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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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HOW TEAM HARD FIELDS A MAMMOTH FLEET P20

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Silverstone chiefs want answers on the future of F1

BRITISH GP BOSSES LEAD CALLS FOR

F1 SHAKE-UP



By Matt James

Leading grand prix promoters have urged F1 owner Liberty Media to rethink the way it runs the series.

The Formula One Promoters Association, which is made up of leading venue bosses including the heads of Silverstone, has issued a statement asking Liberty Media to address several issues including the financial base of existing and new races. There are also concerns about the lack of free-to-air television in many European countries.

Silverstone boss Stuart Pringle said: "If this continues, F1 will be racing on second-rate circuits, if at all."

Full story, p2-3

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MOTORSPORT NEWS ISSUE MJ3166 FEBRUARY 6 2019

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Silverstone heads the call for a revolution

By Matt James

The Formula One Promoters Association has criticised F1 owner Liberty Media and it has asked for an urgent rethink regarding the future of grand prix racing.

Sixteen promoters – including the bosses of the British Grand Prix – are part of the organisation which has raised concerns about some of the initiatives surrounding the engagement of fans with grand prix racing and the lack of clarity over the vision for the future.

Silverstone chiefs announced in July 2017 that they had activated a break clause in their agreement to host the British Grand Prix and talks have been going on in the background ever since. However, without a resolution being met, there is a very real threat that the race could be lost to the United Kingdom.

Silverstone, which is owned and operated by the British Racing Drivers' Club, is one of five venues which are approaching the end of their contracts to operate a grand prix and none of those tracks where the deals are coming to an end have a clear picture about their future prospects.

The original deal to operate the British Grand Prix was negotiated with F1's previous tsar, Bernie Ecclestone, and it included an escalating fee to host the event. With other restrictions on revenue streams put in place by that original deal, the BRDC and Silverstone felt that the deal was untenable and decided to take advantage of the break clause to limit any further potential losses.

The British Grand Prix is one of several in the process of renegotiating its deal with Liberty Media, but the promoters association is concerned about the direction that Liberty is taking grand prix racing.

The promoters association includes members from most grands prix, although it is understood that Russia, Bahrain, Japan, Abu Dhabi and China are not involved.

After last week's meeting, the promoters group issued a statement outlining its concerns to Liberty Media.

They include worries about the loss of F1 on free-to-air television, which will affect the United Kingdom in 2019.

Motorsport News understands that free-to-air TV is a central plinth of Liberty's plans to grow the series in newer territories and it is putting measures in place to make sure this happens, while countries that have a long-standing history with F1 are not provided with this.

Promoters are concerned that a lack of viewers in F1 will directly result in a loss of revenue when it comes to ticket sales.

There has also been some concern about initiatives that Liberty Media has put in place to promote the series which have been done without any consultation of the existing promoters or venues.

Some of them, such as fan experiences, are being created in the host country on the weekend of the events, but not in the same location.

Motorsport News understands that this has angered some of the venue bosses.

The statement added: "As we enter a new season of the sport that we have promoted for many decades, the promoters seek a more collaborative approach to the development of the championship and the opportunity to offer their experience and expertise in a spirit of partnership with Formula 1 and the FIA."

The existing promoters are also concerned about the proposed business model for new races, with the mooted grand prix in Miami coming under the spotlight. It is believed that the organisers of the race in Florida have been talking about a profit-sharing scheme with Liberty, which is at odds with the way most of the other races on the calendar are operated.

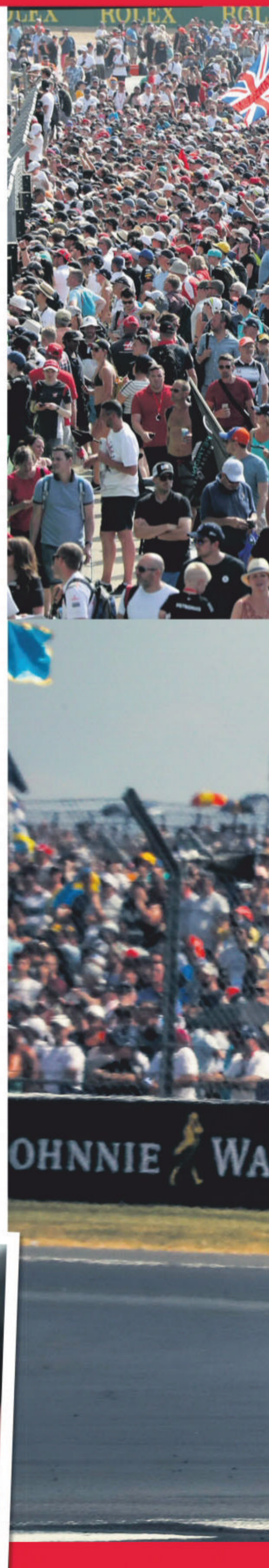
F1 is set to include the race in Miami and the first Vietnamese Grand Prix in 2020, but the full schedule has yet to be finalised.

British Grand Prix promoter Stuart Pringle, who is boss of the Silverstone track, warned against free deals to new races when existing ones like the United States GP in Texas are trying to make their event pay.

"If this continues, Formula 1 will be racing on second-rate circuits, if any at all," Pringle told the *Daily Mail*. "Everyone is disgruntled. Liberty's ideas are disjointed. We have all been compliant and quiet hitherto, but we have great concerns about the future health of the sport under the people who run it now."



Pringle says that Liberty Media needs to reassess F1's future



HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: LAT

in Formula 1



Fans are vital for each Formula 1 race to make revenue, and circuits want this protected

F1 TRACK BOSSES URGE LIBERTY TO RETHINK THE FUTURE



Silverstone is one of the venues unsure of its grand prix future

RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT

F1 ROUND-UP

Season launch

Formula 1 will launch its 2019 season with an event in downtown Melbourne on March 13, the Wednesday before the Australian Grand Prix weekend begins. The exhibition will follow a similar format to the stage element of the London F1 Live event back in 2017, in which all drivers – bar the absent Lewis Hamilton and several team principals – were interviewed in front of the crowd. But this time F1 has promised all 20 drivers and 10 team bosses will attend the event in Australia. Organised in partnership with the local promoter, the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, it will also feature past F1 stars and musical acts.

Exciting angles

F1 is having a major rethink of its trackside television camera strategy for 2019 in order to better translate the speed of the cars to the screen. "There's a big push for 2019 to reflect the speed of the sport, and the pace of the cars," said Dean Lock, F1's head of TV and media. "There's a rethink on all camera positions. If you're in the grandstand and watch them, they look incredible, don't they? Camera angles, or lenses, can cheat that quite a lot, and make them look not so dramatic and not quite as quick. So we looked at different ways to do that, a few little tricks."

Hartley's move

Ex-Toro Rosso F1 driver **Brendon Hartley** has landed a Ferrari simulator role for 2019. Hartley was axed by Red Bull after just one full season in F1, a move he recently claimed was the result of a plan that began during the Monaco Grand Prix weekend early in the year. The Le Mans 24 Hours winner and World Endurance champion had not communicated any 2019 plans so far but has now been confirmed as part of Ferrari's development team. Ferrari needed to replace two key simulator drivers from 2018, after Antonio Giovinazzi and Daniil Kvyat landed full-time race seats at Sauber and Toro Rosso respectively.

Vandoorne's joy

Ex-McLaren driver Stoffel Vandoorne says he is enjoying Formula E following his F1 exit because of the difference in camaraderie between drivers and paddock "politics". Vandoorne failed to make an impact over two seasons with poor McLaren machinery, and has since switched to FE with the new HWA team. "It definitely was not the best moment in my career after everything was running kind of smooth before, but I think it made me stronger," said Vandoorne. "I'm in a completely different environment, which personally I've been enjoying a lot. It is a lot more relaxed because of the way the drivers get on with each other, the politics in the paddock."

SAUBER REBRANDS AS ALFA ROMEO RACING FOR 2019

Historic brand increases F1 involvement



Team's ownership hasn't changed

By Scott Mitchell

The Sauber name will disappear from the Formula 1 grid in 2019 as the team officially rebrands as Alfa Romeo Racing.

Alfa's title sponsorship of Sauber last year marked its first major F1 involvement since the 1985 season. That partnership was always intended to expand onto a technical front to enable Alfa, part of the Fiat Group that includes Ferrari, to become more actively involved.

The team will be entered into the 2019 world championship as Alfa Romeo Racing, effectively reviving the works entry that won the inaugural F1 titles in 1950 and '51.

It is not strictly an out-and-out factory operation, as Sauber's ownership and management remain unchanged and independent of Alfa.

The cars, which will be driven by 2007 world champion Kimi Raikkonen and Ferrari test and development driver Antonio Giovinazzi, will sport Alfa's four-leaf clover emblem that denotes its high-performance vehicles.

Alfa team principal Frederic Vasseur said: "It is a pleasure to announce that we will enter the 2019 Formula 1 World Championship with the team name Alfa Romeo Racing.

"After initiating the collaboration with our title sponsor Alfa Romeo in 2018, our team made fantastic progress on the technical, commercial, and sporting side.

"This has given a boost of motivation to each team member, be that track-side or at the headquarters in Switzerland, as the hard work invested has become reflected in our results.

"We aim to continue developing every

sector of our team while allowing our passion for racing, technology and design to drive us forward."

The Sauber name has been on the F1 grid since 1993, even when it was bought by BMW and ran as a fully-fledged works team from 2006-09.

Founded by Peter Sauber, the team scored points in its debut season and every year thereafter, with the exception of a troubled 2014 campaign.

It struggled again in 2016 and '17 but fresh investment, hiring Vasseur as team boss and establishing closer links with Ferrari and subsequently Alfa have helped revitalise its fortunes.

That left Sauber tipped as the team to watch in F1 this year, following its improvement with contemporary Ferrari engines and an enhanced technical effort in 2018 that helped it finish eighth in the constructors'

championship, its best result since 2015.

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles CEO Mike Manley added: "Alfa Romeo Racing is a new name with a long history in Formula 1.

"We're proud to collaborate with Sauber in bringing Alfa Romeo's tradition of technical excellence and Italian panache to the pinnacle of motorsport.

"Make no mistake: with Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi on one side of the pitwall and Alfa Romeo and Sauber expertise on the other, we are here to compete."

The last Alfa Romeo-named F1 car to compete was the 184TB in 1985 driven by Riccardo Patrese and Eddie Cheever – Patrese described the car as "the worst he'd driven". Alfa's final F1 involvement before its partnership with Sauber was supplying the Osella squad with engines from 1983-88.

Gasly believes Red Bull drive is payback for when he was overlooked for F1 seat after GP2 success

Pierre Gasly feels his Red Bull Formula 1 shot is payback for being snubbed after his GP2 title success, when he was "at the right place at the wrong time".

Gasly became Red Bull's first junior to win the GP2 championship in 2016 but had to race in Super Formula the following year as Carlos Sainz Jr and Daniil Kvyat were retained at Toro Rosso. However, Sainz's early move to Renault

and Kvyat being dropped after a poor run of results meant Red Bull drafted Gasly into its junior team for five races at the end of 2017.

Gasly earned a full-time Toro Rosso drive for 2018 and was then handed an early

Red Bull has promoted Gasly

promotion to the senior team to replace the Renault-bound Daniel Ricciardo.

"I always believed that if you do right things, at some point good things will come to you," Gasly said when asked if it was payback for having to wait for his first F1 chance.

"I'm really happy to see it paying off now. I get great opportunities thanks to

all the hard work I've done in the past.

"I've been sometimes at the right place at the wrong time, and this time I've been at the right place at the right time.

"My life has been pretty awesome in the last 13 months. It has not always been the case but I always felt like, 'OK, if I keep pushing as hard as I can, and keep giving the maximum out of myself, good things are going to come'."

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'Chance of a lifetime at Daytona'
Sunoco Challenge, p22



Photos: LAT



De Ferran (l) and Agag reveal concept

EXTREME E OFF-ROAD CONCEPT UNVEILED

The nature of the Extreme E electric off-road SUV racing series has been unveiled by co-founders Gil de Ferran and Alejandro Agag. The championship, which is operated in association with Formula E, hosted a launch event on the river Thames in central London last week on board the Royal Mail Ship St Helena. XE will hold electric SUV racing events in five remote areas of the world – the Arctic, the Himalayas, the Sahara desert, the Amazon rainforest and islands in the Indian Ocean. The concept, which will begin in

January 2021, has already been presented to nine "very serious" manufacturers, according to Agag. "We've had very preliminary conversations with some, which have been really interesting," he said. "But we've even been fine-tuning the concept a lot until [recently]. "We are about to finish the sporting regulations and the technical regulations. When we have that, manufacturers need to really make up their minds and make a study." Entrants will use the same spec-chassis base underneath bespoke

silhouette SUV racing designs, with limited powertrain areas available for development. Technology developed for Formula E will feature on the cars which will be approximately twice as powerful as those used in the single-seater series. The spec XE parts will be the base chassis, battery, suspension, ECU and software, as well as an FE powertrain motor. The event format will be a series of head-to-heads over stages approximately five miles long, with a round-robin group stage leading to a knockout tournament

to decide the event winner. The drivers will race side-by-side, with XE organisers emphasising that it is not a rally format. XE is aiming for 12 one-car teams and is targeting major manufacturers that produce electric SUV models as entrants. There will be two groups of six teams, with the drivers in each group competing head-to-head in sequence. Points will be awarded for each group race winner, with the final order of the group deciding the knockout match-ups in a seeded system – highest to lowest.

Race winning pass 'on the edge' of fair

The pass that sealed the Bathurst 12 Hour victory for Porsche was "on the edge" of fair, according to former GP3 driver Jake Dennis. The Brit had been leading the race in the #62 Aston Martin with a little over 10 minutes to go, only to be run down by a hard-charging Matt Campbell on fresher tyres due to a late safety car. The race-defining move came at Forrest's Elbow as Campbell surprised Dennis by nosing up the inside and running the Vantage wide to get the advantage down Conrod Straight. The #912 EBM Porsche that Campbell shared with Dirk Werner and Dennis Olsen also survived a post-race investigation after Campbell made contact with Chaz Mostert's BMW M6 GT3 in the final stint.

"I've had my fair share of contact over the years, trying to get passed people and stuff," said Dennis. "It was on the edge, it really was. We squeezed each other quite hard. If the contact wasn't made, he wouldn't have got by. "It was a shame to lose it like that but I can't do anything about it." In qualifying Dennis had the Allan Simonsen Trophy for pole position taken away after a technical breach rendered his shootout lap illegal. He already had a two-place grid penalty for speeding in the pitlane. Three-time British Touring Car champions Matt Neal and Gordon Shedden were unable to even take part in the event after the Audi R8 LMS they were sharing with Pete Storey was damaged at The Chase during practice.

and see where we go in the future. "For us, the fortunate situation we have that every year with all of the series is that we do the last race and then sit together and decide how we go forward. "We don't have to do any development or anything. The car is there, the team is there, so it's easy for us." Ford is also evaluating its WEC programme as the American brand's future beyond the end of the 2018/19 campaign remains unresolved.



EBM Porsche team kept win



Future in WEC uncertain for BMW

No guarantee BMW will stay in World Endurance Championship beyond Le Mans

BMW could quit the World Endurance Championship after just a single season in the series, MN's sister publication Autosport has learned. The manufacturer joined the WEC's GTE Pro class at the start of 2018 with its new M8 GTE, which is also competing in the IMSA SportsCar Championship. While the car has enjoyed success in IMSA, and took GT Le Mans class victory in the 2019 Daytona 24 Hours, BMW sits last in the WEC GTE Pro

manufacturers' standings with just a sole podium scored between the two MTEK-run M8s in five races. BMW motorsport boss Jens Marquardt said: "There are still a lot of things we have to look in to in WEC, we definitely haven't extracted the maximum performance from our package. "That's what we'll focus on with the remaining races. Once we've wrapped up everything, that's when we're going to sit down and assess

and see where we go in the future. "For us, the fortunate situation we have that every year with all of the series is that we do the last race and then sit together and decide how we go forward. "We don't have to do any development or anything. The car is there, the team is there, so it's easy for us." Ford is also evaluating its WEC programme as the American brand's future beyond the end of the 2018/19 campaign remains unresolved.

Team Goh returns to racing with McLaren

The Le Mans 24 Hours-winning Team Goh squad will make a return to motorsport this season with McLaren after a 10-year absence. Longtime Japanese sportscar entrant Kazumichi Goh, who won Le Mans with Audi in 2004, is reviving his team for a domestic campaign in '19 with the new McLaren 720S GT3 car. It will be the first racing programme for Goh since he entered a Porsche RS Spyder LMP2 car at the 2009 Le Mans 24 Hours and renews the team's relationship with McLaren, which yielded the 1996 Japanese GT Championship title with the F1 GTR. Goh said: "I've been looking for the right time to return, and with GT3 offering a very stable platform and McLaren Automotive doing their own car in-house, it made sense to do it now."



McLaren 720S GT3 will be used

QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

Ex-Williams Formula 1 driver Sergey Sirotkin will contest the remaining rounds of the 2018/19 World Endurance Championship with SMP Racing. He replaces Matevos Isaakyan in the Russian team's #17 car line-up alongside Egor Orudzhev and Stephane Sarrazin for the 1000-mile Sebring race, the following round at Spa in May, and the Le Mans 24 Hours season finale... Conor Daly has joined Andretti Autosport for the 2019 Indianapolis 500, as the IndyCar

team expands to five entries. The former GP2 driver took part in last year's Indy 500 for Dale Coyne Racing, only narrowly making the race after James Hinchcliffe and Pippa Mann were eliminated on Bump Day... **Formula Renault Eurocup teams were able to shakedown the category's new car for the first time at the Cremona Circuit in Italy last week. The car, which includes a halo, was tested by eight teams including defending champion R-ace GP...** The Land Motorsport Audi has lost its second

position in class at last month's Daytona 24 Hours for a procedural irregularity. The German team's GT Daytona class Audi R8 LMS driven by Dries Vanthoor, Christopher Mies, Daniel Morad and Ricky Feller has been penalised for a drive-time infringement and dropped to the back of the field... **Three-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Risi Competizione is aiming to return to the French endurance race this year. The US-based Ferrari team has filed an entry for the race under its own name for the**

first time since 2017... Ferrari and Honda have signed up for the Intercontinental GT Challenge, bringing the number of manufacturers registered for the series to eight. Honda and Ferrari will now be able to score drivers' and manufacturers' points in the five-round GT3 endurance series along with Audi, Mercedes, Bentley, Porsche, BMW and Nissan... **Chevrolet will contest its home round of the World Endurance Championship at Sebring in March. The US manufacturer will field a**



The new Brabham BT62 track day car that is expected to race in the 2021 World Endurance Championship beat the lap record at Mount Panorama last weekend. Driven by Luke Youlden, Bathurst winner in 2017, he beat the closed-car record of 1m59s set by Christopher Mies in an unrestricted Audi GT3 car at Challenge Bathurst last year. As the BT62's lap of 1m58.68s was not completed in an official session, it will not be classified as an official lap record.

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Balfe Motorsport

IN BRIEF

C1 wheel changes

The Citroen C1 Challenge will use new and stronger alloy wheel rims this year after several failures last season, but drivers will still be allowed to use steel rims if they choose. New Hankook tyres, moulded with a four-and-a-half millimetre tread, will also be used in the series which will mean they no longer need to be shaved.

Fox duo to continue

Michael Broadhurst and Mike Murfitt will remain with Fox Motorsport for a second season in British GT aboard the team's Mercedes-AMG GT4. The duo finished sixth in the GT4 Pro-Am standings in 2018, with a best finish of eighth in the opening round at Oulton Park. The team's livery will be decided by a fan vote on the Fox Motorsport Facebook page, with one voter who chooses the most popular design set to win tickets for the opening round of the series at Oulton on April 22.

