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EXCLUSIVE!

Returning racer to line up with tin-top legend Plato at Power Maxed Racing

JACKSON RETURNS TO FORM BTCC SUPERTEAM AT VAUXHALL



Jackson (left) will team up with Plato at Vauxhall BTCC team

By Matt James

British Touring Car Championship team Power Maxed Racing will field the most successful driver line-up in the category's history as returnee Mat Jackson joins Jason Plato in the Vauxhall squad in 2020.

Jackson, who has not raced in the BTCC since 2017 after a contractual dispute, will line up alongside double champion Plato for the 30-race campaign, which kicks off at Donington Park on March 28-29.

Jackson said: "This championship has always been my home, and it has been frustrating to be on the sidelines. But now I am back with one of the best teams on the grid. It certainly shares my ambition for success."

Full story, p2-3

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BIRD EXTENDS UNBEATEN MNVICTORY STREAK

FORD FOCUS MAN TOPS CIRCUIT RUNNERS AT CADWELL PARK P17



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Jackson's last full season was with Motorbase in 2017



Jackson will return to the championship after signing for Power Maxed Racing in a Vauxhall

PREVIEW: BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP READY FOR BLAST OFF

HEADLINE NEWS

JACKSON JOINS PLATO IN REVAMPED VAUXHALL TOURING CAR ATTACK

Most successful partnership on the tin-top grid ready for 2020 challenge

Photos: Power Maxed, Jakob Ebrey



Plato will be a central part of the PMR attack

By Matt James

Mat Jackson will make a sensational return to the British Touring Car Championship this season, lining up with Power Maxed Racing to form a superteam alongside double champion Jason Plato.

The pair, who were team-mates in an RML-run Chevrolet in 2009, will handle PMR's two-litre turbocharged Vauxhall Astras.

Jackson, a 31-time race winner, has not contested the championship since a contractual dispute between the factory Honda squad Team Dynamics and Motorbase Performance left him on the sidelines at the beginning of 2018.

Jackson said: "I have unfinished business in the British Touring Car Championship and it was critical for me to return with a top team, capable of mounting a consistent title challenge."

Between them, Plato and Jackson have a record of 128 BTCC victories, which will be more than any other line-up on the 2020 grid.

Jackson's back

Jackson has raced in the top class of the BTCC for 11 seasons and was runner-up in the competition in his second season in 2008, when he was driving a family-run Jacksons MSport BMW 320si.

He was due to race with Motorbase Performance in 2018 and had been confirmed as a driver with the Kent-based team, before an approach from Team Dynamics to replace the departing Gordon Shedden. A row meant that he was left without a drive and Dynamics signed Dan Cammish instead.

The Henley-in-Arden driver said that he had been approached by other teams to return to the tin-top scene but had held out until the right deal came along.

The 38-year-old said: "I may have been away from the series temporarily, but thoughts of winning the BTCC were never far away.

"I have received a number of offers during the last two years, but [Power Maxed Racing's team principal] Adam [Weaver] has worked tirelessly to make my return possible with PMR. The team continues to grow in stature, and I have no doubt that they are the team I need to be with, so when the opportunity came to join them and partner with Jason Plato again, I was not going to miss out."

Plato poised

The 2001 and 2010 champion Plato said that he was delighted to remain with Power Maxed Racing for a second season. He is chasing his 100th win in the category and currently stands on 97.

Plato finished seventh in the 2019 title chase and took his first overall race win for more than two seasons at the year's curtain-closer at Brands Hatch. Last season, he was partnered with Rob Collard. Collard's BTCC future is unclear at this point.

Plato, 52, said he was pleased to be reunited with Jackson, and also added that he thought that he would be able to reach his special landmark victory this year.

Plato said: "It has been a while since I was this excited for the start of the season. I genuinely love my team at PMR; they work unbelievably hard to provide me with the very best car, but also have a lot of fun doing it; it's a great place to be. Adam and [technical director] Martin [Broadhurst] have put a very special group of people together that are focused on winning the championship, whilst sensibly making sure they are also building a stable future in motorsport.

"This all helped me get my mojo back in 2019, and I want to reward them all with plenty more race wins. They will be the team I hit 100 wins with, I have no doubt.

"I am sorry to see Rob [Collard] leave, as last year was fun but, at the same time, I'm very happy about working with Mat again, and really look forward to seeing what we can achieve by working together."



Plato: win number 97 at Brands

Team buoyed

Power Maxed Racing is entering its fourth season with the Astra, which was a winner in its second attack when both Senna Proctor and Josh Cook took victories.

PMR, which runs with factory Vauxhall backing, finished fourth in the Manufacturers/ Constructors' points in 2017, and improved to third in 2018. That was a position it consolidated last term.

Team boss Weaver said that the new driver line-up made the effort of pulling the squad together worthwhile and said it showed how far PMR has come.

Weaver said: "There are very few people out there who truly know how hard this BTCC game is. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to do the job well; it's way past stressful, consistently makes me question my decision making and breaks me on a regular basis. However, this driver line-up alone makes it all worthwhile.

"It's obvious that this is statistically our best pairing to date, and with the engineering team making the car better each year, we certainly intend to be challenging for a championship win this year."

The Power Maxed team will enter with official manufacturer backing again this season. According to the team, Vauxhall is set to increase its support of the team in 2020. More details of the strengthened partnership will be revealed in the coming weeks.

THREE OF THE BEST

Mat Jackson has more wins in the BTCC – currently at 31 – than any other driver who has not claimed the overall crown. Here is a summary of his stand-out seasons:

2008

Team: Jacksons MSport
Car: BMW 320si
Wins: 5
Championship position: 2nd

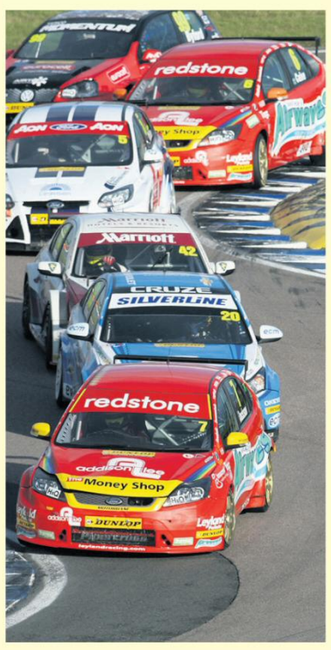
With backing as the BMW Dealer Team UK, Jackson entered his second season in the top flight again at the wheel of the family-run BMW 320si. Following two wins in 2007, he stepped up a gear and was a permanent threat at the front. Although Fabrizio Giovanardi (Vauxhall) eventually won the title by a comfortable margin at Brands Hatch's finale, a double win in Kent vaulted Jackson to second in the points.



2011

Team: Motorbase Performance
Car: Ford Focus ST
Wins: 4
Championship position: 4th

Motorbase Performance kept hold of its Airwaves backing, but switched from the rear-wheel-drive BMW 320si to the newly-built Ford Focus ST for Jackson and Liam Griffin. The team got on top of the car quickly and Jackson was a winner in the second meeting of the season at Donington Park. He went on to take three other wins alongside six podiums, which meant he scored enough to top a tie for fourth in the standings.



2016

Team: Motorbase Performance
Car: Ford Focus ST
Wins: 5
Championship position: 3rd

After a part-season in 2015 with the new Ford EcoBoost engine in the front-wheel-drive Focus, which had netted four wins, hopes were high for 2016. Jackson collected a single victory in five meetings across the season, demonstrating the strength of the chassis on the variety of circuits. Jackson was in the heart of the title fight but lost out at the final meeting to eventual champion Gordon Shedden (Honda) and Sam Tordoff (BMW).



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RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

Williams's men

The Williams Formula 1 team has added ex-Red Bull and Renault staffers in key technical roles for the 2020 season. The outfit has announced the appointments of David Worner and Jonathan Carter as it continues to restructure its technical department in the wake of a series of high-profile departures over the past two seasons. This included the likes of Dirk de Beer and Ed Wood, and culminated in the exit of tech chief Paddy Lowe during the team's disastrous 2019 season. Worner will be named as chief designer and Carter will be his deputy.

Renault's David

Runaway 2019 French Formula 4 champion Hadrien David has been signed to a Renault Formula 1 junior deal for '20. David will drive for Formula Renault Eurocup frontrunner MP Motorsport for what will be his second season of car racing. The 15-year-old trains and takes part in sim racing with Renault F1 driver Esteban Ocon, and David is now part of the Renault Sport Academy that develops the manufacturer's F1 juniors. David took eight wins, six further podiums, 10 pole positions and seven fastest laps in last season's French F4 Championship.

The great Gasly

Pierre Gasly has what it takes to win a place back at Red Bull and become "great" again in F1, according to the team's motorsport advisor Helmut Marko. Gasly started 2019 at the senior Red Bull team, but was demoted to Toro Rosso after a disappointing first half of the campaign. Once back at Toro Rosso, Gasly managed five points finishes from nine grands prix, which included a second-place finish at the Brazilian Grand Prix. "It was a blossoming that was incredible," Marko said. "If I would say now that I had expected this, it would be a complete lie. I think he will have learned his lessons from these six months at Red Bull. I think that he can become a great man in the future."

Boullier's role

Former McLaren and Lotus Formula 1 team boss Eric Boullier has increased his involvement with the French Grand Prix by becoming the event's managing director. Boullier originally joined the organising team last February, assuming the title of strategic sports and operational advisor and ambassador. His new role was announced at the same time as an updated "mobility plan", intended to address access issues at Paul Ricard, was outlined.

RACING POINT TAKES ON ASTON MARTIN IDENTITY

Lance Stroll's father is behind a consortium that has bought in to the iconic British brand

Photos: LAT

By Jonathan Noble

Racing Point is to become the Aston Martin Formula 1 team from 2021 as part of a new investment deal between the British manufacturer and Lawrence Stroll.

Following an Aston Martin board meeting on Thursday night, it was confirmed on Friday morning last week that a consortium led by Stroll has bought a 16.7% stake in the company for £182 million.

In filings detailing the investment that were lodged with the London Stock Exchange on Friday morning, it was made clear that an 'enhanced' F1 involvement for Aston Martin was viewed as essential.

The documents said that as part of this "Aston Martin Lagonda has entered into a legally binding termsheet under which the Racing Point F1 team will become the Aston Martin F1 works team with effect from the 2021 season".

The text continued: "This agreement is for a 10-year initial term and Aston Martin Lagonda will receive an economic interest in the team."

The agreement will include Aston Martin sponsorship from 2021, which will continue for a period of four years and can be extended subject to certain conditions.

Before the rebranding of Racing Point, Aston Martin will see out its title sponsorship with Red Bull until the end of this season, when that deal will terminate.

Red Bull confirmed in a separate statement that it had agreed to release Aston Martin from its F1 exclusivity clause, but it was also confirmed that a separate deal between the two companies involving the Valkyrie hypercar will continue until the cars are delivered.



Aston Martin name will be in F1 in 2021

Racing Point has Sergio Perez under a long-term contract, with Stroll's son Lance also set to remain at the outfit for the foreseeable future.

The team also has a long-term deal in place to run Mercedes customer engines, and there have been suggestions it could forge closer technical ties with the German manufacturer in the future.

While Stroll's investment comes off the back of some tough trading conditions for Aston Martin, the parties involved are optimistic about the deal they have put together.

Stroll said: "I, and my partners, firmly believe that Aston Martin is one of the great global luxury car brands.

"I believe that this combination of capital and my experience of both the motor industry and building highly successful global brands will mean that, over time, we fulfil Aston Martin Lagonda's potential."

Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer said: "Mr Stroll brings strong and proven expertise in both automotive and luxury brands more widely which we believe will be of significant benefit to Aston Martin Lagonda.

"We have also announced plans to leverage a new motorsport collaboration with Racing Point to enhance the execution of the plan.

"I would like to thank Red Bull Racing, who we will continue to sponsor this year, for their partnership and support in us being able to say this today."

Former team owner Vijay Mallya says he is "delighted" the outfit will have Aston Martin support from 2021.

He also revealed he had tried unsuccessfully to secure sponsorship from Aston Martin in late 2015, with the backing eventually going to Red Bull instead.


Alonso has spotted "weakness" in Hamilton

ALONSO THINKS LEWIS STILL HAS FLAWS

Fernando Alonso feels Lewis Hamilton has "weak points" in Formula 1 "that have not been stressed yet", as the double world champion eyes a grand prix racing return in 2021.

In an exclusive interview with *F1 Racing*, Alonso – Hamilton's team-mate at McLaren in 2007 – was asked to assess his former rival's recent achievements.

"If he cannot win, he's a very close second – not 20 seconds further back, which is what happens a little bit with Valtteri [Bottas, Hamilton's current team-mate]," said Alonso, who has expressed interest in returning to F1 in 2021 if new rules intended to improve the racing and spread success across the grid succeed.

"A weekend when the car is not as competitive, Bottas is fifth or sixth or a minute behind – but Lewis is not. He's made a step forward, he is more competitive, more prepared.

"He still has some weak points that have not been stressed yet – no-one is pressing that button, that weakness."

When asked to elaborate on Hamilton's suspected weakness, Alonso said: "If you study Lewis's season there is always a common trend.

"He starts the year slowly and no-one takes the benefit of that. We all get excited it will be the year of Bottas, but it's not.

"It would be nice to compete against him [Lewis] in a proper fight. Maybe his weak points are not real and everything is calculated but it would be nice to discover."

Alonso also says he does not think age will be a problem if he returns to F1 in 2021, by which point he will be 39 years old.

Hamilton quashes talk of disquiet at Mercedes

Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes have dismissed rumours over contract talks and the manufacturer's future in Formula 1.

A number of reports since the start of the year have suggested Mercedes' driver line-up and future may not be secure.

Stories in recent days have claimed that talks between Hamilton and Mercedes over a new contract had stalled over pay, with the inference being that it could prompt him to consider a Ferrari switch for 2021.

However, posting on Instagram, Hamilton rubbished talk of a clash over contracts, and said discussions had not even started with Mercedes boss Toto Wolff.

"FYI Toto and I have not even spoken about contract yet," he said. "Nothing is being negotiated currently, papers making up stories."

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2020 PAGE 20



'Doubts over Rally Sweden'
Rally News, p12



Photos: LAT



Formula E may not race in China during 2019-20 season

CHINESE FE RACE POSTPONED

Sanya contest in March plunged into doubt after outbreak of deadly coronavirus in the country

By Alex Kalinauckas

The 2020 Sanya Formula E race has been officially postponed as a result of China's coronavirus outbreak.

The race, which had been set to take place on March 21, was plunged into doubt by the developing situation in recent weeks – particularly when the World Health Organisation declared it a public health emergency.

FE has not proposed an alternative date for the race on Hainan Island at this stage, as it is taking the "appropriate amount of time to study the viability of potential alternative dates should the situation improve", per a statement announcing the postponement.

The full statement reads: "In view of the continued spread of coronavirus and after close consultation with the relevant departments of Hainan Province and Sanya Municipal Government, Formula E – together with the FIA, the Federation of Automobile and Motorcycle Sports of People's Republic of China (CAMF), and regional partner Enova Holdings – have jointly decided not to race in Sanya on the scheduled date of March 21, 2020.

"Given the current growing health concerns and with the World Health Organisation declaring the coronavirus an international emergency, Formula E has taken the necessary measures to ensure the health and safety of its travelling staff, championship participants and spectators, which remains of paramount importance.

"We are working closely with our regional partner and the local authorities in Hainan Province and Sanya Municipal Government, to continue monitoring the situation as it develops.

"All parties will take the appropriate amount of time to study the viability of potential alternative dates should the situation improve."

It is understood that the possibility of cancelling the Sanya race altogether remains, if the coronavirus situation does not improve.

If that happens, FE is likely to add an extra race to one of its European rounds, or – more likely – turn the New York event in July into a double-header.

It is not yet known what the Sanya race being postponed and the continuing coronavirus situation will mean for Formula 1's Chinese Grand Prix, which is scheduled to take place on April 19.

QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

Former IndyCar and NASCAR racer John Andretti has died at the age of 56 after a long battle with colon cancer. Andretti revealed three years ago that he was battling stage four colon cancer and, while a strong course of chemotherapy that year led to him being given the all-clear, it returned in spring 2018. The son of Mario Andretti's twin brother Aldo, John initially followed the family's path in open-wheel racing, while retaining his uncle Mario's penchant for diversity. Andretti won the IMSA sportscar race at Watkins Glen in 1986 driving a March-BMW M12 with Davy Jones, and clinched victory at the Daytona 24 Hours in 1989, sharing a Porsche 962 with Bob Wollek and Derek Bell. In Indycars, Andretti won the inaugural CART Indycar race at Surfers Paradise in 1991 driving for Jim Hall's team, before spending the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s focused on NASCAR… **One-time IndyCar champion and 2013 Indianapolis 500 winner Tony Kanaan will contest a five-round programme with AJ Foyt Racing in 2020, which will be his last season in the series. Kanaan will drive Foyt's #14 car at all five oval events, four of which he has won previously…** Red Bull has signed 14-year-old American driver Jak Crawford to its Formula 1 junior programme, and has also revealed where its other proteges will race in 2020. Crawford finished seventh in the USF2000 championship last year, and has received Red Bull backing for a move to Europe. He will join Van Amersfoort Racing in German and Italian F4 for 2020. Last year's Toyota Racing Series champion Liam Lawson has kept his Red Bull status and moves from MP Motorsport to the Hitech Grand Prix FIA F3 squad and will be joined there by ex-British F4 racer Dennis Hauger, who won the Italian F4 Championship last year… **Renault has determined its Formula 1 junior drivers' 2020 programmes, with top Formula 2 rookie Guanyu Zhou remaining at Virtuosi Racing and Christian Lundgaard graduating with ART Grand Prix. Zhou scored a pole position and set an F2 track record at Silverstone in the process, while taking five podiums on his way to seventh in his first season as a Renault junior.** **Outside of F2, Max Fewtrell is another driver remaining part of the Renault Sport Academy, but switches from ART to Hitech Grand Prix for another season of FIA F3 in 2020…** Audi has confirmed that it will field an unchanged factory line-up for a third successive DTM season in 2020. Reigning champion Rene Rast will remain at Team Rosberg alongside Jamie Green, while Loic Duval and Mike Rockenfeller will again be paired at Team Phoenix. Abt Sportsline has likewise retained both Robin Frijns and Nico Muller for 2020.

Puncture fails to stop first Bentley Bathurst 12 Hour win

Jules Gounon survived a late puncture to take a first Bathurst 12 Hour win for Bentley amid an ongoing threat of rain, alongside Maxime Soulet and Jordan Pepper.

The #7 Continental was in the fight all afternoon, leading at both the race's half and three-quarter marks during a see-sawing battle with the #999 GruppeM Mercedes.

It ultimately came down to the final round of stops, with Gounon lucky to stay in the fight after suffering a puncture down the Conrod Straight before taking a lead he would hold until the end.



Gounon, Soulet and Pepper took win

The Raffaele Marciello/Maximilian Buhk/Felipe Fraga Mercedes then had a late tyre drama of its own when a puncture inside the final 10 minutes led to an unscheduled stop.

Marciello briefly dropped to third before fighting back to second on the penultimate lap, but was then dumped to sixth after the race thanks to a 30-second penalty for not switching the car off while fitting a new tyre.

That promoted the Tom Blomqvist/Alvaro Parente/Ben Barnicoat McLaren from third to second, and the #888 Mercedes of Shane van Gisbergen, Jamie Whincup and Maximilian Goetz to third.

Pro-Am honours went to the #4 Grove Racing Porsche driven by Ben Barker, Stephen Grove and Brenton Grove, which finished 10th.

Cadillac could return to Le Mans 24 Hours

Taking Cadillac back to the Le Mans 24 Hours has been described by Wayne Taylor as "unfinished business" after his team's second consecutive Daytona 24 Hours victory last month.

He outlined hopes of returning to the French enduro with Cadillac in the wake of Wayne Taylor Racing's domination of the IMSA SportsCar Championship opener and the rules accord between the North American series and Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest.

The tie-up will allow the next generation of IMSA prototypes to race in the World Endurance Championship alongside LM Hypercars under the LMDh banner from the start of the 2021-22 season.

