 2016, series bosses aim to have track experience events to allow potential entrants to sample the series and to outline the plans to reignite the category in 2017.

The director of the B-TEC Development Series, Ian Harrison, said: "Naturally we are disappointed to have to postpone like this, but that is

all it is, a postponement. We want to ensure that we have the strongest possible grid when we start, and at the moment there are a lot of carrots being dangled in front of potential entrants from other categories.

"During 2016, we will be running some on-track experience events for entrants to come along and drive the cars. Hopefully this will confirm to them that the Development Series is a cost-effective solution

over an entire season. We will be announcing details soon."

The class was due to be run by the British Automobile Racing Club and included rounds at Brands Hatch, Donington Park, Croft, Pembrey, Rockingham and Anglesey.

BARC's Ian Watson said: "We are obviously disappointed but believe it is right to postpone the start of what I am sure will be an interesting option for both drivers and teams."

Young racers Graham and Mitchell eye GTs after Aston outings

BRDC F4 graduate Matthew Graham and former Ginetta Junior champion Jack Mitchell are both eyeing a move into the British GT Championship after a test with Aston Martin Racing at Donington Park last week.

Former world karting champion Graham conducted a day of running with the MacMillan Racing Vantage GT4 alongside Renault Clio and Mini Challenge driver Mitchell.

Graham finished fourth in the

2013 BRDC F4 points before moving into the Formula Renault Eurocup, but budget constraints limited his racing last season. Mitchell lifted the Ginetta Jr title in 2014 before doing part-seasons in Clios and Minis last year.

Both tested with an eye to being part of MacMillan Racing's British GT4 entry this year.

Graham, 19, said: "The Donington test was my first time in a race car since I tested the new F4 car with SWR last September

and my first time ever in a closed car. I would like to stay in single-seaters but the budgets are just too much, so looking at GTs is a good move for me. I was surprised how quickly I got used to the car. It was so different to anything else I have driven but a lot more comfortable than a single-seater."

Mitchell added: "This was my second time out with the team, I would have loved to go into British Touring Cars, but I think GTs is a better option."



Duo tested Vantage GT4

Hill joins Team Hard for full BTCC campaign

Jake Hill has joined Team Hard in a Toyota Avensis in his first full campaign in the British Touring Car Championship.

Hill has had sporadic outings in the BTCC. He drove for the Motorbase team in a Ford Focus at Croft in 2013, and joined Rob Austin Racing in an Audi for the final two rounds at Brands Hatch that same season. Last year, he competed in the finale at Brands Hatch at the wheel

of an AmD Tuning.com Audi S3. The 22-year-old will join Chris Smiley on Team Hard's driving roster. Hill explained: "Now I hope I can show what I can do with a full programme - my first in any series since 2011."

Team principal Tony Gilham said he has been watching Hill's progress: "With Jake joining Chris [Smiley], we have one of the most exciting pairings of young talent in the series."



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'Kremer pays homage to its racing heritage'
Firm builds 'new' old car, p9



Photos: Porsche AG, Jakob Ebrey and Telmo Gil Photography

BOYD LANDS LMP3 DEAL



First dry P3 run was at Donington Park

Formula Ford star Wayne Boyd will make the step up to the European Le Mans Series this year after securing a deal to handle one of United Autosports' new LMP3 machines.

Northern Irishman Boyd, 25, will share one of the Anglo-American team's new Nissan-powered Ligier JSP3s with Briton Matt Bell and American Mark Patterson for the full ELMS schedule, which begins at Silverstone on April 16.

Boyd lifted the British Formula Ford title in 2008 and went on to be a race winner in British F3 and the American

USF2000 Championship before budget issues stalled his career. He has since been restricted to a handful of Formula Ford 1600 events per year and last year won the Kent Festival to add to his 2014 Walter Hayes Trophy title.

"This is the biggest opportunity I've had in my career and I owe so much to United Autosports and [team co-founder] Richard Dean," said Boyd. "I've known Richard for years and helped him out with corporate bits, and for him to give me this chance is amazing."

"I've got two very experienced team-mates in Mark and Matt

and I don't think any of us will be off the pace this season. They will help me get up to speed with the car quickly. We're not going in to finish second, we want wins from the start and the championship is the goal."

Boyd tested the LMP3 for the first time at a wet Magny-Cours recently, before having his first dry running at Donington Park last week.

"The P3 is hugely different to what I know, but didn't take too long to adapt to," he added. "The biggest difference is the sheer power of it and having to be very controlled on the throttle out of tight turns to limit the

wheelspin. It has less aero than an F3 car, but just a lot more power. Racing with a roof over my head also takes some getting used to as you have less vision, but within a few laps I felt comfortable."



Boyd has won FFord titles



TPR will run Continentals

Onslow-Cole joins Team Parker Bentley crew

Team Parker Racing has signed Tom Onslow-Cole, Callum MacLeod and Ian Loggie to race its Bentley in this year's Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup.

Former British Touring Car racer Onslow-Cole joins the team having won last year's European 24 Hour Series title with Ram Racing. He will share Team Parker's Continental GT3 with former British Formula Ford champion MacLeod and GT regular Loggie. MacLeod and Loggie shared an Audi R8 LMS Ultra GT3 with the team last year. Onslow-Cole said: "The

Blancpain GT Series is the largest GT class in the world.

"I'm pleased with how my switch to GT racing is going, it's amazing how separate various disciplines in motorsport are. As a driver, not only are you learning new machinery, distances and strategy, but you also need to grow your network to get onto the teams' radars to be in-line for chances."

● Barwell Motorsport has signed Briton Oliver Gavin to race one of its Lamborghini Huracan GT3s in the Spa 24 Hours. He will share with Mark Poole, Richard Abra and Joe Osborne.

Caterham graduates get Ginetta for GT Cup

Caterham champions Ian Anderson and Amanda Black will team up to share a Ginetta G55 GT4 in this year's GT Cup Championship.

Anderson and Black, who have both independently claimed the Caterham Graduates Sigma class title, will run with the Lifetime Racing team, which is run by former British GT and Clio Cup racer Dan Eagling. The pair contested a handful of British

Endurance Championship events last year but will now embark on a full campaign.

Anderson said: "I'm very excited by the GT Cup, particularly the sprint races for amateur drivers only. Hopefully my experience of close-quarters Caterham racing will be useful."

"I'm confident we have the full package with Lifetime Racing and Dan on board and can maybe push for podiums this year."

Meadows moves to Blancpain Endurance

Two-time Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Michael Meadows will switch to the Blancpain Sprint and Endurance series this year, driving a WRT Audi R8.

The 28-year-old will share the car with Stuart Leonard, with Robin Frijns joining them for the longer races. Meadows was part of the crew that won the Dubai 24 Hours earlier this year.

"The Blancpain Sprint Series is going to be really tough but I'm looking forward to it," he said. "The Dubai race was

important - we wanted to use it as a prolonged test session to get to know the team and car but we still wanted to win. It shows what a great team it is that we rocked up and were able to win."

"With endurance racing a lot of it is down to luck, it can be like a lottery, so it will be difficult. My personal goal is to be mixing it with the guys who are setting the pace."

This will be the first time in six years Meadows hasn't raced in the Carrera Cup, which he won in 2012 and 2013.

Century signs Hancock for Britcar attack

Century Motorsport will field ex-Formula Renault champion Ollie Hancock and Russian driver Ruben Anakhasyan in this year's Britcar Endurance Championship.

The Fenny Compton-based team, which also competes in the British GT Championship and Ginetta GT4 Supercup, will field a G55 GT4 for the duo. Hancock, the 2008 Formula Renault BARC champion, coached Anakhasyan through a handful of GT Cup rounds last season.

Hancock said: "I am really excited to see what 2016 brings for us in Britcar. I have coached Ruben for a long time now and he's making huge



Hancock will race Ginetta

leaps forward every time out, so it will be fun sharing the car with him in longer races."

"Century is a team that has always run a fantastic car. I've never raced the Ginetta G55 GT4, but I've had plenty of seat time with different clients and Britcar looks an exciting series with plenty of momentum for this season."

THE VOICE OF NATIONAL RACING

MATT JAMIES

"Henry took me under his wing"



Alan Henry (l), Niki Lauda and Clay Regazzoni

When I started covering the F1 beat in 1998, it was something of a baptism of fire. Stepping from a British Touring Car Championship paddock in to the top flight would be a path later followed by Kimi Raikkonen, but as a journo, it was tough.

Other publications had large contingents of journos from various countries who would work in legion with each other. *Motorsport News*, as ever, was virtually left to fend for itself. It has always been that way, and it isn't necessarily an unpleasant thing.

I was taken to my first race by the then-F1 editor Rob Aherne, and he introduced me around. One of the most important contacts he gave me that weekend was Alan Henry.

As a former editor of *Motoring News*, Henry, by then one of the longest-standing of the grandees of motorsport journalism, always had a paternal nurturing tendency towards anybody who had trodden the path through *Motoring News*'s former home, Standard House in central London. After all, Henry had been top dog of *Motoring News* from 1976 until 1979 before turning his hand to freelance.

Tales of that place and the struggles to survive, print a newspaper and continue a vaguely normal life have passed in to folklore.

As such, Henry knew what a struggle it would be for an *MN* staffer, even after the title had passed in to the hands of Haymarket.

And that meant he kept a very close eye on me to begin with, pointing me in the right direction and introducing me to the people I needed to be introduced to. He wasn't there to unearth the stories or write the copy for me, but would forever be an arm around the shoulder and a point of call if I needed it. For that, I am grateful.

For someone who grew up reading Alan Henry's words in the magazines and in the books that he wrote, just meeting him in the paddock was akin to meeting my heroes who were behind the wheel. And I was so appreciative of his kindness and genuine warmth towards me. That is why I was terribly sad to hear that he had passed away last weekend.

Henry was hugely respected on his own terms within the paddock by some of the sport's greats - be they drivers, officials or team owners - as you can see by just looking around at some of the tributes that have already been paid to the man.

He deserves them all.

AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Mansell for Fun

The Global Racing team has recruited serial lap record-setter Scott Mansell for its seventh season in the Fun Cup Championship. Mansell – who still holds the outright lap record for the Brands Hatch Indy Circuit at 38.032s set back in 2004 in a Benetton B197 EuroBOSS car – will share the Global car with John Gilbert, Sarah Reader and team head Steve Machin.

Drought tests

Irish Touring Car driver Nicole Drought was due to test a Porsche 911 GT3 Cup machine with the Sean Edwards Foundation at Le Castellet in France on Monday. Drought, 21, scored five podium finishes in her Honda Integra during her debut year last season and earned a nomination for the Motorsport Ireland Young Racing Driver of the Year Award. She was invited to the test via the Foundation's Fast Track Racing School driver mentoring programme. Drought said: "The car is way ahead of anything I have driven before so I am not expecting to set the world alight. It will be a wonderful experience though."

Ratcliffe returns

Ryan Ratcliffe will rejoin Optimum Motorsport for the second round of the Creventic 24 Hour Series, the 12 Hours of Mugello on March 18/19. Ratcliffe contested the Dubai 24 Hours in the team's new Audi R8 LMS GT3 in preparation for British GT this year. He will now share the R8 with Flick Haigh and Joe Osborne for Mugello.

Coates joins Clio with Ciceley Racing

Max Coates has become the second driver who raced in the British Touring Car Championship last season to announce they will compete in the Renault UK Clio Cup this year.

The 22-year-old had a one-off BTCC outing with the Support Our Paras team in 2015 and has previously raced in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup and Ginetta Junior.

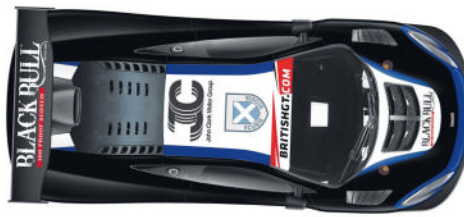
He will now join touring car squad Ciceley Motorsport in Clios this year, joining fellow former BTCC driver Mike Bushell in the series.

"I've known the people at Ciceley for some time and when they told me they wanted to expand on their BTCC team with an entry into the UK Clio Cup I had my heart set on it," said Coates. "So it is a bit of a dream come true, particularly with their links to touring cars, which is where I want to be full-time in the future."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Scruffy Bear Pictures, Kremer

McLAREN TO BRITISH GT

Rob Bell heads factory Ecurie Ecosse entry into GT3



By Rob Ladbrook

Ecurie Ecosse will return to British GT this year through a new factory partnership with McLaren GT.

The Woking firm will back a single 650S GT3 for works driver Rob Bell and Alasdair McCaig. The car will run in the famous blue, white and black colours that previously adorned the Barwell Motorsport BMW Z4, which Marco Attard – aided by pro driver Alexander Sims – steered to the title in 2014.

For Bell, 36, this year will mark his first domestic racing campaign since 2002.

He has since gone on to race successfully internationally in endurance racing.

McCaig last contested British GT in 2012, sharing a BMW Z4 GT3 with Oliver Bryant and finishing fifth in the points.

Bell said: "It is great to have the chance to race back on home soil. Since joining McLaren GT as a factory driver in 2011 I have had the opportunity to race at some of the world's most iconic

circuits, but it is always special to race back on my old stomping ground with the support of the British fans, who are the best in the world.

"The British GT Championship has been growing in stature over the past years and this season looks set to be one of the toughest championships for me, the team and the 650S GT3. But I am confident in all parties being up to the challenge and I am looking forward to working with Alasdair."

McLaren GT head Andrew Kirkaldy added: "The level of competition in British GT has always been high but now it is rapidly becoming one of the world's toughest GT3 championships, and it will be great to see a McLaren wearing the Ecurie Ecosse colours.

"The team is in a great position for a championship assault this year. Rob brings significant experience with him, which will help them hit the ground running. He will be a great partner for Alasdair."

Scottish kart ace to Euro Renault

Scottish karting champion Finlay Hutchison will make his car racing debut in the Formula Renault Northern European Cup this year with Mark Burdett Motorsport.

The 16-year-old will partner fellow Briton Alex Gill at the team for his maiden car racing season.

Hutchison enjoyed a successful karting career, claiming the WSKC Rotax Mini Max title in 2011 before adding the Scottish Rotax Mini Max crown in 2012.

Hutchison joined the team for winter testing in Valencia last year and has continued his programme in the UK in recent months.

"From the first test I did with the team we all worked together really well," he said.

"There won't be any expectations for my first season. The aim is just to develop well and learn as much as I can from the team and my team-mate Alex."

Mark Burdett added: "It's a big step into NEC from karting. He just needs to make the best progress he can, develop his skills and move up the order as the season unfolds."



Karting ace Hutchison



Team BRIT: ready with Golf

Team BRIT enters Silverstone 24 Hours with Le Mans dream for injured military personnel

Team BRIT will enter this year's 24 Hours of Silverstone with the ambition of becoming the first team of injured troops to compete at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The Berkshire-based squad has entered a petrol VW Golf GTi into the twice-around-the-clock touring car event at Silverstone on April 1-3.

The car will be raced former servicemen Martyn Compton and Mark Allen, Julian Thomas and professional driver David Pittard.

Compton suffered severe burns during an IED attack while serving in Afghanistan, while Allen was one of the youngest British soldiers to be a double amputee when he

was 19. Both began racing for rehabilitation via the KartForce programme.

Team founder Dave Player said: "It was six years ago when we started out with KartForce and we set up as a car racing team last season running in Britcar. We always specialised in endurance racing for the team aspect, and the

Silverstone 24 Hours is the biggest challenge we've had.

"The car will be supported by Slidesports so we have a great team behind us and the drivers gel well. Having David racing and coaching the guys is also a big boost.

"We want to one day race at Le Mans, so this is the first step towards that."

Porsche tuning giant Kremer Racing will field its new 997 K3 machine in this year's German VLN championship. The K3 has been designed to pay homage to the Kremer Porsche 935 K3, which was successful in sportscars in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The car is based on the chassis of a 997 GT3 Cup car, but with a reworked body and aero kit from Kremer and Holger Zimmermann.



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'An F1 car will run
on Glasgow streets'
New festival launched, p18



Mini Challenge gets Channel 4 coverage

The Mini Challenge will have dedicated coverage on terrestrial TV this year after agreeing a deal with Channel 4.

The championship's top tier Gen 3 F56 category will be screened over four dedicated 30-minute programmes on Saturday mornings.

Channel 4, which has now secured the Formula 1 broadcast rights for the UK, has traditionally aired coverage of both the British GT and British Formula 3 championships in recent years, as well as supporting series.

Hayfisher Productions will produce the Mini Challenge coverage. Company head Richard Hay said: "Our programmes on Channel 4 are centered on the British GT Championship and this year we add the British Rally Championship as well. In the intervening weeks we try and showcase some of the best of the other championships we cover. The Mini Challenge is a perfect fit in that respect."

"It is now clearly one of the best one-make series in the UK. Not only do the new cars look fantastic there are over 30 of them expected this season. I think the Mini Challenge represents British national racing at its best."

Mini Challenge will continue to have hour-long programmes on MotorsTV for all of its three classes.



Gen 3 Minis will be on C4

Further investment at Donington Park

Donington Park has invested an additional £750,000 into circuit improvements for 2016.

The track has undergone changes at the Melbourne GP loop, where a further 250 metres of debris fencing has been installed. A new tyre wall has been fitted at Hollywood and the podium has been rebuilt. There has also been extra protection created for marshals' posts.

A new spectator bank has been completed on the infield by the Robert's Chicane. Track bosses are also already working on turning the area where the old hospitality units once stood into a new spectator area for 2017.

Donington has so far invested in excess of £11.5 million into regenerating the track since it reopened in 2010 following its failed British Grand Prix bid.

Photos: Hawkins, Ebrey, LAT

BRDC F4 CHASES BRITISH F3 STATUS



BRDC F4 could be soon be rebadged as British Formula 3

British Formula 3 could make a shock return this season – in the form of the BRDC Formula 4 Championship.

According to *Motorsport News*'s sources, the idea was discussed at the FIA World Motor Sport Council in Geneva last Friday and it could be pushed through during the next week – just in time for the opening round at Snetterton on March 27/28.

The new Cosworth-powered Tatuus chassis used in BRDC F4 are significantly faster than their predecessors, with early testing indicating that they are not far off F3 pace. Meanwhile, an upgrading to F3 status could also mean series boss Jonathan Palmer relinquishing his ownership of the F4 trademark in the UK to MSA Formula, which runs to FIA F4 regulations.

While Palmer said he was unable to comment on the story, team bosses gave the thumbs up to the move, which would mean F3 returning to the UK as a single-seater

'ladder' class after an absence of one year.

Fortec Motorsport, Double R Racing and Carlin, which all supported British F3 up to its demise at the end of 2014, have all entered BRDC F4 for the first time in '16.

Fortec boss Richard Dutton said: "The new BRDC F4 car is everything we ever wanted for British F3 – it's a great little car and it's inexpensive."

Dutton said that he played a part in getting the FIA and Palmer to discuss the move. "It made perfect sense to me," he said. "I spoke to the FIA about it at the Macau Grand Prix, and then I was chatting to them at the Autosport Awards when Palmer walked past, so I grabbed him and said, 'Why don't you have a serious conversation?' I think they did that a couple of weeks later. If I've done something good at long last, then so be it!"

Double R chief Anthony 'Boyoy' Hieatt added: "It would be very good for British

racing and for the MSA to get a bit of clarity between the two series [BRDC F4 and MSA Formula], because they're aimed at very different levels of competition.

"Having two F4 series in the same country doesn't help anybody, but there is room for both and, for the Palmer car, having the title of F3 wouldn't embarrass it. It's a seriously quick car, so it's not fair to tar it with the F4 brush. Palmer had a great vision with the car, and I think it's ended up being even better than he anticipated.

"We need to keep European F3 as the pinnacle, while this is a good middle ground from F4. It just seems funny that the FIA desperately tried to kill off regional F3, and now in quite a short time frame they're trying to get it going again!"

