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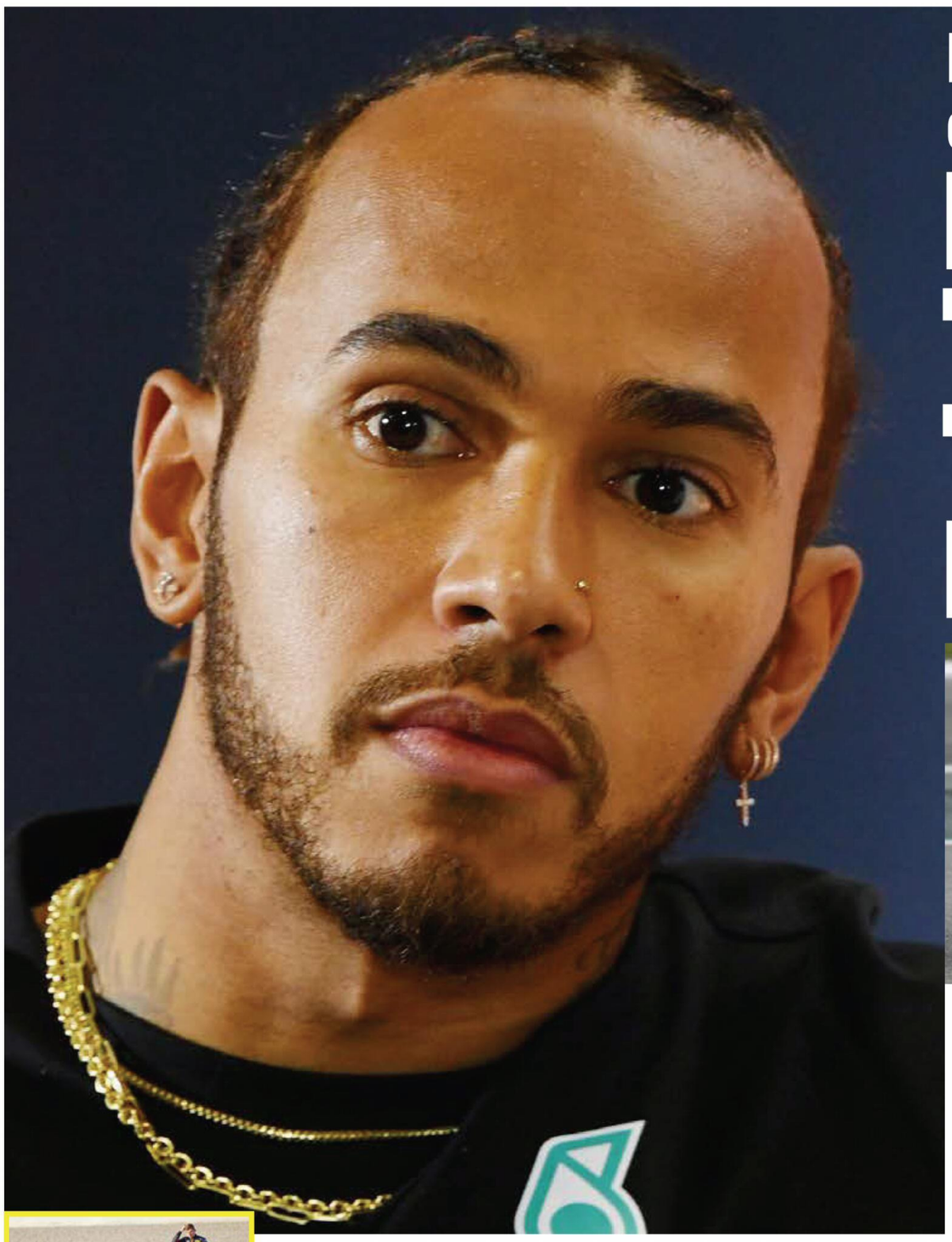
MOTORSPORT NEWS

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THE FIRST WELSHMAN TO RULE IN A TOYOTA

David Llewellin reflects on his Celica successes P18





Merc racer set to topple F1's elite drivers and make history

LEWIS READY TO RIP UP THE RECORD BOOKS IN 2020



By Matt James

Six-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton says that he is not considering becoming the greatest driver of all time, despite heading into this weekend's Australian Grand Prix as the hot favourite.

The British Mercedes star is closing in on Michael Schumacher's all-time record of 91 wins, he is seven race wins behind on 84, and has won at least nine racers per season in F1's new V6 turbo hybrid era.

"It's not something I think about," says Hamilton. "I always say numbers aren't really a massive thing for me. I plan to be here a little bit longer so hopefully I'll get there. We shall see."

Hamilton could match Schumacher's tally of seven world crowns this year. He is also the driver with the most pole positions, having outstripped Ayrton Senna.

Full story Page 20



INSIGHT F1'S BIG 2020 QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

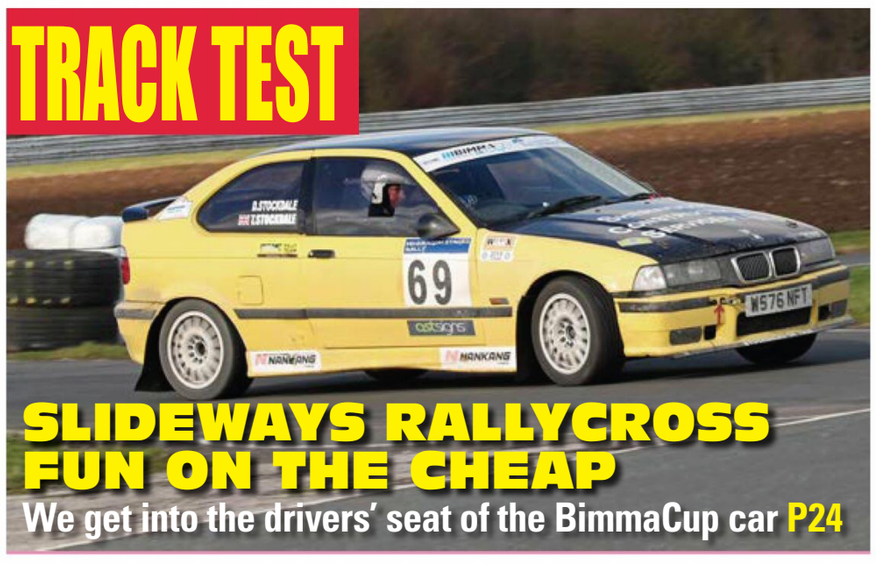
OPINION



SHORT TRACKS IN BIG DEMAND

David Addison on the future for ovals P28

TRACK TEST



SLIDEWAYS RALLYCROSS FUN ON THE CHEAP

We get into the drivers' seat of the BimmaCup car P24

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HELICAL LSDs (ATBs), BLACKLINE



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8x15	£99.00	£118.80



Classic Ford wheels from £69.00 £82.80

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X-Flow ally radiator	£179.60	£215.52
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Brake servo rod bellows		£5.20	£6.24

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COMMENT



Legend Gilles Villeneuve was a Ferrari stalwart

ARE F1 BOSSES FAIR TO FERRARI?

There is, of course, a great deal of excitement heading to Melbourne this week, but what happens on track is likely to be overshadowed by what's happening at Ferrari.

The rulemakers have looked into some issues surrounding the Scuderia's powerplant last season, and has given the team what amounts to a slap on the wrist without taking any real action.

That has infuriated the other non-Ferrari powered teams, and there are all kinds of threats of legal suits to help placate the injured parties.

I have always had a soft spot for Ferrari, but that harks back to a childhood brought up watching Gilles Villeneuve. It was him that made me fall in love with motorsport, but I found the Ferrari of the 1990s (when it started dominating) harder to take. It was all a bit to clinical and un-Italian-like.

Ferrari has, of course, 'grandfather rights' because it is the oldest team on the grid. That has always caused simmering tensions with the other equally professional outfits, and it seems like those tensions are about to boil over.

Let's hope it does not overshadow what could be a fantastic season, and Scott Mitchell looks at the subplots that are likely to play out over the next 10 months in our F1 Season Preview, which starts on page 20.

Elsewhere, Jack Benyon spoke to rallying icon David Llewellin: a Welshman who tamed a Toyota, much like Elfyn Evans is doing right now in the very top flight. Benyon's feature is on page 18, and Llewellin also gives us his thoughts on the latest-spec weapons.

We look ahead to the West Cork Rally too, an event where the best of Irish and British talents will battle it out on some of the sport's finest stages.

Our resident rallyross guru Hal Ridge gets his hands on a low-cost racer which is guaranteed to put smiles on the faces of spectators and drivers too, with our test of the new BimmaCup car.

There is plenty to look forward to in 2020.

Matt James
matt.james@kelsey.co.uk



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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Faith in Merc engines

Lewis Hamilton has faith that his Mercedes Formula 1 team is doing all it can to get on top of its engine reliability problems ahead of this season. The new Mercedes W11 suffered two engine problems during the test, while Williams had to run three engines in testing. Hamilton said: "I fully believe in trusting the guys to be methodical with the way they move forwards and the engine is actually very good. It's an improvement from last year. "It's just not quite where we want it to be reliability-wise, but I am sure they are back at the factory now working hard to rectify whatever the issue is."

Ferrari to focus on 2021

Ferrari has said it could make an early switch to focus on its 2021 Formula 1 car if the gap to the front of the field is too big in the opening races. The Italian outfit has admitted that it is behind its rivals as it heads into the campaign. The effort to catch up comes against the backdrop of teams having to carefully balance how much resource they devote to this season and how much they want to throw at new regulations for 2021. Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto said: "If I see after a few races, and we will still understand that the gap is too big, then maybe it's a consideration [switching focus] that we can take into account."

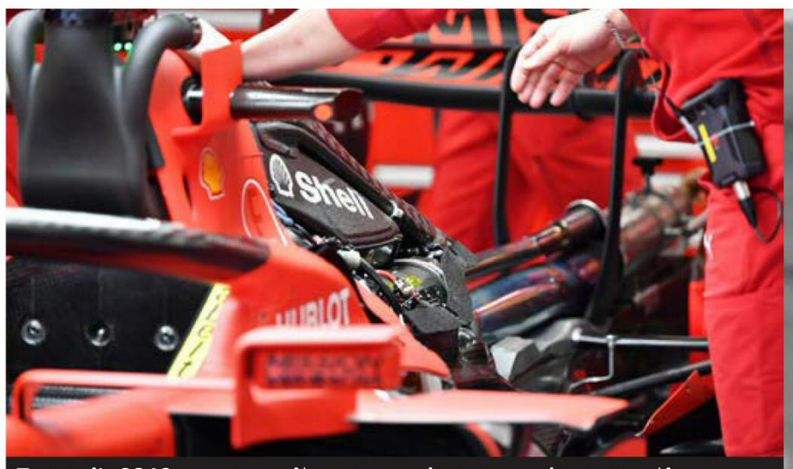
Haas' F1 future unclear

Gene Haas says his team's start to the new season will decide whether or not he commits it to staying in Formula 1 beyond the end of this year. The American has long been clear that he is only interested in continuing to invest in F1 if his outfit can be competitive, and he is concerned about the huge costs being forced on small outfit by the new 2021 rules. In an exclusive interview with Autosport, Haas said: "If we have another bad year, then it would not be that favourable. We did five years. That was really the test – we're going to do this for five years, see how it goes and evaluate it and then we'll decide whether to go forward."

Verstappen on banking

Max Verstappen reckons Formula 1 drivers will have to use different lines through the Zandvoort banking at this year's Dutch Grand Prix – especially when their tyres start going off. The Red Bull driver became the first man to lap the revamped track in a grand prix car after driving a 2012 RB8 around the circuit last week. "I have always found it a super circuit to drive, but the banking definitely adds a new dimension to it," said Verstappen. "I think you can drive different lines through those banked corners, so that's a good thing. It has to do with the tyres as well. "On new tyres you can take a shorter line. But on older tyres, you have to make sure you have a good exit, so you might have to stay a bit higher in that final corner."

Photos: LAT



Ferrari's 2019 power unit came under some close scrutiny

Ferrari decision has angered rival bosses

TEAMS DEMAND CLARITY OVER FERRARI PROBE

Rivals dismayed at FIA's private deal with Italian team over engine claims from 2019 campaign

By Jonathan Noble

Seven Formula 1 teams could take legal action against the FIA to ensure that the truth about its investigation into Ferrari's 2019 engine is released.

In a joint statement issued by the non-Ferrari powered teams, they mentioned that they were 'shocked' and 'surprised' by the governing body's decision to reach a secret agreement with the Maranello-based team over its power unit.

Motor racing's governing body announced last Friday that a private deal had been reached with Ferrari regarding the legality of its engine last year, amid suspicions the team had circumvented fuel-flow regulations with its design.

The nature and timing of that decision, which came as a complete surprise to a number of teams, has prompted Ferrari's rivals to collectively express their dismay.

In the statement, McLaren, Mercedes, Racing Point, Red Bull, Renault, AlphaTauri and Williams all urged the FIA to give full disclosure of the truth behind the Ferrari affair.

"We, the undersigned teams, were surprised and shocked by the FIA's statement of Friday February 28 regarding the conclusion of its investigation into the Scuderia Ferrari Formula 1 Power Unit," said the statement.

"An international sporting regulator has the responsibility to act with the highest standards of governance, integrity and transparency.

"After months of investigations that were undertaken by the FIA only following queries raised by other teams, we strongly object to the FIA reaching a confidential settlement agreement with Ferrari to conclude this matter.

"Therefore, we hereby state publicly our shared commitment to pursue full and proper disclosure in this matter, to ensure that our sport treats all competitors fairly and equally. We do so on behalf of the fans, the participants and the stakeholders of Formula 1.

"In addition, we reserve our rights to seek legal redress, within the FIA's due process and before the competent courts."

The FIA has responded to the statement, saying after its investigation "it was not fully satisfied" that Ferrari had fully complied with the regulations when operating its engine, but felt that it could not prove its case due to the complexities – and that any further action might result in a complicated legal case brought by the team.

F1 COULD HOST NON-CHAMPIONSHIP RACES AMID VIRUS FEAR

Formula 1 says it would not go ahead and host a world championship race if any of the teams cannot compete because of travel restrictions caused by coronavirus.

There remains great uncertainty about the fate of numerous races on the calendar because of the escalating coronavirus situation.

With a major outbreak in Italy meaning that its citizens are facing more difficulties when travelling to select countries, there is a risk that personnel from Ferrari or AlphaTauri could be denied access to nations holding grand prix events.

While it had been unclear what would happen in the scenario that one or two teams could not compete, F1 managing director of motorsport Ross Brawn has clarified that the round would not go ahead.

Speaking exclusively to news agency Reuters, Brawn said: "If a team is prevented from entering a country, we can't have a race. Not a Formula 1 world championship race, anyway, because that would be unfair.

"Obviously if a team makes its own choice not to go to a race, that's their decision. But where a team is prevented from going to a race because of a decision of the country then it's difficult to have a fair competition."

One possible scenario, however, could be for the race to go ahead but for it to be designated a non-world championship event – so no points would be scored.

Brawn said that F1 was working hard to try to ensure that the opening rounds of the championship can go ahead, but conceded that the situation was very complicated.

"It's a very serious situation, so I don't want to underplay it. But we're trying to have races. We've got to do them in a responsible way," he said.

"We're minimising the number of people in the paddock, we're asking the teams to send a minimum number of people they need to a race."

Meanwhile, Bahrain GP organisers have halted ticket sales for the second round of the season while the country's coronavirus situation is assessed.

A statement from the Bahrain International Circuit said that if circumstances allow more tickets will be released at a later date – while also leaving open the option to give refunds if it is deemed that the venue has to decrease the size of the crowd from the current figure.

A spokesman for the venue declined to comment on what percentage of the available tickets has already been sold.



Bahrain could be cancelled amid coronavirus issues

GINETTA JUNIOR CHAMPION HEDLEY GRADUATES TO F4

Title winner switches to single-seaters for 2020 with JHR Developments outfit

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Hedley (right) will step up to F4



By Stephen Lickorish

Ginetta Junior champion James Hedley will graduate to British Formula 4 this season, driving for the JHR Developments squad.

Hedley dominated the Ginetta series last year, taking seven wins and 11 other podiums to score 89 points more than the next best driver.

He is the latest driver from last year's Ginetta Junior ranks to move to F4, joining runner-up Zak O'Sullivan, sixth-placed Casper Stevenson and Roman Bilinski in making the switch.

Hedley is confident of quickly adapting to single-seater machinery and set impressive times at the F4 Scholarship day at Silverstone last year when running with JHR.

"The Ginetta slides a lot more but these cars [the F4], especially in the wet, feel much easier to drive," said Hedley. "It has been helpful to be able to compare the two.

"Ultimately, we want to be fighting for the drivers' championship this year. I wouldn't be on the grid if I didn't think I could challenge at the front."