BWRDC champion

Karter Abbi Pulling was announced as the British Women Racing Drivers' Club champion last Saturday. Pulling, 15, received the Mary Wheeler Memorial Embassy Trophy in recognition of her second Super One National Junior TKM championship. She was also the winner of the club's Kart Trophy and the Barbara E Bird Memorial Shield for the Junior champion. Other BWRDC trophy winners included rally driver Nabila Tejar and sportscar racer Fiona James.

Thai stays in British F3

Sasakorn Chaimongkol will remain in BRDC British Formula 3 this year with Hillspeed. The Thai driver finished ninth in the standings and took two podiums during the 2018 season. Team principal Richard Ollerenshaw said: "He's become an integral part of the Hillspeed family over the last few years, since first beginning a testing programme with us in 2016, and his progression has been outstanding."



Race winner in GT5 Challenge

Bird switches focus to Mini Challenge in 2019

Ginetta GT5 Challenge race winner Max Bird will switch to the Mini Challenge for 2019, driving for the Lawrence Davey Racing squad.

Bird took three wins in the Ginetta category last term and finished fourth in the standings in his second season in the series.

"My driving has improved during the last year and with such a competitive grid I am pleased with my fourth place and feel ready for the next challenge," said Bird. "I am looking forward to competing in the Mini Challenge and I am aiming to get on the podium by mid-season."



McLaren's new 720S GT3 will race in UK

NEW McLAREN TO BE RUN BY BALFE IN BRITISH GT

Squad will be the first to race 720S in the UK

By James Newbold

Balfe Motorsport will be the first squad to run the new McLaren 720S GT3 in the UK this year in the British GT Championship.

The Lincolnshire squad, which has already confirmed a return to GT4 with a 570S for Michael O'Brien and Graham Johnson, will enter the new car for team co-owner Shaun Balfe and McLaren Automotive factory driver Rob Bell.

Balfe and Bell won the 2017 International GT Open Pro-Am

championship together and combined for a part-season British GT effort last year in the previous generation McLaren 650S GT3, which was interrupted by a big crash for Balfe at Rockingham.

Bell has been instrumental in developing the 720S GT3 together with Joe Osborne and Ben Barnicoat, but missed out on the car's race debut at the Gulf 12 Hours in December due to the birth of his second child.

He told MN that McLaren was "happy with what we've done so far" on the new car, with developments focused on

improving the drivability over the 650S, but admits that racing it in British GT will be "unchartered territory".

"It's a new product and there will be some quirks to it that we don't know about yet when we go racing, so that will be difficult for us, but that's something that I enjoy because you've got to graft for your performance and that's something we all thrive on," he said.

Having won at the Donington Park finale in 2016, Bell said that he is looking forward to making two visits to the venue this season and starting afresh

after a "frustrating" 2018 campaign.

"I've personally had a really good run with Balfe over the last couple of years, so we'll take the challenge on," he said.

MN understands Balfe will receive staffing support from McLaren Automotive to help the team get up to speed with the new product.

Spanish squad Teo Martin Motorsport, a regular in GT Open, and Le Mans-winning outfit Team Goh, which plans to enter the car in the Super GT GT300 class, are the only other teams confirmed to run the new McLaren car so far.

Mitchell and Tuck fight for BMW factory spots

Reigning British GT4 champion Jack Mitchell and runner-up Ben Tuck have been invited by BMW motorsport to a simulator shootout with the chance of joining the marque's junior programme.

Held in Munich the evaluation commenced on Monday and was due to finish today (Wednesday), with the Century Motorsport team-mates pitched against a group of 20 drivers who had raced with BMW customer teams in 2018.

Observed by BMW factory ace Philipp Eng, they would be whittled down to four after a series of mental and physical tests with a simulator shootout deciding the winner.

On offer is a full-season drive for the works-affiliated ROAL Motorsport team in the Italian GT championship.

Century Motorsport team boss



Century will promote GT4 Supercup drivers

Nathan Freke said: "We work incredibly hard at Century Motorsport to help develop young drivers and make them into a factory-ready product. To have this pathway and direct links to one of the automotive giants should be a very attractive prospect for any young aspiring pro drivers looking to make a career out of driving. "It'll be an amazing experience

for both Ben and Jack and I really believe they both have what it takes to come away with the prize."

Angus Fender and Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke will step up from Century's Ginetta GT4 Supercup roster to drive one of its M4 GT4s in British GT this season.

Both drivers were new to the British Touring Car Championship-support series last year.

Grid of 30 cars expected for opening Britcar races

Organisers of the Britcar Endurance Championship are expecting a grid of more than 30 cars for its opening round of the season at Silverstone in March.

A number of regulars have already confirmed their entry, including David Mason and Ross Wylie in a new Ferrari 488 Challenge and last year's Endurance champion Sarah Moore with rookie Moh Ritson in a Ginetta G50.

Paul Bailey, a Britcar and GT Cup class champion, will return to the series for the first time in five years aboard a 488 Challenge with Lucky Khera and Lee Frost sharing a Radical RXC Coupe.

Britcar managing director Claire Hedley believes a new format for 2019, which now includes two one-hour races over a single day, has helped attract more drivers.

"We came away from the Autosport International show with 23 people [signed up] and we're looking at over 30 for the opening round, normally we come away with 10 or 15 from the show," she said.

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A second Foster will race in British F4

FF1600 winner Foster signs up for British F4

Formula Ford 1600 race winner Tommy Foster will compete in British F4 this season with Arden.

The Young Racing Driver Academy member contested a handful of FF1600 races at the end of last year in a bid to secure signatures to upgrade his licence, winning one of the races at the BRSCC's winter meeting at Anglesey and securing the Brian Linley Trophy.

Foster tested a variety of different machinery – including BRDC British F3 – before deciding to race in British F4.

“It’s been a struggle but now we can get our heads down and focus on the season,” said Foster. “We had lots of meetings [to decide what to do] – the Formula Ford was a good little car but we really need to get my name out there and, looking at the media side of things, F4 has the best coverage.”

“We had offers from other teams but our hearts really do lie with Arden and I feel really happy there. It’s now about getting used to the F4 car.”

“We have had a lot of time on the simulator and analysed the data and the team really believe I’m a title contender.”

Foster and his Arden team-mates Bart Horsten and Alex Connor headed to Spain earlier this week for testing as the winter testing ban came to a close at the end of last month.

PYRO SWAPS CLIO CUP FOR TCR GERMANY AND RADICAL SR1 CUP

Photos: TCR, Jakob Ebrey, Ollie Read



Pyro attracted to low-cost SR1 Cup

TCR Germany boasts large grids

Leading Renault UK Clio Cup squad Team Pyro will not compete in the final season of the category this year as it instead focuses on new programmes in TCR Germany and the Radical SR1 Cup.

Pyro drivers have won the Clio title eight times since the team first entered the category in 2005, with Max Coates narrowly missing out on becoming another Pyro champion last season. But, with Renault deciding to axe the series at the end of this season, Pyro has decided to prioritise other categories and not compete in Clios this year.

2008: First Pyro Clio champ

“It’s a shame [to leave Clios] because we’ve been around it for a long time but things have to change,” said team boss Mark Hunt. “With it being the last year, I don’t see the benefit [of continuing]. If we get someone new in, it’s for only one year when it should be a two-year plan and people won’t take it as seriously – it will be overshadowed by it being the last year.”



Hunt added that he wanted the team to get established in its new categories before being forced to move by the Clio Cup’s demise.

Instead Pyro will now move into European competition with a campaign in TCR Germany and is in talks with drivers. The team ran Ollie Taylor and Finlay Crocker in TCR UK last year and hasn’t ruled out remaining in the British category too, if there’s sufficient interest.

“The reason for looking at Germany is because it has a very strong grid and you can progress from there to TCR Europe,” Hunt explained. “The TCR manufacturers also look at the German series.”

“[By joining TCR Germany and the SR1 Cup] we’ve gone from Clios in the middle to a higher-level championship and a lower-level championship to cater for other drivers’ needs and both will be two-car teams.”

Pyro’s first SR1 Cup signing is Andrew Wilkins, who has previously competed in the Michelin Clio Series. The low-budget nature of the SR1 category attracted Pyro to it.

“It’s less than a quarter of the cost of Clios and it’s faster,” Hunt added. “Radical are very helpful and have done a great job with the series. It’s also nice for drivers that it’s only on Fridays and Saturdays so they don’t have to spend the whole weekend away.”

Ginetta GT5 Challenge secures 36-car entry three months before season starts

The popular Ginetta GT5 Challenge has already attracted a bumper 36-car entry list despite there being almost three months until the season begins.

The category for G40 cars features on both the British Touring Car Championship and British GT packages and this year also has an away round at Zandvoort.

The series boasted large entries last year – averaging 32 cars – but is faring even better this season.

“I think it was a strong year last year and the grid was predominantly full and that leads to people not wanting to miss out this year and entering early,” said Ginetta motorsport

manager Ash Gallagher. “It’s a strong package, the car’s good value and you get the best of the British Touring Car Championship and British GT package in terms of coverage.”

The maximum capacity for the Oulton Park season opener at the end of April is 38 cars so there are only two full season spaces available, but other circuits like Silverstone Grand Prix can accommodate far more additional entries.

Among the new drivers for this year is 2017 Mini Se7en champion Charlie Budd, who will be competing as a privateer alongside his brother Daniel. “We are all excited and motivated

for the new challenge,” said Charlie. “All my circuit racing so far has been in front-wheel drive Minis, so the key for us this year will be seat time to learn the new car.”

Ginetta Junior graduates Conner Garlick and Abbi Pulling are also new for this season.

Of the drivers continuing in the series, 2017 Ginetta Junior podium finisher Scott McKenna was the highest in the 2018 standings. He will look to improve on his seventh place last year and has switched to the Xentek Motorsport squad. Junior Saloon Car champions Will Dyrdal and Katie Milner are among the others to remain on the grid.



The GT5 Challenge grids are set to be even larger during the 2019 season

GT regular Jones sets up his own team to run drivers in Ginetta categories

Ginetta regular Declan Jones has set up his own team to run cars in the GT4 Supercup and GT5 Challenge categories this year.

Jones, 23, has competed in both series in recent years and was runner-up in the GT4 class of British GT in 2013 also at the wheel of a Ginetta.

He’s now decided to move into team management and will run Lucky Khara and Lee Frost in the GT4 Supercup in 2019. The duo competed under the Butler Motorsport banner last season, with Jones providing additional support.

“Motorsport has always been my life and building a

team is something I’ve always wanted to do, so I had to take the opportunity when it arose,” said Jones, who is planning to run three cars in the GT5 Challenge.

“Having been with my dad, Kelvin Jones, from a young age I’ve gained a wealth of experience and knowledge

from a management and engineering point.

“I am very excited and looking forward to this new chapter. I have recruited some very experienced staff and with a group of determined, fast drivers, we expect to be challenging for wins from the opening rounds of the season.”



Khara and Frost join the new team

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RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT, Priceless Images

BECHE SHINES IN FORMULA FORD BATHURST RACES

Eastwell misses event due to illness



FF1600 races were close



Beche took runner-up spots

By Jack Benyon

Illness forced UK Formula Ford driver Michael Eastwell to miss the Bathurst 12 Hour-supporting FF1600 races last weekend, as Le Mans podium finisher Mathias Beche took his place.

Beche, 32, was in Australia for the first time to compete in the 12 Hours in a KTM X-Bow GT4, but also ended up taking a pair of second place finishes in the FF1600 support races.

The LMP1 Rebellion driver was invited to take Eastwell's Spectrum 010 seat in a restaurant earlier in the week.

He had only driven a Formula Ford once in his career, 15 years ago, and had never driven a H-pattern gearbox car on a track because he had gone straight into Formula Renault after karting.

"I've never right-foot braked apart from in a road car," said Beche.

"I had to heel-and-toe and discover the track. The first session I did five laps and was something like

10 seconds off the pace! Then it was qualifying and I figured it out and was P2 by three or four tenths.

"I haven't done a standing start for a long time because I've done endurance racing for a long time. But I got the lead! "With this car there is a lot of drag racing so it's about getting the tow and stuff, so it's a nice game.

"We had a good fight with the leaders but it was really close. It's about being behind the leader on the last lap so you can overtake with the slipstream.

"The field was awesome, 45 cars I think. I was quite surprised to be straight away there [on the pace]."

Paired with Dean Koutsoumidis, Jake Parsons and James Winslow in the 12 Hours, the X-Bow suffered damage at the start before mechanical issues stymied progress, but Beche reckons he scored a GT4 lap record later in the race.

Of his absence, Eastwell said: "I had to pull out of Bathurst, I haven't been well recently and decided it wasn't a track to race at not feeling 100%."



Andrew (r) will race with dad Mike

Pre-66 Mini restored and to be raced by Jordans

British Touring Car frontrunner Andrew Jordan will race a pre-1966 Mini Cooper in selected events this year.

The Jordan Racing Team is currently preparing the Appendix K machine previously raced by Dan Wheeler. Jordan, the 2013 BTCC champion, hopes to share the car with his father Mike in Historic Racing Drivers Club events in 2019, and contest The Mini Celebration Trophy at the Silverstone Classic in July, celebrating 60 years of Alec Issigonis' famous front-wheel-drive design.

"My first racing car - in Junior Rallycross - was a Mini and I've got a Mini road car," said Jordan Jr. "We looked at building a new one, then saw this in an auction. It's got a lot of the right bits on it, so we're just refurbishing it and putting in a new engine. It should be good.

"We didn't do much racing in 2018 and we want to do a bit more. It's another car we can enjoy driving. That's why we got into historic."

Jordan believes that the racing should be competitive, with many rapid Mini drivers likely to enter the two Silverstone Classic contests.

"They look good fun to drive and you're always going to have someone to race," said Jordan, who has also shared a Mini 1275 GT with Nick Swift. "There are lots of good drivers so you won't break the tow."



Members' Meeting is on April 6/7

High-profile Le Mans victors to Goodwood

Goodwood has revealed the first high-profile drivers who will compete in the 2019 Members' Meeting, featuring 11 overall and class winners of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Five decades of La Sarthe success and 24 outright wins will be represented. Most notably, Guy Smith, Dieter Quester, Neel Jani, Alexander Wurz and Hans-Joachim Stuck will all make their Goodwood racing debuts.

Double Le Mans champion Romain Dumas is a new entry for the Members' Meeting, having made his Goodwood debut in the 2012 Revival.

They will be joined by regular Goodwood faces Darren Turner, Jochen Mass, Emanuele Pirro, Tom Kristensen and Richard Attwood.

Smith, who will compete in the flagship Gerry Marshall Trophy race, said: "I am still a relative novice on the Goodwood Circuit as, while I've done a few manufacturer trackdays, I still have a lot to learn.

"It's a real old-school circuit with some fantastic sweeping, fast corners that always provides amazing racing."

GOODWOOD HIGH-PROFILE DRIVERS

Richard Attwood	Dieter Quester
Romain Dumas	Guy Smith
Neel Jani	Hans-Joachim Stuck
Tom Kristensen	Stuck
Jochen Mass	Darren Turner
Emanuele Pirro	Alexander Wurz

Brits through W Series first-round selection process

All five British drivers to be shortlisted for the all-female W Series have made it through the first stage of the selection process.

BRDC British Formula 3 driver Jamie Chadwick, former GP3 racer Alice Powell, Porsche Carrera Cup GB competitor Esmee Hawkey, 2009 Ginetta Junior champion Sarah Moore and Jessica Hawkins were among the 28 drivers to make it through after three-days of intensive assessment in Austria.

The original shortlist of 54 drivers were whittled down by a panel of judges including W Series directors David Coulthard and Dave Ryan, as well as former IndyCar driver Lyn St James and Le Mans winner Alexander Wurz.

Candidates were evaluated over the course of 10 modules, which included tests of driving ability in snowy conditions at the Wachauring, using Ford Fiesta ST and Porsche Cayman S road cars.

Fitness and mental agility and comprehensive media sessions were also taken into consideration before a 'Race of Champions-style' challenge.

The next stage of the selection process will take place across four days in Almeria in Southern Spain in March, where candidates will test the Tatuus F318 Formula 3 car to be used in W Series.

The final grid of 18 drivers, plus two reserves, will then be selected ahead of the first round at Hockenheim in May.



A total of 28 female drivers will battle it out in the second selection process



Marcus Bicknell's 2001 Ford Fusion ASCAR V8 stock car is ready for the 2019 season having been re-liveried in 2018 NASCAR champion Joey Logano's colours. The car will race in the newly-merged Bernie's Sports Racing & V8s promoted by the 750MC. The ASCAR previously raced at Rockingham and in the USA in the hands of Legends and European SCSA champion John Mickel and is prepped by Duane Kidd.

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11th May	Manx National Leg 2	Isle of Man	Closed Road
20th July	Down Rally	Northern Island	Closed Road
4th August	Solway Coast Rally	Southern Scotland	Military Ranges
28th September	Patriot Stages	South East Wales	Single Venue Military

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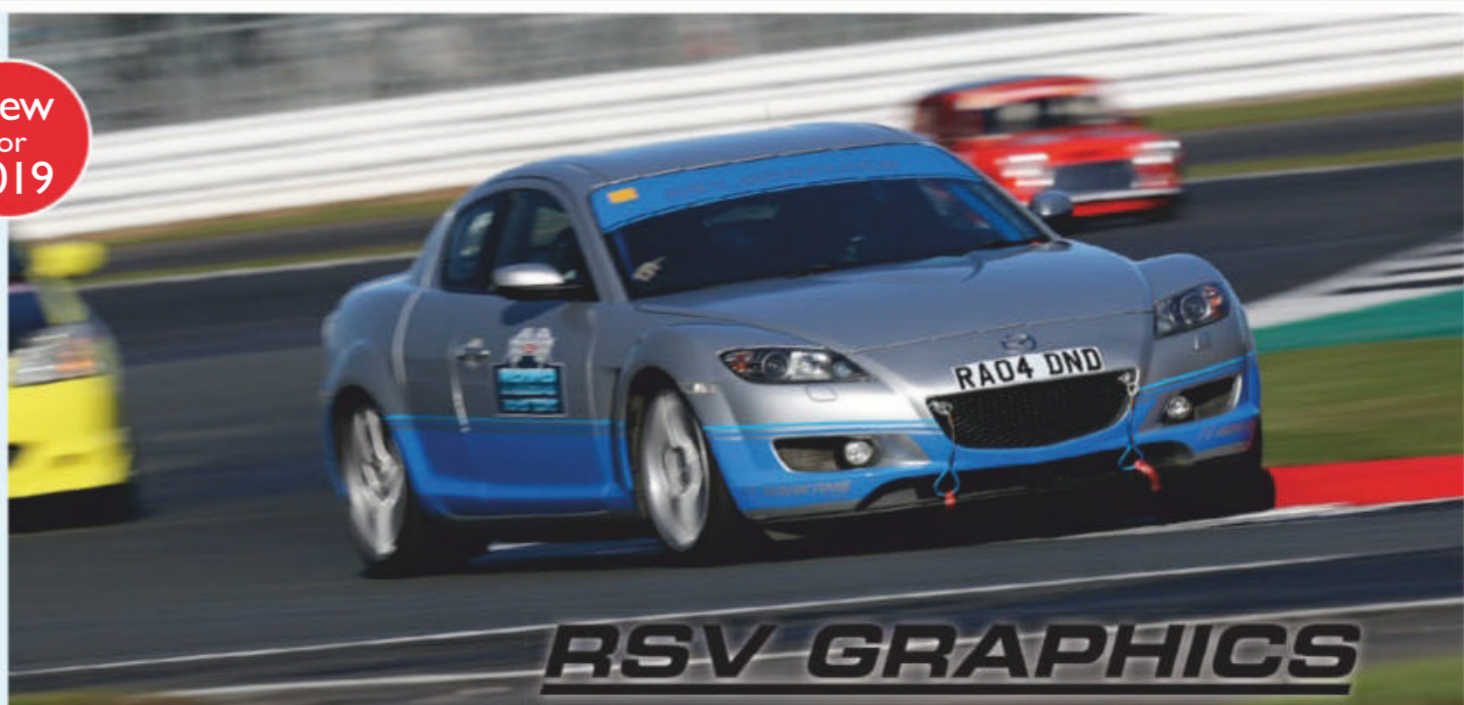
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HISTORICS

'Ralli22 hillclimb events announced'
High profile rounds, below



DOWN THE WORKSHOP

SUPER TOURING NISSAN PRIMERA

Current owner: Richard Wheeler

It's the ex-David Leslie car

This is David Leslie's 1999 works car, run by RML for Nissan, in which he finished second in the British Touring Car Championship to team-mate Laurent Aiello. Tommy Rustad then won the Swedish Touring Car Championship in it in 2000 for Crawford Motorsport and in 2001 it ran in Sweden again for a customer.