It is understood that budgets for the new BRDC F4 are similar to MSA Formula, and roughly one third those of European F3.

Sowery signs up for BRDC F4 with Lanan Racing

McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist Toby Sowery will contest the opening round of the BRDC F4 season with Lanan Racing.

The 19-year-old is still working on a deal to race in GP3 this year but if that doesn't work out he may do the full season. Sowery completed a partial campaign in MSA Formula last year with MBM and Fortec, having won the MRF Challenge the previous winter. He also won the F3 Cup in 2014 with Lanan.

"It's just the first round at the moment," said Sowery. "I am working to try and do GP3 which is my plan A, but I'm doing this to stay sharp. I'll see how it goes and may do more rounds this year if I can't get a GP3 deal. Lanan has won the championship before so we will be going for the win."

Lanan team principal Graham



Sowery has joined Lanan

Johnson added: "Toby is a proven frontrunner. We are confident that the car will be very competitive so I am absolutely sure he'll be straight at the front. Given his experience relative to his age, he will be a valuable asset to the team too. He is going to be difficult to beat."

The first round of BRDC F4 takes place at Snetterton on March 27/28.

Autograss racer lands funded MX-5

Autograss racer Andrew Adams will move into the BRSCC's Mazda MX-5 Championship this year after winning his seat via the Go4itRacing Prize Draw.

The contest offered a prize package of BRSCC membership and ARDS licence costs as well as entry fees and a race-prepared Mk1 MX-5 and trailer for the series. Adams, 21, bought his ticket for the draw during the Autosport International Show and was drawn as the winner of the prize, which is worth over £9000.

Adams, who will race the number 32 MX-5 in the 19-round series, said: "I was very shocked to have

been drawn and am very excited to see how I get on with this.

"It is going to be a new learning curve as I am used to racing on a grass circuit. The Tarmac will certainly be a new challenge. I am looking forward to my first test day and then the rest of the season. Thank you to Go4itRacing for giving me the opportunity for this new chapter in my racing career."

Go4itRacing's Kevin Brent added: "We set up the team with the aim of helping someone new into circuit racing and with Andrew we have a young, but experienced, autograss racer yet to experience the thrills of competitive circuit racing."

Caterham launches new Turkish series

Caterham has expanded its international championship range by starting a new series in Turkey.

The British manufacturer will support the new class, which will run over 13 races at the Istanbul Park Circuit – formerly the home of the Turkish Grand Prix.

The championship will utilise Caterham's 180bhp Superlight R300 model, and so far 20 cars have been supplied. The season begins in April.

The new series is the fourth international expansion from Caterham, following the start of its Colombian and Malaysian series last year and its French championship.

Caterham's motorsport head Simon Lambert said: "It is incredibly rewarding and exciting to bring our unique brand of exhilarating racing to another new audience."

Endurance Racing Series is shelved

The Endurance Racing Series will not run this year, with series organisers citing a lack of entries as the prime reason for its cancellation.

The ERS was founded for the 2015 season and held four three-hour races around the UK. Around 10 cars turned out for each race, but the 360 Motor Club's Allcomers category boosted the numbers in some combined grids over the year.

For this year the ERS had planned to run six-hour races, and also had a deal in place for UK drivers to run on the Nurburgring Nordschleife during a three-hour German club event.

However, series organiser David Hornsey said the class had been cancelled due to a lack of entries close to the scheduled start of this year's campaign.

Hornsey said: "With other series moving toward our tried and tested three-hour race format, we accelerated plans to move to six-hour races while maintaining low entry fees. We currently have around the same number of entries for round one as we did last year and promises of support, but these have not translated into entries. This will result in a grid that does not stand up to the expectation of the competitors, nor the standard ERS wishes to promote/run. This left ERS with no choice but to pull out of the 2016 season."



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RALLY NEWS

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LATVALA: CHAMPIONSHIP IS NOT OVER



By David Evans

Victory on last week's Rally Mexico has finally kick-started Jari-Matti Latvala's challenge for this year's World Rally Championship.

Starting the Leon-based rally with his team-mate Sebastien Ogier 56 points ahead, Latvala knew he had to pull something out of the bag in Mexico if he is going to have any hope of stopping the Frenchman steamrolling his way to a fourth title.

Latvala said: "I have had a very tough start to the season and I was very worried before this event. If I can't get points it's so difficult to get back into the championship.

"I knew here the position [on the road] would give me some benefit, but also you have to be able to use it. In my mind, I knew how good Sebastien is and I know how good he has been in the last two years—especially when he was winning from the front on this event

last year. I still thought it might be possible for him."

Latvala banked his 25 points rather than risking everything for an extra three on the final powerstage.

"I'm happy with second on the final stage," he said. "I knew Seb would push there and I didn't want any risk."

Latvala's first win since last year's Tour of Corsica has lowered the points deficit to Ogier to 50. The Finn will, however, still have the advantage when it comes to the next two rallies in Argentina and Portugal, where he will continue to run in a more favourable position further back on the road for the first two days of those events. Latvala is sixth in the championship, which translates to five cars cleaning the line on gravel rallies.

"The road position will still be good," he said. "And this means we can give more pressure to Ogier and keep pushing him. But we have to keep winning. The championship is not

over, it's definitely not over. We had to get the points here and we have done that—now I must keep this momentum going. OK, it's going to take time if Seb's going to be taking the points for second, but we are in the right direction now."

Latvala added that the way he won his first Rally Mexico was also important for him: "I have won in places like Finland, but this rally is so different. It gives me good confidence to win this kind of event—where it's not about going flat-out all of the time. I'm happy for this."

● Volkswagen has now equalled its own record for the most back-to-back wins with 12. It last did the dozen between Australia 2013 and Finland 2014. The current run started in Portugal last year, following Kris Meeke's Argentina win. Citroen and the Northern Irishman won't be in Carlos Paz next month, opening the door for VW to extend its record.



Latvala hadn't finished in 2016

Gargantuan stage canned for next year

Rally Mexico will not run the 50-mile Guanajuato stage again—much to the relief of WRC Promoter and a selection of the drivers.

Last week's Leon-based event included the World Rally Championship's longest test since the 1986 Tour de Corse, a record that looks set to stand for some time, with no desire from the promoter to see it repeated in the series.

Rally director Patrick Suberville told *MN* he was glad to have tried Sunday's Guanajuato stage, but it wouldn't be back in 2017.

"You should have seen rally control on Saturday night into Sunday morning," he said. "There was some tension! No we won't be doing this again. Definitely not. I'm really happy that we tried it and I had full confidence in the team that they would be able to do it, but not again. The important thing for us was that it appeared seamless to people on the outside—we achieved that."

For organisational purposes, the stage was split into three, with three stage commanders and three sets of safety cars running at the start, middle and finish. "We had more safety cars on that stage than we had rally cars!" said Suberville, who also revealed that his original intention was to run the 50-miler as the live television powerstage.

"I fought like hell for this," he said. "But the FIA and the promoter said no. In the end I convinced them to let us run the stage—it's the promoter's job to make the story for television. Trouble is, they want everything cookie-coloured for the whole championship, they don't want change. But Rally Mexico has got to this point by being daring and different and that will continue."

WRC promoter Oliver Ciesla said: "From the promoter's point of view an 80km stage is too long and doesn't add any sporting or commercial value and nor does it make the competition more interesting. In fact, the opposite seems the case—it's even questionable whether this long stage motivates the drivers to go flat-out or look to bring the car to the finish."

On the future of long stages, Ciesla added: "We do not encourage rallies to run stages longer than 50 or 60km [around 30-35 miles]—we do not see the added value; endurance is sufficiently covered in the WRC as it is."

▶ **COMPREHENSIVE RALLY MEXICO REPORT**

▶▶▶ **PAGE 26**



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'Latvala makes most of road position'
Rally Mexico report, p26

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



MAKINEN: CAR TEST ON TRACK



Finn says Gazoo testing is in hand

Tommi Makinen has scotched rumours that Toyota's World Rally Championship development programme has fallen behind – the Yaris WRC will be testing early in April.

The car was scheduled to be running on March 17, but that date has been put back after transmission parts couldn't be supplied in time. These parts aside, Makinen told *MN* the car is sitting in his workshop in Finland ready to run.

The four-time world champion said: "The original plan for the test was in April. Then there was

a chance it could be March and we tried for this, but it wasn't possible so we go back to the original plan. We are not late, everything is still on track just as it should be.

"This is just a very small thing. Everything is ready. The engine is in the car and now we are just waiting for some small components. Really, I'm telling you, this is not a drama at all."

The initial roll out and shakedown testing will take place in central Finland before moving further afield. "By early May we should be

testing in the south of Europe and in central Europe," added Makinen. "And then we are going to be doing a lot of kilometres."

The intention is to run two separate test teams simultaneously to build up data on the car in a wide variety of conditions.

The Yaris WRC is scheduled to make its debut in the World Rally Championship at January's Monte Carlo Rally – but homologation and production deadlines mean the car's final specification

will have to be set and signed-off by the end of the summer.

Makinen has already made it clear that missing Monte Carlo is not an option for the Japanese car giant on its WRC return after 17 years away from rallying's top flight.

The pressure is on at the Toyota Gazoo base in Puuppola, with significant overtime being done to get the test cars built in time. A largely Finnish workforce has been supplemented by Brits, including some technicians from M-Sport.

Driver selection on hold until autumn but Makinen could be first to test new car

Toyota will not make any announcements on its driver line-up until the autumn, according to team principal Tommi Makinen.

It was expected that Mikko Hirvonen and Juho Hanninen would be announced as test drivers earlier this month. While that hasn't happened, both are still set to drive the Yaris WRC once it is up and running.

Makinen could, however, be the driver who puts the first miles on the all-new Yaris WRC.

"I think that's possible," he said. "I would like to drive for the first test, it would be nice – of course I will take the engineers with me, but I think I can still drive."

Hanninen (along with co-driver Kaj Lindstrom) was present in Mexico for the recce

last week, sparking rumours that he had done a deal for next season – a rumour that strengthened with the news that the pair would complete the recce for all remaining rounds of the championship.

Asked if Hanninen could feature in the 2017 line-up, Makinen said: "We will see. It's one of the possibilities. The reason he does the recce

is to help us prepare the test programme and to help us find the identical conditions for the testing this year. It's really helping us training for next year.

"It's not yet the time to talk about drivers really. We will be looking at all different kinds of possibilities, but it's too early right now. It's more reasonable to talk about this in the autumn."

Hyundai to improve suspension after issues

Hyundai will implement suspension upgrades ahead of next month's Rally Argentina following a double failure on Hayden Paddon's i20 WRC and trouble on the sister car of Thierry Neuville.

The Leon-based event was the first gravel outing for Hyundai's all-new i20 and Paddon admitted he was surprised at how fragile the suspension arms turned out to be.

"For no reason – OK we went wide and hit a bank – but under normal circumstances you wouldn't expect to break a suspension arm," said the Kiwi. "This will be addressed. It's not a problem – it will be sorted for the next rally."

Team manager Alain Penasse said the parts would be studied when the team got back to base in Frankfurt.

Paddon suffered failure



Wilson: Camilli must finish in Argentina

M-Sport team principal Malcolm Wilson has told Eric Camilli he wants to see him at the finish of Rally Argentina without any incidents.

The young Frenchman damaged his Ford Fiesta RS WRC for the third event in succession at last week's Rally Mexico – taking a wheel off in the Ibarra stage. His rally had already been spoiled when he suffered a puncture and dropped five minutes on the opening day.

Wilson said: "From what we can see, Eric hit a rock that was



Camilli: Three accidents

pulled out by Jari-Matti [Latvala], who was running directly ahead of him. Incredible, Jari-Matti's not even driving for me anymore and he's still costing me

money! Was Eric unlucky? I guess he was, but maybe he shouldn't have been cutting quite so much.

"I've told him I want him at the finish in Argentina. The good thing is the pace he showed, he was up on Mads [Ostberg, teammate] on some stages, which isn't bad for his first time here."

BRC PRESENTER

COLIN CLARK

"Mid Wales Stages lived up to the hype"



A strange thing happened this weekend, we had a round of the British Rally Championship! Eighteen months after the Manx Rally 2014, the Phoenix rose from the flames. There was so much pre-event anticipation, some might call it hype, that I'm sure this came as a surprise to no one. What might, however, come as a surprise, is that this event actually lived up to all that hype.

OK, so the 'service park' was actually a disjointed mosaic of car parks on a sprawling industrial estate on the edges of Newtown. The base was an ugly concrete monstrosity that even the architect would probably now disown. But none of that mattered.

We had the British Rally Championship back. We had some of the best stages in the world. We had proper 'take two steps back when they fly past you' rally cars in abundance. We had some of the most exciting young drivers in the world showing us their outrageously precocious talents. And boy, what a weekend we all had.

I suppose the big question that needs answering is just how British rallying found itself back in this miraculously hopeful and seemingly healthy position? The answer is actually relatively easy. The vision, energy, tenacity and blind optimism of one man, IMS managing director Ben Taylor.

He's a bit of a strange one really for a managing director. You won't find Ben swanning around the service park in fancy tweeds and highly polished loafers keeping perfectly manicured and moisturised hands away from the oily reality of rallying. This man is very much one of us. In Newtown, he buzzed around in his old well-worn Cat boots, beanie hat pulled down low, a cheery word of welcome and thanks readily available for everyone from the car park attendant to the mayor of Newtown.

He exudes passion and enthusiasm for our sport and I believe him when he says his priority is not to turn a profit from the BRC but to see it returned to its rightful position as the number one national rally championship in the world. Based on past performance and past characters, it's easy to be sceptical of these kind of statements. But I challenge anyone who was present at the BRC launch reception to honestly question this man's integrity. The talk he gave was full of raw emotion, laid bare honesty, and unbridled enthusiasm. Was I the only one with a wee tear in my eye at the end of it? I don't think so.

This is a man who you can strenuously disagree with, yet rarely fall out with. It's a skill and talent that will undoubtedly stand him in good stead in the coming months and years.

Perhaps only once did the "one of us" mask slip slightly over the weekend. Sitting in a portacabin, surrounded by plastic coffee cups and polystyrene containers of greasy chips and highly questionable burgers, he turned to a colleague and asked "joining us for supper Johnny?"



AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

DMACK has new tyre for gravel

DMACK is confident a new gravel tyre will be enough for it to further close the gap to rival Michelin from Rally Portugal onwards.

Drive DMACK managing director Dick Cormack said the tyre, which includes a new construction and compound, was tested in Spain earlier this month with very positive results. "The hard gravel tyre has always been our weakness," said Cormack. "This new tyre will represent a big step for us. In testing we have seen better stability and longevity. The plan is to have it in Portugal and then we want Ott [Tanak, DMACK driver] to be pushing for the top three in Poland. We're going to let him off the leash in Poland and see what he can do."

Tanak finished third in Mikolajki last season.



New hard gravel tyre

FIA AND DRIVERS MEET TO DISCUSS DECISION MAKING

World champion Ogier says meeting with FIA was 'constructive'



Ogier says the meeting was a step forward

By David Evans

World Rally Championship crews met with the FIA to discuss greater involvement in the decision-making processes in the sport last week.

Both sides reported a positive response from the Thursday meeting in Mexico and cited the

need for better communication. The need for discussion arose from the previous round in Sweden, where the drivers felt their voice wasn't heard in the discussion over cancelling stages in the lack of ice and cold temperatures needed to make the tyres work.

World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier was guarded

in his response when questioned in detail about the meeting, pointing out that the crews didn't want to talk publicly about precise points.

"We had a very constructive meeting and it was nice to have the chance to talk with them on this," said Ogier. "We all want to go forward and all in the same direction."

WRC manager Jarmo Mahonen agreed with Ogier, adding: "We have agreed to keep the distance [between the FIA and the drivers] short. We want to communicate more and this is not only with the top drivers, but with all of the drivers."

Mahonen, who will meet with WRC2 and WRC3 crews in Portugal, believes bridges have

been built between the governing body and drivers.

"The faith is there now," he said. "That was one of the main things we had to work on. I think the whole thing has been a lack of communication. We have been talking in many things – but it's mainly the work to keep the sport safe. I have a feeling we have found each other."

Rally Argentina to change route after FIA raises spectator safety concerns

Rally Argentina has made major changes to the route for next month's event after the FIA was unhappy with safety for the proposed itinerary.

WRC safety delegate Michele Mouton travelled to Villa Carlos Paz just before last week's Rally Mexico to look at the planned route. Mouton was concerned at the fast nature and limited access for fans on the second and longest day. The organisers scrapped the Saturday itinerary and issued a revised schedule.

Rally Argentina is running under warning for spectator safety infringements last season and WRC manager Jarmo Mahonen made it quite clear that a repeat of those issues would result in Argentina being ejected from the series.

Talking to MN about the changes

made at her request, Mouton said: "Saturday's stages were a long way to the north of the service park and I understand why they did this – they were taking the route away from the spectators to try to avoid the problems we had last year. The trouble is that the three stages they had used were in very quick succession with very little road section between them.

"These were stages from Dakar, just straight roads and too fast. The other problem was that you could only get spectators into the first stage. So, now we have three stages much closer to Cordoba [the biggest population centre], but with enough room for the spectators."

The original 12-hour Saturday included 89 competitive miles but has been replaced by 98 miles in 10 hours of action.



Mouton was worried about Saturday running

FIA Institute testing Armco crash safety feature

The FIA Institute has tested safety improvements to avoid the kind of accident that claimed the life of Gareth Roberts and almost cost Robert Kubica his right arm.

The Global Institute for Motor Sport Safety, working on behalf of the FIA Institute, has revealed data from Armco crash testing it carried out in Germany recently.

The new device fits around the open end of an Armco barrier to help ensure the guard rail doesn't pierce the cabin of the car in the way it did when Craig Breen crashed on the 2012 Targa Florio, fatally injuring Roberts, and Kubica on the Ronde di Andora a year earlier.

In the test, a driverless rally-prepared Volkswagen Golf was fired at the end of an Armco barrier at almost 70mph. Covering the end of the barrier was a cylindrical steel tube slotted over the end of the barrier and filled with sand.

The 70cm diameter cylinder reduced the speed of the car by 22mph, but most

importantly, the energy forced the Armco to bend and buckle upwards rather than penetrate the car.

Andy Mellor, research consultant to the Global Institute said: "There is a massive incompatibility between passenger cars and Armco ends that aren't protected. The focus of the study was engineering a mechanism to get the Armco to buckle early enough so that the exposed end didn't penetrate the car."

Mellor admitted the device needs further refining but, once the revisions are complete, the cylinders are expected to be introduced to World Rally Championship events and then to national rallies.

The need to use the equipment at all levels of the sport imposed cost restrictions, said Mellor.

"We understood that cost and logistics were major factors," said Mellor, "and we set a target of 100 euros for the installed product. Any more expensive and it could become cost prohibitive."

EVANS AND AHLIN TO BATTLE FOR BRC TITLE IN 2016?

PAGE 14

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**'Evans wins BRC
opener from Ahlin'**
Mid Wales Stages report, p30



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, FIA ERC, Jakob Ebrej

BREEN WOULD JUMP AT CIRCUIT DEFENCE



Breen made Citroen debut in Sweden

Abu Dhabi Total World Rally Team driver Craig Breen could return to the Circuit of Ireland Rally to defend his emotional win from last season.

The Waterford driver says his only priority this year is his World Rally Championship programme in a Citroen DS3 WRC, but he added that if the chance arose to drive the April 7-9 event, he would jump at it. "You know how hard I've

worked to get to the position I'm in with the Abu Dhabi Total team now and that's everything to me," said Breen. "But at the same time, I just love rallying, I live for it and I am talking to a few people about the chances of getting out on the Circuit. I would say it's an expression of interest more than anything right now.

"Like anything, there's the financial angle to this, but if

somebody's willing to put some money up then that would certainly make things easier!"