JHR has previously powered Sennan Fielding (2016) and Ayrton Simmons (2018) to second in the F4 standings and team boss Steven Hunter believes Hedley will be a title contender this year.

"He was the stand-out performer during the Scholarship assessment day last year and will be aiming to carry that into the season itself," said Hunter.

"His drives in Ginetta Junior last season were eye-catching. He was seriously quick, but also able to manage his races and performances to secure the ultimate goal, which was the championship title. He has a maturity beyond his years and we can't wait for the first race of the season."

IN BRIEF

More GT3s than GT4s

GT3 entries in British GT will outnumber GT4 for the first time in six years this season. There are due to be 19 full-season GT3 entries in 2020, compared to 16 for the GT4 class. Among the 19, there are set to be four Aston Martin, Lamborghini and Mercedes machines, along with three McLarens, two Bentleys and a Porsche. The 19th entry is yet to be confirmed but is due to feature a different manufacturer.

Optimum's GT4 line-up

Optimum Motorsport has announced its GT4 driver line-up for this season's British GT campaign, as it switches from Aston Martin to McLaren machinery. In one car, the team will run former British Touring Car racer James Pickford alongside amateur driver Nick Moss. The other car will be driven by Asian Le Mans Series driver Ollie Millroy and American Brendan Iribe.

Tolman pairings

Tolman Motorsport has revealed the driver pairings for its two British GT4 entries that feature McLaren Driver Development Programme members. The two drivers with past experience of racing in British series, Ginetta GT5 Challenge driver Katie Milner and former British F3/F4 racer Harry Hayek, will share one car. The other will feature ADAC GT4 drivers Alain Valente and Michael Benyahia.

JMH tweaks its drivers

The JMH Auto squad has revealed a revised line-up for its Lamborghini Huracan GT3 in British GT this year. Instead of GT Cup driver John Seale being joined by Jamie Stanley, Seale will now share the car with GT regulars Jordan Witt and Adam Hatfield. Hatfield will drive at Snetterton and Silverstone, while Witt will complete the rest of the year. Hatfield said: "The calibre of the championship looks very high for this year so, hopefully, after a few days in the car, I can be right on the pace."

HOWARD PLOTS BRITISH GT COMEBACK AFTER ALL

Two-time British GT champion Andrew Howard will compete in the championship this season after all, despite saying his racing programme would be focused in Europe.

The team owner of Beechdean, who was champion in 2013 and '15, will now partner Ross Gunn in one of the team's Aston Martin GT3s.

"It's been a difficult close season," said Howard, who will form a Pro-Am pairing. "From our perspective there's been a lot of uncertainty. My programme was always going to be the last to be decided – we sat down and decided what was the best level for me to race. We just found that [me doing British GT] was the best way to support the Silver-Silver car."

Beechdean will expand to running two GT3 cars this season, having operated an Aston Martin in GT4 last year, with which Kelvin Fletcher and Martin Plowman won the Pro-Am title. Valentin Hasse-Clot will be partnered in the second GT3 car by Jack Mitchell to form a Silver-Silver pairing.

"We've always wanted to be a British GT3-based team," added Howard. "My ambition is to run a Pro car in different championships and races. Having run Pro cars in the past that's where we would like to be again. To do that we need to be in GT3 running a Silver-Silver car."

Macdonald returns and will step up to GT3 McLaren

British GT race winner Dean Macdonald will step up from the GT4 class to the new 2 Seas Motorsport outfit in one of two McLaren 720S GT3s it will enter in the Silver class.

Team co-owner Isa Al-Khalifa, 20, whose father Abdullah is the chairman of the Bahrain Motor Federation and second son of the King of Bahrain, will graduate from the Porsche GT3 Challenge Middle East to drive one car with a yet-to-be-confirmed team-mate, while 19-year-olds Macdonald and Angus Fender share the other.

Macdonald finished third in the GT4 standings last year in a HHC Motorsport McLaren 570S, while Fender took two podium finishes in as many GT3 appearances at the end of last year in Century Motorsport's BMW M6.

The team, which will be run by Nick Cristofaro, has hired former HHC engineer Mark Chittenden as team manager and experienced engineer Xavi Ramon Torrijos, with Macdonald citing its key hires as integral to his decision to sign.

The Scot says he expects the team to be capable of springing a surprise against the championship's more established squads.

"It's a new team but the people that are in the team aren't new to the paddock," he said. "It makes me really confident about joining the team.

"I think we'll be a strong partnership: Angus proved himself at the end of the year in GT3 and hopefully I can be just as fast as him. With the engineers and everybody in the team, we'll be very competitive."



The 2 Seas Motorsport McLaren



Dempsey tested with CDR

Dempsey shelves plans to look to the USA and looks at BRDC Formula 3 campaign

Walter Hayes Trophy winner and 2018 Chinese Formula 4 champion Jordan Dempsey is considering a campaign in BRDC British F3 this season following a test with Chris Dittmann Racing.

Dempsey won last year's Hayes with Kevin Mills Racing and took two podiums in Asian F3 to follow his F4 success. He had planned to race in USF2000 for 2020 but has decided to focus his attention elsewhere, which could include British F3 following a test at Snetterton.

"The problem with USF2000 is the season starts soon and all the seats are nearly gone," he said. "I've been looking at different championships and one of them was British F3 – I've been talking with Chris Dittmann [team boss].

"It's very different to the Asia car because the halo adds nearly 100kg in weight, which is heavier and requires a different driving style to this car so it's easier to stop and accelerate.

"I would love to do this championship, with British F3 – if you go out and do well, everyone knows what prestige this championship has.

"The big thing would be mileage, a lot of people do testing and I wouldn't be able to do quite as much. It depends how quickly I learn the car, but I think I'm capable of winning races in this car."

Elsewhere, Kaylen Frederick will spend a second season with Carlin having taken two wins in 2019, and Christian Olsen will join Fortec having raced in the European Le Mans Series and Michelin Le Mans Cup last term.



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RACING NEWS

Fairclough back for more Mini adventures

The 2018 Mini Challenge Cooper S class champion Will Fairclough will return to Mini racing this season, in the BTCC-supporting JCW championship driving for the JamSport team.

Fairclough claimed the '18 Cooper S title in what was his first ever season of racing, and won his debut race. But, despite planning a JCW campaign the following year, he sat '19 out for personal and financial reasons.

"It feels great to be back!," Fairclough said. "The timing is right and I'm up for the challenge. I'm doing a lot of preparation as is normal for me. It'll be interesting to see what'll it be like to be racing with the rest of field in the top class.

"These cars are wonder machines," Fairclough continued. "I'm up against drivers with lots of experience and seat time, but as long as I feel 100% comfortable in the car I have a chance at some top finishes. It will be interesting, and I will continue in my direct style of racing."

Fairclough this year at the JamSport team will race alongside Tom Rawlings and JCW champion Ant Whorton-Eales.

Nicosia ready to take on Supercup attack

Ginetta GT5 Challenge runner-up Geri Nicosia will step up to the GT4 Supercup for this season.

Nicosia has raced in the GT5 series for the past three seasons after graduating from Ginetta Junior but will now move to G55 machinery this year, driving for the AK Motorsport squad.

"I'm really excited to get the season underway with the guys at AK Motorsport, moving another rung up the Ginetta ladder at the same time," he said. "Ginetta have had great success with their GT4 car around the globe, and the live ITV4 coverage is something both myself and my sponsors have become accustomed to over the years, so it's great to be back out on the big stage!"

Assetto Motorsport has also confirmed another three drivers for its GT4 Supercup programme. Joining the already-announced G40 Cup champion Chris Salkeld will be fellow former G40 Cup drivers Mike West, Martin Wills and Lee Goldsmith.

Photos: Chris Valentine, Jakob Ebrey



Lowry was an asset in racing



Driving his beloved Porsche

TRIBUTES TO CLUB RACER AND SERIES CO-FOUNDER LOWRY

Prime mover behind the All Porsche series passes away; tributes paid to popular racer

By Stephen Lickorish

Tributes have been paid to club racer Ryan Lowry who was tragically killed in Manchester at the end of last month.

Lowry, 36, was a co-founder of the CALM All Porsche series that aims to raise awareness for the Campaign Against Living Miserably charity.

He started racing in Classic Stock Hatch in 2012, driving a Ford Fiesta XR2i, before racing a Porsche 924 in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's Porsche Championship. Lowry finished third in the 924 class standings in 2017.

He later began helping to organise races alongside fellow Porsche competitor Philip Waters, including a 25th anniversary 924 celebration contest, before they worked to create the CALM series.

The duo became close friends and Waters says Lowry is going to be "sorely missed".

"I first met Ryan in 2012 when he was racing at Brands Hatch as a friend of mine was looking after his car," said Waters. "I went along and met him and we got on really well.

"He was 36 and I'm 67 and we were quite different – I couldn't be more southern and he couldn't be more northern – but we got on really well and he was wise beyond his years.

"We started a championship last season for four-cylinder Porsches and Ryan's involvement was on the social media side – without Ryan's input we just wouldn't have been able to do what we've done.

"We're all in shock. I used to speak to him two, three, four times a day – we always messaged all the time. Together we were a great team and we bounced ideas off each other.

"You put him in a race car and he was a tiger, I was his team-mate but we never touched each other once.

"On a personal side, he and his wife Michelle fostered children. It's just typical of him – everything about him was caring and sharing.

"Ryan's father, Andy, was a familiar figure at all of Ryan's races and was an important member of the Moluto team. Andy's expertise, especially when reversing the truck and trailer, was invaluable!"

Waters added he plans to dedicate the first race of the CALM Porsche season to Lowry's memory and the category's 'best mate trophy' – for someone who goes "beyond the call of duty" – will be renamed 'Ryan's award'.



Josh Webster will be back for a full season in Porsches

Webster joins King in powerful Porsche line-up for Team Parker Racing

Former Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Josh Webster will contest a full season in the series this year.

The 2014 champion returned to the Carrera Cup grid for the second round of last season having last previously raced in the championship in 2015. After finishing runner-up in the points, he targeted another title bid for this season and it has now been confirmed that he will remain with Team Parker.

"It will be an interesting year with some new faces to the championship but I'm looking forward to it and think I can go out there and win it this year," said Webster, who will join Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Harry King in Team Parker's Pro line-up.

"I wasn't looking at going anywhere else. A few teams approached me over the winter, but I wasn't going to move away from Team Parker. I am not the only Pro in the team now, so I can bounce off Harry and we can work together."

Another Carrera Cup race winner who will be on the grid again this year will be Lewis Plato. He finished fourth last season for Motorbase but will now switch to the Valluga Racing squad for his fifth year in the championship.

"It is a fantastic championship and one which I love to race in," said Plato. "For 2020, the challenge of working with a new team is something which I am really excited about. While Valluga Racing are a fairly new team to the championship, they proved last season that they are a professional outfit that can provide a winning package."

KENT EAGER FOR TCR UK SUCCESS ON SERIES RETURN IN 2020

TCR UK runner-up Lewis Kent will return for a third campaign in the championship this year, having narrowly missed out on the title last season.

Kent will continue in the Hyundai i30 N TCR run by his family team, Essex and Kent Motorsport, and is also planning a programme of European events.

"If we don't come away with first place I think we're all going to be very disappointed this year," said Kent, who was second in the 2019 standings behind James Turkington. "We know we've got the pace."

Kent plans to contest the opening round of TCR Europe at Spa, which falls between the Silverstone and Croft UK events, with further outings dependent on logistics and budget.

"The more I'm in the car, the more I'm racing against higher [standard] drivers, the better," added Kent.

Essex and Kent Motorsport is gauging interest in running a second Hyundai, the car which has taken World Touring Car Cup drivers' titles in each of the past two seasons, alongside Kent's.

Also committing to TCR UK this year are British Touring Car Championship squads Trade Price Cars Racing and Power Maxed Racing, which are joining forces to field two Cupras. Trade Price Cars boss Dan Kirby will drive one of them.



Kent was second in 2019 contest

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RALLY NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Toyota ace is aiming high in Mexico



Evans has to forget about road position

EVANS FACES A TOUGHER TEST ON DUSTY MEXICO STAGES

Welshman aims to keep up the momentum on the third round of 2020



Brit took fifth place for M-Sport in 2019

By Graham Lister

WRC points leader Elfyn Evans should brace himself for a tough Rally Mexico – if history is anything to go by.

Only three times during the event's 15-year WRC tenure has the world championship leader taken victory in Mexico. And since the country joined the global schedule in 2004, the same number of Rally Sweden winners have landed back-to-back victories by winning in Leon afterwards.

Road-opening woes

The Mexican stages are notoriously loose, making time loss inevitable for the driver running first.

While Sebastien Ogier led from the first gravel stage in 2015, he was behind for two stages in 2013.

And when Sebastien Loeb became the first world championship leader to win in Mexico, a feat he achieved in 2012, it took him until Friday afternoon to move in front.

No time to overthink

Evans will open the road on day one in Mexico after his first place for Toyota in Sweden put him top of the standings, albeit level on points with Hyundai's Thierry Neuville.

Having scored his first Mexican podium at this fifth attempt in 2019, the event is not the happiest of hunting grounds for the Welshman.

Despite this and the prospect of opening the road, Evans told Motorsport News he's staying positive.

"I've not [opened the road] much in my career but the best thing we can do is forget about it and just get on with whatever we have," he said. "It's inevitable that gravel rallies clean so you have to take these points when you can and not over-think it."

On gravel he trusts

Evans and co-driver Scott Martin prepared for Rally Mexico with a test in southern Spain last month. He expects the Yaris WRC to perform on gravel.

"We know the car has historically been strong more or less everywhere so we go with a positive frame of mind," said Evans. "We've had two specialist events to start the year and the feeling has been very good in the car. The majority of the championship is gravel and that's where we really need to be sure to get the right feeling."

No stone unturned

It will be a well-prepared Evans in Mexico, the 31-year-old telling Motorsport News that his preparations for the event started two days after his historic Sweden win.

"I quickly scanned over Sweden but then the first job I did was to look at the [Mexico] itinerary," Evans said.

STANDINGS

WRC standings (after 2/13 rounds)

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	42
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	42
3	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	37
4	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)	30
5	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	24
6	Ott Tanak (EST)	20

LINDHOLM TEAMS UP WITH BREEN IN ERC

Emil Lindholm plans to use Craig Breen as his "yardstick" in this year's ERC.

Lindholm will join Breen under the Team MRF Tyres umbrella in a Skoda Fabia run by Toni Gardemeister's TGS Worldwide squad, while Breen lines up in a BRC Hyundai i20.

Although Lindholm will be in a different car and team to Breen, the Finn reckons the Irishman's ERC experience will help him progress.

"Craig will be there and he will be quite a yardstick for us," said Lindholm following his victory on last month's Italralli in Finland, where Breen finished third on his first start on MRF rubber.

"Craig was fast on a tyre that had never seen snow before," said Lindholm, who used Michelin tyres, something he did to finish second in WRC 3 on Rally Sweden. "The product will be good and that's why I'm expecting some good stages times."



Rally Mexico is set to go ahead

NO VIRUS THREAT TO WRC

Health officials in Mexico have stated the country's World Rally Championship qualifier is not at risk of being cancelled due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

As Motorsport News went to press on Friday, the event was due to go ahead as planned from March 12-15.

However, Daniel Alberto Diaz Martinez, the regional secretary of health, said the event must follow international protection and prevention protocol.

"We have implemented an epidemiological surveillance system to monitor all the drivers and teams arriving from countries where the situation is most serious: China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, and Singapore."

Rally boss Patrick Suberville insisted the event would follow health department guidelines. "Everything is in place for the event and we are ready and prepared to assist the authorities with whatever they ask of us. We are in constant communication with them and follow their instructions."

Meanwhile, fans attending the rally are also being encouraged to observe strict hygiene requirements. The rally organisers have listed avoiding "shaking hands and kissing cheeks, avoid wearing ties, and to ensure any facial hair is kept clean".



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RALLY NEWS

New Rally1 rules come under the spotlight

The FIA World Motor Sport Council was sitting in Geneva when Motorsport News was preparing to go to press last Friday, with the Rally1 technical regulations at the top of the rallying agenda.

What is intended as a cheaper headlining division from 2022 in place of the existing World Rally Car class, several rule principles were due to be signed off.

However, with discussions regarding engine type and the planned hybrid system still to be finalised at WRC Commission level, it is understood a full set of rules won't be rubberstamped until the June WMSC in Chiang-Mai, Thailand June 19.

More miles for Tanak in Hyundai

Ott Tanak will continue his bid to catch up in the world title chase in Mexico this week, boosted by more "seat time and competitive mileage" in the Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC.

Tanak is 22 points behind Briton Elfyn Evans after two rounds but arrives in Mexico on the back of a test in Spain and an outing on Rallye Serras de Fafe, where a handful of aerodynamic upgrades were trialled.