Dave Jarman acquired it

After a season in the European Touring Car Championship in 2002, Dave Jarman bought the Primera from Crawford Motorsport. "I got it in 2002 when it finished the last round of the ETCC," says Jarman. "I kept it for two or three seasons and raced it in Formula Saloons, and then I sold it on."

Jarman bought it back

"Later, my friend Keith Butcher bought it in around 2009/2010 when we started the Super Touring series," says Jarman. "I had the red ex-Matt Neal Dynamics car from 1998 but then some guys in New Zealand wanted to buy that. I only sold the Neal car knowing I could buy the Leslie car back from Keith. So I bought it from him three years ago but I never had two at the same time."

It is a strong package

The Primers were widely regarded as one of the best cars of the era and this one is still very original with the same ECU and the same datalogger. The engines are done by Dave Hill from Mountune, who built them in period. It has recently been sold to Richard Wheeler for the 2019 Dunlop Saloon Car Cup season. "When I sold the car I was pleased that it was going to stay in the UK and be raced," says Jarman.

Richard Wheeler now owns it

"The first motorsport I got into was the BTCC in the 1990s and I'm a big Nissan fan" says Wheeler. "So when this car came up it was absolutely perfect. I can only manage three or four race weekends a year to due to family and business, so the DSCC is ideal with eight races in four weekends. John Danby Racing is going to run it for me and I'm really looking forward to racing it."

Wheeler is new to Super Touring

"I only started racing three years ago with the Classic Sports Car Club and had a Ford Fiesta and a Lotus Elan," says Wheeler. "Jake Hill won at the Silverstone Classic last year driving my Elan."



Primera will race this year



Photos: Jakob Brodzicki, Lyndon McNeil, Paul Lawrence

Tyre consultant will use a local Escort Mk2

BEVERIDGE TO TACKLE RALLY SWEDEN STAGES

Briton joins Solberg and Aaltonen in WRC event's support contest

By Paul Lawrence

British driver Ian Beveridge will be the only non-Scandinavian competitor on the historic rally that supports WRC Rally Sweden on February 14-17.

Beveridge, a motorsport consultant for tyre manufacturer Yokohama, and his co-driver Paul Price will use a locally prepared Ford Escort Mk2 on the snow-based event that includes entries for 2003 World Rally champion Petter Solberg (Ford Escort Mk2) and rally

legend Rauno Aaltonen, now 81 years old, in a Mini Cooper S.

Despite having rallied since the 1980s, Beveridge has never before competed with BDG power. "A colleague of mine from Yokohama in Sweden is lending me a car," he said. "I've not rallied a BDG-engined Mk2 before. I had a Ford Escort Mexico back in the day and I've tested cars like that before, but never actually rallied one. It will be a great new experience."

The historic section, with an entry of 55 cars, runs between the two loops of the WRC event and the historic

run on studded tyres.

"I did a snow rally about five years ago in an Opel Ascona and the grip from the studded tyres is just unbelievable," said Beveridge. "The WRC cars use slightly wider tyres, so our grip is probably even better."

"It is at least the level of grip of wet asphalt: there is a remarkable amount of grip. You can't stand up on the surface, but you get in the car and you can barely make it slide. It takes a bit of getting your head around and some mental adjustment is required but it is fantastic fun."



Solberg will compete in Escort Mk2



Van Diemen RF81 of Senna will be at Race Retro

Senna's Ford to go on display

The Formula Ford 1600 Van Diemen RF81 raced by the late Ayrton Senna in his first season out of karts will return to public view at Race Retro on February 22-24.

Following a total restoration by Van Diemen boss Ralph Firman, chassis 528, will feature in the event's Hall of Fame. It has not been seen in public since the 1980s.

Ayrton Senna da Silva, as he was then known, arrived in the UK for the 1981 season after an impressive karting career in Brazil.

He raced the works Van Diemen on his car debut at Brands Hatch and went on to win 12 out of 20 races and two major titles.

At the end of 1981, the Senna car was sold but Firman later had the chance to buy it back. He put it into storage for many years before finally deciding to restore it.

HRDC splits from BRSCC for 2019

The Historic Racing Drivers' Club has confirmed a 2019 calendar based around six events including a new HRDC Race Festival at Lydden Hill on Monday, May 27.

The HRDC has moved away from running events within BRSCC race meetings for its seven categories and will now support the Vintage Sports-Car Club at Silverstone and Donington Park,

the Donington Historic Festival, the Thruxton Motorsport Celebration and the Castle Combe Autumn Classic.

"I have sought to upgrade the quality of the meetings that the HRDC will attend," said club founder Julius Thurgood.

A planned gap in the schedule from the end of June to early October avoids clashes with other major historic events.

R.A.C entry expanded due to interest

The Roger Albert Clark Rally has now received 184 entry deposits as interest in the event continues unabated.

To cope with demand, the entry has been extended to 160 cars as well as 10 reserves for the five-day, 32-stage, 300-stage mile event in November.

Regulations and entry forms are due

this month, and this will be the catalyst for the next entry fee instalment as crews will be required to lodge a further £500 by April 30.

Rally manager Colin Heppenstall said: "We currently have 24 crews on the reserve list and I am confident we will have space for all of them, and probably more."

IN BRIEF

Owen on the grid

Racing newcomer Tom Owen will join the 70s Road Sports grid this season in a newly-prepared Datsun 240Z from Dave Jarman Racing. It is based on a project that Jarman started to build as an FIA-specification car for his own use, but has now been completed for Owen to join the Road Sports field.

Riponian kicks off

Ben Jemison's newly-built Vauxhall Chevette HSR tops the 20-strong historic entry for Sunday's Riponian Rally in Yorkshire. The field for the opening round of the Northern Historic Rally Championship also includes Ben Mellors (Toyota Celica), Bob Bean (Lotus Cortina), Jeremy Easson (Datsun 240Z) and Terry Cree (BMW 2002).

Classic test day

Competitors racing at the Silverstone Classic at the end of July have the chance of a free day's testing on the Silverstone GP circuit during the event's preview day on Wednesday April 10. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and can be booked via the event website at silverstoneclassic.com

Le Mans celebration

Race Retro on February 22-24 will celebrate the Le Mans 24-hour race with a display of vehicles from the race. Notable among the cars to be featured in the event's Hall of Fame is an Audi R8C. Audi made its Le Mans debut in 1999, with R8s finishing third and fourth, and went on to take 13 overall victories.

Ralli22 revealed

The Ralli22 series of hillclimbs for period rally cars has announced two of its dates for 2019. Cars spanning the Group B, Group A and WRC eras will be in timed competition at the Shelsley Walsh Classic Nostalgia weekend (June 15/16) and the Chateau Impney hillclimb (July 13/14) along with several more dates still to be announced.

Harrison is top dog

Mini racer Andy Harrison has accepted a role as a brand ambassador for the British Motorsport Marshals Club. Harrison was a close friend to former BMMC President, the late Barrie 'Whizzo' Williams. The ex-Williams 1963 Mini Cooper S is to be auctioned at Race Retro with a guide price of £70,000 to £100,000.

Porsches on show

The Porsche marque will be celebrated at Prescott on Saturday June 22, with several notable cars on display including the ex-Derek Bell/Stefan Bellof Group C Porsche 956. On the Gloucestershire hill will be a range of classes for Porsches as well as a round of the Porsche Club Speed Championship.



Prescott Porsche celebration

RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Rally Sweden has had stages in Norway

TODT CALLS FOR CROSS-BORDER WRC EVENTS

FIA boss wants countries to team up in more compact calendar



FIA wants a global calendar

By David Evans

FIA president Jean Todt would like to see more cross-border rounds of the World Rally Championship and sees this as a potential solution to an increasingly complicated calendar equation.

This year's WRC calendar has increased from 13 to 14 rounds and the plan for next year is to introduce Japan and Kenya to that schedule, forcing two European rounds out. Todt said events should look to join forces with their neighbours to ease that issue.

Todt said: "I want a global championship and so I want rallies in Europe where the history of rallying started – but I want to go to every part of the world: Latin America, Asia,

I feel bad we don't have a rally in China – clearly we had some attempt, but it did not work – India, Indonesia or Thailand. And a huge country like Japan, it's just a question of time before we are there. It's great that we have a Korean company like Hyundai, but I want some Chinese manufacturers. I want to go back to Africa and we're working on that and [on getting to] the Middle East.

"That's what we want to achieve but we cannot host 20 rallies, we need to find criteria. I wanted to have multi-country rallies: I thought one rally could use two countries.

"What I wish does not always happen, but I feel we should have some sort of creativity with rallies covering more than one country – this could help

settle this question of a European calendar. I've been individually talking with some countries, suggesting this."

Corsica, Germany and Sardinia are understood to be the European events under pressure to keep their slots for 2020. WRC Promoter managing director Oliver Ciesla wasn't keen to discuss individual rallies, but urged series stakeholders to look further to the future.

"The championship, in its entirety, has had 32 countries," he said. "They went, they came, the championship survived, the countries survived. I don't think we need to hype so much which one is going. If it will be France, Italy or Germany going then in that very moment, of course it will be bad news. What we need to see in the long

term is what's best for the championship.

"If we do not go to the biggest markets in the future, which is also China and the United States, then this is not interesting for sponsors and car [manufacturers] to make their business in the future. And if you do not run a product that they sell then this is also a threat. And it makes little difference what European country we're in or not in if they want to go to China, India or the US.

"We are talking about the wrong things. The right question is: why is it so difficult to get into the Chinese market? What can we do to raise it in the US? How long does this take? Sponsors tell me for years, what is going on in China? Long-term, this is more bad news for the series than not

being on one European event. Long-term, losing one European round is not a threat to the championship."

Ciesla admitted he could see value in Todt's idea of two-country events, with rounds one and two both employing such a plan with Monte Carlo and France and Sweden and Norway.

"I am not against this, but the technical implementation needed to have two countries working together is complicated," said Ciesla. "It is ideal from a political point of view, because it helps us to touch many more markets, but the truth is to combine two organisers is very complex; it means combining different governing bodies, different police forces and very few countries work so close together."



This year's event will have 194 miles

Rally Mexico reduced to the shortest competitive route in the event's history

Rally Mexico will run its shortest competitive route ever at next month's third round of the World Rally Championship.

The Leon-based event will include 194 competitive miles, down from the 252 which featured on the longest ever Rally Mexico in 2012. The itinerary for the March 7-10 event is familiar from last year with two changes, the loss of the Duarte-Derramadero test which opened the

morning and afternoon Friday loops last season and the introduction of the Mesa Cuata test which follows Alfaro on Sunday morning.

Last year the crews tackled Las Minas twice on the final morning with the second attempt counting as the powerstage. Las Minas remains the final bonus points-paying test, but the first run is taken on Friday afternoon.

Rally Portugal has also overhauled

its route, with legendary names like Arganil, Gois and Lousa returning to the route for the opening day. MN understands budget problems ruled out some of the regions used on last year's route, but the roads in central Portugal will be welcomed by fans.

The weekend stages of the Matosinhos-based event remain largely similar to last season, especially the Fafe powerstage on Sunday June 2.

SPECIAL FIA HALL OF FAME CEREMONY FOR WRC CHAMPIONS

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**'Fisher returns
for Galway outing'**
Irish star back on stage, p14



Photos: Anthony Bailet, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jacques Lethion

HYUNDAI STILL BULLISH DESPITE BIG TESTING SHUNT FOR LOEB

Sebastien Loeb's testing crash ahead of next week's Rally Sweden had no impact on the squad's round-two preparation, according to his Hyundai team.

The Frenchman went off the road on one of his final runs in the i20 Coupe WRC test car on Thursday. Sources in the area of northern Sweden reported the car rolled over a snowbank causing significant damage. Both Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena were uninjured in the incident, which concluded their first snow test since 2012.

The team worked through the night on the i20 and had it ready for Andreas Mikkelsen to begin his preparations the following day. Last year's Rally Sweden winner Thierry Neuville had completed his running time in the car ahead of Loeb.

A team spokesman said: "The guys on site did a good job in keeping the car fully operational for the continuation of the final test day with Andreas."

Last week was a busy one with three of the four factory teams in action in the Scandinavian snow. While Hyundai was working in Sweden, M-Sport and Toyota were doing the same across the border in Finland.

Kris Meeke and Seb Marshall enjoyed their first extended running in a Sweden-specification Yaris WRC on roads close to Jyväskylä.

Marshall told MN: "Kris felt very comfortable in the car straight away. We worked off a set-up from both Ott [Tanak] and Jari-Matti [Latvala] and then focused on springs and dampers with some work on the differential settings. I don't think we've done anything dramatically different. The car felt well balanced. It did everything we could have asked of it."

Marcus Gronholm stepped aboard the test Yaris for a further day of testing before his return next week. Once again, he and Timo Rautiainen impressed with their pace, despite heavy snow during the day.

Gronholm's former mentor at Toyota George Donaldson was present at the test. He told MN: "Marcus was driving really well. The speed of the car is still going to take some getting used to – he and Timo flew a little further in some places than they probably expected – but it was good. He's still not going to be drawn into anything, though."

Citroën will run its tests for Sebastien Ogier and Esapekka Lappi this week.



All Hyundai drivers tested

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

**"The 50-miler
didn't generate
the interest"**



I always look forward to the arrival of the Rally Mexico route. It's the sense of adventure – the same reason you'd always look out for the Bauxite Way or Karoutes on an Acropolis route.

I suppose Guanajuato or El Chocolate have become the modern-day equivalent of such Greek classics. Which is why I couldn't help feel slightly disappointed at the plan for this year's Rally Mexico. It's pretty much the same as last year. Except shorter. And there are no 30-mile stages. And certainly no 50-milers.

It's the Mexicans' fault – they've worked so hard to lead the World Rally Championship in terms of innovation in recent years, anything less than the longest test of the season or a trip to the centre of Mexico City just doesn't cut it anymore.

This is also the new WRC order. Endurance isn't really the thing anymore and we need to come to terms with that. Even though it was only three years ago, the passing of time has skewed memories of that 50-mile Guanajuato test on the final morning of the 2016 event. Talking about this very subject in the service park in Gap last month, there were plenty who remembered that very stage with a sense of adventure, endurance and exploration.

The only thing missing was competition... Sebastien Ogier won the stage in 48m06.8s with his then Volkswagen team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala his nearest rival. J-ML was 25.3s behind. Hayden Paddon was third, a minute down. Tenth quickest in the test was the Ford Fiesta RS WRC of Benito Guerra. The local hero was almost four minutes slower.

Those 50 miles simply didn't generate the sort of action which they might have. For the WRC Promoter, running that stage again would mean a massive All Live effort for – probably – the same single-sentence response a good few of the drivers offer from the end of a 10 or 15-miler. Instead of fewer, longer stages, the plan is for shorter tests at a higher tempo.

I get that. And, let's face it, we'll still be totally transfixed by a shorter Mexico. It's the way of the World Rally Championship these days – blink and you'll miss something. Round one was split by 2.2 seconds. Next week's super-quick Rally Sweden will be the same story. Once again every team will offer a potential winner. Or two. Or three.

The 2016 days of long stages offering dull stories are well and truly in the past.

There, I almost got through this column without mentioning Marcus Gronholm. Almost. Have you seen the videos from his test? He's totally on it and looking very, very comfortable with a car that is clearly forgiving, friendly and made on fast roads covered in snow.

I saw Gronholm and his co-driver Timo Rautiainen in Paris last week and the pair of them were like teenagers again. It's fantastic to know that as excited as we are to see them in the car again – they are even more so to be there themselves. Here's hoping the weather delivers them the opportunity to do something great again. Talking of the weather and round two, don't even think about starting any of those no-snow Sweden stories. It will be fine. It. Will. Be. Fine. I promise.

Spaniard Sordo signs up for gravel outing in Portugal

Hyundai driver Dani Sordo will compete on gravel again for the first time in four months when he starts Rali Serras de Fafe later this month.

Sordo will use a Hyundai i20 R5 on the Portuguese event as he looks to get himself back into the gravel groove ahead of next month's Rally Mexico – his maiden WRC outing of the season. The February 22/23 rally will be his first time in an

R5 car on gravel, having driven one to third place on last year's all-asphalt Barum Rally.

Sordo said: "It's important to compete before Rally Mexico. It will be my first time at the event [Rali Serras de Fafe], but I know the conditions and some of the stages as they are same as Rally of Portugal, but it should be very good training for Mexico. I'm looking forward to driving the Hyundai i20 R5 again. I

drove it on Tarmac last year and it should be fun on the gravel stages as well. The rally is very popular, with a lot of fans, so it will be great to work with the other i20 R5 crews to put us all at the top of the times."

Sordo's last gravel WRC action was for a day in Spain last October, but before that his last full loose surface counter was when he finished fourth in Portugal.



Sordo: back on gravel surface

McRae scares himself with win

Alister McRae posted a new course record for the Leadfoot Festival in New Zealand, winning the Kiwi hillclimb in a Subaru Impreza WRX STI for the third year in succession.

The Scot, driving the ex-Possum Bourne hillclimb car, posted a time of 47.99s for the all-asphalt mile-long run.

"I didn't know the time when I got to the top," McRae said, "but my leg and my hand was shaking so that means I scared myself. We turned the car up a little bit more. There was a couple of places in the previous run out of the bridge where it got a wee bit sideways on me so I just killed it a little bit on the brake there. There was quite a bit of dirt in the road through the trees and it was understeering there so I had to be a wee bit brave and keep the throttle in and throw another gear at it."

Wales Rally GB boss Taylor steps down from his role after five years

Wales Rally GB managing director Ben Taylor has stepped down from his position after five years in charge of Britain's round of the World Rally Championship.

Taylor took charge of Wales Rally GB when it was in danger of being dropped from the WRC calendar and has turned it into one of the WRC

Promoter's standard-bearers.

Taylor said: "I am extremely honoured to have held the position and proud of what we have achieved. I may have been the figurehead, but the work is done by legions of people on the ground giving time and expertise to make it all happen. It has been a great privilege to get to know these

amazing people and see first-hand just what a fantastic job they do.

"When I took over, my ambition was to return Rally GB to a position where people were proud of their home WRC round. It's taken a lot of hard work, and it's by no means the finished article, but I think we have shown that GB is once again among the best in the world."

PLANET RALLY

Mads Ostberg finished his Citroën C3 R5 a troubled second on Saturday's Rally Hadeland in Norway. Ostberg couldn't find a set-up which worked for him aboard the car he will drive this season. He departed the event admitting: "We have a lot of work to do before Rally Sweden." The issues centred on finding a suspension solution which offered sufficient traction...

Ole Christian Veiby made up for a disappointing Monte Carlo Rally with Hadeland victory in his Volkswagen Polo GTI R5. Henning Solberg was third with Eyvind Brynildsen fourth

(both in Skoda Fabia R5s)... **Eleven-time Italian Rally champion Paolo Andreucci, 53, will turn his back on Peugeot and his domestic series this season – he is expected to tackle a limited WRC 2 programme aboard a Citroën C3 R5...** Mikko Hirvonen made a superb return to rallying aboard a Ford Escort RS1800 (not his own though – this car was locally provided in Belgium) to win the Legends Boucles de Bastogne. Co-driven by Jarno Ottman, the 15-time world rally winner beat the similar machine of local Frederic Caprasso into second place...