Breen and co-driver Scott Martin won last year's event in a Peugeot 208T16, realising a long-held dream for the 26-year-old Irishman.

"It would be fantastic to go back for another go this year," Breen added, "especially with the British Rally Championship guys going

there – and with the way the route's looking. I know some of those stages pretty well and I know how important it is to have experience of those roads. I think I'd have a pretty fair chance as well. Put it this way, I wouldn't be going there to fight for second place! Whether I'm competing or not, I'll be in Belfast like I'll be in West Cork next week. Like I said, I live for this sport!"



Breen would like to defend his 2015 Circuit win

Chances of Circuit WRC round improving

The Circuit of Ireland's World Rally Championship aspirations were further boosted last week by strong messages of support from government ministers.

Both Northern Irish first minister Arlene Foster and deputy first minister Martin McGuinness spoke of their pride in the event and the potential for it to step up from the European to world level.

The Circuit remains contracted to the ERC for this season, but event director Bobby Willis spoke at length last season with the WRC promoter on the

potential for the Belfast-based event to make its debut at rallying's highest level.

Foster said: "The ambition for the Circuit of Ireland is to become a world rally event and that's very much still alive."

McGuinness echoed those sentiments, saying: "The Circuit of Ireland is hugely important to the island of Ireland. I have been a fan of rallying for many years. I had the opportunity of being driven around a track in Dubai a few years ago – which was a highly enjoyable experience."

Event has new base in south Belfast

This year's Circuit of Ireland – a round of the British, European and Irish Tarmac championships – will take rallying to a wider population in Northern Ireland.

The Titanic Quarter base and service park has been ditched in favour of the King's Hall in south Belfast.

The qualifying stage on Thursday, April 7, runs from Antrim Castle Gardens, while the ceremonial start later that day is in Lisburn.

Friday's competitive action

runs on stages close to Larne and Ballymena – with a refuel at Ballymena Showgrounds. Classic stages Torr Head and Glendun are included on the opening day, as is a regroup at the Bushmills Distillery.

The Ards TT stage returns in Newtownards later that evening before the rally moves to Banbridge, Ballynahinch and Dromore.

The rally will finish back in Belfast on Saturday evening with a closing ceremony outside Queen's University.

Abarth back with new R-GT 124 model

Abarth will return one of the most evocative names to world rallying next season, when the 124 Rally lines up for the FIA R-GT Cup.

The rally car was launched alongside the road car at the Geneva Motorshow last week. The 124 marks Abarth's return to rallying after it pulled the Grande Punto out of the Intercontinental Rally Challenge in 2009.

More importantly, it's the return of the 124, a car which won three rounds of the World Rally Championship in the 1970s before it was retired by Fiat 40 years ago this season.

The final incarnation of the 124 Abarth, rolled out for the 1975 Sanremo, managed 210bhp from its 16-valve



Abarth returns 124 moniker

1800cc engine. The new car, which is rear-wheel drive like its predecessor, also runs a 1.8-litre motor, but the addition of a turbocharger boosts output to 300bhp.

The car is still being developed by the Turinese firm. A shakedown is expected in September, with customer cars being ready for action at the start of the 2017 season.

Greensmith to compete on BRC Carlisle

Gus Greensmith will return to the British Rally Championship on the third round of the championship in Carlisle.

The 19-year-old won the opening round of the DMACK Junior British Rally Championship on the Mid Wales Stages, and has already been confirmed in the WRC Drive DMACK Trophy for this year having been the top rookie last year.

"It's about time in the car on actual stages on a real rally," Greensmith explained about heading to Carlisle. "When you go testing you're just relaxed and

Youngster won JBRC in Mid Wales

laid back, when you're on a rally there's competition and I can pace myself, judge the performance and just continue to learn."

Greensmith has been preparing for a strong season in the DDT with testing, including multiple days with David Higgins at his rally school. The reigning Junior British Rally champion completed over 280 miles of testing over two venues in the last month.



Kajetanowicz's title defence begins

European Rally champion Kajetan Kajetanowicz begins his title defence at this week's Canary Islands Rally.

The Spanish event forms the opening round of the series after Rally Liepaja was postponed due to a lack of snow last month. The Latvian event now runs in September.

Kajetanowicz will face opposition on the island from M-Sport World Rally Team star Mads Ostberg, who starts an ERC event for the first time in a Ford Fiesta R5. But for the rest of the year it will be the likes of fellow Fiesta driver Alexey Lukyanuk and David Botka (DS3 R5) who will pose the greatest threat to the Pole's back-to-back title aspirations.

The Junior ERC race – which will include Britain's Chris



Pole to defend championship

Ingram driving an Opel Adam – starts with the Circuit of Ireland in April and runs on five more rounds: Azores, Ypres, Estonia, Zlin and Liepaja.

The Canary Islands Rally – back after a two-year absence – includes some of the most challenging mountainous stages in Europe. After a qualifying stage on Thursday, the crews face 13 tests and 133 competitive miles on Friday and Saturday.

RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

EVANS v AHLIN

Shock as Swedish ace emerges as Brit's closest BRC rival



Ahlin impressed with pace in CA1 Fiesta



Evans (l) and Ahlin (r) enjoyed fight

Title fight is on

After a frantic weekend, what has Mid Wales told us about the season to come?



Firstly, that it has all the hallmarks to be an intriguing and exciting encounter. The battle between Ahlin and Evans was brilliant to say the least, with tyres playing a crucial part. The covers may be very close together in reality, but they can provide a big difference when combined with the correct set-up.

As I explain in my column (*see page 15*), Evans was magnificent over the weekend, the winning margin doesn't tell the story. But the Welshman was right in saying he couldn't let Fredrik take the joker victory away. With the Swede showing he can arrive in the UK and be on the pace instantly, it bodes for a close battle in Carlisle and Scotland. Where the really intriguing battles will occur is on the tar.

Evans has demonstrated lightning pace on asphalt in the past, you only have to look at his podium in Corsica last year to see that he is as good – if not better – on the black top than the loose. Ahlin is very much a novice on asphalt, and on paper there isn't a battle. But we know that the DMACK tyre is behind Michelin and Pirelli. So could that hinder Evans and bring the two closer together? For that, we'll have to wait and see.

DMACK is working incredibly hard to improve its tyres – which aren't that far off the pace anyway – so the margin to the other marques could decide the outcome.

Another man I expect to join the lead fight in the coming rallies is Tom Cave. He's on Michelins for the asphalt rounds – accepted as the best asphalt tyre – and having got a rally under his belt after his massive off on the Red Kite Stages, he showed flashes of excellent pace in Mid Wales. A puncture played a major part in the loss of time, and aside from that he could well have been challenging with Ahlin and Evans for the victory.

Jack Benyon



Evans has challengers for BRC title

By Jack Benyon

Fredrik Ahlin believes that the pace he showed to challenge DMACK driver Elfyn Evans for victory on the Mid Wales Stages will make him a strong candidate for the British Rally Championship in 2016.

The 24-year-old, driving for Martin Wilkinson's CA1 Sport outfit, finished 17.2s down on Evans on the Welshman's home stages. He briefly took the lead before service when Evans was struggling to sweep the road on the tricky morning stages, which had been hit by snow and slush on top of the wet gravel thanks to a heavy downfall on Thursday night/ Friday morning.

The Swede was the only driver close to challenging Evans, as a mixture of crews further back were suffering from issues. Punctures and small mistakes played a part in the separation, but the final man on the podium – Tom Cave – was over a minute and a half behind the sparring pair.

It is not the first time that the pair have duelled, they are very familiar with each other after another intriguing battle earlier in the year, albeit at world championship level in Sweden.

But Ahlin believes that the fact he was on the pace on roads he is less familiar with bodes well for

some of the later rallies in the year in the BRC.

"It's good for me to show my pace. We were quick in Sweden but if I can go very well here with very little experience [of the stages] and still be who he [Elfyn] is looking behind at, that is good," he said. "I was the only one being close to Elfyn so it looks good [for the championship]."

The rally was won on stage five, the penultimate test through Hafren/Sweet Lamb. Evans admitted to pushing very hard through the stage in order to retake the lead, having been just over three seconds down at the service halt.

"I pushed very hard in Hafren and we had a few moments in there," said Evans, who had chosen to use his double points Joker on the event. Each driver can nominate a round of the championship to score double points on, meaning a maximum of 50 points is on offer if a driver playing his joker can win. "Obviously with it being my joker round I didn't want Fredrik winning," he added. "We put on a bit of a push there so we had a good gap and it was just a case of being clean for the last one."

The Welshman believes that sweeping the road was also a major issue in contributing to Ahlin's advantage on Sunday morning.

"I think the road position was a big disadvantage this morning [for us] so I think once the road was

the same for everybody, I was confident we had control [of the rally] then," added Evans.

"He definitely had me worried around lunchtime, obviously taking 8s a stage is a lot, but I thought I'd driven well in the first two stages. It's impossible to know how much conditions will improve [as more cars pass the stage] but it all came good at the weekend."

The first event of the new BRC era drew high levels of praise from the large majority of attendees, with only small amendments suggested as the way forward. Fourth placed finisher and 2011 BRC champion David Bogie praised the quality of the stages.

"They're obviously great stages and it was a nice compact format and it worked really well," he said. "The only thing I can think of is I would have liked it to be longer, but I'm sure the organisers will be looking at that for next year. There's no way they could have anticipated the number of entries this year and factored in the cost of making it longer. Obviously it's the first year of the new BRC and it was nice for it to come back with so much of a buzz."

"I think the organisers responded really well [to the weather on the event]. It wasn't nice for the marshals but they all seemed to have smiles on their faces."

▶ HOW EVANS HELD OFF AHLIN FOR MID WALES STAGES VICTORY

▶▶▶ PAGE 30



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SEEDING ENTRY LIST

West Cork Rally: Irish Tarmac Championship

DRIVER/NAVIGATOR	CAR
1 Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley	Ford Focus WRC
2 Garry Jennings/Rory Kennedy	Subaru Impreza WRC
3 Declan Boyle/Brian Boyle	Ford Fiesta WRC
4 Daragh O'Riordan/Tony McDaid	Fiesta WRC
5 Keith Cronin/Mikie Galvin	Citroen DS 3 R5
6 Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble	Fiesta R5
7 Sam Moffett/Karl Atkinson	Fiesta R5
8 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan	Skoda Fabia R5
9 Kevin Kelleher/Gwynfor Jones	Impreza WRC
10 Roy White/James O'Brien	Fiesta WRC

RING JOINS IRISH TARMAC IN R5 FIESTA

Kerry's Alan Ring will debut his new-build Ford Fiesta R5 on this weekend's West Cork Rally with Adrian Deasy. Ring – who campaigned an S12B Subaru Impreza WRC these past two seasons and battled for Group N honours before that in the Irish Tarmac Championship – took delivery of the M-Sport machine at the start of the week. He placed his order for the Fiesta – including the Evo upgrade – towards the end of January. It and Skoda Motorsport's Fabia R5 were

the only two cars the Munster Joinery-backed driver looked at buying. Ring plans to hold a brief test prior to the Clonakilty-based event but admits it will take a few rallies to adapt from right- to left-hand drive. "I'm not expecting anything spectacular in West Cork to be honest," said Ring. "Left-hand drive is going to be a big change and I will spend much of the first day getting used to the idea. If we get West Cork and Killarney under our belts, I think we'll be in a

better position to challenge at the front." Ring was an interested spectator on last month's Galway Rally as he watched the battle between the R5 and S2000 crews unfold, and believes the decision by Irish Tarmac Championship bosses to make these the series' main focus is the right one. "It guarantees close competition," he said. "We saw that on the Galway Rally. Everything with World Rally Cars is double the price – or half the price with R5 depending on how you look at it. The sheer

cost of running a World Rally Car means going down the R5 route is the more sensible option." Impreza WRC driver Garry Jennings is likely the favourite for overall honours, having entered the event and won the Galway opener, but reigning champion Donagh Kelly has entered his Ford Focus WRC and will also be a frontrunner. Championship leader Keith Cronin returns from a torrid BRC round in Mid Wales to head the R5s, ahead of Alastair Fisher and Sam Moffett.

NATIONAL RALLYING EDITOR

JACK BENYON

“Evans drove one of the best rallies of his life”



More than meets the eye in Evans BRC victory

Elfyn Evans has just driven one of the best rallies of his life in my mind. That may sound silly after discussing how close Fredrik Ahlin was to the Welshman in Newtown, but when you delve a little deeper, there's far more that made Evans' performance great. And great is a word I don't like to band around a lot.

First off, let's look at the circumstances that brought Evans to the BRC. M-Sport went a different direction and have two different drivers. That's well covered territory. Did that dent his confidence? I don't think so. Speaking to Elfyn multiple times before the season started and during Newtown, the fire is burning at a higher temperature than ever. There's a certain swagger to the Dolgellau man's demeanour that screams champion. Someone on top of their game. That could well be because he is.

Two wins at world level, and the attitude by most was that Evans couldn't win in Mid Wales. If he did, it wouldn't be enough or it was too easy as he had been in a World Rally Car for two years. If he didn't win, somehow he would be inferior. I disagree vehemently, but that was the attitude held by some. He was certainly the pre-event favourite and anyone who said otherwise was lying or not 'in the know'.

And then Ahlin came along. The Swede is clearly a bit special. His pace has never been in doubt and in Mid Wales he did something he's struggled to do in the past, put a whole rally together. Overall it wasn't enough, but if he continues in that vein he'll only improve.

Back to Elfyn and my justification. He was sweeping the road and fighting a competitor who had better tyres. Facing the crushing strain of expectation from onlookers who – as I pointed to before – had decided that he should win with ease.

That's the kind of pressure that only the true greats perform under. Sebastien Ogier, for example. He's swept the road for years, but he's so good he often transcends things that usually define how quick a driver will be.

Despite all the pressure, Elfyn was nothing but smiley and approachable for the whole weekend. He was confident he had pace in reserve and as soon as the conditions improved, he pushed like hell and backed up his words.

If that's not a sign of a great performance then I don't know what is. In my eyes, Evans has only further proved that he deserves to be headed back to the World Championship in a World Car, but hopefully not in Germany. That would clash with the BRC...

AGREE/DISAGREE?
mn.letters@haymarket.com

OBITUARY

Roy Cathcart

Well known Fermanagh business man and rally aficionado Roy Cathcart died peacefully on February 25 following a long illness. In the early 1970s Roy purchased Roger Clark's RAC-winning Ford Escort 'LVX 942J' and thus began a long association with rally Fords, a collection of which was one of Roy's passions. He was a handy driver too, and in '78 was fourth on the Ulster Rally in an ex-Bertie Fisher Escort. Over the following years he figured highly in events all over Britain and built up a great association with Malcolm Wilson. Along with co-driver Harold Montgomery, Roy won events as varied as the '79 Hellfire, the '82 Boreen Rally, the '83 Trossachs Rally and in '86 the Malcolm Wilson Rally. Roy was a rally man through and through, and great and enthusiastic company. He was 69 years old when he died. Roy was the father to Richard and Matthew, brother of Ian and uncle of the late Timothy Cathcart. To all his family and friends we offer our deepest condolences.

Brian and Liz Patterson

Ex-Sainz Focus to next BTRDA round

David Wright will wheel out his ex-Carlos Sainz Ford Focus WRC for this weekend's Malcolm Wilson Rally. Wright finished second on last year's Grizedale Stages – which uses the same forests. "I'm really looking forward to getting back in the car after a few months break," said Wright. "We had a great run on the



Wright: BTRDA return

Grizedale Stages and came within a second of winning the event, a result which gave me a lot more confidence in the car." Wright will compete on two weekends in a row when he swaps the Focus for an Escort Mk2 for the AGBO Stages.

Mauger returns to MSA Asphalt opener

Simon Mauger will defend his Tour of Epynt victory on this year's event, with the MSA Asphalt Championship kicking off in Builth Wells this weekend. Mauger – who also took the overall championship last year for the first time in the Metro 4M4 – headed off Damian Cole by just one second on last year's event, but this year Cole will drive his WRC Ford Fiesta.

SEEDING ENTRY LIST

Tour of Epynt

DRIVER/NAVIGATOR	CAR
1 Simon Mauger/Jonathan Hawkins	(Metro 4M4)
2 Damian Cole/Paul Morris	(Ford Fiesta WRC)
3 Steve Simpson/Patrick Walsh	(Subaru Impreza WRC)
4 Adrian Spencer/Mark Hewitt	(Subaru WRC S11)
5 Eian Pritchard/Steve McPhee	(Ford Focus WRC)

Rodgers to ST Trophy for Malcolm Wilson

Tim Kirvan-Rodgers is the latest driver to sign up to the Fiesta ST Trophy, continuing on this weekend's Malcolm Wilson Rally. Kirvan-Rodgers' last event was the world championship-level Wales Rally GB and he took his Ford Fiesta ST to a successful finish, winning the Copart Fiesta Trophy. The prize was a test in a modern Ford Fiesta R2T.

"It's been a few months since Rally GB and I'm ready to get back out on the stages," said Kirvan-Rodgers. "I enjoyed competing against the other Fiestas in the Trophy on Rally GB." TK-R joins Cameron Davies in making his debut in the BTRDA-supporting championship in Carlsile.

Paveley has new car for MN Circuit bid

Jade Paveley will continue to compete in the MN Circuit Rally Championship in a rare Mitsubishi Lancer E3 while her Subaru is repaired.

Paveley – who lies seventh in the standings – clipped a barrier and rolled her Subaru Impreza onto its side during the previous round, the Brands Hatch Stages. The car is in the process of being reshelled.

Paveley has competed in the car before at Anglesey on March 20, the location of the next round of the championship, and is hoping for a strong result.

"It's the closest car to the Subaru I have to use," explained Paveley. "It's a two-litre and has around 290bhp. I've competed in it before at Anglesey so I'm looking forward to it. Hopefully it rains and we can make the most of the four-wheel drive."

Paveley's navigator Sarah Alys Edwards is second in the co-driver standings.



Rodgers has ST experience

BTRDA TEST PREVIEW

MANAGING THE CLASS WARFARE

BTRDA Rallycross kicks off this weekend and **Hal Ridge** tried the cars



Last week, the rallycross headlines in *Motorsport News* included the announcement that Sebastien Loeb, arguably the world's greatest ever rally driver, will race for Team Peugeot-Hansen in the FIA World Rallycross Championship this year. As well as that, we previewed the impressive top-level Supercar entry for the opening round of the British Rallycross Championship, which took place last Sunday at Croft.

This weekend, at Blyton Park in Lincolnshire, the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross series holds its first of seven 2016 rounds.

In some ways Clubmans rallycross couldn't be further away from the glitz and glamour of World RX and Loeb. But, in other ways, it's also very similar, albeit with different regulations and categories. The basic principle remains the same.

The Clubmans series returned for 2014 after a sabbatical with the aim of providing a cost effective entry-level route into rallycross. With the growth of the sport worldwide, there is now a clear structure from the most amateur

of racers in the Clubman championship, to the factory-backed teams employing the services of star drivers in World RX.

The fact that the British Rallycross Championship has attracted a new title sponsor, strong TV package and the strongest Supercar entry for some time is a clear indication that the sport as a whole is benefiting from the overall exposure that the World Championship is creating, and the Clubmans series is also enjoying the same perks.

Around 50 drivers are entered for the opening round of the championship this weekend at Blyton and nearly 50 per cent of those didn't compete last season.

"I think we're looking ahead to another strong year," says BTRDA rallycross committee member John Rook. "There's a good increase across the classes. I think there will be another good fight for the overall title too."

The Clubman series has introduced two new classes for 2016: Historic and Production 4x4, to join the existing Production, Super Modified and Clubman Supercar divisions.

"The Historic class has attracted the biggest Classic Mini entry since 2012 and has everything from a 1275cc Mini to a 3.9-litre

Sierra Cosworth," says Rook. "We know that the main four-wheel-drive cars will always race in the British Championship and we're not ever going to try and compete with that. What drivers asked us for is an accessible route into four-wheel drive, so that's why we've introduced Production four-wheel drive."

