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MOTORSPORT NEWS



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MEEKE

THIS IS MY BEST WRC CAR YET

Briton says he feels right at home after Toyota debut



By David Evans

Kris Meeke is back and he's back right at the very forefront of the World Rally Championship – that's Toyota team principal Tommi Makinen's appraisal of the Northern Irishman's Monte Carlo debut last week.

Meeke, who was sixth after two punctures, dominated the powerstage to take maximum bonus points from the season-opener.

"Kris's result is absolutely brilliant," said Makinen.

"This is so good for him for his first rally with us."

Full story, p2-3

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT
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NEWS**

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BIRD BEATS THE HEAT IN CHILE

FORMULA E
SIZZLES IN
SANTIAGO P27



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Kris Meeke was thrilled with his fastest time on the event-closing powerstage to bag points

By David Evans

Kris Meeke is looking forward to building a World Rally Championship season around "the best car he's ever driven" following his stunning powerstage victory at last week's Monte Carlo Rally.

The Northern Irishman set a blistering pace through the final Col de Braus test, 3.9 seconds faster than anybody to clinch the first bonus points of the WRC season. Meeke's efforts drew praise from his four-time Monte Carlo Rally-winning team principal Tommi Makinen, who described the result as "absolutely brilliant".

Meeke finished sixth overall on the Gap-based season opener, having dropped time with two punctures, which Makinen said were related to the use of Toyota's lightweight wheel rims and the dry conditions in the French Alps.

A delighted Meeke told Motorsport News: "It's so

satisfying to do [that time] on the powerstage when everybody is fighting at ten-tenths. We were able to put the hammer down. It's nice to know we've still got it after nine months."

After a puncture apiece on Thursday and Friday, Meeke was in the top four stage times throughout Saturday and Sunday before his exceptional powerstage win on the second run at Col de Braus.

"This is the best car I've ever driven, bar none," said Meeke. "It just felt so nice. Let's not forget I won this powerstage in the Citroen last year, but the line on that car was fine. In the Yaris, I feel I can squeeze everything from the car and push it hard and it's all there under me - there's no stress and no worries."

"I've been excited from the first stage. I'd never driven the car on studs on dry asphalt before, so I didn't know too much what to expect. My engineer had told me not to put the boost on before the

start of the first stage, but just before the start of the stage I thought: 'Ah, sod it. Let's see.' I put the boost on and: 'Whoa! This feels good!' It was fantastic, just fantastic. We had some technical issues which probably cost a couple of places, but I don't think my start position would have allowed me to win here - there was too much cutting from the cars ahead. But I set my marks for this rally and I've hit them."

Looking beyond the start of the season, Meeke admits Rally Sweden will be another voyage of discovery.

"I'm back to square one for that one," he said. "I go home for 24 hours, see the family for a day, and then it's off to the Sweden test. But you know, Sweden against Ott [Tanak] and Jari-Matti [Latvala], I'll be up against it there. I'm just looking forward to every event."

"I remember when I started the defence of my IRC [Intercontinental Rally Challenge] title in 2010. The first rally with

HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Northern Irishman says he is in the best WRC car he's ever driven

MEEKE

DELIGHTED WITH IMMEDIATE TOYOTA PACE



British driver took a solid sixth place in Monte Carlo

consistent conditions was Brazil and I went out there and won. Everybody said 'Ah, here you go again dominating...' but in the back of my mind I knew Juho Hanninen had taken 10 or 11 seconds out of us in some stages. I knew it would be tough and in the end the Skodas annihilated us. Here it feels the other way around."

The Monte Carlo Rally was Meeke's first with new co-driver Seb Marshall. The Englishman was equally pleased with his first

"It was a brilliant result for Kris"

Tommi Mäkinen

result alongside the five-time world rally winner.

