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Bottas and the Silver Arrows on top in Australia

MERC MAGIC IN MELBOURNE



Bottas took a fourth career victory

By Matt James

Australian Grand Prix winner Valtteri Bottas has hit back at his critics after he dominated the opening round of the Formula 1 season.

The Finn led from the start of the race to finish more than 20 seconds clear of team-mate Lewis Hamilton and the rest. He also vanquished a perceived pre-race threat from Ferrari. The Italian team's drivers, Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc, could only manage fourth and fifth place.

Bottas said: "Even though there will be difficult times during every season, you always remember the good ones, and you get strength from knowing that you'll be able to do something like today."

"Obviously having a year without a win, without getting the absolute result you wanted, this is going to be a big boost for this year."

Full story, p2-3



Bottas headed a Mercedes-Benz 1-2



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FOR MOTORSPORT NEWS STAFF CONTACT DETAILS PLEASE SEE P31



Bottas is now on top of the world championship after opening his account in Australia

By Matt James

Australian Grand Prix winner Valtteri Bottas says his swearing reaction to claiming his first GP win since 2017 was a response to all the negativity surrounding his struggles last season.

The Finn's last victory was at Abu Dhabi in the final race of the season two years ago and he limped to fifth in the points, while team-mate Lewis Hamilton powered to his fifth world championship crown, in 2018. After crossing the line in Melbourne, Bottas was being congratulated by his engineer on the pits-to-car radio. The 29-year-old replied: "To whom it may concern, f**k you". Bottas won ahead of his team-

mate Hamilton in a dominant display by the German-owned team. Ferrari had been expected to be the form team following a strong test programme, but the Scuderia's cars were fourth and fifth, behind Max Verstappen's Red Bull-Honda.

Critics panned
Bottas, who took his fourth career win, said that his reaction over the radio had not been planned and it was in response to the criticism he had suffered over the last 12 months.

"[The words] just came, I just wanted to send my best regards," Bottas explained. "That's it. Honestly, I didn't think about it or plan it, it just came. Obviously there are many people who support you, and honestly I appreciate that a lot. There are many people around me, supporting me. "There are always ups and downs, and you can really see the true support quite easily. And then through the difficult times there's the other part, which is a lot more negative. That's their weakness, so it's fine."

Bottas refused to name who he had targeted with his words, although he said that his detractors would know who they were. He also added that the comments in 2018 hurt him, although they might not have been unfair.

Bottas said: "I can't say unfair, because everyone can say what they really want. Just for whom it may concern, maybe they should look in the mirror sometimes and think actually why they do that. For me it's OK now."

"It would be quite a long list [to name the people it was directed at], unfortunately, that's how it goes. I'm sure the people to who it was, they would know it."

Confidence high
Bottas said that the dominant win, with a margin of 20 seconds, would be a big boost to his confidence for the early part of the campaign. His win also means he is leading the F1 World Championship for the first time in his career. His best championship finish was when he placed third in 2017. Bottas said: "In sport, and especially this sport, the



Last win was Abu Dhabi, 2017

Potty-mouthed Merc racer says he is on the cusp of a great season

BOTTAS:

AUSTRALIAN GP WIN WILL SILENCE THE CRITICS



Bottas dominated from the start at Albert Park

confidence you get from the results is massive, and it can boost you a lot.

"Even though there will be difficult times during every season, you always remember the good ones, and you get strength from knowing that you'll be able to do something like today."

"Obviously having a year without a win, without getting the absolute result you wanted, this is going to be a big boost for this year."

"A perfect start to the year, very different to last year, so we just need to really keep it up and build from what we've learned as a team this weekend and from myself."

Hamilton's struggle

Mercedes said that it had found some damage to the floor of Hamilton's W10 after the race, and it thought that it had compromised the world champion's pace.

The team was not sure how the damage had occurred, but said that it could have been by hitting debris or running across a kerb. The damage was on the left rear corner of the car.



Hamilton struggled for pace

Hamilton had been dominant in qualifying, setting a time more than 0.7s clear of his rival teams. However, after being beaten away from the line, he was unable to match his team-mate.

Speaking after the race Hamilton said that he had some ideas about why he had struggled with his car, having not being totally happy with its balance.

"Valtteri did an exceptional job throughout the race so congratulations to him," said Hamilton. "After that it was just about bringing the car home. "I wasn't entirely happy with the balance I had but it wasn't the end of the world. It wasn't a problem for me to finish second."

Hamilton had been fastest in all three practice sessions at Albert Park and took pole.

Wolff: My drivers didn't listen to me

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff says that his drivers decided to chase the extra point for fastest lap against his pre-race orders.

Bottas landed the fastest lap on the penultimate tour to earn the bonus mark, which has been re-introduced into the championship for the 2019 season.

Wolff said that he had asked the drivers not to chase the point, fearing it could compromise the race positions.

Wolff said: "In the morning meeting when we talked about strategy, I forbade them to go for the fastest lap if we were running first, second or third. They ignored me – all of them!"

"I think it was a plot between the engineers and the drivers, because the engineers were keen. I need to reconstruct the radio calls and how that happened."

Although he was pleased that Bottas landed the point – which will also count towards the constructors' title race – he said he still had concerns.

"I believe that it is taking risks," added Wolff. "Especially when you're aiming for the big points – should you go for the fastest lap?"

"But then, maybe my reference point in keeping control of a car is my own driving and not the level of the Formula 1 drivers. I didn't like it so much."

Bottas said that it was the extent of his advantage at the head of the pack that enabled him to chase the extra point, and there was even a discussion about a late-race pitstop to swap to fresher tyres.

"I asked about a possible stop, but it is something that we actually spoke about before the race," said Bottas.

"It was the first race of the season and we don't want to do silly mistakes, we want to be slightly on the conservative side with some preparations."

"I just decided in the last few laps, even though I was in traffic, to try and find a bit of a gap. I am glad I got it, so it's obviously one point more."



Can you hear me? Wolff was ignored by drivers

AUSTRALIAN GP REPORT



STUART
CODLING

Mercedes-Benz rips up the pre-season formbook in Melbourne

FIVE KEY TALKING POINTS FROM MELBOURNE



Valtteri Bottas set fastest lap to secure maximum points from the weekend



Ferrari had no answers to the speed of Mercedes-Benz

MERC TURNS ITS FORM AROUND



Bottas stroked to an easy victory

Where did Ferrari's advantage go?

Sebastian Vettel aptly summed up what many fans were thinking when he piped up on the radio in the closing quarter of the Australian Grand Prix: "Why are we so slow?"

Ferrari had looked by far the strongest team throughout pre-season testing – hardened calculator-bashers estimated the team had half a second or more per lap in hand over Mercedes – but the silver cars were on scarily imperious form in Melbourne.

Lewis Hamilton topped every session in the build-up to the race, but when the lights went out it was team-mate Valtteri Bottas who hooked up more crisply from the line, shooting into a lead he would only give up briefly during the pitstop phase. Ultimately the outcome of the grand prix was decided by a transient moment of wheelspin for Hamilton and the determination of Bottas to prove his detractors wrong (or as he put it on team radio, "To whom it may concern, f**k you...").

"We should be better than this," was Vettel's verdict after a qualifying session in which just a tenth of a second separated Hamilton and Bottas on the front row, while Vettel was seven tenths adrift. "I'm certainly surprised. I think everybody is, probably even Mercedes themselves."

Worse still, the Ferraris were split by the Red Bull of Max Verstappen in fourth place, but that was more a factor of Charles Leclerc doing what he himself described as "a very bad job" in his last Q3 run. Vettel suggested that the different track conditions compared with testing could have been a factor in Ferrari losing the poise and grip it demonstrated in Barcelona.

"We have probably something like 10-15 degrees more ambient [temperature], a hotter track, and a different circuit, so overall different conditions," he said after qualifying. "But the car felt really good in testing and probably around here this weekend so far it didn't feel as good yet."

Team principal Mattia Binotto suggested that the characteristics of the Albert Park circuit itself didn't suit the SF90.

Come the race it was Verstappen who posed the biggest threat to Mercedes' dominance. Vettel moved across on him away from the starting line to claim the inside line into Turn 1, also seeing off an attempt by Leclerc to go around them both. But Vettel was already 7s off second-placed Hamilton when Ferrari brought him in for medium-compound Pirellis on lap 15, a move that prompted Mercedes to bring Hamilton in to cover the potential undercut. The new tyres weren't to the world champion's liking and he struggled to match Bottas's pace thereafter, complaining that the pitstop had been too early.

Vettel was in no position to challenge, though, and he was a sitting duck for Verstappen after the Red Bull pitted on lap 26. Late in the race he slipped into the clutches of Leclerc, but Ferrari ordered the cars to hold station, and they crossed the finishing line 50s behind Bottas while Verstappen harried Hamilton all the way.

"Honestly, coming to Melbourne we didn't know whether the pace was good enough or not," said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. "It was a bit of a surprise the advantage we had, and a bit of a surprise at the non-pace Ferrari had. Probably the truth is somewhere in the middle, they took a wrong junction on set-up and we got things right."

ROUND 01

Photos: LAT

Gasly ghastriness masks Red Bull gains

Max Verstappen claimed Red Bull's first podium in Australia since Daniel Ricciardo finished second on the road (subsequently disqualified) in 2014.

It was also the first podium for a Honda-powered car in the V6 era.

The question is how much, if at all, Red Bull has gained relative to Ferrari and Mercedes in terms of chassis and engine performance, and how much Honda is contributing to the picture.

Verstappen's weekend was compromised from the off by a problem with his fuel cell that required an overnight chassis change after Friday practice, and during qualifying the RB15 looked like a car from which the driver had to extract a lap time under duress.

While Verstappen qualified fourth, Pierre Gasly started 17th after an attempt to go through Q1 with one set of tyres went awry and he was



Max Verstappen jumped Vettel

bumped out by a slew of drivers who improved late on. Come the race a strategic gamble to run a long first stint on mediums almost elevated him into the points, but Toro Rosso's Daniil Kvyat slipped by at Turn 3 while Gasly was on his out-lap.

Verstappen was 0.834s off Hamilton's pole time, having been just seven tenths off in 2018, but rivals suggested that Red Bull's performance envelope had changed a great deal.

"I felt Honda has certainly made a huge step forward," said Mercedes' Toto Wolff. "If you look at the speed trap, it looks a very different Red Bull than before. They're very fast on the straights and that's good to see."

Gasly and Kvyat (also Honda-powered) were quickest through the speed trap, 6mph up on the race winner, while Verstappen blitzed by Vettel and challenged Hamilton for second – although the Mercedes had picked up some floor damage.

"We couldn't pull it [second place] off but in general I'm very happy to be on the podium," said Verstappen. "If I just compared top speeds against the other two teams, I'm very pleased with that."

Haas might not be the best of the rest

Kevin Magnussen finished sixth for Haas in Australia, thereby claiming 'Class B' victory among those midfield outfits cast slightly adrift from the top three teams. But that may not be an accurate reflection of the pecking order in what is shaping up to be a brutal scrap for the pickings in the back half of the top 10.

Testing form suggested that Renault was the clear leader here, but Nico Hulkenberg and Daniel Ricciardo qualified 11th and 12th after being eliminated in Q2. Ricciardo admitted that he didn't extract "100%" of his car's potential, citing a lack of confidence in the grip available, while Hulkenberg

had an electrical problem.

Romain Grosjean and Magnussen started sixth and seventh ahead of Lando Norris's McLaren, Kimi Raikkonen's Alfa Romeo and Racing Point's Sergio Perez. Magnussen got by his team-mate at the start but it would be Hulkenberg who provided his toughest opposition for sixth place. Grosjean retired when an incorrectly fitted front-left wheel came loose after his stop, while Hulkenberg jumped Norris and Raikkonen at the start.

Hulkenberg pressured Magnussen in the middle of the race before fading late on, while Raikkonen was forced to pit early – compromising his race – when a visor tear-off lodged in one of his brake ducts. He still managed to finish under Hulkenberg's rear wing.



The Haas cars showed speed

McLaren shows signs of recovery

Eighteen months on from McLaren's costly and acrimonious divorce from Honda, the team's shareholders might not be pleased to see a Red Bull adorned with the big 'H' finishing on the podium. Still, there were some



Norris shone on his F1 debut

reasons to be cheerful, even though Carlos Sainz retired from the race and Lando Norris was unable to parlay eighth on the grid into a points-paying position.

Last season's MCL33 was comfortably among the worst cars on the grid, and one that laid bare the myths McLaren insiders had spun to delude themselves that all their problems were Honda's doing. The MCL34 might not be at the head of the midfield pack but the team appears to be in better shape than it did during testing. Norris was surprised to qualify eighth (even McLaren CEO

Zak Brown said he "exceeded where we were going to qualify"), while Sainz's Saturday performance is difficult to quantify because he was eliminated in Q1 after a lap compromised by an encounter with Robert Kubica's three-wheeled Williams.

Norris lost two places at the start, but what really cost him was a long post-stop spell when he was stuck behind the Alfa Romeo of Antonio Giovinazzi. Perhaps in a bid to protect Raikkonen from Norris, Alfa extended Giovinazzi's stint to the detriment of his race.

Why Williams turnaround "will take months"

If you thought testing looked pretty miserable for Williams, avert your eyes now because it isn't going to get any better soon. British rookie George Russell and Robert Kubica qualified last in Melbourne by an alarming degree: Russell, the reigning F2 champion, was 1.2s slower than the next slowest qualifier, 18th-placed Carlos Sainz. Kubica was a further 1.7s off and compounded his woe by biffing the wall and taking his right-rear tyre off its rim on his final run.

Predictably, come Sunday they were the last runners home, Russell two laps down and Kubica three laps. A strategic gamble to start Kubica on



Kubica's return was dramatic

the hard tyres came to nothing when he arrived at Turn 1 with even less grip than expected and he skittered into Carlos Sainz's McLaren, losing his nose.

"It was not the easiest one," said Kubica. "I was the only one starting on the hard tyres. So it was rather more a test for us to get more data."

Lack of spares forced both drivers to run conservatively, and Russell divulged that the troubled car has a "fundamental" issue.

"We understand what that is, but it doesn't mean we can wake up on Monday morning and rectify it," he said. "To change something so fundamental will take months."

RACE FACTS

Results © 2019 Formula One Administration Ltd

AUSTRALIA
Circuit: Albert Park, Melbourne **Laps:** 58
Race distance: 191.126 miles **Lap:** 3.295 miles
Lap record: Michael Schumacher 2004, 1m24.125s
2018 winner: Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari)

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RESULTS

FIA Formula 1 World Championship, round 1/20

POS	DRIVERS	NAT	CAR-ENGINE	TIME
1	Valtteri Bottas	FIN	Mercedes	1h25m27.325s
2	Lewis Hamilton	GBR	Mercedes	+20.886s
3	Max Verstappen	NLD	Red Bull-Honda	+22.520s
4	Sebastian Vettel	DEU	Ferrari	+57.109s
5	Charles Leclerc	MCO	Ferrari	+58.230s
6	Kevin Magnussen	DNK	Haas-Ferrari	+1m27.156s
7	Nico Hulkenberg	DEU	Renault	-1 lap
8	Kimi Raikkonen	FIN	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap
9	Lance Stroll	CAN	Racing Point-Mercedes	-1 lap
10	Daniil Kvyat	RUS	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1 lap
11	Pierre Gasly	FRA	Red Bull-Honda	-1 lap
12	Lando Norris	GBR	McLaren-Renault	-1 lap
13	Sergio Perez	MEX	Racing Point-Mercedes	-1 lap
14	Alexander Albon	THA	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1 lap
15	Antonio Giovinazzi	ITA	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap
16	George Russell	GBR	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps
17	Robert Kubica	POL	Williams-Mercedes	-3 laps
R	Romain Grosjean	FRA	Haas-Ferrari	L29/wheel hub
R	Daniel Ricciardo	AUS	Renault	L28/precautionary
R	Carlos Sainz	ESP	McLaren-Renault	L9/power unit

Winner's average speed 134.187mph Lap leaders: Bottas 1-22; Verstappen 23-24; Bottas 25-58

FASTEST LAP | BOTTAS 1m25.580s

ON LAP 57 (AVERAGE SPEED: 138.612MPH)

QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m20.486s	11	Hulkenberg	1m22.562s
2	Bottas	1m20.598s	12	Ricciardo	1m22.570s
3	Vettel	1m21.190s	13	Albon	1m22.636s
4	Verstappen	1m21.320s	14	Giovinazzi	1m22.714s
5	Leclerc	1m21.442s	15	Kvyat	1m22.774s
6	Grosjean	1m21.826s	16	Stroll	1m23.017s
7	Magnussen	1m22.099s	17	Gasly	1m23.020s
8	Norris	1m22.304s	18	Sainz	1m23.084s
9	Raikkonen	1m22.314s	19	Russell	1m24.360s
10	Perez	1m22.781s	20	Kubica	1m26.067s



CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

DRIVERS			CONSTRUCTORS		
POS	DRIVER	PTS	POS	CONSTRUCTOR	PTS
1	Valtteri Bottas	26	1	Mercedes	44
2	Lewis Hamilton	18	2	Ferrari	22
3	Max Verstappen	15	3	Red Bull-Honda	15
4	Sebastian Vettel	12	4	Haas-Ferrari	8
5	Charles Leclerc	10	5	Renault	6
6	Kevin Magnussen	8	6	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	4
7	Nico Hulkenberg	6	7	Racing Point-Mercedes	2
8	Kimi Raikkonen	4	8	Toro Rosso-Honda	1
9	Lance Stroll	2	9	McLaren-Renault	0
10	Daniil Kvyat	1	10	Williams-Mercedes	0

NEXT RACE WILL FERRARI BE ABLE TO HAUL IN MERC? BAHRAIN MARCH 31

RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT

F1 ROUND-UP

'Gasly needs time'

Red Bull Formula 1 team principal Christian Horner insisted new signing Pierre Gasly must be 'given time' after his disappointing Australian Grand Prix. Gasly was eliminated from qualifying in Q1 when Red Bull was caught out by track evolution, and could only recover to 11th in the race. Horner said: "It's still early days. There's always pressure in Formula 1 but I thought he drove a good race. He just needs a straightforward weekend. He built his way into the weekend very well, his feedback's very strong. We know he's got the pace, we've just got to give the kid a bit of time and it'll come right for him."

Team orders

Ferrari told Charles Leclerc to stay behind Sebastian Vettel in Formula 1's season-opening Australian Grand Prix because there was "no reason" to take a risk fighting over fourth place. Leclerc, making his Ferrari debut, caught his four-time world champion team-mate in the closing stages of the grand prix. He asked if he should stay behind Vettel, who was on older tyres, and was told "yes, and back off to have some margin". Ferrari boss Mattia Binotto said: "I think 10 laps to the end, we decided not to take any risks and hold positions, bring the cars home and score points."

Ferrari lacking grip

Sebastian Vettel says his Ferrari F1 car had "way less grip" in the Australian Grand Prix than it did during pre-season testing at Barcelona. Vettel was able to stay with Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton in the early part of last Sunday's race, but fell back in his second stint and was passed by the Red Bull of Max Verstappen. Asked what was different about the Melbourne weekend compared to testing, Vettel replied: "If you want to be fair, then way less grip. In Barcelona we were very happy with the car right from day one. All weekend I didn't get that confidence that I had in Barcelona so I didn't have the car underneath to play around. It wasn't doing what I was asking."

Kvyat's fightback

Toro Rosso returnee Daniil Kvyat said he "pushed like an animal" to recover from an error and score a point on his F1 comeback in the Australian Grand Prix. In his first F1 race since the 2017 United States GP 17 months ago, Kvyat came from 15th on the grid to finish 10th. He gained ground with a long first stint, then overcame a trip through the Turn 3 gravel while trying to overtake Lance Stroll's Racing Point before re-passing Pierre Gasly's Red Bull on its out-lap. "I thought, 'Oh, it might be that the race is lost', but then I went on," said Kvyat. "It was hard to stay cool, but then I pushed like an animal for the next few laps and I was on his back again in eight or nine laps."

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR CHARLIE WHITING

F1 world's shock at race director's death



There was a special tribute from the drivers ahead of Australian GP



Whiting was well respected in F1

By Adam Cooper

Former Formula 1 deputy race director Herbie Blash has described his longtime colleague and close friend Charlie Whiting as "irreplaceable"

The paddock was shocked last Thursday by the news that race director Charlie Whiting died overnight following a pulmonary embolism in Melbourne. He was 66.

Blash, who was then Brabham's team manager, gave Whiting a job as a mechanic in 1978. The pair worked together at Brabham for nearly 10 years in a spell that included two world championship titles for Nelson Piquet.

When Whiting became the FIA's F1 race director in the 1990s Blash joined him as deputy, and the two worked side-by-side in race control for over 20 years.

"Most importantly two young children have lost the most loving and adorable father," said Blash. "And he was, he just devoted everything to the

kids. He spent the last week with them.

"As for the loss to F1, Charlie really is irreplaceable by one person. He's going to be greatly, greatly missed for a long time to come.

"He did so many things, the circuit inspections, the technical rules – Charlie was the one guy all the teams could go to to talk about the regulations.

"The nice thing is that his legacy will continue when you look at things like the halo and all the other work that Charlie did in the way of safety."

Former Brabham owner Bernie Ecclestone also paid tribute to Whiting, who rose from test team mechanic to chief engineer during his spell with the team.

"He had a lot of influence on the team and we got on very well," Ecclestone said. "We never had to have any arguments about anything. Charlie was the sort of guy I felt comfortable with.

"If Charlie said to me, 'Good morning, I would know it was before 12 o'clock. You didn't have to question him. Which

is good, when you're working with people like that, you feel comfortable and they feel comfortable.

"He's going to be really, really missed, because in the end people didn't know how much he did.

"It wasn't just being the race director, but also the safety and so on. He used to write a lot of the regulations, and he was meticulous in all the things he did like that. He could be trusted."

Teams and drivers from across F1 have also paid tribute to Whiting.

Sebastian Vettel said: "I was as shocked as we all still are now, especially because I spoke to him yesterday [Wednesday, the day before Whiting died] and walked the track for the first couple of corners together with him.