Hirvonen won the Boucles

FIA rally director Yves Matton made a rare competitive rally appearance to bring a Porsche 911 home in fifth... Thierry Neuville retired his Opel Corsa from the Legends Boucles de Bastogne event with an oil pressure problem.

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RALLY NEWS

Photos: Kevin O'Driscoll, Roy Dempster

ALASTAIR RETURNS TO BUILD ON FISHER FAMILY LEGACY

County Fermanagh ace to contest Irish Tarmac Rally Championship

By Jack Benyon

Irish Tarmac frontrunner Alastair Fisher will return to the series in Galway this weekend, after sitting out the 2018 campaign.

Fisher, nephew of multiple ITRC champion Bertie, was the top R5 and third overall last time he contested the event in a Ford Fiesta R5. He'll drive a similar machine, resuming his partnership with Dom Buckley RSC, which will run the car.

"We were third overall the last two years and it's generally in conditions we like," Fisher told MN.

"Hopefully we can pick up where we've left off before.

Ultimately everyone progresses year on year so I'm expecting it to be a challenge to get up to speed. We'll have to get our head down and keep up with them."

Joining the other 24 R5s on the entry list for the event, Fisher believes it's taken a while for competitors to understand the benefits of competing in the class.

"I have to say it's [the entry] very impressive," he added.

"It's took three years for everybody to realise the potential of R5 and what it can do. And how accessible it is. It's good to see it starting to come to fruition."

Bertie won the event 20 years previously in a Subaru Impreza 555 (see page 19).



Fisher sat out last year after second in 2017

One-day Galway to benefit R5s - Jennings

Double Galway International Rally winner Garry Jennings believes the fact that the event switches to a one-day format will affect the balance between WRC and R5 cars in the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship opener, as the R5 drivers will be better prepared.

The event didn't run last year due to funding issues, and has returned with a slightly shortened format featuring just a single day of action.

"It was disappointing to see it cancelled last year as it is one of my favourite events," said Jennings.

"Because it's a one-day rally this year it takes on a whole new meaning, a different complexion. A lot of the R5 drivers will have done a fair bit of testing and will be chomping at the bit to get going. It will be a tough battle."

Jennings enters this weekend's event with a chance to score an unprecedented three consecutive overall wins as he gears up for action in his Subaru Impreza S12B WRC.

Eugene Donnelly, Austin MacHale and Mark Lovell are the only other people who have managed the same feat on an event that is traditionally held in wet and windy conditions on Ireland's west coast.

"We've been successful in Galway



Jennings: R5s have advantage

on our two previous visits - that's why we decided to put an entry in," he added. "If it [a hat-trick of wins] happens then that's great, but if it doesn't we can't say that we didn't try."

Jennings hasn't initiated an all out assault on the ITRC since it went to allowing only R5 cars to fight for the overall championship, excluding WRC cars into a separate class.

He has long been an exponent of right-hand-drive cars and without a properly homologated car on the market, he has stuck to varied outings in his Impreza. He won events competing in France last year.

Darcy swaps Darrian for Den Escort Mk2

Irish Tarmac Modified Rally Championship driver Stuart Darcy has swapped a Darrian T90 for a Den Motorsport Ford Escort Mk2 for this year's title assault.

Darcy faces stern opposition in Galway (see page 19) but the winner of the last two championships, Kevin Eves, has left the series.

"I had a lot of bad luck with the car [Darrian], it felt like the right time for a change," said Darcy. "The Fords are a work of art especially Barry Den's cars, they're a brave and well put together car."

"It probably will require a different driving style, the Escorts tend to oversteer more."

Darcy is likely to complete the whole season, but is tempted by an upgrade for the Donegal International Rally in June.

"We may go four-wheel-drive for a couple of rallies, but we'll see how we are getting on, maybe a rally before Donegal and then the International in a WRC car," he added.

"I would have gone R5 but the right-hand-drive thing [rule change to allow R5 RHD conversions] is pointless. You can't win rallies and only score points. You're paying £160,000 for a car and you can't really win anything."

Bogie: Snowman instead of Galway

The 2017 Snowman Rally winner David Bogie has made a last minute U-turn to enter this year's event, switching his plans to contest the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship opener in Galway.

Bogie - a long-time fan of Irish rallying and the 2016 Donegal National Rally winner - had wanted to combine his efforts to win the British Rally Championship with the ITRC, but the Dumfries driver will remain closer to home.

"The original plan was for us to start both championships, the BRC and the Irish Tarmac,

SEEDDED ENTRY LIST

Snowman Rally, Inverness, February 9

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	David Bogie/John Rowan	Skoda Fabia R5
2	Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton	Ford Focus WRC
3	Garry Pearson/Dale Bowen	Ford Fiesta R5
4	Jock Armstrong/Cameron Fair	Subaru Impreza
5	Donnie Macdonald/Andrew Falconer	Ford Fiesta R5
6	Mark McCulloch/Michael Hendry	Ford Fiesta R5
8	Bruce McCombie/Michael Coutts	Ford Focus WRC
9	Freddie Milne/Patrick Walsh	Mitsubishi Lancer
10	John Wink/John Forrest	Hyundai i20 R5

but we are just too busy with work to make it over to Galway," the five-time SRC champion said. "So we'll head over to the Snowman and do select Scottish Championship rounds as usual."

Bogie will be joined on the Snowman by the return of Euan Thorburn, the 2014 SRC champion having not rallied since 2017. He'll compete in a Ford Focus WRC, as he did in his title-winning year.

Donegal quiz raises over €5000 for Down's Syndrome charity

The second annual Super Rally Quiz took place in Letterkenny last weekend, with over 100 rallying enthusiasts gathered to raise over €5000 for the Donegal Down's Syndrome charity.

Quiz master and Irish Tarmac championship-winning co-driver Rory Kennedy once

again brought together his team, which consisted of event organiser Danny McMenamin, Aidan Caddy, Steven Sheridan and Kevin Glendinning, for 12 rounds (or stages), to try and outwit the competitors.

Last year's winning team of Joe McGonigle and Patrick

Brides recruited Joe Friel and James Cullen to ensure their winning run continued. They took a last gasp win, claiming victory by two points.

McMenamin said: "We've been overwhelmed by people's generosity, this money will make such a difference."

IRISH TARMAC R5 ENTRIES UP 525% FOR NEW SEASON

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'Special 20-year Bertie Fisher anniversary'
Galway Rally preview, p19



Photos: Red265 Rally Media

BIRD GETS DRUG-TEST RELATED EIGHT-YEAR MOTORSPORT BAN



Paul Bird banned

Bird has competed in Barbados often

BTRDA Rally Series frontrunner Paul Bird has received an eight-year competition ban after he was found guilty of evading a drugs test by the UK Anti Doping Panel.

Bird had been fighting for the BTRDA Gold Star championship in his Ford Focus WRC07 alongside eventual winner Matt Edwards, before he stopped competing after winning the Carlisle Stages Rally.

He had received a two-year ban in 2015 for testing positive for a metabolite of cocaine and diuretics, following his win on the Nicky Grist Stages in July. Bird then returned after his ban mid-way through 2017.

However, Bird was charged by the National Anti-Doping Panel Tribunal with "evading, refusing or failing to submit to sample collection" with the incident relating to the Rallynuts Stages on April 14, 2018.

UK Anti Doping has now banned him

from competition sanctioned by the UK governing body, Motorsport UK, for eight years starting from July 11, 2018.

He did compete on two events after the Rallynuts Stages, the Plains Rally, which he finished third on, and he took victory on the Carlisle Stages.

Governing body Motorsport UK confirmed to Motorsport News the reason why Bird was able to carry on competing, and that it was working to improve knowledge when it comes to doping and test related matters.

"The licence suspension wasn't imposed immediately after the Rallynuts Stages because any alleged violation of anti-doping rules first needs to be properly investigated before action is taken," a Motorsport UK spokesperson said.

"Between the dates of the Rallynuts Stages [April 14, 2018] and the charge

[July 11, 2018], UKAD was investigating the case pursuant to our anti-doping rules.

"Motorsport UK has been proactive on anti-doping education and awareness, providing opportunities for all competitors to understand the protocols they sign up to. As with everything we do, our work in this area is under regular review.

"Anyone wanting to know more about anti-doping in motorsport can visit motorsportuk.org/Competitors/Anti-Doping."

Paul Bird does not wish to comment to Motorsport News at this time.

Article 10.12.1 in the UK Anti Doping Rules state: "An athlete or other person who has been declared ineligible may not, during the period of ineligibility, participate in any capacity in a competition, event or other activity."

Giddings gets prize Fiesta for BTRDA R2 Cup

Reigning Fiesta ST Trophy winner James Giddings will step up to the R2 Rallye Cup in 2019, with the use of a Ford Fiesta R2 as part of his prize for last year's championship.

For two years the ST Trophy has offered the use of a Castrol Fiesta R2 for various events and championships, but this is the first time a champion has taken the car for a full campaign.

"Hopefully it will do the ST Trophy good for the car to be out and about in the BTRDA," said Welshman Giddings, who won the GwynneSpeed Rally Challenge in 2017.

"Hopefully we can get some good results. It's difficult to say where we'll be, there's a strong entry of 10 R2 cars for the Cambrian. There's some good competition there and I'm sure it will be tough, but I'm feeling positive.

"The Malcolm Wilson is the only rally we haven't done before, but I'm hoping we can adapt to the car on the Cambrian and then adapt our notes well for the Malcolm Wilson to be prepared. We'll have a small test before it."

George Lopley won last year's R2 Rallye Cup.



ST Trophy champion Giddings contests BTRDA

Welsh Road Rally opener postponed

Dovey Valley Motor Club was forced to postpone the Rali Mike Darowen, the first round of the Welsh Road Rally Championship, which was due to take place last Saturday night.

The recent wintry weather had left almost 50% of the intended route impassable. The Machynlleth area suffered heavy snowfall last Tuesday night. This storm was followed by high

winds which created drifts over six feet high, while, at other points, freezing temperatures turned compacted snow to ice.

The organisers had originally attempted to stage the rally this coming weekend, however concerns that the lanes may still be blocked and also that some entrants were unable to make the new date, have led to a postponement until later in the year.

Welshman and two from Skye to Barbados

Vauxhall Astra driver Paul Rees and a pair of crews from the Isle of Skye in Scotland are among the latest Brits to sign up to Rally Barbados.

Rees and co-driver Paul Briggs won two regional championships last year, and return to the island where Rees first rallied in 2003.

Niall Inglis (Vauxhall Nova) and Talbot Sunbeam driver John Macleod are set to make the 4100-mile journey from Skye for the first time in 2019.

Inglis and Macleod are chairman and vice-chairman of the Skye and Lochalsh Car Club respectively. Kevin Macintosh will navigate

for Inglis while Nikki Addison will join Macleod.

The crews will also compete on the pre-event 'King of the Hill' event, which moves venue to Stewarts Hill for this year.

The event also bans any World Rally Cars produced after 2008 for this year, pushing the participation of R5 entrants.

Brits took three of the top four places on last year's event with Robert Swann, Paul Bird and Kevin Procter finishing in that order behind winner Jeffrey Panton.

Last year 32 crews had at least one British person aboard out of 92 entries.

THE STRAIGHT-TALKING SCOT

JOHN FIFE

"Snowman to kick off refreshed Scottish series"



The impending arrival of a new rallying season always raises fears as well as hopes. Fears that one driver will run away with it, and hopes that it will indeed provide wide open competition.

Expectations are high for this year's new-look Scottish Rally Championship as the entry list for the Coogie Urquhart Snowman Rally opening round will testify. David Bogie will start as favourite, of course, but his ambition lies elsewhere this year: the British Rally Championship.

His campaign will really start the following week on the Cambrian, but for now he said: "Of course it's the chance to get seat time. But more than that, I enjoy the Snowman and I enjoy the Scottish Championship."

Nonetheless, the five-time Scottish champion will start as outright favourite in his Skoda Fabia R5, but this is the Snowman. The big unknown here each and every year is the weather.

Coupled with that is an impressive number of quick and talented drivers behind him. Leading the chase is 2014 champ Euan Thorburn, back behind the wheel of a Ford Focus WRC and will be joined by Bruce McCombie second time out in his new Focus WRC.

Garry Pearson leads the R5 brigade from John Wink, Mark McCulloch, and who knows, Lawrence Whyte may well benefit from running outside the top 10.

There are visitors too from abroad. Peter Taylor was in dominant form on the Cheviot just three months back, but that was on Tarmac, and Ian Bainbridge is relishing his first taste of Highland forest.

Then of course there is Freddie Milne, Jock Armstrong and Donnie MacDonald. Milne used a WRC Subaru last year, but has entered his Mitsubishi, while Armstrong has entered his Subaru Impreza. However, that might change before the weekend if TEG Sport can sign off its first 'Skodaru', a Fabia R5 with Impreza WRC running-gear.

"I doubt we'll get a chance for a test," said Armstrong. "But conditions on the Snowman will be unpredictable anyway."

As for MacDonald, he missed out on his 2019 pre-season 'warm-up'. Last year he contested the 24 hour 'Strathpuffer' mountain bike race through the frozen wastes of Torachilly Forest just weeks before the Snowman. He was unable to take part again last month, so how will he fare on four wheels this weekend?

The quality is there, but what of the quantity? Last year the Snowman had 91 entries and 96 the year before. This year, just 76.

One locally based Snowman regular explained: "Counting entry fee, pacenotes, tyres and fuel, the Snowman will cost me three and a half grand – I can do a one day Tarmac rally for £1500!"

Forget frontrunning cars and favoured competitors, that is the biggest challenge facing forest rally organisers this year.

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RALLY HALL OF FAME

David Evans went to see the great and good of the WRC crowned



Colin McRae's title-winning year was remembered



Didier Auriol, Michele Mouton and Petter Solberg

STARS WALK TALL IN RALLYING'S FIRST HALL OF FAME EVENT



Some of the most famous WRC names gathered for celebration



Marcus Gronholm was all smiles



Hannu Mikkola's flying Audi was remembered



Ari Vatanen and Sebastien Loeb shared some WRC memories

The names need no introduction. The faces, entirely familiar, relaxed with the passing of the years and a shift to a less frantic time. Last week, nine drivers and countless characters gathered to mark the introduction of the World Rally Championship to the FIA's Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame was established at the end of 2017, when all 33 Formula 1 world champions were inducted. Now it was the turn of the WRC and the generations converged for an evening to remember.

The Automobile Club de France sits in a corner of Paris's largest square, the Place de la Concorde. Ordinarily, number six blends obligingly into the beautifully imposing buildings which sit alongside. Not today. Today number six takes the eye of every taxi driving or tourist that passes.

It's not every day you see an Alpine A110, Citroen Xsara WRC, Peugeot 205 T16 E2, Volkswagen Polo R WRC, Toyota Corolla WRC and Lancia Stratos lined up in the centre of the French capital.

Walter Rohrl, Ari Vatanen, Miki Biasion, Carlos Sainz, Didier Auriol, Tommi Makinen, Marcus Gronholm, Petter Solberg and Sebastien Loeb were all in attendance and all in the mood to talk.

Gronholm arrived early with co-driver Timo Rautiainen and, curiously, a bag with his overalls in.

"I'm ready to race," grinned 'Bosse'.

The opportunity of further investigation into his race-readiness passed all too quickly as another cab dropped another megastar, another hero of our sport.

A special reception was reserved for the family of Britain's first ever World Rally champion Colin McRae. Colin's parents Jimmy and Margaret, wife Alison, partner Hugh, and daughter Hollie were all there, along with Derek Ringer and his wife Ann.

Richard Burns' sister Jo collected the award on behalf of the 2001 World Rally champion, with Robert Reid joining her on stage.

There was no shortage of emotion and appreciation for a journey which took

the Automobile Club de France's library down a 40-year-old road. Stories, some told, some forgotten and retold were joined by emerging tales relayed in confidence inspired by the passing of time and fading of memories.

FIA president Jean Todt welcomed all to the room and talked warmly and with a deep sense of pride of his own time in the series, both as a co-driver who came close to taking a world title and as a team manager who crushed all comers with the era-defining 205 T16.

Todt's fellow co-drivers were all remembered, but this was an evening where the drivers took centre stage.

Seeing Biasion, Auriol and Ninni Russo in a huddle took you straight back to a Martini-liveried time where the discussion centred on a preferred damper for the Tuscan gravel which lay in wait.

The youngest of the McRaes offered the most searing insight into the speed with which the years have passed. Looking up to 'wee Hollie' – as Margaret will, doubtless, always refer to her – there was a young lady now in her third year at university. Hollie would have made her father enormously proud, as she does the rest of Lanark's finest folk.

It was, however, her gramps who stole the show with a fabulous line in response to the question of what made Colin so great.

Jimmy: "He had a fantastic father."

Colin's former team-mate Carlos Sainz talked touchingly of his time alongside McRae, as did Petter Solberg. The Norwegian arrived looking fresh-faced and relaxed, talking of a recent holiday. Petter's wife Pernilla filled in the details: "Holiday... we had an afternoon walking around Paris!"

Petter wasn't in a position to argue. He'd gone back to 2003, back to the end of Margam Park and he'd gone back there with the man who'd carried him on his shoulders that day... Makinen.

"This is amazing," said Petter pausing long enough to look around the library. "All of these guys, just look at them. Walter [Rohrl], [Miki] Biasion... these guys are legends. Real legends."

And now, thanks to the FIA's Hall of Fame, their names are on the wall. ■

WHAT THE CHAMPIONS SAID

Bjorn Waldegard (Champion: 1979)

Represented by son Mathias Waldegard

Waldegard Jr said: "He would have been very honoured, me and my sister we miss him and are very happy to be here."

Co-driver Hans Thorzelius: "Bjorn was a fantastic driver and a very, very good friend. We had 15 years together and I miss him very much."

Walter Rohrl (Champion: 1980, 1982)

"This is a good chance to say sorry to Michele [Mouton], it was a mistake [to win the 1982 title] because it was the only chance in history that a woman could be world champion."

Co-driver Christian Geistdorfer: "We had a really gorgeous time together and it still gives me chicken skin when we talk about these times and watch these pictures."

Ari Vatanen (Champion: 1981)

"It is so nice to be here again among the friends again, so nice to remember some of the memories and the good times. I'm happy to be here. Do I have any regrets from my career? No... well, maybe I could have braked a bit earlier sometimes..."

Co-driver David Richards: "We had some great memories and some pretty big disasters as well. Looking back, it's a long time ago now and, more importantly, we've become great friends and our families have grown up together."

Hannu Mikkola (Champion: 1983)

Hannu Mikkola – sons Juha and Vesa Mikkola

Juha Mikkola said: "His career lasted 30 years, but for me he will always be synonymous with the Audi quattro era. There's an iconic photo of him fully airborne in one of these cars and it's still hanging in Audi dealerships around the world. Every time I see that it reminds me of his speed, his skill and also the consistency he had. He drove a lot of cars and he heralded the four-wheel-drive era which helped change all of the cars we drive today."

Co-driver Arne Hertz: "I co-drove for Hannu between 1976 and 1989. We had a great time with many successes and even a few disappointments. The good results came because we trusted each other and because of the help we got from the teams we worked for – from the Ford and Audi mechanics and team managers. Thank you Hannu."

Miki Biasion (Champion: 1988-1989)

"I remember I was always in the cockpit, always testing and practising and thinking to the next event. There was never a lot of opportunity to think about what we had done in the past – thank you for giving us that time now."

Carlos Sainz (Champion: 1990, 1992)

"Thank you for the guys who competed in the past, it was them who inspired me and the drivers I competed against and now the guys competing today who keep my passion going. I would like to remember Bjorn Waldegard, Colin McRae, Richard

Burns and [Toyota Team Europe's] Ove Andersson."