"It was a great event and a great way to finish the weekend with the fastest time on the powerstage," Marshall told MN. "We've both been absolutely buzzing, we've enjoyed it so much. The car's doing exactly what he wants - you can see the smile he's got. We knew the powerstage was up for grabs, so we decided to take four seconds out of everybody! We worked really hard with the notes, with the onboarders and with the gravel crew. On the notes, we put some more stuff in - where we thought we could carry some more speed we added a 'flat' just to make sure Kris kept it pinned. It worked. Coming down to the stop line [of the powerstage], he said: 'It's going to be a good year,' and it certainly feels like we've started something here."

On the subject of the broken wheel rims - which also cost Tanak his hopes of a Monte Carlo

win - Mäkinen said: "This is our standard asphalt rim. We have run this since we started. We have a reinforced rim which is a little bit heavier, but that doesn't affect the performance, back at the factory. We will take it for Corsica."

"The problem we had with the rims is clearly a question of why... this is our third time here and in the two last years we had quite a bit more snow and when there's some snow on the side of the road then you don't get the same amount of corner-cutting."

"As well as that, the conditions were warmer and everybody was going in the cuts. When it's really cold the road and the side of the road is more frozen and you don't get the same problems from cutting the corners. This is some experience thing for us, but you know this is a brilliant result for us and an absolutely brilliant result for Kris. To do what he did in the powerstage and not just take a small margin, but four seconds is something special."



Wheel problems ruled Kris Meeke's team-mate Ott Tanak out of the fight at the front

HOW OGIER GOT BACK TO THE FRONT

PAGE 20

RACING NEWS

F1 ROUND-UP

'One-trick pony'

Ex-Ferrari Formula 1 driver Eddie Irvine has labelled four-time champion Sebastian Vettel "massively overrated" and a "one-trick pony". Despite claiming "I don't watch it [F1] anymore because it bores me", Irvine questioned five-time world champion Lewis Hamilton's credentials because of the Briton's "debatable" competition. Speaking to BBC Northern Ireland, Irvine said: "You watch Vettel and, when Vettel is racing someone, he is focused as much on the other guy as he is on where he is going and inevitably crashes into the other guy. I think Vettel is a good driver, but a four-times world champion, I just don't see it. I think he is massively overrated, I think he's a one-trick pony."

Caterham money

More than 200 ex-Caterham F1 employees have been paid a small sum as the long-running legal saga following the team's collapse finally nears its end. Caterham went into administration in 2014 amid a dispute between founder Tony Fernandes and a group of investors who had bought the team that summer. Administrators from Smith & Williamson took control of Caterham later in the year but the team had to miss the US and Brazilian Grands Prix, before a crowdfunding project allowed it to compete in Abu Dhabi. Attempts to help it continue in 2015 came to nothing but it has emerged that Smith & Williamson was able to pay 216 employees that were transferred to their control under TUPE regulations from Caterham.

All-new Renault

Renault has revealed that its 2019 F1 car is an all-new design in which only the power steering system is being carried over from last year. Renault executive director Marc Gené says its strategy has increased stress levels because of the amount of work necessary. "It is always challenging to get a car with thousands and thousands of parts, and the only thing we carried over from last year's car is the power steering," said Gené. "That gives you an idea that all the rest [of the car] is changing, and it is changing because we are trying to squeeze more performance from every area."

Early Toro Rosso

Toro Rosso is poised to become the first team to officially reveal its 2019 F1 car after confirming the earliest launch date so far. The Red Bull junior team has announced its Honda-powered STR14 will be unveiled on Monday, February 11. That puts it at the head of a queue of teams preparing to reveal their new challengers that week, ahead of testing commencing on February 18. Six teams have now revealed their launch dates, with Renault previously set to be the earliest by unveiling its new car on February 12.

McLAREN REVEALS ITS VISION OF 2050 GP CAR

AI co-pilot for 310mph machine



Aero would be "shape-shifting"

By Scott Mitchell

McLaren Applied Technologies, the Formula 1 team's sister company, has unveiled an extreme concept of how grand prix racing could look in 2050.