"I have known him for a long time and he has sort of been our man, the drivers' man. He was a racer. He was just a very nice guy."

Haas team boss Gunther Steiner added: "It's a very sad moment. I was

very emotional when I heard about it. I thought this cannot be true.

"Charlie was a very big part of this sport. We all knew him, he was always polite. He never had anything bad to say. Which is amazing from a person, especially in his job. My condolences to his family because he was too young to go.

"He was a friend of Haas, a personal friend. I would say without the help of Charlie in the beginning, five years ago, here to advise us how to do things best, we wouldn't be here. I've got a lot of respect for what he did."

Whiting held a number of different roles, including race director, permanent starter and safety delegate. Following his death, the FIA named Michael Masi, one of two deputy race directors, in all three positions.

Masi is a former Supercars official who worked as Whiting's deputy at several grands prix last year.

Additional reporting by Scott Mitchell

Russell says Williams has found a "fundamental" fault with its 2019 car

Williams has found a "fundamental" fault with its 2019 Formula 1 car that can get it closer to the pace, reckons George Russell, but it could take months to resolve.

The team was at the bottom of the timesheets throughout the Australian Grand Prix weekend and was 1.3 seconds

adrift of the next slowest car in qualifying.

But Russell said a major issue has been identified that could provide a decent step forward.

"There is one fundamental which I don't want to discuss publicly," said Russell. "We understand what that is, but

it doesn't mean we can wake up on Monday morning and rectify it.

"To change something so fundamental will take months of development, work in the simulator and designers working out how to do it, and that is what needs to be done at the moment."

It was a difficult weekend for Russell's team-mate Robert Kubica on his F1 comeback. The Pole hit the wall in qualifying and was nearly 2s behind Russell. Then at the start of the race he struggled to see the lights and damaged his front wing in a collision with Pierre Gasly's Red Bull.



Williams has had a nightmare start

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'BTC Racing aiming for the big time'

BTCC feature, p24



Photos: LAT

Sebring victory for the #8 crew



Alonso celebrates win

ALONSO, BUEMI AND NAKAJIMA RETURN TO WEC WINNING WAYS

Toyota drivers Fernando Alonso, Kazuki Nakajima and Sebastien Buemi took their first World Endurance Championship race win since last year's Le Mans 24 Hours in the Sebring 1000 Miles last weekend.

The crew were handed a clear path to victory when Jose Maria Lopez's sister TS050 HYBRID lost two laps after making contact with the TF Sport GTE Am class Aston Martin of Jonny Adam in the fifth hour of the race. The car

Lopez shares with Mike Conway and Kamui Kobayashi had been right in the hunt, trailing by just a few seconds.

Heavy rain in the final 30 minutes prompted both Toyotas to change to wet tyres, and then again to extreme wets, but a late spin for Nakajima in treacherous conditions was not costly as the race ended under a safety car. Alonso, Nakajima and Buemi now lead the drivers' standings by 15 points heading into the final two rounds.

Completing the podium were

Brendon Hartley, Vitaly Petrov and Mikhail Aleshin in SMP Racing's BR Engineering BR1, 11 laps down on the winning Toyota.

Jackie Chan DC Racing trio David Heinemeier Hansson, Jordan King and Will Stevens took a dominant LMP2 victory, finishing fourth overall. Ex-Formula 1 driver Anthony Davidson was third in class, alongside Pastor Maldonado and Roberto Gonzalez.

Porsche took victory in the GTE Pro class as Gianmaria

Bruni and Richard Lietz took full advantage of the late rain to beat Alexander Sims, Martin Tomczyk and Nicky Catsburg's BMW and the Ford GT of Andy Priaulx, Harry Tincknell and Jonathan Bomarito.

● Alonso will test at Texas Motor Speedway next month in preparation for his second attempt at the Indianapolis 500. Alonso is targeting victory to complete the triple crown, following his Le Mans success and Monaco Grand Prix wins in 2006 and 2007.

Action Express trio enjoy faultless run to top all-Cadillac Sebring 12 Hours podium

Action Express Racing trio Felipe Nasr Pipo Derani



Nasr/Derani/Curran triumphed

a near-faultless run to win the Sebring 12 Hours IMSA SportsCar race held separately over the same weekend.

After heavy rain ensured the race started under caution, the winning Cadillac DPi V-R

moved into the lead at the end of the first hour and maintained its advantage despite several safety car periods.

The sister car of Brendon Hartley, Joao Barbosa and Filipe Albuquerque completed an all-

Cadillac podium behind Wayne Taylor Racing's Daytona 24 Hours-winning example.

Victory in GTLM went to the Porsche 911 RSR shared by Nick Tandy, Patrick Pilet and Frederic Makowiecki.

QUICK LAPS THE FASTEST NEWS ROUND-UP

Supercars champion Scott McLaughlin continued his dominant start to the season, winning three of the four races at Melbourne in his Ford Mustang. But his unbeaten streak ended in bizarre fashion after a crash with Cam Waters before Saturday's third race, allowing fellow Ford driver Chaz Mostert to top the podium... Kyle Busch took his 200th NASCAR win by producing a dominant display in the Cup race at Fontana. The Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota driver led 134 of 200 laps to claim his 53rd Cup victory. Recovering from a pitlane speeding penalty, Busch breezed past Penske drivers Joey Logano and Brad Keselowski... **Reigning DTM champion and HWA Formula E driver Gary Paffett will complete the Intercontinental**

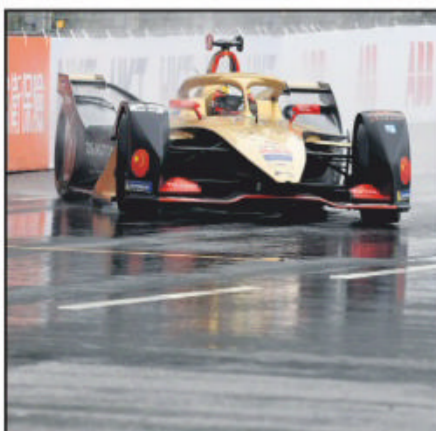
GT Challenge in a Strakka Mercedes-AMG GT3. Following an outing in February's Bathurst 12 Hour series opener in a car run by Craft-Bamboo and Black Falcon, the Briton will share Strakka's lead car with reigning IGTC champion Tristan Vautier and team regular Lewis Williamson... Honda will enter a factory car for the remainder of this year's Intercontinental GT Challenge season. The JAS Motorsport squad, which played a key role in development of the NSX GT3, will field a solo Evo version of the car, with Bertrand Baguette, Renger van der Zande and Mario Farnbacher set to drive in the next round at Laguna Seca... **IndyCar is in talks about a future race in Argentina, using the El Villicum circuit in San Juan. Mark Miles, CEO of**



McLaughlin has had brilliant start to the Supercars season

IndyCar's owners, said the series is talking to promoter Grupo OSD about a race at the World Superbike Championship venue. IndyCar's last round held outside of North America was at Sao Paulo in 2013... Roger Penske says his organisation has

looked at the World Endurance Championship's new hypercar regulations, as he seeks to fulfil his dream of racing once again at Le Mans. Penske has raced twice at Le Mans: as a driver in 1963, and a team owner in '71, running Ferraris on both occasions...



Reigning champ has struggled

Vergne and Techeetah need to halt "negative spiral" in Formula E

Reigning Formula E champion Jean-Eric Vergne says that he and his Techeetah team need to change the "negative spiral" that has hurt their 2018/19 season to date.

Vergne finished 13th in the Hong Kong E-Prix after a penalty, having only qualified 18th after crashing in the changeable conditions.

It was the latest disappointing race for Vergne after promising pace in Saudi Arabia was followed

by a spin in Marrakech and frustration with the handling of his car in Mexico.

"It was a nightmare race honestly," said Vergne. "What more can I say? It seems that the negative spiral keeps going on for us and we have got to change that."

While team-mate Andre Lotterer was able to put himself into superpole and race-win contention, Vergne does not

believe the two were apart in raw performance.

He said: "When you are glued in traffic and in free air it's a completely different race isn't it? The car was behaving well in the race, Andre did a good job."

"The problem now is that you can't overtake in Formula E. "I don't think there has been a single clean overtake without touching [in Hong Kong]."

F1 RACING EXECUTIVE EDITOR

STUART CODLING

"Whiting's death serves as a quiet warning"



The sudden death of Formula 1 race director Charlie Whiting four days before the Australian Grand Prix not only robbed motor racing of a much-loved and well-respected individual, it also served as a quiet warning to those who globetrot as part of the F1 circus.

Whiting, who was 66, joined the FIA in the late 1980s as a poacher-turned-gamekeeper. Since one of his first experiences as a mechanic for Brabham was the debut of the infamous BT46B 'fan car' at the 1978 Swedish Grand Prix, he was the perfect occupant of that role. He'd worked on some of the cleverest circumventions of the rulebook with his own hands.

As F1 grew flush with cigarette money and manufacturer investment, the demands on Whiting grew far beyond any level he could have anticipated. And with ever greater car performance came heightened risks for the sport's personnel, and it's this field perhaps more than any other that will define Whiting's legacy. His twin roles as technical and safety delegate put him at the centre of conflicting demands and forces and ensured he was permanently under scrutiny. Paranoid competitors are always inclined to read bias into any regulatory decision; likewise any whiff of complacency around safety draws understandably negative attention.

For over 30 years Whiting navigated these choppy waters. It's a testament to his effectiveness in his many roles that teams trusted him to preside over technical matters without fear or favour. Similarly, while the drivers often kicked back against judgements over prosaic matters such as short-cutting chicanes or breaching track limits, they trusted him implicitly to keep them safe.

Ultimately, Whiting's greatest achievement was to be the invisible guiding hand that prevented calamity. Lives have been saved and injuries prevented because of procedures laid down by Whiting or sagacious calls from race control in moments of crisis. Grands prix pass so seamlessly that you only notice the rare slips, such as the stray fire truck during the 2013 Korean Grand Prix.

So Charlie leaves big boots to fill. And also, for those who would follow his mantra of avoiding complacency, a word of caution. He was struck down by a pulmonary embolism, one of the prime causes of which is deep vein thrombosis – a phenomenon often brought about by air travel. Now, correlation does not equal causation, but as the sport's commercial rights holders plot future calendars stretching to 25 or more races, those members of the circus who must jam themselves into economy seats for long stretches week in, week out, should take this as a warning...

RACING NEWS

Lidsey and Thompson the latest Clio Cup signings

Renault UK Clio Cup driver Brett Lidsey will remain with the MRM team for the final season of the category this year.

Lidsey contested his first full season of the series last year taking a best result of fifth and finishing 13th in the standings.

Now he's targeting podiums this year as part of MRM's three-car line-up alongside Jack Young and Ben Davis.

"We've definitely got unfinished business in the Clio Cup, last year we came very close to getting on the podium and had a lot of bad luck along the way," said Lidsey. "This season, podiums are the target every round."

Also remaining in the series for another year is Aaron Thompson, who will switch to the Westbourne squad after finishing 18th in 2018 with Matrix Motorsport.



Second full Clio season for Lidsey



Teamwork has enjoyed Asian success

Huff partners Teamwork for new TCR UK squad

Former World Touring Car champion Rob Huff has partnered with Hong Kong-based touring car squad Teamwork Motorsport to run two Volkswagen Golfs in TCR UK this year.

Huff, who will be competing in a Golf in the World Touring Car Cup this season, has worked with the squad for a number of years and the team will also work closely with British Touring Car outfit Ciceley Motorsport.

Huff is one of a number of UK drivers to have raced for Teamwork in the Chinese Touring Car Championship, that also includes Ciceley's Adam Morgan and triple BTCC champion Colin Turkington.

Teamwork Huff Motorsport's first signing for TCR UK is TCR China champion Sunny Wong.

"I've been working with the Teamwork guys for years, and now with Teamwork Huff Motorsport, it's great to be trying my hand at something else," said Huff.

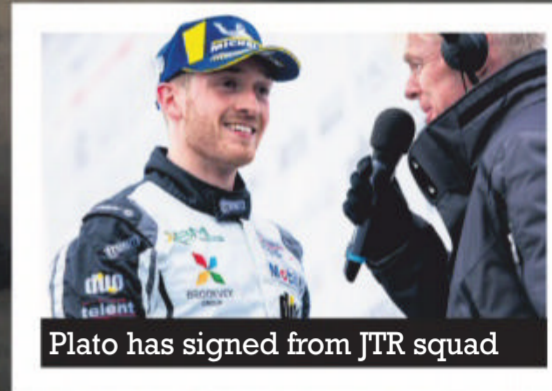
"I've spent a lot of time in China with the guys, guiding their progress, and now it'll be something different to work with them in the UK, and not only work with them on how to get the best out of the car, but do that at some of the circuits where I grew up racing.

"It'll be a great experience, and also to have my name on a race team, working with some top drivers as we try our best to do well in the TCR UK championship, will be an exciting and fun new challenge."

Photos: Gary Hawkins, Dan Bathie, Jakob Ebrey



Vaughan and Plato will drive for Motorbase



Plato has signed from JTR squad

MOTORBASE SIGNS PLATO IN EXPANDED CARRERA CUP ENTRY

Team returns to the top class of Porsche category after seven years

By Stephen Lickorish

British Touring Car squad Motorbase Performance will return to the top class of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season with an expanded two-car line-up after signing race winner Lewis Plato to partner Dan Vaughan.

Motorbase made its Carrera Cup comeback last year running just one car for much of the season with rookie

Vaughan finishing runner-up in the Pro-Am standings and earning the 'driver of the year' accolade.

Vaughan will now step up to the Pro class and will be joined by his former Radical team-mate Plato – who made his series debut in 2016 and finished fourth in the standings last year.

"Dan did a stonking job last year on his own in a one-car team," said Motorbase boss David Bartrum. "In order to take Dan forward he needs a

strong team-mate. Lewis is ideal because they've raced together before as team-mates in Radicals.

"On his own he managed to get driver of the year which is phenomenal. I think we want to go for the title now. It's a great line-up and good to have two like-minded drivers."

Plato, who considered a return to endurance racing for this year, added: "I'm looking forward to hopefully having a successful year and showing

everyone just how good the team really is. Realistically, this year the aim is to win. Of course, there are always variables that get in the way of that, but I'm really looking forward to getting started and targeting the top step."

● Also racing in the Carrera Cup this year will be reigning Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Charlie Ladell. The 22-year-old will be competing with Rob Boston Racing alongside fellow Ginetta graduate Tom Roche.



Double champion Plato in PMR Astra

BTCC racers Plato and Blundell get to grips with their new cars for the first time

British Touring Car Championship racers Jason Plato and newcomer Mark Blundell got to grips with their 2019 cars for the first time during testing last week.

Plato drove the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra at Snetterton for a full day. The two-time champion reported a positive day's running.

"We did some wet running in the morning and then it dried out, and it was a really great little car," said Plato. "We chased the set-up a bit and looked

at several avenues, and the reaction we got from the car was really strong.

"It was a great team to work with: I know so many of the guys from my days with Triple Eight, and we all worked really well together. I am very optimistic about what is to come."

Blundell got to grips with the AmDTuning.com Audi S3 at Silverstone on Thursday last week, before moving on to Oulton Park on Friday.

"To go through Copse just changing

down one gear to fifth and having the rear move round on a front-wheel-drive car, is something way outside of my comfort zone," said Blundell. "That is something that is going to take a while to get used to."

● The new Team Toyota GB Toyota Corolla completed its first full week of running at Circuit Calafat in Spain, and Tom Ingram is thrilled with the results. "What was really encouraging was how well the Corolla responds to minor set-up changes," he said.

Green decides against F4 campaign, instead choosing Ginettas

Ginetta Junior graduate F'in Green will race in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this year with Total Control Racing, having previously been confirmed as a driver for Carlin in British Formula 4.

Green, 16, finished ninth in Ginetta Junior last year and was set for a switch to single-seaters

but has since changed his mind to head down the sportscar route.

"The Ginetta G55 GT4 feels a great car to drive and the competition has always been at a very high level," said Green. "All the guys at TCR are working really hard and I've got some great people around me with team boss

Lee Brookes having huge experience in motorsport, while I've got Dave Wooder [former Ginetta Junior racer] coaching and managing me too."

● Former Mexican NACAM F4 racer Mariano Martinez is the latest driver to sign up to British F4 for this year. He will race with the Fortec Motorsport squad.



Ginetta Junior graduate Green to drive G55 with TCR

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Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins

ASTON MARTIN AMR1 GROUP C TEST FOR BTCC DRIVER HILL



Hill: Impressed with brute force

Test took place at Guadix in Spain

British Touring Car Championship racer Jake Hill got the chance to drive a 1989 Aston Martin AMR1 Group C car during a recent test session at Guadix in Spain. The 25-year-old was in Spain to undertake some pre-season mileage with regular historic racing partner Rob Fenn, with whom he will share a Lotus Elan 26R and a Ford Mustang in Masters series events.

Hill will race in the BTCC this season in a Trade Price Cars Racing Audi S3 alongside Mark Blundell. Paul Whight, who owns the Aston Martin among a collection of other old cars, was also present with the AMR1 and offered Hill the chance to sample the six-litre 900kg car. "What an amazing experience," said Hill. "I will admit, I was screaming

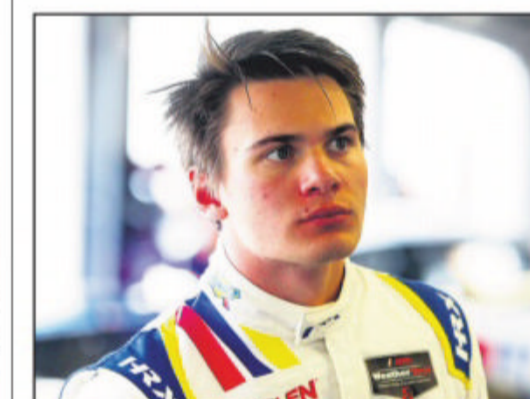
like a girl as I was going around. I can't thank Paul enough." Hill said he completed eight laps in the machine, and was impressed with the brute force of the car. "I was being careful with it, obviously, and the gearbox was the hardest thing to get used to," he added. "It is a dog leg H-pattern box, and it was quite floaty between cogs, so I was just making sure I didn't do

anything to damage it. Once I got the hang of it I could push on and the car was way beyond my expectations. Such a beast. Group C always has been one of my favourite eras of racing, and it didn't disappoint. "I immediately sent a text message to my BTCC team-mate Mark Blundell afterwards and told him that he must have been mental to have raced one in period. It is such a car."



Changes have been made to car Praga RT1 to finally race in UK with VR Motorsport

VR Motorsport will run a Praga RT1 in Britcar this season after modifications were made to the car allowing it to compete in the UK. The car was created in 2012 by the Czech Republic manufacturer, but was unable to race in the UK before now due to its full carbon monocoque chassis. The UK's governing body, Motorsport UK, requires that steel roll over protections systems (ROPS) are used. VR Motorsport's Vincent Randall said: "We recognised it was imperative given the uncertainties of Brexit that we could race the car in the UK, so in 2018 with the assistance of Motorsport UK, VR Motorsport developed a suitable rollbar for the R1 and Motorsport UK classified the car as a sportscar. "In 2019 Britcar will be our main focus, however we will also attend a few other meetings and charity events."



Lundqvist: British F3 champion

Lundqvist moves into Euroformula Open

Reigning BRDC British Formula 3 champion Linus Lundqvist will step up to Euroformula Open this season and will remain with the Double R squad. The Swede dominated last year's British F3 campaign with the Surrey-based outfit, taking seven wins and clinching the title with two races still to spare. The 19-year-old took a win in the Euroformula Open Winter Series at Paul Ricard earlier this month with Campos Racing, having also tested a GP3 car with the team at the end of last year. But he will now compete with Double R in Euroformula this term, having raced for the outfit last year and in British F4 during 2017. "Both me and the team expect to be in the mix for wins and the championship and my target is to walk away with another championship by the end of the season," said Lundqvist, who also competed in this year's Daytona 24 Hours after winning the Sunoco Whelen Challenge last season. "I know it's going to be tough, it's a new series for me and the team. I've not been to the tracks before so it's going to be a challenge. The guys doing it are going to be tough competition."



Harrison swaps teams for 2019

Third time lucky? Harrison stays in Mini Challenge after finishing runner-up twice

Mini Challenge runner-up Nathan Harrison will switch to the Mini UK VIP team for a third attempt at the title. Harrison, 22, took two wins last year as he finished second in the standings – and he was also runner-up in 2016, a year after winning the Cooper class crown.

"In truth, I was planning to take a year out and concentrate on the family business, but then the chance to join the Mini UK team came up and the squad has a great track record, so now it's game on for this year," said Harrison. "I'd like to think that nobody on the

grid knows the JCW as well as I do. Coming in with two years of experience under my belt obviously puts me in a great position but, as I know from Mini Challenge racing, nothing is ever easy. There are some quick new drivers coming in and you rarely ever get a free run at anything in this championship."


New Open class created in Sports Prototype Cup

Organisers of the new Sports Prototype Cup have created a new Open class to run at selected rounds of the series this year. The new class is open to a wide range of machinery, including Sports 2000, Clubmans, Caterhams and Radical SR1s. But the cars must not exceed the pace of a Radical SR3 and 'balance of performance measures' can be applied to ensure this. The main Sports Prototype Cup features classes for the new Revolution sportscar and the Radical SR3. "We expect over 15 cars to compete in the first year of the main Cup, but on the longer circuits we have the ability to accommodate additional cars," said championship promoter James Bailey. "The Sports Prototype Open provides racers with the chance to experience an endurance race format on four great

circuits in addition to competing in their main championship." Revolution principal Phil Abbott says testing and sales of the Ford V6-powered car are progressing well but doesn't expect a huge number to be on the grid for the opening round at Silverstone on April 27. "We've built a second car, run towards 10,000 miles, the monocoque has passed [FIA] crash tests and KS Composites [maker of the first Radical Clubsport panels] has redone the body, subtly restyling and rationalising it to 23 mouldings," said Abbott. "The tub is now all carbon, saving around 30kgs, and the first batch of eight is arriving this month, with another two in Germany. Apart from the UK market, cars have been sold to Italy, Switzerland and the USA."