"It was a productive weekend as we w orked closely with the engineers and Dani [Sordo] to find some good settings for our car on gravel," said the reigning world champion.

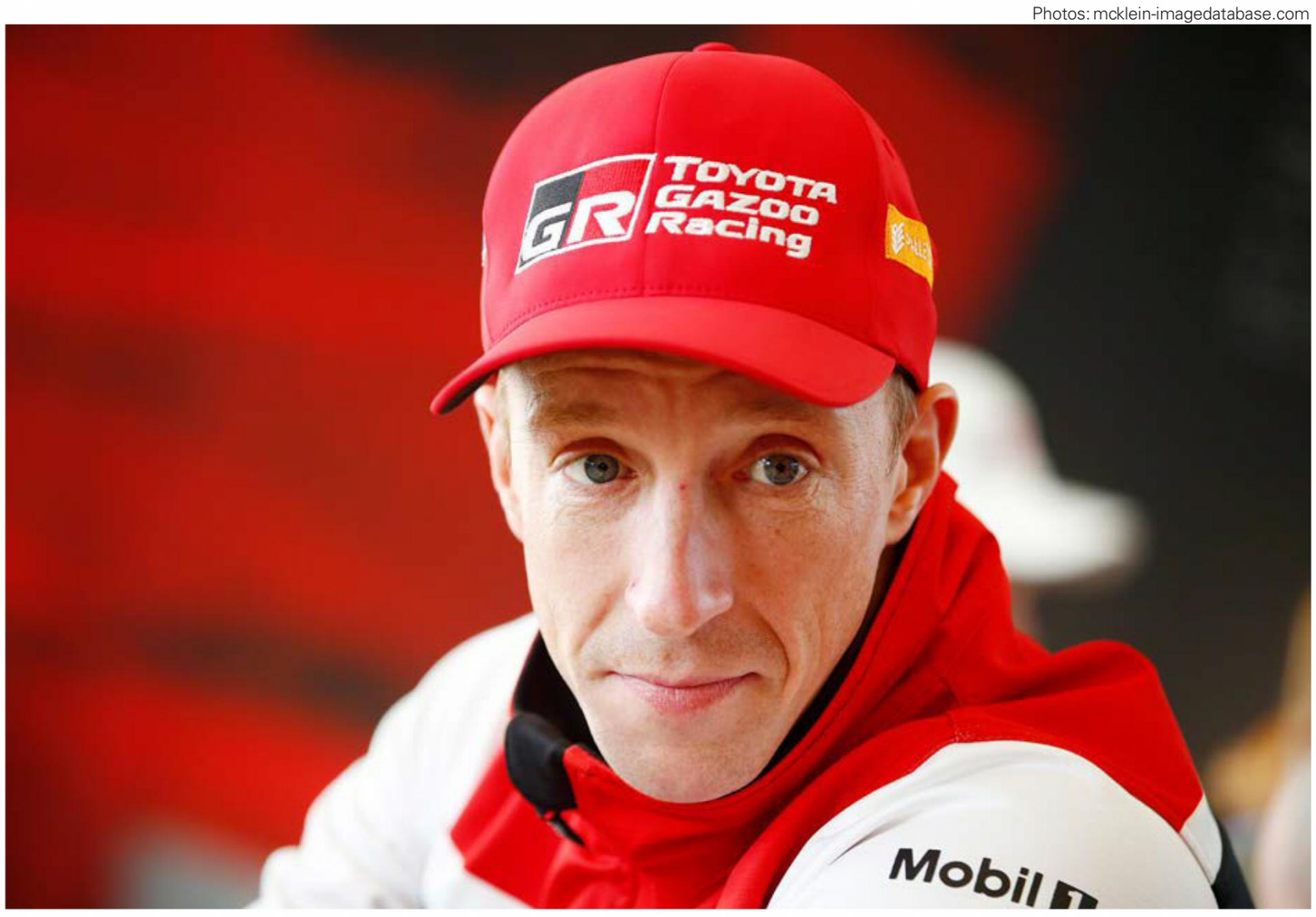
"I'm definitely adapting, it's step-by-step. This car is a different car to the two previous ones, it's maybe taking a bit of time. I'm pretty confident many areas will improve and get better – these are possible to do."

Estonian Tanak has never won in Mexico but is set to take advantage of running sixth on the road on day one.

MEEKE AIMS TO EVOKE MEMORIES OF McRAE

Northern Irishman set to tackle Whangarei event in May

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



By Graham Lister

Kris Meeke says his outing on New Zealand's International Rally of Whangarei from May 8-10 will bring back memories of watching his mentor Colin McRae competing in the country.

Meeke, who lost his works Toyota WRC seat at the end of last year, will drive a Force Motorsport Mazda 2, which conforms to the regional AP4 regulations, on the North Island gravel event.

"It's something I've always dreamed about, driving a rally car in New Zealand," said the Northern Irishman, who will be co-driven by Seb Marshall. "Through all my exploits in the WRC, I was never involved when Rally New Zealand was in the championship.

"I grew up with the images of these famous stages in New Zealand with Juha Kankkunen, Colin McRae and Richard Burns and I always wanted to do it. So, when I had some contact with Andrew Hawkeswood and he made a proposal for me to get an opportunity to drive on these roads, for me it was certainly a box I wanted to tick."

International Rally of Whangarei is a round of the Asia-Pacific and New Zealand championships. Kiwi Hayden Paddon, another WRC refugee, is also on the entry in a AP4-specification Hyundai i20.

MIKKELSEN TO BE REUNITED WITH A VW FOR SPA RALLY CHALLENGE

Andreas Mikkelsen will drive a Volkswagen Polo in competition for the first time since 2016 when he contests the Spa Rally in Belgium this weekend (March 14-15).

Mikkelsen last drove a Polo – albeit in World Rally Car guise – on Rally Australia in November 2016.

Following VW's withdrawal from the WRC at the end of that season, Mikkelsen joined Hyundai, but has been without a drive since the end of 2019.

For the Spa Rally, Mikkelsen will use a Polo GTI R5 from Pieter Tsjoen's PTR stable.

"It's an event I have never competed in," said Mikkelsen, who last rallied in Belgium in 2012. "I've already understood at this time of the year the course is likely to be muddy and with tricky conditions, which should make matters pretty exciting.

"Up until now I have never had the opportunity to test the Polo R5, but you can count on me to go into the attack.

Of his prospects of returning to the WRC, Mikkelsen (*right*) said: "I'm relentlessly working to get back into WRC, and I hope it will be very soon."





Briton will tackle a second 2020 round

GREENSMITH GOES BACK TO SCHOOL FOR MORE PACE

Gus Greensmith spent time at university to prepare for his second Rally Mexico appearance.

The M-Sport Ford driver finished on the WRC 2 podium in Leon in 2018 but returns in a Fiesta World Rally Car for his second outing of the 2020 season.

To prepare for the high ambient temperatures he'll face in Mexico, Greensmith spent time in a heat chamber at the University of Roehampton in southwest London. He also visited an altitude centre in the capital.

"I really enjoyed my time there in 2018, but it will be a completely different challenge this year," said the Briton. "I've been preparing in the heat and altitude chambers so my body is definitely feeling efficient and I'm sure that will help my performance."

After a non-score on the Monte Carlo Rally, Greensmith will be hoping to emulate the ninth place he bagged on his Mexico debut two years ago.

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RALLY NEWS

Kelly wants West Cork podium

David Kelly is eyeing a second consecutive Junior British Rally Championship podium on the West Cork Rally, adding he can't afford "to be hanging about all year".

Kelly edged Eddie Lewis by less than a second to seal third on the Cambrian and is buoyed by a recent class win and 15th overall on the Birr Stages. But despite West Cork being home territory for Kelly, he's only ever done the rally once in 2018 and didn't make it past the second stage when his Toyota Starlet's engine gave way.

"We're definitely going to be trying our best on West Cork as we don't have any experience of Ypres so I can't afford to be hanging about all year, so I'm going to have to push on when I'm at home," Kelly told MN.

When asked what his targets were, he said: "Podium finish. That leaves it kind of wide enough, we can first or we can come third we'll still be happy!"

Kelly expects JBRC leader William Creighton to be "the man to beat" given his masses of experience and has also tipped JBRC newcomer and namesake Eamonn Kelly to go well. In potentially Kelly's only year in the JBRC due to budget constraints, the 24-year-old is playing the long game.

"It's about consistency. It's a long year," he said. "It's not hard to be quick for the first two rallies but [you've got to] be there at the end of the year. I'm not saying I'm going to win the JBRC but I'm not saying I'm not going to try either."

PRYCE COULD TRY EVEN MORE CARS BESIDES POLO R5

British Rally Championship star considers his options after new car switch

Photos: Kevin Glendenning



Pryce will drive a Melvyn Evans car

By Luke Barry

Osian Pryce has admitted he is tempted to try another new R5 car on future British Rally Championship rounds after agreeing a deal to drive a VW Polo GTI on the West Cork Rally.

Pryce finished second on the Cambrian Rally in a Hyundai i20 R5 but that car is being used by Sam Moffett on West Cork. He therefore elected to use one of Melvyn Evans Motorsport's Polos to create a bit of BRC history as it marks the first top-line entry in a VW since Tapio Laukkanen on the 2000 Manx International Rally in a Golf IV Kit Car.

"We kind of decided to try something new, just because the opportunity was there," Pryce told Motorsport News. "It kind of made sense really working with Melvyn as the Polo was sat there and he was keen to get it out so that's how we've done it really.

"OK I'm creating a bit of hard work [for myself] but I just quite fancied it as well. If it had been a new Fiesta or a Skoda, I was quite tempted to try something else to be honest. And seeing how this goes, I might be tempted to try something else again for another rally in the season. It's just nice to try."

West Cork is a complete rally of firsts for Pryce and co-driver Noel O'Sullivan who have both never competed on the event before. It's also Pryce's first rally in southern Ireland and the very first outing for the chassis.

"It's going to be a challenge whichever way you look at it," he said. "If it was going into a gravel rally we'd be starting again but obviously [everybody's] going to be starting again because everybody's onto Tarmac but I'm just looking forward to having the chance to drive it really.

"I've got to really be on the podium on every rally to be there at the end.

"If I'm happy with the car, if the car is doing what I want it to do, there's no reason why I can't go for it from the start but having not driven the car I don't really know what to say."



Greer has waited patiently to get to grips with the Citroen

GREER IMPRESSED WITH C3 R5 AHEAD OF ITS UK AND IRELAND DEBUT

Jonathan Greer says Citroen Racing has done a "proper job" with its new C3 R5 ahead of giving it its competitive debut in the UK and Ireland on West Cork this weekend.

Greer performed course car duties at last Saturday's Bishopscourt Stages as a shakedown for round two of the Irish Tarmac Championship. The deal to bring the car over to Ireland was brokered with help from Raymond Moore of Race and Rally NI.

"Everything in the car feels really good," Greer told Motorsport News. "The gearbox feels strong and the engine has more torque and is much more responsive. Based on my short time in the car I have been left very impressed. Citroen has done a proper job; everything has been redesigned. It's all incredibly impressive.

"Citroen have been very good with their communication [too] and have given us as much help as they can with the set-up of the car," Greer added. "They have definitely put a lot of time and effort into the C3 and whereas we had no data for the DS3 R5 we have lots this time."

Greer could have had the car for the first round of the Irish Tarmac Championship - but it would only have arrived 72 hours before the start of the Galway Rally. "I didn't want to take it straight out of the box and do it a disservice," he explained.

"Those extra few weeks in the lead up to West Cork should give me and the guys at DGM a better understanding of how the car works. Hopefully I have made the right decision to hold off and not rush things."

Greer's priority is the ITRC although he does intend to enter select rounds of the BRC including the Galloway Hills Rally.

McERLEAN WANTS A FINISH AFTER TWO DISAPPOINTING RALLIES

Josh McErlean insists he has been encouraged by his switch to four-wheel-drive for the 2020 season even though he has retired from the first two rallies he has started this season.

A non-finish at the opening round of the British Rally Championship was particularly difficult for the 20-year-old to take as a podium result was on the cards prior to a damaged wheel forcing him to park up.

A similar outcome awaited at the Birr Stages Rally, which he had entered as practice for the next round of the BRC this weekend in West Cork. However, he is refusing to grow despondent and believes "everything will start to come good".

"The start of 2020 has been tough," he told Motorsport News "but we have to keep looking forward. On the Cambrian we were on course for a podium finish until an unfortunate mistake put us out of the race. Our pace from the off, against World Rally Championship level drivers who were on home soil, was very encouraging.

"We didn't have a clean stage in Birr because of an issue with a wheel that was out of our control but the data we gathered shows we have pace on Tarmac. The package is good."

"The priority in West Cork is to stay out of trouble and set consistent times," he added. "West Cork is a long rally with challenging stages so anything can happen. We just need to get the car to the finish."



McErlean is aiming for the finish ramp

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Lepley is confident of glory

LEPLEY WANTS TO SPOIL PETCH'S PARTY

Mitsubishi driver thinks there's more to come after points finish on Cambrian

By Luke Barry

Photos Jakob Ebrey, SMJ Photography

George Lepley "doesn't see any reason" why he shouldn't be aiming to win this weekend's Malcolm Wilson Rally, the second round of the BTRDA Rally Series.

Lepley finished fifth on the Cambrian Rally but believes the pace he showed was strong enough to fight at the very front.

"The main thing about that rally is we got a haul of points, it wasn't a no-score rally," Lepley told MN. "We had the punctures and the half-spin but it didn't stop the game. We need to get points for the championship.

"Going towards the Malcolm Wilson I'm feeling confident, I'm feeling good and with the speed we showed on the Cambrian, I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be going for the win and that's definitely what we're aiming for."

To do that, Lepley will need to beat championship leader Stephen Petch who is determined to finally win his local rally as well as Dylan Davies who was just four seconds shy of Petch's Cambrian lead before his event curtailed.

Davies has since acquired a left-hand-drive road car to accelerate his learning process as his second event in a Skoda Fabia R5 beckons: "I was quite surprised to be close after the first two [stages on the Cambrian] so yeah hopefully [we can do it again]," he said.

"If I can finish just behind [Petch and Lepley] or with them I'll be happy and then when we get back to Wales I'll be a bit more familiar with the stages and I'll have had a bit more seat time and hopefully I can push on a little bit."

The Fiesta WRCs of Charlie Payne – who needs a strong score after a Cambrian DNF – and Thomas Preston will be in the reckoning, as will the R5 brigade of Sacha Kakad, Rory Young, Martyn England and Ian Bainbridge who has converted his Fabia to right-hand drive.



Lancer driver was fifth on Cambrian


Fourmaux wants more seat time

FOURMAUX SET FOR VITAL EXPERIENCE ON MALCOLM WILSON

M-Sport WRC2 driver's Adrien Fourmaux entry into the Malcolm Wilson is "great" for both the fans and Fourmaux himself according to team principal Rich Millener.

The event is special to M-Sport given it's named after its founder and documentation is held at its Cockermouth headquarters. Running a car on the event has been challenging though as it clashes with the WRC round in Mexico, but in 2020 Fourmaux will compete in order to gain crucial seat time ahead of May's Rally Portugal.

"It's great to put one of our top cars and drivers out there for local fans to see, but it's also a good opportunity for Adrien to get some more seat time behind the wheel," Millener said.

"I've competed on the Malcolm Wilson Rally four times myself and I have to say that the stages are fairly epic. Adrien is definitely going to have a lot of fun out there as he discovers more about the car on gravel – and I expect he'll do a bit better than I did!"

Millener's best result on the Malcolm Wilson was 25th in both 2010 and '12 as a navigator. Fourmaux is among the likely frontrunners on his first foray in the English forests.

MORRIS AWARE THERE'S STILL WORK TO DO TO CLAIM MN CIRCUIT CROWN

Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship points leader Barry Morris says "it's not over yet" despite being in the boxed seat for the title ahead of the Donington Park finale this weekend.

Consistency has been key for regular frontrunner Morris, who took his maiden win at Anglesey earlier this month. Despite winning four of the seven events so far, Frank Bird is no longer in contention after a non-score in Wales (see page 26).

"We can only go there and do what we've been doing all season," Morris said, who holds a 10-point lead over Paul Murro in his Ford Escort.

Murro has a dropped score to take but could still be in contention if Morris slips up. A poor result for them would give Richard Wells the chance to overturn a 24-point deficit in a new Ford Fiesta R5 that will be in contention for D2 title spoils. Wells switched from a Mitsubishi to the Fiesta for Anglesey and is delighted with the car so far.

"We got the car from Derek McGarrity in Ireland, and it was a pretty quick turnaround to get it sorted so soon.

"Braking in particular is very different compared to the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo, and I love it already," he said.

"We're looking at a few gravel events and closed road rallies that we could do with it," he added. "and something I'd love to do would be to go over to Belgium to do some later in the year."