"I've always said that Le Mans is unfinished business for myself and Cadillac," said Taylor, who was a partner in the 3GR operation that masterminded the marque's assault on the race in 2001 and 2002.



Rule convergence from ACO and IMSA is popular

"The chance to go to Le Mans and win overall is inspiring. With the new discussions between IMSA and the ACO, I can't think of anything that is more exciting than me, Max [Angelelli, WTR co-owner] and this team to go with Cadillac and try to win Le Mans."

But he warned that the costs of competing at Le Mans, especially if it is part of a full campaign on the WEC, would likely be prohibitive for a non-factory team like his.

"I am a bit wary because all the talk is about manufacturers – is there a place for a team like ours?" he said.

"It's hard enough to find $6 million for an IMSA programme, so it's difficult to imagine finding $15-20 million to do the WEC.

"There has got to be an understanding that an independent team can't write a cheque for that kind of money."

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

MR-G stays in US

Northern Irish Formula Ford 1600 champion Matt Round-Garrido is to return to USF2000 in 2020 with reigning teams' champion Pabst Racing. The 19-year-old graduated from FF1600 to compete in USF2000 last year with Jay Howard Driver Development then BN Racing. He subsequently stepped up to Indy Pro 2000 for 2019's final two meetings. "Ultimately my goal is to win the championship and get the scholarship to move up to Indy Pro 2000 for 2021," Round-Garrido said. Team owner Augie Pabst added: "When we tested Matt in October, it was immediately clear that he was a driver we wanted."

Sturges to Britcar

Castle Combe GT champion Jamie Sturges will move into the new Britcar Trophy championship in his SEAT Leon Eurocup. Sturges has previously raced in a range of different categories, including the Classic Sports Car Club's New Millennium and 750 Motor Club's Roadsports, but believes Britcar provides him with the "opportunity to race at a higher level in a more prestigious championship".

Steed stays in GT5

Ginetta GT5 Challenge racer Josh Steed plans to contest a full season of the series this year after missing the opening 2019 events having suffered an arm injury. He took his maiden category podium in the season finale at Donington Park. The Mutation Motorsport driver said: "Now that we know what it takes to be at the front, we're hoping for a very successful 2020. Me and the team have been doing a lot behind the scenes throughout the winter to make sure I have the best possible chance of success this year."

BUSHELL TAKEN ILL IN FRANCE

BTCC racer is recovering in cardiac intensive care unit

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins

By Matt Kew

British Touring Car Championship driver Mike Bushell is recovering in a cardiac intensive care unit in Chambery, France after falling ill while on a skiing holiday.

Bushell, 30, was found to be suffering from myocarditis – an inflammation of the heart muscle. It is more often associated with sudden death in young athletes as it can remain a symptomless disease.

This is the second time that double Renault UK Clio Cup champion Bushell has fallen ill with the condition, the first being five years ago before the start of the 2015 season.

After a two-day stint in intensive care, Bushell said: "Lightning strikes twice unfortunately. It was my first ever time skiing; the second day had gone brilliantly with some good runs down red routes and a little off-piste exploration.

"All the exertion of the day caused me to rapidly deteriorate towards the end of the day and during the early hours of Wednesday morning."



Team Hard driver may not be fit for season-opener

Bushell is set to race for Team Hard in 2020 with one of its newly-built Volkswagen CCs. He added that his recovery is going to take some time, saying: "I know all too well the effects that this illness has on the heart.

"I have to follow strict instructions from a cardiologist in building back my activity level.

"As it stands, making round one of the BTCC at Donington Park [March 28-29] this year is going to be a challenge – but certainly not one that I will shy away from."

Rushforth's squad to Fiesta Junior

Ginetta Junior squad Alastair Rushforth Motorsport will expand into the Fiesta Junior series this year.

The team will run karting graduate Will Orton in the Fiesta category, which is set to feature significantly larger grids this season after an investment in the series by the organising British Racing and Sports Car Club has encouraged more entries.

Orton tested with the squad towards the end of last year and team boss Rushforth has past experience of working in the category.

"The Ortons knew they wanted to go into circuit racing but weren't 100% sure which route to go," Rushforth said. "Everybody wants to go to Ginetta Junior because of the package it's on and it's a cracking championship getting massive coverage but that coverage and being in that playground comes with a price tag.

"Their thought process was to look at Saxos and Fiesta Junior to do a year in that for his first year in cars as it's a little bit more low-key and the budget is less.

"The Ortons bought a car and there's only one round that clashes with Ginetta Junior so it made sense for us to run Will in that. As a team, we can now cater for two of the three options for 14- to 17-year-olds and it's good for us to have a bit of diversity."



Butcher made his BTCC debut with Motorbase in 2017

Independents champion Butcher switches to Motorbase for 2020

Reigning Independents' Trophy champion Rory Butcher will return to the British Touring Car Championship grid this season at the wheel of a Motorbase Performance Ford Focus.

The 32-year-old Scot took fifth in the overall standings and claimed three overall wins and six podiums on his way to the privateers' trophy last year. He also lifted the Jack Sears Trophy for drivers who had not had a podium at the start of the season.

Butcher, the brother-in-law of three-time champion Gordon Shedden, began his BTCC career with Motorbase in 2017 in a Ford Focus.

Butcher said: "David Bartrum and Motorbase launched me on my British Touring Car journey, and it feels like 'coming home' to go back to the team. There are some very exciting plans for the 2020 season and to be in on the ground floor of those developments really motivates me.

"I have tasted glory in the Independents' Trophy, which was a huge achievement, but my sights are set higher. I want more wins, and the overall championship is my aim.

"I know that I might not have the touring car experience of some of the guys out there but I am working relentlessly to absorb all the information I can and push myself, and Motorbase, forward to go for the biggest prizes we can reach."

Motorbase will enter its 10th season with the Focus and Butcher will line up alongside Ollie Jackson.

Goodyear creates new programme guiding racers up the ranks

Goodyear has created a new driver development programme to take racers from karting up to the British Touring Car Championship.

The tyre manufacturer has partnered up with the Junior Saloon Car Championship and Mini Challenge to create the driver scheme. There will be a ladder of progression through the series as the winner of the JSCC title will get a free test in a Cooper class Mini Challenge machine along with free tyres in the series.

Goodyear event manager Mickey Butler explained: "We are proud to build a ladder into the BTCC through Goodyear's support of the Mini Challenge and Dunlop's investment in the teenage racers of the JSCC.

"By building a bridge from one of the UK's strongest junior series into the UK's highest profile one-make touring car feeder series, we are supporting young talent in their goal of getting to the pinnacle of British racing, racing on the touring car weekends in either the Mini Challenge or BTCC."

JSCC coordinator Dave Beecroft added: "JSCC has been going from strength to strength, year on year and it's exciting to be able to offer this opportunity to our junior drivers.

"The Mini Challenge is a great championship to progress to after JSCC and it's brilliant to be a part of this development programme to aid young drivers to progress all the way through to theBTCC."



Junior Saloon Cars is the first rung on the Goodyear ladder

Ginetta to hold factory driver shootout

British sportscar manufacturer Ginetta has announced plans to stage a shootout for the chance to join its factory roster as a development driver in 2021.

Entry to the shootout, which will take place at the end of the 2020 season, will be made by invitation to drivers competing in any of Ginetta's single-make series, or racing in a Ginetta in a worldwide category.
The top three drivers in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup will be guaranteed a space.

The winner will earn a salary for development work and be given a "supported season's drive" with a Ginetta customer team in 2021.

The Yorkshire-based company currently has Mike Simpson and Charlie Robertson on its books, and both race the works-entered G60-LT-P1 LMP1 prototype in the World Endurance Championship's top division.

FOSTER STEPS UP TO BRDC BRITISH F3

F4 frontrunner targets title bid in his second season of single-seater competition

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Foster (inset) will stay with Double R

By Stephen Lickorish

British Formula 4 frontrunner Louis Foster will graduate to BRDC British F3 this year, remaining with the Double R squad.

The 2018 Ginetta Junior runner-up was on the pace from the start as he switched to single-seaters last year, heading the F4 standings in the early part of the season.

He struggled to maintain that form during the middle stages of the campaign and finished third in the points after taking six wins.

Foster was one of the unsuccessful finalists for the Porsche GB Junior shootout at the end of last year but has decided that continuing up the single-seater ladder is his best option.

"I think it is probably the best step for us right now in terms of budget and age," he explained. "We didn't really see the point in doing another year in F4 – there's always more to learn, but not enough that required another year.

"We had a few tests in the F3 car, I've done five days so far. The first day was awesome at Silverstone. It's a really, really fast car. I think it's more of a step to F3 from F4 than F4 from Ginetta Junior, just because of the higher power and downforce.

"The aim this year is to win the championship. The last two years I've been so close but I think this year we're going to be giving it our all. Kiern [Jewiss, 2018 F4 champion and F3 race winner] is going to be quick at the start but we will look to pull back in and grab some points off him. It's a tough grid and a lot of people are coming back for a second year."

Foster admits that continuing to progress in European single-seaters beyond British F3 is not a realistic option as "budgets go through the roof". But he is looking at a potential move to American single-seaters or GT racing in Europe longer-term.

"If you do single-seaters, you leave options open," he added.



Barbados racer won F4 title last year

British F4 champion Maloney switches to Euroformula Open with Carlin

British Formula 4 champion Zane Maloney will graduate to the Euroformula Open series for this season.

The Barbados-born racer took the F4 title in his maiden season of single-seater racing last year and will now graduate to Euroformula, remaining with the Carlin squad. He had also tested Formula Renault Eurocup machinery before opting to join Euroformula, which will feature the new Dallara 320 car in 2020.

"It feels great to continue the relationship with Carlin," said Maloney. "Last year was amazing and I hope to build on this momentum to perform strongly in Euroformula. I have been working really hard in the off-season with the team and my trainer."

Team boss Trevor Carlin added: "He is an incredibly talented driver, as his Formula 4 results prove, and a hard worker within the Carlin team.

"We have no doubt that Zane will be an asset to the team and will be one to watch from the very start of the Euroformula Open season – we can't wait to see what he can achieve this year."

Connor and Juffali to continue in F4 for a second campaign this year

British Formula 4 drivers Alex Connor and Reema Juffali will remain in the series this season.

Connor was too young to contest the opening races at Brands Hatch and took a best result of third during the season. He will now complete a full campaign with Arden this year having taken his maiden car racing win in the UAE F4 series at last year's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

"I learnt so much last year about the car, the tracks and the racing and now, after good off-season testing and fitness programmes, I'll be pushing hard," said Connor.

Juffali, the first female Saudi Arabian racing driver, will also stay with Double R for a second year. She has raced in the Jaguar I-PACE eTrophy and UAE F4 during the winter.

Series organisers have confirmed that the prize Formula Renault Eurocup test for the F4 champion will remain in place for this year.



Arden racer Connor won Abu Dhabi GP-supporting F4 race

Howard won't race full-time in British GT

Double British GT champion Andrew Howard says he "cannot see" himself entering the series again as a driver, but has left the door open to contesting one-off races in the future.

The 56-year-old patron of Beechdean AMR has been a regular in the championship since 2006, and won titles alongside Jonny Adam in 2013 and 2015.

But Howard, who won the 2016 European Le Mans Series GTE crown, has decided to focus his efforts on Europe instead and signed Valentin Hasse-Clot and Alex Toth-Jones to drive Beechdean's Aston Martin Vantage British GT3 entry.

"Until the foreseeable future I cannot see me entering the British championship," Howard said. "I think the days of the true Am having an opportunity of winning it have gone, and I'm not complaining at that, it's just the way it is. The best way of winning British going forward is as a Silver-Silver pairing and I would like to be the first team to outright win British GT as a genuine Silver-Silver pairing."

Howard added Beechdean will not be returning to the second-tier GT4 category this year.



New Beechdean GT3 line-up

Century to slim down to run one GT3 BMW

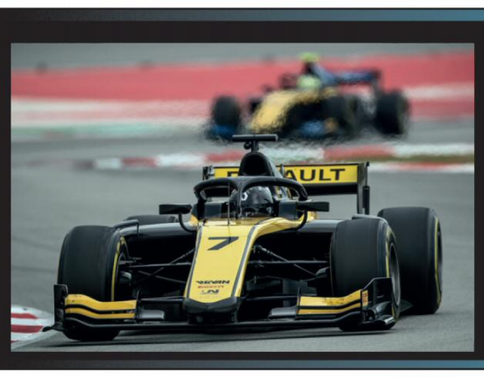
Century Motorsport is set to downsize to a single BMW M6 GT3 in British GT this season, but team boss Nathan Freke says he will still enter two cars in GT4.

The 2018 GT4 title-winning outfit has put the M6 raced by Dominic Paul and Ben Green up for sale after a challenging return to GT3 last season learning the nuances of the M6, which was competing in the series for the first time. But, after making a set-up breakthrough at Spa, Century ended the year with two podium finishes at Brands Hatch and Donington with all-Silver pairing Angus Fender and Jack Mitchell.

Beechdean AMR and RAM Racing have already confirmed Silver-graded pairings for GT3, and Freke told MN he was looking to follow a similar path.

"The potential is there and I think a Silver-Silver partnership would be competitive," he said. "We've got a quick Silver driver and we're just looking for a good partner for him."

Century has previously announced Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke and Ben Hurst in its first M4 GT4 entry.



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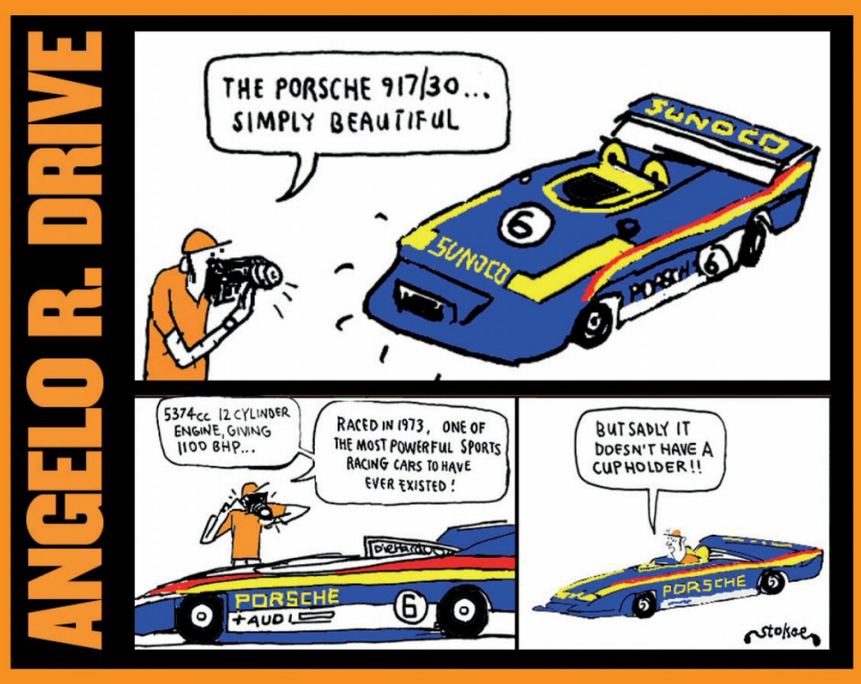
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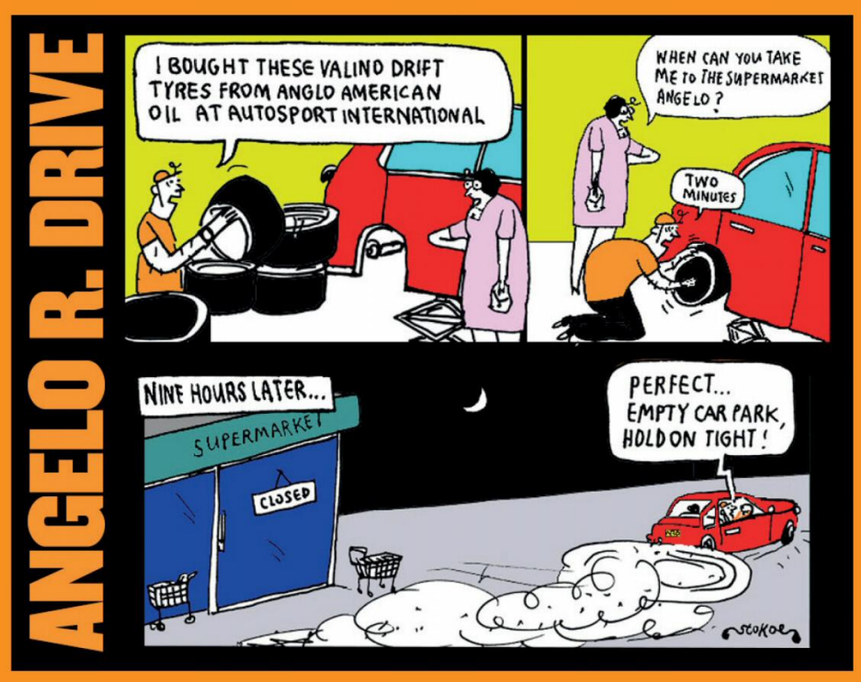
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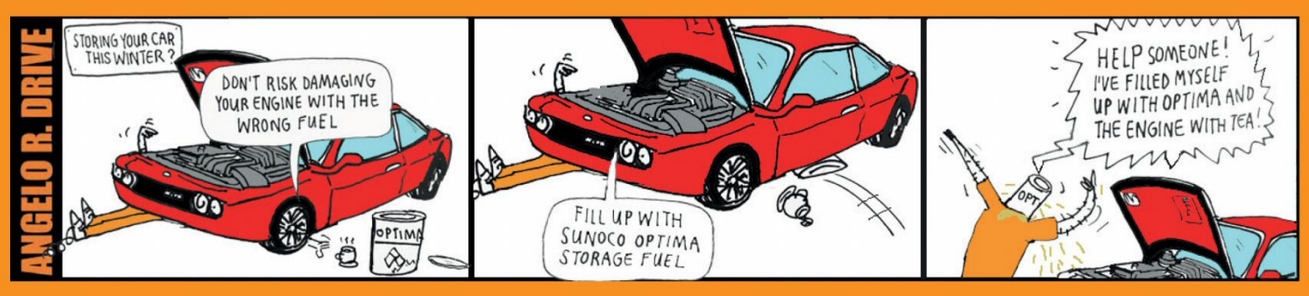


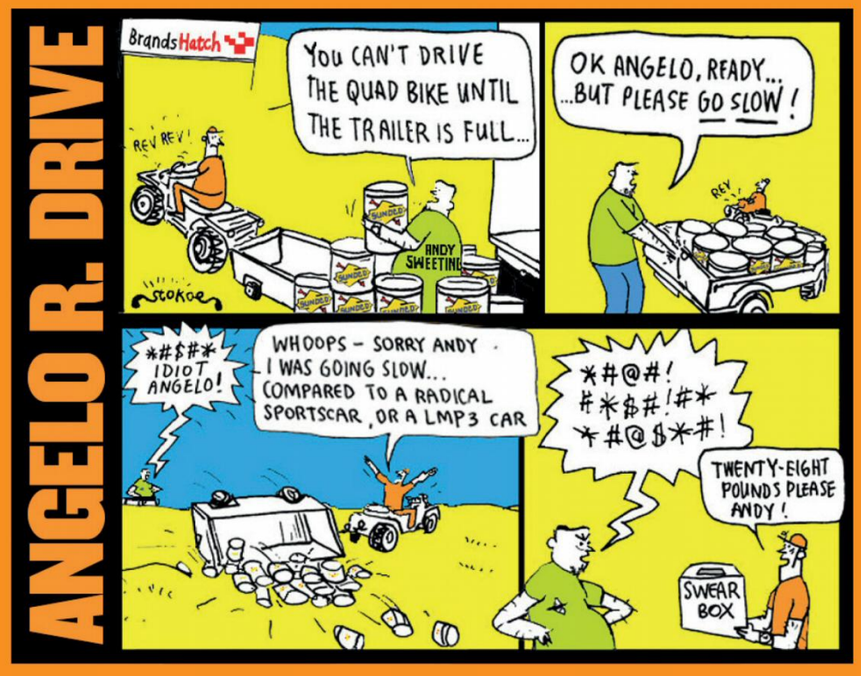












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RACING NEWS

Photos: Steve Jones, Kerry Dunlop



Paddock Promotions plans to run two cars

PLOWMAN AND FLETCHER SET UP OWN MX-5 TEAM

British GT4 Pro-Am champions create squad that will compete in MX-5 Supercup this year

By James Newbold

British GT4 Pro-Am champions Martin Plowman and Kelvin Fletcher have set up a team that will contest the Mazda MX-5 Supercup.