Revolution Ford V6-powered car will make its race debut this season




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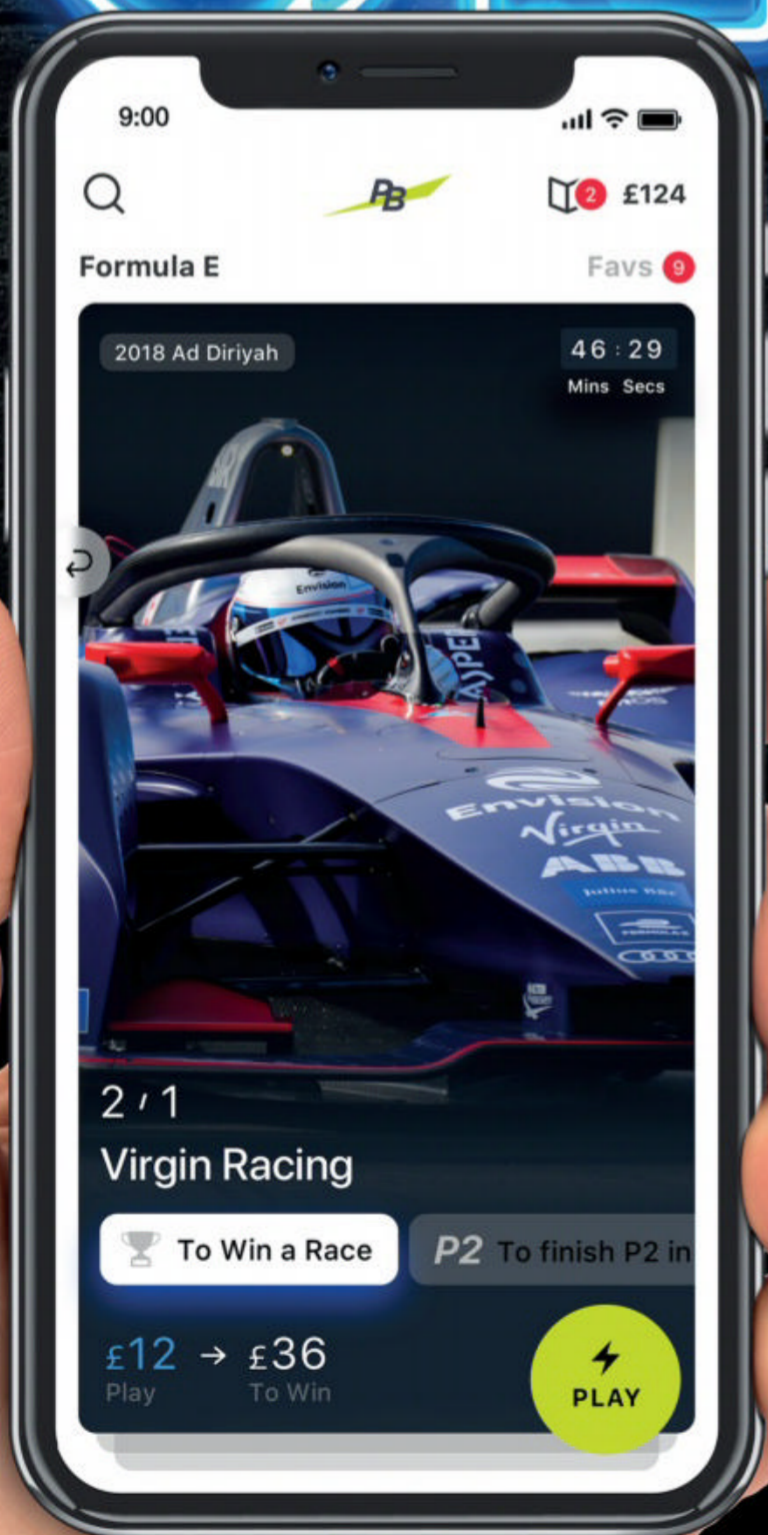
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RACING NEWS

Photos: Mick Walker, Peter Scherer, Ollie Read

EQUIPE GTS TO RACE AT SPA AFTER MG LIVE DOUBTS

Cancellation of MG Car Club's flagship event leads to calendar tweak



MG Live has boasted large Equipe GTS grids

By Stephen Lickorish

The popular Equipe GTS series will visit Spa this year following the cancellation of the Silverstone MG Live meeting.

The Silverstone event has been the centrepiece of the Equipe GTS calendar for the past few years and in 2018 series organisers Equipe Classic Racing had over 90 entries at the event.

But with MG Live on June 15-16 cancelled due to resurfacing work

at Silverstone, a new date as part of the Spa Summer Classic on June 29-30 has been added to the calendar.

"We hit the phones and talked to everyone we know [after MG Live's cancellation]," explained series co-organiser John Pearson. "MG Live has been a highlight of our season. It's our biggest race of the season and we normally run six races and 100 cars and a big party – it's a good social weekend. That was our jewel in the crown race.

"It was a big shock and you couldn't

pick a worse time because there's more demand for club racing between May and June [than any other time]. People's cars are fresh, their wallets are fresh and the weather's generally good."

The MG Car Club is working on alternative arrangements to ensure MG Live still goes ahead. But Equipe Classic Racing decided to make its own new plans as it was left with a large gap in its calendar.

"It would've given us an eight-week gap," added Pearson. "Spa is

a fantastic circuit and we've not been there since we've been running the series. A huge number of our drivers have never been to Spa. But it doesn't make up for it [the loss of MG Live].

"We've got a half-hour qualifying and two 40-minute pitstop races, so a good deal of track time. The Spa 6-hour meeting is one of the biggest events in historic racing but it's in September. The Summer Classic is the better of the two meetings in terms of being on track and being a competitor."

McAttack and Amigo squads take opening C1 spoils

McAttack Racing and Amigo Motorsport shared the victory spoils at Croft last weekend, as the Citroen C1 Challenge season kicked off with two three-hour races.

Simon Walker-Hansell gave McAttack the lead in race one at the completion of the first hour but, despite losing the lead, Kraken Motorsport's James Kenyon and Stewart Linn stayed well in contention.

Kraken, McAttack, TCS Motorsport and Donkwell Racing were a lap clear of the rest at the two-hour mark but, with Declan McDonnell handing to Joe Wiggins for the final stint, McAttack eased clear to a comfortable win, with the Merlin International car of Katie Milner/Alice Hughes consolidating second during the final hour.

Despite being penalised when Rhys Lloyd jumped the start in the polesitting Amigo car, Mathew Dawson joined him to battle back to third.

Hughes managed to snatch the lead in race two into the final half hour, but a splash and dash allowed Lloyd to go back ahead and clinch the win for Amigo, with Merlin the only other pairing to remain on the lead lap.

Emaxmotorsport's Jake/James Little had been near the top of the leaderboard throughout, but ran out of fuel seven laps from home. A similar fate befell Paul Donkin/Stuart Drewell's Donkwell car, which handed the final podium place to Voir Un with JDC Racing's Nick Halstead, Michael Close and Gary Mitchell.



Walker-Hansell, Wiggins and McDonnell won three-hour Croft opener

Platt picks out Gulliford and James as main rivals

Five-time British Superkart F250 National champion Paul Platt has marked Andy Gulliford and Gareth James as the main drivers that could prevent him sealing a sixth title this year.

Some of Platt's previous rivals are switching classes, with Andy Bird moving to Division 1, and Daniel Clark concentrating on the F125 Open class.

"I think one of the main contenders will be Andy Gulliford as it looks like he has the same pace as me after setting three lap records during the final weeks of the 2018 season," said Platt. "Also look out for the return of Gareth James who will be running in the Anderson camp."

Platt has been working on quite a few upgrades for the 2019 season, but details are secret until the first round. But he will be staying with his tried and trusted PVP GasGas chassis/engine combination which was so reliable last year.

While the F250 National class doesn't begin until April 21 at Cadwell Park, the Division 1 and F125 Open categories begin at Bishops Cleeve on April 6-7. This is the first season since the championship has been taken in house by Motorsport UK and run under the Karting UK banner.

● For details of the full British Superkart programme, see MN's karting calendar on page 20.



Liam Morley will be a key contender in the F125 Open class again this season

IN BRIEF

Harvey's debut

James Harvey, son of 1992 British Touring Car champion Tim, made his car racing debut in the C1 Challenge at Croft. "I had done loads of karting over the years, but never raced a car until now," he said. "I had known Paul and George Ingram for years, they were interested and I couldn't think of anything cheaper to have a go in." Their Squadra Budino Nero (Team Black Pudding) car was 24th in the first race, and 20th in race two – with Harvey now considering further outings.

Grasstrack to race track

Former international speedway and grasstrack racer Chris Pidcock had his first ever car race at Croft, as part of the CDMC (Castle Donington Motor Club) team in the C1 Challenge. "I had helped the car's owner Ian Whitt with his MG Midget a few times and had the chance to race myself," he said after sharing with Morgan racer Andrew Thompson to 26th place.

Clio cash incentives

The Renault UK Clio Cup is offering extra incentives for competitors in its final season. As well as the previously announced cash prizes for the champion and winner of the Graduate Cup, the series will also award a £500 'race bonus' to each competitor for every round they contest. This will be supplied in the form of credits that can be used to purchase components from the category's official parts supplier R.Sport.

De Sadeleer targets title

Radical Challenge frontrunner Jerome de Sadeleer is targeting a title challenge in the series this year. The older brother of LMP2 regular Hugo, Jerome won the Radical SR1 Cup in 2017 and took three wins in the series last year. He will again compete with the 360 Racing squad. "I was much stronger and more consistent in the second half of the season and I'm confident I can build on that momentum," de Sadeleer said. In the SR1 Cup, last year's rookie champion Will Hunt will remain with the Scorpio Motorsport squad after finishing third in the standings in 2018.

Motorsport UK changes way the sport's governed

Motorsport UK has made significant changes to the way British motorsport is governed after it has adopted new articles of association.

The changes mean the Motorsport UK board has become the ultimate decision-making body in the governance of UK motorsport. In the past this role has been carried out by the Motorsport Council – this will now become an advisory body for the board.

A new rules committee, drawn from across the disciplines, will also be established to review regulation changes proposed by the various specialist committees.

"This is a very significant moment in the history of motorsport in the UK, as we commit to becoming a modern governing body that is truly representative of our members and motorsport in general," said Motorsport UK chairman David Richards. "The changes approved this week have come about after lengthy debate and meet the objective of ensuring that we will now provide the highest standards of sports governance."

Tom Purves has been appointed as the new chairman of the Motorsport Council, taking over from Tony Scott Andrews at the end of his nine-year tenure. Purves was previously a director of Motorsport UK and is also a former chairman of the Royal Automobile Club.

RALLY NEWS

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Ogier has won twice already this year



Ogier wants to kick on after a strong season start

OGIER HUNTING FOR MORE GRIP FOR CITROËN CHALLENGE

French world champion urges team for more speed from 2019 C3 WRC

By David Evans

Sebastien Ogier is pushing Citroën for more developments on its car as he looks to kick on from a good start to his first season in a C3 WRC.

The Frenchman has won two of the first three rounds of this year's World Rally Championship, but he has warned more pace is needed from the Citroën as the series moves towards the South American and European gravel rounds.

While Kris Meeke and Ogier have guided the C3 to success in Mexico, the car has yet to score a victory on any other all-gravel round of the series.

Significant strides were made with both the front and rear geometry last season, but the focus has now switched to suspension and finding more grip on the loose.

Ogier would not be specific in his requests, but he told MN he wants more from Citroën.

"Like always, I'm pushing – you can

count on that," he said. "Sure, it's a good start [to the year], but in Mexico there were a few things disturbing me which I couldn't change yet. I have some direction to make the car better. I don't want to mention too much – we have seen the car is not too bad and the potential is there, but I see some room for improvement.

"One of the things I want to get for Argentina, it's something which is specific for the gravel."

Citroën switched from Ohlins to Reiger dampers for the first time in Mexico and team principal Pierre Budar acknowledged this is an area the team is working hard on. Ogier has pushed for the switch, having worked with Reiger at M-Sport for the past two years.

It's possible, however, that a new regulation for this season could force Citroën to revert to Ohlins for the next two gravel rallies in Argentina and Chile.

The two South American rounds of



Budar: Suspension question mark

the series are split by 10 days – enough time for the teams to make their way through the Andes after the finish in Villa Carlos Paz on April 28 and before the start of scrutineering for Rally Chile in Concepcion on May 8.

Budar explained: "There is a link between [the WRC rounds in] Argentina and Chile and it will affect our decision [on suspension]. The cars stay out there in South America between the rallies and there is a new rule on the dampers

which says we will have five sets of dampers for two cars over the two rallies. After Argentina, we can change only two of these sets, which means three sets will have to do both Argentina and Chile. That's quite a lot because we know that Argentina can be quite hard for the dampers. Depending on the weather it can be a hard rally.

"We started working with Reiger and we could have more developments coming for Argentina, but it's quite complicated if you are not sure about those new developments – especially when they go to Chile as well. We don't have much time to make the validation with these parts. We do a debrief [from Mexico] and we will make a decision soon whether we go with Reiger or Ohlins."

Beyond the dampers, Citroën is also working on an overhaul of its aero package, but Budar confirmed that would not be completed until the summer.

Asked where the focus was on the

changes to aero, Budar replied: "It's a complete package. But it takes time and we won't have it for the next race. You need to make the calculation, make the test, produce the moulds. We work with the CFD already, but these parts won't be coming for Argentina – they will be later in the season."

Ahead of those two rallies comes the season's first all-asphalt encounter in Corsica – a rally won by Ogier in a Ford Fiesta WRC last season. The C3 WRC runs its own in-house dampers on Tarmac and the Citroën is reckoned to be at its strongest on that surface.

It is seven years since Citroën enjoyed such a strong start to a season, with Sebastien Loeb winning Monte and Mexico – rounds one and three – in 2012. Continuing the development of the C3 WRC will be vital as the French firm looks to overcome its worst season as a full-time WRC competitor in 2018.

Last season left Citroën with one win and bottom of the manufacturers' table by a considerable distance.

MN CIRCUIT RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP WIN FOR BIRD

PAGE 18



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'Cave back on the top step in the BRC'
West Cork success, p22



Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

SOLBERG STUNS ON HIS USA DEBUT



Solberg (l) and co-driver Aaron Johnston



Solberg was runner-up

The Solberg and Subaru partnership was spectacularly reunited last week when Petter's son Oliver came within 6.8 seconds of landing a maiden victory at the 100 Acre Wood Rally. Solberg Jr started the first of six rallies driving a Subaru Motorsports USA WRX STI and was immediately on the pace, only missing out on the win after a puncture cost him a minute. The 17-year-old has vowed to push to go one better in pursuit of America's most famous stage event – the Olympus Rally in Washington. Solberg's celebrated British team-mate – nine-time American title winner David Higgins – controlled last week's American Rally

Association round and looked set for a first win of the season until his Subaru stopped with an electrical fault. Higgins fixed the issue and continued to finish third. Co-driven by Northern Irishman Aaron Johnston, Solberg told MN: "I didn't know what to expect before the start of this rally. I'd never competed on gravel in a four-wheel-drive car before, never driven the Subaru and never competed in America. So to come out second and so close to the win is fantastic for me – especially because we dropped time with the puncture and then drove one stage with the bonnet up." Solberg's result in Missouri extends a strong start to the

year, with two Latvian Rally Championship wins already secured in a Volkswagen Polo GTI R5. Looking forward to the Olympus Rally, Solberg added: "I want to start that rally today! This Subaru is a fantastic car, so much power and so much fun to drive on these really fast roads. I'm sorry for David's problem, that's tough. But now I'm looking forward to Olympus, I'm going flat out to push for the win." Oliver's father Petter won his 2003 WRC title with Subaru and admitted to an emotional moment when he saw his son driving in the same colours. "Subaru is such a big part of this family's story," he said. "Of course, it was emotional to

see Oliver in that car and those colours. But most of all, I'm so impressed with what he did on this rally. He was so calm, so cool. He didn't let anything, the puncture, the bonnet, nothing got to him. He just kept on driving his rally. This is a very, very good start to a new adventure for Oliver and Aaron." Irishman Barry McKenna scored his first American Rally Association victory at the 100 Acre Wood. The Ford Fiesta driver overcame a last-stage spin to top the podium on St Patrick's weekend. Ken Block's hopes of an eighth 100 Acre Wood win were blown when his Ford Escort RS Cosworth was sidelined with engine trouble.



Paddon wants a return

Paddon working hard on making a top-flight rallying return

Hayden Paddon says he's working harder than ever to reclaim a seat in the World Rally Championship this season. The Kiwi, who lost his i20 Coupe WRC drive to Sebastien Loeb this season, has announced a programme of event th di E aime profi to Hy "Lo hard

Paddon told MN, "and, there's no doubt when I came home to New Zealand after Rally Australia, I was a bit disgruntled with the whole thing. But I can't tell you how much I want to be back in that car now. "The fightback started the day after [Rally] Australia and I i l 't i tti

Hyundai NZ team, Paddon will contest three rounds of his home series, starting with next month's Otago Rally. He will return to Europe for Global Rallycross, racing a Hyundai i30 in the Titans category, in June. His i20 rally car will be t dt 800bh hill li b

Nasser Al-Attiyah continues to break records in the Middle East – last week the Qatari became the first driver to win the Qatar Rally a 14th time. It was also his 70th victory in the series. That success was also the first outright rally win in an FIA Regional Rally Championship for Volkswagen's Polo GTI R5.



GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"Rallying on T is still a hit"



Nobody, apparently, watches the telly anymore. Not traditional telly anyway. YouTube, Netflix and Prime are, apparently, the only way forward.

Hmm... I'm not so sure. I've unearthed two key pieces of evidence which indicate that might not be the case. Let's see what you think. Firstly, there's the noisy folk who seem to relish the opportunity to carp on about the lack of WRC terrestrial coverage in the UK. The culmination of such an argument is always the same: nothing has ever been the same since Colin and Richard. It's true, there was no digital terrestrial television coverage of the season opener in Monte Carlo. BT Sport's pay TV coverage was available, but, you're right, there was nothing for free.

It was back in Sweden. And there in Mexico. And it'll be there for every one of the remaining 11 rounds this season. Where's there? Try Channel 5 and 5Spike. What's 5Spike? Simple, it's what BBC2 was to BBC1 back when we were watching Grange Hill. Or Byker Grove. Or both. Yes, yes I know Byker Grove was technically on CBBC, but let's not confuse the issue.

5Spike runs a half-hour WRC magazine show at 0900hrs the Saturday before every round and an hour-long report straight after each event. And yeah, you're probably right, that report's probably in the middle of the night, only available to insomniacs or milkmen who can't sleep. Try 1900hrs on a Monday evening. It couldn't be more primetime if it tried. Now, have this on me: 5Spike's on channel 31 on Freeview; 141 on Freesat; 150 on Sky (250 if you want to plus-one it) and 154 on Virgin.

So, if you hold your remote and push two or three buttons, you're in. Happy days. Before I get to the second reason, I'll just add more good news for Brit fans: when the WRC comes to Wales, Channel 5 and 5Spike will dedicate almost seven hours to live stages and daily highlights.

Now, where was I? Ah yes. The second part of my argument outlining that TV still makes sense. There are 823,790,000 reasons why I know that to be the case. That's how many people tuned in for some WRC fever in 2018. That's almost 1,000 million people – a number also known as a billion. That is a 36% rise in viewing since 2013. Was there much for them to watch? There was a fair bit: just the odd 14,208 hours or so (a 140% hike from six years ago).

And all that comes before you factor in Red Bull TV's superb offering via the WRC's version of Ant and Dec: Mike Chen and Matthew Wilson. Is it still appropriate to compare them to Ant and Dec? Should that be Dec and Holly? If you haven't watched Chenny and Matt, you should do – they align the sport, the series and the stars. And they do it on every rally (apart from when Wilson's busy bossing M-Sport's Bentley GT team) on Red Bull TV (available on smart tellies up and down the land).

Finally, just before I sign off, did you know the WRC's unbelievably brilliant All Live service is available on television? It is! But you do have to pay, it's on BT Sport Extra 1.

People still can – and do – watch rallying on TV.

AGREE/DISAGREE?
letters@motorsport-news.co.uk

RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, DHarriganImages

HIRVONEN THRILLED WITH WEST CORK OUTING

Former WRC star finally competes in Ireland aboard Ford Escort



Crowds gathered to see Hirvonen

By Jack Benyon

Ex-works Citroen and Ford World Rally Championship driver Mikko Hirvonen said he had "never had so much fun in a rally car" after making his debut in the Modified class of the West Cork Rally last weekend.

Hirvonen, an Escort Mk2 enthusiast, had discussed competing in an Irish

event with current Ford Performance Europe senior manager Gerard Quinn, who has been a member of Cork Motor Club since the early 1980s.

The two had discussed an outing as far back as when Ford was still in the WRC circa 2012, but the deal finally came together last weekend.

Hirvonen was joined by regular navigator Jarno Ottman, and the pair

won the national rally and the hotly contested Modified class in an Escort Mk2.

"It was a fantastic weekend never mind the result," said Hirvonen, who took 16th overall. "I want to thank everyone for making it possible. I never had so much fun in a rally car."

Asked if he would return to Ireland, he replied: "If the opportunity comes."

Quinn, who volunteered on the event,

said he had feared the deal would never come together.

"We tried to make it happen in 2018 but Mikko had another commitment, and at that point I thought it wasn't going to happen," said Quinn.

"At that point I'd almost given up hope, and then at Rally Spain 2018 Mikko came to me and said 'I'm coming to West Cork next year'. I asked him who was sorting

that out and he said, 'I think you'd better sort it out!' That's how it started.

Fortunately he gave me enough time...

"I could tell he was apprehensive but after the first test he opened the door with a huge smile and said, 'bloody hell', this weekend is going to be expensive. I said, 'I hope not because of damage', and he replied, 'I think I'm going to be buying one of these cars'."

British Rally Championship title the target, claims Cave after win

Tom Cave believes his quest for a British Rally Championship title is back on track after a first win in the series in seven years, after a dogged battle with reigning champion Matt Edwards.