"Theoretically, you can now join the sport by competing in the BTRDA, move up to the British Championship, then all the way to European and World RX. People who go to watch big events, like the Supercars in the British or World Championships, can come to us and compete, and we get a lot of enquires at

club level from people wanting to get involved."

The Clubman championship has received 60 registrations to date for 2016, many of which didn't race last year.

Motorsport News was invited to the championship's pre-season test day at Blyton Park recently, to sample a car from each of the five Clubman categories.

Motorsport News's rallycross correspondent Hal Ridge, who has previously competed in the Clubman, British and European Rallycross championships, made the journey to Lincolnshire to get behind the wheel. ■



CALENDAR

BTRDA Rallycross 2016 events schedule

DATE	TRACK
March 13	Blyton Park
April 16	Pembrey
April 17	Pembrey
July 2	Pembrey
July 3	Pembrey
October 16	Blyton Park
Nov 6	Croft

PRODUCTION 4x4



The first of the cars I climbed aboard was the Subaru Impreza of Leanne Richardson, who will compete in rallycross for the first time in 2016.

On pulling away from the start line, my first impression was that the Impreza's acceleration was impressive given the weight of the basically standard saloon car. Producing around 220bhp out of the factory, the Impreza's grunt propelled it around the twisty rallycross circuit at Blyton rather nicely. The suspension – which like everything else on the car is standard (aside from the safety modifications) – was soft to say the least but, even though the car wallows around under braking and on corner entry, it was very controllable and forgiving.

The standard, servo-assisted brakes take a little getting used to as the pedal is quite long, but they did

work and well too. This Impreza was running standard road-going tyres at the test day, so it was easy to lock a wheel, and there was a lot of turn-in and mid-corner understeer, but that will be much improved when the car is fitted with some rallycross boots.

The car was very chuckable, especially on the loose section of the circuit, and had plenty enough power to get nice and sideways.

Production 4x4 essentials

This is a class for four-wheel-drive production cars. Only safety modifications are permitted. Most likely choice will be the Subaru Impreza, but Mitsubishi Lancer Evos could also appear, or even more exotic machines.

Likely contenders: Former British Championship event-winning Supercar racer, Mike Manning (Subaru Impreza)

Photos: Hal Ridge, Trevor Coulson, Martin Taylor

PRODUCTION

Next up was the Production category car; James Orton's race-winning Peugeot 106 GTi from 2015. The car was bought as a project some years ago, but realising that it only had one owner from new after buying it, Orton put it on the road for his wife to use. He then converted it into a race car later.

I used to race a Peugeot 205 myself in Stock Hatch, a car renowned for being tail-happy. I was expecting the same from this Peugeot with similar suspension, but it was quite the opposite. Orton has spent time working on the set-up of his car, and to his credit it handled well.

The Peugeot 106 was really stable, both under braking and in

the corners, especially on the fast Tarmac first corner, which tightens almost to a hairpin. This type of corner is prime territory for a front-wheel-drive car to step out of line, but the 106 was well planted. The brakes were very positive too. Orton uses off-the-shelf motor factor discs and pads, but they were very effective at slowing the car.

As with the Impreza, the 106 inspired confidence to enter the long loose corner flat on the throttle and, with a small tug on the handbrake, it was willing to rotate around the following hairpin nicely. What was noticeable was the standard differential with the front-wheel-drive car. In the 90-degree Tarmac corners, the front

inside wheel would spin up, but as all cars are the same in the category that makes little difference.

Production essentials

Three sub-classes make up the Production category; up to 1600cc 8v, up to 1600cc 16v and 1601cc to 2000cc. All cars race together. On top of the safety requirements (rollage, bucket seat, polycarbonate windows etc.), limited modifications are allowed, such as upgraded suspension and air filter.

Likely contenders: James Orton (Peugeot 106), Jeff Hope-Davies (Citroen Saxo), Paul Davis (Citroen Saxo)



CLUBMAN SUPERCAR

Built by Subaru specialist Scooby Clinic, Dmitriy Sribnyj's Impreza Clubman Supercar was a significant step up from the Production 4x4 version.

Despite suffering from a bit of body roll, mainly from running on gravel rally suspension, the handling was positive and precise. Although the car still had the traditional Impreza understeer, it was significantly less than in the Production version.

This Impreza boasts 400bhp, with a PPG sequential gearbox. I have driven a number of different cars with sequential gearboxes, but this was pretty nice to use, a light pull backwards on the gear lever swiftly

gave you the next gear, using the flat-shift with your right foot buried on the throttle.

The engine was responsive and, combined with quick gear changes of the six-speed 'box, you got up to pace quickly even out of the slow corners. The car went where you wanted. There were no nasty surprises, and six-pot front calipers brought it to a rather abrupt halt, made easier by simply making a short, sharp push forwards on the lever.

Sribnyj is yet to fit a gear indicator, so my meagre brain struggled with computing which of the six gears

I was in, even in only a few laps, but that's something that's easily solved.

Clubman Supercar essentials

Clubman Supercar uses the same regulations as the British Rallycross Championship Supercar division, but isn't aimed at the Julian Godfreys and Pat Dorans of the sport. Cars are four-wheel drive and can produce anywhere up to 600bhp. The Supercars only race at Pembrey and Croft.

Likely contenders: Simon Horton (Subaru Impreza), Gary Pusey (Subaru Impreza), Dmitriy Sribnyj (Subaru Impreza)

SUPER MODIFIED

A significant amount of breathing-in was required to strap myself into the Super Modified BMW M3 that the svelte Andy Brinkley has built for 2016 together with CRM-Tech Motorsport, but I really wanted to see what it was like. Fortunately, the six-point harness clicked into place.

Andy advised that I start in second gear, and "even then it will spin the wheels". Ok, another Sierra-like animal I thought (see below).

Yes, if you nail the throttle in almost any gear, the BMW will light up the rear tyres and send you sideways but if you moderate your right foot, it isn't too difficult to keep

on top of. Being smooth is key with this car. But even when you are nearing on broad sideways, modulation of the throttle allows you to bring things back under control.

The digital dash told me all sorts of information that I didn't really have time to look at on the short Blyton circuit, but what I was able to decipher from looking out of the front, and side, windows was that the chassis was positive and taught.

The brakes, which will soon be upgraded to AP four-pots, were good as they were, as was the M3 gearbox, which will also be changed at some

stage for a sequential version.

Super Modified should be the cream of the two-wheel-drive brigade in Clubmans rallycross, and this car proved that.

Super Modified essentials

In layman's terms, as long as the car's engine remains in the original location, and has the same number of cylinders as standard, then the rest is almost free, which produces a variety of interesting cars.

Likely contenders: Todd Crooks (BMW Mini), Tommy Graham (Ford Escort)



HISTORIC

Ford and Historic motorsport go hand-in-hand, so it was only fitting that I drive Mark Richardson's newly built Ford Sierra Cosworth to get a taste of the new Historic category.

It is often suggested that Historic cars are not the easiest things to drive, and I'm not afraid to admit that I found Richardson's Sierra a handful.

The 2.9-litre, 24-valve V6 engine sounded fantastic and it remained sounding fantastic each time I spun on Blyton's hairpin, coming off the first loose section.

The engine revved up both freely and

fast, and you find yourself regularly changing gear.

The brakes, as Richardson admitted, need a little fettling. My foot was almost touching the bulkhead at times with the middle pedal. Even after a couple of pumps I was still wondering if we were going to slow down enough for the next corner, but it did.

In seven or so laps, I spun on a few of those. Once sideways, especially on the loose, it was tricky to come back from having deviated from pointing straight ahead. I did start to get the hang of it and the car drifts well, even on the circuit's Tarmac corners, but I was

never sure when it might bite me next.

Currently producing in the region of 190bhp and 260lb/ft of torque with Mazda RX-8 running gear, Richardson is planning to swap the motor for a twin-turbo unit later in the year with over 500bhp. That sounds...interesting.

Historic essentials

For pre-1995 rallycross cars. Entries will range from Classic Minis to Peugeot 205s and Sierra Cosworths.

Likely contenders: Vince Bristow (BMW 318), Darren Clark (Nissan Almera), Mark Richardson (Ford Sierra)

SPORTING SCENE

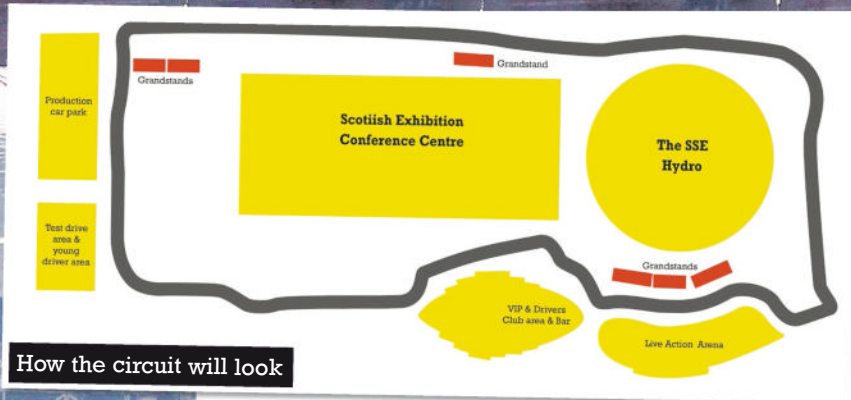
Photos: LAT, MKpics.net

GLASGOW STREET RUN PLAN

F1 cars and other racers headline new festival planned for closed-road event



Coulthard will demo an F1 car



How the circuit will look

By Matt James

A new motor racing demonstration event will take place at the Scotland Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow this year, and David Coulthard will drive a Red Bull F1 machine.

The three-day festival, called Ignition, takes place from August 5-7. A selection of supercars, race and rally cars – as well as bikes – will run on the closed-loop purpose made track.

Display areas include a Motor Sport Hall, celebrating Scottish success in the competition arena, and a Motorbike Hall. There will also be a Classic and Vintage Hall and a display of Colin McRae's famous rally machines.

Councillor Frank McAveety, leader of Glasgow City Council and chair of Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, said:

"We're really looking forward to hosting the inaugural Ignition festival of motoring.

"The announcement of the street circuit is incredibly exciting as it marks a first for Glasgow and will put the city right at the heart of the action.

"It makes perfect sense for Ignition to make its home in Glasgow as we're a city that's always on the move and we have a history of welcoming the world's elite supercars and drivers, having previously provided the backdrop for thrilling scenes in the *Fast & Furious 6* movie as well being the starting point for the iconic Monte Carlo Rally."

IRISH RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

Kelly takes advantage as favourite Tohill is left stranded again

Mondello Park

By Paul Phelan

Organiser: Carlow Car Club When: March 6
Championships: Irish Rallycross Championship
Starters: 65

John Kelly's Mitsubishi Lancer E7 romped home to a surprise 4s win over the older-shape Ford Fiesta of Thomas O'Rafferty in the first Super Final of the Irish Rallycross Championship. It was a shock, because he had been resigned to battling for second up to the moment when the starting lights turned green.

All day Derek Tohill's Ford Fiesta Mk 7 had been the pacesetter but, in a repeat of November's final round, the car remained stopped in pole position at the starting signal with mechanical woe. It was a long time before Tohill finally managed to get it restarted.

He then set off in pursuit of the long-vanished pack, but it took four full laps before he gained even one place and fourth spot was as far as he got by the chequered flag. He just managed to catch last year's champion Willie Coyne's two-wheel-drive Opel Corsa at the line.

Earlier, Tohill had run away with the Supercar Final. He

finished 9s ahead of O'Rafferty, Kelly and Noel Greene's Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

Coyne took the Modified A Final, 4s ahead of a well-matched trio consisting of Lloyd Spendlove's Lotus Exige (which had come through with a victory in the B final), the BMW Compact of Pearse Browne and Kieran Curran's Corsa.

Polesitter Eoin Murray's Peugeot 106 was left stranded at the start of the Stock Hatch 16-valve Final and Derek Lenehan took full advantage to score a win on his maiden outing in a Citroen C2. He was followed by the 106s of John Ward and Ian Fishbourne.

A red flag halted the 8-valve A Final. Dan Dowling's Citroen Saxo led all the 205s home at the restart. Damian Farrell was second from Ciaran Murphy and Brace winner Adrian Farrell.

In the Juniors, the Nissan Micras of Morgan Quinn and Shane Duggan stayed together for the first few laps, but Quinn then drew away to win by 3.7s.

The well-supported Fiesta class provided some good close racing, with Dan McDonnell coming out best in the A race ahead of circuit racers Dave

Griffin, Kevin Doran and Hugh Grennan. Best in the B session was Jonathan Woods.

Results
Super Final (6 laps): 1 John Kelly (Mitsubishi Lancer E7) 4m01.256s; 2 Thomas O'Rafferty (Ford Fiesta) +4.449s; 3 Noel Greene (Lancer E9); 4 Derek Tohill (Ford Fiesta Mk7); 5 Willie Coyne (Opel Corsa); 6 Pearse Browne (BMW Compact).
Supercar A Final (5 laps): 1 Tohill 3m20.402s; 2 O'Rafferty +8.711s; 3 Kelly; 4 Greene; no finishers.
Modified A Final (5 laps): 1 Coyne 3m33.243s; 2 Lloyd Spendlove (Lotus Exige) +4.253s; 3 Browne; 4 Kieran Curran (Corsa); 5 Chris Grimes (Vauxhall Nova); 6 Patrick Ryan (Vauxhall Nova).
Modified B Final (5 laps): 1 Spendlove 3m40.733s; 2 Brendan Coyne (Fiesta) +0.558s; 3 Peter McGarry (Peugeot 205); 4 George Tohill (BMW Compact); 5 Fergal Driver (Peugeot 206); no other finishers.

Stock Hatch 16v A Final (5 laps): 1 Derek Lenehan (Citroen C2) 3m43.956s; 2 John Ward (Peugeot 106) +1.601s; 3 Ian Fishbourne (Peugeot 106); 4 Keith Kerrshaawe (Citroen C2); 5 Leigh Anne Sedgwick (Citroen Saxo); 6 John Dowling (106).

Stock Hatch 8v A Final (5 laps): 1 Dan Dowling (Saxo) 3m52.175s; 2 Damian Farrell (205) +3.364s; 3 Ciaran Murphy (205); 4 Adrian Farrell (205); 5 James O'Shea (Saxo); no finishers.

Stock Hatch 8v B Final (5 laps): 1 Adrian Farrell (205) 4m04.419s; 2 Damien O'Donovan (205) +0.882s; 3 Vincent O'Rourke (205); no finishers.
Junior A Final (5 laps): 1 Morgan Quinn (Nissan Micra) 3m 17.369s; 2 Shane Duggan (Micra) +3.731s; no finishers.

Ford Fiesta A Final (5 laps): 1 Dan McDonnell 4m01.787s; 2 Dave Griffin +2.107s; 3 Kevin Doran; 4 Hugh Grennan; 5 Brian Matthews; 6 Bernard Bradley.
Ford Fiesta B Final (5 laps): 1 Jonathan Woods 4m13.291s; 2 Chris Mulvaney +4.529s; 3 David Walters; 4 Michael Leonard Jr; no finishers.

NATIONAL HOT RODS

Weaver beats the pack – and the scrutineers – for victory

Birmingham Wheels

By Graham Brown

Organiser: Incarace When: March 5
Championships: National Hot Rod Series Starters: 27

Reigning points champion Kym Weaver put himself firmly in contention for another title as the Nationals resumed World Series racing in Birmingham last Saturday but only took the final honours after having to battle against a disqualification over a scrutineering problem.

The first encounter kicked off with Russ Wilcox leading, tracked by Martin Heath, Ken Marriott and Danny Hunn. Wilcox continued to lead but eventually came under pressure from Marriott, who overtook. But Marriott was being chased by Rob McDonald, the Scot hassling the new leader the rest of the way. The experienced front man never left an opening, however, and held on to win.

Heat two followed a similar pattern. Wilcox led more briefly, Marriott and Steve Dudman overtaking just before the yellows flew due to a loose wheel on the track from Billy Wood's car. Marriott made a fast getaway when racing resumed but Dudman was hard after him and went past in determined

fashion, remaining in the lead for the duration.

The third heat proved to be the race of the night. Dudman was the frontrunner from the off and looked like an easy winner for a while. But, emerging from the early-laps midfield scrum came Dudman's long-time friend, Colin Smith. It wasn't long before 'Smiffy' had worked through to second, reducing the gap to the leader as well. The pair were running nose-to-tail with three laps to run. It looked for a couple of tours as though Smith wasn't going to challenge his pal and sometime sponsor but, with only about half a lap to go, he went outside to snatch the win by inches.

Dudman went straight into the final lead but after the opening gambits had played out, it was Weaver who burst through to second place.

For a time the gap between them stayed static but eventually Weaver began eating up the leader's advantage. Weaver's first attempt at a pass coming off turn four was thwarted by a spun car partly blocking the track. But he made no mistake a lap later, taking over at the front and pulling rapidly away.



Weaver came out top

Dudman was steadily forced backwards as Smith, Chris Haird, Jason Kew and McDonald forged towards the front, but the places remained unchanged in the final third of the race.

After the finish it was reported to race control that Weaver and Haird had failed to attend a post-race weight check. Both were initially disqualified but were adamant they had not been told to go to the scales, and it was the following day before the result was confirmed.

Results
Heat one: 1 Ken Marriott (Vauxhall Tigra); 2 Rob McDonald (Tigra); 3 Russ Wilcox (Tigra); 4 Jack Blood (Tigra); 5 Chris Haird (Tigra); 6 Jason Kew (Tigra). **Heat two:** 1 Steve Dudman (Tigra); 2 Marriott; 3 Alistair Lowe (Tigra); 4 Kym Weaver (Tigra); 5 Mikey Godfrey (Tigra); 6 Colin Smith (Tigra). **Heat three:** 1 Smith; 2 Dudman; 3 Lowe; 4 Dick Hillard (Tigra); 5 Weaver; 6 Carl Waller-Barrett (Tigra). **Final:** 1 Weaver; 2 Smith; 3 Haird; 4 Kew; 5 McDonald; 6 Hillard.

SPORTING SCENE

Photos: Hal Ridge, kartpix.net, LAT



Procter won last race of 2015 too

PROCTER TAKES OPENING WIN

British Rallycross Championship

By Hal Ridge

Organiser: BARC/LHRC When: March 6
Where: Croft, Yorkshire Starters: 71.

Any driver from at least 10 could have won the opening round of the MSA British Rallycross Championship round at Croft, where an exciting entry of both experienced and new Supercar drivers took part.

Picking up where he left off in 2015 with victory at the final round of the year at the same venue was local man Kevin Procter, who took the first victory of the season last weekend – but only just.

Procter, a former European Rallycross event winner, set fastest time in the second qualifying run and, in a new-for-2016 format that uses semi-finals and finals in a similar way to that of the World Rallycross Championship, the Yorkshireman won the second semi-final to line up on the front row of the grid. Pole position was claimed by reigning champion Julian Godfrey, who set a pair of fastest times

to top the Intermediate Classification.

Neither Godfrey nor Procter are strangers to the front row of a Supercar final, but the man starting on the outside – 2015 Supernational champion Dan Rooke – finished second in the first semi behind Godfrey to secure his place at the front of the grid on what was his Supercar debut.

Procter won the race to turn one as the lights went green but he wouldn't finish the opening lap at the front. Class newcomer Rooke passed the Ford Fiesta driver in the final corner of the opening lap to seize the lead.

Procter retook the advantage at the same hairpin on the very next lap, while Irish driver Ollie O'Donovan ran in third position with a misfiring engine in his Ford Focus. Rooke pushed Procter hard to the chequer, but couldn't do more than follow the experienced driver to the flag, the pair split by less than half a second.