The team will be run under the Paddock Promotions Motorsport banner with Will Killick, the step-son of Imagine Cruising owner Robin Deller who sponsors Plowman and Fletcher, the first confirmed driver after a successful test at Anglesey.

Deller could drive a second car, while Plowman says he would be open to adding a third but stressed the team would look to "walk before we can run" in its first year.

Plowman, who has an online motorsport engineering degree from the National Motorsport Academy, said he had long planned to set up his own team after finishing racing, but was surprised at how quickly the programme came together.

"I had no real plan to start a team even as late as mid-November," he said. "The catalyst for it was Robin really got the racing bug and challenged me and Kelvin with the goal of setting out a roadmap for them."

Plowman said he chose the MX-5 series as a pathway for Killick into GT racing as it costs around one fifth of a GT4 season.

"My plan was to do as much mileage as possible for the least amount of money, so you would accelerate the learning curve for both of them," he said.

Plowman and Fletcher will graduate to GT3 in British GT this year in a JRM-run Bentley, and Plowman added that he is not concerned about combining driving with team management.

"I've got the bandwidth in me to still be racing full-time and managing the team as well," he said. "My job is going to be to put the right people in place so that the team is self-sufficient whether I'm there or not, in the event that there are clashes with British GT."



Wylie will drive for In2Racing after late 2019 appearances

Hanafin and Wylie among the drivers to sign up to Porsche Carrera Cup

Ginetta Junior frontrunner Lorcan Hanafin and 2017 Britcar champion Ross Wylie head a host of drivers to sign up to race in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season.

Hanafin finished fourth in the Ginetta Junior standings last year after taking two wins and was selected as a Porsche GB Junior finalist but lost out to Harry King in the shootout to secure Porsche backing.

However, he will still compete in the series and will drive for the JTR squad that powered Dan Harper to last season's title. Jamie Orton and Am racer Adam Knight will continue at JTR alongside Hanafin.

Wylie will also be on the grid this year after joining In2Racing. He made his return to the series at Silverstone last season and took a podium but will now be back for a full campaign in 2020.

"I am not there to make up the numbers and want to give it a good crack," said Wylie, who thanked his former Britcar co-driver David Mason for sponsoring him via the racer's MacConnal-Mason Gallery.

"I'm also under no illusion that the series is, without doubt, the most competitive one-make series around and is arguably the toughest championship I have ever contested."

Another driver to confirm they will be on the grid is British GT4 racer Mark Kimber. The 18-year-old, who contested his first season of car racing in a Century BMW M4 GT4 last year, will drive for the Brookspeed squad.

Lydden Hill finally secures the go-ahead to improve circuit facilities

Lydden Hill circuit has finally been given the go-ahead for a £5.5 milllion scheme to improve its facilities, after more than five years of protracted talks with its local planning committee.

The plan allows for the demolition of the existing offices in the paddock, to be replaced by a much larger VIP pavilion, which will include a hospitality area with a viewing balcony, a press room, medical facilities and scrutineering bay.

The viability of the circuit should be improved by the granting of many more "quiet" days to include car shows, cycle racing and driver tuition in silenced road cars. The existing limit of 52 racing days per year remains unchanged.

The previous plans to build 14 engineering units and a larger camp site, which proved a stumbling block in the past, were dropped from this application.

When the planning committee met at Dover District Council offices last week, the chamber was packed to capacity and many Lydden supporters had to be accommodated in an adjoining room equipped with an audio link.

After more than two hours of debate, councillors voted five-two in favour of the plans.

Pat Doran, the former British rallycross champion who leads the consortium that owns the circuit, said: "We worked very hard for this. We see this as the way forward for the circuit. Now the future is much more certain, otherwise we would have been on a downhill trajectory."



Existing paddock offices will be replaced by VIP pavilion

Work to begin on new Pembrey pit garages

Work to build a new pit garage complex at Pembrey will begin in the next few weeks.

The Welsh venue will feature a new building that will contain 12 double garages and these will be located next to the circuit's race control tower. There will be a large paddock space behind them.

The construction work at the circuit is due to be completed in time for the start of Pembrey's 30th anniversary season. It follows other improvements at the track in recent years, including the creation of a new circuit layout and improved spectator banking.

There will be four circuit racing events at Pembrey this year, including the popular British Truck Racing Championship and the return of the Historic Sports Car Club.

"With a new garage complex and some of the marquee events we have, I'm confident that 2020 is going to be a special year for the venue and I'm looking forward to welcoming spectators and competitors alike in joining us as we celebrate," said circuit manager Phil Davies.

Ben Taylor, group chief executive of circuit operator the British Automobile Racing Club, added the garages "will significantly improve the experience for people racing and testing at Pembrey this year".



Old Clios to Britcar Trophy

Clio category teams up with Britcar

Organisers of the Clio Cup Series have teamed up with Britcar so the championship will now run as a standalone class within the new Britcar Trophy category.

The Clio series formerly had Michelin backing but will now switch to using Dunlop trackday rubber to reduce costs. It struggled for grid numbers last season, despite fourth-generation Clios joining the third edition models in being eligible, and averaged nine cars.

The Britcar Trophy is for production cars and features 50-minute races so Clio drivers will now be able to share their car with another driver or race on their own.

The Clio category's promoter Richard Colburn said: "Taking on board the feedback from competitors – higher-profile events, TV coverage, hospitality options and, above all, reduced costs – this presented by far the best option and I believe the championship heads into 2020 stronger than ever.

"The Britcar team operate an incredibly successful championship and the fit for the Clio is excellent."

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HISTORICS

'Equipe has been recognised'
Racing club is now registered, below



DOWN THE PUB

DAVE PRICE

Co-driver to Nick Elliott
Age: 55
Lives: Cheltenham



Price: no to the driver's seat

He's a long-time co-driver
"I've done a lifetime of rallying with Nick Elliott. It's a long partnership and I don't think we've ever fallen out in any way. It's all been based on results and whether we got to the end or not. Our joke is that we're going to do well or end up parked in a ditch somewhere."

It's an exciting ride
"He puts down some unusual lines and to me it's almost normal. If I got in with someone who drives really tidily I'd probably be confused about where they were going. I'm used to looking out of the side window and it is always good fun."

He's no ambition to drive on stages
"People ask me I if I'd ever like to drive and Nick says I can borrow the car, but I've seen what happens when it all goes a bit wrong and he gets out of things I could never do. His style is very fluid and he is very good in slippery conditions. That's when the car is moving around more."

Their season starts this weekend
"The Cambrian Rally this Saturday is a good shakedown and we are going to do all the British Historic rounds this year and some Welsh rounds as well. We are planning quite a few events. It would be good to win the BHRC at long last. We like the competition and it's not that big a thing for us now, but it would be good to win it. We've been second occasionally and that gives us a reason for another go."

Last year was interrupted
"There was a big gap in last year's schedule after our shunt on the Pirelli. We decided not to do so many later in the year and finally came back on the Wyedean. We punctured in Speech House but we thought we'd lost a driveshaft because we just lost drive. We pulled over and by the time we'd changed the puncture we had lost a lot of time so we retired. There was no point risking the car once we'd lost the result."

He enjoyed the Three Shires Stages
"I did the Three Shires in September with Dave Kedward in his Ford Escort Cosworth. That was a great event and I wish it the best for this year as well too. I was surprised how populated it was, and it all went down very well. The organisers did a great job."

Photos: Paul Lawrence



Jimmy McRae will star at Goodwood

NEW RALLYSPRINT ADDED TO GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING

World rally legends to attend season-opener in West Sussex

By Paul Lawrence

Up to 25 rally cars, spanning the Group 4, Group B, Group A and World Rally Car eras, will take part in a spectacular rallysprint on the Saturday evening of the Goodwood Members' Meeting on March 28.

WRC stars including 1984 champion Stig Blomqvist, 2003 winner Petter Solberg and co-driving ace Nicky Grist will lead a host of star drivers and cars for the occasion.

Once the day's racing has finished a special stage will be set up between the pits and Lavant corner.

The asphalt stage will start through the paddock vehicle tunnel and then use the chicane and the pit road. The action will run into the dusk of the evening.

Jimmy McRae will drive one of his former Group 4 Vauxhall Chevette HSRs, while Blomqvist, who won the World Rally Championship with Audi in 1984, will also take part.

Grist will drive his own Group A Toyota Celica GT-Four and cars from Audi, Lancia and Subaru are expected.

Jen Godding from Goodwood said: "The route of the Rally Sprint has been designed to maximise the opportunities for spectators to revel in the sight and sound of the cars in full flow, running against the clock."

Meanwhile, the central theme for the Festival of Speed on July 9-12 has been announced and the event will celebrate 'the maestros: motorsport's great all-rounders'.

Jacky Ickx, who enjoyed success in F1, sportscars, touring cars, rallying and cross-country events, has been named as the first maestro to be honoured.



Ingram will head to Retro

Auriol and European champion Ingram head to Race Retro showpiece

Didier Auriol, World Rally champion in 1994, will make his Race Retro debut this month and will be joined by the current European Rally champion Chris Ingram.

Auriol will tackle the Live Rally Stage on Saturday and Sunday, February 22-23, in a replica of the Ford Sierra RS Cosworth he drove in 1987 and '88. Auriol will be interviewed and take fans' questions on the stage and will also sign autographs and pose for selfies.

Joining Auriol is young British ace Ingram, the first British ERC winner in 52 years and one of the youngest champions.

Ingram, a long-time supporter of Race Retro since he started rallying, says that meeting the late Russell Brookes at the event saved his career. He said: "Shortly after the event, Russell helped me secure sponsorship from his loyal former sponsors Andrews Heat for Hire."

Meeke bowled over with Boucles victory

Kris Meeke and Seb Marshall scored a convincing win on the Legend Boucles Bastogne over the weekend in a Ford Escort Mk2.

On his first competitive outing since calling time on his World Rally career, Meeke dominated the Belgian event to join former winners Thierry Neuville and Mikko Hirvonen on the roll of honour.

Meeke pressed home his advantage on Sunday's forest stages to take a clear victory.

"I have discovered a rally concept that I did not know," said Meeke. "Covering such special stages with an old car shod with standard road-going tyres, without being allowed to make notes beforehand, is one hell of a challenge. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and rallying in Belgium definitely remains popular!"



Equipe Classic Racing already has thriving support, and a new series has been added

SERIES DEVISED TO CATER FOR 1950s SPORTS-RACERS

Historic racing organiser Equipe Classic Racing will run a third series this season after launching a new category for 1950s machinery.

The new Equipe 50s series is open to production sportscars with engines of under 3.6-litres and sports-racers with under two-litre engines. A wide range of cars is expected to feature on the grid, including Jaguar XKs, MGAs and sports-racers from Lotus, Cooper and Lola.

Equipe 50s will have a six-event schedule this year, which predominantly features on the roster of MG Car Club fixtures.

The new series joins the Equipe GTS and Pre '63 categories and means Equipe will be running four grids at some events – as large GTS entries are sometimes split in two.

IN BRIEF

HRDC gets going
The Historic Racing Drivers' Club will kick off its 10th season with three grids within the Vintage Sports-Car Club Silverstone meeting on April 18-19. The Coys Trophy, Allstars and the Classic Alfa Challenge will all be on the schedule, with both qualifying and racing on Sunday. Prior to that event, the HRDC has two exclusive test days at Goodwood in March.

Equipe is official
Equipe Classic Racing has recently become a registered Motorsport UK club and appointed former MG Car Club man John Hutchison as competition secretary. "We've registered as a Motorsport UK club and what that means is for 2021 we can buy our own track time – we don't have to rely on buying track time from other clubs," said founder John Pearson.

Saloons to Spa
A date at Spa-Francorchamps has been added to the 2020 schedule for the Dunlop Saloon Car Cup. A double-header at the home of the Belgian Grand Prix, will now be the season finale within two Historic Sports Car Club Closed Wheel races at the Classic Six Hour meeting at the end of September. The calendar takes in 10 races at five events.

Wales goes Manx
The Welsh Historic Rally Championship will include a holiday event in its 2020 schedule with the Manx National Rally (May 15-16) joining the calendar. The eight-event, mixed-surface season starts on the Rallynuts Stages in April and takes in two events on Epynt and one at Caerwent along with four forest rallies.

Archie tribute
The life of Archie Scott Brown will be celebrated at Snetterton on April 5 with a race for pre-1960 sports and sports-racing cars. The organisers are keen to encourage owners of drum-braked cars to join the grid. This is the fifth running of this race to honour the 1950s sportscar ace, who died at Spa in 1958, and will comprise a 30-minute qualifying session and 45-minute race.

Bumper trials
More than 50 historic sporting trials cars are due at Sywell near Northampton on Sunday for the latest event in the Historic Sporting Trials Association calendar. A gaggle of regular historic racers will be competing, including single-seater racers Frank Lyons, Andy Wolfe, Mike Bletsoe-Brown, Mark Goodyear, Dick Dixon and Hans Ciers.

Boucles accident
Both rally crew members and two spectators were injured when the Ford Escort Mk2 of Fred Caprasse and Geoffrey Razzi crashed on Sunday morning during the Legend Boucles Bastogne in Belgium. The crew were taken to hospital for checks with minor injuries but one of the spectators was reported to have more serious injuries. The stage was cancelled but the event continued.

REPORT: HISTORIC ROAD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP KICKS OFF PAGE 27

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Ogier (inset) wants a return of snow

RALLY SWEDEN BOSSES FACING A HEADACHE OVER NO SNOW

Event could be reshaped – or even axed completely – amid unfavourable weather in the build up

By Graham Lister

Rally Sweden bosses were working to ensure their 2020 World Rally Championship counter goes ahead as planned next week when MN went to press on Monday evening.

A lack of ice-packed roads, caused by unseasonably warm weather and vital for winter rallies to run, has raised fears that round two of the world championship, scheduled from February 13-16, will either be reduced in length or culled altogether.

Although local forecasts hint at temperatures falling, unless they plummet significantly around the rally route and remain well below freezing, organisers could face the real possibility of canning the WRC's only winter event.

Should that happen then it would be the first time since 1990 that the rally will not have taken place due to the weather. It would also be the second event of the current WRC season to have been cancelled after the axe fell on Rally Chile earlier in the year, albeit due to the economic unrest in the South American country.

What was an initial 14-event schedule could fall to 12 rounds, while Junior WRC organisers would have to go in search of a replacement rally following the loss of Chile.

Rescue plans

But as part of efforts to keep Rally Sweden running, Motorsport News understands that proposals have been drawn up by an increasingly worried organising team.

They revolve around altering the itinerary from cancelling some stages outright to converting selected stages from double to single use, while trying to ensure the rally covers 75% of the planned distance. This stands at 300.84 kilometres (186.93 miles) and would ensure full points are awarded.

More than 60 miles were lost to similar conditions in 2016, but the event still covered the required distance to prevent only half points from being allocated.

However, as well as stage conditions, Motorsport News has learned that the warm weather is affecting other preparations such as spectator car parking and service park layout. Frozen ground is essential for the former and preferential for the latter due to the restricted hard-standing space available at Torsby Airport, where the service park is housed.

Meanwhile, teams have yet to test with Hyundai, for one, announcing last week that it was still working to fix an alternative date (*see sidebar*) after its scheduled session had to be postponed.

No control

Rally Sweden confirmed in a statement last week that "the FIA and WRC Promoter gave their unanimous support for Rally Sweden to continue, provided the weather conditions allow the safe running of the event".

Event CEO Glenn Olsson also said: "If the weather develops as the forecast, we don't see any problems in running the event as planned. The weather is unfortunately one aspect of the rally we can't control, but our entire organisation is working hard to prepare for another great edition of Rally Sweden for competitors and fans."

Ogier not convinced

Organisers have since shared images of snow-covered stages on social media, going as far as encouraging fans to take part in a snow-dance challenge. However, images of countryside devoid of snow and comments suggesting the ambient temperature will not fall low enough for the roads to freeze significantly to withstand two passes by the 55-car strong entry were also posted.

At the finish of the Monte Carlo Rally, three-time Sweden winner Sebastien Ogier admitted he had genuine fears that the event will not run.

"We don't know which the next rally is," the Toyota driver said. "I really hope we can do Sweden. I hope Mother Nature can turn it into the conditions we want for Sweden."

Rally Sweden is the country's largest annual sporting event and attracts approximately 100 million TV viewers and 200,000 visitors.

Breen suffers Sweden test woe



Craig Breen's planned first try of the Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC on snow fell victim to the weather when the South Korean firm cancelled its Sweden test scheduled for last week.

The team, which tops the drivers' and manufacturers' standings after the Monte Carlo Rally, said that a "revised test is being considered" this week in the area close to the rally.

Irishman Breen was called up as Sebastien Loeb's replacement for what is set to be his third appearance for Hyundai's factory squad after nine-time world champion Loeb elected to step aside.

"After discussions with the team, we decided not to go to Sweden," Loeb wrote on Facebook. "Even if I am now in the WRC with another approach, that of [having] fun behind the wheel, I remain a competitor and I want to be able to bring the maximum points to Hyundai in each of our appearances. Not everything was put together so that I could fully fulfil this task in Sweden and I thank the team for listening to me and reacting so quickly."

MOTORSPORT WITH ATTITUDE: GRASSROOTS UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT PAGE 26



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OGIER PLEASED WITH MAIDEN TOYTOA OUTING

Six-time world champion says that banking big points on season-opener was a bonus

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com


Ogier was second in Monte Carlo

By Graham Lister

Sebastien Ogier insists the best is yet to come following his Toyota debut on last month's Monte Carlo Rally.

Ogier was making his first appearance for the Tommi Makinen-run works squad after his switch from Citroen. He finished second, 12.6s behind Hyundai's Thierry Neuville.

"This was our first race with this car and we don't have a lot of experience in it yet," said the six-time world champ following his maiden Yaris WRC start.

"What was lacking for me was a level of knowledge of the car that would have allowed me to let loose a little and increase the risk-taking. But I'm not one to force things when I don't feel it.

"Twenty-two points for our first rally with Toyota is clearly a promising result. It bodes well for the rest of the season, both because of the good atmosphere among the whole team and because of the positive feeling I had behind the wheel.

"Even though we'll have to raise our game a little in the next rallies, the performance was there and the car's potential is undeniable."


Hirvonen won Perth-based Rally Australia back in 2006

Perth politician aims to get Rally Australia back to its roots

Western Australia politician Liza Harvey has launched an online petition to bring the WRC back to the city of Perth where it ran between 1989 and 2006.

Harvey wants state premier Mark McGowan to push for a Perth-based Rally Australia in 2021, when the country is set to return to the WRC roster as part of a mooted yearly rotation with New Zealand.

Harvey's petition states: "Mark McGowan was responsible for giving away the much-loved and highly successful Rally Australia when he was tourism minister in the last Labor Government.

"There was massive public backlash, exacerbated by the fact Rally Australia was a profit making, job creating event that won global recognition as rally of the year three times. Now is the opportunity to right that terrible decision and secure this event while it is up for grabs."

After not running in 2007 and 2008, Rally Australia returned in 2009 in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales. Coffs Harbour, a one-hour flight north of Sydney, took over for 2011 and the rally has been held there on a permanent basis since 2013, although last November's event, the intended WRC finale, was cancelled due to the country's bushfire crisis.

Devine grabs huge chance with Hyundai

Callum Devine will be able to call on advice from Hyundai's WRC drivers after he was picked for the make's Customer Racing Junior Driver scheme for 2020.

Hyundai is expanding its young driver initiative into rallying following success in the TCR touring car category.