Cave had been second to Edwards in his Philip Case Rally Sport-prepared Hyundai i20 R5 on the season-opening Cambrian, before he had to retire on the road section with a puncture.

A win on asphalt, his first of that kind in the BRC, was his pre-season target and what he

referred to as the key thing in the BRC season this year.

"It's heading the best way possible now and round one is way behind me and we always look forward," said Cave after West Cork. "We are back in the mix and now it's important to finish the Pirelli Rally, which is up next, and keep moving forward to close the gap to Matt at the top of the points standings."

Cave still trails by 18 points, as Edwards added a second in West Cork to his Cambrian victory in his

M-Sport Ford Fiesta R5. Edwards said it "felt like a win" to finish second in such poor conditions.

"It's been a fantastic weekend," he said. "We've got the points we wanted, so we're happy. It feels like a win to come here and have strong pace all weekend."

Marty McCormack lies second in the championship after a third and a fourth so far, in what has been a strong start to the season for the Northern Irish Skoda Fabia R5 driver. David Bogle is third, one point ahead of Cave.



Cave (l) last took British Rally Championship win back in 2012 (above) on Rally of Yorkshire



The Ford Focus WRC05 driver won the Tour of Epynt this month

Pritchard to defend Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally title

Reigning Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally champion Jason Pritchard is set to defend his title this year, having not originally planned to do so.

The Welshman, who will contest this weekend's North West Stages (see preview, p15), won the season-opening Tour of Epynt Rally, a rally local to him in Powys, Wales, in his Ford Focus WRC05.

After winning the title last year, Pritchard had questioned whether he would return in the midst of a bid to win the R.A.C. Rally, but is likely to contest all of the Asphalt events.

"Time away is the big deal

for us," said Pritchard.

"The Tour was right on our doorstep, Isle of Man we do every year, and we really enjoyed Belgium last year. Ireland we'll do for the craic, and that's most of the championship then, the Mewla starts across the road from our garage! So we're doing it."

"The championship finishes quite early and then I can concentrate on the R.A.C. at the end of the year. I've not had much luck on that one. The entry is in and the accommodation booked. We were leading in 2017 and the halfshaft went – unfinished business."

Pritchard is one of a number of drivers who have switched to or use the 2005-specification Focus regularly. Three are entered in the Manx National, with Damian Cole and Hugh Hunter both swapping to the car from the Ford Fiesta RS WRC.

"The M-Sport boys say the 2005 car was the best Tarmac car they built until the 2017 car," said Pritchard. "Paul Benn has the bits to run them, so they are quite cost-effective to run as far as running a World Rally Car goes."

"They're still a competitive car and it's still winning rallies, so that's good enough for me!"

Return of Midland Moto Stages Rally

The Midland Moto Stages Rally returns in 2019 after a one-year hiatus, and has received a strong entry as the second round of the Irish National Rally Championship.

Just over 71 miles are on offer around the roads of Longford in Ireland.

The 2017 winner, Sam Moffett – who later went on to win that year's title – does not return although his brother Josh continues his quest for a national title. Reigning champion Declan Boyle and previous champions Peadar Hurson and Roy White all steer Ford Fiesta RS WRCs.

Welshman Hugh Hunter returns to the National championship for the first time since his year in the series in 2014 in a Ford Focus WRC05, while Simon Chapman and Peter Foy also contest the event in their Proton Satria S2500 Millington.



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, prorally.co.uk, SMJ Photography

Event was held in 2017

SEEDED ENTRY LIST

North West Stages, Lancashire, March 23

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Arron Newby/Andrew Leech	Subaru Impreza
2	Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
3	Kevin Procter/Dave Bellerby	Ford Fiesta S2000 Turbo
4	Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke	Ford Fiesta S2000
5	Alex Laffey/Stuart Loudon	Ford Fiesta R5
6	Simon Bowen/Richard Robinson	Subaru Impreza S11 WRC
7	Tony Bardy/Tony Walker	Ford Focus WRC
8	Stephen Simpson/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5
9	John Stone/Jack Morton	Ford Fiesta RS WRC
10	Neil Simpson/Michael Gibson	Skoda Fabia R5

NORTH WEST STAGES BACK WITH A BANG BELIEVES NEWBY

The North West Stages has "the best entry in UK rallying" according to Arron Newby, who will lead the field away as this weekend's event uses closed-road stages for the first time.

Newby won the last North West Stages based in Blackpool in 2017, while the event organisers took a year off in 2018 to prepare to use new legislation to include closed-road tests in its itinerary for 2019.

Now based around Garstang near Preston, crews will get 50 miles of action on March 23.

"In my opinion it's probably one of the best entries in British

rallying," said Newby, who drives a modified Group N TEG Sport Subaru Impreza on the event. "Especially looking at the level of cars, the number of World Rally Cars sat behind you – not to mention the R5s and Super 2000s. It's crazy.

"I've done my homework for this one. It's a nice thing to have a Ford Fiesta World Rally Car sat behind you at the start on your home event. I'm taking this one very seriously.

"We're in a tractor compared to those guys, it's a modified Group N Subaru. But we'll

give it everything we can."

Newby will be at a huge disadvantage over the three closed-road stages the event has to offer due to the more advanced machinery entered. But the TEG car is one of the most successful in UK rallying and the team has won the British Rally Championship in the past. Newby is the son of its owner, Stuart.

Speaking of the stages, Arron Newby added: "It starts off fast and narrow, I've noted at least 10 places on the first stage that could catch you out.

"There's quite a lot of crests and bumps as well. Stage two is quite narrow but after a mile or two it becomes quite open. It's completely different to stage one so you have two different characters. The third stage is shorter and looks quite rough in places with potholes."

Ex-works British Rally Championship driver Neil Simpson will contest his local event in a Skoda Fabia R5, and says that the hard work of the organisers encouraged him to become involved.

"I'm really interested to see

how the event pans out," he said. "I hear that the stages are really tricky and challenging.

"The organisers have taken a huge amount of effort to get this off the ground, and in fairness they deserve the event to be a success. We've put some support in as Simpsons Skoda to help. I'm very much looking forward to it."

The event gets underway from Garstang high street on Friday at 1900hrs. It will be based out of Myerscough College and finish there around 1800hrs. All three stages – in the Wyre district – have spectator viewing access.



Newby will compete

David Ross and Kyle MacKintosh had a lucky escape after their MG DAM 1400 became submerged in a bog during the Border Counties Rally last weekend. The incident happened towards the end of stage three on a right-hander, after heavy rain and snow had caused flooding. "As I started to counter steer the car just started to aquaplane," explained Ross. "The bottom of the car is quite flat so it was like a stone skipping on water. As soon as the front splitter went under the water it just nose-dived. Kyle is a lot shorter than me and the water level filled to his eye-line but we got out quite quickly."



Woodhouse won in MN Class B

Title bid Woodhouse's aim after impressive MN Circuit Rally return

Motorsport News Circuit Rally champion in 2016/17 Ian Woodhouse returned to the series with a class victory, and has set his sights on a full-time return next season.

Reigning Michelin Cup champion Woodhouse has missed the current season due to family commitments and the ongoing rebuild of his Ford Escort Mk2, but returned in Paul Sheard's

regular Mazda MX-5 for last weekend's Lee Holland Memorial Rally at Anglesey.

Woodhouse was called up as a replacement for British Touring Car race winner Paul O'Neill, and duly clinched maximum MN points in Class B with second place overall in the class on the event.

"It's been great," Woodhouse said. "It's like a little go-kart compared to a powerful Escort.

You point it where you want and it goes. I hadn't even tested it until now."

On a full-time return next season with his Millington-powered Escort Mk2, he added: "It's getting there now. It's a great series and I want to launch a proper title attack again next season with the new car. It's been more about having a break as we've moved house and then looking after the budget."

More European rallies the plan for Simpson after this weekend's North West Stages

Former British Rally Championship frontrunner Neil Simpson is targeting more events in Europe after finishing fifth on the Saarland Rallye in Germany in preparation for this weekend's North West Stages.

Simpson rallied semi-regularly from 2014 to 2017 in Skoda Fabia S2000s and R5s, but only did one rally in 2018 due to work commitments.

Simpson – who now runs a successful chain of Skoda garages – is also managing European Rally Championship frontrunner Chris Ingram and reigning ERC Under 28 champion Nikolay Gryazin. He rekindled his relationship with his BRC co-driver Michael Gibson from their works Volkswagen days in Germany and the pair join this weekend, for Simpson's local event.

"We thought we'd do a test and Toksport, who are running my car [a Fabia R5], are based in Germany so it seemed the right thing to do, the rally is just down the road from their workshop," he said.

"So we used that event as a test and wanted to get back in the groove of things.

"I love rallying overseas, the atmosphere and the way they run the events out there is great.

I'll definitely do Condroz in November because that's my favourite rally in the whole world, and if there's a few we can do between that would be great.

"Michael and I are rallying again after 20 years having last done it professionally with Volkswagen all those years ago, we've come back and reformed the partnership which is a really nice thing to do."



Simpson used to compete in Skoda Fabia R5s and S2000s

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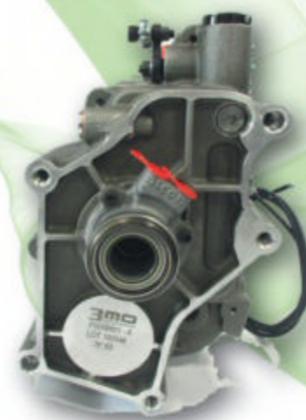
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RALLY NEWS

Photos: rallygallery.com

WIN CRUCIAL FOR INGRAM

Briton aiming to match Vic Elford and win ERC title

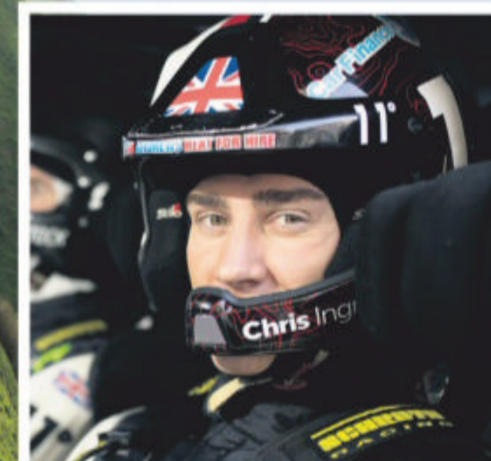


Ingram will drive Skoda Fabia R5

CALENDAR

ERC 2019

RALLY	DATE
Azores Rally, Portugal	March 21-23
Canary Islands Rally, Spain	May 2-4
Rally Liepaja, Latvia	May 24-26
Rally Poland, Poland	June 28-30
Rally Rome, Italy	July 19-21
Barum Rally Zlin, Czech Republic	Aug 16-18
Cyprus Rally, Cyprus	Sept 27-19
Rally Hungary, Hungary	Nov 8-10



Ingram will run third on the road

Chris Ingram aims to become the first Briton to win the European Rally Championship title since Vic Elford in 1967 – but he needs victory at this weekend's Azores Rally to maintain his funding for that challenge.

Ingram will drive a Toksport-run Skoda Fabia R5 on the Portuguese island and knows his task is simple this weekend.

"I have to win this rally," he said. "I've worked through the winter to try to land the deal for the whole season, but I haven't managed that yet. I'm sure victory on round one would help."

Ingram had hoped to contest WRC 2 in 2019, but will now focus his efforts on making

British rallying history in the ERC.

"It's a very, very long time since a Brit won the European championship," he said, "and I think it's a good time to change that. I've got a lot of really good experience in the ERC – I've been driving for a while now. I know the rallies and I know what it takes to win."

Ingram won the Junior U27 title with Opel in 2017, but illness and sponsorship problems curtailed his efforts to lift the overall crown last year.

Ingram added: "This season was looking very, very short before Car Finance 24/7 and Andrews Heat for Hire came on board and

gave me enough to make the start of the Azores. Now I need to make that work."

While the Azores entry list is lacking household names, defending champion Alexey Lukyanuk returns with a Sainteloc Citroen C3 R5 replacing the Ford Fiesta R5 he used to lift last year's title.

"Alexey won Azores last year," said Ingram, "and I think we all know he's got plenty of pace. Let's see. I had a good test on Monday and now it's all about hitting the ground running on SS1."

Ingram finished as top Junior U28 runner on the Azores Rally last season, clinching fourth overall on his first outing in a four-wheel drive car. Since then he starred at Turkey's round of the WRC

where he led WRC 2 before finishing third.

"It was a real eye-opener to go to the Azores having never competed in a four-wheel drive car before," Ingram said. "A year on and I've got good knowledge of the car and a really great team in Toksport behind me. I'm ready for this."

Ingram starts the event at three behind top seed Lukyanuk and local hero Bruno Magalhaes. Lukyanuk admitted his change of car wasn't the ideal lead into the season.

"I would not say I am 100% relaxed," said the Russian, "but I am calm. I feel comfortable and confident that we can have a really good event, have fun and get a good result."

RALLY REPORT

Hat-trick of AGBO wins for Davies and Innes as Armstrong pairing grab Historic victory with last-gasp stage win

AGBO Stages

By Peter Scherer

Organiser: Owen MC When: March 16-17 Where: Weston Park Championships; AWMMC Heart of England; HRCR Stages Masters/Old Stager; HRCR Mini Cup; Welsh Historic Tarmac Stages: 10 Starters: 72 + 43 historic.

Oliver Davies and Ben Innes made it three AGBO Stages wins in a row as their Ford Escort Mk2 eased away from the challenge of a similar car occupied by Huw and Rhiannon James to take the Modern event win.

James had a two-second lead on the opening stage, before Davies began to take charge, recording his eighth win on the

event by 16 seconds.

Despite not being able to stick with the lead duo, Lee Edwards/Mike Roberts's Ford Escort G3 was a comfortable third throughout, with Gareth Richards/Heather Gilmore's Darrrian fourth for much of the day.

But after an overshoot on stage seven and a grassy excursion on stage nine, Richards was slowed by a sudden shower on the last stage, dropping to sixth.

After sliding off on the opening stage, Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt's Escort gradually settled and was into the top six by stage five, before Richards' trouble gave them fourth on the final

stage and Roger Moran/Den Golding's Escort fifth.

Tom Bishop/Isobel Mansell's Vauxhall Nova led Class A all day from Matt and Adrian Walk's Ford Fiesta, while in Class B Gary Ollerenshaw/Dion Morley's Honda Civic had only 1s to spare over Andy Evans/Neville Boulds' Peugeot 205 GTI.

The previous day's Historic Rally was a day-long duel between the Ford Escorts of Mike Simpson/Dale Gibbons and Leigh and Chris Armstrong. Although Armstrong led initially, they started the last stage tied. Armstrong finally clinched it by four seconds, with Chris/Steve Grundy's Ford Escort a clear third.

Results

1 Oliver Davies/Ben Innes (Ford Escort Mk2) 30m38s; 2 Huw James/Rhiannon James (Ford Escort Mk2) +16s; 3 Lee Edwards/Mike Roberts (Ford Escort G3); 4 Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Roger Moran/Den Golding (Ford Escort Mk2); 6 Gareth Richards/Heather Gilmore (Darrrian T90); 7 Meilyr Evans/Lowri Evans (Ford Escort Mk2); 8 James Nicholls/Grace Lees (Peugeot 205 GTI); 9 Wayne Lloyd/Will Lloyd (Ford Escort Mk2); 10 Richy Williams/Will Atkins (BMW E30).
Class winners: Tom Bishop/Isobel Mansell (Vauxhall Nova); Gary Ollerenshaw/Dion Morley (Honda Civic); James/James.

Historic

1 Leigh Armstrong/Chris Armstrong (Ford Escort Mk2) 32m31s; 2 Mike Simpson/Dale Gibbons (Ford Escort Mk1) +4s; 3 Chris Grundy/Steve Grundy (Ford Escort Mk2); 4 Simon Crook/Alister Crook (Ford Escort Mk2); 5 Stuart Anderson/Kenny Owen (Vauxhall Chevette HSR); 6 John Cressey/Martin Cressey (Austin Mini Cooper S); 7 Martin Beech/Matthew Bradley (Mazda RX-7); 8 David Higgs/Jamie Sparks (Triumph TR7 V8); 9 Clive King/Anton Bird (Austin Mini Cooper S); 10 Ryan Taylor/Hollie Churchill (Austin Mini).
Class winners: Cressey/Cressey; Steven Powell/Jamie Hawkins (Hillman Avenger); Anderson/Owen.



Davies and Innes on top again

RACING REPORT

SILVERSTONE: BRSCC BY GRAHAM KEILLOH

MARCH 16

The place for dreaming up a grand plan may sound familiar. "From sitting around at the curry house in Donington," recalls Caterham's chief motorsport and technical officer Simon Lambert. "By the end of the curry we'd worked it all out."

Yet little else was usual about Caterham's new 2019 season curtain-raiser at Silverstone last weekend, devised over the heady meal. The **Caterham Motorsport Team Enduro** was a four-hour endurance relay; its format that a car each from three Caterham series – Roadsport, 270R and 310R – combine competing as 'Super Teams'. An impressive 21 teams participated.

The initial curry house plan was even more ambitious. "[We were]

talking about 'wouldn't it be great to do a Caterham 24-hour race?', and then 'how would you do that?'" Lambert continues. "But that's fantastically expensive and well beyond our means."

"Then we said how about we just use that same formula and reduce it to an endurance race?"

Above all this there was a twist: a driver grading system to ensure no team could load up only with habitual frontrunners. And it bore fruit as demonstrated by the inaugural winning Super Team, 'Power Pratt' made up of Martin and Oli Pratt as well as Tom Power.

"Oli's been on the podium a few times; I've been doing this for six years and I've never got

anywhere near!" Martin says.

Lambert adds: "We spent a lot of time working out a formula – it's fantastic that people who don't normally have that opportunity can win."

Power Pratt rose from dead last on lap one after Martin beached the car in the gravel during a drying qualifying session.

There were other benefits from the format, including one not foreseen by drivers more used to short races.

"It was very hectic in the first hour as people got their heads around endurance racing," says Lambert.

"You actually have to think, and you do need a strategy. It was quite clear a lot of people had just

come along to enjoy themselves, and realised..."

Oli Pratt notes: "It adds another tactical side, usually once you're out there you're out there. [That] has another appeal than just being a solo effort."

The 'Team OLARCH Racing' squad took the overall glory with Alex Jordan, Rob Watts and Jack Sales all competing in quicker 420Rs.

"It's a great season-starter," says Jordan. "One, it gives everybody an opportunity to blow the cobwebs away; two, it's socially quite fun and it mixes up everybody. So those who are new get to meet other people; they get to pick up a few tips."

"It's been very good natured, and everybody's had a good time."

Lambert concludes: "We'd definitely like to do it again. That's our hope, that it would be an annual thing." It was hard to find anyone at Silverstone disagreeing. TCR UK's Lewis Kent starred in the **BRSCC Saloon Car Trophy** races, which he treated as a shakedown for his Hyundai.

He missed the first half of race one after a driveshaft problem on the green flag lap meaning Lucky Kherra won in his BMW M3. Kent won race two, storming through from starting 15th to lead by one-third's distance.

Ashley Hicklin took two **Sports Car Trophy** wins from two in his Radical SR3, despite a stuttering race two launch which left him seventh at the end of the first lap.

WINNERS

Caterham Motorsport Team Enduro
420R Team: Team OLARCH Racing – Rob Watts/Jack Sales/Alex Jordan (all 420s)
Super Team: Power Pratt – Martin Pratt (310R)/Oli Pratt (270R)/Tom Power (Roadsport)

BRSCC Saloon Car Trophy
Race 1: Lucky Kherra (BMW M3 E46)
Race 2: Lewis Kent (Hyundai i30 N TCR)

BRSCC Sports Car Trophy
Race 1: Ashley Hicklin (Radical SR3)
Race 2: Ashley Hicklin (Radical SR3)

MN CIRCUIT RALLY

Photos: SMJ Photography

CLASS ROUND-UP

The penultimate round proved highly unpredictable across the classes, three of which were turned upside down with one stage remaining.

Class A was where much of the antics occurred, won by the Nissan Micra of Adam Ripper who only led the eighth and final stage of the day after "incredible competition" between the main contingents.

Ripper also grabbed MN spoils, as Dale Lawson was denied by a slow puncture on stage six after a consistent run in his MG ZR. He had to settle for third behind the Toyota Yaris (nicknamed 'Sharon') of Craig Aston, who improved by 17s during his maiden Anglesey visit. "It's places like this that make me realise why I bought this car," he said.

Lawson sits four points adrift of Aston ahead of the Cadwell Park finale.

The class victory appeared certain for the Vauxhall Corsa of Dion Rowlands and Kai Alcock, until they collected a chicane tyre stack and suffered terminal steering damage with one stage remaining.

The incident also had ramifications seconds later that decided the fate of **Class B**.

Ryan Simpson and Mark Fowler did not put a foot wrong in their Ford Escort, but came across the stray tyres moments later. The resulting collision deranged the car's front-left quarter, gifting victory to a familiar face.

That and maximum MN points again went to a Paul Sheard-run Mazda MX-5, but not in the hands of its regular driver. Instead, spoils went to 2016-17 overall champion Ian Woodhouse, who christened his series return with victory ahead of Ashleigh Morris.

Stage seven continued to bite, this time in **Class C** as the brother/sister pairing of Joshua and Tamsyn Davey were denied a hat-trick of class victories when mechanical troubles reemerged with their Darrian T90 on the main straight.

Eric Roberts was the beneficiary in his Ford Escort, although the similar car of Mike English earned top MN points in class despite an "interesting" slick-shod stage when the day's heaviest shower arrived.

The **D2** class also proved unpredictable, with overall rally winner Frank Bird eventually taking both maximum MN points and the outright class honours. Guy Smith initially looked odds-on favourite in the early stages, before his collision with Rob Hughes' Fiesta put a third victory out of reach.

Only the **D1** class evaded significant drama. Both overall and MN spoils went to reigning champion Chris West, who continued his and co-driver Keith Hounslow's 100 per cent record in individual classes this season.