"The car was faultless today," said Procter. "Young Dan went really well, the final was spot on. It's a pity I'm not going to be able to do the whole year, but it would be hard against him [Rooke]."

O'Donovan finished third, with Dave Bellerby fourth on his first appearance in a Ford Fiesta Supercar freshly rebuilt by Tony Barty Motorsport. Steve Harris finished fifth, with Jack Thorne sixth.

Godfrey, meanwhile, dropped to the back of the field by spinning off at turn one. The five-time champion was suffering brake problems due to a broken suspension component. He recovered to finish seventh.

"We broke an output flange, so the disc was wobbling and I had no brakes," said Godfrey. "It could have been worse for sure. The car has been really good other than that."

British Touring Car Championship convert Dave Newsham had a difficult first day of Supercar action, but qualified for the final. Unfortunately, the Power Maxed team were forced to withdraw the car with a misfire.

"It was a bit of a baptism of fire. We had some misting-up issues in the first race, then the propshaft broke in the second," said Newsham. "The third race was pretty good. We've got issues on the bumpy stuff, but we're all

learning. If not for the misfire, we could have been mid-pack in the final. Hopefully we can come to the next event with an updated car and progress."

Paige Bellerby won her first Super National event at the final round of the season in 2015, and got her championship challenge off to the perfect start by claiming victory at the opening round at Croft.

Bellerby held off Gary Dixon throughout the final, while Guy Corner finished third in his redeveloped Peugeot 206.

Tom Constantine won the MSA Junior Rallycross final after a penultimate-lap pass on leader Sam Jones, who would finish second. Matt Rainbow was third.

RX150 champion Chrissy Palmer dominated proceedings in the category. Never headed all day, the former Formula Ford Festival winner took the final by a margin of over 15 seconds.

Aiden Hills won the Swift Sport final, ahead of championship protagonists Jack Brown and Nathan Heathcote, while Ray Morgan cruised to victory in Retro Rallycross.



Paige Bellerby was a class winner, holding off close rivals throughout

RESULTS

MSA British Rallycross Championship

P	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Kevin Procter	Ford Fiesta	5m25.571s
2	Dan Rooke	Citroen DS3	+0.455s
3	Ollie O'Donovan	Ford Focus	+9.670s
4	Dave Bellerby	Ford Fiesta	+10.783s
5	Steve Harris	Citroen DS3	+12.589s
6	Jack Thorne	Ford Fiesta	+20.304s

Other finishers: 7 Julian Godfrey (Ford Fiesta) +22.560s; 8 Simon Horton (Subaru Impreza) +30.991s.
Super National Rallycross Championship/BMW Mini Rallycross Championship/Hot Hatch Rallycross Championship/Super1600 Rallycross Championship (6 laps) 1 Paige Bellerby (Lotus Exige) 5m09.426s; 2 Gary Dixon (Vauxhall Astra) +0.317s; 3 Guy Corner (Peugeot 206); 4 Kris Hudson (BMW Mini); 5 Robert Potyra (Citroen Saxo); 6 Craig Lomax (Citroen C2).
MSA Junior Rallycross Championship (6 laps) (All 1.3 Suzuki Swift) 1 Tom Constantine 5m54.863s; 2 Sam Jones +5.107s; 3 Matt Rainbow; 4 Tom Middleton; 5 Cameron Hawkes.
Suzuki Swift Rallycross Championship (6 laps) (All 1.6 Suzuki Swift) 1 Aiden Hills 5m19.711s; 2 Jack Brown +3.154s; 3 Nathan Heathcote; 4 Jake Taylor; 5 Simon Owendon; 6 Christian Hainsworth.
RX150 Rallycross Championship (6 laps) (All RX150) 1 Chrissy Palmer 4m51.934s; 2 Stephen Jones +16.273s; 3 Jake Harris; 4 Geoffrey Dolan; 5 Adam Sargent; 6 Larry Sargent.
Retro Rallycross (4 laps) 1 Ray Morgan (Ford Escort) 3m29.198s; 2 Terry Maynard (Triumph TR8) +13.136s; 3 Neil Maynard (Triumph TR8); 4 Lance Foster (Mini Clubman); 5 Stewart Bowes (Mini Clubman); 6 Paul Smith (VW Polo).

KARTING



Smith had RSF backing

MSA Formula winner Smith back to karts

MSA Formula race winner Josh Smith will return to karting this year after being unable to find the budget to continue racing in cars.

Smith had Racing Steps Foundation backing last season when he contested the TOCA support category with Fortec Motorsports. He finished 13th in the points, taking one win at Croft.

He will now move to the Formula Kart Stars series, racing as a privateer with his father.

Smith has his eye on winning the title as the champion gets a fully funded drive with Fortec in MSA Formula for 2017.

"It wasn't like I wanted to come back to karting, I would have loved to have stayed in cars but budget doesn't allow it so this is a great opportunity for me to get back into cars," said Smith. "I don't think it's a step down, I think it's a step back to go 10 steps forward."

NO NEW NOSES IN TKM CLASS

Clubman category exempt from rule



New front fairings aren't compatible with some karts

By Stephen Lickorish

Karts competing in TKM Clubman will be exempt from using the new CIK-style front fairings this year.

Some of the karts in this class are not compatible with the new bumpers and the MSA has therefore decided to exempt it from the rule.

An MSA statement said: "Competitors in the Clubman class are permitted to use older chassis, some of which will not accept fitment of the new detachable front fairing, therefore an exemption has been made for 2016."

All rounds of the TKM Club Championships for the Clubman class will be exempt from the fairings and other clubs running the class can also apply for exemption. The main TKM Junior and Senior classes are not affected. Tal-Ko, which organises

the TKM categories, supports the decision.

The company had been critical of the fairing's original introduction saying in a statement last year: "We are not opposed to the principle but to the mandatory adoption of these items without full consideration and experience, which we think is too rapid."

The new detachable front fairings were made mandatory from March 1 in a bid to try and improve driving standards in karting.

A change to the penalty for drivers whose bumpers have moved back from the original position following contact has also been made. The punishment was originally a 10-place penalty but that has been changed to 10 seconds based on feedback from drivers who have competed under the new rules already.

IN BRIEF

Hoggard stars

Briton Johnathan Hoggard starred in the opening round of the Belgium Max Challenge at Genk at the end of last month. Hoggard won the Senior Rotax Final, beating drivers who were much more experienced at the Belgian track. He started fourth for the main final and grabbed the lead on lap four of 16-lap contest, which he held on to.

KKC and Compkart

KKC has become the sole UK and Ireland importer and distributor of the Birel ART-made Compkart chassis. The chassis dominated the Junior X30 World Championship last season.

KartForce event

The KartForce charity is inviting drivers to join its injured troops in taking part in a series of events at Daytona's new track in Tamworth this month. Around 15 injured service personnel will take part in endurance and sprint races on March 5 and 18. "We're racing in the 24Hr of Majorca, Le Mans 24Hr and British 24Hr this year, so it's fantastic that Daytona has offered us this opportunity to get the lads some valuable race time," said founder and boss Dave Player.

HISTORICS

'Pritchard Sr had a rare Escort outing'
Bovington Stages entry, below

Photos: LAT, Paul Lawrence and Hoyer/Ebrey



IN BRIEF

Pritchard on Asphalt
Eian Pritchard had a rare Ford Escort Mk2 outing on the Bovington Stages last Saturday. The father of current BHRC champion Jason tackled the opening R.A.C. Historic Asphalt round in the car rebuilt since Jason rolled it on the 2014 Neath Valley Stages. Engine issues curtailed his impressive pace, but he hopes to be back out soon.

Shinner to FF1600
Caterham Graduate frontrunner Neil Shinner will switch to Historic FF1600 this year in the ex-Jason Minshaw/Mike Wrigley Merlyn Mk20. Shinner will race alongside former champion Callum Grant. The team will grow to three cars at some rounds as Max Bartell will take in selected rounds of the championship.

Rally to race
Race and rally driver Jerry Bailey will switch focus back to racing this season after a couple of seasons rallying Ford Escort Mk2s. Alongside an Aston Martin GT4 programme he will share the DB4 of Steven Byrne in several two-driver historic races. However, the Salisbury driver will also return to asphalt rallying later in 2016.

Easton's centenary
Ron Easton, a former leading autocross competitor notably in a TVR Vixen in the 1960s and 1970s, will celebrate his 100th birthday this weekend. Easton won the BTRDA autocross title in 1978 and won regional titles in the 1980s. He was still competing in his 70s and is a former president of South Hams Motor Club in Devon.

Roy Cathcart
Roy Cathcart, a popular and respected member of the Irish rallying community, died recently aged 68. Cathcart, from Enniskillen, rallied extensively in the 1970s and 1980s and was well known as the owner of 'LVX 942J', the Ford Escort Mk1 used by Roger Clark to win the 1972 RAC Rally. He previously owned and rallied the car in the 1970s.

VSCC online
The Vintage Sports-Car Club will provide live online timing for all of the club's race meetings this season. The new development will allow anyone with internet access to get real-time information via the club's timekeepers at hssports.co.uk. The facility is being supported by MG Bellevue Special racer Tom Hardman.

Widmer in Brabham
Swiss racer Christophe Widmer will return to Historic F3 in the UK this season in his Brabham BT18A. Widmer will start his season at the Goodwood Members' Meeting on March 19/20. "It was a fantastic event last year; remarkable," he said of his Goodwood debut. Widmer travels from his home at Hinwil, close to the Sauber Formula 1 base.



Widmer will race in 2016

DOWN THE PUB WITH

MARTYN HALLIDAY

Age: 72 Lives: Horsham
Historic trials promoter

He's always competed
"I've been in motorsport since I was 18 but I only started racing when I was 60. I did a bit of hillclimbing and I went racing in 2004 in a Lotus 7 in Historic Road Sports. Then I had a Lotus 23 for the Guards Trophy and now I've got a one-litre F3 Chevron B15C, which was Stuart Tizzard's."

He's about to race the Chevron

"I tried the Chevron for the first time at Goodwood recently and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The Members' Meeting will be my first single-seater race. I've got a Mallock Classic Clubmans car as well."

Historic Sporting Trials was born

"Michael Schryver bought a Cannon and didn't know what it was. I took him to Ian Wright and he got in a modern trials car and loved it. The suggestion for historic trials came from that and it was something I'd been thinking about for a long time. We tried it with a few people and the Historic Sporting Trials Association is the result."

He was a trials driver before

"I was primarily a trials rider and then driver and went through modern sporting trials in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I love the old cars and so here we are. We've converted a lot of historic racers and about 75 per cent of our competitors are new to trials. We want people looking to do something different in the winter for a bit of fun."

HSTA is four years old

"Our first event was in May 2012 at Long Compton in Oxfordshire and it has grown far more than I expected. At Sywell in January we had 44 entries, including a lot of two-driver entries, which is amazing. We want to make it fun and not take it too seriously. The historic class is for pre-1970 and the post-historic class is up to 1977"

There is growing demand

"There is a shortage of cars right now, but there are more cars coming and we've got people who are restoring cars. A new recreated chassis is about £2500 and a good complete Cannon is about £15,000 and it should hold its value very well."



Halliday: trials exponent

PROTOTYPE GRIFFITH TO MAKE RACE RETURN

Original Cobra chaser reappears for Goodwood Members' Meeting



By Paul Lawrence

A famous ex-works TVR Griffith will return to racing at Goodwood later this month.

Chassis 1, registered 'BFR 400B', was the prototype for the Griffith and only raced during the 1965 season. Now, model enthusiast Mike Whitaker has had the car restored by Nigel Reuben ahead of its first race for 50 years.

Whitaker bought the car in 2011 as a road-going model and Reuben has painstakingly restored it to 1965 factory specification. "Nigel has spent a lot of time on the chassis; he even worked on it on Christmas Day," said Whitaker of the project. "The pressure was on to get in ready for Goodwood, and it will race in the Graham Hill Trophy."

The car raced at Goodwood in June 1965 in the Whitsun

Trophy with factory driver Tommy Entwistle and last raced in October 1965 with Chris Lawrence, who had been developing the car for TVR. Before Whitaker, the previous owner had the Griffith for 22 years.

"We're keeping it as original as possible," said Whitaker of the narrow-bodied car. "It has been prepared in its original silver blue colour and runs with a V8 engine exactly as in period.

At the time, journalist John Bolster hit 163mph on the road in Europe."

Whitaker has become one of the leading TVR drivers in historic racing over the last five years and will continue to field his existing Griffith in Gentlemen Drivers and Guards Trophy races. Reuben, meanwhile, is widely regarded as the leading preparer of period TVRs from his workshop in Bromsgrove.



Sri Lankan racer switches to E-type

US-based Harindra de Silva will make his Goodwood debut this month in the ex-William F Anson Jaguar E-type.

The Sri Lankan driver has raced single-seaters extensively in the US, including Formula Junior and Historic F1, but is new to sports and GT cars.

"This is a bit of a change of scene but I've always admired E-types," said de Silva, who will commute from his home in Los Angeles to race in Europe this season.

"The E-type is a car I can race all over Europe and I'd like to do more endurance races this season."

F Anson tended the car in a Goodwood test last week as part of the handover.



Andrew Jordan tried a Group C car for the first time at Donington Park last week when he drove Mark Sumpter's Porsche 962-011 for some filming work. "That was a real experience, awesome, probably the best car I have ever driven," said the BTCC star.

Blakeney plots Historic Formula Ford 2000 campaign with Delta

Pat Blakeney, Formula Ford racer and group operations director at Thrupton, will return to his racing roots this season in Historic FF2000.

Blakeney has acquired a Delta T81 for a return to the class he first contested in 1986. He later did a full season in the

1989 British FF2000 Championship in a Reynard.

"I'm really excited about going racing again," he said after missing the last four seasons due to work commitments. "I've always loved the two-litre cars and I plan to do as many races as

Champion Sleeman in race comeback

Ex-Historic FF1600 champion Paul Sleeman plans to race regularly again in 2016 after competing little in the last decade.

Sleeman has bought a Lenham Midget and plans to do some two-driver races with John Powis, the senior instructor at Goodwood.

"I did one race three years ago in a Jaguar XJS," said Sleeman, who won back-to-back Historic Formula Ford titles in 1999-2000.

The 1962 car came back from France and is in left-hand drive configuration. It was converted into a race car in 1990.

Sleeman hopes to run the car in Guards Trophy and Equipe GTS.

I can around work. It's for the atmosphere and the social side of it as well. It's a case of going back to the start."

Blakeney owned and raced an FF1600 Vector for 14 years and later shared it with his son Scott, who is also likely to race the Delta.

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2016 CALENDAR

ROUND	CIRCUIT	DATE
1	CADWELL PARK	SUNDAY 24th APRIL
2	PEMBREY	SUNDAY 22nd MAY
3	BRANDS HATCH	SUNDAY 19th JUNE
4	OULTON PARK	SATURDAY 9th JULY
5	CROFT	SUNDAY 21st AUGUST
6	SNETTERTON	SUNDAY 25th SEPTEMBER



For further information please contact the championship coordinator:
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OULTON PARK

SNETTERTON

CADWELL PARK

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28 MARCH
2/3 APRIL
16/17 APRIL
30 APRIL - 2 MAY
7/8 MAY
20-22 MAY
28/29 MAY
28 & 30 MAY
4/5 JUNE
11/12 JUNE
1-3 JULY

EASTER BRITISH TRUCK RACING
EASTER FAMILY FUNDAY
DUNLOP MSA BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
BRITISH GT AND BRDC F4 CHAMPIONSHIPS
MCE INSURANCE BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP
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OULTON PARK
BRANDS HATCH
BRANDS HATCH GP

8-10 JULY
30/31 JULY
5-7 AUGUST
6/7 AUGUST
14 AUGUST
27-29 AUGUST
9-11 SEPTEMBER
10/11 SEPTEMBER
1/2 OCTOBER
14-16 OCTOBER
5/6 NOVEMBER

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FIA World Rallycross Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Montalegre, Portugal	April 16/17
2	Hockenheim, Germany	May 7/8
3	Mettet, Belgium	May 14/15
4	Lydden Hill, Great Britain	May 28/29
5	Hell, Norway	June 11/12
6	Holjes Sweden	July 2/3
7	Trois-Rivieres, Canada	August 6/7
8	Loheac, France	September 3/4
9	Barcelona, Spain	September 17/18
10	Riga, Latvia	October 1/2
11	Estering, Germany	October 15/16
12	Rosario, Argentina	November 26/27

MSA British Rallycross Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Croft	March 6
2	Lydden Hill	March 27/28
3	Pembrey	May 1
4	Pembrey	May 2
5	Massmechelen, Belgium	July 16/17
6	Lydden Hill	August 29
7	Pembrey	September 25
8	Croft	October 22
MSA British Rallycross Grand Prix: Croft		October 23

BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Blyton	March 13
2	Pembrey	April 16
3	Pembrey	April 17
4	Pembrey	July 2
5	Pembrey	July 3
6	Blyton	October 16
7	Croft	November 6

MSA British Hillclimb Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Prescott	April 23/24
2	Craigantlet	April 30
3	Harewood	May 7/8
4	Gurston Down	May 28/29
5	Shelsley Walsh	June 4/5
6	Loton Park	June 11/12
7	Doone	June 18/19
8	Barbon Manor	July 2
9	Harewood	July 3
10	Bouley Bay	July 14
11	Val des Terres	July 16
12	Wiscome Park	July 30/31
13	Shelsley Walsh	August 20/21
14	Gurston Down	August 27/28
15	Prescott	September 3/4
16	Doone	September 17/18
17	Loton Park	September 24/25

Scottish Hillclimb Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Doone	April 16/17
2	Fintray	May 21/22
3	Doone	June 18/19
4	Forrestburn	June 25/26
5	Fintray	August 13/14
6	Forrestburn	August 27/28
7	Doone	September 17/18

Scottish Sprint Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Kames	April 9/10
2	Kames	May 14/15
3	Golspie	June 11/12
4	Boyndie	July 2/3
5	Kames	July 30/31
6	Golspie	September 10/11
7	Boyndie	September 24/25

MSA British Sprint Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Castle Combe	March 19
2	Croft	March 28
3	Snetterton	May 21/22
4	Pembrey	June 4/5
5	Anglesey	June 18/19
6	Knockhill	July 30/31
7	Kirkistown	August 6/7
8	Blyton Park	September 11
9	Anglesey	October 1/2

MSA British Drag Racing Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Santa Pod	March 25-27
2	Santa Pod	May 27-30
3	Santa Pod	June 25/26
4	Santa Pod	July 29-31
5	Santa Pod	September 8-11
6	Santa Pod	September 24/25

British Autograss Series

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	South Wales	April 31/May 1
2	Scunthorpe	June 25/25
3	St Neots	July 16/17
4	Yorkshire Dales	August 20/21
5	Border Counties	September 17/18

* reserve date October 1/2

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British Superlite Championship

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Three Sisters	March 27
2	Blyton Park	April 23/24
3	Pembrey	June 18
4	Three Sisters	July 16
5	Teesside	August 20
6	Blyton Park	September 3/4
7	Three Sisters	October 1
8	Cadwell Park	November 5

National Hot Rods, England 2015-2016 season (second half)

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Birmingham Wheels	March 5
2	Hednesford Hills	March 13
3	Northampton Raceway	March 25
4	Ipswich	March 28
5	Northampton Raceway	April 23
6	Hednesford Hills	May 2
7	Aldershot	May 15
8	Ipswich	May 30

2016-2017 season (first half)

PLACE	PLACE	DATE
1	Aldershot	July 24
2	Birmingham Wheels	August 20
3	Northampton	August 29
4	Ipswich	September 24
5	Hednesford Hills	October 9
6	Ipswich	October 22
7	Hednesford Hills	November 6



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Meetings in italics already held



One-off Hot Rod events

PLACE	DATE
Thunder 500: Ipswich	June 18
World Final: Ipswich	July 2/3
Nationals weekend: Hednesford Hills	August 6/7