Irishman Devine, who is competing in the European Rally Championship in a Hyundai i20 R5 this season, joins Hyundai's WRC 2 drivers Nikolay Gryazin and Ole Christian Veiby, plus WRC 2 champion Pierre-Louis Loubet and Belgian Gregoire Munster on the programme.

"This is an amazing opportunity and will certainly help with our European championship ambitions," said Devine, 25. "To have even been considered for inclusion is amazing, but to have been one of the five chosen is a real honour. I'm really looking to the year ahead and some new challenges and experiences."

Hyundai has stated that its Junior Driver intake "will be able to take advantage of support from Hyundai Motorsport Customer Racing engineers, have the mentoring of Hyundai Motorsport's experienced WRC crews, and the opportunity for extra training to help them further their motorsport careers."

Loubet, meanwhile, has also secured a nine-event programme in a privateer Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC starting from May's Rally of Portugal.

LOEB'S TEAM AIMS TO EXPAND INTO EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Sebastien Loeb's eponymous team is working on a European Rally Championship entry for 2020.

The nine-time World Rally Championship title winner co-founded Sebastien Loeb Racing with his mentor Dominique Heintz in 2012.

Although it is better known for its circuit racing exploits, the squad has been active in rallying in recent years, running R5 cars from Hyundai and Volkswagen on French events in 2019.

SLR's technical boss, Jean-Philippe Nicolao, explained: "We have a team of highly experienced personnel and the facilities to provide a very professional service to customer drivers. We have followed the ERC in recent years and it's a championship we would like to be a part of with good events and good competition."


Loeb is looking to Europe

Loeb won two ERC events earlier in his career.


Sebastien Loeb Racing tackled World RX in 2018


Kristoffersson will tackle WRC 3 in Rally Sweden

Kristoffersson shuns mistake ahead of WRC run

Double World Rallycross champion turned World Touring Car Cup race winner Johan Kristoffersson believes he will be a better driver on his home round of WRC 3 following his mistake on last month's Sigdalsrally.

The Swede dropped out of contention on the Norwegian event when he went off into a snowbank and lost several minutes.

But while he lost out on valuable Rally Sweden preparation time, the 31-year-old will not be overly concerned based on previous events.

"I have been pushing the limits, going over the limits to see where the limits are for the future," said Kristoffersson. "Without the mistakes I would not get the results."

Kristoffersson will contest Rally Sweden in a Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 run by his family team.

Munnings ready for Junior WRC comeback

Briton Catie Munnings is set to make her WRC debut in Sweden – providing the event runs.

The Kent-based driver is stepping up from the European championship to the Junior World Rally Championship, which caters exclusively for the M-Sport Poland-built Ford Fiesta R2T.

Munnings, who only managed a partial ERC 3 programme with the Peugeot Rally Academy in 2019 and has not driven in anger since the all-asphalt Rally di Roma Capitale last July, said: "The benchmark will be high, but I'm so ready to get back behind the wheel."

Munnings, 22, has recruited a new co-driver for the event, Swede Ida Lidebjer-Granberg.

RALLY NEWS

Postponed return for Jennings

Garry Jennings made a last-minute decision to withdraw from the opening round of the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship last weekend due to personal reasons.

The two-time Galway International winner was due to start first on the road at the event in his Subaru Impreza S12B, but decided not to attend after discussing the matter with his family.

The event would have been his first competitive outing since the death of Manus Kelly at the Donegal International last year.

Jennings posted on social media: "I'm sorry to have disappointed my fans and anyone involved with the rally. Returning to rallying was not an easy decision for me as many of you know, after the tragic events of last year.

"I returned home to speak with Kerry and our young girls last night [Saturday night] and together we decided for our peace of mind at this time to withdraw from the rally."

Jennings continued to write that he remained unsure whether or not the decision not to rally would be a permanent one.

Taylor suffers same bike injuries as Neal

Ford Escort Mk2 driver Roger Taylor is facing a fitness battle to be ready for April's Rally Tendring and Clacton after suffering a mountain bike accident on the same day as his friend, triple British Touring Car champion Matt Neal.

Taylor was part of the group riding with Neal at the time the Honda driver crashed and suffered serious injuries when they were in the Malvern Hills last month.

Once Neal was taken to hospital, the group continued riding but incredibly Taylor also had an accident and suffered near identical injuries to Neal.

"We've ridden together for years and years and never had any bad accidents at all," said Taylor. "I was trying to avoid some walkers coming over the brow of hill and it was still frosted. I don't remember anything about it.

"We were taken to the same Worcester hospital and we had nearly identical injuries – I had a broken clavicle and three broken ribs. The recovery is slow – we're both itching to get started with physio."

Taylor's last rally was the Three Shires Stages in September but he aims to be fit again for Rally Tendring and Clacton on April 25-26.

YOUNGSTERS TO TAKE ON BRC VETERANS

Next generation will make their debuts in the top tier of the BRC on Cambrian Rally

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



McErlean has driven on Welsh forest roads before



Williams will drive Proton Iriz

By Luke Barry & Jason Craig

Former juniors Josh McErlean and James Williams will attempt to mix it with the established stars of the British Rally Championship when they step up to the top division this weekend on the Cambrian Rally.

McErlean is using the money he secured by winning the Billy Coleman Award to drive a Hyundai i20 R5 against the likes of reigning two-time BRC champion Matt Edwards in a Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2, Ollie Mellors in a Proton Iriz R5 and Tom Cave who returns with his own i20 R5.

The 21-year-old, who won the Junior BRC in 2019, is hoping his experience of driving on Welsh forest stages during Wales Rally GB last season will prove useful.

"Our time at Rally GB is now becoming very valuable to us," said McErlean, who completed a full day's gravel testing in the Hyundai i20 R5 last month. "We have the basics of what to expect going into the rally which is a big help when you are still in a position where you are learning a lot in such a short space of time. Having driven the car on similar stages before will help me.

"The feeling going to the Cambrian is very positive. We have some pressure on our shoulders, but it's a nice pressure. Sometimes you need this to help get the maximum out of everything.

"A solid start to the season would be ideal. Anything after that is going to be a bonus for us."

Williams meanwhile has graduated to the main BRC1 class having done three seasons in the JBRC and will drive one of two Iriz R5s on the event alongside Mellors.

"I want to do BRC1 for the full year [but] I haven't agreed with Ollie [Mellors] or anything to do the full year in a Proton," Williams told MN.

"I tested the car in Ireland a couple of weeks back and they were quite impressed with how I got on with it and it kind of went from there. There's been quite a few drivers giving positive feedback about it so it's exciting for me to see how we get on."

TOP SEEDS

Cambrian Rally, British Rally Championship/BTRDA Rally Series, February 8

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod	Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2
2	Tom Cave/Dale Furniss	Hyundai i20 R5
3	Rhys Yates/James Morgan	Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2
4	Osian Pryce/Noel O'Sullivan	Hyundai i20 R5
5	Ollie Mellors/Ian Windress	Proton Iriz R5
6	Cathan McCourt/Barry McNulty	Ford Fiesta R5
7	Stephen Petch/Michael Wilkinson	Ford Fiesta WRC
8	Charles Payne/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
9	Josh McErlean/Keaton Williams	Hyundai i20 R5
10	George Lepley/Tom Woodburn	Mitsubishi Lancer E10



McErlean will continue to use Hyundai i20 R5 in 2020

Organisers forced to cut Cambrian route

Organisers of this weekend's Cambrian Rally have had to axe the final two stages of the National A event in order to prevent the cancellation of the rally.

Alterations have been made due to an "insufficient number of entries" to make the event financially viable. It means that the British Rally Championship crews will receive no additional mileage compared to the National B event for BTRDA and Welsh Championship competitors.

"We can assure you that the members of the Cambrian and North Wales Car Club committees have spent long and exhaustive hours trying to achieve cutbacks in order to ensure the rally can run. The alternative would have been to cancel the event," said clerk of the course Alyn Edwards.

"The entry fee for BRC competitors has been adjusted to take into consideration this change. However, the route for all [remaining] competitors remains unchanged."

British Rally Championship manager Iain Campbell added: "As can be seen by the number of entries the Cambrian is a popular event but, for whatever reason, the finances haven't stacked up for them and they have had to alter their route.

"What won't alter is the pace and competition across all the classes as the BRC and BTRDA start their 2020 campaigns."

The location of the service park has also been moved. It has switched from Llandudno town centre to a college, Coleg Llandrillo, three miles away, also due to costs.

Three-time BRC runner-up Cave returns in search of elusive title

Tom Cave has confirmed he will once again compete in the British Rally Championship in his Hyundai i20 R5.

The 28-year-old finished runner-up to Matt Edwards in 2019 and returns with the ambition of winning the championship.

"It's great to be back in the British Rally Championship and, after finishing second place for the third time last year, adding to my results in 2016 and 2012, I feel I have some unfinished business to attend to," said Cave, who will be co-driven by Dale Furniss.

"We've spent the past few weeks bringing everything together for this season, so I'm delighted to be able to kick things off with the Cambrian Rally this weekend.

"Although the Cambrian Rally is fairly local to me, it's a tough one to start with and we'll need to hit the ground running. I'm sure the PCRS [preparation] team will do their usual fantastic job when it comes to providing a strong and reliable car, so I'm hoping we'll get off to a great start."

Cave also intends to compete in further World Rally Championship outings this season, including Rally Finland and Wales Rally GB.

FISHER GETS IRISH TARMAC WIN AT LAST PAGE 19

BLACK ACQUIRES FIESTA R5 FOR ASPHALT EVENTS

Ex-Devine car set to be used on Ypres, Jim Clark and Epynt rallies among others

Photos: Roy Dempster, Kevin Money

By Luke Barry

Reigning BTRDA 1400 champion Callum Black will contest a select programme of Tarmac rallies in 2020 after acquiring Callum Devine's former Ford Fiesta R5.

Black has not driven a four-wheel-drive car in competition since winning the 2017 Welsh Rally Championship in a Fiesta R5+ and he has not regularly competed on Tarmac in over five years, but wants to reacclimatise himself to the surface.

Black told Motorsport News: "I want to do Tarmac as I've not done it since my British Rally Championship days [but] I don't want to over-commit and do too much. We showed good pace on the [2017] Nicky Grist Stages when it was a mixed-surface event. I think we were 0.2 seconds off the fastest BRC time [on the Tarmac tests] so we have good pace and good potential on Tarmac."

Black, who will be co-driven by Paul Morris, has targeted entries in three Asphalt Championship events – the Tour of Epynt, Manx National Rally and Jim Clark Rally, as well as the BRC Ypres event in late June.

"I would've liked to do the North West Stages but we were away skiing so we couldn't get an entry," added Black, who will not return to defend his BTRDA 1400 title this season.

"It might be that we're busy or don't have the budget to do all of them but I'm hoping to do Epynt, Jim Clark, Manx and Ypres. I did the Ypres recce last summer and made a set of notes to try and build ourselves up for this year. I've been over like five times to watch as I love it there. It's one on the bucket list we've just never done."

Black's father Steve also plans on using the Fiesta R5 on gravel events later in the year, with the Malton Forest Rally and Grizedale Stages currently pencilled in.



Callum Devine previously drove the Ford Fiesta R5, pictured here at the Donegal International

IN BRIEF

Duckworth outing

Roger Duckworth made a rare appearance when he contested the Alan Healy Memorial Rally at Cadwell Park last weekend at the wheel of his Subaru Impreza. The 1998 UK National champion said: "We ran the car in Wales Rally GB National and had a mechanical problem. You could say it's a very early shakedown for our annual trip to Barbados."

Yates the co-driver

Fresh from his recent WRC 2 outing on the Monte Carlo Rally, Rhys Yates was in the navigator's seat for the latest Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship counter at Cadwell Park as he shared a Ford Fiesta R200 with Bob Vardy. The duo were desperately close to a class win, losing out by only one second on the last stage. "It was great fun and I tried to do a good job," said Yates.

Missing glasses

Gawaine Clark returned to rallying at Cadwell Park last weekend as he made his first outing in a rear-wheel-drive car for nearly 30 years. "We had entered Mike Bayliss in his BMW Compact, but he decided not to do it and offered me the car," said the Langworth Motorsport chief. He had his debutant navigator daughter Lois alongside for the MN Circuit Rally event, but struck problems before the opening stage when he lost his glasses. "I had to do the stage without them so just aimed for the lighter bits and ignored the dark bits," he said. With the missing glasses found inside the car door he was able to to finish 24th overall and eighth in class.



Wilson will use Ford Fiesta R2 in the coming campaign

WILSON GRADUATES TO RALLYE R2 CUP

Reigning Junior 1000 champion Rob Wilson will make the step up into the BTRDA Rallye R2 Cup this season at the wheel of a Ford Fiesta R2.

The 17-year-old dominated last season's Junior 1000 Championship alongside co-driver Martin Haggett in a Citroen C1, as well as becoming part of the Motorsport UK Academy.

Wilson tested the Fiesta R2 at the Phil Price Rally School prior to the end of 2019 with support and advice from two-time and reigning British Rally champion Matt Edwards.

"I turned 17 about a month earlier than I would have been able to do another season [in Junior 1000] but I wanted to go out into the forests, I've always had my eye on that," said Wilson.

"It's a bit of a step up to this R2 but I believe it's the right step to make.

"I'd love to get at least one class win maybe by the end of the year, get some experience and look to be in the top three in the standings."

Skoda Fabia R5 is Davies's weapon of choice

Dylan Davies is poised for a two-pronged attack on the BTRDA and the Welsh Rally Championship in 2020 but is "trying to be realistic" about what he can achieve with his new Skoda Fabia R5.

Davies sourced the Skoda from Mark Wallenwein in Germany last month despite initially wanting a Ford Fiesta R5 similar to the one he took to victory on last year's Red Kite Stages.

"It's a Fiesta I was aiming for because, with M-Sport being UK- based, I thought it'd be easy to get stuff," Davies told MN. "But, the more I looked into the Skoda the more appealing it became. And everyone I spoke to said 'yeah, I'd go for the Skoda if I was you'. It all seems to be there, I just need to learn to drive it now."

Despite heading into the season with more potent machinery than his usual Subaru Impreza, Davies is keeping his expectations measured ahead of the Cambrian Rally this weekend.

"Obviously I'd really like to win [the BTRDA] but I'm trying to be realistic," he said. "I got a top three, top four and top five in the Subaru sometimes and I know the Skoda is better than what I've had, but I've got to learn the left-hand-drive side of it and until I get the Cambrian out of the way I don't know how I'm going to do."

Procter finally secures missing Croft Circuit title after intense Jack Frost Stages encounter

Jack Frost Stages

By Larry Carter

Organiser: Darlington & District Motor Club **When:** February 2 **Where:** Croft Circuit, North Yorkshire **Championships:** ANECCC Stage Rally Championship, North of England Tarmacadam Rally Championship, ANCC Stage Rally Championship **Starters:** 68 **Stages:** 7

With numerous victories in rallycross over the years and having won the Christmas Stages Rally on eight occasions at the same venue, Kevin Procter finally got his hands on the one major Croft Circuit title to elude him when he won the Jack Frost Stages.

Although the local businessman has not always contested the Darlington & District Motor Club-organised event – this year celebrating its 21st anniversary – the victory made up for the disappointment of finishing runner-up on the Christmas Stages back in December. For co-driver Patrick Walsh, it was a second Jack Frost win in a row having partnered Peter Smith to victory last year.

But the pair were made to work hard for the win in their turbocharged Ford Fiesta S2000 with 2018 winners Barry Lindsay/Caroline Lodge excelling in their SGP Motorsport-supplied Fiesta S2000, which they were again using as their prize for landing the 2019 SG Petch ANECCC Championship.

Wet and cool conditions greeted competitors for the first couple of stages. Procter laid down the gauntlet from the off to stop the clocks three seconds ahead of David/Katie Henderson (Ford Escort Mk2) on SS1 before increasing his advantage to 9s over Lindsay on SS2.

As the track dried, Procter continued his relentless pace and, at the halfway point, held a 22s lead over Lindsay. Three-time Jack Frost winner Tony Bardy/Dave Bellerby were third in their Ford Focus WRC00 a further 6s adrift.

Into the afternoon, and although the course was drying rapidly, the temperature plummeted. Still Procter charged on and added another 4s to his lead on SS5 before a timing issue meant SS6 was scrapped.

As dusk started to fall, Procter went fastest on SS7 and, although he bashed a chicane on the final stage, he completed his clean sweep although the impressive Lindsay got to within one second of him on SS8.

Procter's winning margin at the end was 32s with Lindsay a gallant second. Bardy boxed off third, half a minute further back, with Henderson an impressive fourth. Ian/Sarah Forgan (Subaru Impreza) claimed fifth ahead of Hugh Brunton/Liam Whiteley (Fiesta R5).

Results

1 Kevin Procter/Patrick Walsh (Ford Fiesta) 50m07s; 2 Barry Lindsay/Caroline Lodge (Ford Fiesta S2000) +32s; 3 Tony Bardy/Dave Bellerby (Ford Focus WRC00); 4 David/Katie Henderson (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Ian/Sarah Forgan (Subaru Impreza); 6 Hugh Brunton/Liam Whiteley (Ford Fiesta R5); 7 Des Campbell/Craig Forsyth (Peugeot 206); 8 David/Mathew White (Impreza); 9 Lyndon Barton/Simon Hunter (Escort Mk2); 10 Joe McKeand/Callum Shanks (Impreza). **Class winners:** Andrew Fawcett/Josh Beer (Vauxhall Nova); Campbell/Forsyth; Alistair Hutchinson/Thomas Bruce (Renault Clio); Henderson/Henderson; Forgan/Forgan.



Kevin Procter and Patrick Walsh prevailed by 32 seconds

UNSTOPPABLE BIRD WINS AT CADWELL PARK PAGE 17

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MN CIRCUIT RALLY

Photos: SMJ Photography



Another rally and another win for Bird

NO STOPPING BIRD AS MN HAT-TRICK SECURED

Ford Focus WRC07 driver in a class of his own at Cadwell. By Peter Scherer

Winning has become a habit for Frank Bird and Jack Morton, as they made it a hat-trick of Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship victories at Cadwell Park.

It was damp and quite slippery for the opening stages of the Alan Healy Memorial and Bird's Ford Focus WRC07 could not match the pace of championship returnees Mark Kelly/Neil Colman's Ford Escort Mk2. "I stalled on the first two stages braking for a hairpin, so lost time restarting but, having done the rally here last year, it helped a lot," Bird explained.

Although Kelly had ended the opening stage with a three-second lead, Bird still managed to claw 1s back on the repeat, despite stalling again in the stage.

Paul Smith had been joint sixth quickest on the opening stage but, with Dale Bowen guiding their Ford Fiesta R5, they shot into third place by stage two. It was a position they were to maintain all day.

Smith said: "I did the first as if I was driving to bingo, but in both of the last two rallies I had started off very badly and didn't want to make the same mistake."

Bird took the lead from stage three and gradually consolidated his advantage, adapting well to the changing conditions.

"It was going OK, I hadn't hit anything, but I didn't like losing 12s to Frank on stage four after he had caught the chicane and made it tighter for us," said Kelly. Bird admitted: "Yes, I did move it a little."

Although the conditions improved during the afternoon, Bird's lead grew decisive and victory was secured with 1m16s in hand. "Once I had got over the stalling, the car was just mega," he said.

Although Kelly was still a clear second, Smith closed in considerably during the latter stages. "A great day but I think I felt something down in the engine halfway through the last stage, so I hope it's nothing serious," said Kelly.

A new engine made all the difference for John Griffiths/Nigel Wetton's Subaru Impreza. They had seen off the Escorts of Martin Hodgson/Tony Jones and Stephen/Jack Tilburn by stage three and continued to run in a solid and untroubled fourth all day.

The usual rivalry between Hodgson and Tilburn only continued until stage five. Initially Hodgson had the upperhand, aided by Tilburn hitting a chicane on stage three. But it all went wrong for Hodgson when he followed Seamus Morris/Jarlath Kelly's wrong-slotting Darrian T90 GTR+, giving them both stage maximums.

Mike Taylor/Martin Haggett's Talbot Sunbeam Lotus had already shown signs of closing in on Tilburn and Hodgson's duel for fifth, after they recovered from hitting a chicane on stage three.