Ripper survived to take Class A



Error on SS1 didn't stop Bird

BIRD FLIES TO MAIDEN RALLY VICTORY

West takes runner-up spot to retain MN title. By **Dan Mason**

Frank Bird flew to his maiden Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship win in last weekend's Lee Holland Memorial Rally at Anglesey, while Chris West successfully defended his crown.

Peugeot 306 Maxi driver West simply needed to reach the final time check unscathed to be confirmed as champion with a round to spare, and he duly completed the task by finishing runner-up in what proved to be a rally of attrition.

Through it all emerged a new star, though, as in only his second ever rally Formula Renault Eurocup regular Bird recovered from an early mistake to dominate the event.

Co-driver Jack Morton led praise for the youngster, saying "he told me he just wanted to beat Guy Smith on a stage at some point - now he's not just done that but gone and won the thing!"

Only 42 of the 71 entries made it to the end of the rally, as recent gales made conditions changeable throughout the day in north Wales.

At the head of the field, West fought hard to keep his four-wheel-drive rivals within striking distance in the battle for overall victory. Two-time winner Guy Smith appeared the most likely candidate for overall honours after comfortably leading the morning loop in his Ford Fiesta R5, and was tailed by father Peter in his Fiesta RS WRC.

It was promising to be another intra-family dice for honours between the two, but quickly unravelled.

Surviving a stall on stage three, Peter Smith's Fiesta succumbed first due to water pump failure. His junior was gifted a 31-second lead by the interval, but his rally would also come to an abrupt halt on stage five.

Slowed to a brief stop by a mechanical glitch earlier in the stage, Guy Smith then dived up the inside of Rob Hughes and Sion Cunniff's Fiesta at the Corkscrew to try and escape the clutches of a chasing West. Front wheels locked up and the resulting collision caused terminal damage to a strut arm in Smith's front-right suspension.

"It doesn't always go your way," said an apologetic Smith afterwards. "We stopped on stage and had to reboot it all, but then when I caught [Hughes] I locked up. I knew that I couldn't do anything about it."

A bright start for Hughes had already been damaged by an off into the damp grass earlier in the day which earned the pair a stage maximum. Hughes said: "I turned left into the gateway and we got sideswiped. We were already not having a good day."

An opportunity was gifted to West and a recovering Bird, who had lost 45s after an off into the tyres on stage one as he adapted to a gravel surface for the first time.

"I like to start with an off," he joked, unbeknown that it would create the platform for a thrilling recovery. It started as early as stage two, where he clocked his maiden fastest time.

Egged on by rallying father Paul, it was apparent the single-seater regular's pace was no fluke as he grabbed the lead on stage six following the Smith duo's misfortunes. He then proceeded to dominate through worsening conditions and, after bagging seven stage wins from the eight contested, Bird sealed his fairytale victory by 1m06s.

"I can't quite believe it really," he added. "I was out testing the new [Formula Renault] car the other week which went well, but this is so different! I really enjoyed it and Jack's helped me so much. I'd love to do more if we can sort dates out."

Although playing bridesmaid in



West couldn't match 4WD opponents but did enough to clinch title again

RESULTS

Lee Holland Memorial, MN Circuit Rally Championship, round 7/8, March 17

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Frank Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Focus RS WRC	55m22s
2	Chris West/Keith Hounslow	Peugeot 306 Maxi	+1m06s
3	Wil Owen/Llion Owen	Ford Escort Mk2	+2m28s
4	Nigel Mummery/ Fiona Scarrett	Ford Focus WRC	+4m00s
5	Eric Roberts/Merfyn Williams	Ford Escort Mk2	+4m03s
6	Steve Tilburn/Jack Tilburn	Ford Escort RS2500	+4m23s
7	Darren Meadows/James Squires	Mitsubishi Lancer E4	+5m05s
8	Ciro Carannante/Simon Coates	Porsche Cayman	+5m17s
9	Mike English/Andy Robinson	Ford Escort Mk2	+5m40s
10	Tomas Delaney/Brynmor Pierce	BMW Mini Cooper S	+5m45s

Event class winners: Bird/Morton; West/Hounslow; Roberts/Williams; Ian Woodhouse/Bruce Lindsay (Mazda MX-5); Adam Ripper/Ray Ripper (Nissan Micra); Myles Gleave/Jonathan Cragg (Peugeot 205 GTI); Paul Gorge/Adrian Lloyd (MX-5).

MN class winners: Ripper/Ripper; Woodhouse/Lindsay; English/Robinson; Bird/Morton; West/Hounslow.

Anglesey, second place was enough to make West champion once again.

"We just couldn't compete with the 4WD cars today," he said. "I'm happy, because we've done all right, won it again and had strong results all season. We kept getting better."

Local driver Wil Owen tamed his improving Ford Escort Mk2 to add another Lee Holland podium to his collection. He was best of the rest ahead of Nigel Mummery who survived a hail-induced spin in his Ford Focus RS WRC for fourth.

A fine performance by Eric Roberts was enough to pip regular frontrunner Stephen Tilburn, who enjoyed the conditions more than others thanks to a working heater in his Escort.

Darren Meadows and James Squires guided their Mitsubishi Lancer E4 to seventh ahead of Ciro Carannante, who finally put to use a set of new wet tyres he was reluctant to waste on his Porsche Cayman. Mike English (Escort Mk2) was ninth, and the top 10 was rounded out by the spectacular Tomas Delaney in his BMW Mini Cooper S.

SCOTTISH REPORT

Photos: Eddie Kelly Motorsport

ELEMENTS FAIL TO STOP THORBURN

Mixed conditions caught many out. By **John Fife**



Ford Focus WRC05 came out on top

Euan Thorburn and Paul Beaton's victory on last weekend's Border Counties Rally makes it three wins on the trot for the Ford Focus WRC05 crew.

A half-minute winning margin over Garry Pearson and Dale Bowen in their Ford Fiesta R5 made it sound rather easy, but that was far from the case.

There was snow on the first two stages, slush on the next two while the final two were just wet and muddy although there was grip to be found, but only for the brave. Stephen Petch and Michael Wilkinson (Fiesta RS WRC) completed the top three at the end of a most difficult day.

Although declared a 'snow rally' at 0740hrs by the organisers, the falling snow was already turning to rain as the 0830hrs rally start time approached and the two-wheel-drive cars lined up at the head of the field. That meant the four-wheel-drive brigade were to benefit from clearer roads.

By the time the top seeds reached the first two tests, there were already two black lines showing through the snow-covered terrain. Fastest over both tests were Pearson/Bowen and Peter Taylor/Andrew Roughead (Fiesta RS WRC), both crews sharing identical times. Third quickest on both tests were Jock Armstrong and Cameron Fair in their Subaru Impreza, while fourth quickest were Thorburn and Beaton but the retirement list was also well under way.

Bruce McCombie's Ford Focus WRC had sheared a bottom arm and the wheel had gone sledging while John Wink got a wheel on the snow under braking for a hairpin.

The Hyundai i20 R5 spun and, although Wink managed to bring the car to a halt, it just slid helplessly into a ditch under its own weight. Not a mark on the car, but going no further. More fortunate was Scott MacBeth. First time on gravel with his new Mitsubishi Lancer E9, he had set an impressive fifth fastest time on the

opening test but a burst brake pipe cost him nearly a minute on SS2.

From being fourth overall after two stages, Thorburn found himself in the lead after four. Taylor's Fiesta WRC coasted to a halt at the end of the third test with a dead engine while Pearson had spun his Fiesta R5. "It was my own fault," smiled Pearson. "I put the power down coming out of a left-eight, got a wheel on the snow and spun, then got stuck in the mud. I lost nearly a minute."

At least he was still going. Both Fiesta R5s of Donnie MacDonald and Mark McCulloch fell victim to Kielder's snow-filled ditches while Chris Collie in a hired Mitsubishi Lancer E8 was sidelined with fuel pump failure.

With two snow and slush-free stages remaining, Thorburn now had a 32-second lead over Pearson with Petch in third place. "I've had an unfortunate start to my season, I'm just wanting to get around," said Petch.

But where was Armstrong? He had moved up to second place, 9s behind the leader, after SS3 but despite setting third fastest time in SS4 he found himself demoted to eighth place. The Subaru driver had incurred a two-minute penalty booking into TC4. Little consolation, but he wasn't the only one.

That left Thorburn in command. "I don't really like the snow, so I was really cautious over the first two stages, hoping that I could push on later as the snow cleared in the rain," he said. And so it proved. He was still fastest over the penultimate test from Pearson and third quickest in the final run where Pearson tied with Armstrong.

Throughout the day Freddie Milne and Michael Binnie had been waging a tremendous battle and the two Lancer E9 drivers ended the day just three seconds apart in fourth and fifth, with Armstrong rounding off the top six.

Two more drives worthy of note filled the next two places with MacBeth fighting back after his earlier brake loss to claim seventh just ahead of Thomas Gray, first time out in his new Lancer E9 and scoring an impressive eighth.



Pearson/Bowen managed to grab second place in tricky conditions

RESULTS

Border Counties Rally, Scotland, Scottish Rally Championship, round 2/7, March 16

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton	Ford Focus WRC05	40m51s
2	Garry Pearson/Dale Bowen	Ford Fiesta R5	+33s
3	Stephen Petch/Michael Wilkinson	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+1m26s
4	Freddie Milne/Steven Brown	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m38s
5	Michael Binnie/Claire Mole	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+1m41s
6	Jock Armstrong/Cameron Fair	Subaru Impreza	+2m35s
7	Scott MacBeth/Daniel Forsyth	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+2m47s
8	Thomas Gray/Harry Marchbank	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+2m53s
9	Alan Dickson/Martin Forrest	Mitsubishi Lancer E9	+4m02s
10	Ian Bainbridge/Mark Fisher	Subaru Impreza	+4m11s

Class winners: Niall Cowan Jr/Thomas Bruce (MG ZR); Donald Peacock/Keith Riddick (Peugeot 205 GTI); Barry Lindsay/Caroline Lodge (Peugeot 206 Cup); Paddy Munro/Keir Beaton (Escort Mk2); Steve Bannister/Callum Atkinson (Escort Mk2); Carl/Robin Tuer (Suzuki Swift Maxi); Steven Wood/Mary Wood (Ford Fiesta RWD); Iain Wilson/Chris Williams (Escort Mk2); Binnie/Mole; Milne/Brown; Thorburn/Beaton.

Another Mitsubishi in the top 10 was ninth-placed Alan Dickson (Lancer E9) who had made what he called the first crucial decision of the day when he looked out of his hotel room window earlier that morning and saw the snow.

"It was either turn left out of the hotel car park and go home for rugby and telly or turn right and head for the rally," he joked.

Completing the top 10 finishers was the Subaru Impreza of Ian Bainbridge, another to suffer a two-

minute time penalty. Just outside the top 10, Steve Bannister finished top two-wheel-drive car in an impressive 11th place overall.

"My historic Mk2 doesn't have the power of these 'new' Mk2s," he said. "That was the difference in these conditions today."

All of which left Thorburn leading two championships, BTRDA and the Scottish contest.

"Who'd have believed that after a year out of it?" said Thorburn.

IN BRIEF

Winner in 2WDs

Top two-wheel-drive runner was Steve Bannister in 11th overall in his Ford Escort Mk2, with Paddy Munro (Escort Mk2) 15th overall just two seconds ahead of the Mk2 of Iain Wilson. Steven Wood's rear-wheel-drive Fiesta was fourth in class and 17th overall.

New family member

Hard to believe, but two weeks prior to the Border Counties Rally, Class 5 winner Steve Bannister became a great grandfather to great granddaughter Darcy.

Let it snow!

Barry Lindsay's Class 3 winning Peugeot 206 was the leading 1650cc contender, finishing the rally in a mighty impressive 18th place overall and possibly the only driver who had been praying for more snow! "It was nice and rough and wet, that's how I like it," said Lindsay. "I heard a few 'woohoos' from the co-driver's side but we kept out of the ditches."

Cowan Jr wins class

Niall Cowan Jr scored the 1450cc Class 1 win in his MG ZR by two minutes from the similar car of Scott Peacock, who had stopped to see if the crew of a Ford Escort were OK after their car plunged into a water-filled hole leaving just the roof, boot lid and tail lights showing.

Wellies for boots

Class 2 winner, Donald Peacock, finished the rally in his wellies after his socks and racing boots got soaked in the first two stages. Martin Crombie was second in his spluttering Talbot Sunbeam and lucky to finish as the dampness got into the car's electrics.

Gearbox woes

John Rintoul's Skoda Fabia S2000 was sidelined on the third stage when the gearbox failed and the car lost drive, stranding the crew mid-stage.

Car debut shortlived

After two seasons with a Mitsubishi Lancer E5, Scottish Rally Championship sponsor Kevin Crawford had his first run out in his new Mitsubishi Lancer E9 but retired in the second stage when the car slid off the road in the snow.

No laughing matter

Nikki Addison and Rachel Matheson were still smiling after their first ever roll despite the fact that Matheson cut her hand. When the sliding rear end of their Peugeot 106 caught the snow on the first stage, Addison shouted to Matheson: "I've got this" – just as the car tipped over and fell on to its roof. When it was recovered later, Addison drove it out of the stage.

Crews caught out

In total, 10 crews incurred a two-minute time penalty which affected their final scores. A route amendment had been included (and signed for) in their pack when signing-on prior to the rally. This informed the crews that SS3 had been shortened. This meant that the subsequent road section had been lengthened and that crews should mark their Time Cards accordingly.

KARTING CALENDAR

British 24hr 2019

THE ORIGINAL - THE BIGGEST - THE BEST



**Teesside
Karting**

Teesside Owner Driver Spring
Bambino/Cadet/Junior Pro Kart/F100

ALL EVENTS LIVE

Championship index

NO	CHAMPIONSHIP
1	CIK-FIA World Championship
2	CIK-FIA World Junior Championship
3	CIK-FIA World KZ Championship
4	CIK-FIA International KZ2 Super Cup
5	CIK-FIA European Championship
6	CIK-FIA European Junior Championship
7	CIK-FIA European KZ Championship
8	CIK-FIA European KZ2 Championship
9	CIK-FIA Endurance Championship
10	CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy
11	WSK Super Master Series
12	WSK Final Cup
13	Rotax Max Challenge Euro Trophy
14	SKUSA SuperNationals
15	Karting UK British Rotax Karting Championships
16	Karting UK British IAME Karting Championships
17	Karting UK British TKM Karting Championships
18	Super One Series
19	Little Green Man Series
20	British Superkart Championship
21	Karting UK Bambino Racing Championship
22	Daniel Ricciardo Series
23	Club 100
24	Kartmasters British Grand Prix
25	Trent Valley Kart Club Winter Series
26	Shenington Kart Club Championship
27	Hunts Kart Club Championship
28	Fulbeck Kart Club Championship
29	Manchester & Buxton Kart Club Championship
30	Manchester & Buxton Kart Club Winter Series
31	Cumbria Kart Racing Club Championship
32	West of Scotland Kart Club Championship
33	Clay Pigeon Kart Club Championship
34	Forest Edge Kart Club Championship
35	Rissington Kart Club Championship
36	Whilton Mill Kart Club
37	TKM O Plate
38	TKM Clubman Championship
39	TKM Festival
40	Bayford Meadows Club Championship
41	Kent Kart Championship
42	Mansell Kart Racing Club Championship
43	Ellough Park Kart Club Championship
44	Cheshire Kart Racing Club Championship
45	Camberley Kart Club Championship
46	Northern Karting Federation
47	F100 British Championship
48	Historic Kart Series
49	British Universities Karting Championship
50	Bambino Kart Club Tour
51	IAME International Final
52	Shenington SuperPrix
53	Teesside Sprint Championship
54	British 24-hour race



March

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
21-24	Sarno, Italy	11
23	Blackbushe	45
23-24	Fulbeck	18
23-24	Shenington	23
23-24	Three Sisters	29, 30
23-24	Whilton Mill	36
24	Teesside	53
30-31	PF International	15
30-31	Mansell Raceway	42
30-31	Whilton Mill	50
31	Fulbeck	28

April

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
5-7	Whilton Mill	49
6-7	Bishopscourt	20
6-7	Clay Pigeon	22
6-7	Fulbeck	47
6-7	Hooton Park	48
7	Forest Edge	34
7	Rissington	35
12-14	PF International	16
13-14	Whilton Mill	23
14	Kimbolton	27
14	Rowrah	31
14	Clay Pigeon	33, 38
14	Lydd	41
18-21	Angerville, France	5, 6
19-21	Genk, Belgium	13
20	Ellough Park	43
20-21	Glan-Y-Gors	19
20-21	Larkhall	32
20-21	Hooton Park	44
21	Cadwell Park	20
21	Shenington	26
21	Bayford Meadows	40
27	Blackbushe	45
27-28	PF International	17, 21
27-28	Three Sisters	29, 30, 46
27-28	Whilton Mill	36
27-28	Mansell Raceway	42
28	Fulbeck	28
28	Teesside	53



May

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
2-5	Wackersdorf, Germany	7, 8, 10
4-5	Rowrah	18, 50
4-5	PF International	19
4-5	Llandow	23
4-5	Fulbeck	48
5	Forest Edge	34
5	Rissington	35
5-6	Snetterton	20
10-12	Shenington	16
11-12	Glan-Y-Gors	22
11-12	Clay Pigeon	33
12	Kimbolton	27
12	Rowrah	31
16-19	Genk, Belgium	5, 6
18	Ellough Park	43
18-19	Rissington	17
18-19	Rowrah	18
18-19	Larkhall	32
18-19	Hooton Park	44
19	Shenington	26
19	Bayford Meadows	40, 41
25	Blackbushe	45
25-26	Rowrah	15
25-26	Three Sisters	21, 29
25-26	Whilton Mill	36
25-26	Mansell Raceway	42
25-26	Lydd	47
25-26	Llandow	50
26	Fulbeck	28
26	Teesside	53
30 May	Kristianstad, Sweden	5, 6
31 May	Adria, Italy	13



June

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
1-2	PF International	
1-2	Donington Park	20
1-2	Glan-Y-Gors	46
2	Forest Edge	34
2	Rissington	35
7-9	Larkhall	16
8-9	Glan-Y-Gors	18
8-9	Shenington	22
8-9	Kimbolton	27
8-9	Rowrah	21, 31
9	Clay Pigeon	33
9	Lydd	41
13-16	Sarno, Italy	7, 8, 10
15	Ellough Park	43
15-16	Larkhall	19, 32
15-16	Buckmore Park	23
15-16	Hooton Park	44, 46
16	Shenington	26
16	Bayford Meadows	40
22	Blackbushe	45
22-23	Fulbeck	17
22-23	Clay Pigeon	18
22-23	Three Sisters	29, 47
22-23	Whilton Mill	36
22-23	Lydd	48
29-30	Mansell Raceway	15
30	Fulbeck	28
30	Teesside	53

July

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
6-7	PF International	
6-7	Larkhall	18, 50
6-7	Whilton Mill	22
7	Rowrah	31
7	Forest Edge	34
7	Rissington	35
12-14	Kristianstad, Sweden	13
12-14	Rowrah	16
13-14	Clay Pigeon	33
14	Kimbolton	27
18-21	Le Mans, France	5, 6
19-21	Shenington	26, 38, 52
20	Ellough Park	43
20-21	Glan-Y-Gors	15
20-21	Rowrah	19
20-21	Knockhill	20
20-21	Hooton Park	44
21	Bayford Meadows	40
27	Blackbushe	45
27-28	Shenington	17
27-28	Rye House	23
27-28	Fulbeck	28, 46
27-28	Three Sisters	29, 36
27-28	Mansell Raceway	42
27-28	Rowrah	48
27-28	Rissington	18, 50
28	Teesside	53

August

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
1-4	PF International	
2-4	Teesside	
4	Forest Edge	
10-11	Kimbolton	
10-11	Rowrah	
11	Clay Pigeon	
17	Ellough Park	
17-18	Clay Pigeon	
17-18	Rissington	
17-18	Shenington	
17-18	Lydd	
17-18	Larkhall	
17-18	Hooton Park	
17-18	Rowrah	
18	Bayford Meadows	
23-25	Three Sisters	
23-25	Shenington	
24	Blackbushe	
24-25	Whilton Mill	
24-25	Mansell Raceway	
24-25	Clay Pigeon	
24-26	Rowrah	
31 Aug	Cadwell Park	
-1 Sep		
31 Aug	Rissington	
-1 Sep		
31 Aug	Rowrah	
-1 Sep		
31 Aug	PF International	
-1 Sep		
31 Aug	Fulbeck	
-1 Sep		

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CHAMPIONSHIP
24
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31,46
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21,38
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25
50

September

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
1	Forest Edge	34
5-8	Alaharma, Finland	1, 2
6-8	Wackersdorf, Germany	13
7-8	Kimbolton	17
7-8	Whilton Mill	23
8	Clay Pigeon	33
8	Lydd	41
14-15	Forest Edge	15
14-15	Larkhall	21, 32, 46
14-15	Hooton Park	44
14-15	Ellough Park	47
15	Shenington	26
15	Bayford Meadows	40
19-22	Lonato South Garda, Italy	3, 4, 10
21-22	Anglesey	20
21-22	Three Sisters	19, 29
21-22	Whilton Mill	36
21-22	Ellough Park	43
21-22	Llandow	48
22	Fulbeck	28
27-29	Le Mans, France	9
27-29	Whilton Mill	16
28	Blackbushe	45
28-29	Fulbeck	22
28-29	Clay Pigeon	23
28-29	Mansell Raceway	42
29	Teesside	53

October

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
5-6	PF International	25
6	Forest Edge	34
12	Buckmore Park	47
12-13	Wombwell	50
12-13	Le Mans, France	51
13	Kimbolton	27
13	Rowrah	31
13	Clay Pigeon	33
18-20	Larkhall	32
19	Ellough Park	43
19-20	Whilton Mill	17
19-20	Bayford Meadows	21, 40, 41
19-20	Llandow	22
19-20	Red Lodge	23
19-20	Hooton Park	44
19-20	Tattershall	48
20	Shenington	26
26	Blackbushe	45
26-27	Three Sisters	29
26-27	Whilton Mill	36, 38
26-27	Mansell Raceway	42
27	Fulbeck	28