Co-driver Luis Moya: "There are a lot of good drivers here, but Carlos was the best set-up driver in the history of rallying. When we come to a team and Carlos worked with the car, either he won the title or the car and the team did. Also, it's his capacity for working – since he was 16 years old and Spanish squash champion, he's been the same."

Didier Auriol (Champion: 1994)

"This was always a nice family, the other guys were rally drivers and my friends. We had some nice endings in 1992 and 1994 against a lot of people who are here in this room and it's nice to have the opportunity to say thank you for that life."

Colin McRae (Champion: 1995)

Represented by Jimmy and Alison McRae
Jimmy: "Colin had such a flamboyant way of winning rallies and it was thanks to David Richards for noticing Colin when he was very young. He just loved driving and loved playing to the crowd when he could."

Co-driver Derek Ringer: "As I'm sure the other co-drivers would agree, we were very, very privileged because we saw things that nobody else saw in this sport. Colin was absolutely incredible. He could do things which were just supremely magic and I was there to witness that magic. But, sometimes, some of those tricks just went a bit wrong and I was there at the same time. But the memories for me are just incredible."

Tommi Makinen

(Champion: 1996-1999)

"This was a special time in the sport and I have to thank all three of my co-drivers. I took Seppo [Harjanne], with the experience. Then Risto Mannisenmaki and then the youngster Kaj Lindstrom, who is working with me again at Toyota now. Without all of those guys this would be a different story."
Co-driver Seppo Harjanne: "Nearly 30 years ago I was introduced to a young driver from central Finland. Little did anybody in our team know of the upcoming years. We had our plans and objectives and, after some years of ups and downs, one of the most remarkable careers in rallying was born. It was very exciting to work with a young driver at the very beginning of his time in international rallying. I'm thankful and proud to be part of that career which led all the way the championship."

Marcus Gronholm

(Champion: 2000, 2002)

"Oy, oy, oy long time – it was 20 years ago! These were nice times when I was driving. There wasn't much time for fun when I was driving before and now it would be good to do this [at Rally Sweden next week]. The Toyota is a nice new car. If we can do some stage times, then that could be interesting as well..."

Co-driver Timo Rautiainen: "I have just good memories from the time with Marcus,

some touching memories – sometimes maybe some of the memories were a little bit too much touching! I'm really proud to have sat with Marcus and to see what he has achieved."

Richard Burns (Champion: 2001)

Represented by Jo Burns, Richard's sister

Jo Burns: "I was working on Rally GB [when Richard and Robert Reid won the World Rally Championship] in 2001, I was working on the merchandise. It was phenomenal, my biggest memory is of Richard punching the air and telling Robert he was the best in the world."

Co-driver Robert Reid: "It was amazing to sit alongside Richard for 13 years. In that time you get to know somebody really well and develop friendship, camaraderie, competitiveness and mutual professional respect. I first co-drove for Richard on a rally in 1990 and, in the bar afterwards, we both said we wanted to be world champions, little did we know the dream would come true – but dreams do come true."

Petter Solberg (Champion: 2003)

"I have so much passion for this sport and to be back in a room with so many people from this sport and so many guys I have worked with as a team-mate, it's fantastic. It was a special moment for Phil [Mills, co-driver] and me to win the World Rally Championship in 2003. You know, I am coming from Norway, it's not the biggest country, so to win against so many incredible drivers was fantastic for me. And tonight is another special moment. It's really sad that we're here without Colin, Richard [Burns] and, of course, our first winner Bjorn Waldegard – but we will always remember those guys, especially now that we are all together in the FIA's Hall of Fame. I want to say a big thank you to my co-driver Phil. Co-driving is such a tough job for those crazy guys who want to sit next to us, but Phil and I have an amazing relationship. He's such a fantastic person with a fantastic voice – when I go to bed at night, I still hear that voice!"
Co-driver Phil Mills: "We had 11 fantastic years together, 11 world tours, back-to-back. What great times and never better than in 2003. I'm so proud to have played a role with you. They were great days, great memories and this is a fantastic achievement, well done."

Sebastien Loeb (Champion: 2004-2012)

"My career had a lot of incredible moments. I would say the one that leaves me the most emotional is the one I had in France in my home town in 2010. I won the rally, the title, the manufacturers' title and it all came in front of my friends and family near my home in the town where I was born. I had great battles with drivers and I do still – with Petter in rallycross and with Carlos in Dakar. And, it's always nice to see the guys who won the historical rallies."

Stig Blomqvist, Timo Salonen, Juha Kankkunen and Sebastien Ogier were not represented in Paris



Makinen and his old race suit

Rallying in The North of England ?

2019 NORTHERN STAGE RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Forest Challenge

10 Feb	Riponian Stages Rally (Ripon MSC)	North Yorkshire	www.riponian.co.uk
7 Jul	Greystoke Stages (West Cumbria MC)	Greystoke	www.greystokestages.co.uk
27/28 Sep	Trackrod Clubman's Trophy (Trackrod MC)	North Yorkshire	www.rallyyorkshire.co.uk
3 Nov	Malton Forest Rally (Malton MC)	North Yorkshire	www.maltonmc.co.uk
7 Dec	Grizedale Stages Rally (Furness DMC)	Grizedale,	www.grizedalestages.co.uk

Tarmacadam Challenge

23 Mar	North West Stages Rally (Motor Sport NW)	Fylde	www.nwestages.co.uk
21 Apr	Warcop Stages	Warcop Ranges	www.northhumbersidemotorclub.co.uk
12 May	Cetus Stages (Wigan MC)	3 Sisters	www.wiganmotorclub.org.uk
25 Aug	Pendragon Stages Rally (Kirkby Lonsdale MC)	Warcop	www.pendragonstages.co.uk
23 Nov	Hall Trophy Rally (Clitheroe DMC)	Blyton	www.cdmconline.co.uk

Mixed Surface Challenge

17 Feb	Jack Frost Stages (Darlington DMC)	Croft	www.darlington-motor-club.org.uk
7 Apr	Lookout Stages (Trackrod MC)	Melbourne	www.trackrodmotorclub.co.uk/lookout
21 July	Twyford Wood Stages (Mid Derbyshire MC)	Twyford Wood	www.mid-derbyshiremc.co.uk
22 Sep	Heroes Stages (Pendle DMC)	Weeton Barr.	www.pendledistrictmc.co.uk
6 Oct	Harold Palin (Eastwood & DMC)	Fulbeck	www.eastwoodmotorclub.co.uk

2019 NORTHERN ROAD RALLY 2019

Date	Event	Club
19th/20th January	Malton Laser Ryemoor Trophy Rally	Malton Motor Club
9th/10th February	Vauxcare Bruce Robinson Rally	Lincoln Motor Cycle & Car Club
23rd/24th February	John Robson Rally	Hexham & District Motor Club
27th/28th April	Primrose Trophy Rally	Clitheroe & District Motor Club
15th/16th June	Garstang & Preston Memorial Rally	Garstang & Preston Motor Club
20th/21st July	Maple Garage Beaver Rally	Beverley & District Motor Club
14th/15th September	Mercian Road Rally	Mercia Motor Sports Group
21st/22nd September	Taybridge Clitheronian Rally	Clitheroe & District Motor Club
2nd/3rd November	Dansport Rally	Matlock Motor Club
16th/17th November	Rali Bryniau Clwyd	Broughton-Bretton Motor Club

For further details please visit www.ancc.co.uk

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PREVIEW

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Roy Dempster, Kevin O'Driscoll, Ger Leahy

**IRISH
TARMAC
RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
PREVIEW**

The top asphalt series has 25 R5s for its season opener. By Jack Benyon



WRCs 'long in the tooth'
says Donagh Kelly

IRISH TAR GLORY DAYS RETURN?

Over £3 million. That's the second-hand value of the 25 R5 cars that have entered the Galway Rally, in what can only be described as one of the greatest turnarounds in rallying history.

The Irish Tarmac Rally Championship is almost identical to last year, in terms of calendar and rules. It's had R5s at the front of the field for two full seasons now. No major changes have been made. There were four R5 cars that finished last year's championship: that has increased by 525% for Galway 2019.

Not only has it added numbers, but quality too. Five past ITRC champions will start in Galway, an unprecedented number. In that five are key players Declan Boyle (Ford Fiesta R5) and Donagh Kelly (Skoda Fabia R5).

Both have stuck with WRC cars since 2016 when the ITRC decided that WRCs wouldn't be eligible for the overall championship, and that R5s would be the top class.

It wasn't a universally popular move, but clearly something has shifted for 2019.

"World Rally Cars are getting a bit long in the tooth if I'm honest," says Kelly, the 2015 Irish Tarmac and National champion.

"I would get more enjoyment if I finished a second behind the eventual winner of a rally if we were both in R5 cars. Winning is nice, of course it is, but you don't have the same feeling if you have two minutes in hand over the next car."

With the likes of Kelly, Boyle and now Manus Kelly – the three-in-a-row Donegal winner switching to a Hyundai i20 – all in R5s, it's given the rallying scene in Ireland a shot in the arm. If drivers want to compete against the best, now is the time to trade-in and go R5.

The Moffett brothers, Sam and Josh, have won the last two series and they will be favourites to fight for the championship with the returning Alastair Fisher, Donagh Kelly and Boyle. But it's still uncertain as to who will be the main championship players, especially when many of the R5 converts have kept their WRC cars for an attempt at Donegal, where they will drop a round by not scoring points in their R5s.

What is certain is that Galway will be as hard fought as the championship this season.

"The entry for Galway is something else, I'm gutted we're not able to be there," says 2011 British champion David Bogie, a regular in Donegal who had been intending on starting in Galway before work commitments foiled his plans.

"I think you have to go back to

around 2006 when Colin [McRae] took the Metro to Donegal for an entry as strong as in Galway. We'll definitely try and get over to do some rounds later in the year."

Kelly may end up being a ringer in the championship, and he's joined by ex-Citroen WRC works driver Craig Breen for Galway, but he also could do more rounds in his Ford Fiesta R5. In a similar car, WRC Esports champion Jon Armstrong is back in an R5 for the first time in 16 months.

The entry is quite spectacular and arguably close to the 2006 list mentioned by Bogie, which featured the likes of McRae, Mark Higgins, Matthew Wilson, Eugene Donnelly and Andrew Nesbitt.

It's a spectacular turnaround for an event which is wet and windy on the west coast of Ireland in February. And it didn't run last year due to funding concerns.

"There was always the potential for this [the increase in number of R5s in the Irish Tarmac series] to happen," says ITRC championship manager Paddy Flanagan.

"If you go back to the mid-2000s, there was a few pounds about and there was great interest in rallying, but there weren't 25 WRC cars entering then.

"It's difficult to put your finger on a single reason although I think Declan and Donagh switching has played a big part in it.

CALENDAR

Irish Tarmac Rally Championship

DATE	EVENT
Feb 10	Galway International Rally
Mar 16/17	West Cork Rally
Apr 19/20	Easter Stages
May 4/5	Rally of the Lakes
Jun 21-23	Donegal International Rally
Aug 16/17	Ulster Rally
Sep 28/29	Cork '20' Rally

"There's five past champions entered in Galway. I don't think that's ever happened.

"We were always confident the event would run in some shape or form, and they were determined to run a rally this year and that has shown in the entry."

Favourite for the slimmed down event – reducing from two days of action to one – is double winner Garry Jennings in his Subaru Impreza S12B. But WRC cars are not out of reach of rapidly driven R5 cars, and he won't have it easy. Joe McGonigle is another WRC entrant in his Mini John Cooper Works WRC. Desi Henry and Jonny Greer will all be in contention as well as those aforementioned.

There's many questions to be answered about the protagonists for this year's series. But one thing is for certain. Galway will be one of the best rallies to feature in the UK and Ireland this year. ■



Josh Moffett is one of 25 R5 cars

FISHER'S SPECIAL GALWAY VICTORY

The legendary Bertie Fisher is one of the most revered and missed personalities in Irish rallying, and this weekend will mark 20 years since his last Irish Tarmac Rally Championship win of the events that are still active, taking a second Galway International victory in 1999.

Not long after, Bertie, his son Mark and daughter Emma passed away following a helicopter crash in their native County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland.

Despite the tragedy, the Fishers live on through their rallying antics and are still to this day some of the most talked about figures in Irish motorsport. Bertie's nephew Alastair is targeting victory at this weekend's event, 20 years after his uncle won.

Driving the famous silver and yellow 'Tough Mac' liveried Subaru Impreza, Fisher was boosted on the 1999 Galway International by the previous year's winner Austin MacHale breaking an input shaft on the start of the first stage.

However, Toyota Celica driver Ian Greer led the first half of the event in an epic battle with Fisher, who reclaimed the lead on SS8 of 18.

The going was typically muddy and slippery, with Fisher admitting to conservative tyre choice in the beginning. But in typical style, he hunted down Greer to win by 1m23s. He was helped by an off into a hedge which damaged Greer's strut.

"It was very tough," Fisher told MN. "And the conditions were very variable. Fair play to Ian Greer, he went hard."

Fisher went on to win the Circuit of Ireland on his way to third in the championship, as Ian Greer took the title.



Bertie's 1999 Galway win is special

MODIFIED CLASS TO HAVE NEW CHAMP



Eves will contest national calendar

The hotly contested Irish Tarmac Modified Rally Championship will crown a new champion in 2019, as the winner of the last two titles is heading for the Irish National Rally Championship.

Kevin Eves, the owner of one of the most striking cars in the Emerald Isle – a baby blue Toyota Corolla – has elected to take a break from the ITRC.

He took three wins in the series last year and leaves a large hole in the class, which was last won by Ford Escort Mk2 driver Ross Marshall in 2016.

A Damian and Damien duo top

the class in the season opener in Galway, with Damien Tourish and Damian Toner both steering Ford Escort Mk2s. In a similar car, David Condell is the third modified on the road, ahead of Escort convert Stuart Darcy, who switches from a highly-strung Darran T90 GTR. Ray Breen joins the fray in the Metro 6R4 that his son, Craig, drove as the zero car on the Killarney Historic Rally.

In the International section, William Creighton tops the R2 runners in his Peugeot 208, while William Mavitty heads the Group N entry in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9. Conor Murphy tops the Juniors.

ENTRY LIST

Galway International Rally seeded entry list

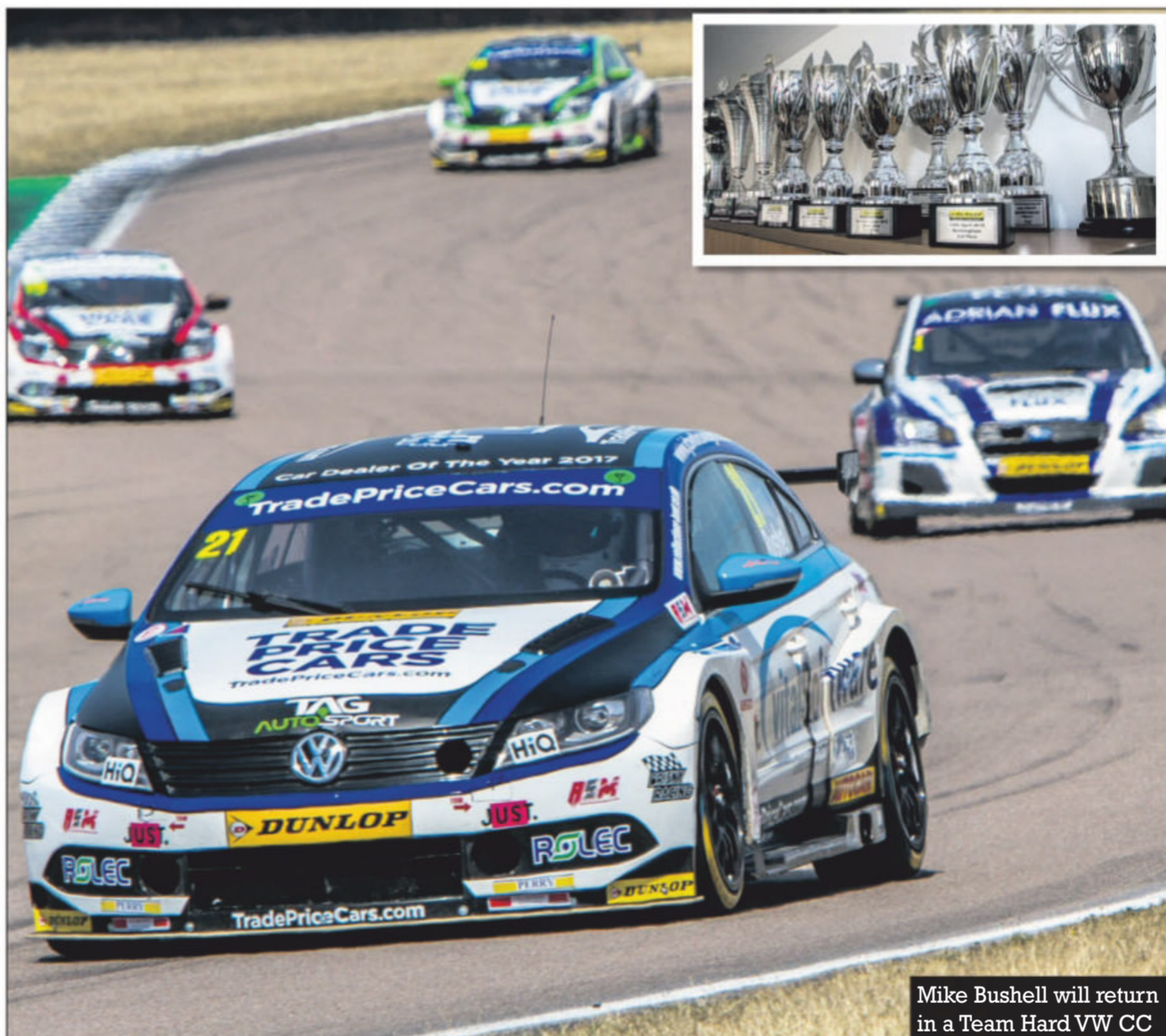
NO.	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Craig Breen/Paul Nagle	Ford Fiesta R5
2	Garry Jennings/Rory Kennedy	Subaru Impreza S12B WRC
3	Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty	Ford Fiesta R5
4	Sam Moffett/James Fulton	Ford Fiesta R5
5	Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble	Ford Fiesta R5
6	Declan Boyle/Brian Boyle	Ford Fiesta R5
7	Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley	Skoda Fabia R5
8	Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan	Skoda Fabia R5
9	Jon Armstrong/Noel O'Sullivan	Ford Fiesta R5
10	Manus Kelly/Donall Barrett	Hyundai i20 R5

Top National rally entries: 25 Damien Tourish/Domhnall McAlaney (Ford Escort Mk2); 26 Damian Toner/Mick Coady (Escort Mk2); 27 David Condell/Paul Kelly (Escort Mk2); 28 Stuart Darcy/Emmet Sherry (Escort Mk2); 32 Raymond Conlon/Damien Fleming (Toyota Corolla).