BTRDA Autotest Championship

PLACE	DATE
1 Hagley and District Light Car Club	March 13
2 Herefordshire Motor Club	April 3
3 Whitchurch Motor Club	April 17
4 CSMA (North East London)	May 8
5 Wolverhampton and South Staffs Car Club	May 22
6 Hartlepool & District Motor Club	June 12
7 Knutsford & District Motor Club	June 27
8 Alwoodley Motor Club	July 10
9 South of Scotland Car Club	July 23
10 Caemarvonshire & Anglesey Motor Club	August 14
11 Loughborough Car Club	September 18

BTRDA Autosolo Championship

PLACE	DATE
1 Knutsford and District Motor Club	January 31
2 Devizes and District Motor Club	February 21
3 Bristol Motor Club	March 5
4 Ross and District Motor Sports Ltd	March 13
5 Bath Motor Club	April 10
6 CSMA (North East London)	April 17
7 Oxford Motor Club	April 24
8 Farnborough and District Motor Club	May 8
9 Ilkley and District Motor Club	May 15
10 Sixty and Worcestershire Motor Club	May 22
11 Abingdon CARnival	June 11
12 Bristol Motor Club/CSMA (NW)	June 19
13 Loughborough Car Club	July 17
14 Bath Motor Club	August 21
15 Ross and District Motor Sports Ltd	September 18
16 Oxford Motor Club	October 2
17 Knutsford and District Motor Club	October 16
18 Sixty and Worcestershire Motor Club	October 23

Other special one-off events

PLACE	DATE
Motorsport at the Palace, Crystal Palace, London	May 29/May 30
Cholmondeley Pageant of Power, Cheshire	June 10-12
Goodwood Festival of Speed, West Sussex	June 23-26
Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, Colorado, USA	June 26
London to Brighton Veteran Car Run, Hyde Park, London	November 6

BriSCA F1

PLACE	DATE
Belle Vue	March 28, May 2, May 30, August 29, October 30
Birmingham Wheels	April 16, May 21, August 27, October 15, November 12
Buxton	April 24, August 14
Coventry	April 2, May 7, June 4, July 2, August 6, September 3, October 1, November 5
Cowdenbeath	June 25
Hednesford Hills	April 17
Ipswich	June 18
King's Lynn	March 19, April 30, May 28, July 23, September 24, October 22
Lochgelly	June 26
Northampton	April 23, June 19, July 16/17, September 4, October 16
Sheffield	April 10, July 31, October 9
Skegness	March 25, May 14/15, June 11, June 9/10, September 17, October 8
Stoke	March 26, September 11
Venray, Holland	August 20/21

BTRDA Sporting Trials Championship

PLACE	DATE
1 Jiggers Jug, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Trials Car Club)	February 7
2 Geoff Taylor, Worcestershire (Hagley and District Light Car Club)	February 14
3 Walsingham, Hampshire (750 Motor Club)	March 6
4 Peter Blankstone, Shelsley Walsh (Midland Automobile Club)	March 13
5 Stuart Butterfield, Yorkshire (Yorkshire Sports Car Club)	March 20
6 Presidents, Hampshire (Southsea Motor Club)	April 3
7 Raymond Baxter, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Trials Car Club)	April 10
8 JB Taylor, Gloucestershire (BTRDA)	April 17
9 Pennine, Derbyshire (Airedale & Pennine Car Club)	April 24
10 Four Turnings, Cornwall (Camel Vale Motor Club)	May 8
Summer break	
11 Robin Jager, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Trials Car Club)	September 11
12 Robin Alexander, Cornwall (Camel Vale Motor Club)	September 17
13 David Ayers, Cornwall (Launceston and North Cornwall Motor Club)	September 18
14 Charles Pollard, Northamptonshire (Peterborough Motor Club)	September 25
15 John Southern, Cumbria (Northern Phoenix Trails Car Club)	October 2
16 Peter Fear Pauntley, Newent (Ross & District Motor Sports Ltd)	October 9
17 Mercian, Oxfordshire (Coventry & Warwickshire Motor Club)	October 16
18 Stone Trough, Yorkshire (Yorkshire Sports Car Club)	October 23
19 November Sporting, Kent (BTRDA)	November 6
20 Roy Fedden, Somerset (Bristol Motor Club)	November 13
21 Loughborough, Nottinghamshire (Loughborough Car Club)	November 20
22 Gloster Trial, Gloucestershire (750 Motor Club)	December 4

GOT A STORY? EMAIL matt.james@haymarket.com **MOTORSPORT NEWS**

TORBAY MOTOR CLUB

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» 13th March	» 11th/12th June
» The Torbay Trial	» 3 Clubs Manor Farm Hill Climb
» 23rd/24th April	» 17th July
» TMC Autocross	» Clay Pigeon Sprint
» 14th May	» 8th/9th October
» Wiscombe Hill Climb	» TMC Autocross

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YAMAHA'S GAME-CHANGING BUGGY



Yamaha has worked to perfect suspension

Yamaha-backed Thorney Motorsport will bring this UTV to the British Cross Country Championship in 2016. Experienced Thorney team boss John Thorne takes it for a spin in California

There's no doubt the first question going through your mind when you see this is 'what is it? A buggy? A quad bike? A Baja racer?' and the answer is a little of all of them. Technically, the new Yamaha YXZ1000R – catchy name – is a sports Side by Side or Ultimate Terrain Vehicle and it represents a new class of machine now racing worldwide.

Yamaha pioneered the class with the launch of the Rhino model in 2004; it was originally designed for the utility market but it was quickly adopted by the All-Terrain Vehicle off-road racing scene in the USA. Soon a whole new class of motorsport was born, with Rhinos



High-revving engine powers YXZ

competing in everything from short track racing to full Baja desert contests. However, it was other manufacturers – Polaris, Arctic Cat and Can-Am – that took the genre to the next level with dedicated sportscars designed for fun and racing rather than for farmers.

Since then the UTV racing market has exploded. Polaris leads the way, with the RZR that, along with the Arctic Cat Wildcat and the Can-Am Maverick, is now racing in multiple race series across the US, Europe and Asia with their own classes in long range events such as the Baja 1000 and even the Dakar Rally. But it's taken until now for Yamaha to launch its own pure sports UTV with the YXZ1000R.

This is an important car for Yamaha. In the 10 years since it pioneered the class the game has moved forward considerably. The Polaris RZR XP 1000 is now turbocharged, with over 140bhp, and is the car to beat. The YXZ1000R needs to be a game changer. And there is one particular feature that really does justify using that term – a sequential manual transmission.

Up until this point all UTV cars have had continuously variable transmissions, with which power to the wheels is determined by a series of primary and secondary clutches connected by a belt, which moves up and down to represent different wheel speeds. This system suffers

from two major flaws. Firstly, as the belt moves up and down a series of pulleys, it gets very hot and CVT belt failure is common. Secondly, a good 20-25 per cent of your power is lost through the belt and drive system.

The YXZ1000R has a five-speed manual transmission with a sequential shift. The gearbox is mounted in front of the engine for better weight displacement and is mated to Yamaha's switchable four-wheel-drive transmission, which is able to switch to two-speed at the flick of a switch at pretty much any speed. The system also provides for a full diff lock option.

The other major 'game changing' part of the YXZ1000R is its heart. It has a three-cylinder engine that should give a better spread of power over the twin-cylinder engines used by all the other manufacturers. The YXZ1000R unit, while derived from Yamaha's extensive snowmobile platform, is a whole new engine, boasting 998cc capacity, liquid cooling, four stroke with a dry sump (another sector first). It produces approximately 120bhp and has a 10,500rpm red line. On paper it's a real screamer: typical Yamaha.

The critical element of these kinds of cars is the suspension set-up, their light weight means they will skip about on rough tracks and the slightest yump will mean you're airborne. Again, Yamaha has spent some time developing the set-up.

So, what's it like to drive? Fun. The addition of the sequential gearbox opens up the car to a completely different feel, the low clutch pedal makes for an easy getaway and pretty soon you are revving away towards the 10,500 limit. Changing gear soon becomes the best part; a slight touch on the clutch and slam the gearshift back. Pretty soon I was flat-shifting, which needed just a slight touch on the clutch pedal.

The car pretty much pulled from about 4000rpm but was really on song from about 7000 all the way through the rev range to the 10,500 limit. Coming from an Arctic Cat Wildcat with an 8000rpm limit, I felt I was straining the engine in terms of noise but once you got over that psychological hurdle you realised that the Yamaha liked it rough, which was the same for the gearbox. It was only when you babied it on shifting that it missed.

I got the chance to try out some of the manoeuvres that we are faced with in UK cross country racing, which wasn't easy as the launch event was at Glamis, California – 50 square miles of sand dunes. In a typical Britpart MSA British Cross Country round we are flat-out on a gravel track, quickly followed by a very slow, tight turn in into some much rougher cross country sections. With the Yamaha I was able to slam the brakes on (two-pot rotors all round, 245mm discs – huge for a

UTV), bang down four gears, then use first or second gear to spin the car on its axis and accelerate out. Like a typical off-road race car in other words.

There were around 30 YXZ1000Rs present, it got to 110 degrees and the cars were driven by all manner of racers and journalists, some of whom had never driven such a car and some of whom were champion UTV racers. Not once did I see a Yamaha technician even approach a car to check it over. We went out, caned them silly, lined up to get more fuel, then parked up. That's it. Clearly they have confidence in the car.

Any downsides? Well the jury is out on whether the Yamaha will beat the new Polaris RZR XP Turbo but the Arctic Cat Wildcat, Maverick and normally aspirated RZR XP 1000 look defeated.

The conditions also left a question in mind; how will the brakes react in Welsh mud? For racing in the UK they are going to need extended wheel covers (for MSA regulations), which won't be too hard to do, along with different seats and the cage welding rather than bolting on but that's it. It's not going to take a king's ransom to get this to the start line.

Add that to the fact that the Yamaha is nearly £4000 cheaper than the RZR or the Can-Am and you see just how much potential the package has. ■

Thorne will take on Cross Country Championship in the UK before Dakar

This year Thorney Motorsport will compete in the Britpart British Cross Country Championship with John Thorne driving a Yamaha YXZ1000R.

Thorne has plenty of experience off road, having raced Polaris machines and Arctic Wildcats almost exclusively after moving away from the British Touring

Car Championship and, with Yamaha backing, the aim is to go out and win in the championship while developing the new car.

The series features six rounds around the forests of Wales, Scotland and England, with a minimum of five stages per day over two days and the aim of creating a mini off-road safari.

The team plans to run two cars, one in the Production class, and a turbo version in the modified category. The second driver is yet to be announced.

With Thorne doing the development work on the car, one of the next major goals is to get a team ready for the Dakar Rally in 2017. **Jack Benyon**



Trick drivetrain could be a big step forward for the category

RALLY MEXICO



BY DAVID EVANS

Jari-Matti Latvala finally defeats his championship-leading team-mate Sebastien Ogier

It's not often driving out from the end of a stage you are flagged down by the rally leader. Jari-Matti Latvala was out of his car and looking concerned.

It was Sunday morning, the 50-mile Guanajuato stage was in his rear-view mirror and there was just the powerstage remaining. And he was starting that one with a minute in hand over everybody.

The bespectacled Finn leaned into the car.

"I made a mistake," he said, in a typically apologetic Latvala fashion. "When we got to the end of the long stage, the organisers were giving out the T-shirts to the drivers and co-drivers. Miikka [Anttila, co-driver] got one. I thought he had one for me as well, but I was wrong. Could you go back to the stop line and get me one, please?"

The T-shirt was OK, it was red and told the world that you had completed the Guanajuato stage. But it was just a T-shirt.

But that's Jari-Matti. That kind of thing means so much to him; he's a rally fan first and a professional rally driver second.

Last week in Mexico, he was the consummate professional. And turned in one of his best ever performances. He was fastest pretty much everywhere. Oddly, that wasn't the point. In his position, running eighth on the road, the Finn was in the perfect place on a surface swept clean of the loose gravel and giving considerably more grip than the man at the front would be enjoying. More of the man at the front later.

In all honesty, if Latvala hadn't been quickest, he should have been dismissed on the spot.

Speed's not an issue for Latvala, never has been – how could it be for a man unbeaten in Finland since 2013? Getting to the finish of an event has been. Still is. Dare we say was? Not yet.

But Mexico was a major step forward. He took his time. He didn't rush himself. He didn't snatch at seconds. He didn't take risks. He knew the advantage was all his and he let it come to him in the kind of way that Sebastien Loeb would have done.

Just over 30 seconds up on second-placed Sebastien Ogier on Friday night, eyebrows were raised. Shouldn't he have expected more? There was no stress. He had another day in the perfect place to come. Yes, Sunday was all about 50 miles in one hit, but the approach for the road there was a little more about catching monkeys: slowly, slowly.

Predictably, Latvala had a full and detailed explanation, not to mention the usual interesting backstory.

"I remember," he said, "when I was here in 2012 – the speed was amazing. The first day I was attacking and

leading, then I hit the rock and we broke the suspension arm. We managed to get to service, then we attacked some more. Next day we got the puncture and lost 30 seconds. And on the last day, still I tried to attack and I finally I rolled!"

There's a pause and a smile at the recollection.

"That," he said, "was not good. But now, I think I am learning. It's coming more instinctively for me to slow down. I have to stay calm."

He stayed perfectly calm on the baking stages last week.

Two thirds of the way through Sunday's Guanajuato marathon, he began to lose the brakes at the rear of his Volkswagen Polo R WRC. Still, calm. He lost 25.3s to Ogier – pretty much what he'd planned and expected to lose, with the second-placed winner of the first two rounds now right ahead of him on the road. Everything was under control.

For the first time in Mexico and for the first time since Corsica last October, Latvala and Anttila stepped onto the roof of their Polo and celebrated.

"I feel I have turned a bit of a corner here," he said. "It's not about 110 per cent all of the time."

Hush: Was that the sound of a penny dropping?

"It's so important for me to take this win," he added. "Now we have something on the board for this year." He's pointless no more.

Ogier bored

The difference in mood from one side of the Volkswagen camp to the other was marked.

From the minute Latvala's driveshaft broke at the end of the first stage of Rally Sweden last month, victory had been on the cards here. Equally certain was a powerstage win for Ogier.

The Frenchman's mood was dark on Friday – and that was only partly due to finding a herd of cows in his way on SS5. Epic save ("It would have been bad for us, but worse for them!"). That mood darkened further over the weekend.

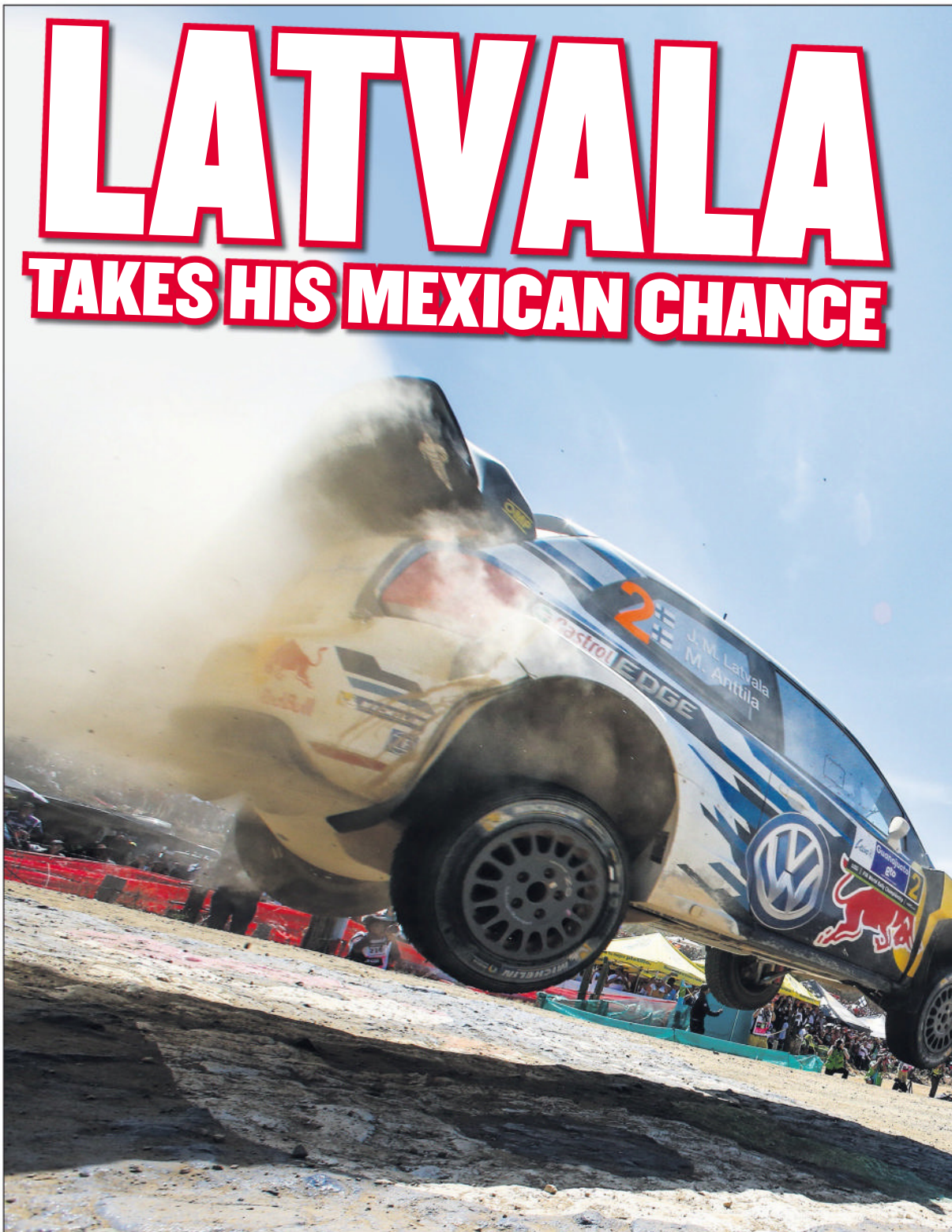
By Sunday, he was wearing the look of a man who wanted to be elsewhere. "This," he said, "has been a boring rally. No fights, no nothing. A boring rally."

Ogier grew tired of talking about the running order regulations a long time ago, he had no appetite to go over old ground and it's a brave man who brings it up at such a juncture.

Understandably, he hates the fact that success is penalised while apparent mediocrity – for whatever reason – is celebrated with a preferable position on the road. He wants the level playing field. He wants the fair fight. Yes, he could slow down and perhaps even miss a rally to level the playing field himself, but why should he? He's persecuted for perfection. The championship's shortcomings that force us down the road of such manipulation are of no interest to Ogier and neither should they be.

Ogier arrived at the start of Mexico on the back of the perfect 56-point start. At the finish, I ventured that his perfect start had continued. He'd always said, Latvala was in a different rally on a different road.

He'd asked to be measured against his nearest rivals. Against Andreas Mikkelsen, Mads Ostberg and Hayden Paddon, those closest to him on the road. Predictably, he'd



taken them all to the cleaners.

A reminder of that brought a wry smile. "It's true," he said, "there was no way for me to do anything better than this. So, for that, this is still the perfect start. It's frustrating, but what can we do? People expect the unexpected from me because we did some crazy results when we were winning events like this one, Sardinia and Australia last year. But before the start I was thinking it would be good to just get on the podium. You know, this is not against Jari-Matti – he is the nicest guy and the most honest guy around. He is just doing his job, what else was he going to do here?"

Looking at the results, it was hard not to argue with Ogier's appraisal of this being a boring rally: two, three, four even 14-minute gaps littered the top 10. But there was more to this event than a split-second battle. This was 250 miles of pure adventure and, after four hours and 25 minutes, Latvala got that.

"Rallies are not always the big

battle," he said. "Not every rally is like Finland – that's how it is. I had a boring rally in Sweden, when I had a problem and I had to drive the whole day with the broken car. I understand for Seb, he couldn't fight and he is not feeling comfortable with that. I understand. But some rallies are different."