November

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
2-3	Hooton Park	22
2-3	PF International	25
3	Forest Edge	34
9-10	Buckmore Park	23
9-10	Fulbeck	48
10	Kimbolton	27
10	Rowrah	31
10	Clay Pigeon	33
14-17	Adria, Italy	12
16	Ellough Park	43
16-17	Hooton Park	44
17	Bayford Meadows	40
17	Teesside	53
20-24	Las Vegas, USA	14
23-24	Three Sisters	29
23-24	Whilton Mill	36
24	Fulbeck	28
30	Blackbushe	45
30 Nov -1 Dec	PF International	25

December

DATE	VENUE	CHAMPIONSHIP
8	Kimbolton	27
15	Bayford Meadows	40
21	Ellough Park	43
21	Blackbushe	45



Championships at a glance

DATE	EVENT	DATE	EVENT
CIK-FIA World Championship		Karting UK British IAME Karting Championships	
Sept 5-8	Alaharma (FIN)	April 12-14	PF International
		May 10-12	Shenington
CIK-FIA World Junior Championship		June 7-9	Larkhall
Sept 5-8	Alaharma (FIN)	July 12-14	Rowrah
		Aug 23-25	Three Sisters
CIK-FIA World KZ Championship		Sept 27-29	Whilton Mill
Sept 19-22	Lonato South Garda (ITA)	Karting UK British TKM Karting Championships	
CIK-FIA European Championship		April 27-28	PF International
April 18-21	Angerville (FRA)	May 18-19	Rissington
May 16-19	Genk (BEL)	June 22-23	Fulbeck
May 30-June 2	Kristianstad (SWE)	July 27-28	Shenington
July 18-21	Le Mans (FRA)	Sept 7-8	Kimbolton
		Oct 19-20	Whilton Mill
CIK-FIA European Junior Championship		Super One Series	
April 18-21	Angerville (FRA)	March 23-24	Fulbeck
May 16-19	Genk (BEL)	May 4-5	Rowrah
May 30-June 2	Kristianstad (SWE)	May 18-19	Rowrah
July 18-21	Le Mans (FRA)	June 8-9	Glan-Y-Gors
CIK-FIA European KZ Championship		June 22-23	Clay Pigeon
May 2-5	Wackersdorf (DEU)	July 6-7	Larkhall
June 13-16	Sarno (ITA)	July 27-28	Rissington
		Aug 23-25	Shenington
CIK-FIA European KZ2 Championship		Little Green Man Series	
May 2-5	Wackersdorf (DEU)	April 20-21	Glan-Y-Gors
June 13-16	Sarno (ITA)	May 4-5	PF International
CIK-FIA Karting Academy Trophy		June 15-16	Larkhall
May 2-5	Wackersdorf (DEU)	July 20-21	Rowrah
June 14-16	Sarno (ITA)	Aug 17-18	Rissington
Sept 20-22	Lonato South Garda (ITA)	Sept 21-22	Three Sisters
WSK Super Master Series		Daniel Ricciardo Series	
Jan 31-Feb 3	Adria (ITA)	April 6-7	Clay Pigeon
Feb 21-24	Lonato South Garda (ITA)	May 11-12	Glan-Y-Gors
March 7-10	La Conca (ITA)	June 8-9	Shenington
March 21-24	Sarno (ITA)	July 6-7	Whilton Mill
		Aug 31-Sept 1	Rowrah
WSK Final Cup		Sept 28-29	Fulbeck
Nov 14-17	Adria (ITA)	Oct 19-20	Llandow
		Nov 2-3	Hooton Park
Rotax Max Challenge Euro Trophy		Club100	
April 19-21	Genk (BEL)	Feb 23-24	Buckmore Park
May 31-June 2	Adria (ITA)	March 23-24	Shenington
July 12-14	Kristianstad (SWE)	April 13-14	Whilton Mill
Sept 6-8	Wackersdorf (DEU)	May 4-5	Llandow
		June 15-16	Buckmore Park
Karting UK British Rotax Karting Championships		July 27-28	Rye House
March 30-31	PF International	Aug 17-18	Lydd
May 25-26	Rowrah	Sept 7-8	Whilton Mill
June 29-30	Mansell Raceway	Sept 28-29	Clay Pigeon
July 20-21	Glan-Y-Gors	Oct 19-20	Red Lodge
Aug 17-18	Clay Pigeon	Nov 9-10	Buckmore Park
Sept 14-15	Forest Edge		
Oct 12-13	Whilton Mill		

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REPORTS

CAVE HOLDS OFF EDWARDS TO WIN

Search for BRC win ends after seven-year drought



Cave (l) and co-driver Morgan celebrate success



Hyundai i20 crew took win

A decade ago, Matt Edwards was working at M-Sport and building Craig Breen's gearboxes, while building his own Ford Fiesta ST in his spare time to fight against the young Irish prodigy on the stages.

Fast forward 10 years, and it was Breen versus Edwards in the same machinery again, only this time Edwards had the works machinery with his M-Sport-backed Ford Fiesta R5. Ex-works Citroen World Rally Championship driver Craig Breen had the favourite's tag instead.

But it wouldn't be a repeat of that old battle, not least because Breen wasn't registered for the British Rally Championship. There was another factor in the equation in the shape of Tom Cave as well.

He became the first driver that wasn't Edwards to win a BRC event outright since Keith Cronin in 2017 and it was Cave's first BRC win since the Rally of Yorkshire in 2012. Just 4.8 seconds would settle it.

Cave – partnered by James Morgan instead of Dale Bowen for this round – had singled out before the season that the championship would be won on asphalt pace. It was part of the reason he pushed so hard to renew his partnership with Michelin – due

to its superior Tarmac tyres – on his Hyundai i20 R5, and claimed that he would work harder than ever to improve his driving on sealed surfaces.

It was clear from early on in the first day that Breen's slow start was not a sign of things to come as he raced off into the sunset en route to a comfortable overall event victory. He had the benefit of not having to fight for a championship, while Edwards tries to defend his with stronger BRC competition than in the previous year, and with a new co-driver in Patrick Walsh.

But neither appeared to be the main British challenger after the first trio of stages, with reigning Irish Tarmac champion Josh Moffett stretching the legs of his Ford Fiesta R5 into a 15s lead after three stages. His knowledge of the rally was vital given the fact it was the first time it had been included in the BRC.

The conditions were wet and treacherous to say the least. Although it may sound like a cliché, drivers reported avoiding retirement was a success, such as the rainfall and difficulty out on the stages. And experience of the roads surely helped.

Edwards won four of the next six stages in a resurgent display, to sit 6.8s in the lead on Saturday night for what is the BRC's only two-day event this season. Cave won the other two stages as the battle between

the two Welshmen intensified.

Moffett's rally unhinged with a broken driveshaft before the end of the first day, his chances of a BRC title slipping away as wins on the asphalt rounds were vital, as other drivers are more at home than him on the gravel. Sunday would provide a dry surface in the most part, and Cave pushed early. Even if Moffett was the paceman on Saturday, Cave and Edwards won all of Sunday's stages between them.

Edwards' overnight 6.8s lead became a 1.2s deficit to Cave on the first stage, and he fell further behind on SS11, the second test of the day. Edwards fought back in SS12 and SS13, taking the lead on the former test.

But that is all he would get, as a big push from Cave reversed the order completely on the penultimate stage. A tenth is all Edwards could pull back on the final stage, leaving 4.8s in total after 135.4 miles of stage action. The pair took third and fourth overall.

"We had a good run on stage 14 and pulled a bit of time out from Matt," said Cave. "I think that was the most we've pulled out all day. It's been a very difficult rally and considering the conditions yesterday we kept our noses clean. We've been rewarded with a really good result."

Moffett sealed third in the BRC ahead of the new second-place man in the championship, Marty McCormack, in the top Skoda Fabia R5. Jonny Greer



Edwards/Walsh had to settle for second spot in BRC order in Ireland

RESULTS

West Cork Rally, British Rally Championship, round 2/6, March 16-17

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Tom Cave/James Morgan	Hyundai i20 R5	1h51m55.9s
2	Matt Edwards/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5	+4.8s
3	Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m44.6s
4	Marty McCormack/Barney Mitchell	Skoda Fabia R5	+2m17.8s
5	Jonny Greer/Kirsty Riddick	Ford Fiesta R5	+3m22.1s
6	David Bogie/John Rowan	Skoda Fabia R5	+7m51.2s
7	Josh McErlean/Keaton Williams	Peugeot 208 R2	+11m48.3s
8	James Williams/Tom Woodburn	Vauxhall Adam R2	+12m22.0s
9	William Creighton/Liam Regan	Peugeot 208 R2	+12m23.6s
10	James Wilson/Arthur Kierans	Peugeot 208 R2	+12m37.7s

Class winners: BRC 1 Cave/Morgan; Junior BRC McErlean/Williams
Points: 1 Matt Edwards 43; 2 Marty McCormack 27; 3 David Bogie 26; 4 Tom Cave 25; 5 Josh Moffett 25; 6 Desi Henry 12.

and David Bogie rounded out the top R5 contingent, a disappointing result for the latter who had been a favourite to fight for BRC honours overall.

Edwards holds a 16-point lead in the championship after a first and a second

in 2019. Cave's retirement in the Cambrian opener means he's 18 behind. A third and a fourth for McCormack mean the reigning R.A.C. Rally winner is currently Edwards' closest challenger.

First Junior class victory for McErlean after tough conditions claim rivals

Josh McErlean has shown pace in a range of sub-optimal machinery. But for 2019 he has the car that won last year's British Rally Championship – a Peugeot 208 R2 – and on Irish asphalt he finally delivered a first Junior class victory.

It was fellow 208 driver Marty Gallagher and co-driver Dean O'Sullivan that led for the first five stages and looked like they might take their first win, but then they crashed out. That promoted McErlean, who was usurped by 2016 BTRDA 1400 champion and now Opel Adam R2 driver Jordan Hone by the end of day one, the wet and windy conditions making it even harder for the two-wheel-drive R2 cars of the class than its R5 big brother.

When the stages proved drier on Sunday morning, McErlean came to the fore, and by SS13 he'd built up a lead of 12.2s over Hone. On that stage, Hone slid off the road and ended what had been an entertaining battle.

Another Adam replaced Hone in James Williams/Tom Woodburn, but they were 42.6s in arrears.

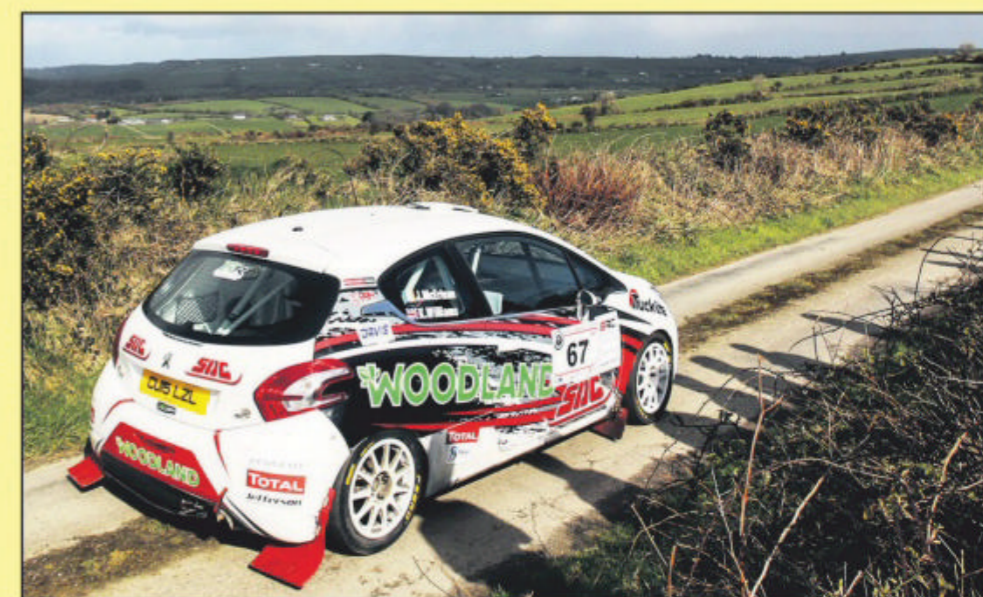
McErlean and co-driver Keaton Williams therefore held on with that comfortable cushion for a first victory in the series, and a €2500 cheque for Peugeot parts.

Williams had to fight hard to hold off the charging Peugeot of William Creighton and Liam Regan, but

managed to do so as the latter pair's title bid has gotten off to a slow start.

It was announced before the event that James Wilson will get Hyundai i20 R5 outings this year thanks to his Billy Coleman Award win, but his event was plagued by a misfire for his 208 and a small accident which led to fourth. That was still enough to maintain an equal championship lead with McErlean, while Creighton sits an ominous four points behind.

Rookie Ruairi Bell set fastest stage times in a Ford Fiesta R2T in what has been an impressive start to his BRC career, with reigning BRC champion co-driver Darren Garrod alongside.



Peugeot 208 R2 crew of McErlean and Williams stayed out of trouble

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Martin Walsh

Hirvonen capitalises on Kiernan misfortune

Four-time World Rally Championship runner-up Mikko Hirvonen found a new legion of fans in West Cork as he netted a late victory in the modified category of the West Cork Rally.

The presence of the Finn, co-driven by Jarno Ottman in a left-hand-drive Ford Escort Mk2, boosted the spectator levels in Clonakilty.

But for 12 of the 15 stages Cavan's Gary Kiernan (Escort) led the way until a blown engine on SS13 signaled the end.

Hirvonen went on to claim the laurels and finished 1m35.2s ahead of the Escort of Damian Toner with local driver Conor McCarthy (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) a further 1m27.8s behind.

Winds of almost hurricane proportions greeted the crews on the traditional Ring opener. Kiernan was fastest out of the blocks and led the Escort of Phil Collins by 7.8s with Hirvonen an additional 1.9s behind in third.

Welsh favourite John Dalton was expected to challenge but that ended when he crashed his Darrian T90 GTR+ at the same location that brought a similar fate to Manus Kelly and Desi Henry in the International entry.

The opening pair of stages at Ring and Dunworley were repeated with Hirvonen punching in his first fastest stage time on the repeat of Ring. By the midday service Kiernan, who broke an engine mount and damaged the propshaft on SS4, was 26.7s ahead of his Finnish rival.

The second part of Saturday stages, another two-by-two stage format and a short town stage, allowed Kiernan, despite yet another engine mount breakage, to hold an overnight advantage of 36.9s. Hirvonen certainly became competitive as the day wore on with Toner, Frank Kelly, McCarthy and Richard Moore completing the top six.

The St Patrick's Day gift was sunshine and, while Kiernan continued to lead, he completed SS12 without a clutch and his advantage was cut to 22.3 seconds. On SS13, the engine expired and Hirvonen went on to take victory. Toner, on his first West Cork outing, took second with an untroubled McCarthy third. Kelly crashed out while Wayne Evans and Collins were SS10 casualties.

Martin Walsh

Results

1 Mikko Hirvonen/Jarno Ottman (Ford Escort Mk2) 2hr0m20.7s; 2 Damian Toner/John McGrath (Escort Mk2) +1m35.2s; 3 Conor McCarthy/Gavin Sheehan (Mitsubishi Lancer E9); 4 Richard Moore/William Lynch (Escort Mk2); 5 David Condell/Paul Kelly (Escort Mk2); 6 Kevin O'Donoghue/Colin O'Donoghue (BMW M3 E30); 7 Conor McCrossan/David Burns (Skoda S2000); 8 Kevin Horgan/Stephen Horgan (Subaru); 9 JR McDaid/Andhan Gallagher (Escort Mk2); 10 Mark Dolphin/Brian Quinlan (Escort Mk2). **Class winners:** Moore/Lynch; McCrossan/Burns; Horgan/Horgan; McDaid/Gallagher; Michael Canny/Sinead Canny (Ford Fiesta R5); John O'Sullivan/John McCay (Fiesta); Tommy McDonagh/Paul Hickey (Escort Mk2); Fergus Hurley/Eric Deane (Escort Mk2); Mickey P Kelliher/Eoghan McCarthy (Escort Mk2); Noel McCarthy/John Caverley (Escort Mk2); Emma Nutt/Declan Casey (Escort Mk2).



Hirvonen drove Ford Escort Mk2



Ford Fiesta R5 was car to have

BREEN MAKES IT TWO FROM TWO

Ex-WRC driver tamed the conditions on way to victory. By **Kevin O'Driscoll**

Craig Breen and Paul Nagle were the victors in the West Cork Rally with 22.2 seconds to spare over Alastair Fisher and Gordon Noble, both crews in Ford Fiesta R5s.

Tom Cave and James Morgan took an excellent third place overall in a Hyundai i20 R5, just 15s behind Fisher.

The weather could scarcely have been worse for the 41st running of the West Cork Rally as the 145 starters lined up for the opening stage, the classic Ring test.

High winds and incessant rain battered the coastal stage, with shiny tar and pools of water making life very difficult for everyone. A strong line-up graced the Cork Motor Club event with the rally being the second round of both the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship and the British Rally Championship.

Josh Moffett and Keith Moriarty were fastest on the opening test by 1.1s from Robert Barrable and Damien Connolly, who were making their first appearance in a Skoda Fabia R5. Breen was a lowly fifth after the first stage, but a stunning time on the equally difficult second stage at Dunworley propelled him to the top of the leaderboard.

Most drivers had a story to tell after the opening loop with many close shaves, but two who weren't so lucky were Manus Kelly/Donall Barrett (i20 R5) who bent the back axle after clouting a bank, and Cal McCarthy/Eamonn Dullea (Citroen DS3 R5) who retired after hitting a wall and breaking the radiator.

The weather improved somewhat on the second loop where the Ring and Dunworley were repeated, and Breen took advantage to move into an

11.4s lead over Moffett. Daniel Cronin (Fiesta R5) and Meirion Evans (Ford Escort Mk2) were both forced out by this point with an overheating engine and fuel pressure problems respectively, although Evans rejoined in Rally 2. Declan Boyle had lost over six minutes early on, but was still going while Donagh Kelly in his first appearance in a Skoda Fabia R5 was taking things very easy as he got used to the new car.

The afternoon stages were Shanaway and Sam's Cross tackled twice followed by a short 1.5-mile blast on the edge of Clonakilty town to wrap up the day's action.

Breen extended his lead over Fisher as Moffett suffered a minute's loss on SS6 with a broken propshaft, which dropped him to eighth. Kelly was also out, having broken a wheel on the SS5.

The sun had come out belatedly and the roads were drying out so the speed increased. Cave had moved into third place with Matt Edwards, Sam Moffett and Callum Devine completing the top six after six stages. There was little change over the remaining stages of the day except for Edwards moving ahead of Cave for third place and Breen extending his lead over Fisher to 26.8s.

The second day was a huge contrast in weather with the sun shining and cold, dry conditions. Fisher took fastest time on the opening Clogagh stage to close the gap slightly to 24.4s, while Cave moved back into third place. Several battles were going on down through the top dozen, with Josh Moffett moving ahead of Barrable and Cathan McCourt closing in on Stephen McCann.

The pressure told on McCann on the following stage at BallinacCarthy when he slid off the road and out of the event. By the end of stage 12, Ardfield, the gap at the top was back out to 27.7s and, barring a disaster,



Breen (front right) comfortably leads ITRC standings after two wins

RESULTS

West Cork Rally, Irish Tarmac Championship, round 2/8, March 16-17

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Craig Breen/Paul Nagle	Ford Fiesta R5	1hr51m18.6s
2	Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble	Ford Fiesta R5	+22.2s
3	Tom Cave/James Morgan	Hyundai i20 R5	+37.3s
4	Sam Moffett/James Fulton	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m34.3s
5	Callum Devine/Brian Hoy	Ford Fiesta R5	+1m41.4s
6	Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m21.9s
7	Robert Barrable/Damien Connolly	Skoda Fabia R5	+2m47.3s
8	Jonny Greer/Kirsty Riddick	Ford Fiesta R5	+3m59.4s
9	Stephen Wright/Dai Roberts	Ford Fiesta R5	+5m16.6s
10	David Guest/Jonathan McGrath	Skoda Fabia S2000	+7m54.4s

Event class winners: Edwards/Walsh; Josh McErlean/Keaton Williams (Peugeot 208).

Breen was on course to win. Cave and Edwards were still locked in battle with the latter holding a 1.4s advantage. Barrable lost even more time with a lurid spin on stage 11 (BallinacCarthy) and he slipped to ninth as a result.

Over the last three stages Breen managed the rally from the front and by the end of the 15 stages and 150 miles he had a lead of 22.2s.

Fisher had to be content with second place for the second rally in a row, but it was a fantastic performance again from the Fermanagh driver.

Cave eventually took third place

from Edwards and with the Hyundai driver also registered for the Irish Tarmac Championship, he took 12 valuable championship points.

Sam Moffett overcame a very strong challenge from Devine to take fifth place overall while the 2018 Tarmac champion Josh Moffett had to be content with seventh position, just ahead of Robert Barrable.

Marty McCormack, Jonny Greer, Stephen Wright and McCourt completed the top dozen.

William Mavitty won Group N while William Creighton was the top Irish Tarmac Championship R2 driver home.

FEATURE

Photos: LAT and BTC Racing

A revamped team, a new driver and a top-line car have come together. By **Matt James**



BTC Racing has updated FK8 cars

HOW BTC RACING AND COOK AIM TO RIP UP THE BTCC



The car will have a bespoke motor



Dudman has invested in the Hondas



Team Dynamics link-up is pivotal

There is something irresistible about the BTC Racing team this season. It is going into the 30-race British Touring Car Championship with a proven machine and race-winning drivers.

Fresh investment in Bert Taylor's team from his friend Steve Dudman has allowed the squad to move to new premises, and it has retained 2018 Rockingham winner Chris Smiley and he is joined by Josh Cook, who was sixth in last year's contest.

Smiley has been a regular since the team rejoined the championship in 2017, whereas the recruitment of Cook was something of a surprise. Despite his strong 2018 campaign, he came dangerously close to a year on the sidelines.

"I was thinking that I wouldn't be on the grid at all," says Cook, who was one of the stand-out performers in 2018 in the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra. "I lost a backer and the chances were slim, but I had kept in touch with Bert. I had known

him since I joined the BTCC and he had always said that he wanted me in one of his cars. Now he has made that happen.