INSIGHT

The Kent-based crew has multiple programmes from British touring cars to truck racing. By **Matt J**

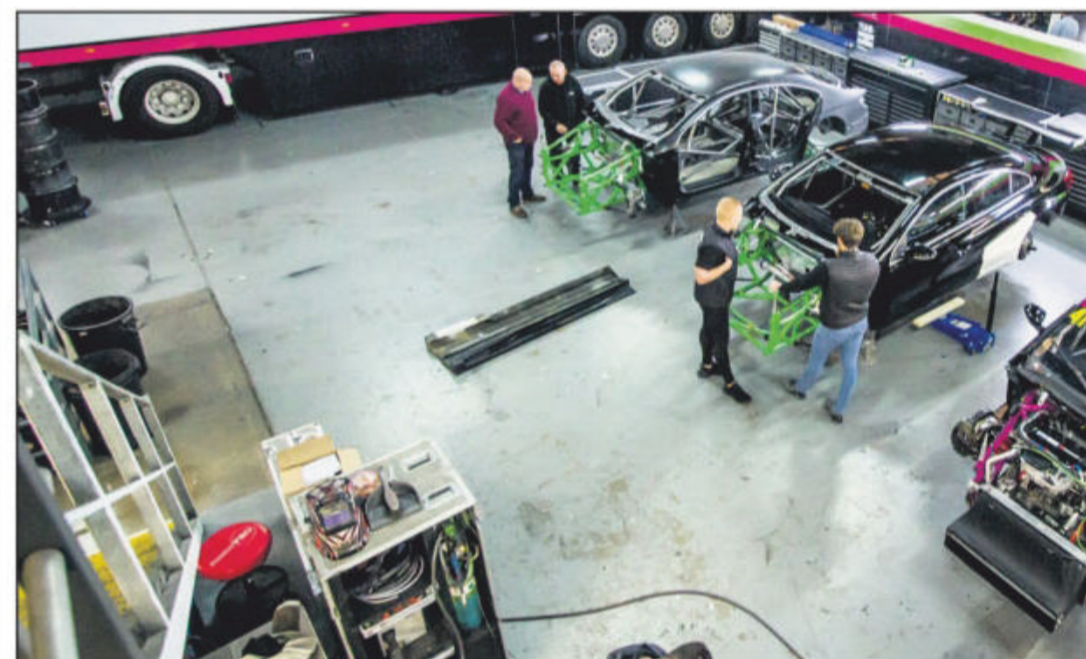
HOW TEAM HARD RUNS BRIT



Mike Bushell will return in a Team Hard VW CC



Hard has 100 staff working on most race weekends



Running a British Touring Car Championship team is often just one part of a squad's operations.

Most teams diversify into other categories to help create a broader base to the business.

Kent-based Team Hard has taken that to extremes. In 2019, the team will oversee the on-track activities of more than 50 drivers across 16 championships, including the headline BTCC campaign. It is a remarkable effort for what has to be one of the biggest teams in the UK in terms of the number of machines it looks after.

Team Hard first emerged on the British Touring Car Championship grid in 2012 to run the boss Tony Gilham in a Honda Civic. It has been through several iterations from that period, including a partnership with

Warren Scott's Chrome Edition Restart Racing operation (which would later become Team BMR).

The current guise of Team Hard was created at the end of 2013 with Kieran Gallagher tackling the BTCC in 2014, and that was the seeds of what has now become the biggest team on the BTCC grid. In 2019, it will run four VW CCs for Carl Boardley, Mike Bushell, Michael Crees and Bobby Thompson and the ambitions are high.

"While we are probably one of the biggest teams in the UK in terms of the amount of cars that we operate, we don't see ourselves as big as a team like [multiple championship winners] WSR or Team Dynamics," says Gilham. "They have been there and done it and got the trophies. We are big in different areas, but we do aspire to be like them and to have the success they have had."

And the ambitions have a real intent, a purpose that the crew hasn't necessarily had in the past. There is a reason that there is a spring in the step of the Team Hard personnel. The feeling is that 2019 will be a watershed moment.

"Up until now, we haven't been able to afford to do it the way we want to," says Gilham. "But look at the investment we have put in the cars and the infrastructure we have put in place. Look at the staffing levels we have. We are moving through the gears, we are making progress, but we have still got to improve. This is a genuine effort from us and we are aiming for the Independents Trophy. We feel we have got a shot."

The reason for the increased ambition for the season ahead is the stability that

the operation has craved. Going into the year, the team has got the foundation in place to make the step forward. Team Hard is a family effort in every sense of the word, with Gilham working alongside wife (and co-owner) Sam, father-in-law Gary Allen is a manager and his mother Debbie is at the heart of organising race-day hospitality.

"Up until this point, every year we have had to make a massive investment in hardware: more equipment, more tooling, all kinds of things," says Gilham. "This year there has been less expense - I have only bought one new truck this year whereas last year I had to buy six. We have not acquired any more race cars - this time last year we had just bought the fourth VW CC. We were growing again."

"But this year, we have been able to invest more heavily in quality. Up until this point, we had been investing in quantity, now it is in quality and that will be a turning point for us. Also, as of December 31 we were five years old as a company. A massive amount of companies fail in their first five years. But reaching that point has been like flicking a switch. Coming into year six as a company, it feels like we have got a lot more respect from people, the other drivers, people that you are working with and the bank! We are getting approached by teams, drivers and sponsors that have been with other teams and they like the way we do things and they are asking to come on board, which has never happened before."

So that has set the team up for 2019, and the BTCC sits at the top of the pile. But below that, there are campaigns in

the Ginetta GT4 Supercup, Renault Clios, the VW Cup, Britcar and GT Cup, alongside Junior Saloon Cars, C1 Racing, a raft of Ginetta series, the Mini Challenge and helping out with Simon Cole's British Truck Racing Association campaign. There are Touring Car Trophy plans too alongside a programme of karting, trackdays and tuning for road cars, which has just been added.

Gilham says: "It has been building, but with any business you have growing pains and, because we got burned so badly in the past by other people and investors, we said this time around [when the team regrouped in 2014], it is just going to be us. We will not have any outside investors coming in. We are going to stick to what we know and we have got this unique set-up of being a business hub bringing all our backers together."

"Up until now, we have not really spoken openly about our foundations and what we are doing: people could

have copied it. But now we have come so far that it is a model that would be very hard to recreate. This is our launch year if you like: this is the first year where we can do things properly and we have taken a step forward as a team and as a brand."

Team Hard is known, in touring car circles at least, as quite a proactive operation when it comes to interacting with fans. Like other teams, it operates race day hospitality and trackdays for corporate partners as a central plinth of what the team does. That is where the team's name originated, as it is actually an acronym: Hospitality And Race Days.

It isn't just the surrounding bolt-ons to the race programme that have got Gilham's attention. He is already planning the next stage of the team's growth. "We are onto the next phase of our building plan too: we are in three factories at the minute and we want to be in one. We will be bringing media in house in terms of training, we will be bringing the simulators in



Hard will run eight VW Golfs

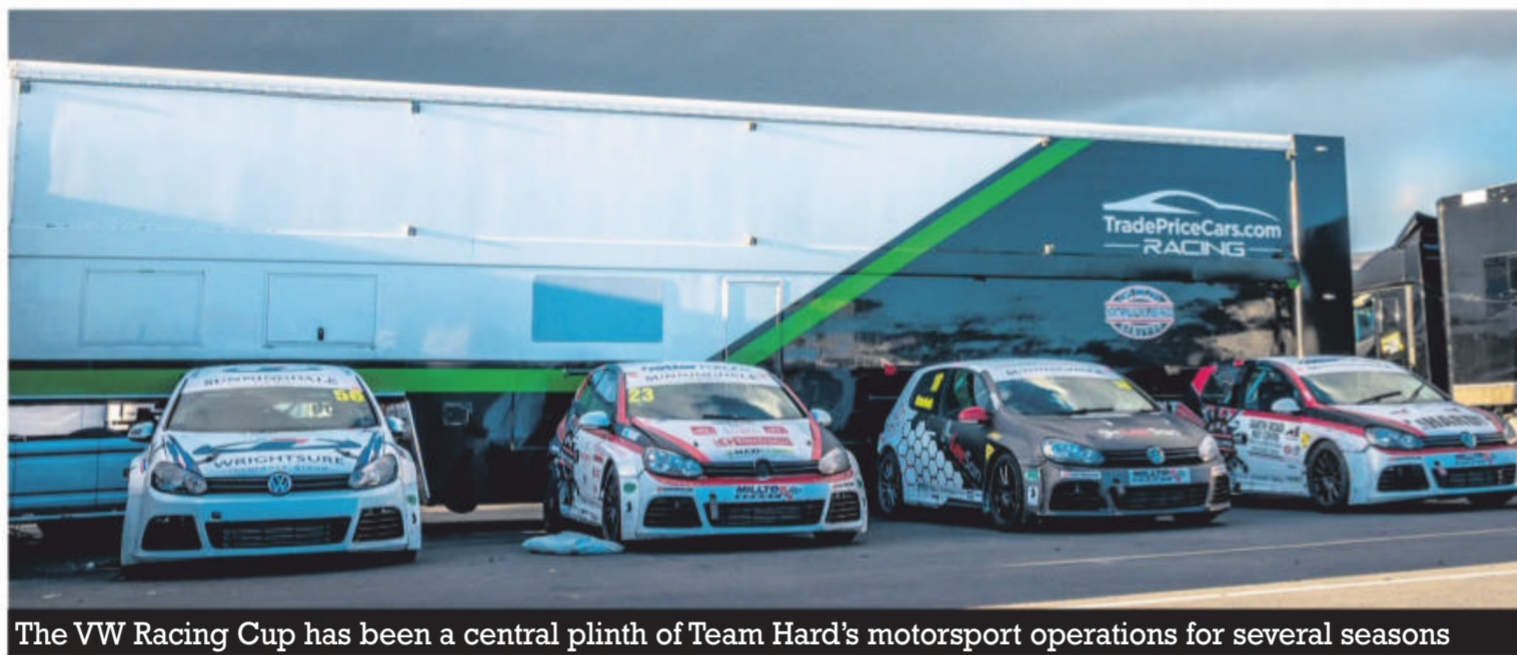


Team Hard had a successful programme with its Ginettas in the Britcar long-distance series

Photos: Ian Cutting Photography, Mike Hills Speed Images

ames

TEAM HARD'S BUSIEST RACE SQUAD



The VW Racing Cup has been a central plinth of Team Hard's motorsport operations for several seasons



Gilham is full of optimism for the 2019 campaign



The BTCC fleet is being prepared in Kent



Older BTCC-spec Toyota Avensis can be refitted for racing in 2019

TEAM HARD'S MAMMOTH PROGRAMME

DRIVER	CAR	DRIVER	CAR
BTCC			
Carl Boardley	VW CC	Thomas Ward	Citroen Saxo
Mike Bushell	VW CC	Ben Kasperczak	Citroen Saxo
Michael Crees	VW CC	Scott McIntyre	Citroen Saxo
Bobby Thompson	VW CC		
British Truck Racing Championship			
		Simon Cole	Mercedes Race Truck
		TBA	TBA
VW Cup			
Howard Fuller	Volkswagen Golf		
Mark Wakefield	Volkswagen Golf		
Jamie Bond	Volkswagen Golf		
Josh Jackson	Volkswagen Golf		
Callum Jenkins	Volkswagen Golf		
Toby Davis	Volkswagen Golf		
TBA	Volkswagen Golf		
TBA	Volkswagen Golf		
Ginetta GT5 Challenge			
			Ginetta GT5
			Ginetta GT5
Ginetta G40 Cup			
			Ginetta G40
			Ginetta G40
			Ginetta G40
			Ginetta G40
Ginetta GT Supercup			
Paul Taylor	Ginetta G55		
Darron Lewis	Ginetta G55		
TBA	Ginetta G55		
TBA	Ginetta G55		
Karting			
		Ralphie Reeves	
		Holly Miall	
		TBA	
		TBA	
Ginetta Junior Championship			
			Ginetta Junior
			Ginetta Junior
Touring Car Trophy			
		TBA	TBA
		TBA	TBA
		TBA	TCR UK
Citroen C1 24 hour			
		TBA x 4	Citroen C1
		TBA x 4	Citroen C1
Classic Touring Car Championship			
		TBA	TBA
Renault UK Clio Cup			
Max Coates	Renault Clio		
Ethan Hammerton	Renault Clio		

house, we will have a fitness gym, we will have coaches including life coaches, everything will be a one-stop shop," says Gilham. "Anybody who is racing, and it doesn't matter what championship they are in or who they are, if they come to speak to us we can help them. It adds to what we are doing already."

The struggle for results up to this point has been tough, and Gilham knows that there are some within the paddock who deride his efforts. There was a podium by Gilham himself in 2012 and three more after that, but the silverware has been rare. Even more alarmingly, some people make accusations that Gilham himself is aware of.

"[The perception of Team Hard] is changing but I feel that sometimes others thought of us as a laughing stock," he says. "Sometimes they thought of us as hard triers. But now it has turned to 'not quite sure how they are doing it but they are obviously doing something right'. It is on that turn. While we don't

expect total respect, we are starting to command it with what we are doing. That is a big staging post for us.

"Sometimes there is a lot of negativity there and there have been a lot of lies that have been around the paddock that I know are not true but I don't bother going out there fighting it. We will just get our heads down and keep doing what we do. People think all sorts: some people think I am a secret millionaire, some people think I am a drug dealer, all sorts of things have been thrown at me. People are always asking where the money comes from. But it is work, and the way we work.

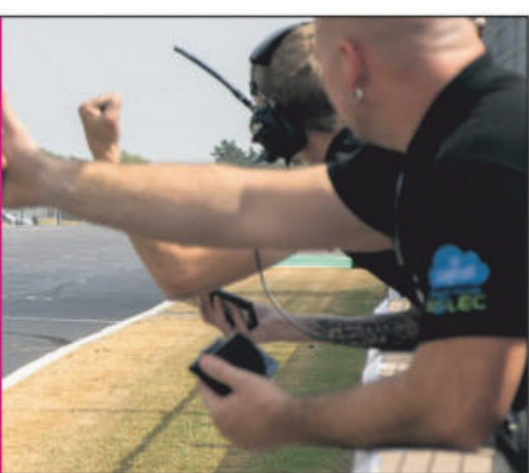
"To get to where we are now, I have had to take massive risks, duck and dive, and do things that would satisfy what we needed at the time, but maybe cost us further down the road. I had to do that to survive. I have been able to change now because the foundations of the team are stronger.

"It has been tough. I am quite thick

skinned and I am not massively emotional at times. It does have a knock-on effect if someone is horrible about me or the team with the family. It does hurt somewhere. It has been a tough and tricky journey, but because I have always believed in it, now other people are starting to believe what I believe."

The message is extremely bullish. The British Touring Cars have been heavily reworked over the winter time with a huge financial outlay, and that has a trickle down effect to every other part of the programme.

That is something that Gilham says should be a concern for rival operations on the grid. "These people who have been jealous of us or fearing us has all been when we have had no money: but they have got a big problem now, because we are starting to get financially secure," he concludes. "Once we have got money, they are in huge trouble." ■



ries last year, and will run two cars in 2019



The four VW CCs have been reworked for the 2019 BTCC attack

SUNOCO CHALLENGE

Kyle Reid and Linus Lundqvist had a trip to remember, as **Gary Watkins** found out

CHANGE OF A LIFE



Lundqvist raced in the Daytona 24 Hours



It was one of those pinch yourself moments. Kyle Reid was coming out of Turn 4 at Daytona International Speedway strapped into a BMW M4 GT4 and about to start his first international motor race.

Not bad for a Mini racer who couldn't have dreamt of competing on the high banks of the self-styled 'World Center of Motorsport' at the start of last season.

But it very much became the 29-year-old Scot's dream through the 2018 season. Winning the Sunoco 240 Challenge and its prize, a drive on the Daytona 24 Hours support bill last month, became the *raison d'être* of his season.

Reid, a stalwart of the Scottish Mini ranks, wasn't planning a full season last year as he ventured down south to race in the Cooper Pro class of the Mini Challenge UK. He wasn't entertaining thoughts of a tilt at the title, let alone even thinking of Sunoco honours. A chance exchange between a Sunoco representative and Reid's father at the opening round of the series at Donington Park last April changed that.

Reid had just won both races and notched up a pole and a fastest lap — so a big haul of challenge points — when the Sunoco man pointed up at the podium and suggested to the stranger standing next to him that the guy spraying the champagne looked like a short-odds bet to win the Sunoco 240 Challenge. That man happened to be Reid Sr, and it resulted in some soul searching by the Reid family that evening.

The plan for 2018 was for Reid to contest only selected events in his first season of racing outside of Scotland with the family SCK Motorsport squad.

He works in the oil industry in Africa, so he wasn't able to do all the rounds and hadn't even signed up with Sunoco.

"I'm out of the country for six months of the year, working one month on, one month off," explains Reid. "I contacted my rig manager on Monday morning and he said he'd support me. He offered to fly me back to the UK so I could do the three races I was going to miss. I then got on the phone to Sunoco. Thankfully I had until the Monday after Donington to register.

"It turned into an amazing season. It went from not planning to do all the races, to thinking I could win the title and the Challenge, and then get to Daytona. Most of the tracks were new to me; I'd only ever raced at Knockhill, Oulton Park and Donington before the season started."

Reid notched up 12 wins from 17 races aboard his Mini R50 Cooper last year and made it onto the podium on three more occasions. And in the two races in which he didn't collect silverware he finished fourth and sixth.

The sixth came at the penultimate weekend of the championship at Cadwell Park. The Mini title was as good as won, but he still needed vital Sunoco points as he battled with the best amateur drivers from the British GT Championship and the frontrunners in the Radical Challenge.

"Maybe the pressure was getting to me," he says. "I wasn't really thinking about the Mini title. It was all about the Challenge for me. To be honest, I quickly forgot about winning the championship."

The prize drive in the opening round of the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge, formerly known as the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge, came with

the Fast Track/Classic BMW squad. He wouldn't get behind the wheel of its M4 until the official pre-race test at Daytona, known as the Roar, in early January. It was a massive step up for a driver who'd never previously raced a rear-wheel-drive car.

"I had done some work on the simulator before heading over to Daytona, but it was still a massive step going from a 130bhp front-wheel-drive Mini to a rear-drive BMW with something like 450bhp," he says. "Going into Turn 1 at 173mph was a bit of an eye-opener."

"When I arrived at Daytona for the first time, I was about 1.6s off my teammates, but by the time I left after the test, we were all within a few tenths of each other, so the team was super happy."

The team continued to be impressed with the newcomer through practice and picked Reid to qualify the car, which meant that he would be the starting driver. On a fresh set of Michelin tyres, Reid found 2.2 seconds to put the Bimmer 22nd out of 36 GT4 cars.

Reid managed to move up a couple of positions during the early stages of the four-hour race. He made it as high as 16th before handing over to the first of his team-mates, Jayson Clunie.

The car briefly led the race before third driver, Fast Track's pro and also its team manager, Toby Grahovec, collected a spinning car. Four laps were lost to repairs, and after another delay with a puncture, the car ended up in 30th position at the chequered flag.

These issues meant, however, that Reid was strapped back in to finish the race, completing a second 45-minute stint. The team didn't get the result it was looking for, but for Reid the whole event was a rewarding experience.

"I've gained so much out of doing Daytona apart from just the thrill of racing here," he says. "Things like working with a data engineer were all new to me. And to come away as the quickest driver in the car was quite an achievement."

Reid isn't sure what the future holds for him, but the phone has started ringing since he claimed the Sunoco 240 Challenge.

That's an indication, he says, of the prestige it now holds in its eighth year of existence. British GT teams have been in touch, though he stresses that the finance isn't available to take up any of the offers. He's also been asked back to the USA with Fast Track, but that again will be dependent on finance.

"I'm not committed to anything at the moment, but the plan is to try to get out on the TOCA package this year," says Reid. "I want to do at least one round in the Renault UK Clio Cup and try to get out in the JCW class of the Mini Challenge as well, but of course I want to get back out in some kind of GT car again."

Reid wasn't the only Sunoco winner racing at Daytona last month. BRDC British Formula 3 champion Linus Lundqvist competed in the main event after coming out on top in the Sunoco Whelen Challenge in 2018. The 19-year-old Swede followed in a line of illustrious predecessors, whose number include ex-Sauber Formula 1 driver Felipe Nasr. The Brazilian is now one of the stars of the IMSA SportsCar Championship, which kicks off with the Daytona 24 Hours, and won last year's title together with Eric Curran.