Although Taylor closed the gap, he was then caught by Barry Morris/Tom Hutchings' Darrian T90, which had begun to excel in the drying conditions. "I think I was still sleeping at the start, but my car is not a wet-weather car," Morris said.

Tilburn managed to retain fifth but, after Morris had usurped Taylor on stage seven, he managed to close the gap to only 6s as he rounded off the top six.

The Escort Mk2s of Michael Walton/Jamie Vaughan and Paul Murro/Callum Cross had both started well. They went into stage three only one second apart in a duel for seventh, but Walton did not come out unscathed. "Coming down the hill from Coppice I touched the grass, lost the rear end and hit the barrier," he explained.

Murro continued to run in seventh until the weather improved, losing 10th on the last stage as both Robert Swann/Steve McNulty's Fiesta R5 and Roger Duckworth/Mark Broomfield's Impreza moved up the order.

Swann had pipped Taylor on the last stage too, securing seventh, with Richard Wells/Calvin Houldsworth's Mitsubishi Lancer E9 and Duckworth completing the top 10.

Dan Corner/Mark Regan's Peugeot 205 GTi had also been in the top 10 early on, but slipped out of the frame on stage five to come in 12th, one second up on Dan's father Andy, sharing his 205 GTi with Ade Camp.

Bird, though, was delighted. He said: "I really don't want this run of wins to end, I am enjoying it and already looking to Snetterton in two weeks' time."

CLASS ROUND-UP

Adam and Ray Ripper's Nissan Micra took charge of **Class A** from the second stage despite breaking a headlight on a marker board on the opener. "I didn't know I had done it, but hopefully we won't need it," said Adam at the time.

With the top-seeded Vauxhall Corsa of Matt Wood/Pete Kettle careering down the hillside after an off at Charlies, it was Sir Andrew McAlpine/Andrew Merrifield's Mini Cooper S that was the initial class leader but they dropped back.

James Hardy/Nick Wilkins' Micra held onto second for most of the day, with a recovery charge from Wood netting him a late third, with Ian Barnes/Jason Cutter's Ford Ka in fourth.

Class B went down to the wire after Ben Short/Hannah Chislett's Mazda MX-5 had the edge in the morning. A control time penalty was followed by an off on stage seven which left Short with a tyre on the car's bonnet.

Short's demise left Bob Vardy/Rhys Yates' Fiesta R200 and Chris Ruck/Steve Harris's Corsa S1600 to duel for the class win.

Going into the final stage Vardy was ahead, but Ruck continued to press on and reversed the order with a one-second advantage.

Ashleigh Morris/Jamie Mactavish (Fiesta R200) completed the class podium, while Mark Peterson/Jim Bowie's Citroen C2 R2 Max, Connor Tolson/Brian Ilaria's Fiesta R2 and Paul Gorge/Daniel Hurst's MX-5 followed as Short finished seventh.

On their first visit to Cadwell Park, Andy Corner/Ade Camp were never headed in **Class C**, despite their Peugeot 205 GTi doing the opening stage with the tailgate open and clouting the barrier at the Mountain.

Mike English/Andy Robinson's Escort Mk2 took maximum championship points however, with a trouble-free and day-long second. Ryan Connolly/Chris Allen's Ford Puma held on to third, but had to fend off a challenge from Cathy Sewart/Colin Stephens' Talbot Sunbeam Lotus.

Sewart briefly lost out to Stuart Ranby/Jonathan Stockdale's Escort Mk2 before reclaiming the spot on the penultimate stage.

Mark Kelly was never headed in **Class D**, but Stephen Tilburn secured second after Martin Hodgson's retirement, while Barry Morris took third at the expense of Mike Taylor.


Ruck took Class B win

RESULTS

Alan Healy Memorial Cadwell Park Stages, Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship, round 5/8, February 2

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Frank Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Focus WRC07	45m22s
2	Mark Kelly/Neil Colman	Ford Escort Mk2	+1m16s
3	Paul Smith/Dale Bowen	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m24s
4	John Griffiths/Nigel Wetton	Subaru Impreza	+2m00s
5	Stephen Tilburn/Jack Tilburn	Ford Escort Mk2	+3m14s
6	Barry Morris/Tom Hutchings	Darrian T90 GTR+	+3m20s
7	Robert Swann/Steve McNulty	Ford Fiesta R5	+3m25s
8	Mike Taylor/Martin Haggett	Talbot Sunbeam Lotus	+3m28s
9	Richard Wells/Calvin Houldsworth	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+3m44s
10	Roger Duckworth/Mark Broomfield	Subaru Impreza WRC S6	+3m49s

Class winners: Adam/ Ray Ripper (Nissan Micra); Chris Ruck/ Steve Harris (Opel Corsa S1600); Andy Corner/Ade Camp (Peugeot 205 GTi); Kelly/ Colman; Bird/ Morton.
MN class winners: Ripper/ Ripper; Ruck/ Harris; Mike English/Andy Robinson (Escort Mk2); Tilburn/Tilburn; Bird/ Morton.


Mark Kelly and Neil Colman had to settle for the runner-up spot

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REPORT

Photos: Martin Walsh



Winning margin was just 21.1 seconds

Fisher (r) with Noble celebrate Galway victory

FISHER FINALLY TAKES WIN

VW Polo R5 crew overcome tricky conditions and emerge on top in Irish Tarmac opener. By Adam Hall

An impressive performance by Alastair Fisher on the Galway International Rally gave the 2019 Irish Tarmac Rally Championship runner-up his maiden win in the category, as he and co-driver Gordon Noble led from start to finish in a Volkswagen Polo R5.

Going into the final loop of three stages, Fisher led Sam Moffett by 22.8 seconds and he managed the gap perfectly to finish the one-day rally 21.1s ahead of the Hyundai i20 driver.

"It is nice to finally get over the line and take our first Tarmac win," said Fisher, who was also making his debut in the Polo R5. "It was a tough final stage with a lot of muck pulled out onto the road but thankfully we got through it OK. There were quite a few delays on the last loop of stages so we really had to keep our focus."

Fisher's event got off to the perfect start as he won the opening stage, Tynagh, beating the Polo R5s of Donagh Kelly and Meirion Evans. Tynagh seemed to suit the Polos as they took the top three spots on each pass of the 5.6-mile stage.

Kelly and Evans's pressure on Fisher was relieved on the next stage as they both encountered issues on the mucky Duniry test. Kelly had a few moments on the stage, losing 15.3s to Fisher, while Evans suffered from a loss of power from the start, which cost him over 20s. Desi Henry came closest to Fisher's time on SS2 but his rally came to an end on the last junction of SS4 after shearing the bolts in the front-left hub of his newly-acquired i20 R5.

Henry's exit left Kelly in second with a 7.2s cushion to Moffett, who was confident he knew where Fisher was gaining time.

Worsening road conditions meant SS5 was run at less than 50% of its original length. Not that it mattered to Fisher as he took his fourth and final stage win, as Kelly stalled at the startline. A big push through the now 2.4-mile stage was not enough to alleviate the time loss and he ended Duniry 29.1s behind the leader. The stall also brought a confident Moffett to within 3s of the Donegal driver.

Overnight rain had left the stages wet throughout the day but a heavy shower before SS6, Black Road, was to prove the ultimate test for the crews. Fortunately, due to the existing conditions, no-one was caught out on the wrong tyres. Moffett jumped ahead of Kelly on the 11.6-mile stage, explaining that concentration on the wettest sections was key to his first fastest time of the rally.

The battle for second was not over yet though as Kelly responded on the following test, regaining a 3.9s advantage over Moffett. Another fastest time for Moffett on the penultimate stage reduced the gap to 0.8s and left it all to play for on the final pass of Black Road.

More heavy rain intensified the drama. Kelly finished the stage having gone quicker than Fisher and feeling settled that he had done all he could to fight off Moffett's attack. It was not to be though as Moffett arrived having set another blistering time to win the stage and provisionally take second from Kelly by just 1.7s.

Evans finished 11.2s from the final podium spot on his Polo R5 debut, but he was a happy man as he pondered on the progress he has made over the past 12 months. Josh Moffett had a subdued event as the 2018 ITRC champion made fifth position his own from the end of the first loop. He remained confident that he knew where the time gap could be made up on the next rounds of the championship in his i20 R5.

Eamonn Kelly came out on top of the R2 battle after a ding-dong fight with Jason Dickson. Kelly, who is Donagh's son, survived an incident on the second loop of stages, which smashed the rear passenger window of his Fiesta R2T, to beat Dickson by 38s. Dickson had been leading the class by 0.1s after SS7 before losing over 30s on the mucky penultimate stage.

RESULTS

Galway International Rally, Irish Tarmac Rally Championship, round 1/7, February 2

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble	Volkswagen Polo R5	1h00m34.6s
2	Sam Moffett/James Fulton	Hyundai i20 R5	+21.1s
3	Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley	Volkswagen Polo R5	+22.8s
4	Meirion Evans/Jonathan Jackson	Volkswagen Polo R5	+34.0s
5	Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty	Hyundai i20 R5	+54.2s
6	Stephen Wright/Liam Moynihan	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m54.4s
7	Cathan McCourt/Barry McNulty	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m16.2s
8	Declan McCrory/Stephen O'Hanlon	Ford Fiesta R5	+4m28.3s
9	Paul Barrett/Kevin Reilly	Ford Fiesta R5	+5m07.8s
10	Willie Mavitty/Martin Connelly	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+5m31.4s

11 Keith Lyons/Niall Burns (Fiesta R5); 12 Eamonn Kelly/Conor Mohan (Fiesta R2T); 13 Jason Dickson/Martin Brady (Fiesta R2); 14 Jer O'Donovan/Sean Hayde (Skoda Fabia S2000); 15 Colin Flanagan/Liam McIntyre (Lancer E9); 16 Cal McCarthy/Derek O'Brien (Citroen DS 3 R5); 17 Johnnie Mulholland/Jeff Case (Fiesta R2T); 18 Daragh/Aoife Raftery (Peugeot 208); 19 Paul Horton/Darren Garrod (Fiesta R5); no more finishers.

Class winners: Evans/Jackson; McCrory/O'Hanlon; Kelly/Mohan



Mitsubishi Lancer E10 crew took a comfortable National victory

National triumph for O'Connell and Wiley

The lack of any previous experience of the event didn't prevent Pat O'Connell (Mitsubishi Lancer E10) from taking victory in the National category of the Galway International Rally.

Co-driven by Mark Wiley, he took a 41.6-second victory over the rear-wheel-drive Toyota Starlet of Jason Black and Karl Egan. The Whelan brothers, Richard and James (BMW 1 Series) were an additional 48.8s behind in third.

On his first outing since last April, Black, whose Starlet was fitted with a two-litre engine, punched in the best time on SS1, Tynagh – 4.5s ahead of O'Connell with Galway ace Tom Flaherty (Ford Escort RS) 1.6s further behind.

O'Connell was quickest on the following pair of stages and, although he admitted he was cautious on SS3, he moved 19.8s ahead of Black. Flaherty was 11.7s further adrift and concerned about the slippery conditions, while Whelan in fourth had to contend with a loose steering wheel through all three stages.

It was a case of more of the same on the repeat loop (SS5 was shortened due to concerns with the road surface) as O'Connell extended his lead with Black taking no risks whatsoever – especially on SS6, Black Road, where copious amounts of standing water did not fill third-placed Flaherty with confidence. Whelan in fourth lost significant time with an overshoot on SS5.

O'Connell went on to secure his inaugural Galway win from Black, who had a small spin on SS7 that he attributed to the misjudgement of grip as Whelan took third followed by Eugene Meegan (Lancer E9). Stephen Faughnan (Escort Mk2) had a relatively clean run to fifth ahead of Neil Phelan (Escort Mk2). Ray Breen crashed his Metro 6R4 on the second stage.

Jason McSweeney and Liam Brennan claimed class 24 at the wheel of a right-hand-drive Ford Fiesta R5, which was ineligible to compete in either the International or National categories.

Martin Walsh

Results

1 Pat O'Connell/Mark Wiley (Mitsubishi Lancer E10) 1h04m50.7s; 2 Jason Black/Karl Egan (Toyota Starlet) +41.6s; 3 Richard/James Whelan (BMW 1 Series); 4 Eugene Meegan/Sarah Whelan (Lancer E9); 5 Stephen/Amy Faughnan (Ford Escort Mk2); 6 Neil Phelan/Keith McCarthy (Escort Mk2); 7 Geoffrey Dolan/Connor Murphy (Talbot Sunbeam); 8 Vincent/Jane Collins (Escort); 9 Gareth Black/Connor Dunlop (Starlet); 10 Andrew Fanning/Andy Hayes (Proton Millington).

Class winners: Declan/Brian Forde (Escort Mk2); Des Lyons/Ashling McArdle (Honda Civic); William Nolan/Shane O'Mahony (Toyota Corolla); Collins/Collins; Faughnan/Faughnan; Phelan/McCarthy; Justin/Adrian Comer (Lancer E5); Fanning/Hayes; Meegan/Whelan; Jason McSweeney/Liam Brennan (Fiesta R5).

2020 EVENTS

MN'S MUST-SEE E

Our team of writers have picked out the motorsport meetings they

Every year, there are hundreds and hundreds of motorsport events that take place in the UK and Ireland. Right from the smallest grassroots disciplines to the glamour of the British Grand Prix, there is a huge variety to choose from.

So, MN's writers have produced a list of the events that we are most looking forward to over the coming months, starting with an Irish rally celebration and ending with an exciting pair of knockout Formula Ford contests.

But, which is the first event that goes in your diary at the beginning of the year? Let us know your must-see meetings by emailing letters@motorsport-news.co.uk

A VERY IRISH CELEBRATION





When: March 14-15
Where: Clonakilty
What: West Cork Rally, BRC/ITRC round

The Irish know how to have a good time when they throw a party and they do not come much bigger or better than St Patrick's weekend. Unless, of course, a rally is involved.

The weekend prior to the country's patron saint being celebrated, the West Cork Rally takes place. A relative unknown a few seasons ago, the stock of this closed-road event has risen sharply. The reason? It is a counting round of both the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship and the British Rally Championship – one of only two meetings in the UK and Ireland that bring the two series together. The other is August's Ulster.

So what can you expect if you decide to make the trip? Centred around Clonakilty – a lively and very sociable town – the West Cork Rally consists of eight stages on both days with these taking in narrow, twisting and undulating stretches of road. The most famous of all is 'Ring', a 9.6-mile stretch of black ribbon that hugs the coastline initially before it turns from the Celtic Sea and heads back inland.

Irish drivers have dominated at West Cork since 2007. Could this be the year that a British name breaks that stranglehold?

Jason Craig

A UK HISTORIC RALLY DEMONSTRATION



When: June 7
Where: Telford
What: Historic Rally Festival

For too long, UK fans have looked enviously at the big European rally demonstration events and wished for something similar at home.

Well, on June 7 their dreams will be answered by the all-new Historic Rally Festival, which will be based in Telford and feature demo stages at Weston Park and on nearby estate roads. Warner Lewis is the man behind it all and he is expecting an entry to set the pulses racing.

In year one, this bold initiative will not replicate the Eifel Classic or Rally Legends, but it opens the door to something very special. Around 80 cars from across the history of rallying will be let loose to run, with full current safety equipment, at as close to competitive pace as possible. Never before has an event of this style been run in the UK.

Of course, to really rival the great European events, closed roads must be the medium-term goal and that really would make it a sensational event.

Paul Lawrence

MG LIVE RETURNS



When: June 13-14
Where: Silverstone
What: MG Live, MG Car Club's flagship event

The highest-profile victim of the urgent resurfacing works to take place at Silverstone last year was MG Live.

The MG Car Club's seasonal highlight has been a fixture of the Northamptonshire circuit's calendar for decades but the event did not happen in 2019 after the club was unable to find an alternative date or venue. But, for this year, it is back.

MG Live is unlike many club race meetings that take place in this country. While the on-track action is super, with packed grids a regular feature among the MG categories and a selection of guest series, there is plenty going on elsewhere too. Trade stands, displays and hundreds and hundreds of MGs mean there is plenty to see and do.

And this year's event is set to be extra special as the club celebrates its 90th anniversary in 2020. It is great that it is back on the schedule once more.

Stephen Lickorish

A FAVOURITE OF THE INTERNATIONAL STARS

When: June 19-21
Where: Donegal
What: Donegel International Rally

Ari Vatanen came in a Ford Escort Mk2 called 'Black Beauty'. Jimmy McRae enjoyed success in a Vauxhall Chevette HSR. Sebastien Loeb steered his title-winning C4 WRC to glory there in 2007. And Ken Block forced the cancellation of a stage in 2019 such was the interest in his one-of-a-kind Cossie V2.

The number of A-list drivers who have tried their hand at the Donegal International Rally – Ireland's sole remaining three-day closed-road competition – speaks for itself.

The Donegal name is synonymous with the world of rallying and held in the highest regard by competitors and fans alike for sheer excitement, passion and atmosphere. Where else can you stand at the door of a pub, sup on a pint of Guinness and marvel at the very best Tarmac drivers whizz past as they trade tenths of a second?

If there is one rally you go to this year make it Donegal. But do not just take MN's word for it. It has to be experienced to be believed.

Jason Craig



EVENTS OF 2020

y are most looking forward to this year

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Paul Lawrence, Steve Jones, William Neill, pro-rally.co.uk, Richard Styles, Jim Moir

A CLOSED-ROADS SPECTACULAR

When: March 20-21
Where: Garstang
What: North West Stages

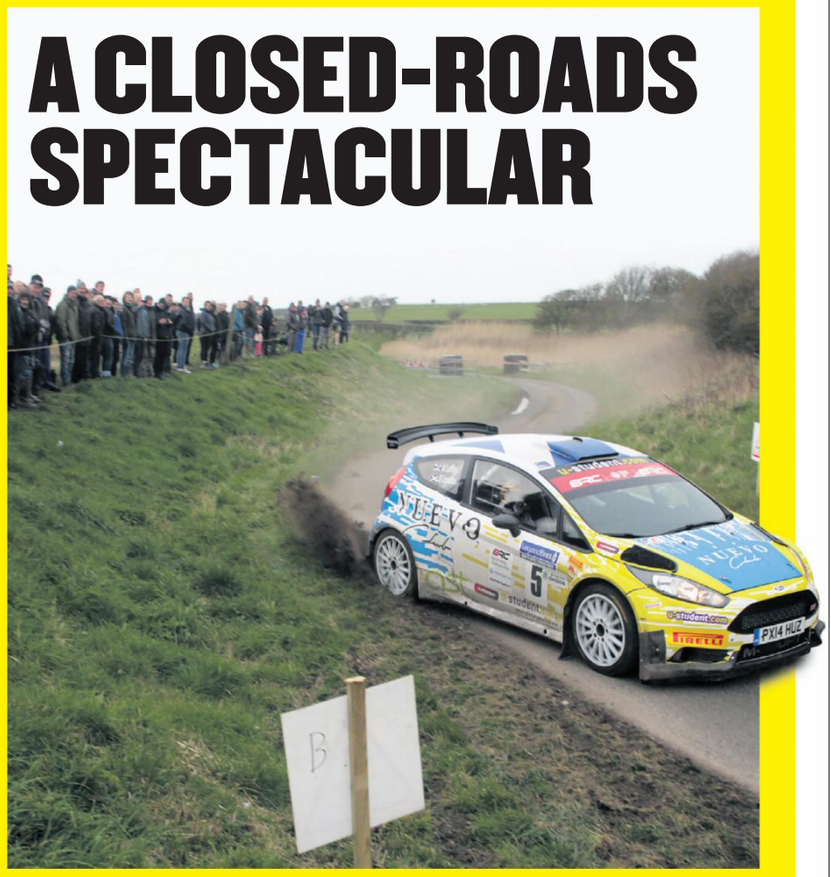
A difficult second album that, in truth, faces no difficulty. The North West Stages was a closed-road rally for the first time in 2019 and was one of the highlights of the season as just five seconds split Peter Taylor, Alex Laffey and Neil Simpson at the finish.