Morris has one hand on MN title



Wilson was pleased with Moonraker pace

LIMERICK FOREST RALLY CANCELLED BUT SET TO BE RERUN IN APRIL

The second round of the Irish Forestry Rally Championship, the Limerick Forest Rally, has been rescheduled for April 19 after heavy snowfall forced the event to be postponed on March 1.

The rally will therefore become the third round of the series following the Moonraker Forest Rally in Ballyvourney on March 28.

The 2018 Billy Coleman Award winner James Wilson currently leads the championship after claiming a breakthrough victory on the Carrick Forestry Rally in his Hyundai i20 R5. The former JBRC contender won all five of the rally's stages to win by 41.8 seconds.

"The first round certainly went very well for me but I wouldn't say it was perfect," Wilson told MN. "The car was perfect, the tyres were good and the PCRS team were faultless as usual. But looking back over the onboard footage I can certainly see there is plenty of time to gain on the stages

"The result doesn't raise my expectations," he added. "My aim this year is primarily for me to better myself, enjoy the driving and keep building my experience in R5. I want to improve my own knowledge of the car, I want to get to know it better the suspension's finer settings. I even want to have a look at the data and the telemetry from the stages and compare this to the onboard footage. There is always room for improvement."

HISTORICS

‘Crusader for Tarmac rallies’
Makin’s new pride and joy, below



DOWN THE PUB

WARNER LEWIS

Rallying History founder
Age: 45 **Lives:** Worcester



Lewis: Rally history fanatic

The June 6-7 event is well under way
“We’ve got 60 entries confirmed and 43 on the reserve list. We’ve got 20 places to fill. We’ve deliberately restricted it to 80 cars as its our first time running this type of event and it’s about logistics and safety. We’ve all been doing the European events for years and we want the same sort of events here. But we want to walk before we start to run.”

It will run to Motorsport UK standards
“We’ve had great support from Motorsport UK to get to how this event can run with the type of cars we want to run. They want this to work as much as we do. It is running to a special permit, which is a multi-venue special stage demonstration event with an exclusion for timing. There will be road section timing, an arrival control and stage start time, but no stage finish times. There is no competition in the event.”

It will bring back memories
“The cars will be driven at a realistic pace and the drivers want to go sideways and be more spectacular. Some of the stages are through woodland and to hear things like the Audi quattro will bring back all the memories.”

Closed roads next
“It’s already been talked about by all relevant parties about this being an annual event and the local authorities want to do closed roads in their district. They want to do that next year, so closed roads in 2021 is a very big possibility..”

There is interest from Europe
“The Sunday format next will follow this year’s with stages in Weston Park and surrounding land while Saturday will include some closed roads. We’ve already had crews form Europe put in entries for this year. The people that do this type of event travel around, so they will come to the UK because we go out to them.”

Spectators will be catered for
“Spectators will have a good package. We’ve selected two areas in Weston Park, with a crossing point: one at a double hairpin and one at the water splash. The entry is for cars from 1960 to 2010, so the cars must be a minimum of 10 years old. It will be nice to see them out there.”

Photos: Paul Lawrence



Gwynne and Evans enjoyed a Subaru Legacy outing



Jimmy McRae was one of the heroes on show in Chester

CHESTER REVIVAL RALLY DRAWS UNIVERSAL PRAISE

Drivers and fans give backing for well-run event after inaugural event

By Paul Lawrence

Participants in the inaugural Chester Rally Revival have given the event widespread praise following the touring event that marked the 25th anniversary of Colin McRae’s victory on the Network Q RAC Rally.

Ian Gwynne, who drove McRae’s 1992 Subaru Legacy with World Rally Championship journalist David Evans co-driving, said: “It was very well run and very enjoyable and it was a great effort by Bryn Pierce and his team. It takes a huge effort to organise an event like this.”

In 1995, McRae and Derek Ringer won the RAC Rally when it finished at Chester race course and clinched the World Rally Championship title and the Chester Rally Revival celebrated that memorable event. After informal celebrations on the Friday evening, around 60 rally cars took part in a tour around venues in Cheshire and Shropshire on Saturday, taking in some venues with an RAC Rally history.

As well as the famous World’s End road above Llangollen, crews entertained large crowds at Rednall kart track and Oulton Park race circuit.

The field was headed by Colin’s father Jimmy in the mighty Chevrolet Firenza Can-Am. Colin’s former co-driver Nicky Grist was joined by current British Rally Champion Matt Edwards in a Toyota Celica, while a gaggle of 555-liveried Subaru Imprezas, Ford RS200s, Ford Escorts and more took part in the non-competitive event.

The immediate future of the event is undecided. Prime organiser Pierce said: “We really hope everyone enjoyed the event. Whether it happens again next year, I’m not sure.”



Thruxton will echo to the sound of historics

THRUXTON FIRMS UP HISTORICS

Thruxton will have a dedicated historic race festival this summer under the Thruxton Historic brand.

Building on the venue’s 50th Anniversary meeting of 2018 and last year’s Thruxton Motorsport Celebration, the June 6-7 event will have complete historic race content thanks to a partnership with Historic Promotions.

Categories promoted by Motor Racing Legends will be at the core of an 11-race programme. Making Thruxton debuts will be the GT and Sports Car Cup and the Jaguar Classic Challenge.

Thruxton’s Pat Blakeney said: “Thruxton is a perfect environment for historic motorsport, with a fast, flowing and challenging circuit allowing these stunning cars to truly stretch their legs.”

Solberg heads the rally stars ready for Goodwood Members’ Meeting

Petter Solberg, at the wheel of a famous Subaru Impreza, will lead the entry for the Rally Sprint at the Goodwood Members’ Meeting (March 28-29).

The 2003 World Rally champion will drive Richard Burns’ 2000 Rally GB-winning Subaru Impreza in competition against drivers like Emanuele Pirro (Ferrari 308 GTB), five-time British Champion Jimmy McRae (Vauxhall Chevette HSR) and Kalle Grundel (Ford RS200). Matthew Wilson will run as course car in the latest M-Sport Fiesta WRC.

The Rally Sprint will start with one practice run and one timed run starting at 1845hrs on Saturday after racing finishes. The third timed run will be first early on Sunday morning before racing starts. Results will be based on aggregate times for the second and third runs.

The stage will run between the start line and Woodcote Corner, taking in a loop around the chicane and several hairpins.



Lyons has a wealth of experience in several different grand prix cars

LYONS BANNED FOR A YEAR OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

Seasoned historic racer Frank Lyons has been banned from racing for a year following a Motorsport UK National Court hearing.

Lyons was found guilty of breaching the M-UK Social Media Policy through a comment posted on Facebook. He has stepped down as chairman of the Historic Sports Car Club with immediate effect.

In a statement, Lyons said: “It is clear to me now that I have failed to keep abreast of the changing rules and policies that we racers have to abide by as a condition of being granted a race licence.”

Lyons has been a prolific racer in a range of historic cars over the last two decades, notably in Formula 5000 single-seaters.

IN BRIEF

Clan returns
Paul Mankin debuted his latest historic rally project, a Clan Crusader, during the Chester Rally Revival with hugely experienced co-driver Peter Scott alongside. The Newcastle-upon-Tyne driver is best known for running a Lotus Cortina but has also rallied a Category 1 Porsche 911 and will now target asphalt events in the Clan.

Compact Kielder
A compact format is promised for the Kielder Forest Rally, round two of the British Historic Rally Championship on Saturday April 25. Entries are now open for the event that will be based at the Kielder Greenside facility and feature a ceremonial start at Kielder Castle. The route will take in three stages run twice, including Broomylinn and Falstone, with minimal road mileage. The first car will start at 1000hrs.

Inch’s treasure
Mini racer Paul Inch has bought back the Mini 1275GT previously raced by his late father Chris and hopes to restore the car to its former glory. Chris was racing the 1275 GT Challenge when he suffered a heart attack at Castle Combe in April 1980. The car was found in a poor state in an orchard and Paul is now looking for the parts needed for a rebuild.

Duo return
After a long break from the sport, Neil Calvert and Arlene Cookson took part in the Chester Rally Revival in their Ford Lotus Cortina. More than a decade ago, the couple were leading runners in the BHRC but the Cortina has done very little in recent years. “It was a great event that ran very smoothly,” said Calvert of the non-competitive tour.

Newer Monte
Newer cars will be admitted to the Rallye Monte Carlo Historique when the 24th edition runs at the end of January next year. The event’s cut-off date has been moved to 31.12.82 and the change will allow cars like the Audi Quattro, Ferrari 308GTB, Lancia 037 and Nissan 240RS to take part in the regularity rally. The 2021 event will not feature a start from Glasgow after recent years drew a small number of starters.

Donington line-up
The timetable for the Donington Historic Festival (May 1-3) has been confirmed, featuring 17 races from 13 grids. New for 2020 are two races for Formula Atlantic single-seaters. After qualifying through Friday, the first race will be at 1730hrs on Friday with part one of the Sixties Touring Car Challenge with U2TC race. The Saturday evening slot will be taken by a race for GT and Sports Cars.

Pearson’s Volvo
John Pearson, one of the founders of the Equipe GTS race series, will bring a fresh car to the organisation’s Equipe Pre ’63 series this season. Pearson has had a rare 1961 Volvo P1800 prepared to an immaculate standard for racing and showed the car at Race Retro recently.

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SPORTING SCENE

ROUND-UP

Veales take control

Josh Veale led the **Walsingham Sporting Trial** all day, taking the initiative with a superb climb on a garlic-strewn section on the first round.

Round one winner (and Josh's father) Ian Veale was the nearest challenger closely followed by Stuart Beare at lunch. Tyre pressures were increased due to dry ground for the final round after lunch, and Josh dropped a five marker early on but had a sufficient lead to beat his dad by a point, judging his trickling speed to perfection all day.

Three section from the end, Beare broke a driveshaft to plummet down to a disappointing 12th. Richard Sharp benefited to complete the podium some 16 points back, ahead of Ian Wright, who had a poor morning down in eighth overall.

Andy Wilks upheld Crossle honours in fifth ahead of a brilliant sixth by Phil Haines in his live axle Facksimile. George Watson returned to the hills for the first time this year to finish in seventh ahead of Paul Marsh who was starred winning the BTRDA Rookie class. Ross Bruce borrowed his father's independent suspension car for the first time and struggled to fit comfortably but managed ninth commenting how loose and different it felt to his venerable Concord, beating Peter Fenson on a tiebreak. Nick Speed won the blue independent class in 13th place, Mark Howse the red live axle and Dave Oliver the blue live axle.

Duncan Stephens

Results
Walsingham Sporting Trial
Organiser: 750MC **When:** March 1 **Where:** Queen Elizabeth Park, Petersfield
Starters: 30
1 Josh Veale (Sherpa IRS) 8 points; 2 Ian Veale (Sherpa IRS) 9 points; 3 Richard Sharp (Cartwright); 4 Ian Wright (Sherpa Indy); 5 Andy Wilks (Crossle); 6 Phil Haines (Facksimile); 7 George Watson (Hamilton); 8 Paul Marsh (Sherpa); 9 Ross Bruce (Cartwright); 10 Peter Fensom (Hamilton).

Photos: fiaworldrallycross.com, Hal Ridge



Sellar will join the grid in a Citroen

ENTRIES SO FAR

British RX Supercar

DRIVER	CAR
Julian Godfrey	Ford Fiesta
Ollie O'Donovan	Ford Fiesta
Tristan Ovenden	Citroen DS3
Jack Thorne	Ford Fiesta
Mark Donnelly	Citroen DS3
Roger Thomas	Ford Fiesta
Steve Hill	Mitsubishi Evo
Andy Grant	Ford Focus
Andy Scott	Peugeot 208
Mike Sellar	Citroen DS3

SELLAR RETURNS TO RALLYCROSS FOR 5 NATIONS TROPHY ATTACK

Former circuit man goes back to his roots in mixed-surface discipline

By Hal Ridge

Former Supernational rallycross championship frontrunner Mike Sellar will race a newly-acquired Hansen Motorsport-built Citroen DS3 in the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy this year.

Sellar will revert from GT racing to rallycross to make his Supercar debut in the DS3 that Alexander Hvaal raced to a pair of European Championship victories for Kenneth Hansen's team in 2013.

The car was most recently driven at international level by Norwegian Hans-Joran Ostreng, who raced it to a semi-final finish in the Swedish round of Euro RX at Holjes last season.

Sellar said: "It's going to be strange returning to rallycross after so many years away, but I'm really looking forward to the challenge. The new structure of British rallycross was a deciding factor in my decision and although I expect it'll be a tough learning curve getting used to the car and racing on a different surface again, I'm hopeful that by mid-season I will be up to speed. The car is a proven one. Hansen is renowned for building cars to a high standard. There's a fair bit of work to be done bodywork wise before the season starts, and Julian [Godfrey] is working his magic on the engine. So, once that's all completed, we'll be ready to go."

A number of Supercar drivers are expected to race in the final round of the Lydden Hill Winter Series this weekend, in preparation for the season-opener that takes place at the same circuit next month.

Tuominen to tackle ERC with SET Twingo

Reigning RX Academy champion Rasmus Tuominen will race a revised Renault Twingo with Finnish team SET Promotion in the European Rallycross Championship this year as his prize drive.

Tuominen follows in the footsteps of former RX Academy champions Jesse Kallio and Sami-Matti Trogen, but while Kallio raced in Super1600 in 2018 and won the Norwegian round, Trogen raced in the single-make RX2 class last season, Tuominen will race an updated Twingo to Super1600 this year in the six-round campaign.

"When I was little and started watching rallycross, I remember Andreas Bakkerud winning in Euro RX Super1600 in a Twingo," said Tuominen.

"I've watched a lot of onboards since – Super1600 cars are just such special and cool race cars. It's so good to be making this step with SET.

"I learned a lot in RX Academy last season about driving in rallycross, handling the pressure when we were fighting for the title in the last round and being as prepared as possible."

SET Promotion was absent from the class last year, but since 2006 the Jussi Pinomaki-owned outfit has won six titles in the category with 40 wins and 97 podiums.



Super1600 winner will get Supercar shot

Supercar drive for the top performers in 5 Nations Trophy Super1600 class

The winner of the Super1600 category in the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy this year will win a free drive in a Supercar for an event next year.

The initiative has been set up to boost the European Championship category at domestic level.

Championship general manager Hannah Rynston said: "We are delighted to announce that the winner of this year's BRX 5 Nations Trophy Super 1600 Championship will receive a drive in a Supercar at an event in 2021.

"We feel it is important to reward those that have supported the championship through this exciting new phase in its development while we're also very keen to ensure that talent is allowed to grow at this level as drivers look to progress up the ranks to Supercar.

"Giving someone the opportunity to shine in the premier class will really give the competitors this year something to aim for, whilst also showing our commitment to help the next generation of drivers."

Craig Lomax and now Supercar driver Jack Thorne have both won a pair of Super1600 titles in recent years, with Lomax set to return for 2020. Darren Scott is also planning to race in the series with a Citroen C2 and Irishman Andrew Twomey is planning to race in a full campaign from the second round at Pembrey.

GC KOMPETITION FIRMS UP ITS ENTRY INTO WORLD RALLYCROSS CONTEST

The Guerlain Chicherit-owned GC Kompetition squad became the first team to officially announce 2020 World Rallycross Championship participation last week.

Chicherit will be joined by Lithuanian Rokas Baciuska in a pair of heavily-revised Renault Clios, running under the GCK UNKORRUPTED banner.

While former Super1600 champion Baciuska had joined Chicherit and Swede Anton Marklund in GCK's Renault Meganes last year, he will now drive one of the Clios used by Guilleaume De Ridder and Cyril Raymond in the GCK Academy team last season. The cars have undergone significant revision, including new engines from Oreca and new suspension from BOS. "I won't pull any punches: we're here to cause trouble! I'm stoked to be bringing UNKORRUPTED into World RX, and together we will push the limits and not be afraid to ruffle some feathers," said Chicherit.

"I've spent my whole career taking on new challenges and 'changing the rules', and this time is no different."

Both drivers tested the Clio recently in Portugal.

Marklund will continue to race a GCK Megane for the GCK Bilstein squad, with his sole focus on fighting for the Drivers' title. Marklund won the Norwegian round of World RX last year with the car but was stripped of the victory due to a technical infringement post-race. He finished second in the French round at Loheac. "I just can't wait to get started," he said. "Together with Bilstein we made great progress last year and showed really good speed, and with the extra time and better preparations over this winter we are ready to start 2020 with a bang. Being able to build on the real developments with the Megane R.S. RX. from last year, and the existing relationships I have with the team and technical partners, allows us to start the season strongly."