Lundqvist wasn't at the wheel of a prototype like the Sunoco winners that have gone before him, rather a GT

Daytona class Lamborghini Huracan GT3. The stakes are ever higher at the front of the field, reckons Anders Hildebrand, the architect of the Sunoco scheme as the British importer of Sunoco racing fuels, and throwing a challenge winner into one of the Daytona Prototype international (DPI) racers competing for outright honours is a "bit like asking a League One or Two footballer to play in a World Cup Final".

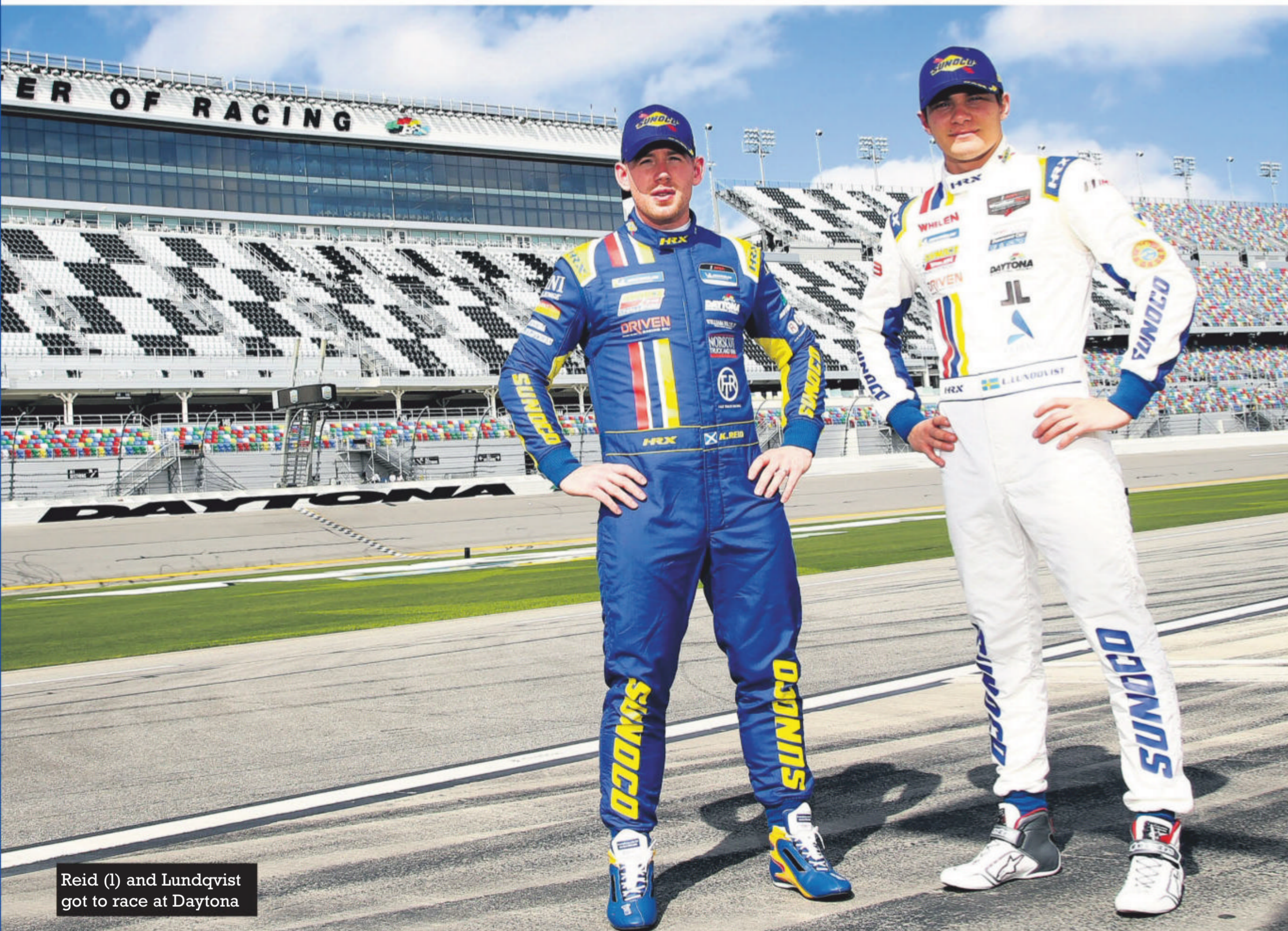
Lundqvist managed two stints early in the race aboard the Precision Performance Motorsport Lambo, which subsequently spent nearly three and a half hours in the pits undergoing a clutch change. The Swede would get back behind the wheel, but only when the safety car was out as heavy rain turned the IMSA series opener into a stop-start affair that was red-flagged twice. The car was classified down in 18th position in class after the results were declared.

Lundqvist reckons he's taken a lot away from his international sportscar debut. He managed just 49 laps across the pre-event Roar test and practice for the race, yet he notched up the car's fastest race lap. He outpaced Milos Pavlovic, a Lamborghini regular and also a British F3 racer in his time, by 0.6s, setting his race best when conditions were not at their quickest.

"I've really enjoyed myself here and every lap you do in a racing car is experience gained," says Lundqvist. "My plan is to race in some kind of international F3 series this season, but I can definitely see myself doing the odd one-off here and there in sportscars if the opportunity arises."

"I think it will help make me a more complete driver and I hope one day I can come back to Daytona." ■

TIME AT DAYTONA



Reid (l) and Lundqvist got to race at Daytona



TEN YEARS AND COUNTING...

Sunoco Challenge boss Anders Hildebrand (above) picks his personal high points from the first 10 years of the scheme.

2010 Derek Johnston: Doran Racing Dallara-Ford DP01

"When Derek first jumped in the car, he thought it was going to kill him, but he got on top of it and proved that the concept of the Challenge could work."

2012 Felipe Nasr: Michael Shank Racing Riley-Ford MkXX

"Felipe was so impressive as the Challenge winner that he was invited back the following year by Action Express. I believe he raised the bar for drivers in Grand-Am."

2015/2016 Phil Keen/Jonny Adam: Action Express Racing Coyote-Chevrolet Corvette DP

"Phil and Jonny were our more experienced winners. They were so composed and the team gave them a lot of time in the race and both came away with the second-fastest lap time in the car."

2017 Seb Morris: Action Express Racing Cadillac DPi-V.R

"In the wet during the night, Seb outperformed everyone else on track. He gave the team a heart attack, but he'd just been very clever in warming up his tyres."

2018 Stuart Middleton: Action Express Racing Cadillac DPi-V.R

"That was a drive of such enormity for a young driver. Stuart had to fuel save and nurse an engine with a water leak, but he still brought the car home in second place."



Daytona support bill race was Reid's prize

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INTERVIEW

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Adam Morgan and Ciceley Motorsport are looking for a step forward in 2019. By **Matt James**

READY TO MAKE THE NEXT JUMP TOWARDS BTCC SUCCESS



Morgan took three BTCC wins last year

BTCC CV

Adam Morgan

Age: 30
From: Whalley, Lancashire

Starts: 207
Wins: 7
Podiums: 24
Pole positions: 1
Fastest laps: 13
Points: 1395
Races led: 11
Laps led: 136



Thruxton has been a happy hunting ground

After three rounds of the 2016 British Touring Car Championship campaign, Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes-Benz A-Class racer Adam Morgan was third in the points with two wins. He was fifth at the same stage 12 months later, and in 2018 he was top of the pile.

The overall results in those last three seasons haven't lived up to the early promise, with last year's seventh place in the overall standings equalling his best points finish of 2013 and 2015.

He will return to the competition in 2019, and he has a clear objective in terms of the way he'd like the campaign to go.

"It has got to be about the consistency – and we have to iron out the dips that we have experienced in the middle of the season," says Morgan. "That has to be crucial if we want to be in the hunt at the end of the fight."

Morgan wasn't completely out of the picture in 2018 despite his tricky middle of the season. Full ballast thwarted him at Oulton Park, but

damage at Croft and Snetterton (where double points were on offer for the final race of the weekend) left him with a run of nine races where he had only picked up points on four occasions.

Morgan says: "That knocked the stuffing out of our challenge. Oulton Park has often been a problem for us – I even had the car go up in flames in 2017. These are the things that you can't control, but in a championship as close as the BTCC, you can't afford those things. But I actually think we bounced back pretty well in 2018."

He did that due to a victory – from his first career pole position in the BTCC – at Rockingham, which was his third win of the campaign. "If things had gone our way, we could have bounced back to third place in the overall standings at Brands Hatch," says Morgan.

Unfortunately for him, things didn't go his way at Brands Hatch and he was trapped in the midfield, unable to land the results he needed to push himself into the championship's top three.

The Mercedes A-Class was built by Ciceley Motorsport in 2014, which means it is now among the oldest cars on the grid. However, work back at Ciceley's base hasn't stopped and



Ciceley tackled British GT in '18

Morgan thinks that the hatchback will take another step forward over the next 12 months.

"We have been through another programme of weight saving with the car," he says. "By doing that, it means we can put ballast in parts of the chassis which will help the handling. Also, we have developed the chassis."

"I don't think that the age of the car is an issue. Look at the Toyota Avensis that Speedworks ran last year – that is not a fresh car and it was one of the fastest cars out there in 2018.

We have a testing programme and we have done some detailed simulation work to try and understand the set-ups more. We will try some radical things in testing and I think we can unlock some more pace from the car."

Ciceley Motorsport itself is a



Mobile barbecue at Oulton 2017

family-run team, with Adam's father Russell, a former rally driver, at the helm and Norman Burgess as commercial director, along with three other full-time staff.

The team has ambitions too. In 2016, it joined the Renault UK Clio Cup with a three-car operation, and then it expanded to four cars in 2017. But the Clio side of the operation has since been put on ice for the time being.

"We realised that the rewards we were getting from doing Clios were not as great as we would have wanted," says Morgan. "We were putting a lot of work into it, but there was a lot of damage. We always managed to get the cars on the grid, but we were up against it a lot of the time."

So while the Clios have been silenced, there was even more of a rumble around Ciceley at the end of the 2018 season when the expansion plan took the team to British GT, with a Mercedes-Benz AMG-GT4 which Morgan shared with David Fairbrother. That is a programme which might yet continue in 2019, while Morgan himself has raced in the Dubai 24 Hours and run the GT4 car in the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi.

"I will always look to do as much as I could in other areas," says Morgan, who has also shone on his outings at Goodwood in the Members' Meeting and in other high-profile historic events sharing Ric Wood's spectacular Ford Capri. "But the main focus will be the BTCC."

"It is odd, because people always go on about the new wave of drivers who are taking over the BTCC, the younger guys like Ash Sutton and Tom Ingram. Well, you know, I am only 30! You have got the likes of Colin Turkington and Matt Neal there, who are vastly experienced, so it is good to have them there. It is nice that I have been able to establish myself in the championship and I feel that I am ready to take things to the next level in terms of results." ■



Rockingham in 2018 was a win from Morgan's first career pole



Morgan's first season was in 2012 as a prize drive for lifting the Ginetta G50 title, and it was dramatic



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FEATURE

Photos: Proshotz.com

New Zealand's Silver Fern Rally has proved popular with British drivers. **Paul Lawrence** considers why



New Zealand has varied kinds of roads



Matthew Robinson won last year's event



Historics get the event's main billing...

THE GREATEST GRAVEL RALLY IN THE WORLD?

Anyone who has visited New Zealand will know about its countless miles of public gravel roads. Superb road surfaces, views to die for and very little habitation make the land of the long white cloud a haven for gravel rallying.

Every other year, the Silver Fern Rally offers the ultimate gravel adventure. For a week, some of these roads are closed to public use and turned over to the rallying fraternity. Though the rally is focused on historics, a modern two-wheel-drive event runs alongside.

The route is beyond anything we can dream of in the UK. Each day covers around 100 stage miles, often in stages that are 30 and 40 miles long, and in a week the rally covers around 800 stage miles. That's more than two seasons of BTRDA Rally Series competition in seven days.

It is little wonder that crews from the UK regularly trek to the other side of the world to tackle this biennial event and they have done well. Very well, indeed. In 2014, Vince Bristow scored the result of a lifetime by winning in a locally-

prepared Ford Escort Mk2, Meirion Evans topped the historics in 2016 and most recently Matthew Robinson won from Roger Chilman and Simon Tysoe as Brits took a clean sweep of the historic podium.

Event promoter Peter Martin from the Ultimate Rally Group is proud of the product. "We probably have the best gravel roads in the world and we have such a high number of quality roads," he says. "We have a huge variety of roads and so we can regularly change the route and not do the same stages over and over.

"We rarely, if at all, repeat a stage through the event so every stage is different. We have tight, twisty roads to fast, open and flowing roads. The idea is to pick the stages that are kinder on the cars.

"We don't want to bring people from the other side of the world and stick them in a rocky, sh***y piece of road. People come for the roads and if you are spending all that money, we want to make sure that the event is organised and run in a way that gives you the biggest opportunity to finish. We don't want to issue unnecessary time penalties and we don't put hooks in the regulations to try and catch people out. It is about engagement and completion."

Simply getting a finish on this marathon event is some achievement and getting a rally car and spares to New Zealand is a major undertaking. But the organisers are on hand to help with shipping, customs, hire vans and pretty much everything else.

"From the UK, the car will be gone for three months," says Martin. "We highly recommend that, if not a new build, it is a fresh rebuild. You don't want to spend the time and money to ship a car with half-worn components. It is going to do two years of UK rallying in a week. We have suppliers in New Zealand who hire cars. Some people have dry-hired the shell and the running gear and brought their own engine, so that's an option. But the majority of people bring their own car because the cost of getting the car to New Zealand is actually quite small when you plan it properly."

The most common sea freight option is three cars in one 40-foot container and a 20-foot container for all the spares and tyres. Shared between three cars, it works out at around £3000 to get a car and kit there and back. The 2018 entry fee was 9000 Kiwi dollars and with insurance that totals about £5000. Add in flights,



...but an event for modern cars runs alongside the historic rally

hotels, vehicle hire and tyres and this is an event that starts at around £20,000. Then, you will come back with a car that needs a major refresh.

However, you'll have done 800 top quality stage miles at a cost from £25 per mile at a time when the entry fee alone for a UK event stands at close to £15 per mile. The next edition is scheduled for late 2020.

"Going forward, our format will be a seven-day rally and we will run at the end of November and early December in 2020. We're yet to confirm which island and I hope to announce that soon," says Martin, who has endless options across New Zealand's North and South Islands.

"It will run regardless of the number of entries. There will be a half-day break in the middle of the week. That's to try and get people socialising. We've seen that the first two or three days are very serious as people get themselves into the groove but, by day three, they are relaxing a bit and that's when we want to get everyone together and have a drink. We plan to take them to an adventure place that New Zealand is renowned for."

Martin says that around 60 entries works well but they can cater for up to 100 cars.

"We have plenty of time in our road closures to get the cars through the stages and most of our closures are four and a half hours so it's not difficult to get up to 100 cars through," he explains.

"There are two competitions within the Silver Fern: the Historic Trophy and the Challenge Trophy for non-historic two-wheel-drive cars. A historic-looking car with modern running gear can certainly come and play. We see front-wheel-drive Honda Civics and Ford Fiestas and that sort of thing but by far the most common vehicle entered in the Silver Fern Rally is the Ford Escort Mk2 BDG." ■

What it takes to win the marathon event

From recent results it is clear that British crews can conquer this event, even at their first attempt. With 800 stage miles, local knowledge can never be the factor that it is in a typical 45-mile UK rally.

"It is probably the best marathon rally in the world," says 2016 winner Welshman Meirion Evans. "You are on the best roads in the world; high-speed, flowing, wide and on the longer stages you are flat out for 45 minutes. That's why we go back.

"There are a lot of elements you need to win this rally. The car has got to work, you've got to be fit, you've got to be focused and have an excellent team around you. You could go there for 20 or 30 years and still not know it like some people know the UK forests.

"It's not just the rally and the amount of mileage you get. It is the whole adventure and the New Zealanders are such nice people. That will draw me back for a long, long time."



Meirion Evans is a repeat Silver Fern entrant

FEATURE

Photos: Trevor Coulson

Luke Constantine zoomed to rallycross success. By Hal Ridge

SPEEDING UP THE LEARNING PROCESS



Luke Constantine (left) won the BTRDA

As the home of the British motor racing, Silverstone has played a key role in the careers of countless rising British motorsport talents. But, not many will have made their car racing debut at the Formula 1 venue, or returned later the very same year as the overall champion in one series and in the hunt for top honours in another.

Luke Constantine, son of former BTRDA 1400 rally frontrunner Mark Constantine, and following in the footsteps of older brother Tom, entered the Junior ranks of UK rallycross for 2018 aged just 14, the youngest a driver can compete.

With only just enough testing under his belt to familiarise himself with the single-make Suzuki Swift used in the MSA Junior Rallycross Championship, Constantine arrived at British RX's Silverstone season-opener (and the track's first meeting) in 2018. While freezing conditions and rally legend Sebastien Loeb stole the headlines, Constantine delivered arguably the performance of the weekend and finished second to Norwegian Marius Solberg Hansen in the final.

Just a week later, Constantine was an event winner. Having initially planned to use the BTRDA

Clubmans series as seat time, the Constantines joined several of the British RX regulars at Blyton Park for the BTRDA opener, where Constantine claimed his maiden win in his second event.

For the first time last year, Junior drivers were eligible to score points towards the overall BTRDA Gold Star rallycross crown. Remarkably, despite his lack of driving experience compared to the competition and visiting every circuit for the first time, Constantine made it through all nine rounds of the Clubmans campaign unbeaten and became the youngest overall BTRDA rallycross champion.

Constantine says: "At the start of the year me and my dad discussed that it was just going to be a learning year to get used to the tracks and the car. I was fine with that because I didn't really have any experience, but the result at Silverstone was amazing and I think it really boosted my confidence.

"Then to win the next race at Blyton Park, I couldn't really

believe that and I think I was just on that high all year. I was so happy with how the year went."

The teenager says, while the results came quickly, he didn't even consider being in the hunt for either title until the middle of the campaign. "I didn't have too good a result the first time we went to Lydden Hill for round two of the British Championship and that hurt quite a lot," he explains. "I was really upset with how that year had started. But a few results later I managed to climb up in points and I suddenly realised I was in the fight for it. It was hard because I wanted to win so much, but I still had this thought in the back of my mind that I still had so much to learn, and that was there the whole time. When it turned out I was leading the overall BTRDA championship, I didn't even know about it, but that's when I really thought about trying to win it."

With the best seven rounds to count from nine in the BTRDA series, any tie-break in the points would come down to which driver

had beaten most competitors over the year in their respective class.

While Constantine had his maximum score of seven wrapped in September, he had to wait until the final round to see if Super Modified campaigner Tony Lynch could also score seven wins, but Lynch was pipped to the post in the finale, meaning Constantine lifted the overall crown.

"It was amazing to win that title," says Constantine. "We just had to see what Tony did with his results, but I also really wanted to keep the undefeated run and win every round, so I was still pushing really hard. At Croft in the last race of the BTRDA me and my brother had a really good battle, so I was pleased to come out on top of that to win all the races."

In a year where the Junior division enjoyed its strongest field for some time, one of Constantine's biggest challengers was indeed his brother who, having raced in the two previous campaigns, was competing in his last Junior season.

"We were very jokey with each other with fighting talk and stuff like that, but I think having both of us racing at the front this year pushed us both on," says Luke of a seemingly rare bond the pair share, not dissimilar to that of World RX stars Timmy and Kevin Hansen.

"Obviously you want to beat your brother, but I think he got faster and I got a lot of experience by racing him."

Entering the final round of British RX, the pair were split by just a single point at the head of the Junior standings, making for a winner-takes-all showdown.

"We said before the weekend we hoped we weren't battling for it in the final because we didn't want someone to get knocked off and then be upset at the end of the race," Luke adds.

"We thought it would be pretty clear in qualifying who would win, and it was. I cracked my sump and damaged the suspension and that put me out of the fight. I was disappointed not to win both titles, but when I saw the smile on my brother's face it made it a lot better and I've got another two years in Junior rallycross so I hope I can win it before I finish."