"It is a great feeling, because clearly this decision wasn't taken on finances, it was taken because the team wanted me in the car. That is an amazing amount of faith that the team has shown in me and really motivates me to perform and give something back."

And he will be in a good position to do so. Dudman's investment has also extended to two new FK8 Honda Civic Type Rs, which means BTC Racing has the same equipment as the factory-backed Team Dynamics crew. There will be a link-up in terms of data and technical support with the former title-winning squad.

This is an opportunity that Taylor didn't want to turn his back on. "When the chance came up in 2018 to get the FK8s, I simply couldn't ignore it," says Taylor. "I knew I would have regretted it had I turned it down. We had just built up two new FK2 Civics for 2018, but this was the next level.

"When you go to Team Dynamics and see the set-up there, you know why they win so much. It is set up for success, and success alone. There's 35 years of history there: would I have been able to compete at that level? Probably not, so by forming this alliance it has given us what I need to go to the top flight. This will be a great year for us, and I want regular wins and the Independents Trophy. If we are in the mix for that, who knows where it can take us."

In a year when title winners WSR and Independents Trophy winners Speedworks will be developing new BMW and Toyota machinery respectively, the Honda, with 12 months of development behind it, is going to be tough to rein in.

Cook is fired up about the challenge: "I have gone from virtually nothing to being in arguably the most competitive car on the grid, although this season will be a battle. When I was at MG and when I was at Vauxhall, there were circuits where the chassis might have been stronger and some where we weren't. This year, there are going to be four of us in FK8s and it will be a fight just to be at the head of that group."

Team-mate Smiley will be one of those to contend with, but Cook has a firm roadmap of what he needs to do this year. He says: "Win the title! No one should be on the grid if that is not their aim.

"I know you need lots of things to come together, but there is such a hunger in the team and we have a great car. I have the utmost faith in the crew, so I need to match that with what I do on the circuit. The BTCC is all about consistency. Maybe I was a bit pragmatic last season, but I know it is all about building the points round by round. I want to be going into the finale on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix track in with a shout of the overall title."

That might sound like quite a lofty ambition, but the ingredients are there to make those dreams come true. This truly will be a watershed season for BTC Racing. ■

BTC RACING IN THE BTCC



2006-2007

BTC Racing joins the BTCC with TVR Tuscan Challenge graduates Chris Stockton and Darren Dowling in the rear-wheel-drive Lexus cars for the final two rounds of the season. The car was on the fringes of the top 10, with Stockton scoring a best finish of 12th. Nick Leason joined the team for 2007 but only contested the opening three races, leaving Stockton as a solo entry.



2008

After starting the season with the Lexus machines, the team swapped to ex-Motorbase Performance SEAT Toledo cars for Stockton and truck racing champion Stuart Oliver. Gareth Howell also drove after Oliver's deal fell apart. Stockton scored the team's first point with an eighth place at Donington Park – although they would later lose the team's points for too many engine changes.



2014

BTC dipped out of the championship but confirmed its intention to return in 2013. There was much optimism in 2014 with new backing and a new NGTC-spec Chevrolet Cruze, which had originally been built for RML which decided against racing it. Stockton continued behind the wheel with Power Maxed Racing support. Power Maxed bought the team's licences to compete at the end of the season.



2017

BTC returned to the category in the Chevrolet Cruze machines that it bought back from Power Maxed Racing. Chris Smiley would drive alongside Dave Newsham, and backing came from Norlin. The revamped team scored 13 top 10 finishes, and Newsham was on the podium at Silverstone.



2018

With Newsham retiring from the BTCC, the team drafted in James Nash and then Dan Lloyd to partner Smiley in the Honda Civic Type R FK2 machines. Both Lloyd and Smiley were winners, with successes at Croft and Rockingham respectively. The team finished ninth in the teams' competition.

2019

Another new era for the team with fresh investment from businessman and racer Steve Dudman means the squad moves into new premises in Brackley and purchases two new latest-spec FK8 Honda Civic Type Rs. Smiley remains with the team, while multiple race winner Josh Cook will drive the other machine.



Smiley was a race winner in 2018

HISTORICS

'Ford tops the Classic Mini Challenge'
Crew ahead of the pack, below



Photos: Paul Lawrence

DOWN THE PUB WITH

ANDREW FLETCHER

Retired racer
Age: 79 Lives: Edinburgh

He started in Scotland

"I've nearly always lived in Scotland but in my racing years I did live in London. I started racing in 1962. I went to Charterhall and saw a race and thought it looked terrific fun. I loved the noise and the smell and decided to get a car and have a go."

He moved to single-seaters

"I started with a Lotus 7, then bought a Lotus 23 but couldn't afford a twin-cam engine, so it wasn't really competitive. I very much wanted to do single-seaters and bought a Cooper BMC for the early years of F3. Jackie Stewart had done brilliantly in one the year before, but it was the wrong car for 1965 and I got a Brabham for a couple of years."

Formula 2 was next

"I did a lot of F3 races and then got a Brabham Formula 2. The twin-cam engine wasn't competitive but we got paid the same starting money as everyone else. When the F2 car wasn't competitive, we moved into sportscars and teamed up with Willie Tuckett."

Then he raced sportscars

"I did a year with a Chevron B8 and then Willie and I got a B16 between us and we've still got it. We did races like the Brands Hatch 1000kms and won our class. But Willie wrecked the car in a club race at Thruxton. We had it rebuilt as an open-cockpit B19 and ran that for a year."

They won in Africa

"We went to Angola in Africa and did three races and we won the six-hours of Nova Lisboa and we got huge trophies made from the local tin. Then we sold the car but bought it back five or six years later and rebuilt it as a B16. Later on, we raced with David Piper in South Africa and all over the place. My last race was in South Africa in an Alfa Romeo T33 about 20 years ago. Now I go and support the racing exploits of my son Henry in historics."



Fletcher: single-seater fan

JACKSON CHOOSES A WINKELMANN FOR 2019

Champion picks a new car for title defence



Jackson will battle in a rare Winkelmann

By Paul Lawrence

Cameron Jackson will defend his Historic Formula Ford 1600 title in a rare Winkelmann chassis.

Jackson has acquired one of the two Winkelmans previously owned and raced by veteran Robs Lamplough and says that he wants the challenge of trying to win a second title in an unfashionable car.

Last year, the Lincoln racer became the first champion in a Lola T200 since 2005 but now he wants to try and be the first to win the title in a Winkelmann. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the cars were based on Hugh Dibley's Palliser design and sold into the US by Bob Winkelmann, rebadged as Winkelmans.

"Robs Lamplough had three Winkelmans that he imported in one deal, including two

Formula Fords. Neil Fowler always looked after the Formula Ford that Robs raced and Neil won at Pau in 2016 in the car that we now have," said Jackson. Lamplough's late brother Peter was a works driver for Palliser in 1970 and 1971.

"If I was going to do the championship again I fancied doing it in something else, maybe something that needed

development as that would be a nice challenge. We've done some work on the car and it was pretty quick straight out when we tested at Silverstone.

"It's a really nice car and we're planning a full campaign. It is basically the same car as the Palliser and the Winkelmans did really well in the States. It's different to the Lola but it feels really planted. It's fun to drive and very forgiving."



Coulthard will return for West Sussex outing

Coulthard to race his "favourite car" at Goodwood

David Coulthard will be one of the stars of the Goodwood Members' Meeting on April 6-7 in the IWC Racing Team's Mercedes-Benz SL 300 Gullwing.

The former F1 racer will contest the Tony Gaze Trophy after making his

Members' Meeting debut last year in the Mercedes. After qualifying 15th for Salvadori Cup, the Scot worked up the order to finish ninth.

The Tony Gaze Trophy will mark a hat-trick of appearances for Coulthard in the

Gullwing, as he demonstrated the car at the 75th Members' Meeting in 2017.

Coulthard says that the Gullwing is a special car. "It's my favourite car of all time. I missed out on buying one in 1995," he said.

Pryce confirms North Wales historic outing

World Rally Championship aspirant Osian Pryce will contest Rally North Wales next weekend in a historic specification Ford Escort Mk2 to fill the gap while his 2019 plans are finalised.

Pryce contested his local event last year and made an impressive historic debut. Now, co-driven by Dale Furniss, Pryce will again drive a BDG-engined car from Rally Xtreme.

He said: "Rally North Wales is my local event; you could see my parent's house from one of the stages last year, so we're doing it again for a bit of fun. The car is great and the stages are some of the very best in the world and we'll try hard and push for a good result."

Rare Bugatti to celebrate 90 years

The magnificent 1939 Bugatti Type 59/50B will return to Prescott this spring to join the Bugatti Owners' Club 90th anniversary celebrations, centred on La Vie en Bleu on May 25-26.

In July 1939 Jean Bugatti was invited to the first Bugatti Owners' Club International meeting and brought the monoposto Type 59 fitted with a type 50B engine for works driver Jean-Pierre Wimille to take to second place with a 46.69s climb. The car has

not been back to the Gloucestershire venue for 80 years.

Apart from a single outing in 1945 with Wimille at the Coupe des Prisonniers in Paris, the 59/50B was not driven again and will be on loan from the Schlumpf Collection. Chris Rogers from Prescott said: "We are delighted that the Bugatti Type 59/50B will make an historic return to Prescott. The car will be on display at the Bugatti Trust."



Bugatti was at the hill 80 years ago

IN BRIEF

Colin Wilson
MN is sad to report the death of Colin Wilson, formerly the press officer at the Motor Sports Association. After leaving the MSA, he set up an agency specialising in a database of motorsport dates. Wilson was found unconscious at his home in late February and died in hospital. His funeral will be held at Lichfield Crematorium at 1130hrs on April 9.

Brava for Brits

The Ford Escort Mk2 of Tim Metcalfe and John Connor was the top British entry on last weekend's Rally Costa Brava, the opening round of the FIA European Historic Sporting Rally Championship. From a 150-strong entry, they finished an impressive 12th overall and first in class on the high-speed asphalt event.

Morgan's MN run

British Touring Car racer Adam Morgan will be the next star driver in the MN-backed HRCR Clubmans Historic Rally Championship. Morgan, who did some historic stage rallies in an Escort Mk1 in the early years of his motorsport career, will guest drive the Lancia Fulvia of Martin Phaff on this weekend's North Yorkshire Classic. The event, round two of the championship, is based at Hawkhill at Easingwold.

Trasmeira is go

Rallye Festival Trasmeira in Spain (May 9-11) is back on for this year after briefly being cancelled. Problems within the organising club cast doubts over one of Europe's most popular rally festival and demo events but the event is now confirmed as up and running again. The event always attracts a strong contingent of UK crews.

Mini marvels

After two rounds of the Classic Mini Challenge, Rick Ford/Neil MacDonald hold a slender lead over Tour of Epynt top scorers Jim Brindle/Sam Bould. Brindle topped the Epynt event by a minute. Round three will be the Warcop Stages at Easter.

Rallying Elan

Paul Mankin and Peter Scott will tackle Saturday's North West Stages in a historic specification Lotus Elan. The car was previously owned and rallied by Drew Wylie in Northern Ireland many years ago. Geoff Jones Motorsport is preparing and running the car in a small programme of three events planned for 2019. Mankin is best known for campaigning a Lotus Cortina on gravel events.

AGBO drama

Harvey Stevens and Lawrence Selly were fortunate to escape without injury when their Mini hit a tree in Weston Park during Saturday's AGBO Historic Stages. They slid off the road when trying to overtake a rival on the grass.



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PREVIEW

Photos: Hal Ridge, Trevor Coulsen, Tom Banks

Domestic rallycross ready for lights out. By Hal Ridge

BRITISH RALLYCROSS PREVIEW

ALL SET FOR TAKE OFF



Godfrey will be at the front

BRITISH RALLYCROSS PREVIEW

NO	DRIVER	CAR
2	Ollie O'Donovan	Ford Fiesta
4	Steve Hill	Mitsubishi Evo
32	Steve Mundy	Ford Fiesta
21	Oliver Bennett	BMW Mini
28	Simon Horton	Subaru Impreza
46	Pat Doran	Citroen DS3
51	Julian Godfrey	Mitsubishi Mirage
95	Roger Thomas	Ford Fiesta
101	Derek Tohill	Ford Fiesta
124	Liam Manning	Subaru Impreza
135	Mike Manning	Ford Fiesta

CALENDAR

RND	VENUE	DATE
1	Silverstone	March 24
2	Lydden	April 22
3	Pembrey	June 22
4	Pembrey	June 23
5	Lydden	August 26
6	Pembrey	Sept 21/22
7	Croft	October 26
8	Croft	October 27

For the third year in succession, the reigning British Rallycross champion won't defend their crown this season.

With 2018 title-winning Mark Higgins not returning to the domestic series after his fruitful maiden term, there's an open goal for a fourth name in four years to be etched on the British RX silverware.

Following a run of five consecutive titles until being dethroned by Dan Rooke in 2016, it's fitting that Julian Godfrey starts among the favourites for the 2019 title. Entered for the opening round at Silverstone in the

Spencer Sport Mitsubishi Mirage he campaigned last season, Godfrey also has his multiple-title winning Ford Fiesta in the locker should he need it.

The renowned engineer was in the thick of the title fight with Higgins and Irishman O'Donovan until the finale last season. O'Donovan, the 2007 champion, is another who will challenge for top honours if he competes a full campaign, while two-time 2017 podium finisher Roger Thomas has upgraded to an M-Sport-built Ford Fiesta from the Focus he used last year, but he will miss the opening round while the car is completed in Tony Bardy's workshops.

Yet to confirm his plans for 2019, but absent from the permanent European

Championship entry list for the first time in four years, double European champion Derek Tohill will race his Ford Fiesta in the opening round at Silverstone and would be a welcome full-time addition, as would four-time British RX title-holder Pat Doran, who will race an LD Motorsports Citroen DS3 in round one.

Having been 'best of the rest' behind the top three in 2018, Steve Hill's unique Mitsubishi Lancer E10 has undergone development work over the winter and can be expected to fight at the front, while Steve Mundy (Ford Fiesta) and Simon Horton (Subaru Impreza) also join the line-up. Liam and Mike Manning will compete in selected rounds (see page 29), and Oliver Bennett is likely to



The BRX season will blast into life at Silverstone this weekend

make ad-hoc appearances alongside his World RX exploits.

In the two-wheel-drive Supernational category, double-champion Tristan Ovenden will be the man to beat with his Renault Clio V6, but Paige Bellerby returns with her Lotus Exige and will challenge.

Like last season, the Super1600 front-wheel-drive brigade could feature at the front of the order.

Junior RX champion Tom Constantine has graduated to the Swift Sport series for this season leaving the champion's situation in the Junior division vacant for 2019, with a mix of new and returning young drivers on the grid. In the supporting categories, the single-make BMW Mini and Swift Sport series will produce some of the closest racing of the British RX roster. ■

An influx of new exotic machinery should help galvanise the Retro Rallycross competition and make a landmark season

If it's possible for a Historic series to come of age, 2019 could be that time for the Retro Rallycross Championship. Until now, since the category was formed in 2012, cars and drivers signing up to the class

have generally either slid over from an existing category, or dusted themselves off and made a return to the sport.

But last year, a number of cars entered the arena having been

specifically sourced or adapted to suit the criteria (cars must be of suitable vintage and fit within period rallycross regulations up to the end of 1991). Steve Harris had a 'new' Ford RS200 built up from

genuine period parts, Roger Thomas had an MG Metro 6R4 restored for the series and John Cross adapted an ex-rally Lancia Stratos. For 2019, Supernational racer Phil Collard has acquired a

Renault 5 for the series, Richard Lepley's Prepfab concern has built a Porsche 911 and Stewart Bowes is working on an Audi quattro. That injection of exotic machinery and competition could be just the ticket.

CONSTANTINE FACES AN UPHILL BATTLE



Constantine will miss first round

For the first time since 2014, rallycross will head North of the border to Knockhill for the final round of the

BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship this season in October. Curiously though, both the British RX and BTRDA series will start on the same date this weekend.

Reigning BTRDA Gold Star champion Luke Constantine will miss the season-opener to drive at Silverstone, but will return for the rest of the campaign in a bid to defend his crown. In the headline Super Modified category, former champion Gary Cook makes his return this weekend with a new Ford Fiesta, while rallycross stalwart Allan Tapscott will campaign his rear-wheel-drive Vauxhall Corsa and Mike Dresser will also be in the hunt for victory with his Lotus Exige.

Newcomer William Stewart has bought an ex-Tommy Graham Ford

LEADING ENTRIES

BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship two-wheel drive

NO	DRIVER	CAR
39	Fred Ling	Ford Fiesta
48	Todd Crooks	BMW Mini Cooper
61	Michelle Swallow	Porsche Boxster
77	Mike Dresser	Lotus Exige
91	Allan Tapscott	Vauxhall Corsa
104	William Stewart	Ford Escort
144	Leigh-Anne Sedgwick	BMW Mini Cooper
219	Gary Cook	Ford Fiesta
313	Elise Friem	Ford Focus
339	Gary Mitchell	Ford Puma
512	Leonardo Lyon	Peugeot 206

Escort for the 2019 season, while Todd Crooks will debut a freshly-built BMW Mini at Blyton Park on Sunday.

In the well-supported Production category, former champion James Orton returns and will start among the favourites with his Peugeot 106, alongside Citroen Saxo exponent Dale Ford.

Former British Touring Car Championship driver Harry Vaulkhard has signed up to drive a Vauxhall Corsa in the series' Classic category. ■

BTRDA PREVIEW



Ryan Stutchbury will battle

CALENDAR

RND	VENUE	DATE
1	Blyton Park	March 24
2	Pembrey	May 22
3	Pembrey	May 23
4	Blyton Park	June 30
5	Pembrey	August 10
6	Pembrey	August 11
7	Lydden	September 28
8	Knockhill	October 20

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SPORTING SCENE

Photos: fiaworldrallycross.com, Hal Ridge

ROUND-UP

Simon Kingsley won the **Stuart Butterfield Sporting Trial** in atrocious conditions on Saturday, making it three wins on the trot.

A select bunch of competitors nearly witnessed one of the discipline's biggest surprises when Jonathan Hughes led at lunch, well clear of all the seasoned competitors. Nerves during the afternoon meant he slipped back to third, still an excellent result having only competed in a handful of trials.

Club chairman Andrew Woodhead drove consistently on his return in his Jedi to finish two points behind Kingsley in second. Mike Salton won the live-axle class in fourth overall, with Alan Baker winning the blue live-axle class.

Richard Sharp beat Boyd Webster and club champion Bryan Walker in a very close midfield by a single point over the 18 rough, wet, challenging hills that meant crews worked exceptionally hard on every section. The top 10 was completed by three live-axle crews with Jeff Armistead in eighth two points ahead of Alan Baker and Mike Storrar. Barry Hogg and George Watson were both unlucky to retire their Hamiltons with two sections left dropping them outside the top 10.

Salton led the **Stone Trough Sporting Trial** all day in contrasting conditions to the preceding day where scores dropped considerably, to win his maiden national event having started competing in 2010.

Walker proved his closest challenger all day, tying at lunch, but a careless three shortly afterwards proved costly. The season's form man, Kingsley, could only manage third overall, his first defeat of the campaign at the fifth event of the championship. Kingsley's concentration faltered a couple of times dropping some careless points.

Webster kept him honest all day finishing just two points back ahead of Armistead who won the live-axle class, with Salton winning overall in his live-axle Concord.

Duncan Stephens

Stuart Butterfield Sporting Trial
Organiser: NPTCC When: March 16. Where: Edenhall, Penrith, Cumbria. Starters: 17.
1 Simon Kingsley (Crosse) 51 marks; 2 Andrew Woodhead (Jedi) 53 marks; 3 Jonathan Hughes, Hamilton; 4 Mike Salton (Concord); 5 Richard Sharp (Cartwright); 6 Boyd Webster (Crosse); 7 Bryan Walker (Jedi); 8 Jeff Armistead (Hutton); 9 Alan Baker (Apex); 10 Mike Storrar (Jedi)

Stone Trough Sporting Trial
Organiser: NPTCC When: March 17 Where: Edenhall, Penrith, Cumbria. Starters: 15.
1 Salton (Concord) 11 marks; 2 Walker (Jedi) 14 marks; 3 Kingsley (Crosse); 4 Webster (Crosse); 5 Armistead (Hutton); 6 Sharp (Cartwright); 7 Baker (Apex); 8 Bryan Thornton (Kincraft); 9 Woodhead (Jedi); 10 Neil McHardy (Struggler).

BRITON MANNING JOINS THE EUROPEAN RALLYCROSS TRAIL

Ford Fiesta Supercar racer set to fulfil a dream with ERX season



Manning raced at Silverstone in 2018

By Hal Ridge

Welshman Mike Manning will compete full-time in the European Rallycross Championship this year with a Ford Fiesta Supercar.

A former British Rallycross frontrunner, Manning took a break from the discipline to compete in international hillclimb events until returning to rallycross in 2017.

He will race the Fiesta Supercar,

the same car he ran in British RX last year, in the six-round European series.

"We wanted to race in a championship abroad with top teams, good circuits, big entries and good atmospheres to have fun like we did years ago," Manning told MN. "I have been to Barcelona twice and Loheac three times to have a good look to see what goes on. We thought we could do this, so the car was newly built last year by Grant Rees. We've changed suspension and gearchange from

how we used the car last year. The competition will be tough, but you have to start somewhere.

"This is a young man's sport really but I'm not fazed, I like pressure! We know we will be running at the rear, but we're just going to enjoy the ride."

A 13-car permanent Euro RX entry list was revealed last week, but additional entries are expected for each event.

"If there are 30 cars and we got into the top 20 that would be a result," said

Manning, who will also compete in a selected British RX programme.

"I will do the Silverstone, Lydden Hill and Pembrey rounds in British RX. If we could be fourth or fifth at Silverstone this weekend, I'd be happy."

Reigning British Super1600 Rallycross champion Jack Thorne will also compete full-time in Euro RX this season, racing an ex-Set Promotion Renault Twingo in the Super1600 category.