Marklund will be on the grid in a GC Kompetition Renault Megane

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FEATURE

HOW LLEWELLIN BLAZED A TRAIL FOR WALES AND TOYOTA

A Brit dominating in a Japanese car: Jack Benyon explains that rallying has experienced this before



LLewellin's victory on 1990 Welsh Rally was significant

Seeing a white and red Toyota driven to victory by a patriotic Welshman may be a sight fresh to a new breed of rally fan, but it's not new. In fact, rewind the clock 30 years and you reach one of the most dominant periods of British Rally Championship history. But the Wales and Toyota link remained.

While Elfyn Evans has kicked off 2020 in fine form in the World Championship with a victory in Sweden and an impressive run in Monte Carlo, one of his trailblazers David Llewellin – 'Dai' (Welsh for David) to his legion of followers – had taken Britain by storm three decades earlier.

Llewellin had rose to prominence quickly in the early 1980s, a brilliant season in the Audi Sport Europa Team in 1985 earning him a three-year deal to drive an Austin Metro MG 6R4 in the World, European and British Championships from then on. But the cancellation of Group B for the 1987 season left Llewellin's plans in tatters.

A return to Audi delivered strong results – the 1987 win on the Scottish one Phil Short, Llewellin's long-term co-driver, describes as his best up to that point, was followed in 1988 with a car switch to the oil tanker-like 200 quattro. It was as agile as the Titanic, and sunk down leaderboards just as quick despite Llewellin's herculean efforts.

A power struggle ensued at the end of 1988. Toyota Team GB had been formed and the new Toyota Celica had been entrusted to RED at the end of that year for two events with Jimmy McRae. But, as Short remembers, that legendary team quickly swiped the project aside.

"They were amongst those who said 'this isn't going to work' and obviously they were a very experienced team, Dai and I had been with them in the Metro in 1986 and they had done a very good job," explains Short. "They seemed to be a bit dismissive of the car because it was in its infancy and didn't appear to work so well."

Toyota had to choose between McRae and Llewellin. Stories differ, with some people saying McRae took a deal elsewhere to help launch his son, Colin's career. One thing is for certain, Toyota called Llewellin and offered him and Short the drive. And the rest is history.

Phil Collins, a regular and capable driver in his own right, swapped *those* pink overalls of the Mr Tomkinson carpets sponsorship to head up the new Toyota team run out of Wales.

Not unlike in 2016 when Toyota's return to the World Rally Championship had been written off by most after it had gone to the relatively inexperienced Tommi Makinen Racing outfit in Finland, Collins steering the ship was the first time he had taken on such a project.

Llewellin remembers a busy pre-season.

"There were big changes, driver changes, preparation changes, because the car didn't appear to be competitive at the end of 1988," he says. "David Ewles from Toyota GB was very enthusiastic and put a lot of time into the car from not only the sponsorship side but the engineering side. I remember doing a lot of work with the Collins team and the Ewles team on engine mapping, putting a lot of time into it early on and obviously it paid off."

It turned out that 1989 would be the dream year. For what felt like centuries, Llewellin and his fans had been waiting for him to win a Welsh event. He did it on the Welsh International, the top six

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Paul Lawrence



Welshman was eighth on Rally GB



Llewellin won at home in 1989

reading like a who's who of 1980s British rallying and even included the winner of the RAC Rally that year, Pentti Airikkala. The bespectacled Finn Airikkala had been over five minutes adrift of Llewellin on the Welsh, and was 30s behind when Llewellin blew a turbo on the RAC later that year. It should have been Llewellin's as Airikkala took a now famous victory.

"Of course, the all important Welsh win which had been eluding me for years, the old log piles and the famous roll in the Metro," Llewellin recalls. "Obviously you remember that very strongly winning your own international event for the first time. It was a fantastic feeling and obviously going on to win the championship that year was great and the team was built to have fun but work hard at it and that was the ethos of Toyota Team GB. We had fun and got the results, the balance worked really well. Phil Collins himself was an engineer, and a good driver, so that combination helped to make that car a success.

"I won't say it's a regret but it's a disappointment in my career because the RAC in 1989 I led on the first day and I think I was third overall on the Sunday night, and then the turbo blew in Hafren and at that moment we were 30s ahead of Pentti Airikkala, so it was my chance to win the RAC rally. The turbo let us down, we lost 17 minutes and of course that was it. I think that's one of the most disappointing moments of my career was having that turbo blow on the RAC."



The Celica campaign started in 1989

Defending a title is always difficult, but Llewellin found things easier rather than harder in 1990. The pressure was off. He had admitted that the pressure had got to him fighting Hannu Mikkola on the RAC in 1986, and on other events, but with the Welsh win and the British Championship in the bag, 30 years ago the 1990 season went like a dream. Only it didn't quite...The Cartel opened the season, and with Malcolm Wilson and Colin McRae in powerful Ford Sapphire Cosworths, Llewellin knew the gravel rounds were where he would have the advantage. But on the Cartel, the turbo went while he was leading.

With Wilson getting Ford backing and McRae destined for future success, it would not be easy. But Short remembers the standard Llewellin held himself to in those days.

"In my view he had every bit as much natural talent as Colin McRae," says Short. "He was a naturally capable and flamboyant driver and it was great to sit with him. There were times when I had to calm him down a bit perhaps when excitement got the better of him. It was fantastic to sit alongside someone with such immense talent."

The big breakthrough in 1990 was the Tarmac pace. The Sierras had more power and should have troubled the big heavy Celica, but Llewellin was always fantastic on asphalt and he turned that into four and two minute wins on the Circuit of Ireland and the Ulster respectively, two events that come with the extra burden of the local experts. None of them came close to Llewellin in Donegal in '89 or either of the sealed surface events in 1990.

After the Cartel, Llewellin won every rally he entered, five in total. The year before he'd won four of seven, the asphalt Ulster and clutch and transmission issues on the Circuit and the Manx halting progress. He'd won all the gravel events.

Llewellin was the original Welsh Toyota maestro and he reigned over one of British rallying's most successful periods. Unfortunately a move to Nissan in the WRC the following year ended badly for him and Stig Blomqvist, and he'd be forced into two-wheel-drive competition. But those years in the Toyota will never be forgotten.

So what about now? What does Dai think of Elfyn and the latest crop of WRC cars?

"Absolutely fabulous, for Elfyn to go to Monte Carlo and nearly win it in Ogier's back yard was mighty impressive," he adds. "To go to Sweden and be dominant, it was fantastic. I'm so pleased for him. The car combination with him is clearly working. I do follow the World Championship. I went out with Phil Collins, Howard Davies and Bryan Thomas to the 1000 Lakes. Boy, those World Cars don't half go around the corners fast.

"The first stage we watched was a long straight over a crest, four or five left and then down. When they didn't lift, I just thought 'my word'. Obviously because of the speed they have, the aero keeps them planted. My heart was in my mouth honestly. The impressive and scary bit is the cornering speeds.

"Wouldn't it be fabulous if we could have a Welshman win the world championship? I know it's too early to be saying stuff like that. But he's shown he's one of the men to beat this year."

Evans is undeniably one of the men to beat. And he joins an exclusive club alongside Llewellin and co-driver Nicky Grist who won four rallies in 1993-94 with Juha Kankkunen - in putting the red dragon on a white and red Toyota, and steering it to victory. ■

Junior Llewellins enjoy the big stage

Success runs in the Llewellin family. Ben, David's son, is an Olympic skeet shooter and proved himself successful in a rally car, and now the youngest son Tom fancies a go at the family business.

After competing in the Junior 1000 Championship, Tom has flitted between rallycross and rallying but secured the Junior Welsh Rally Championship last year as he switched to a Ford Escort Mk2. This season he's taking on the ultra competitive British Historic Rally Championship, after winning the historic class on the season opening Cambrian Rally.

"Dad and I both work on the car and Dad obviously helps run the car with me," says Tom.

"To be honest I don't feel under any more pressure. He's very helpful, his experience and knowledge is unbelievable and everything that goes along with it. It's a mega help.

"You have the likes of Nick Elliott and Marty McCormack. There's a lot of big names in the championship. Well established drivers in Escorts. I'm definitely going to have to increase the pace but I'm looking forward to the challenge."

With Peredur Wyn Davies alongside for 2020, Llewellin is showing a lot of promise. While the family farm often has to remain the priority, a four-wheel-drive car in the British Championship is the dream, just like dad. But the surname doesn't guarantee anything, and like most other under-20 rally drivers, a fight for funds looms ahead.



Tom Llewellin is tackling the ultra-competitive British Historic contest

LLEWELLIN'S MARCH TO 1990 SUCCESS

Cartel International Rally

Where West Yorkshire **When** February 24-25

It was a bad start and end to this one for Dai Llewellin. He was quickest through the Esholt Sewage Works opening stage, but approaching the end of the rally with a lead over five minutes his Celica blew a turbo. Colin McRae won in his rear-wheel-drive Sierra Cosworth as Malcolm Wilson's similar car broke a driveshaft.

Circuit of Ireland Rally

Where Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland **When** April 12-16

Despite smoke coming from the dash and a connector box sending all the power to the rear-end on a square right corner, Llewellin persevered and followed up his 1989 Donegal success with a first British Championship asphalt win. Won by over four minutes ahead of Wilson and McRae.

Welsh International Rally

Where Wales **When** May 5-6

Due to Wilson's international status, he started all events ahead of Llewellin – meaning the latter should have suffered from dust in a warm and tough Welsh. But Wilson scored a double rear puncture on the first stage allowing Llewellin to drive on into the distance. Also got a double puncture, but still won by almost seven minutes.

Scottish Rally

Where: Scotland **When** June 9-11

Llewellin broke a shock absorber 100 yards into the first stage and still went quickest, which summed up the year. Wilson crashed, McRae was just over three minutes adrift in second.

Ulster Rally

Where Northern Ireland **When** July 27-28

This wider and more flowing Ulster should have suit Wilson, but he had an axle issue and would retire. McRae went off because of an incorrect pacenote and finished seventh, leaving Llewellin to overcome changing a puncture mid-stage to beat the BMW M3 of Bertie Fisher by two minutes. The title was won and Toyota didn't enter the Audi Sport or Manx Rallies, both won by Russell Brookes's new Sierra.



Welsh success was despite dust

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F1 PREVIEW

Scott Mitchell says there will be plenty of story lines to look out for this year

ANSWERING THE BURNING QUESTIONS FOR F1 2020

We are on the cusp of what is likely to be a history-making season in Formula 1 – and yet there is still much uncertainty surrounding what will actually play out.

With Ferrari seemingly on the back foot, will there be a shake-up in the fight for podium places? And how will the calendar actually play out, given the current global health crisis?

Our man Scott Mitchell looks to the season ahead and unearths what will be the major talking points over the next 10 months.

1 Will Lewis Hamilton surpass Michael Schumacher?

With 84 victories and six world titles, Lewis Hamilton has established himself as the most successful Formula 1 driver of his generation. This year he can reinforce his statistical claim to being the greatest ever.

Two of Michael Schumacher's seemingly impregnable records stand to matched or broken in 2020. Mercedes' strong pre-season form and Hamilton's own ability to reach new heights suggest a seventh title for the Briton is eminently possible. And Hamilton is just seven race wins behind Schumacher's tally of 91.

What once seemed an outrageous anomaly is on the brink of being equalled, if not better. Hamilton needs seven victories this season to match Schumacher: he's won at least nine races every year in the V6 turbo-hybrid era.

"It's not something I think about," says Hamilton. "I always say numbers aren't really a massive thing for me. I plan to be here a little bit longer so hopefully I'll get there. We shall see."

Five podiums in 2020 will also put Hamilton top of that particular all-time list. He has also long since obliterated the pole position tallies of Schumacher and Ayrton Senna and is closing in on an incredible century. But that probably won't happen in 2020.



Photos: LAT

2 Will Ferrari's rivals get 'justice' for 2019?



On the eve of the 2020 season an explosive joint statement from seven F1 teams cast a massive cloud over the championship and ensured at least the Australian Grand Prix weekend will be dominated by chat about something from last year: Ferrari's engine.

At the end of pre-season test the FIA released an opaque statement that concluded a long-running analysis into Ferrari's 2019 engine and declared a confidential "settlement" had been reached with the team. It was widely viewed as the governing body striking a compromise with Ferrari because it did not yet have grounds to rule its engine illegal, but had enough to argue Ferrari was doing something amiss.

However, the seven non-Ferrari teams in F1 are outraged by this. They find it surprising that the FIA would consider this an acceptable way to conclude the matter and have demanded that the full details of the investigation be disclosed.

The teams have even threatened legal action, either through the FIA's own channels or through civil courts.

This settlement saga is unlikely to have a sporting impact on 2020 but it is a vital question to be answered. In the interest of transparency and trust, the stakes could not be higher.

3 And is Ferrari's 2020 over already?

Ferrari rates its pre-season testing performance "below 6/10" and even if its rivals are right and things are rosier than they seem at Maranello, it does look like it will start the year behind Mercedes and probably Red Bull too.

The car is quicker through the corners but slower on the straights, a consequence the team says is because of greater drag but also because its 2020 engine is weaker than last year.

In the context of the 2019 legality questions, that sparks conspiracy theories. However, Ferrari insists the weaker engine performance is only a legacy of its pursuit of greater reliability after plenty of problems last year. It hopes to address whatever power deficit it has discovered with its first update of the season. Ferrari insisted throughout testing that it was off the pace, with Sebastian Vettel saying Mercedes looked more at "ease" with their 2020 challenger. Trackside observers noted the Ferrari seemed fine, but was simply not as impressive. The team will be under pressure as soon as qualifying begins in Australia. It either needs to reveal its full potential and overhaul its rivals, or it needs to play catch up very quickly.

Otherwise, it faces yet another disappointing season.



4 Is Red Bull finally going to fight for a title?

Ten years ago the world had no idea it was at the beginning of a four-year Red Bull-Sebastian Vettel dynasty. But the domination of an up-and-coming disruptive team and F1's youngest ever world champion got stale pretty quickly.

A decade later and things have come full circle. F1 might rely on Red Bull and its new young charger to break the monotony and give fans something to cheer about.

Red Bull has not spent the last six seasons in the wilderness and has been victorious every year in the V6 turbocharged-hybrid era bar 2015, but it has never come close to mounting a serious or sustained championship challenge.

That was often through a lack of Renault engine reliability or performance, but it's also fair to lay some of the blame at Red Bull's door for stumbling over regulation changes.

Now, with Honda more competitive than ever, Max Verstappen at the wheel and a car that has been well-developed from a strong end to 2019, a title bid is not just hoped for – it is expected.

This is Verstappen's last chance to break Vettel's record and become F1's youngest world champion.

The prospect of the Dutchman fighting Hamilton for the crown is one to savour.



5 Is this going to be Sebastian Vettel's farewell?

Sebastian Vettel has done everything in F1 'early'. He started his first grand prix aged 19 years and 11 months, which made him one of the youngest-ever debutants.

He took his first win a couple of months after his 21st birthday, which made him the youngest-ever grand prix victor (and podium finisher) at the time.

And his first world title, earned at 23 years, four months and 11 days, means he is still the youngest champion in F1's history.

With that in mind, it has always been considered a possibility that Vettel would retire early as well. Vettel's only 32, and could conceivably race on beyond the mid-2020s. But the emergence of Charles Leclerc and the mark he has made on Ferrari means Vettel is under pressure to re-establish his authority and eliminate the mistakes that have dogged recent seasons.

As an out-of-contract driver, this is a make-or-break year for Vettel. He needs to show Ferrari he is still capable of being number one and work out himself whether he wants to stay.

For even if the team believes Vettel's powers have waned but would consider him a perfect supporting act to Leclerc, would Vettel accept slipping into that role?

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F1 PREVIEW

6 What will happen to Renault and Ricciardo?

Photos: LAT



No team on the grid is under more pressure at the start of 2020 than Renault, which needs to secure its future in Formula 1 and try to convince its big-money signing Daniel Ricciardo not to jump ship after just two seasons.

Renault's backwards step in 2019 means the French works team is a long way from the original target it had for 2020 way back when it rejoined the grid in 2016. According to that original roadmap, Renault should be fighting for the title this year. Instead it is scrambling to get back ahead of its engine customer McLaren.

The problem for Renault is its 2020 car has been designed by technical leadership that got axed at the end of 2019. That could make for a painful season, but Renault showed in 2018 – and plenty of times last year – that even if it is not ready to join the F1 elite it can still be king of 'Class B'.

That would be some evidence to show to its board, and Ricciardo, that it is back on track. Whether it is enough to keep the support of both is a huge question that could decide the team's fate.



7 Will the driver market explode?

The long-term deals for Charles Leclerc (at Ferrari) and Max Verstappen (at Red Bull) announced over the winter took them away off the market very, very early. However, that does not mean the driver market is dead.

Lewis Hamilton intends to stay in F1 beyond 2020. But his contract with Mercedes is up for renewal and there were links to Ferrari at the end of 2019.

All signs point to Hamilton negotiating a fresh deal with the team that has given him so much success since he joined in 2013. But both Mercedes seats are theoretically up for grabs as Valtteri Bottas is also in need of a new deal. Vettel's future at Ferrari is unknown, and Alex Albon needs to prove he is the full-time solution to Red Bull's number-two crisis.