But it was spectacular away from the stages too, with the ceremonial start in Garstang the evening before the rally attracting a monumental crowd and atmosphere akin to rallies abroad.

Now the opening round of the Asphalt Championship, the entry for 2020 is mouth-watering and reads as a who's who of national rallying. Taylor and Simpson return and will be joined by double Asphalt champion Jason Pritchard, Alan Kirkaldy, John Stone, Hugh Hunter, Melvyn Evans, Stephen Simpson, Thomas Preston, Paul MacKinnon, Frank Bird, Chris West and Euan Thorburn to name but a few.

An incredible range of cars from Gary Le Coadou's Hyundai i20 WRC to John Deegan's Subaru Justy and Martin Fox's Porsche Cayman make this one not to miss for any motorsport fan.

Luke Barry





When: May 1-3
Where: Donington Park
What: Donington Historic Festival

When it comes to quality historic racing at a perfectly-suited venue, the Donington Historic Festival is right up there. The advantage of a relatively early-season date adds to the appeal of the three-day event, which marks its 10th edition this spring.

This is a fantastic event for spectators as the Donington experience is now fully recovered from the folly of the abortive British Grand Prix and the venue is looking better than ever. Seeing period cars drifting down the Craner Curves or sliding though Redgate and Coppice is a special treat.

The race line-up is first class, topped by the Motor Racing Legends portfolio with quality back-up from the GT and Sports Car Cup, Jaguars and huge grids from the Historic Racing Drivers Club.

After qualifying through Friday, there is wall-to-wall racing on Saturday and Sunday with one of the feature races running into the early evening on Saturday. Either day is worthy of a visit to an event that never feels overcrowded.

Paul Lawrence



JIM RUSSELL TRIBUTE

When: April 4-5
Where: Snetterton
What: Jim Russell Trophy meeting

Despite sadly no longer being a part of the traditional single-seater ladder on the path to Formula 1, there's no denying that Formula Ford races are some of the most exciting in the UK. Slipstreaming thrillers between packs of cars where mechanical grip and the art of heel and toe come to the fore.

If you are a FF1600 fan like myself, then the traditional end-of-season Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy are musts on any national calendar. But in 2020 there is another event for Formula Ford fans to attend, and you do not have to wait very long for it.

The Jim Russell Trophy Meeting will take place on April 4-5 at Snetterton and features 10 Formula Ford races to honour the memory of the racing school pioneer and also the early heritage of the Festival – which, before moving to Brands Hatch in 1976, was held at Snetterton from 1972-75.

The race line-up will include double headers for Historic Formula Ford, Classic Formula Ford, Heritage Formula Ford, Historic Formula Ford 2000 and a double header for modern FF1600 machinery run under the Champion of Snetterton banner. It is an event not to be missed.

Stefan Mackley



SUPERKARTS GUEST IN SCOTLAND

When: April 5
Where: Knockhill
What: British Superkarts heads to Knockhill

Superkarts around Knockhill sounds like a bonus combination you can unlock on a PlayStation game, doesn't it? Such are the chalk-and-cheese characteristics of the two. More accustomed to the fast-flowing nature of Donington Park and Silverstone, the British Superkart Championship raced at the Fife circuit for the first time in a decade last year.

It proved to be a big success. A total of 42 karts across the 250 Division 1 and F125 Open categories made the long trek up north, proving how popular Knockhill was with drivers and teams alike.

The great news is that the championship returns in April, for the opening Scottish Motor Racing Club weekend of the season. Lap records tumbled during last year's appearance so the expectation is that, with much cooler track temperatures, spectators could see even quicker feats this time around.

And just like the temperatures, the start of the season also produces cold minds, which should make for some thrilling racing across the bill.

Knockhill welcomes a range of visiting championships in 2020, with the ever-spectacular Caterhams holding a unique standalone round across one-and-a-half days in June. For nose-to-tail NASCAR-style bump-drafting around the 1.3-mile circuit, this is a must-see event.

Stephen Brunsdon



Advertising enquiries: 0203 405 8110

2020 EVENTS



PRODRIVE CARS TO STAR AT RALLY SHOWSTOPPER

When: June 20
Where: Castle Combe
What: Rallyday

Rallyday is the ultimate pilgrimage for any rally fan and Tom Davis and his team have done their utmost to ensure the 2020 event delivers on this promise. It most definitely will by the way.

Prodrive will have a strong presence at this year's edition, bringing Colin McRae's 1996 Rally Catalunya-winning Subaru Impreza 555 along. Oh, and Jimmy McRae's MG Metro 6R4, Richard Burns's Subaru Impreza WRC S5 and Dani Sordo's Mini JCW WRC will be there too. Plenty more modern and historic machines will be on display with several of those cars taking to the circuit for demonstrations.

But Rallyday is as much about the people as it is the cars. It is a chance for the fat to be chewed, stories to be retold and memories jogged, all in the company of fellow enthusiasts.

While this year's star guest list still remains to be confirmed, be assured it will include some names worth getting out of bed for. World champions Miki Biasion and Didier Auriol have both thoroughly enjoyed their time at Castle Combe in recent years. And surely a testimonial does not come much greater than that.

Luke Barry

BRISCA F1'S SHOWPIECE

When: September 12
Where: King's Lynn Raceway
What: BriSCA F1 World Final

If you want to feel the ground shake, then this is the meeting for you. The sight of 36 rumbling V8 monsters in a no-holds-barred final is one that will live long in the memory.

The drivers spend the season qualifying for the semi-finals, and the results of those set the grid for the winner-takes-all clash on Saturday night. The finishing order of the two semi-finals determines the grid for the 800bhp machines, alternating in an 'ABBA' fashion.

Full contact is allowed in BriSCA F1, so any simmering rivalries that have been built up over the course of the past 12 months will explode into full-on warfare as soon as the starter has unleashed the crowded grid.

While there are other headline events on the BriSCA F1 calendar, the World Final is the one where the partisan fans manage to cheer louder than normal, and the reaction in the stands is almost as strong as the hits that are being taken on it. It is an event unlike any other on the motorsporting scene.

Matt James





THE NATIONAL WEEKENDER

When: July 31-August 2
Where: Hednesford Hills
What: National Hot Rods, National Championship weekend

Coming just a month after the discipline's showpiece event, the World Final, the National Hot Rod Nationals weekend at Hednesford represents a different kind of meeting, but it also offers the chance for revenge.

While the racers will have worked season-long to get into the World Final at Ipswich, the Nationals weekend is different. Anyone can enter so long as they have done five meetings in the build-up to the event, and drivers go through a series of three heats each – there are six heats in total – to make the grand final on Sunday.

From there, it is gloves off and each man for himself. The action is fierce on one of the fastest short ovals that the cars visit, and drivers who feel they might have been robbed in the World Final can go and set the record straight over the course of the 75 laps. The World Final winner usually starts with a target on his back, and that makes the action frenetic and door handle-to-door handle.

Allied to that, there is a superb buzz at the amphitheatre with fans pitching up for the weekend and making a real festival atmosphere of the three-day showpiece. It is one not to be missed, and drivers often declare it their favourite meeting of the season.

Matt James

TIN-TOPS TRYING SOMETHING NEW

When: September 26-27
Where: Silverstone
What: BTCC on the International circuit

The British Touring Car Championship calendar has been pretty static in recent seasons. In fact, the last alteration was in 2014 when the series used the International circuit at Oulton Park rather than the Island version.

But there will be an exciting new addition in 2020 with the 30-car grid tackling the Silverstone International layout. That means the BTCC cars will be using the F1 starting grid and also tackle the Hangar Straight and the famous Stowe corner.

The championship's media day will take place at the venue too, which will give teams a heads-up on how the two-litre cars are likely to perform on the track. Those drivers who have already sampled it in other categories think it could provide up to four-wide action down the Hangar Straight.

Fans will be well catered for on the 2.249-mile configuration too with excellent facilities, and the format will mean there are plenty of overtaking spots.

The BTCC will switch its start venue from Brands Hatch to Donington Park in 2020 too, which will add a different flavour to the roster, and the Croft meeting has been moved to August. There could be a very different storyline to the battle for this year's title.

Matt James



THE ULTIMATE ISLAND EVENT

Photos: Colin Casserley, mkpics.net, Jakob Ebrey, Eddie Kelly Photography, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Paul Lawrence, Steve Jones



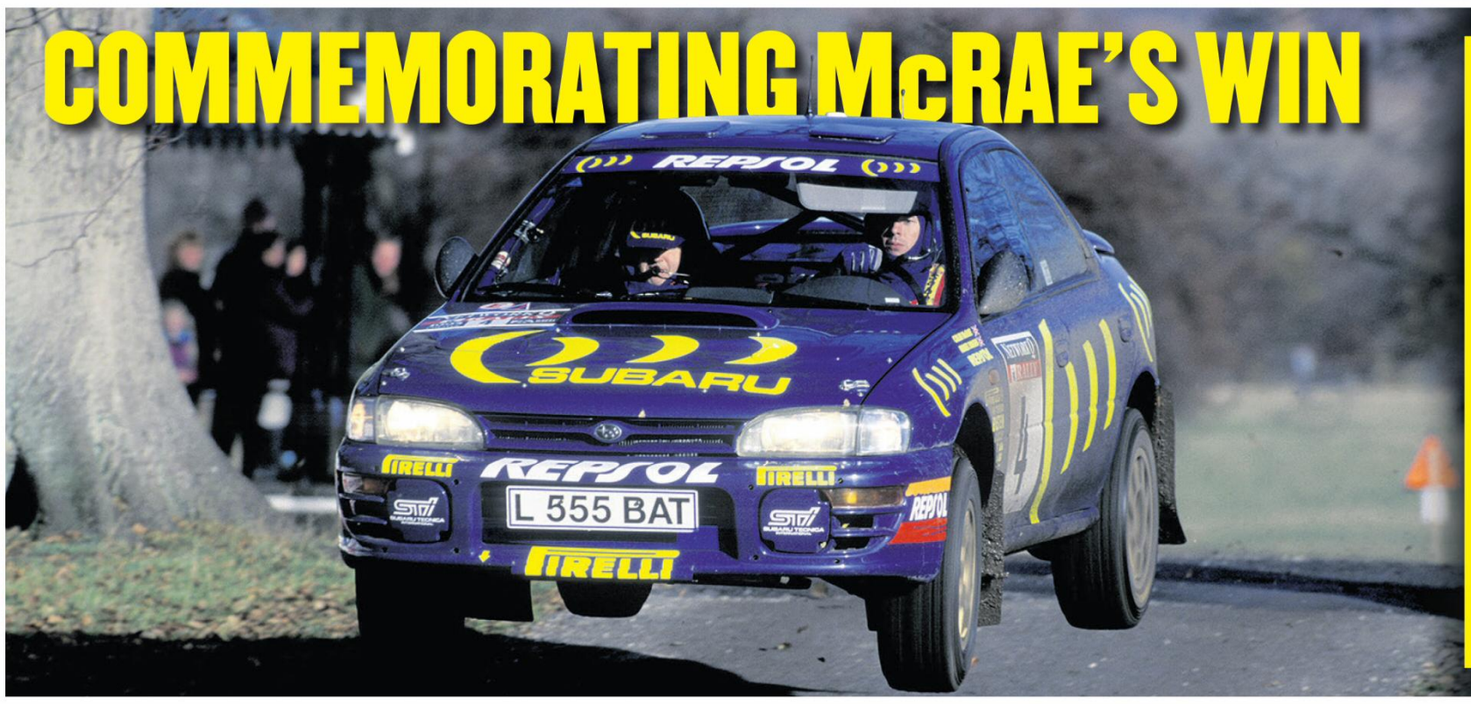
When: October 8-11
Where: Isle of Mull
What: Mull Rally
Trying to find parallels between the Mull Rally and any other rally is difficult because, in truth, it presents a challenge that is mimicked by no other event in the universe.

Making a hugely popular return to the rallying calendar in 2019, it was local hero Paul MacKinnon that added a third win to his collection behind the wheel of a Ford Fiesta R5. But in Mull, the result plays just a small part in the weekend.

It is a proper old-school adventure in properly tough conditions on what just happens to be one of the most beautiful islands anywhere. The roads are narrow, unforgiving and fast in equal measure, while the through-the-night schedule throws in an additional element to overcome. Whoever wins this one truly has conquered it all.

The traditional winner's parade on the streets of Tobermory is a real highlight as the top three finishers are led into the town centre by a pipe band. And, of course, the after-rally parties over a few drams too many are the stuff of legend. Mull is an attack on all the senses and a truly unforgettable experience.
Luke Barry

COMMEMORATING McRAE'S WIN



When: October 2-4
Where: Knockhill
What: McRae Rally Challenge
Twenty-five years after Colin McRae famously won the 1995 World Rally Championship, his success and that of the entire McRae dynasty is being commemorated in spectacular fashion this October.

The inaugural edition of the McRae Rally Challenge was held five years ago and was the scene of a large gathering of not just ex-McRae cars but Group B monsters and other memorabilia too. But where the McRae Rally Challenge differs is a competitive invitational rally is also held, which last time was won, fittingly, by Alister McRae.

This year three generations of McRaes will be competing with Alister, father Jimmy and Alister's son Max all set to take part. Other world-renowned names will be revealed in due course, with a WRC-style powerstage shootout set to crown the winner.

A Q&A forum on Friday night at the nearby Keavil House Hotel is new for this year with a celebratory tribute dinner scheduled for the following evening. This is not to be missed as it offers you the chance to rub shoulders with the world's biggest names in rallying.
Luke Barry

COMBE CELEBRATES ITS HISTORY



When: October 3-4
Where: Castle Combe
What: Castle Combe Autumn Classic
In recent times, the Castle Combe Autumn Classic has evolved into a thoroughly enjoyable late-season race day with a strong classic flavour and support from the customarily enthusiastic local crowd.

In celebration of the 70th anniversary year for the Wiltshire track, the 2020 Autumn Classic will expand to a full weekend to allow a specially-extended race programme.

This year's Classic will retain the best features of the preceding eight editions and the car parks will be crammed with classic cars. Parade and demonstration sessions will bring out rare and historic cars, but it is the on-track action that is the big draw for the fans.

To celebrate the earliest days of Castle Combe back in the 1950s, the wonderful 500cc F3 cars will be back, along with the one-litre F3 screamers from the late 1960s. The GT and Sports Car Cup returns to bring a rare longer race and pitstops to the venue, while the Historic Racing Drivers Club will be out in force. Add in Minis, Vintage Sports-Car Club races, Jaguars and 50s Sports Cars and it creates a great weekend at a fabulous circuit.
Paul Lawrence



FORMULA FORD KNOCKOUT EVENTS

When: October 24-25 and October 31-November 1
Where: Brands Hatch and Silverstone
What: Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy
By October and November, most categories have either already finished or are in the final throes of their season. But that is most certainly not the case with Formula Ford 1600. Instead, these months provide the highlights of the season as there are no other race meetings quite like the Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy.

The Festival-organising British Racing and Sports Car Club invested heavily in the event last year. For example, it was fully livestreamed for the first time, as it prepares for the 50th Festival next season. This year's event is set to be extra special as also on the bill are the final rounds of the Classic and Historic FF1600 championships.

As for the Walter Hayes Trophy, the spectacular racing around the Silverstone National layout is the perfect way to head into the winter break. The weather may be cold and miserable, however the racing is anything but.
Stephen Lickorish

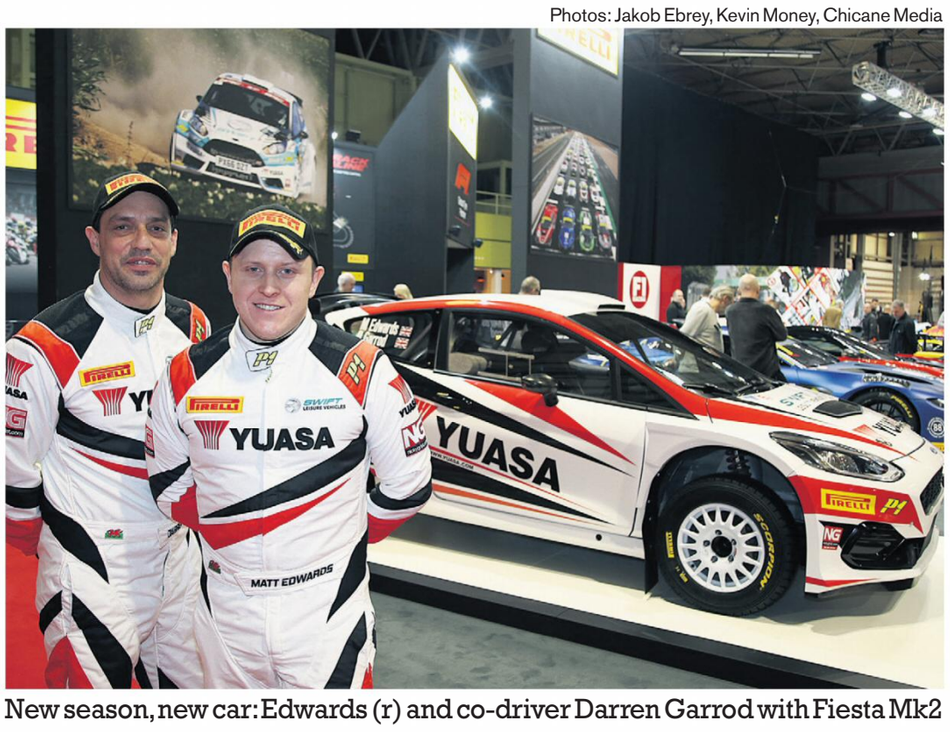
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BRC PREVIEW



Matt Edwards secured a second BRC title last year

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Kevin Money, Chicane Media



New season, new car: Edwards (r) and co-driver Darren Garrod with Fiesta Mk2

CAN EDWARDS MAKE IT A BRC HAT-TRICK?

A quality field of drivers and cars will attempt to stop him in this season's British championship. By Luke Barry

The 2020 British Rally Championship has been simmering away nicely over the winter break and this weekend it kicks off for what should be a mesmerising season.

The narrative is waiting to be written no matter how the season-opening Cambrian Rally pans out. Reigning two-time champion Matt Edwards, armed with the latest evolution of M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R5, returns and is as hungry as ever in his quest to become the first driver to win three BRC titles on the bounce.

But he is not going to have things his own way, as a plethora of talent is set to challenge him in the form of World Rally Championship drivers and BRC winners.

Edwards certainly won't give up his crown without a fight, but nor does he want to reclaim it without a battle. "I mean that's what the championship is all about," says Edwards. "You need that edge, that competition which drives everybody forward and brings the pace up to the standard of WRC 2. It's great to be involved again and to have M-Sport's support to go and do it is the key to making it three in a row, which hasn't been done before."

Competition he will certainly get as the quality in this year's BRC field is high. Front of the queue is Tom Cave, who came agonisingly close to halting Edwards last term, and he returns in 2020 with his Hyundai i20 R5.

"I'm very pleased to be coming back to the BRC again this year, we've got the same technical support from the guys at Hyundai as we had last year, so that gives us the consistency we need to be even stronger in 2020," he says.

"For me the focus is 100% on the BRC this year with Dale [Furniss, co-driver], but there is an outline to do a minimum of one, possibly two WRC events as well.

"I think it'll be a good fight for the championship this year. Matt [Edwards] will of course be in the mix and there's talk of some others coming back, which should make it very competitive."

One of those returning is Rhys Yates, who is back for his own title stab in a Fiesta R5 Mk2 as he attempts to emulate his father John and become a British champion in his discipline. The real unknown this season will be Ollie Mellors though, who will be at the wheel of a Proton Iriz R5. There has been a lot of noise about the Proton's development over the past couple of years and Mellors has bagged some stand-out results at a national level, including winning the Cambrian in 2018 and Trackrod and Woodpecker stages last year.

"Tom Cave and Matt Edwards will go well on the Cambrian but on the Irish events there's a whole other bunch that will go quick there so I think we're [all] going to constantly be fighting," says Mellors. "And it's not going to be easy, but I'm looking forward it, to be honest."

Elsewhere, Osian Pryce's pedigree is well documented at this level too, so fingers remain crossed his current one-round deal in an i20 can be stretched to a full season.