Constantine will enter the 2019 campaign as the clear favourite for the title, but he isn't letting himself get carried away on the success of his maiden season.

"I obviously want to win, but I don't want to get over confident and try to push the boundaries too far," he says. "I'll just carry on with what I've been doing and hopefully the string of results can continue.

"The RX Academy test (see sidebar) really opened my eyes for the future too. Even though the budget is not there to do something like that at the moment, all I can do is focus on doing the best I can this year, so if I do ever get a chance in something like that I can grab the opportunity by the horns." ■



Constantine was in the junior BRX showdown at the end of the year

Spreading the wings ready for the next step

Towards the end of the season, Luke Constantine joined brother Tom and fellow Junior racer Patrick O'Donovan in travelling to Finland to test an RX Academy Renault Clio.

Created by SET Promotion owner Jussi Pinomaki, the RX Academy is a concept created to give aspiring World Rallycross competitors a platform to learn about every aspect required

from a modern-day motorsport athlete, both in and out of the car.

While Constantine doesn't yet have the budget to race the specially adapted Clio Cup cars with 1.6-litre turbo engines and sequential gearboxes, he is targeting graduation in the future.

"The test in Finland was absolutely amazing," he says. "I enjoyed driving the car so much, it was by far the best

thing I've ever driven. I was so happy to be there and all the team were really nice. I wish I could race there along with Juniors here this season but it's just finding the budget.

"The test really boosted my ambitions, even though the car was very different from what I'm used to think I had good speed and it opened my eyes a lot to see what I want to push for in the future."



Luke Constantine was one of three Britons to test the Renault Clio

SPORTING SCENE

Photos: americasrallycross, fiaworldrallycross.com, Duncan Stephens, Peter Paltridge/Go Slideways

WRC star Paddon to tackle rallycross

Hyundai World Rally Championship refugee Hayden Paddon will race a single-make Pantera RX6 car in the GRC Titans category of the new Global Rallycross Europe series this year.

Paddon was left without a WRC drive when Hyundai signed former Peugeot World Rallycross driver Sebastien Loeb to share its third car with Dani Sordo this year.

The 31-year old will now race a Pantera RX6 car using a Hyundai i30 silhouette body.

"I have been in rallying for a long time, so rallycross is not completely new to me, but I will have to adapt to cars racing alongside me," said the 2016 Rally Argentina winner.

"GRC Europe will be a new challenge and I am looking forward to taking it on, joining the other drivers throughout the year and trying to be competitive."

Two-time Le Mans winner Alexander Wurz will compete in the series alongside World RX race winner Toomas Heikkinen. Swedish brothers Timmy and Kevin Hansen will also compete, but it is yet to be announced in which category the pair will drive.

Dubourg captures another Andros crown

DA Racing driver Jean-Baptiste Dubourg claimed his fourth successive Andros Trophy title in the final points-scoring weekend of the winter at Super Besse.

The Renault Captur driver entered the last round ahead of Aurelien Panis in the points, but a fourth place on day one and victory on day two ensured his fourth straight crown.

Panis was passed by fellow electric car racer Franck Lagorce, who won on day one, for the runners up position in the points. Panis just held off his father Olivier for third, the ex-Formula 1 racer having another strong weekend with a brace of podiums.

The Andros series will run a non-championship one-off round at the Stade de France this weekend, where Sebastien Loeb will join the field.



Galli has shaken down the Kia Rio

Galli upbeat with reworked Kia Rio racer

Former World Rally star Gigi Galli has completed the build of his second evolution Kia Rio World Rallycross Supercar.

Galli debuted the first version of the car at his home round at Franciacorta in 2015 and subsequently rented the machine to Hungarian driver Lukacs Kornel for the 2017 season.

The Italian says the new version of the car, which has its cooling package mounted in the front like the title-winning Volkswagen Motorsport Polos, features improvements in every area.

It retains a Lehmann-built engine and Unic transmission. Galli has already undertaken 120 miles of testing in the new machine, including competing in the Ice Challenge Championship at his home town of Livigno last month and is seeking an experienced driver to race the car this year.

BENNETT CONFIRMS FRESH ATTACK ON WORLD RX

By Hal Ridge

British driver Oliver Bennett has signed up to the World Rallycross Championship as a permanent entry for 2019.

Bennett graduated to World RX events last season after only a year in the discipline, racing a freshly-built Mini Cooper Supercar. The former motocross rider competed in all but three of the World RX rounds last term, using the campaign as a development year for both the car and driver, while also competing in the Americas Rallycross series and selected British RX events with a Ford Fiesta.

"It's nice to be in a position where we can commit to the full series and now points at every round will really count," said Bennett. "It's nice to move up another step this season from our trial last year. This year is looking great too, especially as

a private team with a levelling of competition. The battle between the privateer teams should be intense. I'm really excited."

Bennett's Xite Racing team is set to begin pre-season testing on Friday this week.

He said: "This is the main test with our major improvements and then we will evaluate and make the changes that we need to make towards the end of February. After that our engines are shipped off to France for a refresh ready to head to Abu Dhabi for the first round in April."

Bennett finished 15th overall three times in World RX last year driving the older Mini, and set the pace in the British RX finale at Silverstone in November. To date only one British driver has finished on the podium in World RX. BTCC title winner Andrew Jordan was third in the British round of the series at Lydden Hill in 2014.

Briton to return to the top level



Bennett will continue his WRX campaign

TRIALS REPORT



Moss took the advantage late on

Moss powers his Hillman Imp to Cotswold glory

Cotswold Clouds Classic Trial

By Duncan Stephens

Organiser: Stroud & District Motor Club When: February 3
Where: Stroud Starters: 78

Ian Moss won the incredibly slippery Cotswold Clouds Classic Trial on Sunday. With snow covering the ground, conditions were extremely tough for the early outright purpose-built specials.

The snow turned to ice before natural conditions prevailed for the saloon cars. Sam Holmes took the early lead, being one of only five cars to climb out the top. The long straight climb of the Wicked Juniper section allowed Matt Facey to use all the power of his supercharged BMW to take the lead, but his driveshaft broke one section later.

Moss's high revving Imp also excelled

there with a superb climb only bettered by the Ford T special of David Golightly.

Keith Sanders returned after a year off and drove superbly to win the sportscar class from Aaron Haizelden. Paul Merson, who narrowly lost the title last year on the final round, upheld special honours in sixth tying with the oldest car of the entry, the MG J2 of Bill Bennett. Bennett was the best club member. Rick Neale collected kitcar honours in eighth, with Rich Hayward again driving the door handles off his Ford Escort to complete the top 10.

Results

1 Ian Moss (Hillman Imp) 9 points; 2 Matt Facey (BMW 318); 3 Sam Holmes (VW Beetle); 4 Keith Sanders (Reliant SST); 5 Aaron Haizelden (Reliant SST); 6 Paul Merson (Shopland Special); 7 Bill Bennett (MG J2); 8 Rick Neale (Dutton Melos); 9 David Golightly (Ford Special); 10 Rich Hayward (Ford Escort).



Briton Bobby Griffin was a winner

British Lions team in the wars in tough Superstock Teams battle in New Zealand

Despite a hard-fought two days, the British Lions came up short in its bid to win the Superstock Teams Championships in Palmerston North last weekend, finishing eighth overall.

The British team, led by BriSCA F1 National Points champion Frankie Wainman Jr, fielded a relatively inexperienced and young team this year but began the two-day Championships with a victory over the Waikato Wanderers in the opening qualifying round.

Six rounds for Americas Rallycross including COTA

The Americas Rallycross Championship will be run over six rounds in 2019.

The series, which will not travel outside North America in its second term, will again join the World Rallycross Championship at Trois-Rivieres in Canada and includes visits to a pair of new venues at Mid-Ohio and Gateway Motorsports Park.

ARX will also race at Circuit of the Americas on the September weekend initially pencilled to be part of the World RX calendar until the date was postponed until 2021.

The season will be bookended by events at Mid-Ohio, with a double header at Gateway Motorsports

CALENDAR

Americas Rallycross Championship

RND	VENUE	DATE
1	Mid-Ohio	June 8/9
2	Gateway	July 13
3	Gateway	July 14
4	Trois-Rivieres	August 3/4
5	COTA	September 28
6	Mid-Ohio	October 5/6

Park for rounds two and three. Steve Arpin's Loebro Motorsports squad announced recently that it will revert to running a pair of M-Sport-built Ford Fiestas having fielded Ford's Focus RS RX last season in conjunction with Ken Block.



The Americas Rallycross contest will return to Texas in late September

Bobby Griffin won the race, but Wainman Jr, who was all set for second place, failed to finish after suffering major rear axle damage after a big hit from the Wanderers' Blair Ashton on the last lap. The Lions won the round 110 points to 85.

The damage to Wainman Jr's machine would prove a major setback for the Lions as the BriSCA F1 star was unable to repair the car in time for the team's second round race and had to swap to a spare car as a result.

In round two against the Stratford

Scrappers, the British Lions came under attack from the start, with Karl Hawkins drilled into the wall, and Wainman Jr was forced to pull off with a loose wheel guard. The Scrappers' Mitch Vickery cruised to victory, with Griffin and Lions team-mate Lee Fairhurst finishing third and fourth. The Scrappers won by 150 points to 45.

The defeat dropped the Lions to eighth place in the overall points.

South Island team Canterbury Glen Eagles went on to take its first Teams Championships.

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Circuits must have a voice in the future

The Formula One Promoters Association has the right to raise its concerns

The statement issued by the Formula One Promoters Association last week wasn't just a broadside at Liberty Media, the bosses of F1. It also raised some valid concerns about the direction of grand prix racing, and the circuits are the ones in the firing line should Liberty take F1 down the wrong path.

One of the problems FOPA has got is what it sees as some level of inequality. New countries are vital for grand prix racing if it is to expand interest in the sport, but some of them have been rumoured to be given very preferential deals and even, in some cases, a profit share with Liberty itself. The established venues, and Silverstone is included in that, do not appear to be getting a similar cut of the cake. The traditional venues are just expected to stump up and shut up.

Liberty Media has some great ideas for the future of the top level of motorsport, but it needs to make sure that they don't rip the heart out of F1 as we know it and how it should be. F1 is a sport, not just a media commodity, and that needs to be remembered at all times.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



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



ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Bob Sketchley went to the Monte Carlo Historique Rally checkpoint at Banbury



Donington Park has been busy with test days. This Radical was taken by Rich Cranston



Peter Atkins, from the Autosport Show



Mike Bouts's pic from Brands Hatch



Rallying trouble, taken by Gary Hill



Another shot from Bob Sketchley



An Aston Martin getting a pre-season workout at Donington. Taken by Rich Cranston



Action from the recent rallying event at Brands Hatch, sent in by Chris Collier

GOT AN OPINION?

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

TV GUIDE



Nico and Keke Rosberg at Monaco

Enjoy the company of two Formula 1 champions and only the second father and son pairing to achieve the feat: **Keke and Nico Rosberg**.

Interviewed by ex-F1 driver Martin Brundle, the pair offer a unique insight into their racing careers and title-winning triumphs, as well their family life (Friday, 1545-1600hrs, Sky Sports F1).

Can't wait for F1 testing to begin later this month? Fear not as you can watch full coverage of all the 2018 races courtesy of Sky Sports F1.

Relive the **Abu Dhabi Grand Prix** from the Yas Marina Circuit where the end of an era beckoned as Fernando Alonso took part in his final F1 race, at least for the time being.

You can watch his final race and Lewis Hamilton take his 11th win of the season to finish his season in style this Friday (2255-2355hrs).

And finally, catch highlights of the **Carrick On Suir Forest Rally** (Saturday, 1930-2030hrs, BT Sport ESPN), which makes up part of the Irish Forest series.

LIVE TV

NASCAR: Daytona

■ **Race:** Sunday, 2000-2230hrs, Premier Sports



Austin Dillon won in 2018

LISTINGS



Snowman this weekend

RALLY SATURDAY

■ Blyton Park, Lincs

Jack Neal Memorial Stages

Starts 0930hrs

Admission TBA

Web clitheroedmc.co.uk

■ Jurby

Motordrome, Isle of Man

Ormeau Jurby Stages

Starts 0900hrs

Admission TBA

Web manxautosport.org

■ Inverness, Scottish Highlands

The Coogie Urquhart

Snowman Rally

Starts 0845hrs

Admission TBA

Web snowmanrally.co.uk

■ Goodwood, West Sussex

Phil Collings Memorial

South Downs Stages

Starts 0900hrs

Admission free

Web southdownsstages.co.uk

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

■ Galway, Ireland

Galway International Rally

Starts TBA

Admission TBA

Web galwayrally.com

SUNDAY

■ Thirsk, NYorks

Riponian Stages Rally

Starts 0830hrs

Admission TBA

Web rmsc.org.uk

Details correct at time of press but please check before travelling

FAVOURITE LIVERIES 1970s KEVIN TURNER'S TOP THREE PICKS



Brabham BT45

From the silver Porsche 917s of 1971 to the white 935s and 936s at the end of the decade, Martini has to top this list of the non-tobacco liveries of the 1970s. Picking a best is tough, but the striking red Formula 1 Brabhams of 1976-77 take some beating.



Porsche 917/30

Gulf or Sunoco? There's no doubt that the powder blue and orange of Gulf is more famous, but I'm going for the dark blue of Sunoco, as run by Penske. The team's Ferrari 512M looked superb, but the best example has to be the iconic Porsche 917/30 Can-Am king.



BMW DRM 320 Turbo

There were some great BMW paint schemes in the 1970s, including Gosser Beer, Jagermeister and Castrol. It's Warsteiner that gets the nod, it looked great on the BMW DRM 320 Turbo, as well as the TOJ sports-racers and the Arrows F1 cars.

NEXT WEEK

OUT WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

BTRDA AND BRG



SEASON PREVIEWS



YOUNG'S RENAULT CLIO ADVENTURE



GOODWOOD RALLY: IS IT A HIDDEN GEM?

PLUS: ALL THE USUAL NEWS, VIEWS AND REPORTS

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Advertising deadline Monday 12 noon

Sales Director James Robinson

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Registered as a Newspaper with Consignia

Printed by Sheffield Web

Distributed by Seymour, 2 Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT

Published every Wednesday by Autosport Media UK Limited, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1AG, UK

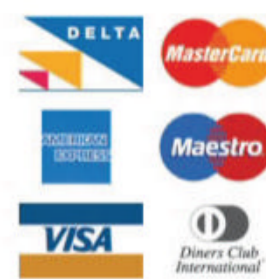
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Mk1 Mexico front wing, LH or RH each **£265.22** £318.27
 Mk2 front wing, LH or RH, std. each **£72.10** £86.52
 Mk2 front wing, LH or RH, RS2000 each **£175.00** £210.00

Full listing of all Mk1 and Mk2 body panels on our website
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M16 calipers to fit standard discs, pair **£89.00** £106.80
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 Escort Mk2 front laminated screen (incl. rubber) **£69.50** £83.40
 Escort Mk1 front heated laminated screen (inc. rubber) **£198.60** £238.32
 Escort Mk2 front heated laminated screen (inc. rubber) **£198.60** £238.32
 Escort Mk1 front screen rubber **£24.92** £29.90
 Escort Mk1 rear screen rubber **£23.92** £28.70
 Escort Mk2 front screen rubber **£29.08** £34.90
 Escort Mk2 rear screen rubber **£29.08** £34.90
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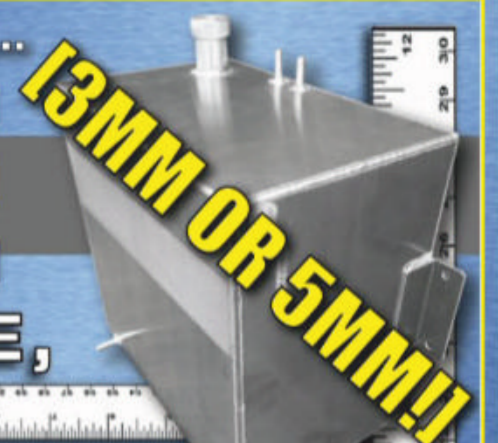
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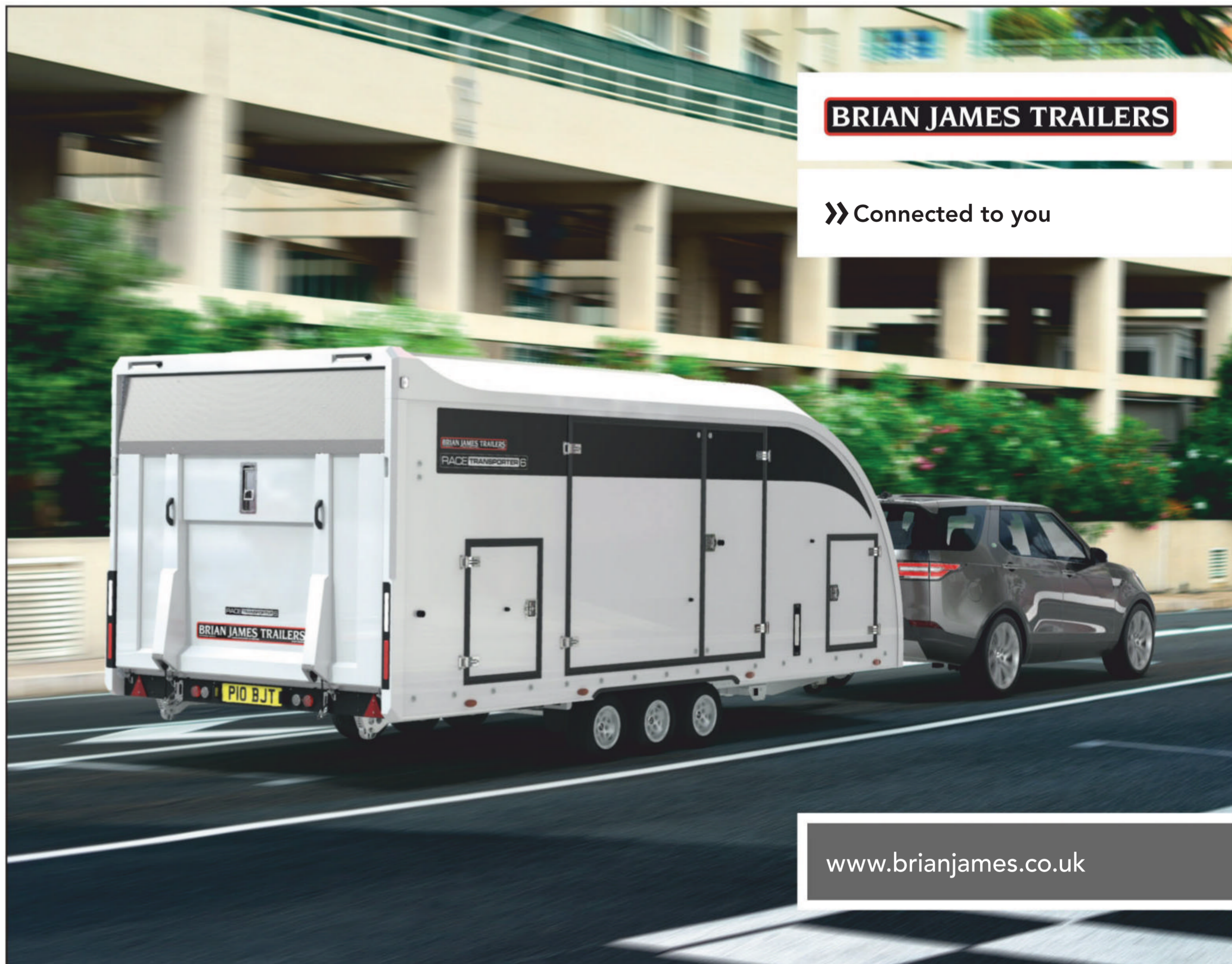
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