Plus, a contract is only worth the detail within it. Might there be a clause that allows Verstappen to jump ship and take a potentially vacant seat along Hamilton at Mercedes? Will Ricciardo abandon a sinking Renault ship to join Leclerc at Ferrari? What about the leading midfield teams like McLaren and the works Aston Martin entry that Racing Point will become? There's still plenty to be settled.

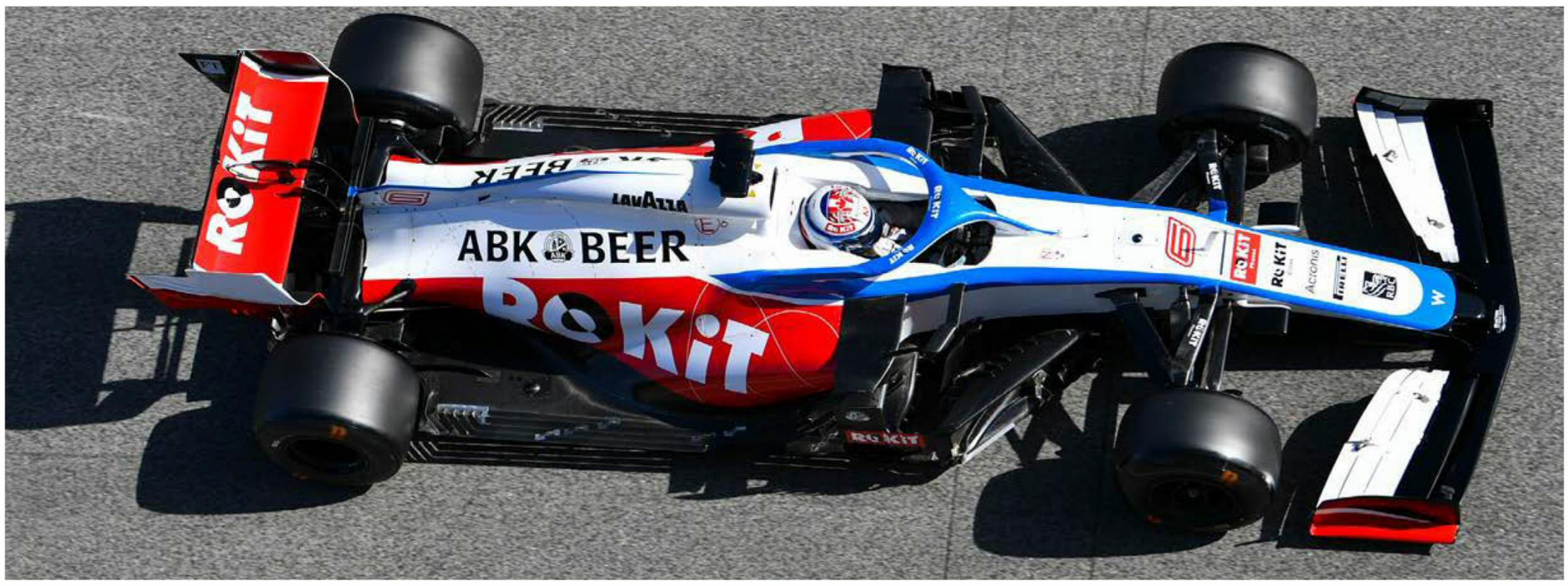
8 Can Williams recover from embarrassing 2019?

Everything about Williams's start to 2020 has been better than a year ago. It was the first team out of the pitlane in pre-season testing, versus its 2019 car being two and a half days late. The FW43 looked solid on-track, instead of a car George Russell called "scary" to drive early on. And so far the car also seems legal, rather than needing last-minute design changes to avoid being off-the-pace and disqualified. Which is a nasty combination.

There is no miracle expected of Williams this year. It is not likely to jump into Q3 and score points from the outset (although Australia has often been a good place for an unusual result). However, it looks like it will at least be in the fight.

Respectability is the aim for Williams after an embarrassing 2019. Without the chaotic German Grand Prix it would never have scored a point and had nothing to show for a season its drivers spent arguing between themselves over 19th and 20th on the grid.

Williams can get into the lower-midfield mix and fight for a Q2 spot. With a driver like Russell spearheading the charge, plus a competent race team, it must fancy its chances of a few points.



9 Does F1 risk losing a team from the grid?

Teams find themselves in a peculiar position heading into 2020. They need to develop cars for F1's major 2021 rules change: but none of them are signed up to race next year.

To all intents and purposes, all 10 teams have to spend a lot of time and money designing and building cars for a championship they might not compete in.

All parties want a new Concorde Agreement sorted sooner rather than later. It is taking time because everyone needs to sign up to the same document.

However, F1 is at risk of losing one team. Gene Haas is known to be frustrated at the struggles his eponymous team faced last year, and a repeat could mean that F1's newest – and only American-owned – team does not continue into 2021.

Whether Haas was naive in thinking he could shortcut success in F1 or not, the split between the haves and the have-nots on the grid is damaging. This team's future could be the ultimate example of that.

Haas doesn't want to keep wasting money. Is it a negotiating tactic? Very possibly. It has less to lose by leaving F1 than the championship does by losing a team that only joined in 2016.





10 How many races will there be?

F1 has not been immune to the ever-increasing severity of the global coronavirus outbreak. At the time of writing, the Chinese Grand Prix had been postponed, there were serious doubts about the inaugural Vietnam Grand Prix, and travel restrictions also put question marks over the Australia season opener and the second round in Bahrain.

The 2020 season was meant to comprise a record 22 races but is almost impossible to see how China will fit back onto the calendar, even if local officials seem to be promising that will happen.

We also have no idea how the situation will develop and affect the European races. Italy has been the most-affected European country and is one of the worst-hit globally, too. Therefore travellers from the country face restrictions almost everywhere they go.

F1 can eliminate a lot of red tape but even its powers are limited when it comes to a worldwide health crisis.

Ross Brawn says if any team is restricted from getting to a race because of this problem, the race cannot go ahead. At least as a world championship event.

So on the eve of the season, we're still waiting to see exactly how the 2020 calendar will end up.

FEATURE

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Breen will be back with the Hyundai R5



Tom Cave says he will be having a push to claim the outright win

TOP 10 SEEDED ENTRY LIST

West Cork Rally, March 14-15

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Craig Breen/Paul Nagle	Hyundai i20 R5
2	Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod	Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2
3	Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble	Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2
4	Tom Cave/Dale Furniss	Hyundai i20 R5
5	Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley	VW Polo GTI R5
6	Sam Moffett/James O'Reilly	Hyundai i20 R5
7	Osian Pryce/Noel O'Sullivan	VW Polo GTI R5
8	Josh Moffett/Andy Hayes	Hyundai i20 R5
9	Desi Henry/Stuart Loudon	Hyundai i20 R5
10	Robert Barrable/Liam Moynihan	VW Polo GTI R5



Edwards finished in fourth place overall in the 2019 edition

WEST CORK CORKER IN STORE FOR BRITISH AND IRISH CREWS

The West Cork Rally is the second round of both the British and Irish Tarmac contests, but there's a battle for the overall rally win to be settled too. By Luke Barry

"I'm not going to West Cork simply to make up the numbers." Those words could belong to any one of a dozen drivers competing on this weekend's Irish Tarmac and British Rally Championship clash in Clonakilty. But in this particular instance, they're courtesy of five-time event winner Donagh Kelly who wants to extend his own record to six.

The West Cork Rally is the first of two rallies throughout the year where the ITRC and BRC converge for a head-to-head battle. It's a fascinating comparison between the two series which this season is expected to be better than ever given the quality of both championship's entries and the fact the BRC contingent now know what to expect in West Cork.

"It's got a bit of everything to be honest," Tom Cave describes. "Everyone will know them [the stages] pretty well but they're just typical Irish fast, bumpy roads with some very nice, enjoyable stages as well where you can really push the car and open it up but in other places you have to use your head and just be really neat with the car because there isn't much room at all to be honest."

Before the clash of the titans, Kelly was the man to beat and scored consecutive victories between 2014 and '18 in his Ford Focus WRC08. His run was halted by Craig Breen who won last year's encounter in a Ford Fiesta R5 as



Edwards will lead BRC charge

Kelly slumped to fifth in a Skoda which he described as a "wasted year." Now armed with VW's Polo GTI R5, the 2015 Tarmac champion is bullish.

"I enjoy the terrain and the lay of the land in West Cork. I like the stages, I know them well, so maybe that will be the difference in a car that I really enjoy driving," he says. "A sixth win there is not out of the question. Perhaps a sixth win, in a R5 car, would mean more because a lot of drivers who have tried to make the switch from World Rally Cars to R5 have been unsuccessful."

But Kelly isn't the only one that really wants the West Cork win. Far from it. Craig Breen admitted he "couldn't resist" another crack – this time with a Hyundai – while BRC frontrunner and last year's third placed man Cave conceded his



Donagh Kelly is aiming for a sixth victory on the West Cork clash

attentions aren't just on maximum championship points but the overall spoils too.

"We've got to go there and take more points off Matt [Edwards, BRC champion and points leader] if we can but Matt's obviously very strong," Cave says. "He's got a new car this year which has proven to be strong as well so it's not going to be an easy task.

"[But] my aim will certainly be to go out there and fight for the win overall for the rally if we can as well. We showed some good pace there last year on stages I didn't know at all, it was my first time there so we'll be much better prepared this year and we'll have a better understanding of the surfaces of different stages".

"Let Tom do that!" Edwards quips when he hears of Cave's intentions. The Cambrian Rally winner admits he "would love to go there and win" but is restricted by his own championship game.

"I'm a bit less certain of my plan until I'm sat on the start-line of the first stage for this one," he says. "It'll probably just depend how the first mile goes. I don't want to take big risks because obviously we are leading the championship, I don't want to do anything daft to give that away. Am I going to put everything on the line to win this one? Probably not, because I've got strong ones in Ypres and Ulster to come as well."

Cave will be confident in his attack though, benefiting from a new specification of damper that's part of the latest development package for the i20 R5. "That should help in certain areas where the car wasn't so great to be honest from last year's event but pretty much everything else is very much similar," he surmises.

ITRC points leader Alastair Fisher is another man expected to soar in West Cork but intriguingly has switched to a Fiesta R5 Mk2 after a winning debut in VW's Polo R5. Moffett brothers Sam and Josh will be threats in their Hyundai's too with Welshman Meirion Evans sure to impress in his Polo R5.

Osian Pryce has also played musical chairs and will pilot a Polo R5. He could be a dark horse depending how long it takes him to adjust. Rhys Yates showed cracking pace on his last Irish event – Ulster 2018 – but it's Ollie Mellors who could do some real eyebrow raising following his recent podium on the Birr Stages; made all the more impressive given it was his first Tarmac rally in four years in the Proton Iriz R5.

"I was actually surprised," he confesses. "The biggest thing for me was making sure I could commit to my notes. We made the pacenotes and we managed to pick up all the shiny Tar and the mud so that was encouraging Before doing anything you just want to make sure you're prepared as best you can. Now I've got a lot more confidence to push a bit more and commit."

Ladies and gentlemen start your engines. It's time for battle to truly commence. ■

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FEATURE

Being smooth was the key in the BimmaCup machine

KEEPING RALLYCROSS CHEAP, AND VERY CHEERFUL

Hal Ridge gets behind the controls of the new BimmaCup BTRDA Rallycross offering



Hal enjoyed the car's handling at Blyton

How often do you hear in modern motorsport that things are not what they used to be. Especially when it comes to rising talents being picked up by works teams to compete at a level their own budgets would otherwise not allow.

And, in the case of many junior and single-make series of the past, there was often a prize drive carrot dangling for the champion.

Those opportunities do still exist, but the budgets required to reach the point where such a drive could be won are often beyond the means of the regular nine-to-five worker, and the pressure to succeed and achieve also removes some of the raw enjoyment of driving and competition.

But now an initiative as part of the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship structure is changing that in 2020, with a prize drive in Barbados on offer to the winner of the new BimmaCup UK rallycross series.

BimmaCup, an entry-level, single-make formula for BMW 318Ti Compacts is hugely popular in the Caribbean, with competitions taking place in circuit racing, rally sprint, rallycross and rallying. Last year, BimmaCup UK was introduced into

18+

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Photos: Sarah Hall, Trevor Coulson, Hal Ridge



The BMW has a hydraulic handbrake

single-venue stage rallying over here, and now it will transcend into rallycross too.

This isn't about being picked up as the next hottest talent about to take on the motorsport world though, it's about competing in a socially enjoyable environment for an achievable amount of cash with the lure of dream prize drive in the final round of the BimmaCup Caribbean in Barbados in November. And the prize isn't just the entry fee, it's a paid-up run in a car already based in the Caribbean and a flight for the winner to make the trip.

Originally based on the UK Compact Cup circuit racing series concept, cars can be built from scratch or converted from existing machines. The cheapest way to getting going is, I'm told, by sourcing an ex-Compact Cup race car for around £5,000, then fitting the regulation Bilstein or Gaz coilover suspension (£1500) and BMW M3 (3.91 ratio) limited slip differential (£1200) to the car to make it eligible for BimmaCup rules and add safety features such as under body guards, polycarbonate windows, fire extinguishers and the like. The five-speed gearbox must remain standard, the same with BMW's M44 16 valve 140 horsepower engine. While series bosses pride the cars on their reliability, old components do break, and accidents also do happen, but parts can be picked up on auction websites such as eBay and breakers yards for sensible money. Engine management is regulated by needing to use either a Compact Cup or BimmaCup specification ECU.

At the BTRDA's pre-season test at Blyton Park recently, I got the opportunity to sample Tom Stockdale's BimmaCup car. Incidentally, this yellow machine is the car that Stockdale drove to the title in the BimmaCup rally series last year and claimed the same prize drive in Barbados. Competing against 35 cars in the Caribbean, he finished third overall in both the rally and rallycross categories.

But while rally was the focus last season, and the car is still home to a passenger seat and spare wheel in the boot to prove it, Stockdale is eyeing the 2020 rallycross series.

After a brief explanation of what to expect from the car, I line up for a session around a temporary Blyton layout. While the main loose surface section of the rallycross track was out of use due to recent wet weather, fortunately the number of cars running through the day have pulled a significant amount of loose gravel and mud onto some of the corners, especially through the chicanes, almost simulating a real rallycross circuit, albeit rather tighter.

Once out on track, heading down the start straight for the he first time of asking, I'm up to fourth gear, almost reaching the maximum revs of 7100 before changing each time, and while I brake early and turn in gently to the first corner, a long, fast left-hander that tightens into a hairpin, the chassis feels very stable.

Through a pair of chicanes covered in gravel the car slides around underneath me, but not unexpectedly so, and its into a pair of 90-degree left handers that I brake hard for the first time, changing from fourth gear down to second. Here, all 1,150kg of German engineering moves around on the brakes, but in such a manner that only entices you to try braking harder and later next time around. Out of the second 90 left, and also at the final turn a couple of corners later, the BMW steps out sideways, but with my right foot buried and opposite lock applied, the car is easy to control.

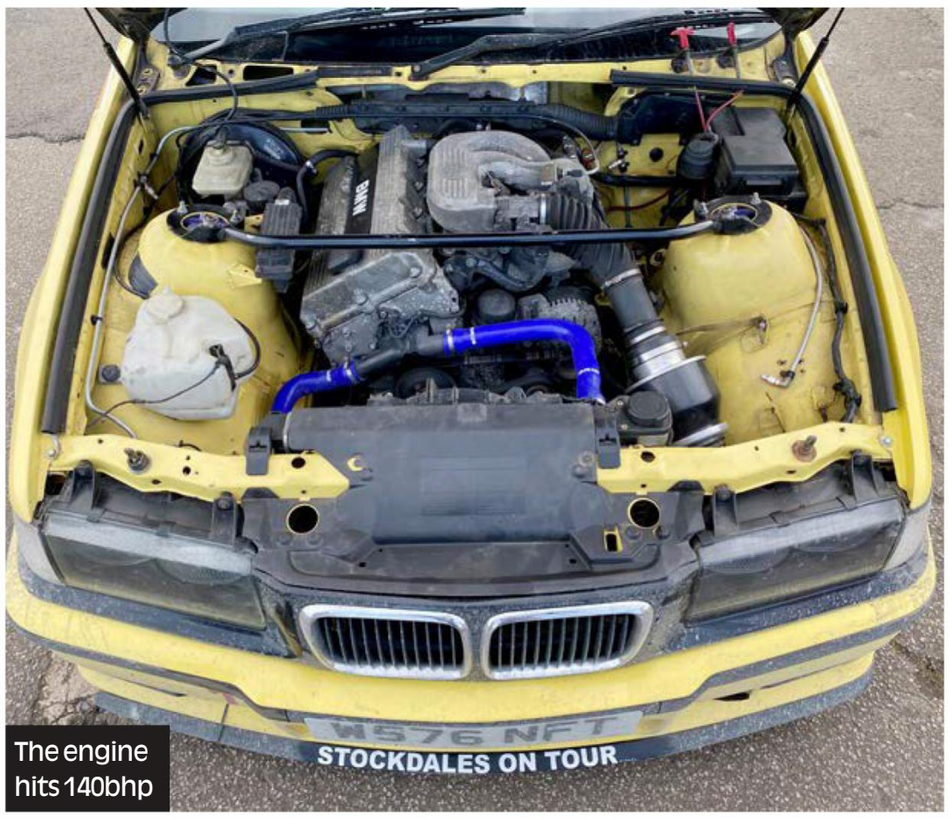
This isn't a high-performance missile by any means, and I'm definitely not blown away by the acceleration or speed, but it's not poor either and the predictability of the chassis makes it a lot of fun to drive.