As part of the vision it has released images of a car concept dubbed the MCLExtreme, a 500km/h (310mph) rear-wheel-drive electric car powered by a "foldable battery moulded to the aerodynamic package".

The aero would be "shape-shifting", while the car technology would include an onboard AI co-pilot and "self-healing tyres".

It is not the first time McLaren has unveiled a futuristic concept, having

shared its MP4-X idea in December 2015.

But MAT's Future Grand Prix "vision" goes much further, assessing what car, driver, tracks and fan experiences could evolve into.

McLaren says it conducted extensive research that included speaking to fans, assessing "international policy on vehicle electrification and emission targets" and evaluating how human and car technology is likely to change.

Its ideas for futuristic race circuits include huge sidewinding banks, pitlanes with the capacity for battery charging and circuits that can adapt to extreme weather.

There would also be "black-out-zones with no communication or AI assistance for the driver", who would

have a specialised race suit reinforced to handle extremely high speeds.

The AI co-pilot element would "learn" from its driver, whose emotion would be "reflected on the chassis".

McLaren's circuit concept also includes transparent roofs to allow fans to see more track action, and fan engagement is another element that has been explored in detail.

It envisages "fan sentiment being projected in the cockpit of the car" and what it calls "mixed reality giving fans access to multiple camera angles and race data".

Esports competitors would be able to compete in the race virtually, in real-time – something that has been explored already in Formula E – while gamers

could race the track before grands prix to "teach the AI new race strategies".

Explaining the concept, MAT motorsport director Rodi Basso said: "We are always looking to innovate to find the solution for tomorrow today."

"In recent years, we have seen concepts and ideas about how a Formula 1 car could look and operate in the future."

"However, this is the first time anyone has given detailed thought and insight into a viable vision of motorsport in the future."

"Our hope is for this to stimulate debate about how motorsport responds to changes in technology and sports entertainment trends to ensure we can meet the needs of fans in 2050."



Drivers have reinforced suits

Front wing rule changes cost Red Bull team £13million

Formula 1's front wing rule changes cost Red Bull almost £13million but it has already recovered a large amount of performance, says the company's motorsport advisor Helmut Marko.

F1's 2019 changes include simplified front wings and bargeboards in a bid to make it easier for cars to follow, which in turn should lead to closer and better racing.

Red Bull was a vocal

opponent to the decision to push through those changes in May last year, citing a lack of reliable data to support it and the financial impact it would have.

Marko says that, while the front wing would improve F1's overtaking prospects, despite a performance level "already at the standard" of mid-2018, "we are €15million (£13m) poorer".

"We have the same [aerodynamic] data as last

summer," said Marko.

"By the time we get to Melbourne we'll probably be better than that."

"[But] there is now a good basis for discussion between Mercedes, Ferrari and us. We agree that regulations must not be determined by technicians."

"As soon as technicians are involved, the costs increase and everything becomes complicated. Things have to be specified."



Front wings have been simplified for 2019, but have come at a price

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*'What the future holds
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W Series insight, p24