Ex-Junior WRC driver Tom Williams is a real curveball as he is in unchartered territory in a four-wheel-drive Fiesta R5, as is JBRC frontrunner James Williams, who is armed with an Iriz R5. And then there is Josh McErlean. If the reigning Junior British Rally champion's speed on Wales Rally GB is anything to go by, he will be a real thorn in the side of Edwards and co.

Nine R5s are set to start in Wales with the potential for that figure to swell when the series links up with the Irish Tarmac Championship next month. And that is without the presence of series stalwarts David Bogie and Marty McCormack.

This year's championship will be played out on six different battlegrounds and in six different countries. Tendring & Clacton joins the schedule in place of the Pirelli with the Cambrian (Wales), West Cork (Republic of Ireland), Ypres (Belgium), Ulster (Northern Ireland) and the Galloway Hills (Scotland) completing the line-up. ■



Cave returns with Hyundai i20 after just missing out on the title in 2019

CALENDAR

2020 British Rally Championship

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
February 8	Cambrian Rally	Llandudno, Wales
March 14-15	West Cork Rally	Clonakilty, Republic of Ireland
April 25-26	Rally Tendring & Clacton	Chelmsford, England
June 25-27	Ypres Rally	Ypres, Belgium
August 21-22	Ulster Rally	Newry, Northern Ireland
September 19	Galloway Hills Rally	Dalbeattie, Scotland

JUNIOR BRC

Youngsters prepare for new one-make era and chance of winning €60,000 prize



Ford Fiesta R2Ts will be used by all in JBRC as Creighton (inset) returns

The Junior British Rally Championship has produced some eye-watering contests over the years, arguably upstaging the fight at the very front at times.

This is set to continue for 2020, as the series has switched to a one-make championship with last year's prize of a €60,000 cheque from M-Sport and Pirelli still the main goal.

Seven of M-Sport's Ford Fiesta R2Ts, all on Pirelli rubber, will square off across the season in a bid to become JBRC champion and receive a leg-up the rallying ladder with that cash bonus being put towards a 2021 JWRC campaign.

A one-make format is something Finlay Retson is a "big fan" of as "we'll find out who the best driver really is". Might that be him? Retson has downplayed his chances, but the Scot is the only driver starting the Cambrian with any real experience behind the wheel of the latest Fiesta R2T.

William Creighton is the obvious favourite as he lines up for his fourth successive season in the JBRC. Creighton was swayed towards the category again as it affords him a chance to learn the Fiesta R2T, which is used in the JWRC. But having been runner-up twice before, Creighton only has one target in mind.

"The goal for the season is the championship, it's as simple as that," he says. "I'm not going back to be the bridesmaid again, I'm going for the win."

George Lepley's U-turn back towards the BTRDA (see right) is a sad loss to the JBRC as he was guaranteed to be a contender, but there are several hungry youngsters vying to fill that void.

Big things are expected of Motorsport Ireland Academy member David Kelly, while Eddie Lewis is something of a dark horse having gone about his business quietly in 2019. And then there is rallying newcomer Rupert Flynn, whose sole BRC appearance in the Cadets (now BRC Academy) on last year's Ulster Rally gifted him the championship and the free JBRC entries that came with it.

One thing is for sure; this year's JBRC champion will have their mettle tested against the very best in what is always an ultra-competitive category.

BTRDA'S OLD GUARD AIM TO GET BACK TO THE TOP

Veterans Charlie Payne and Stephen Petch set sights on 2020 Gold Star crown. By Stephen Brunsdon

Last year's BTRDA Gold Star Rally Series was dominated so much by Euan Thorburn that the Scotsman did not even need to take part in the final two rounds of the year. For 2020, a number of key contenders will be hoping that the title fight goes all the way down to the wire this time around.

One of those aiming to take Thorburn's crown is veteran Charlie Payne, who has decided to revert to an older Ford Fiesta RS WRC instead of the newer 2016 model he has used for the past two seasons. Payne has also changed his full-time co-driver for this year, with Patrick Walsh – who co-drove Matt Edwards to British Rally Championship glory last year and did two rallies with Payne at the end of 2019 – coming onboard and replacing Payne's previous partner, Carl Williamson.

It is a veritable mixture of a 'tried-and-tested' approach alongside something of a fresh start for Payne, who won the Gold Star title in 2016 but has endured a frustrating couple of seasons since. It is something the Yorkshireman is keen to put right in 2020.

"You never know what the season has in store really, you could have a good Cambrian and then suddenly it can all fall apart, can't it?" says Payne.

"But I'm confident Patrick and I have got off on the right foot. I feel a lot more at ease with the older WRC car as it's probably suited better to my driving style than the newer one, so hopefully that helps across the season."

Where there is Payne, there is usually Stephen Petch. The two drivers have formed a healthy rivalry on the stages and have endured similarly troublesome campaigns of late.

Petch returns in his Fiesta RS WRC with co-driver Michael Wilkinson alongside him once more. Petch was the first to admit that his title challenge was largely extinguished after the opening two rounds last season as mechanical dramas and a crash robbed him of valuable points on the Cambrian and Malcolm Wilson events, respectively.

A change of driving style, a work in progress since 2018, produced more consistent form with three second places behind Thorburn followed by victory on the Trackrod last year, and it sets Petch up for an attempt at a first title since 2017.

Elsewhere in Gold Star, Sacha Kakad makes his return to the series for the first time since 2018 in a Ford Fiesta R5, while Ian Bainbridge will team up with Dale Bowen in his Skoda Fabia R5. George Lepley will contest the opening round aboard the Mitsubishi Lancer E10 he used at the end of last season to take the class victory on the Woodpecker Stages, although whether he intends to do the full season remains to be seen.



Payne and Petch (inset) return

B13 AND NR4

"It's the same car, but it's almost completely new." This is how Class B13 driver Matthew Hirst has described his Mitsubishi Lancer E9 ahead of his third full BTRDA season. The Doncaster local – who will again dovetail his campaign with a full season of the Welsh Rally Championship – had an up-and-down 2019, where mechanical problems curtailed any title fight there had been at the start of the year.



Modifications to Hirst's Lancer E9

Hirst's Lancer E9 has undergone some major work over the off-season, which he hopes will produce the reliability needed for a title tilt.

"We spent a lot of time over the winter, and a lot of money on the car, trying to get down to the nitty-gritty of what's been causing the problems last year," Hirst says.

"In terms of the car itself, I think it's fair to say that every aspect of it has been changed, the suspension, differentials, the mapping and the gearbox."

Hirst admits that it is a "bit of a brave move" considering he won the final Welsh round of 2019 in the same car, but it is a necessary change to unlock the pace to launch a title fight against the likes of Russ Thompson – who has moved up to the B13 class with his own Lancer E9 from NR4 last season – Pat Naylor and Scott Faulkner.

Naylor and Faulkner head the leading NR4 runners and look set to continue their 2019 rivalry, which produced some spectacular fights during the course of the season.

Baz Jordan's monstrous Subaru Legacy RS has been the talk of the service park in the H3 category ahead of the new season. The veteran will run his four-wheel-drive, 350bhp Group A machine for the full year alongside co-driver Arwel Jenkins.

CALENDAR

BTRDA Rally Series

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
February 8	Cambrian Rally	Llandudno, Wales
March 14	Malcolm Wilson Rally	Penrith, England
April 18	Rallynuts Stages Rally	Royal Welsh Showground, Wales
June 6	RSAC Scottish Rally	Lockerbie, Scotland
July 11	Nicky Grist Stages	Builth Wells, Wales
September 5	Woodpecker Rally	Ludlow, England
September 26	Trackrod Rally	North Yorkshire, England

CLASS ROUND-UP

The **Rallye R2 Cup** was one of the most hotly-contested national rallying championships last season, with just 21 points splitting the top five crews all year. Reigning champion Perry Gardener will defend the title in his Ford Fiesta R2, while Mat Tordoff, 2300 Club John Easson Award winner Ewan Tindall and 2019 ST Trophy champion Zak Hughes are all eager to beat him to it.

Hughes, who will drive a Fiesta R2 for the Cambrian before switching to a Renault Twingo R2 with which he will also compete in the BTRDA Mixed Surface Championship, has set high expectations for the year.

"I'll need a bit of time to get to grips with the car but I think, like everyone, the goal has to be to win the R2 Cup this year," says Hughes, who will be co-driven on the Cambrian by Will Atkins before 2019 Welsh Tarmac champion co-driver Ian Beamond joins him.



Champion: Gardener

The **1400s** are also sure to produce another exciting battle this season, with 2018 champion Dave Brick returning in his Vauxhall Nova. Last year's runner-up Chris Powell is also back for another crack at the title in his Talbot Sunbeam alongside Jim Lewis.

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REVIEW

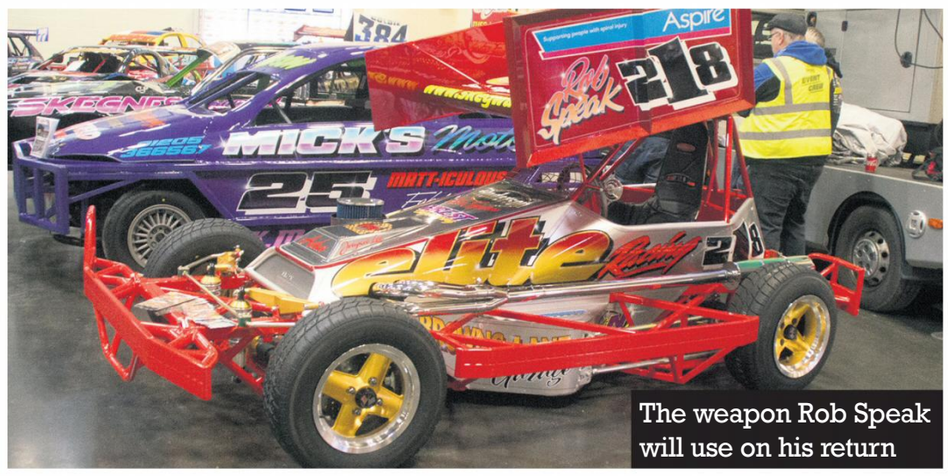
Photos: mkpics.net



Matt Linfield's BriSCA F2 car was star attraction



Will Yarrow's replica of Willie Harrison's racer



The weapon Rob Speak will use on his return

CARS AND STARS TURN HEADS AT MOTORSPORT WITH ATTITUDE SPECTACULAR

Mark Paulson headed to Peterborough to kick off the grassroots racing season

The motorsport fraternity was out in force at the East of England Arena in Peterborough last weekend for the second annual Motorsport With Attitude show. Highlights of the event, which aims to showcase grassroots motorsport such as short oval racing, grasstrack and rallycross, included new car unveilings, stage interviews and live race action.

For many people, star of the show was the newly-built replica car of stock car racing pioneer and 1982 BriSCA Formula 1 world champion Willie Harrison. Painstakingly recreated over the past 12 months by current racer Will Yarrow, the Austin A40-bodied machine replicates the car Harrison raced from '73 to '77 and features a Ford V8 engine from the period before Chevrolets became the norm in the formula.

"When I first saw it, it fetched a tear to my eye," admitted 82-year-old Harrison. Others were similarly moved as they witnessed the moment.

"The response we've had this weekend is beyond expectations really," said Yarrow. "My brother Charlie and friend Richard Johnson helped me with it and, between the three of us, it's a project we were quite passionate about. With the name 'Willie Harrison #2' down the side we couldn't really go wrong, but I'd like to think we've done it justice and it's put a few smiles on faces and brought back a few memories.

"We've tried to be as precise as we could with every detail. The hardest thing was [sourcing] the Austin A40 Farina body."

In a close contest, the Harrison car was pipped to the Best in Show title by Matt Linfield's new KMR BriSCA Formula 2 chassis. Featuring a tribute to long-time short oval racing sponsor Colin North of Teng Tools – who was killed in a tragic accident in November – on its steering wheel, it was fitting that the car earned Linfield the magnificent Colin North Memorial trophy.

"I'm stunned," said Linfield. "I just decided I'd do a little tribute to say thank you to Colin for everything that he's given our sport, oval racing, and motorsport in general."



World champion Rob McDonald's Vuaxhall Tigra upheld Hot Rod honour

Also unveiled at the show on Saturday morning – in front of a large crowd – was eight-time BriSCA F2 world champion Rob Speak's new Elite chassis. Speak, now the promoter of Skegness Raceway, is returning to the formula this year as he hosts September's World Final at his own venue for the first time.

Having claimed the '98 and '99 world titles in cars from Terry George's Elite workshops, Speak will be aiming to rekindle that success more than 20 years later.

"It's a little bit of promotion for our home World Final," said Speak, who will also campaign a Bingley chassis on shale tracks. "I just want to gee the job up a little bit," added the crowd favourite who will resume his rivalry with current world champion Gordon Moodie.

Moodie revealed his own new RCE car and was among 10 reigning world champions from various short oval categories who gathered on stage for a unique photocall. They included BriSCA Formula 1 top man Tom Harris, fresh from racing in the midget car Chili Bowl Nationals in Oklahoma, and National Hot Rod gold-top Rob McDonald.

McDonald's reworked machine was displayed alongside the British Touring Car Championship BMW 125i of Carl Boardley, the four-time Hot Rod world champion who remains one of the formula's leading car constructors.

Among over 300 cars at the show, many took to the live action arena where a damp track only enhanced the spectacle. Unexpected stars of the outdoor action were the grass karts, a new addition for 2020.

"I think your grassroots formulas, it's what they're crying out for," said organiser Dave Rennie, who identified a gap in the market ahead of last year's inaugural event as the oval racing content of the Autosport International began to drop off.

"The feedback was absolutely brilliant [last year] so we thought we've made the first step so now we just need to try and build it. We need the drivers and promoters getting behind it to really push it."

Rennie is keen to keep the show's content fresh, adding more disciplines and introducing new elements as it develops. Plans are afoot for next year's edition – likely to take place on February 6-7 – to feature a rally stage, after various hurdles couldn't be overcome in time to include the feature this year.

"Everybody seems to love it," added Rennie. "There's always that buzz about it, and I think it's because it's motorsport grassroots. It's nice seeing the effort that people put into their cars." ■



All forms of grassroots sport were on display



Carl Boardley's BTCC BMW was a head-turner

REPORT

Photos: Paul Lawrence

WARREN AND TULLIE STRIKE FIRST IN HISTORIC ROAD RALLY SHOWDOWN

Porsche duo head home the battlers after a tough day in Wales. By Martin Phaff



Warren and Tullie topped demanding HRCR event



Crosby and Procter were four minutes from a win

Ross Traders Rally

By Martin Phaff

Organiser: Ross and District Motor Sports Club **When:** February 1 **Where:** Caerwent, Wales **Starters:** 40

The 2020 Historic Rally Car Register Historic Road Rally Championship season kicked off in style for Howard Warren and Iain Tullie in their Porsche 911 as they claimed victory on the Ross Traders Rally. They dominated and sealed the victory by over four minutes from of Paul Crosby and Ali Procter's Porsche 911.

The second-placed crew were also an impressive two minutes ahead of the Volvo Amazon of Paul Dyas and Michael Gilbey.

These three battlers had swapped the lead throughout the event in a competitive contest. Dyas and Gilbey only lost out on the chance of a win on the penultimate regularity section. That feat was even more impressive as it was Gilbey's first regularity rally.

The format of the event appeared simple. All the tests were centred around the Caerwent Military base while the Regularity tests were in the Wye Valley. It was split up with six tests and two regularities in the daylight and then three tests and three regularities in the dark.

The first test gave crews a good idea of the pecking order as it was a stern test. It comprised three miles and included 50 junctions. It was such a demanding test that only 17 crews were able to beat the bogey time.

Crosby/Procter were the leaders from Warren/Tullie after this initial test, while the quickest Expert was Clive Martin and Anji Martin (Ford Escort). Roger Fildes/Lynsey Procter (MGB) were the only Novices to beat bogey.

After the second test, Warren joked that the tests were "a bit long". Co-driver Tullie replied: "The next one's longer, it's five miles…"

They knuckled down and won the stage by six seconds from Dyas/Gilbey. Crosby and Matt Nicoll-Jones (Lancia Fulvia) both suffered punctures with bullet casings ripping through the tyres. Fortunately neither crew lost too much time.

The first regularity, which was a pre-plotted route, proved easy pickings with Warren/Tullie dropping only 15s and Dyas/Gilbey 16s. Keith Jenkins/Tony Brooks (Saab) racked up 19s and were the best in the Experts class. Dominic Hodge/Peter Raine (VW Golf GTi) scored 48 and were best Novices.

The crews then went back to Caerwent for three more tests. The first was won by Peter Joy/Matt Fowle in their beautiful 1959 Lotus Elite. On that section, Mark Turner/Sasha Heriot (Talbot Sunbeam) won the Experts division and Hodge/Raine once again topped the Novices. Fellow Novices John King and Andy Fowler (Porsche 924) were forced to retire on that section after an accident.

Test five had a scary section over an unguarded bridge, but 'care' boards meant all crews managed to get through the area unscathed. Crosby/Procter were quickest with Turner/Heriot head of the Experts division and Michael Mayne/Mark Robinson (Mini Cooper S) winning the Novices.

Test six was all about retirements. John and Rob Kiff were forced out when their VW Beetle lost its clutch. Darren Everitt/Susan Dixon (Triumph 2000) were forced out as Dixon was unwell. Frontrunners Simon Mellings/Henry Carr (Rover 216) were forced to abandon their run when they arrived at speed at the finish only to find they had lost all their brakes. The test was won by Dyas/Gilbey with Turner/Heriot again topping the Experts class and Fildes/Procter the Novices.

Regulation two utilised first the inner Eastern tracks of Caerwent, and then used a run round the perimeter road. Although the route was handed out to the navigators as they left the start control, it was easy enough to plot. Dyas/Gilbey won on 26s with Mark Goodwin/Anthony Davies (Dolomite Sprint) and Mayne/Robinson taking class honours.

At the rest halt, Warren/Tullie led Crosby/Procter by 21s with Turner/Heriot and Mayne/Robinson leading the classes.

As darkness fell, the crews reassembled for three more tests. On the first, Dyas/Gilbey took 26s out of the field to take the lead in the rally while Turner/Heriot and Hodge/Raine continued to maintain class advantage.

The next test was the longest of the rally at 5.3 miles. On that challenge, Ian Crammond/Matt Vokes (Mercedes-Benz 280SL) were fastest. Hugh Garnish/David Bell (Peugeot 205 GTi) also put in a great run as only three Experts beat bogey and all the Novices took bogeys.

The last test ruined the good run of Goodwin/Davies, which came to an end with electrical failure. Crosby/Procter won and guest driver Nicoll-Jones, getting to grips with the car and competing on his first rally, put in a great time to be fourth quickest.

Garnish/Bell took another chunk out of the Expert class, which moved them into the top 10, and Hodge/Raine took the Novices.

All that remained was three regularities. The first and third were handouts at the start controls, so navigators were under pressure. The first was made more difficult as it was a printed map with the instruction on the reverse.

Dyas/Gilbey triumphed but regularity four was where their hopes of a win were dashed as they missed a code board.

Crammond/Vokes and Andre Scruton/John Youd (Porsche 911) shared honours on the penultimate test as Experts Roger Powley/Brian Goff got through with just 30s added. All the Novices missed at least one control.

The final regularity, again a handout at the start control, caught out most. It used the A40 dual carriageway in both directions and only nine cars found all the controls. Only two of those managed it without incurring a minute's penalty somewhere: take a bow Jenkins/Brooks, who took top spot from Garnish/Bell.

At the finish, there was universal praise for Paul Morris and his team at Ross and District Motor Sports Club, with its event offering new ideas and, although the consensus was that it was a tough route, it was really rewarding.