Pressing on into the first corner for the second time of asking, hard on the throttle in fourth gear at the entry, I brake hard, change down to third and the car again steps out on the brakes. That begins to rotate the rear nicely though as the corner tightens, and by running a little wide on the exit into the loose gravel, I can even feel a smile growing on my face as I look out of the driver's door window to see the direction of travel. Into the lap's second heavy braking area, for the first of the two 90 lefts, I catch the outside right-hand front wheel on the grass, which causes the front to slide in the same direction, but with a large throw to the left with the steering wheel, I enter the corner in Scandinavian-flick fashion and the car feels so predicable that, I'm surprised when watching the onboard back later that even with my limited ability and experience, I'm able hold a continuous slide around the two sharp corners one-handed, before needing a second hand to assist in dealing with the amount of lock required at the corner exit, to remain heading forwards. This is a huge amount of fun, if you enjoy going sideways in a car that is. The key to getting speed out of these rear-wheel-drive machines, I imagine and from my discussion with Stockdale later, is to be smooth and consistent, not letting the car run out of line too much or too often. But going sideways is far more enjoyable, which is why I'm sure this class is so popular in the Caribbean.

The only blot on my copybook in the test run comes at the start of my penultimate tour, when having leaned hard on the right-hand 15" Nankang control tyres into the entry of turn one, braking with my left foot to balance the car and changed down from fourth into third and then second, I give the vertical hydraulic handbrake lever a tug pre-apex into the hairpin, which rotates the rear too far to be saved, resulting in a spin in the middle of the tarmac. Fortunately, Stockdale had explained where reverse was in the standard BMW gearbox before I set off and the run is completed without any real drama.

Series organisers are confident that a grid of cars will join the BTRDA series from the first round for the category at Lydden Hill in May, which will run within the modified division until there are enough cars to run their own grids.

I'm always cynical about introducing new categories to the national rallycross scene, for fear of complicating the sport further and diluting the potential for entries in the main divisions. And UK rallycross is well catered for in the single-make class stakes with the Swift Sport, BMW Mini and RX150 classes that support the British Championship. But given how enjoyable the BimmaCup machines are to drive, how many cars already exist that may just need a little conversion to be eligible, and that there is a bloody good prize at the end of it, I think this class is a welcome addition to the UK rallycross scene. ■



The engine hits 140bhp



The BMW Compact's controls are basic

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RALLY REPORT

Photos: SMJ Photography



Morris had to hold his nerve for glory



Rob Hughes pushed hard all day long

MORRIS TAKES DECISIVE MARCH TOWARDS TITLE AS BIRD FALTERS

Barry Morris scored his first MNCRC victory at Anglesey to obtain a vital title edge over Frank Bird who hit trouble in his Ford Focus WRC07. By Dan Mason.

Barry Morris took one almighty step towards the MN Circuit Rally Championship crown by grabbing a dramatic Lee Holland Memorial Stages victory at Anglesey.

The Irishman's task at hand was simple initially – finish strongly to consolidate his title lead. That plan rapidly changed as recent runaway winner Frank Bird came a cropper while on course for a fifth victory in succession, gifting Morris the chance to challenge for his maiden MNCRC win. It was not without tension, however.

From the opening two stages of the day in Wales, it looked as though the recent narrative would continue as Bentley GT racer Bird started strongly with two scratch times, stretching out a lead of 30 seconds over his chasing rivals. "All good so far," said Bird. "I'll be trying to take the jump flat out next time!"

Those words would soon come back to haunt him, however, as, just after sticking to his promise over the famous jump, the Ford Focus WRC07 stuttered and came to a halt. Gearbox issues from input shaft damage put the Focus out on the spot. Bird's title hopes were left in tatters with main rival Morris inheriting the rally lead in his Darrian T90 GTR. It was the second slice of luck for Morris, having witnessed another title rival, Mike Taylor, retire on the opening stage after water pipe dramas for his Talbot Sunbeam Lotus.

The fight for the rally win was suddenly blown wide open, and it was Rob Hughes who stepped forward with local man Sion Cunniff to challenge the Darrian. It became a punch and counter battle over the afternoon's quartet of stages, with only a solitary second separating the pair across the course of the morning. Morris grabbed the lead back on SS6 while his rival encountered traffic in the tighter sections, setting up a two-stage showdown with dark clouds looming.

Hughes' co-driver Cunniff was lapping up the contest after disappointment 12 months prior, commenting "this is the sort of rally the fans want; we're not paying attention to the times too much, we just want to get it to the end and see where we're at."

For six stages, the biggest advantage either had taken out of the other had been two seconds, the top two matching times at the end of SS5. It needed one decisive moment to twist the fate of the battle, and that break was finally made when Morris took four seconds from his rival on SS7, opening out a five-second cushion over the Ford Fiesta R5 of Hughes heading into the final stage.

A curtain of sleet threw one final spanner into the works; Morris opting for a wet compound as his rivals pondered. Hughes and Cunniff performed a rain dance in the paddock to keep the conditions wet enough to suit the Fiesta competitors, but sunny skies returned too quickly for the joker card to work in the chaser's favour.

"It was the right decision to go for wets," said Morris, as he snatched a maiden victory by seven seconds to open up a 10-point championship lead with one event to go – dropped scores not taken into account. "It means a lot to get a good result in this car after we've worked so hard on it. We're in a good position now but it's not over yet!"

Hughes gave it his all but suffered damage from hitting a loose chicane marker in the final section, adding: "We had a power steering issue at the start of that stage too. It could have been closer if we didn't have traffic problems earlier in the day too, but it is what it is."

Two-time MNCRC rally winner Mark Kelly played catch-up after a sluggish start in his Ford Escort Mk2, but the mostly clear conditions left him on the back foot in terms of setup. "We struggle to get it dialed in in the dry," said Kelly, who finished 26s adrift of Morris.

Simon Bowen's Fiesta got the better of Richard Wells for fourth place, the latter "learning more" about his new Fiesta R5 over the day as he switched from Mitsubishi machinery for the first time.

Roger Moran's Skoda R5 pipped the experienced Peter Smith for sixth as Chris Ford's Fiesta grabbed eighth ahead of Neil Roskell's Subaru. Martin Hodgson was second best of the Escort runners, rounding out the top 10 on a day where his traditional rival Stephen Tilburn was restricted to 34th position by troubles in the afternoon.



An input shaft put paid to Frank Bird's' win – and title – aims

RESULTS

Lee Holland Memorial Stages, Anglesey, March 1, Round 7/8

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Barry Morris/Tom Hutchings	Darrian T90 GTR	54m21s
2	Rob Hughes/Sion Cunniff	Ford Fiesta R5	+7s
3	Mark Kelly/Neil Colman	Ford Escort Mk2	+26s
4	Simon Bowen/Richard Robinson	Ford Fiesta R5	+48s
5	Richard Wells/Calvin Houldsworth	Ford Fiesta R5	+49s
6	Roger Moran/Den Golding	Skoda Fabia R5	+1m06s
7	Peter Smith/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m07s
8	Chris Ford/Matt Daniels	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m24s
9	Neil Roskell/Jonathon Kennedy	Subaru Impreza	+2m58s
10	Martin Hodgson/Tony Jones	Ford Escort Mk2	+3m13s

Class Winners: Morris/Hutchings; Hughes/Cunniff; Chris Berry/Daniel Petrie (Escort Mk2); Ashleigh Morris/Jamie Mactavish (Ford Fiesta); Ron Walker/Amy McCubbin (Ford Puma).

MN Class Winners: Class A: Walker/McCubbin; Class B: Morris/Mactavish; Class C: Cathy Sewart/Colin Stephens (Talbot Sunbeam Lotus); Class D1: Morris/Hutchings; Class D2: Wells/Houldsworth.

CLASS ROUND-UP

After a bright start, a gearbox issue on the fourth stage looked like it had derailed the chances of **Class B** success for Ashleigh Morris. Chris Ruck inherited the lead in his Opel Corsa after admitting to "getting lost" at times over the opening two stages, but Ruck suffered last-stage heartache when a broken manifold left him crawling through the final stage.

Luck had turned for Morris, as she brought her Ford Fiesta home for a second class victory of the season to go alongside Knockhill spoils in December. "We weren't sure at the end who had won it, but that's a great end to the day," she said, beating Mark Peterson's Citroen C2 by seven seconds.

Peterson, therefore, took the points lead in Class B heading to the final round at Donington, with just 18 points separating the top four competitors.

Chris Berry was unstoppable in **Class C** with his Ford Escort MK2, comfortably besting the similar Escort of a flamboyant Rhisiard Gareth Hughes for overall class spoils. Neither were registered for championship points, meaning the maximum score instead went to third place finisher Cathy Sewart. The latter snatched the advantage in her Talbot Sunbeam Lotus when erstwhile leader Mike English was forced to retire his Escort with differential problems on stage six, ending an otherwise close contest.

Dion Rowlands started strongly in **Class A**, but engine problems for his Vauxhall Corsa before the interval put MN contender Ron Walker back in the prime seat in his Ford Puma. Despite a moment or two at one of the Anglesey hairpins, Walker stopped the rot and was victorious to extend his Class A points lead to 20 points over rival Adam Ripper, who finished 39s adrift in his Nissan Micra to keep up the pressure.

In **D1**, it was Morris who clinched the spoils Second was enough for Hughes to be victorious on his only rally of the season in **D2**, but he and nearest class rival Bowen were not registered for points, meaning Wells would grab MN spoils to move closer to the D2 class title.



Morris: Class B win

RALLY REPORTS

Photos: Phli James, Martin Walsh

STONE RISES TO DOMINATE QUESTMEAD STAGES

Fiesta man is in a league of his own on Three Sisters showdown



Stone set nine fastest times

Questmead Stages Rally
By Phil James

Organiser: Warrington & District Motor Club **When:** March 1 **Where:** Three Sisters Race Circuit, Wigan **Championships:** ANWCC, SD34, 6r4.com Three Sisters Rally Challenge, J1000 **Stages:** 11 **Starters:** 54

John Stone and Alex Stone headed the standings throughout the Questmead Stages in their Ford Fiesta WRC. They finished almost a minute ahead of the Skoda Fabia S2500 of Tom Morris and Colin Harkness. The winning father-and-son crew had a troublefree day setting fastest time on nine of the 11 stages.

With the top two positions remaining unchanged throughout, the final podium place went to Jason and Lee Wilson in their Darrian T90GTR. An electrical fault had halted the car in stages three and four but, with that sorted, they later became the only crew, other than the winners, to set fastest stage times. Late entrants John Marshall and Scott Crawford had been third at the midway point but then withdrew their Skodaru, even though the car was running perfectly on what was only a test outing.

A quartet of Ford Escort Mk2s were headed by fourth-placed Mark Jasper and Don Whyatt, who were forced to use the car's standard gearchange mechanism owing to an electrical issue rendering their paddleshift inoperable. Like a lot of crews, despite the dry conditions, Rob Cox and Joe Graham found tyre choice a headache and finished one second ahead of Matt Pierce, whose co-driver Phil Turner continued despite feeling unwell. Jack Ives and Stephen Henty, who survived a fifth-stage spin, then finished seventh to complete the Escort foursome.

Having destroyed his own car on November's Cadwell Stages, Adam Williams borrowed brother Greg's Subaru Impreza and together with Rachel Atherton finished eighth. More Escorts completed the top 10 with Chris and Steve Grundy's Mk2 RS2000 beating the Mk3 of Richie Hughes and Martyn Quant that escaped a late excursion, by four seconds.

Results

1 John Stone/Alex Stone (Ford Fiesta WRC) 26m31s; 2 Tom Morris/Colin Harkness (Skoda Fabia S2500) 57s; 3 Jason Wilson/Lee Wilson (Darrian T90GTR); 4 Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Rob Cox/Joe Graham (Escort Mk2); 6 Matt Pierce/Phil Turner (Escort Mk2); 7 Jack Ives/Stephen Henty (Escort Mk2); 8 Adam Williams/Rachel Atherton (Subaru Impreza); 9 Chris Grundy/Steve Grundy (Escort Mk2); 10 Richie Hughes/Martyn Quant (Escort Mk3).

Class winners: Andy Walshaw/Lacey Brown (Nissan Micra); Stephen Terry/David Terry (Micra); Jack Darbyshire/Tom Darbyshire (Peugeot 106GTi); Wilson/Wilson; Morris/Harkness; Maurice Henry/Mike Jode (Citroen C1).

WEATHER RUINS IRISH FOREST CONTEST PLANS

Limerick Forest Rally
By Martin Walsh

Last Sunday's second round of the Irish Forest Rally Championship, the Keltec Limerick Forest Rally that was based in Abbeyfeale, fell victim to a blanket of snow that fell some eight hours before the event was due to start.

Ironically, last year's event was curtailed also because of snow and a result declared after just some competitors managed to complete just two stages.

Last Sunday's stages were set in a region of high altitude spanning the county boundaries of Limerick, Cork and Kerry. The snow began to fall around 0200hrs on Sunday morning and an inspection (around 0700hrs) by an experienced club official found that the route was not conducive to the safe running of the event.

A statement issued by the organising Limerick Motor Club said: "Many sections of the stages could not be accessed safely meaning that marshals, officials, rescue crews and media could not get to their locations without putting themselves at risk. As a club, we could not put anyone at further risk due to restricted access and compromised emergency response times."

The statement added: "In addition, road liaison sections between stages were also in a poor condition due to snow and ice. The event will run on April 19 next – subject to approval from Motorsport Ireland, Coillte (Irish Forest Authority) and Cordal Windfarms."


Snow meant that the organisers abandoned the event

The decision to postpone the event was made at around 0930hrs on Sunday morning, approximately, an hour before the first stage was set to get underway.

Meanwhile, the next round of the series, the Munster Moonraker is set to take place on March 28.

Top 10 seeds:

1 Josh Moffett/Andy Hayes (Hyundai i20 R5); 2 Roy White/James O'Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC); 3 Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley (VW Polo GTi R5); 4 Peadar Hurson/Damien Connolly (Ford Fiesta WRC); 5 Gary Kiernan/Ryan Moore (Ford Escort); 6 David Bogie/John Rowan (Ford Escort); 7 Damien Toner/Denver Rafferty (Ford Escort); 8 Eaun Thorburn/Paul Beaton (Ford Focus WRC); 9 Niall Maguire/Anthony Nestor (Subaru WRC); 10 Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally (Subaru WRC).

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

After an early set back, Andy Davies/Michael Gilbey came through to take a convincing win on the **Rali Bro Caron**.

They had a shaft break on the opening sections; being an Subaru Impreza they could lock the axle, kept going and changed the broken item in a non-competitive section. They lost around 20 seconds but still held second place. They then powered through a rough white just before Petrol to pull clear of the pack and came home almost two minutes clear of the field.

Kevin Davies/Alan James were in contention until early in the second half when they picked up a puncture; the tyre came off the rim and, as they struggled up a hill, they slid into a ditch. They got out eventually, but had to cut route and finished in last place. John Davies/Eurig Davies had led but fell back and almost lost the runner up spot to George Williams/Nick Bloxham on the final sections.

Ian Mills

Rali Bro Caron
Organiser: Lampeter Motor Club **When:** February 29/March 1 **Where:** West Wales **Championships:** WAMC **Route:** 95 miles **Starters:** 87.

1 Andy Davies/Michael Gilbey (Subaru Impreza) 9m59s; 2 John Davies/Eurig Davies (Vauxhall Astra) +1m50s; 3 George Williams/Aled Richards (Ford Escort); 4 Mike Roberts/Dafydd-Sion Lloyd (Escort); 5 Arwel Evans/Nick Bloxham (Escort); 6 Gari Evans/Richard Williams (Escort); 7 Richard Jerman/Ryan Griffiths (Escort); 8 Mark 'GT' Roberts/Dylan Jenkins (VW Golf); 9 Rhodri Evans/Geraint Jones (BMW 318); 10 Daniel Williams/Shaun Richards (BMW 318).