Latvian Vitols joins UK Junior rallycross fight

Sixteen-year-old Latvian driver Roberts Vitols will race in the full Motorsport UK Junior Rallycross Championship this season.

Vitols made his UK rallycross debut in a round of the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship last season at Lydden Hill where he challenged for victory until being forced out with driveshaft failure. This year he will race a Peter Gwynne Motorsport-run 1300cc Suzuki Swift in the single-make Junior RX series.

"The fact that we will be the first team from Latvia to build our rallycross experience through British motorsport feels really exciting," said Vitols. "It's a privilege given to me by my team to work with an experienced company in a country with great marketing and motorsport traditions."

"My debut last September showed that I can fight for the podium in every race



Vitols will race in a 1300cc Suzuki

and hope for the championship [title]. I'm not afraid to compete in a car with the steering wheel on the right-hand side, which is new for me. I think it is just another element for my experience and will teach me to adapt to all kind of cars."

Vitols' Provento Racing team has acquired a right-hand-drive Swift to use for practice in his native Latvia.

He will also compete in the Latvian Rallycross Championship and Baltic Rallycross Cup this year in a Super1600 specification Peugeot.

Nitiss joins forces with GRX team for World RX

Double European Rallycross champion Reinis Nitiss will make his first start for Marcus Gronholm's GRX World Rallycross team at the first round of the season in Abu Dhabi.

Announced as development and race driver for GRX in 2019, Nitiss is expected to compete in a number of rounds and will drive a third Hyundai i20 in competition for the first time at the Yas Marina Circuit next month.

"I am excited for the season to start," said Nitiss. "There are lots of unknowns, a new circuit, a new car, new team-mates. It will be a huge challenge, but at the same time I'm happy to be able to compete against World Championship drivers."

The first round of the series will be run as a Saturday evening race, under floodlights in the stadium section of the Abu Dhabi venue.

"I took part in the Abu Dhabi



Nitiss will join Gronholm's team

circuit presentation a few weeks ago and it looks very interesting," added Nitiss.

Manfred Stohl's STARD team will field Norwegian Pal Try in its second Ford Fiesta for the opening round of the campaign and is expected to rotate its second driver through the season.

Bennett to join opening British RX round to shake down his BMW Mini

Xite Racing driver Oliver Bennett will race his team's World Rallycross BMW Mini in the opening round of the British Rallycross Championship at Silverstone this weekend in preparation for his World RX campaign.

Bennett raced full-time in British RX in 2017 with an OlsbergsMSE Ford Fiesta and, having graduated to World

RX and Americas Rallycross events last season with the Mini, raced the Fiesta in the final round of British RX at Silverstone in November.

He set the pace until a fire forced him out of the semi-finals. Bennett will drive the Mini this weekend just two weeks before the World RX season-opener in Abu Dhabi. The car has undergone

upgrades over the winter and was recently tested at Pembrey in South Wales. Bennett is also racing in the RallyX on Ice series this week at Are in Sweden, sharing duties with Norwegian Andreas Bakkerud in the Team Faren squad. Three events are taking place on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week, using three different tracks.



Bennett will rejoin the BRX hunt

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Don't write off Ferrari challenge yet

Things didn't work out for the Scuderia in Australia, but there is still a fight to com

All the experts were wrong, and all the brows at Ferrari were furrowed after what happened in Melbourne last weekend. The Scuderia has been the team most tipped to turn over Mercedes-Benz in Australia and it simply didn't happen.

Sebastian Vettel admitted that the SF90 should have been faster at Albert Park. The team boss Mattia Binotto knew that it should have been quicker. And Mercedes knows it scored a tap-in last weekend with a 1-2 result, but it is also aware that the Italian team's latent pace has yet to be fully unlocked.

The team said maybe the set-up of the car was wrong, or maybe it was an Albert Park-specific problem which meant that the chassis didn't perform in the way it had in testing up until that point.

Ferrari will bounce back, and the Formula 1 Championship needs that too. Lewis Hamilton started on the back foot Down Under, but that won't last forever. For the sake of a competitive year ahead, let's just hope that Ferrari managed to find the answers when the grid reforms in Bahrain in two weeks' time.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



YOUR PICS



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



Martin Cooper sent in this excellent photo from the British GT pre-season test run



Action from the recent Donington Park Rally, photograph sent in by Peter Atkins

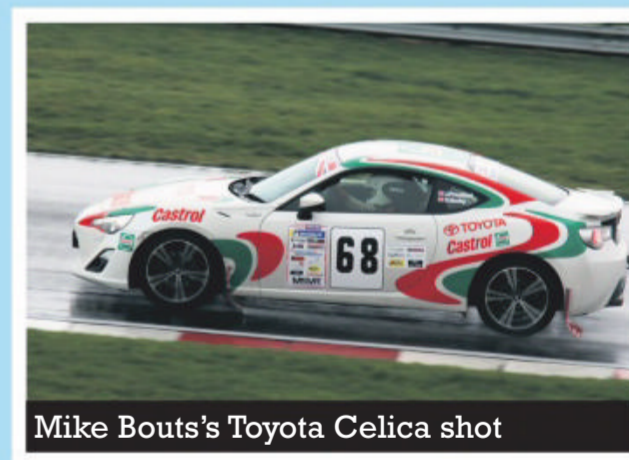
ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!



The Team Parker Racing Bentley British GT challenger, taken by Chris Collier



Callum Grant, aged 14, snapped this



Mike Bouts's Toyota Celica shot



John Henderson's BMW photograph



Whoops! Gerallt Price at Race Retro



Rally fun at the recent Questmead Stages, photographed by Graham Lomax

GOT AN OPINION?

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TV GUIDE

This week take a trip back in time and relive the final round of the 1986 Formula 1 season from Adelaide with **Classic F1** (Wednesday, 2100-2145hrs, Sky Sports F1). Williams drivers Nigel Mansell and Nelson Piquet, as well as McLaren's Alain Prost, all had a shot at the title Down Under in what proved to be a thrilling climax to the championship.

Want something a little more modern? Well, you can catch the full rerun of the **Australian Grand Prix**, the opening round of the 2019 season from Melbourne this Friday (1835-2035hrs, Sky Sports F1). Would Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes continue where they left off at the end of 2018, or would Ferrari be able to begin the season in perfect fashion?

And finally watch highlights from the **1000 Miles of Sebring** which was the sixth round of the World Endurance Championship's 2018/19 superseason (Saturday, 0830-0930hrs, BT Sport 1).

LIVE TV



Newgarden (centre) won first IndyCar round of year

Jaguar I-Pace eTrophy

■ Race: Saturday, 0445-0545hrs, BT Sport 1

Formula E: Sanya

■ Race: Saturday, 0630-0830hrs, BT Sport 1/ Eurosport 1/BBC BBC Red Button, iPlayer and online

Indycar: Austin

■ Race: Sunday, 1700-2000hrs, Sky Sports F1

NASCAR: Martinsville

■ Race: Sunday, 1730hrs, Premier Sports 2

LISTINGS

RACING SATURDAY

■ Oulton Park, Cheshire

BARC meeting: Sports/Saloons, Junior Saloons, Kumho BMW, Pre '66 Touring Cars, Pre '83 Group 1 Touring Cars, Pre '93 Touring Cars, Pre '03 Touring Cars, Pre '05 Production Saloon Cars, Blue Oval Saloon Series, Classic and Historic Thunder Saloons **Starts** racing from 1135hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs) **Admission** adult £16, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

■ Brands Hatch, Kent

BRSCC meeting: Porsche, Mazda MX-5, Mazda MX-5 Super Series, BMW Compact Cup, Alfa Romeo, Fun Cup, Multi Marque/ Nippon Challenge/ Tricolore Trophy **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1125hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1105hrs (qualifying from 1000hrs) **Admission** adult £16, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000

RALLY SATURDAY

■ Garstang, Lancs

Legend Fires North West Stages **Starts** 0830hrs **Admission** free **Web** northweststages.co.uk

SUNDAY

■ Co Longford, Ireland

The Admore Air Conditioning Corp Midland Moto Stages Rally **Starts** 0910hrs **Admission** TBC **Web** midlandmotorclub.net

SPORTING SCENE SUNDAY

■ Silverstone, Northants

British Rallycross Championship **Starts** 0900hrs **Admission** adults £20, under 15 free **Web** rallycrossbrx.com

■ Blyton, Lincs

BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship **Starts** 0900hrs **Admission** £6 **Web** clubmansrallycross.weebly.com

■ Hednesford, Staffs

National Hot Rod **Starts** 1330hrs **Admission** adults £16, under five free **Web** nationalhotrod.com

Details correct at time of press but please check

FAVOURITE LIVERIES 1960s KEVIN TURNER'S TOP THREE PICKS



Alan Mann Racing Ford F3L

Red and gold is a great combination and both Alan Mann Racing and Broadspeed sported the mix during the 1960s. The AMR version just gets the nod here. It was mainly seen on the team's successful tin-tops – Ford Lotus Cortina and Ford Falcon in particular – but the ultimately unsuccessful Ford F3L (pictured) simply looked stunning.

Gulf Mirage M1

This is a predictable choice, but I make no apologies for that. The powder blue base with various versions of orange detailing is iconic. The oil company's colours proved successful too, particularly in sportscars. The JW Automotive team was a winner with Mirage (pictured) and Ford GT40 machinery in the 1960s and carried on into the next decade.



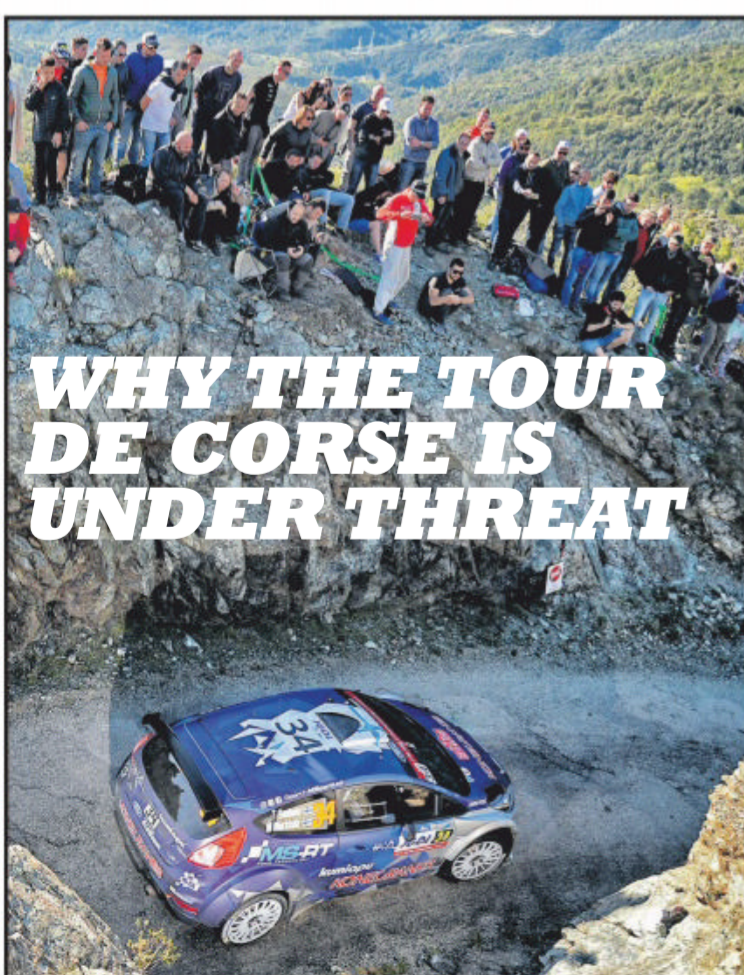
Rob Walker Lotus 18/21

Two British privateer teams battled it out for this slot. The cars of successful Ferrari entrant Maranello Concessionaires often looked great with a blue nose on top of the usual red, but Rob Walker's blue with a white stripe pips it. The team's successes included famous Cooper, Lotus (pictured) and Ferrari wins for Stirling Moss.



NEXT WEEK

OUT WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27



WHY THE TOUR DE CORSE IS UNDER THREAT



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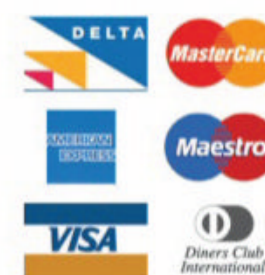
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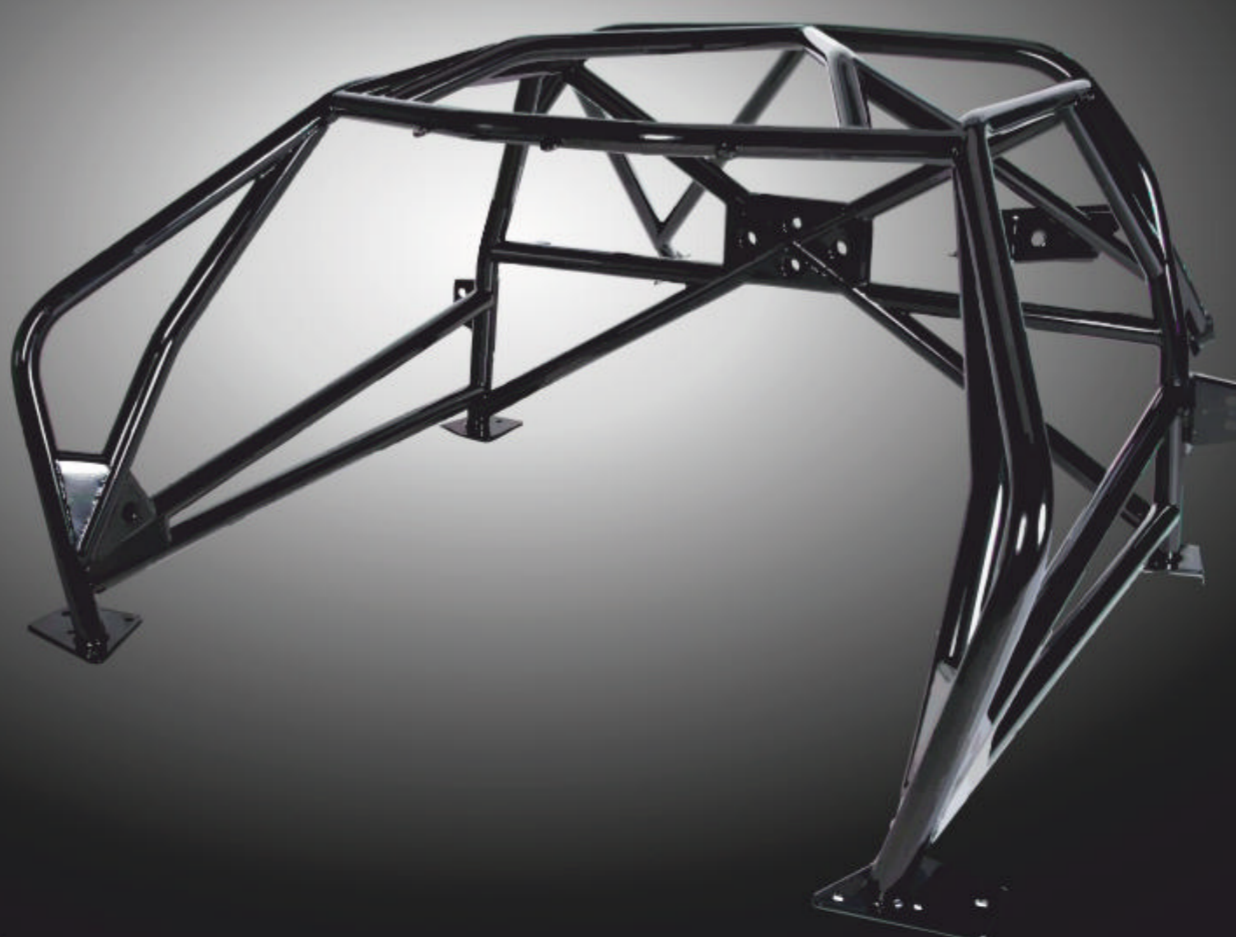
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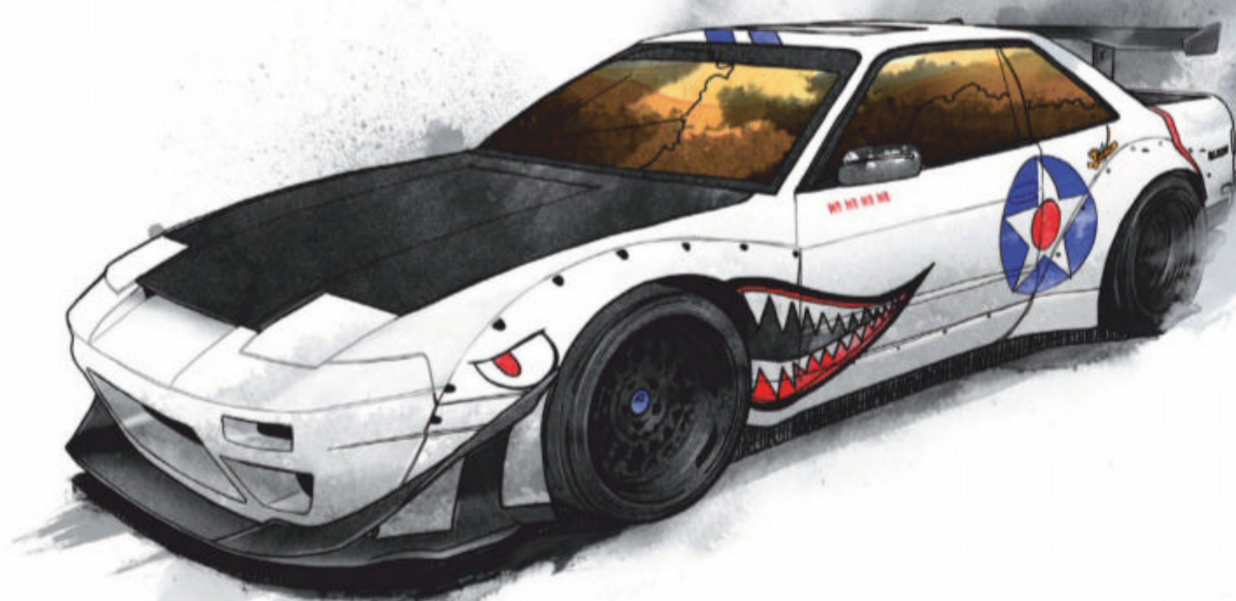


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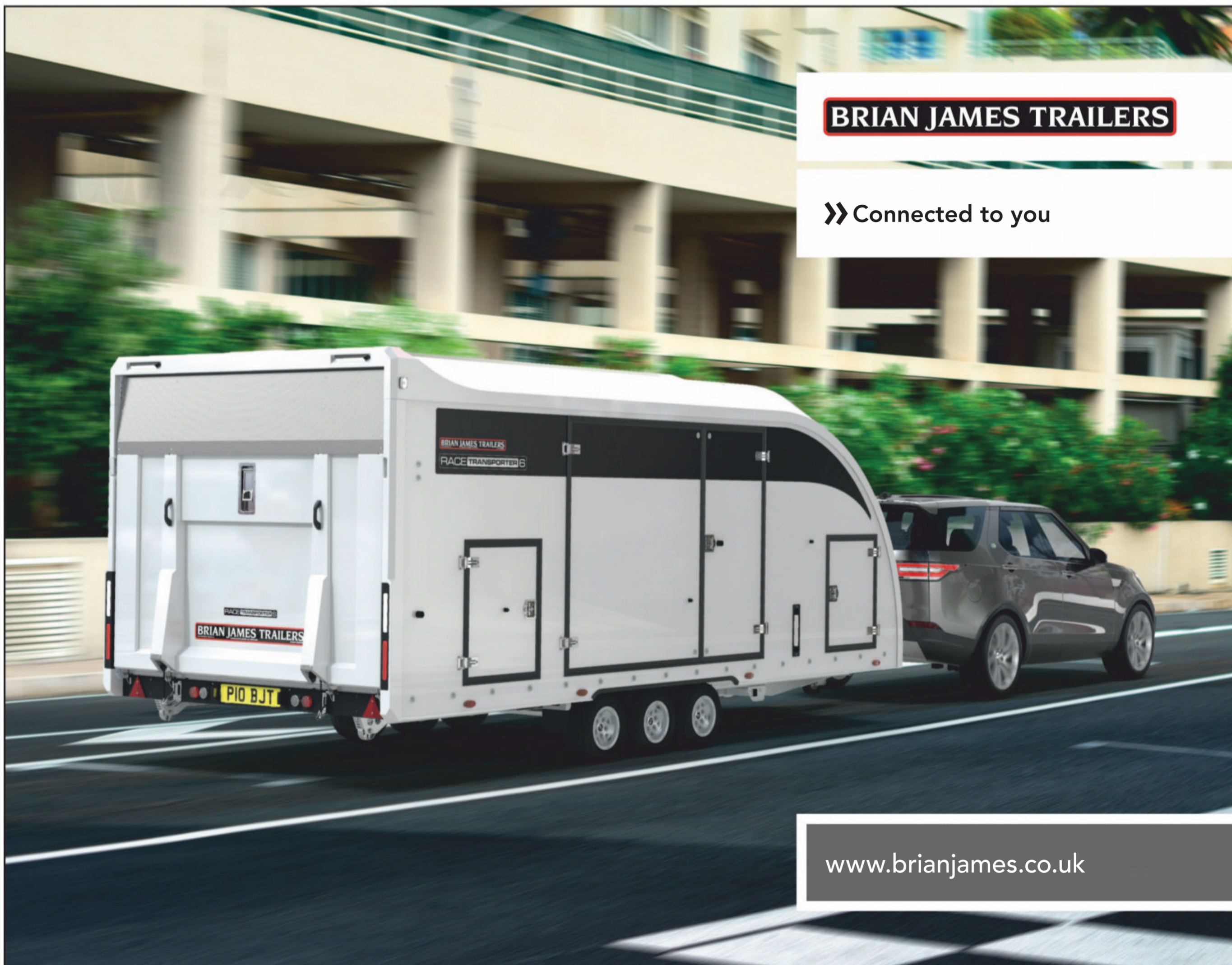
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