Behind the VWs

Mexico was certainly that. And there were few further down the order who would reach for the same adjective as the defending champion when it came to describing their event.

Hyundai's Dani Sordo, for example, drove well to take his first podium on an all-gravel rally since the 2013 Acropolis Rally. Or, at least, his first podium before a two-minute penalty for using one tyre too many dropped him to fourth.

The Spaniard's measured approach once again paid dividends, but there wasn't much measuring going on when he was in the thick of a battle

with Mikkelsen. Pushing hard for another Volkswagen podium lock-out, and just 4.5s shy of Sordo, the Norwegian went off the road six miles from the end of the second run through Otates. Mikkelsen's countryman Ostberg thus picked up fourth (which then became third) in M-Sport's frontrunning Ford Fiesta RS WRC.

Paddon was fifth. The Kiwi's speed between breaking suspension arms (the first on the same Las Minas bridge that ruled Kris Meeke out in 2014) was another reason for Hyundai cheer.

The Koreans had come to Mexico with a shot at winning. Pre-event, there was plenty of humility and talk of podiums, but Thierry Neuville demonstrated rally-winning speed here last year before crashing out of second place on the afternoon run at the El Chocolate stage. This time his hopes were extinguished first time down the same stretch of road, when he damaged the car's steering. Worse was to come when he crashed



Ogier was forced to clean the road

'Mikkelsen crashed while chasing Sordo'
VW's driver rated, p29



ROUND 08

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Anttila and Latvala celebrate their first 2016 success



STAGE TIMES

■ **SS1 Street Stage Guanajuato (0.68 miles)**
Fastest Neuville 59.1s **Leader**
Neuville **Second** Bertelli +0.1s

■ **SS2 Super Special 1 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m38.9s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +0.9s

■ **SS3 Super Special 2 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m38.1s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +1.7s

■ **SS4 El Chocolate 1 (33.68 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 38m48.1s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +19.0s

■ **SS5 Las Minas 1 (9.54 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 11m00.1s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +22.4s

■ **SS6 Street Stage Leon 1 (0.85 miles)**
Fastest Mikkelsen 1m19.0s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +21.2s

■ **SS7 El Chocolate 2 (33.68 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 38m16.3s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +31.2s

■ **SS8 Las Minas 2 (9.54 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 10m57.7s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +31.7s

■ **SS9 Super Special 3 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 1m39.1s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +32.5s

■ **SS10 Super Special 4 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m38.1s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +32.1s

■ **SS11 Ibarra (18.88 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 17m41.8s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +51.9s

■ **SS12 Otates 1 (26.48 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 29m39.8s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +1m13.6s

■ **SS13 El Brinco 1 (4.44 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 4m00.5s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m16.3s

■ **SS14 Agua Zarca 1 (10.23 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 10m07.6s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +1m21.9s

■ **SS15 Otates 2 (26.48 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 29m17.8s
Leader Latvala
Second Ogier +1m34.1s

■ **SS16 El Brinco 2 (4.44 miles)**
Fastest Latvala 3m57.3s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m36.3s

■ **SS17 Super Special 5 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Sordo 1m39.2s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m37.5s

■ **SS18 Super Special 6 (1.43 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m38.1s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m36.8s

■ **SS19 Street Stage Leon 2 (0.85 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 1m18.6s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m35.7s

■ **SS20 Guanajuato (49.71 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 48m06.8s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m10.4s

■ **SS21 Agua Zarca 2 (power stage) (10.23 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 9m57.1s **Leader**
Latvala **Second** Ogier +1m05.0s

DAVID EVANS

"The Mexicans are like you and me: they are rally folk"



It's 12 years since the World Rally Championship first arrived in Mexico. Then, Leon was the new boy in class, eager to please, homework in on time and no questions asked; teacher asked, teacher got.

How times have changed. Mexico's in the upper-sixth now and taking no nonsense. Some might say, there's even the demonstration of head boy potential, house captain at the very least.

Don't get me wrong, the Rally Mexico organisers remain deeply respectful of the FIA and WRC Promoter, but they've found a voice and they're not afraid to use it.

Last week's long-stage format event divided opinion. Sunday's 50-miler was a case in point. It didn't work for the promoter. Being one test, it offered one set of onboards and one set of end-of-stage interviews: could those 50 miles not have been divided in two? Or three? Imagine the hike in the day's value from three or four stages...

I can understand the concept of more stages equalling more value, but I seriously struggle with the inability to grasp the story those 50 miles offered in one hit. That stage was *the* story last week.

I found myself concerned at the need for explanation of the challenge, not to mention the implications for our sport's heritage and history. Clearly, there is little room for such deliberations in the economically driven world of promotion.

Fortunately, the Mexicans are like you and me. They're rally folk, not money makers.

I'm not naive or blinkered enough not to see the need for the work of WRC Promoter – and I genuinely believe it's doing a very, very good job – but there still needs to be room for what makes our sport great. And those 50 miles did just that last week.

The head of sixth has doubtless asked event boss Patrick Suberville and his team to have a think; reconsider that last – slightly too radical – assignment and bring it more into line with current thinking before the next lesson.

Suberville will do that. He'll give it due consideration, he's a sensible, reasonable man. But then he'll do the best by Mexico.

Such is the confidence of this event, it's ready to go its own way and do its own thing. Rally Mexico has become one of the greats and an event the WRC would be poorer without. The organisers know that, they realise their changed position and they're not afraid to use some of the power that brings. Good on them.

They've worked desperately hard to educate a local population, some of whom thought rally cars were only there to have rocks thrown at them, while developing an event with character and integrity. There are times when this event looks like it's in a class of its own.



heavily in Otates a day later. Neuville's nightmare continues.

One man who'd endured every driver's nightmare 12 months ago was Ott Tanak, when he rolled his Fiesta into a Los Mexicanos lake. The organisers avoided that stretch of road this time around. For Tanak, it was simply a case of putting miles beneath the wheels.

"I wouldn't have minded going back to that stage," said Tanak, "it was a nice stage! For us, we are waiting for the new tyre, which comes, hopefully, in Portugal. We had to finish here, that was the important thing."

If the Latvala win was telegraphed, one part of this year's Rally Mexico story came as a complete surprise – the continued use of soft tyres on the morning loop of stages. Granted, temperatures were as low as seven degrees when the cars were put into stage mode for the first time each day, but still this remained a major challenge to the rubber.

Continued on page 28



Theirry Neuville needed to bounce back. He didn't

NOW TURN OVER TO READ MN'S DRIVER RATINGS

RALLY MEXICO



BY DAVID
EVANS

CITROEN'S STAR MAN

KRIS MEEKE

"Leaving after the recce was a strange feeling"



Coming off the final stage of the recce turning left towards the airport and not right to Leon was a pretty strange feeling last Wednesday afternoon.

And the week continued in the same vein – not that I had too much time to dwell on it: my wife was working, so I was looking after the children. I tried to introduce them to split times and tell them how interesting it was that Sebastien Ogier was taking four soft tyres on the first loop on Friday; it would be a bit of an overstatement to say they were riveted...

This wasn't the first time I've done the recce but not the rally, so it wasn't too strange for me to be honest. I arrived in Mexico on Sunday, did a bit of bike riding on Monday and then got on with the recce on Tuesday. Regardless of whether you are doing the rally or not, the preparation in the recce for Paul [Nagle, co-driver] and I is exactly the same. OK, we're not talking in depth with the engineer at the end of the day about what we might or might not do with the car set-up, but for Paul and I it was like we were starting the rally.

The stages in Mexico are lovely, there's no doubt about that. And spending 1h45m in the 50-miler through Guanajuato was incredible. We'd never driven those roads in that direction, so to all intents and purposes it was the first time we'd seen it. It was a monster, a proper stage and one that I would love to have driven on the rally.

A few folk have been asking me if it was frustrating not to be starting the rally, but it's honestly not. As the Abu Dhabi Total World Rally Team, we know what we're about this year and this year's all about next year.

It's the same when David Evans asked me where I thought we'd have finished – that's not a question I could answer. Instead, I told him to ask me where I thought we'd be finishing next year; the answer to this one is that I hoped to be beaten on this rally in 12 months time – that will mean we've gone to Mexico in the lead of the championship and first on the road. I'll take that!

Stepping back slightly and looking at the event from afar, you can't help but be impressed with what VW does. The pace was incredible; Jari-Matti Latvala and Seb [Ogier] were on a different planet.

Both of them were very impressive: Latvala made the best of what he'd got, while Ogier was masterful at the front again. He's had a fair bit of practice running first on the road and he's become very, very good at it.

Last week was about the start of the British Rally Championship on the Mid Wales Stages and the launch of the Circuit of Ireland a few days before. With 30-plus R5 cars likely for the Circuit and a great start to the BRC, rallying's looking good in the UK.

Another thing I was impressed with was the WRC+ service on wrc.com. Being a bit of a spectator at the weekend, it was great to be able to watch so many onboarders on the website. That's not something I intend to make a habit of though!

Continued from page 27

Michelin's rally manager Jacques Morelli admitted he was surprised by what he saw.

"This soft tyre is exactly the same – the same compound and construction we are using in Wales," he said. "And the temperature is not like this in Wales in November!"

The explanation involves the high altitude and low temperatures, but there are two further facets: the depth of gravel and down-on-power engines.

Mikkelsen explained: "When you are early on the roads, there's a lot of loose on the surface, so you're not actually giving the tyres any work to do because we're not scratching through to the base of the road. And, of course, the power is not the same because of the altitude."

Morelli was keen to see some of the credit going the way of his team in Clermont-Ferrand. "We introduced this new soft tyre in Finland two years ago," he said. "We could see straight away the chemistry in the rubber and the construction of the tyre was good – it made it much more durable. That's what we've seen here."

Mexico Monster

But what about the other part of the Mexico story? What impact would tyres have on the most talked about stage in years? For the first time since the 1986 Tour de Corse, a competitive stage ran to 80 kilometres, 50 miles.

Guanajuato was a significant chapter in this year's Mexican tale. But surely this would be beyond Michelin's soft compound. Not quite. First on the road (courtesy of the forceful removal of a wheel on



Ostberg inherited third spot

Suninen keeps his head for victory

Mexico wreaked absolute havoc on a WRC2 field already short on entries – but in the end Finn Teemu Suninen emerged with his Skoda Fabia R5 intact and 20 minutes ahead of his nearest rival. Suninen had kept his head while those around him lost theirs. Then came back the next day and lost them again.

His fellow Skoda driver Armin Kremer led after Thursday night's three asphalt stages, but the German's tenure of the top spot was shortlived. He retired with suspension problems on Friday morning. He returned on Saturday, only to suffer the same fate.

Another Fabia, Peruvian Nicolas Fuchs hit the gravel running on Friday morning and moved to the front of the field, dropping out when he hit turbo and suspension trouble. Fuchs' Saturday didn't improve much when his gearbox refused to play ball on the way to the first stage. After half an hour of roadside repairs, he got it working again and went on to set a handful of fastest times through day two. He would finish fourth – and the last of the crews to get to the end



Sordo finished as top Hyundai man

Saturday's Ibarra stage) Eric Camilli's Fiesta was delivered to the stage finish seventh fastest and still with tread beneath it.

The anticipation of Guanajuato was huge, the challenge apparently even greater.

Fifty miles through a stage that varied greatly in character and tempo, going for miles with the cars bouncing off the limiter in top to sections so technical and tight they were reminiscent of the pitilessly twisty Motu Road stage in New Zealand, complete with overhanging vegetation and accompanying varying grip level. There were drainage ditches, cobblestones and peaks nudging 9000 feet. But the part that really caught the imagination was the competitive use of Derramadero. Usually reserved for a road section, it was the chance of a lifetime to see the cars literally flying into the village, landing on cobbles and then threading their World Rally Cars down the main – only – street between the houses.

Waiting to talk to the crews at the end of the stage, there was no chance

for me to partake in such a sensory assault. Colin McMaster, the man who took most of the pictures you're looking at, did make the journey.

"I'm not over-egging it when I say it was unbelievable," McMaster said. "They were down through the houses at over 100mph. Fantastic. You'd have loved it!"

The story at the stage end wasn't anything like as dramatic.

In fact, 50 miles in 50-odd minutes didn't really do much for anybody. There had been talk of cars coming to the finish with wheels hanging off, punctures galore, drivers on the verge of collapse. In fact, the zero car was the only one of the frontrunners demonstrating any kind of impact, with its rear bumper hanging off.

Ogier admitted it had been a nice stage; Latvala only wanted 60km (probably in the hope that his brakes would last that long) and Ostberg? "I didn't enjoy it at all. Why should I? It's too long. OK, there were some nice sections, but it's just so long. You end up just doing the same, the same and the same again. We need rally stages, not endurance. I

understand the argument, but it's not for me."

None of the drivers looked desperately out of shape at the finish, but Paddon was one of the most fresh-faced. "I'd quite happily turn around and go and do it again," he smiled. "I enjoyed it. For me, we should have longer stages like this in the championship; rallying's not all about balls-out stages, it's about tactics and stages like this make you think a little bit more."

Ultimately, the long stage failed to deliver the expected drama. On the surface, the same could be said for Rally Mexico in terms of pure competition. But, as ever, from the underground stage and frankly bonkers reception from the locals in the city of Guanajuato on Thursday night to the WRC's longest road in three decades, this event provided something different. Something different, not least, because it was a rally Ogier didn't win.

Latvala won and wore the winner's cowboy boots on Sunday afternoon.

More importantly, he got the T-shirt too... ■



Teemu Suninen was one of the only contenders not to hit trouble

SUPPORTS

ROUND 03

DRIVER ANALYSIS BY DAVID EVANS

SEBASTIEN OGIER VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

Times through the first two days made no sense as Ogier again reshaped convention about what can be done with a rally car. He was superb and turned in a result worthy of a win.



10/10

JARI-MATTI LATVALA VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT

Controlled the rally perfectly from the front with an effective drive. His only problem being the bill coming from Malcolm Wilson after Eric Camilli hit the rock the Finn pulled out. He'll pay it. He's that kind of bloke.



10/10

ANDREAS MIKKELSEN VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORT II

Too cautious on Friday morning, he described the car as a snake on Friday then crashed chasing Sordo on Saturday. A highly forgettable event for the chirpy Norwegian, who remained chirpy nevertheless.



2/10

BENITO GUERRA FORD FIESTA RS WRC

You know that jump Sordo was effing about? Well that one really ruined Benny's rally. A heavy landing put the local out of action for the rest of Friday. Back to a heroes' welcome on the weekend.



3/10

MARTIN PROKOP JIPOCAR FORD FIESTA RS WRC

First time back in the World Rally Championship after contesting this year's Dakar and the cheerful Czech star was soon back in the groove and on his way to another solid top 10.



5/10

MADS OSTBERG M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

Second last year, Mads was at a bit of a loss to understand where the pace had gone this time around. There was a minor downshifting issue, but that wasn't the difference in Mexico last week.



5/10

ERIC CAMILLI M-SPORT WORLD RALLY TEAM

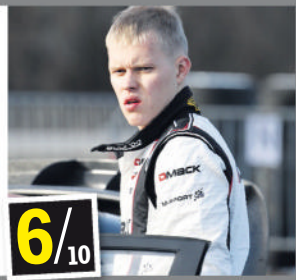
Unlucky to pick up a puncture on the opening day. Ripping a wheel off on Saturday was more frustrating. The line is littered with rocks, depending on your line... Great job opening the road in the long one.



2/10

OTT TANAK DMACK WORLD RALLY TEAM

Stayed completely dry and his Ford Fiesta went nowhere near the bottom of a lake this time around after his splash landing 12 months earlier. This was a sensible and solid drive from Tanak.



6/10



Tanak stayed on dry land this time

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

THIERRY NEUVILLE

0/10

Great opportunity for the Belgian to put his poor form firmly behind him with a win. Instead he broke the steering on Friday and ended Saturday in hospital. Ironically, giving himself an even better chance in Argentina.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT N

HAYDEN PADDON

4/10

Beefier suspension would undoubtedly have helped the capable Kiwi but, as he pointed out, his problems stemmed from him running wide and hitting things twice. A car-load of dust and odd technical glitch didn't help.

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

DANI SORDO

7/10

"I took off on the jump; f****g hell, it was big. I remember looking out of the window and thinking: "F**k me... we are very, very high!" Sordo's amusing description of a Las Minas leap. Great drive. And landing.

TCS SKODA FABIA R5

TEEMU SUNINEN

7/10

While all around him faltered the Finn found the middle of the road and stayed there to take a dominant WRC2 division win by the narrow margin of, oh, er, just the 20 minutes. A very strong showing.

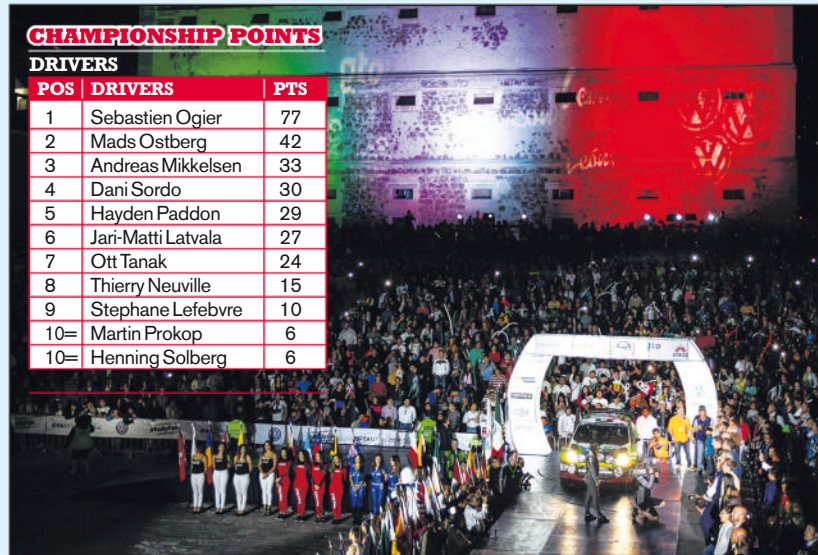
RESULTS

FIA World Rally Championship, round 3/14, Rally Mexico, Leon, March 3-6

POS	DRIVER/ CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	4h25m57.4s
2	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+1m05.0s
3	Mads Ostberg (NOR)/Ola Floene (NOR)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+5m36.4s
4	Dani Sordo (ESP)/Marc Marti (ESP)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+5m37.9s
5	Hayden Paddon (NZL)/John Kennard (NZL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	+6m22.6s
6	Ott Tanak (EST)/Raigo Molder (EST)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+9m59.5s
7	Martin Prokop (CZE)/Jan Tomanek (CZE)	Jipocar Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+12m58.5s
8	Lorenzo Bertelli (ITA)/Simone Scattolin (ITA)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+14m09.6s
9	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Skoda Fabia R5	+18m01.8s
10	Valeriy Gorban (UKR)/Volodymyr Korsya (UKR)	Mini John Cooper Works WRC	+32m37.3s
13	Benito Guerra (MEX)/Borja Rozada (ESP)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+44m39.2
16	Eric Camilli (FRA)/Nicolas Klinger (FRA)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+1h09m36.4s
R	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Anders Jaeger Synnevaag (NOR)	Volkswagen Polo R WRC	accident
R	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai i20 WRC	accident



VW crew had a reason to celebrate



CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier	77
2	Mads Ostberg	42
3	Andreas Mikkelsen	33
4	Dani Sordo	30
5	Hayden Paddon	29
6	Jari-Matti Latvala	27
7	Ott Tanak	24
8	Thierry Neuville	15
9	Stephane Lefebvre	10
10=	Martin Prokop	6
10=	Henning Solberg	6



MANUFACTURERS

POS	TEAMS	PTS
1	Volkswagen Motorsport	97
2	Hyundai Motorsport	61
3	M-Sport World Rally Team	46
4	Volkswagen Motorsport II	30
5	DMACK World Rally Team	26
6	Hyundai Motorsport N	24
7	Jipocar Czech National Team	6

Rally Raid expert Martin Krokop returned to the WRC and scored good points

NEXT RALLY

Can Jari-Matti Latvala keep the ball rolling?