Class winners: Experts: Evans/Williams; Semi-Experts: Ioan Lloyd/Dylan Evans (Escort); Novices: Elian Lewis/Ryan Jones (Ford Fiesta).

VEY MAINTAINS HIS HIGH STANDARDS FOR GLORY

Bovington Stages
By Ian Harden

Organiser: Bournemouth and District Motor Club **When:** February 29/March 1 **Where:** Bovington camp, Dorset **Championships:** ASWMC Sealed Surface, ACSMC Tarmac. **Stages:** 12. **Starters:** 46.

Acknowledged Bovington experts Andy Vey and co-driver Richard Fletcher continued their streak of good form at the Dorset venue of Bovington, taking their fifth successive win by 3m50s from Andrew Phillips/Chester Elliott (Peugeot 205 GTi).

The Mitsubishi Lancer E4 pairing locked horns early on with perennial rivals Geoff Bennett/John Billett (Ford Escort Mk2): only two seconds separated the protagonists after the opening loop of stages. Then, Bennett was penalised 10 minutes for a technical infringement on SS3 which dropped him down the order. From then on, Vey ruled supreme; with his car running perfectly he set 10 successive fastest times to seal victory.

Phillips's well-deserved second place came despite using a standard engine sourced from a scrapyard. Although giving away horsepower, he fought a four-way battle throughout day one, Saturday, with Darrell Taylor/Matt Devlin (Lancer E10), Tom/Megan Jones (Subaru Impreza STi) and eventual third-placed Ben Parker/Robert Selley (Honda Civic VTi).

When Jones retired on Sunday's opening stage with mechanical problems, Phillips clung tenaciously to third until Taylor retired from runner-up spot with accident damage on SS8. He then held Parker, who survived a frightening 70mph chicane overshoot on SS3, at bay until the finish. Bovington first-timers Lewis Arkison/Ryan McCully (Ford Escort Mk2) had a sensible mistake-free run to fourth.

Results

1 Andy Vey/Richard Fletcher (Mitsubishi Lancer E4) 1h11m01s; 2 Andrew Phillips/Chester Elliott (Peugeot 205 GTi) + 3m 50s; 3 Ben Parker/Robert Selley (Honda Civic VTi); 4 Lewis Arkison/Ryan McCully Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Thomas Todd/Daniel Morefield (Escort Mk1); 6 John Collins/Peter Williams (Escort Mk2); 7 Alex Waterman/Glyn Thomas (Escort Mk2); 8 Nigel Willcox/Robert Symes (Escort Mk2); 9 Dave Hockaday/Steve Frost (Volkswagen Golf GTi Mk2); 10 Nev Cole/Colin Ashley (Subaru Impreza). **Class winners:** Paul Davis/Keith Richings (Vauxhall Corsa), Lee Allen/Beccy Stuart (Peugeot 205 GTi), Phillips/Elliott, Collins/Williams, Cole/Ashley, Barry Connolly/Phillip Cook (Land Rover Wolf XD).

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COLUMNIST

DAVID ADDISON



Our columnist-at-large looks at a looming problem for short ovals



Nick Tandy was a Ministox star



Birmingham is under a cloud

Change of plan. This column was set to be all about a new calendar year for National Hot Rods, after a night in the freezing cold at Birmingham Wheels on March 7. Except, that as you will have read over the weeks in Sporting Scene in Motorsport News, Birmingham Wheels is no more. Seemingly, it has fallen victim to a combination of council machinations and rent increases, although all the details are known only by the parties involved.

What it means for fans and drivers is the loss of a track. Another track. This has been a bad winter for the sport, with Birmingham's closure on top of Stoke's demise (both BriSCA F1 venues) and the constant uncertainty over Belle Vue, which I understand is operating on a six-month basis, hardly sustainable for a business.

Then there is Swaffham, a venue that has had a number of promoters over the years, and despite talk of Oval Racing Council and BriSCA categories going back there, its new owners have decided not to join the ORC after all and run independently.

Another venue then off-limits for National Hot Rods or F1 stock cars.

Yes, of course tracks come and go. There are plenty of websites highlighting the long-lost venues, and it isn't the end of the sport, true. The sadness is that the sport is losing people because they go to there local track be it to watch or race and if you take that local track away, they don't necessarily pick up a fixture list and look at where else they can go. They've gone. Drivers, too. They may race at Birmingham or Stoke because it is their local venue. They may not have the desire, nor diesel, to schlep from Great Barr to Great Yarmouth instead to go racing. And now there is another issue rearing its head: categories being dropped from venues, partly because of grid sizes and partly because there isn't space. For example, ORC Ministox (from where future Le Mans winner Nick Tandy came) was always healthy at Mildenhall and Birmingham Wheels, whereas it had struggled in the South for some years. Now, though, with no Birmingham and the need to reallocate dates, Ministox has been dropped by Spedeworth and while it has alternative junior formulae, that is another chunk of drivers looking for somewhere, or something, else to race.

It's also sad how these tracks have gone. Endless debate and speculation on-line, falling into disrepair or just a snap decision by a new landlord. Coventry was another that disappeared without any fanfare, unfair after its part in BriSCA F1 history, but another victim to squabbles driven by money. At least when Wimbledon had to go, it went with a proper send-off. The last meeting, sad as it was, gave great racing because everyone appreciated the venue and the event, whereas recent closures have happened without them being able to celebrate, or even exploit, the final race meeting. Indeed, that Wimbledon farewell got a far bigger crowd than many of its previous meetings, making promoter Deane Wood wonder whether if all those fans came regularly, the place would have had a better chance of escaping the developers. Discuss...



Happier times: BriSCA F1 rumbling at Coventry


There is some serious concern about Belle Vue

You can argue that the loss of inner-city tracks is inevitable. Land prices are going up and as Governments leap on their eco-friendly bandwagons in an attempt to convince voters that they are keen on planet-saving, a load of noisy racing cars charging around close to homes isn't viable. Perhaps. Most closed tracks are underneath a retail park, so rejoice that the sheep up in the Peak District haven't mounted a campaign to get Buxton Raceway closed or that Ipswich's related residents haven't managed to spoil the fun at Foxhall Heath.

So is this one-way traffic? Is it inevitable that one day we will have run out of tracks? Hopefully not. Lochgelly is a purpose-built place in an industrial area which shouldn't have much competition for its survival, Buxton is pretty remote so shouldn't get developers excited, hopefully Hednesford can stave off any advances too. But couldn't the ORC, that band of supposedly forward-thinking promoters and rule-makers, get together to identify an area which has land, access and little noise-related problems around it and then build a new venue? That might be fanciful, but should it be? If the sport's governors are keen to protect it then something like that may need to be done.

In fact, isn't there a big plot of land near Northampton that runs regularly? Surely, in all of Silverstone's acreage there could be space to build a quarter-mile oval and two grandstands, giving the sport a new venue and some much-needed optimism for its future.

"Most closed tracks are now underneath a retail park or something similar"

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Lancias old and, well, newer. Photo by Graham Lomax



James Lomax enjoyed the demos at Race Retro



A rare Clan Crusader, taken by Graham Lomax

ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



James Lomax knows how to appeal to our Art Editor Mike Stokooe with this shot of a rumbling Rover...


Robert Clayson took this atmospheric trailling shot



Chris Noble braved the weather to snap this Ford Escort



A Race Retro favourite, sent in by Richard Salisbury...



...who also captured this lovely Mini in full flight



John Henderson's of Super Gordon Shedden's return



Peter Hamilton's photo of Jimmy McRae pushing hard



Taking it to the Maxi: photograph by Mike Bouts

GOT AN OPINION? LET US KNOW: LETTERS@MOTORSPORT-NEWS.CO.UK

WHAT'S ON

LISTINGS

RALLY

SATURDAY

■ **Cockermouth, Cumbria**
Malcolm Wilson Rally
Starts: 0700hrs
Admission: TBA
Web: malcolmwilson.co.uk

SUNDAY

■ **Donington Park, Leicestershire**
The LDV Donington Rally
Starts: 0920hrs
Admission: £16 (£12 for seniors, £10 for teens)
Web: doningtonrally.co.uk

SATURDAY/ SUNDAY

■ **Clonakilty, West Cork**
Clonakilty Park Hotel
West Cork Rally
Starts: 0936hrs / 1100hrs
Admission: TBA
Web: westcorkrally.com

Listings correct at time of press

LIVE F1 TV



All eyes will be on Melbourne this weekend as F1 is go again

Australian Grand Prix

■ **Practice 2:** Friday, 0500hrs, Sky Sports F1
■ **Practice 3:** Saturday, 0300hrs, Sky Sports F1
■ **Qualifying:** Saturday, 0600hrs, Sky Sports F1
■ **Race:** Sunday, 0510hrs, Sky Sports F1

LIVE WRC TV

Rally Mexico

■ **SS1:** Friday, 0200hrs, BT Sport 2
■ **SS15:** Saturday, 1700hrs, BT Sport 3
■ **SS24 (Power Stage):** 1700hrs, BT Sport ESPN

NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY REVIEW

Uppity: The Willy T. Ribbs Story

When Lewis Hamilton secured his sixth Formula 1 drivers' title at the end of last season, countless column inches were written and used to debate whether he is the greatest driver of his generation, perhaps even in the history of the sport.

Unsurprisingly, there was almost no mention about the colour of his skin, but why should there have been when that has nothing to do with how good a driver he or anyone else is? Sadly, that hasn't always been the case, and with the new Netflix documentary Uppity: The Willy T. Ribbs Story this fact is laid bare.

Uppity tells the story of Ribbs, an African-American who fought discrimination to ultimately become the first black driver to qualify for the Indianapolis 500 in 1991. It charts the highs, very deep lows – such as withdrawing from a NASCAR event after receiving death threats purely for being black – and numerous controversies in his career.

While difficult at times to watch – brief clips of a Klu Klux Klan gathering and people wearing T-shirts with the n-word on them come to mind – this is ultimately a story about how Ribbs overcame prejudice and broke down barriers.



Ribbs tested a Brabham

Much of the early part of the documentary focuses on his time in the Trans-Am Series and the relationship with his team-mate and eventual rival David Hobbs.

In an interview for the programme Hobbs describes Ribbs as being "very abrasive" and that he "didn't make friends easily", which is perhaps not surprising given the backlash he faced.

Nevertheless, it's a theme which crops up at several points during his career and could occasionally end in a punch being thrown and finding himself being sacked.

It's apparent early on that Ribbs relished breaking the status quo of competing in a sport dominated by white men. His celebration based on Muhammad Ali's 'shuffle' – who he met in 1977 – eventually earned him the nickname 'Uppity' for his perceived arrogance. But this is something he appears to have embraced.

Hobbs is one of many voices featured within the documentary, which also includes two-time Indy 500 winner Al Unser Jr and Formula 1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone. A segment focuses on the latter giving Ribbs an outing in his Brabham F1 car at Estoril at the end of 1985 after the driver signed a management deal with boxing promoter Don King, who claimed Ribbs would become the 'Ali of racing'.

It's one of several scarcely believable scenarios to take place during Ribbs' career, such as now-disgraced comedian Bill Cosby sponsoring his 1991 Indy 500 effort, or punching Scott Pruett in a car park with Pruett's team-mate Caitlyn Jenner (then Bruce) watching on.

A number of former mechanics and team owners also provide first-hand accounts throughout, which help to build the narrative, while there is a plethora of archive footage from Formula Atlantic and Trans-Am that is interspersed with article cuttings and pictures.

The culmination of the near-two-hour documentary is Ribbs' attempts to finally qualify for the Indy 500 in 1991 after a failed attempt in 1985.

His conversations with team owner Derrick Walker in the pits are absorbing and there's a real sense of desperation at this being a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

The reaction of the paddock when Ribbs makes it into the race is a genuinely touching moment that ultimately defined his career and ends the documentary on a high.

Racing purists might question why there is no mention of his near-full-time Indycar campaigns in 1993 and 1994 and beyond, or that generic Brabham BT54 shots are used when referring to his F1 test.

At times the viewer is also left to read between the lines about how a car issue or team owner's grudge was caused – whether Ribbs' personality was the primary reason rather than the colour of his skin.

But all this doesn't detract from an entertaining and interesting documentary, with Ribbs ultimately concluding that breaking down all these barriers and overcoming such adversity was winning in itself.

Stefan Mackley

NEXT WEEK

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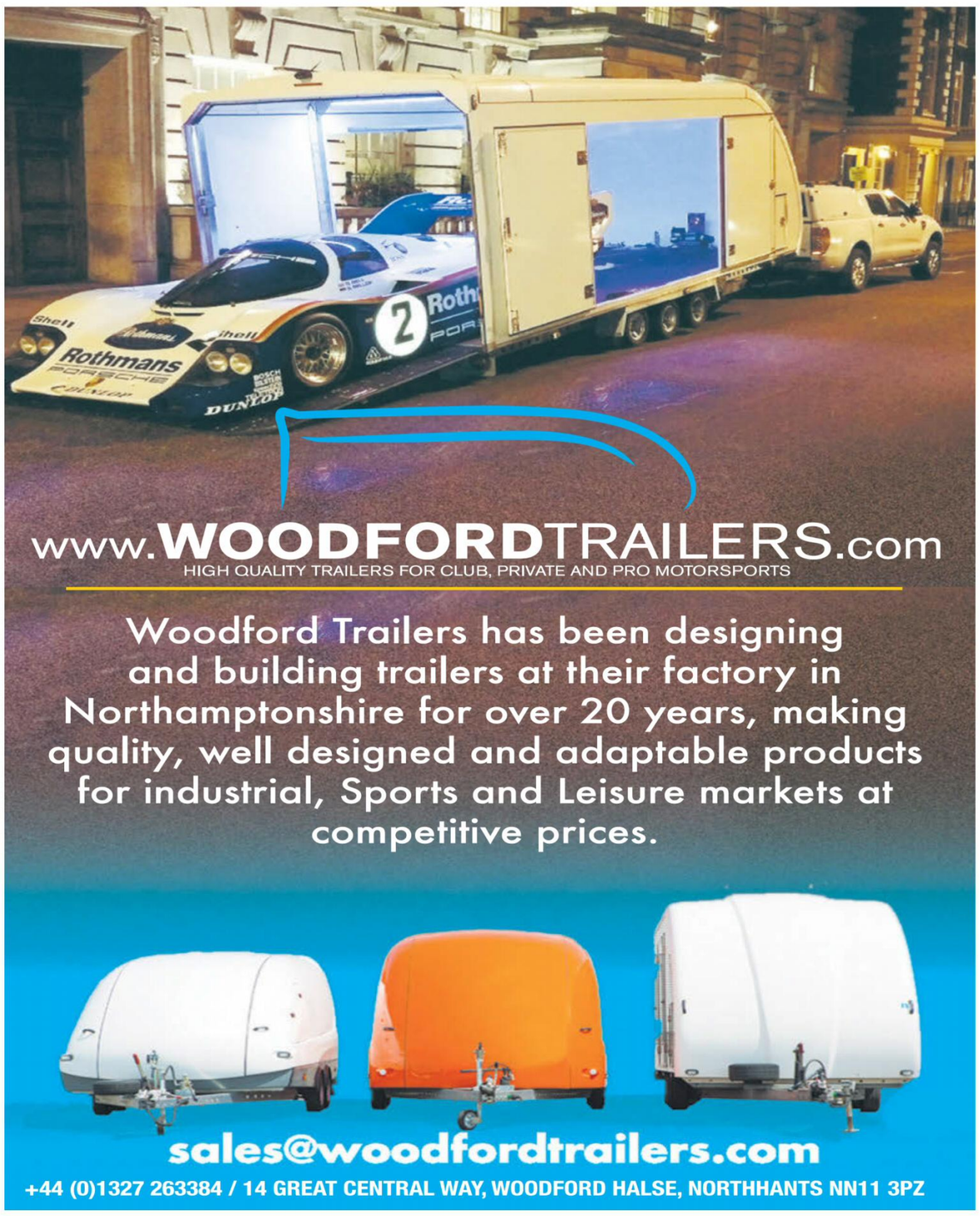
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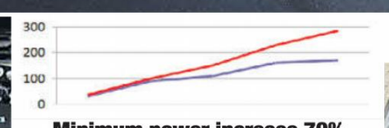
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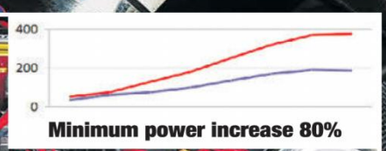
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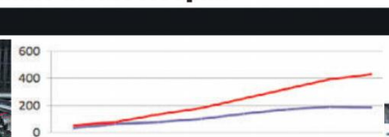
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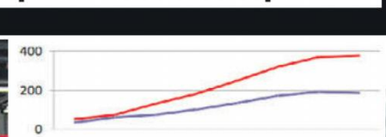
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