Results

1 Howard Warren/Iain Tullie (Porsche 911) 83.56s; 2 Paul Crosby/Ali Procter (911) 88.30s; 3 Paul Dyas/Michael Gilbey (Volvo Amazon); 4 Ian Crammond/Matt Vokes (Mercedes-Benz 280SL); 5 Hugh Garnish/David Bell (Peugeot 205 GTi); 6 Gavin Rogers/Carrie Rogers (Reliant Scimitar); 7 Mark Turner/Sasha Heriot (Talbot Sunbeam); 8 Noel Hughes/Gwawr Hughes (MGB GT); 9 Keith Jenkins/Tony Brooks (Saab); 10 Matt Nicoll-Jones/Martin Phaff (Lancia Fulvia). Class winners: Experts Garnish/Bell; Novices: Matthew Smith/Simon Hawken (Mini).



Racer Nicoll-Jones took 10th



A missed code board cost Dyas and Gilbey

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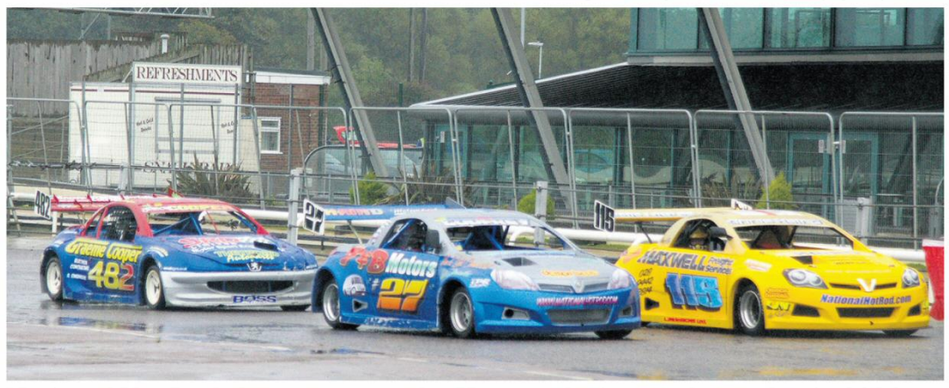
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SPORTING SCENE

GREAT YARMOUTH ADDED TO HOT ROD BILL

Another short oval returns to the roster for English points contest

Photos: Hal Ridge, Anatolijs Calko, Andros Trophy, mkpics.net



National Hot Rods have not raced at Yarmouth since a damp day in 2010

By Matt James

The English National Hot Rod series will return to race at Great Yarmouth in Norfolk at the start of the 2020-2021 campaign.

It is the first time in 10 years that the high-profile short oval category has visited the track, which is bordered by post-and-wire fencing.

Dates for the second half of the 2019-2020 series and the opening seven rounds of 2020-2021 have been released, and have continued the variety that was added to the schedule last season. In 2019, National Hot Rods raced at Skegness and also returned to Buxton Raceway, and now Yarmouth slots in as the third round of the 2020-2021 campaign. The Yarmouth round is on August 30.

Northampton International Raceway, which was re-laid with a shale surface in 2018, has dropped off the schedule and there could still be question marks regarding the future of Birmingham Wheels Raceway as negotiations are ongoing with the city council, which has prompted some of the rethink in the National Hot Rod line-up. Birmingham remains on the roster for the time being.

Spedeworth's Billy Wood said that the calendar for the 2020 calendar year would offer some variety.

Wood, who won the World Final at Ipswich in 2018 in his Vauxhall Tigra, said: "It is always nice to go to different venues, because it means it is as much about how you set the car up as it is about the driving. It adds another element to it, and that is a fresh challenge for everyone.

"Sometimes, when you go to the same venues all the time, you are pretty much looking at the one-circuit experts being at the front. Mixing it up can add some variety to the results too."

Hot Rods last raced at the track in 2010. Experienced campaigner Mikey Godfrey was part of that meeting, and he is pleased that the series will return.

"It's a great stadium and the facilities there are brilliant," he said. "In a way, it is similar to Birmingham in size, but there is the added excitement of the post-and-wire waiting to catch you out. You have to be brave to go round the outside if you want to make a pass, so it is demanding."

CALENDAR

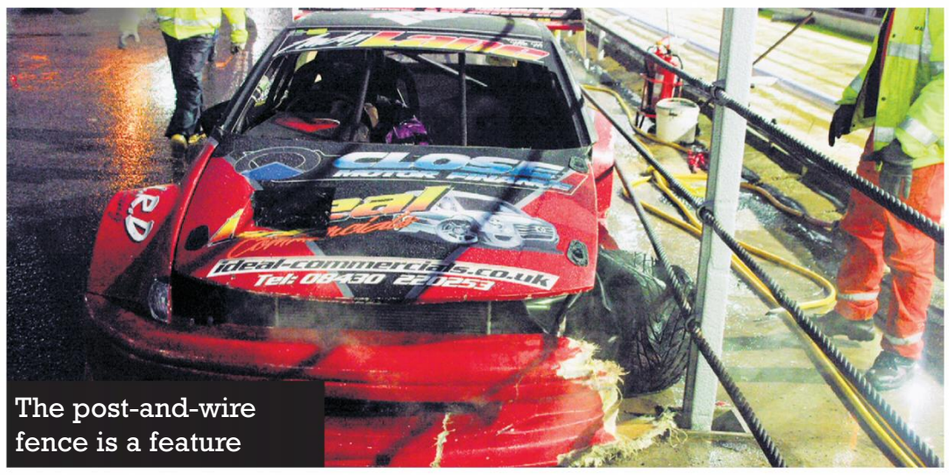
National Hot Rods English Championship 2019-2020

DATE	VENUE	RND
March 7	Birmingham Wheels	8
March 29	Hednesford Hills	9
April 10	Skegness Raceway	10
April 13	Ipswich	11
May 10	Hednesford Hills	12
May 25	Ipswich	13
June 7	Aldershot Raceway	14

2020-2021

DATE	VENUE	RND
July 19	Buxton	1
Aug 15	Birmingham Wheels	2
Aug 30	Great Yarmouth	3
Aug 31	Ipswich	4
Sept 13	Aldershot	5
Oct 17	Ipswich	6
Nov 1	Hednesford Hills	7

Other dates: European Championship (Lochgelly) April 25-26; Thunder 500 (Ipswich) June 20, World Final (Ipswich) July 4-5; National Championships (Hednesford Hills) July 31-August 2.



The post-and-wire fence is a feature



Gehrman has raced the VW Polo

Ambitious Swedish pair join the roster for 2020 European Rallycross Championship in a Clio and a Polo

Swedes Philip Gehrman and Andreas Carlsson will race a Volkswagen Polo and Renault Clio in the European Rallycross Championship this season.

The pair raced in the RallyX Nordic series last year. Carlsson, who has previously driven his self-developed Clio with a five-cylinder engine – a similar specification to that used by the Walfridsson-owned Helmia Motorsport team – will now run a 'custom' engine in the car for his 2020 campaign.

Gehrman, meanwhile, will campaign an ex-Kristoffersson Motorsport Volkswagen Polo in the series. The former Euro RX TouringCar racer finished third overall in the Nordic Supercar standings last term, but was plagued by mechanical troubles.

Gehrman said: "We had high hopes for the 2019 season – we had a new car, a new team and in the end we achieved our goal to be in the top three in RallyX Nordic, despite the season being marred by some problems with the car that made it impossible for me to fight for the absolute top positions.

"The car has had a good overhaul during the winter to once again become the speed bomb that took [Johan] Kristoffersson to second in World RX in 2016."

Ex-rally man Donnelly to tackle British RX contest

Former British Rally Championship frontrunner Mark Donnelly will race an LD Motorsports Citroen DS 3 Supercar in the British Rallycross Five Nations Championship this season.

The experienced rally campaigner first sampled a rallycross Supercar in a Titans RX support race at Lydden Hill last summer, driving an LDM Citroen C4, and will now compete in a full season with a DS 3 previously raced by owner Liam Doran.

Donnelly told Motorsport News: "My first experience of a Supercar at Lydden kind of blew my mind with the power. Just the sheer grunt of a Supercar off the line is so impressive.

"Coming from the last rallying I did in an R5, it just didn't compare. For motorsport it's just completely different, a different kind of adrenaline.



Donnelly drove car at Lydden

I really enjoyed it at Lydden and by the end of the event I was really getting a feel for it, so I thought it would be nice to go back and do a bit more, then I had the opportunity to come up and do the Five Nations championship, and I jumped at it."

Donnelly's last full motorsport campaign was at the wheel of a Citroen DS 3 R3 in the British Rally Championship in 2013. Having made sporadic appearances in selected machinery in recent years, Donnelly is ready for a new challenge and is eyeing success.

"I haven't been in a car for a while and there's a ton of cobwebs, it takes a while to blow them off," he said. "There's only one way to be competitive and that's with seat time. My first hope is that I don't embarrass myself. But I'd like to be up there fighting for podiums and wins this year. I don't think I'd be going to compete if I thought anything else."



PHOTO: XXXXXXXX

World Cup Alpine Ski champion Marcel Hirscher and American RX champion Tanner Foust (above) demonstrated an EKS Audi S1 World RX Supercar and a former GRC and American RX Volkswagen Beetle Supercar at the now annual GP Ice Race held in Austria's Zell am See last weekend. They joined an eclectic line up of cars and drivers including Formula E driver Daniel Abt, DTM champion Rene Rast and Stig Blomqvist in their familiar machinery, adapted to be driven on the ice-covered layout.



Another win for Panis took the title

Weather threatens the final round of the Andros Trophy but can't take the heat off a title charge for Panis

World Touring Car Cup star Aurelien Panis wrapped up the Andros Trophy title in a season finale marred by unseasonably warm weather conditions at Super Besse last weekend.

The final event of the 2019-2020 season was held over just a single round, where victory for pre-weekend points-leader Panis secured the first all-electric top-flight Andros Trophy title.

World Rally legend Sebastien Loeb returned for another of his selected appearances this winter with his own Sebastien Loeb Racing team. He beat Panis to fastest time in Q1 and took the top qualifier position ahead of the finals, but it was Panis who pipped the nine-time WRC title-winner to victory.

Benjamin Riviere completed the podium, while four-time champion Jean-Baptiste Dubourg could manage no better than fifth in the final and ended the campaign second in the points. In the Elite category, Jeremy Sarhy claimed the crown.

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MN SAYS...

It is time to start the serious planning

The season is drawing closer, and it is time to make a dream date for 2020



Calendars are always quite a rubbish Christmas present, particularly as, at the time they are gifted to you, there is a whole bunch of blank pages staring back at you. In late 2019, the prospects for 2020 seem far enough away not to worry about.

But Motorsport News has started ramping up the excitement ahead of the 2020 season with our essential list of the motorsport events that you must not miss throughout the next 11 months. There is everything there, from the rally celebration events to the bumper-crunching drama that will unfold on the short ovals up and down the United Kingdom. This is only the start, however. Rest assured that Motorsport News is in the process of plotting its national racing and national rallying calendars, which will be published in March. That is when the diary comes into its own. The only advice we can give is to make sure the dates added are (literally) pencilled in. There is so much to see and do that you might well change your mind in a couple of months and head to an alternative motorsport event. The season starts here – but have we missed anything out? Let us know at letters@motorsport-news.co.uk.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)

YOUR PICS

LETTERS@MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK

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

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



Rich Cranston enjoyed the sweet sound of this Lamborghini Huracan during a recent testing session at Donington Park



Ben Lawrence sent in this snap of a trialling Smart Car



Cars everywhere! Brands Hatch Stages, from Charlie Killick



Howard Fowler's rally testing photo from Smeatharpe Airfield



Passenger doing the work: photo taken by Duncan Stephens



David Harbey's photograph of rallying at Brands Hatch



An out-of-shape TR7 at Brands, sent in to MN by Gary Hill



More action from the Yas Marina circuit, from Dean Chilvers

GOT AN OPINION?

LET US KNOW: LETTERS@MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK

LISTINGS

RALLY

SATURDAY

Llandudno, NorthWales
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Admission £10 for parking
Web cambrianrally.co.uk

Goodwood, Sussex
Phil Collings Memorial South Downs Stages
Starts 0900hrs
Admission free
Web southdownsstages.co.uk

SUNDAY

Thirsk, NYorks
Able UK Riponian Stages Rally
Starts 0830hrs
Admission £10 for parking
Web rmsc.org.uk

TV GUIDE

The penultimate round of the 2019-20 **Andros Trophy** took place from Lans en Vercors located in the southeast of France.

You can catch highlights of all the thrills on Friday (0600-0700hrs, Freesports) as Aurelien Panis and Jean-Baptiste Dubourg battled it out for supremacy at the top of the standings.

There may not be any Formula 1 action for a few more weeks, but **F1 Classic Races** is here to keep your spirits up. The latest instalment is the 2003 Brazilian Grand Prix, which is one of the most dramatic races in F1 history. Torrential rain, high speed crashes, a red flag and initially the wrong winner being declared mean this race is certainly one to savour (Saturday, 2000-2215hrs, Sky Sports F1).

And finally, ahead of the next round of the **2019-20 Formula E Championship** from Mexico City next weekend, catch up with the previous round (Tuesday, 1030-1130hrs, Eurosport 2).

Taking place in Chile, the Santiago ePrix was franctic throughout with three different leaders as Max Guenther took his maiden win in the category.

LIVE TV

NASCAR: Daytona

Race: Sunday, 1930hrs, Premier Sports 2



Kyle Busch won 2019 NASCAR title

BOOK REVIEW FORMULA ONE: THE CHAMPIONS

Formula 1 world champions are an exclusive bunch. Just 33 have achieved the status across the championship's 70-year history from the 600-plus drivers to compete in F1, plus the innumerable pretenders who did not even make it that far.

And in *Formula One: The Champions*, out on March 3, the redoubtable scribe Maurice Hamilton explores every single one of those 33 remarkable people in his latest work. Just like with his 2016 title *The Pursuit of Speed*, for this he has teamed up with father-and-son Bernard and Paul-Henri Cahier of The Cahier Archive photographic collection.

The trio is well-placed to take on the task, with Hamilton offering four decades of F1 front-line reporting as well as a keen eye for its history, while the notable Cahier collection stretches back to the F1 championship's beginnings and has remained in its original creator's hands throughout. It all ensures that in this book each champion receives a lavish portrait in words and pictures.



Book is due for release March 3

But it is something easier said than done. As Hamilton notes at the outset, F1's champions not only are diverse but have participated in an activity changed almost beyond recognition across time. Hamilton therefore sensibly shuns the "impossible" task of comparing champions; statistics also are rarely cited. He instead lets the reader decide, informed by a portrayal of each driver that is authoritative and entertaining; positive without being hagiographic. He does not merely plot achievement, as he also paints the personality and modus operandi.

The Cahier pictures – some previously unpublished – are plenty, varied and high-quality, and add to the depth offered for each champion in and out the car. Highlights include Alberto Ascari pivoting his Lancia D50 through Tabac with Monaco's elegant backdrop, Colin Chapman with his arm around the neck of still-in-the-cockpit Jim Clark as they celebrate his first F1 win of many, and Alain Prost's McLaren exiting Detroit's pits beneath the towering Renaissance Centre.

Each driver's section is across six or eight pages, aside from Michael Schumacher's which, perhaps appropriately, gets 10. The book's format means Hamilton's portraits are concise, but they rarely feel too basic. There also is no notable drop-off in insight for the drivers who pre-date his time in F1, which he has clearly researched assiduously. The chapters on Schumacher, Prost and Ayrton Senna strike as more text-heavy than the rest though.

A minor criticism is that chapters on two or three of the champions strike as too light. But commonly the detail is rich and often illuminating, such as Jack Brabham's antics after receiving his OBE in 1966, when he alarmed officials after being found in a Buckingham Palace courtyard underneath his road car whacking its jammed starter motor. Or discovering the lengths Nelson Piquet went to in order to help an old mechanic friend left crippled after a customer "used a handgun to settle his bill". Pre and post-F1 careers are covered too.

And the foreword is by none other than Bernie Ecclestone. He states that of the 33 champions "one way or another, I knew them all," and that "they were united by being very competitive and extremely astute". Though, being Ecclestone, he also has a detour about why the world champion is not that important…

Moreover the book is beautifully presented, and is a sizable 240-page hardback. With all this, even at £35 it feels like great value and highly recommended.

Graham Keilloh

NEXT WEEK

OUT WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

HOW HISTORIC RACING IS TACKLING THE ENVIRONMENT

How do classic racers bring themselves bang up to date?





WHAT NEXT FOR RACING POINT?

The effects of the Aston Martin deal in Formula 1

IS NATIONAL RACING BURSTING AT THE SEAMS?



The 2020 calendar investigated in detail

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Yalding, Maidstone Kent ME18 6AL

EDITORIAL
Editor: Matt James
Tel: 0203 405 8149
Email: matt.james@motorsport-news.co.uk

Deputy Editor: Stephen Lickorish
Tel: 0203 405 8152
Email: stephen.lickorish@motorsport-news.co.uk

Reporter: Stefan Mackley
Tel: 0203 405 8151
Email: stefan.mackley@motorsport-news.co.uk

Art Editor: Mike Stokoe
Tel: 0203 405 8150
Email: mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk

Contributors
Group Rallying Editor: David Evans

Historics Editor: Paul Lawrence

Rallycross Editor: Hal Ridge

ADVERTISING
Tandem Media Ltd.
Account Director: Richard Rowe
Email: richard@tandemmedia.co.uk
Tel: 01233 228757

Account Manager: Peri Smith
Email: perianne@tandemmedia.co.uk
Tel: 01233 228753

PRODUCTION
Tandem Media Ltd.
Ad Production Manager: Andy Welch
Email: mn@tandemmedia.co.uk
Tel: 01233 220245

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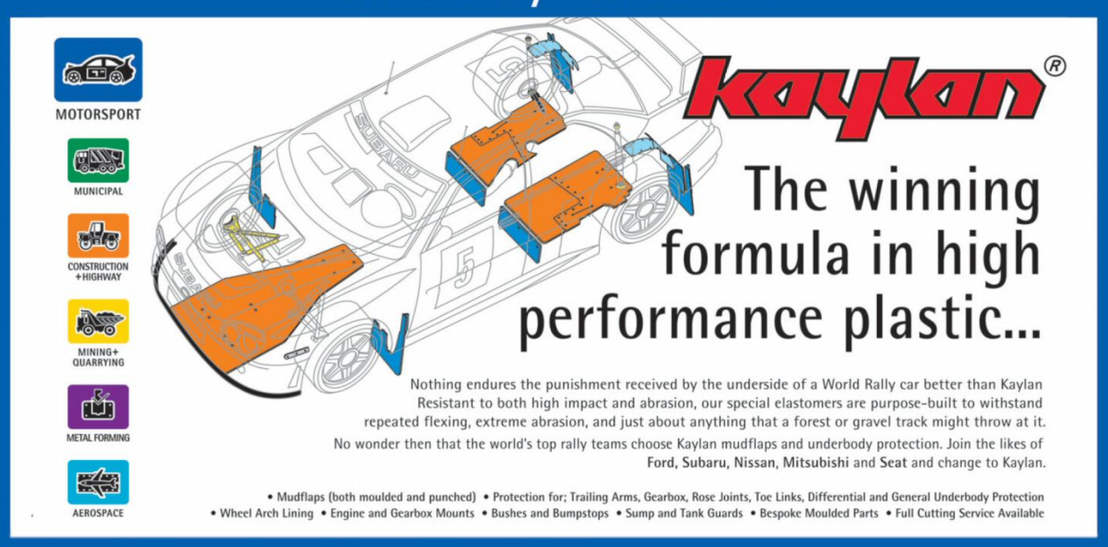
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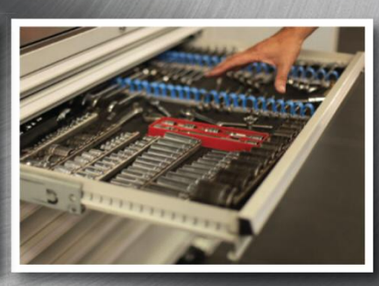
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THIS CLASSIFIED SECTION WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Christian Plucknett
Advertising Sales
T: +44 (0) 20 3405 8110
E: christian.plucknett@motorsport.com

Nick Gavigan
Advertising Sales
T: +44 (0) 20 3405 8148
E: nick.gavigan@motorsport.com

Ben Webster
Senior Production Controller
T: +44 (0) 20 3405 8131
E: ben.webster@motorsport.com

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