RALLY ARGENTINA
APRIL 21-24

BRC: MID WALES STAGES

Evans produced a world-class drive to fend off Ahlin. By **Jack Benyon**

EVANS DELIVERS ON HOME SOIL



Ahlin shocked onlookers with his leading pace



Evans was cool under pressure to take victory

A crowded media room watches with anticipation as times come in for SS1 after a long and arduous test. No, not, Newtown. It's in Guanajuato.

Such was the reach of the newly formed British Rally Championship that even the media involved with Rally Mexico were waiting with bated breath as one of their own – Elfyn Evans – won the Mid Wales Stages in a triumphant and dramatic return for the BRC.

As if the rally wasn't tough enough with the first two stages used on Wales Rally GB, the typically unpredictable Welsh weather threw a curveball at the crews with treacherous conditions on the recce and then also on the stages, which were to be run in the dark. Easy!

Snow fell aggressively on Thursday night, meaning the crews had to make their notes for the rally on slippery and slushy stages, with a question mark hanging over the conditions for the next day.

The first stage – Hafren/Sweet Lamb – was a hybrid snow and gravel

test, with crews struggling to see which was which in the dark. Perhaps predictably it went to Evans as the Welshman showed his class despite feeling he left time out on the tricky stages. He took 17s out of second placed man Fredrik Ahlin, who would be his closest challenger.

The two had done battle in Ahlin's backyard in WRC Sweden, but a puncture had set Ahlin back considerably on that event. The 24-year-old Swede was unhappy with his pace at the end of the first stage, much to the contrary of the time on the stopwatch, and he also cited a lack of grip. He has competed on Wales Rally GB before, but hardly has the knowledge of the stages that the home favourites had on their side. The tables had certainly turned since Sweden where Ahlin held the home advantage.

It was a different story through Myherin though, as Ahlin struck back, taking the stage win by a second. The CA1 Sport driver had the benefit of Pirelli tyres that work well in cold conditions, and the hills surrounding the windmills on top of Pikes Peak/Myherin were coated in deep snow.

At service, the Swede was still

adamant that Evans was out of touch the next day, and Evans added that he still had pace left in the tank. Was the rally already over? The gap was 17.2s.

Behind the sparring duo, Ahlin's team-mate David Bogie – driving a Skoda Fabia R5 – was third after Tom Cave's Fiesta suffered a puncture through SS2 and held fourth. It was an incredible time to go seventh quickest having run on the puncture for around six miles.

Euan Thorburn was also in the mix in his new Peugeot 208 T16 despite only having received the ECU from Peugeot Sport France on Saturday morning. Another pre-event favourite – Keith Cronin – was unhappy after SS1 having not been in a gravel event in a rally car for two years. He was sixth overnight despite being expected to challenge Evans as the second-seeded driver.

The real surprise of the evening was Matt Edwards; he planted his BRC 2 Group N-spec Mitsubishi Lancer E9 fourth on SS2, exciting spectators with his flamboyant style in the process. With 17 R5 machines in the event, for a Group N to be so high up was a testament to Edwards' skill. When asked what he would have said if he had been told he would finish as

high up as he did, the answer was not suitable for print...

As the drivers awoke early for the start on Sunday, there was an air of certainty. With a lead gap totalling 17.2 seconds, surely Elfyn was safe on these stages? But underestimate a rapid Swede at your own peril. Stig Blomqvist's rivals will tell you that.

Indeed, in Pikes Peak Ahlin went fastest again, 8.6s quicker than Evans, trimming the lead to 8.6s overall, and the buzz around the service area was palpable. The home favourite was under pressure and we had a rally. Again, the DMACK tyres were struggling to match the prowess of the Pirellis in the tricky conditions, and sweeping the slushy snow off the road meant Evans was in a similar position to his French counterpart Sebastien Ogier in Mexico. Plenty of pace but too much road sweeping to do. Credit where it was due though, Ahlin was really on it. And boy did he deliver through SS4 Myherin.

The Swede was through and into the lead by 3.5s. The service park was on edge, surely Elfyn couldn't be beaten through his home forests? Ahlin had three fastest stage times to Evans' one. Another Welshman was flying; Cave

had a busy morning and was through into third passed Bogie and happy enough at service, although still learning the Michelin tyres he hasn't run for several years. The Fiesta's seat also wasn't ideal for the strapping driver, but that will be sorted for the next event.

In the first two stages of the morning, a number of contenders were lost, including Rhys Yates. The Chesterfield driver had impressed on the Cambrian rally earlier this year and was fifth fastest overall through SS2. A short spin cost him another top five stage time and then the notorious day-glo green machine was beached in SS4, ending his rally early as spectators weren't allowed to push him out.

Also on the retirement list was Neil Simpson. He only lasted 400 metres into the rally thanks to a pop-off valve failure on SS1. The Lancashire driver had been so positive before the event and it was a cruel end to proceedings for him and co-driver Elliott Edmondson.

Ahlin was buoyant in service, adding that, incredibly, he had turned the anti-lag system (ALS) off in his Fiesta to counteract the slippery conditions. He was happy to maintain

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Writtle Photographic



Furuseth won Spirit award

Greensmith is the reigning BRC Junior champion and kicked off 2016 in the same vein in his R2T

Greensmith battles to take fine Junior victory

Pre-event favourite and Drive DMACK Trophy driver Gus Greensmith – with co-driver Alex Gelsomino – rallied to victory on the Mid Wales Stages, but he was pushed hard by a surprise challenger.

Sindre Furuseth took the fight to Greensmith, the 22-year-old Norwegian touted as a rank outsider mainly down to his car, a Renault Twingo R2. The car's age led people to believe it would be obsolete against the others in the class, the Vauxhall Adam R2, Ford Fiesta R2T and Fiesta R2, but the Norwegian was on the pace from the word go with navigator Goril Undebakke.

Through the tricky night stages, Greensmith drew first blood in Hafren/Sweet Lamb as the Norwegian suffered from a misfire, but Furuseth went an incredible 11th quickest overall on SS2 to steal the overnight lead.

Wales Rally GB star Robert Duggan and Mattias Adielsson followed in the Vauxhall Junior Rally Team machines. Both

impressed with the new car but Duggan was struggling to find his confidence on the extremely slippery surface. He's still inexperienced on gravel and is looking forward to the Circuit of Ireland back on asphalt.

Greensmith was a touch downhearted not to be in the lead after the night stages, but a huge push on Sunday morning helped him earn the top spot once again to set up the decider after service. In Hafren/Sweet Lamb Greensmith pushed again and was over 13s quicker to cement his advantage. He held on through the last stage to take the win, although he'll only return for Carlisle before heading back to the Drive DMACK Trophy.

Furuseth held a comfortable second as one of the surprises of the rally in the plucky Twingo, and the youngster is certainly one to watch for the remainder of the year.

Adielsson – the first seeded junior – rounded out the podium spots after a coming-of-age drive.



The Swede was struggling in the slippery conditions and with the car in the first part of Sunday morning, but the Swede's huge smile had returned after "many" set-up changes improved the car – and his feeling in it – to claw back onto the podium.

Duggan was unfortunate as he picked up a puncture in SS5, in a rally he's hoping to forget. Nevertheless there are points on the board for him, although only fifth after MH Motorsport's Josh Cornwell and Dai Roberts leapfrogged the Irishman thanks to his puncture. Cornwell is one of the youngest juniors in the field and drove way beyond his years to seal fourth in the Fiesta R2, an underpowered model.

Scot Blair Brown rounded out the top six in his Ford Fiesta R2T with co-driver Richard Simmons.

his pace and attempt to hold the lead, but there would be no heroics. He wanted the win, but not at the cost of a DNF.

The first stage after service was SS5 Hafren/Sweet Lamb, the stage Evans had taken 17s out of Ahlin on the previous night. However, with most of the snow clear and the visibility back, Evans was missing two of the factors that gave him a real advantage the night before. So the resulting performance was excellent. Aided by a quick tyre compound change at service, Evans took 16.2s out of Ahlin to retake the lead, and that was that. Just to stamp his authority, Evans topped the final stage – SS6 – by 4.2s but the damage was already done as Elfyn proved a cut above. But by less than expected.

"I pushed very hard in Hafren, we had a few moments in there," explained Evans. "To have won the first two WRC2 rallies and now here is a great start to the year. I am really pleased to have won – the last event I won outright was in 2011, so it has been a long time coming."

Ahlin admitted to an air of inevitability in the DMACK driver's success: "I always want to win but Elfyn has been in a works car for

the last two years."

Cave cemented the podium spot with a strong drive on the final day. The Welshman has been in an R2 car for two years and only done two events in an R5 so was settling into the car well, despite a huge crash in testing at the Red Kite Stages where he rolled down into a ravine after a mechanical issue. Both he and co-driver James Morgan commented how good it was to be back in the car.

Scots Bogie and Thorburn rounded out the top five. Despite a clash while overtaking Cronin, Bogie brought the Skoda home to the finish. Thorburn had a solid rally, with only a couple of hairy moments and a spin, and the Peugeot worked well despite its reputation for unreliability.

Irishman Josh Moffett delivered an excellent sixth place as others around him suffered attrition or mistakes in the conditions. The reigning Irish Forest champion dealt with the conditions well and his R5 was in good shape ready for West Cork at the finish ramp. Edwards sealed seventh (see above), while Jonny Greer had a relatively uneventful rally to finish ahead of Cronin, who couldn't have had a more eventful rally if he'd tried. He's also off to West Cork. ■

STAGE WINNERS

SS1, Hafren/Sweet Lamb 1 (15.91 miles)
Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry
(Ford Fiesta R5) 16m19.2s

SS2, Pikes Peak/Myherin 1 (9.78 miles)
Fredrik Ahlin/Morton Erik Abrahamsen
(Ford Fiesta R5) 9m30.2s

SS3, Pikes Peak (8.86 miles)
Ahlin/Abrahamsen 9m40.0s

SS4, Myherin (9.79 miles)
Ahlin/Abrahamsen 8m51.2s

SS5, Hafren/Sweet Lamb 2 (15.91 miles)
Evans/Parry 15m57.0s

SS6, Myherin/Pikes Peak (7.81 miles)
Evans/Parry 7m35.0s

CLASS ROUND-UP

Matt Edwards only 'finished' his car on the Saturday morning of the rally, but the Lancer E9 campaigner wiped the floor with the BRC 2 competition. As well as seventh overall, the Welshman headed fellow countryman and second in class Roland Llewellyn by over five minutes, although the Lancer E10 crew suffered many issues, including a puncture over the course of the weekend.

Chris Harris/Brynmar Pierce were the victors in BRC 3 as the Toyota Motorsport name made a return to rallying with the GT86 CS-R3. A battery issue curtailed their running but *Top Gear's* Harris and Pierce were the only entry in class. They also scored maximum points having played their joker.

BRC 4 went the way of Tony Simpson after battling the lighter and more modern Fiesta R2s of Gee Atherton and Roger Plant. In his ST, Simpson finished ahead of Plant and behind Atherton but is the

only BRC-registered entry in the class.

Osiyan Pryce topped the National Rally Cup in the Mitsubishi Mirage, with a time that would have put him fifth on the overall BRC event had the car been homologated. The NRC is for cars with an MSA bluebook rather than FIA homologation, but Pryce's Spencer Sport Mirage is built to R5-spec and was proven against some of the other R5 cars on offer. Without a recce Pryce put in times good enough to compete with the leaders, in his first rally on wet mud since Rally GB in 2014.

It was a hat-trick of Davies at the top of the Sunday National B Sunday rally, with Dylan making the most of Welsh Championship leader Luke Francis' absence from the event to win in his Subaru Impreza.

Andy Davies (Subaru Impreza) and Tomas Davies (Fiesta R5) rounded out the top three.

RESULTS

British Rally Championship, round 1/7, Mid Wales Stages, March 5-6

POS	DRIVER/NAVIGATOR	CAR	TIME
1	Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry	Ford Fiesta R5	1h08m14.3s
2	Fredrik Ahlin/Morton Erik Abrahamsen	Fiesta R5	+17.1s
3	Tom Cave/James Morgan	Fiesta R5	+1m26.8s
4	David Bogie/Kevin Rae	Skoda Fabia R5	+1m42.8s
5	Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton	Peugeot 208 T16 R5	+2m43s
6	Josh Moffett/John Rowan	Fiesta R5	+3m24.5s
7	Matt Edwards/Will Rogers	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+3m46.5s
8	Jonathan Greer/Kirsty Riddick	Citroen DS 3 R5	+4m0.4s
9	Keith Cronin/Mikie Galvin	DS 3 R5	+4m41.5s
10	Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan	Fabia R5	+5m29.8s
11	Hugh Hunter/Andy Marchbank	Fiesta R5	+5m49.8s
12	Gus Greensmith/Alex Gelsomino	Fiesta R2T	+8m01.4s
13	Sindre Furuseth/Goril Undebakke	Renault Twingo R2	+8m13.3s
14	Mattias Adielsson/Andreas Johansson	Vauxhall Adam R2	+8m32.1s
15	Sam Moffett/Karl Atkinson	Fiesta R5	+8m41.3s
16	Roland Llewellyn/Jack Morton	Lancer E10	+8m57.4s
17	Max Vatanen/Jacques Renucci	Fiesta R5	+11m28s
18	Josh Cornwell/Dai Roberts	Fiesta R2	+12m21s
19	Robert Duggan/Ger Conway	Vauxhall Adam R2	+12m52.9s
20	Ollie Mellors/Ian Windress	Proton Satria Neo S2000	+14m53s

Class winners BRC 1: Evans/Parry; BRC 2: Edwards/Rogers; Junior BRC: Greensmith/Gelsomino; BRC 4: Tony Simpson/Ian Bevan (Fiesta ST); National Rally Cup: Osiyan Pryce/Dale Furniss (Mitsubishi Mirage); National B Rally: Dylan Davies/Llion Williams (Subaru Impreza).
Championship points BRC 1: 1 Evans/Parry, 50*; 2 Ahlin/Abrahamsen, 15; 3 Cave/Morgan, 10; 4 Bogie/Rae, 8; 5 Thorburn/Beaton, 6. BRC 2: 1 Edwards/Rogers, 25; 2 Llewellyn/Morton, 15; 3 Spencer Wilkinson/Glyn Thomas (Subaru Impreza), 10; no other points scorers. JBRC: 1 Furuseth/Undebakke, 30*; 2 Greensmith/Gelsomino, 25; 3 Cornwell/Roberts, 16*; 4 Adielsson/Johansson, 10; 5 Duggan/Conway, 6. BRC 3: 1 Harris, 50*; no other points scorers. BRC 4: 1 Simpson/Bevan, 25; no other points scorers; NRC 1 Pryce/Furniss, 50*; 2 Robert Blomberg/Lars Andersson (Lancer E5) 15; 3 Dan Shacklock/Rob Fagg (Peugeot 206), 10. *Joker played.



Pryce won the National Cup



Edwards was spectacular in the BRC 2 category

NEXT BRC RALLY: CIRCUIT OF IRELAND, APRIL 8-9



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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Just the start we needed

Things look promising for the British Rally Championship

For the relaunch of the British Rally Championship, the Mid Wales Stages couldn't have gone much better. Despite poor weather, a strong entry enjoyed a fine contest, and we even had a battle for the lead. OK, so Elfyn Evans might have had a tyre and running order disadvantage, but Fredrik Ahlin still put up encouraging resistance.

More drivers battling right at the sharp end would have made it even better, but there were quite a few who were learning new machines or (re)familiarising themselves with the conditions. And let's not forget, Evans is a podium finisher in the World Rally Championship, so he is always going to take some beating.

The number of different marques represented – five in the top eight – is also to be welcomed, particularly when one remembers only two (Citroen and Ford) finished on the podium all season in 2014.

Over in Mexico, we finally saw the true nonsense of the running order rules. Sebastien Ogier has given up moaning about them, but I won't just yet. To deliberately handicap the best car-driver combination for two days seems rather desperate to me, and I mean no disrespect to Jari-Matti Latvala. I've heard it argued that drivers of previous eras didn't complain and just got on with it, but – for the most part – margins at the front were bigger and events were longer, giving more scope for recovery.

Which brings me to another minor gripe. I think it's a shame Rally Mexico won't be running a repeat of the epic 50-mile stage next year. One of the appeals of world rallying has surely always been the variety, whether it be surface, nature of the event or mix of 'sprint'-style contests and enduros. Mexico brought a little bit of that and the WRC was better for it. Even if the organisers don't plan to repeat Guanajuato in 2017, I hope they came up with something similarly different and interesting.

● I think I write for all concerned when I say our thoughts are with Alan Henry's friends and family. I never met Alan, but his impact on the sport – and indeed this very title – is clear. He will be sorely missed.

Kevin Turner, Editor (Twitter: @KRT917)



LETTERS



Motorsport News, March 2

John Horton remembered

I have just heard the very, very sad news that John Horton has passed away after suffering a recent heart attack.

John was known by all my family (and probably 99.9 per cent of all rally drivers in the UK and around the world).

It was John who gave me my first break into the media business when we covered the Colway 1300 Championship. We have worked for him on Wales Rally GB for over 12 years.

He has stayed at my home and spent many hours in my motorhome chatting about life, and my son Daniel worked with him in the media office on the British Grand Prix.

We have always had the utmost respect for him as a professional and as a friend. Our deepest sympathies go out to all his family, his son Patrick and daughter Sarah. We are all devastated by this news.

Nick, Denise, Daniel and Nicola Nieroda
Conwy, Wales

Social media: think twice

Thank goodness the sport's governing body, the Motor Sports Association, is acting in a positive way regarding the negativity and sometimes nastiness that one often sees on motorsport social media sites and forums.

The majority of individuals who post these offensive and ignorant comments about drivers and race day affairs do not know the drivers personally and have never sat in a race car in their lives, yet think they are expert enough to pass judgement. How easy does it all look from your armchair?

The danger being once it's posted, it is out there for all to see and cannot be taken back.

I hope the MSA does take seriously cases of verbal abuse on social media, and more people take the view 'if you haven't got anything nice to say, don't say anything at all'.

Judith Jordan
(Andrew Jordan's mum)
Lichfield

F1's latest farce

Maybe I'm a bit late to the party, but the latest qualifying is a dance-athon lifted straight from the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing. Are we to be confronted by sequins and mildly revealing outfits?

Oh my. Perhaps there could also be a telephone vote to see who gets voted off the grid...?

Andrew Banks
Ringwood

YOUR PICS



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

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S
FAVOURITE OF
THE WEEK!



Jamie Pinchbeck got this picture of Wayne Boyd's new LMP3 ride during a Donington test



A beautiful Ligier shot, from Richard Cranston



Chris Payne got up close to this McLaren F1



Mike Farmer's Sunbeam photo



A classic Subaru Impreza shot, taken by Peter Atkins



Anthony Underwood's snap from Race Retro

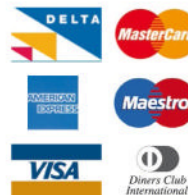
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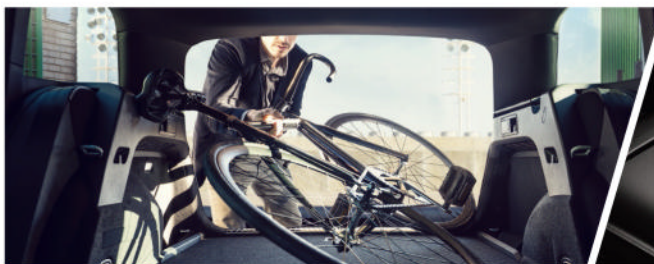


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