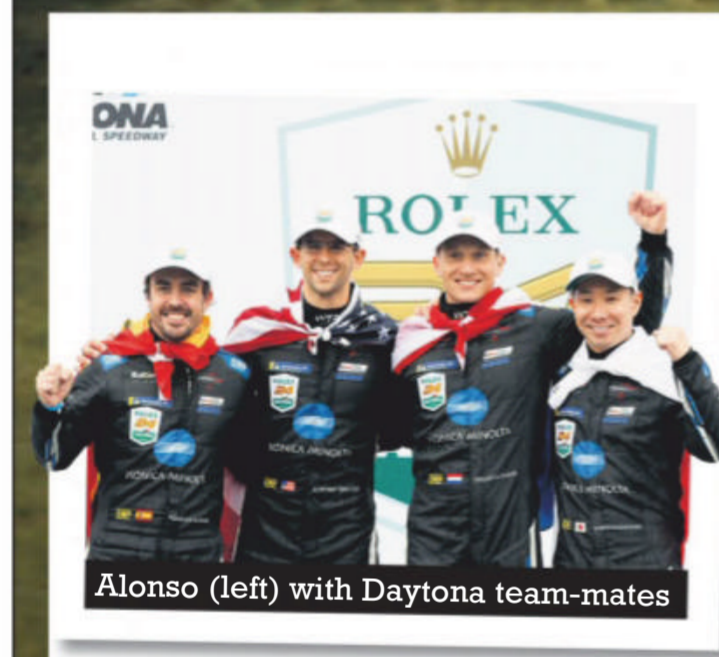


Photos: LAT, DPPI



Daytona 24 Hours was
plagued by bad weather

ALONSO TAKES VICTORY IN SODDEN DAYTONA 24 HOURS



Alonso (left) with Daytona team-mates

Fernando Alonso added another race win to his list of career victories last weekend after triumphing in the Daytona 24 Hours at the second attempt.

The two-time Formula 1 champion was instrumental in securing victory for the Wayne Taylor Racing Cadillac entry he shared with Renger van der Zande, Jordan Taylor and Kamui Kobayashi, starring in the wet conditions that characterised the latter part of the race.

He had pulled out a lead of 55 seconds on the opposition in the early hours of the morning before the race was red-flagged a first time, running almost three seconds a lap

quicker than his nearest challengers. He had just retaken the lead from the Action Express Cadillac of Felipe Nasr when action was halted for a second time with a little under two hours left on the clock, as Nasr went wide at Turn 1.

Speaking after the race, Alonso said the worsening conditions in the run-up to the second stoppage were such that he was calling for the race to be neutralised before he passed Nasr.

"I called a lot of times, when I was second, over the radio that a safety car was necessary," said Alonso. "The last five, seven laps of the race were not I think right, for anyone on track.

"The visibility was nearly zero, we could not be flat-out on the straights, the car was moving, the TC [traction control] was coming in sixth gear at 200mph, there were parts of different cars in different parts of the track, because people were losing bodywork here and there."

Despite the tricky weather conditions, Alonso was delighted to win, telling NBCSN: "[It was] just an amazing experience with this team, from the test and now the race – a perfect execution of the race.

"[There were] very different conditions, we've been competitive in everything: dry and wet, night and day. [I'm] really happy for the team."

Software glitch to blame for FE crash, claims Buemi

Sebastien Buemi says a software glitch contributed to the crash that eliminated him from the lead of Formula E's Santiago race and reckons it "was not my fault".

The Nissan e.dams driver led the first two thirds of the race from pole but locked up at the fast Turn 7 right-hander while being chased by eventual race winner Sam Bird and Pascal Wehrlein.

Off-line and onto asphalt that had broken up in the race's scorching conditions, he slid into the wall on the outside, the same point that he had crashed at heavily during FP1 earlier on Saturday.

"I cannot say too much – that's the problem," said Buemi.

"The only thing I can tell you [is] it was not my fault.

"Basically, we had lots of software issues during the day, which of course were related to the crash I had in FP1, the big



Buemi (left) led in Santiago before hitting the wall and being forced to retire

crash. That was related to a small software issue.

"Unfortunately I had another issue

in the race that was there from lap one and that basically made the crash happen. It didn't help me in that phase."

Fewtrell: 'I need to turn heads' with ART in Formula 3

New ART Grand Prix FIA Formula 3 signing Max Fewtrell believes he can win races and wants to "turn heads" on his way to success in the 2019 season.

Fewtrell was confirmed at ART last week, also extending his involvement in the Renault Academy.

The 19-year-old won the prestigious Formula Renault Eurocup last season and the British F4 title in 2016.

"I'm really confident for this year,"

Fewtrell told Motorsport News.

"I'd want to be challenging for wins, I need to make a good impression on the Formula 1 team straight away.

"I need to turn a few heads by being fast straight out of the box.

"Obviously Renault know it's difficult to do that and I have a bit of time to adjust and learn, but I think it would really help me to be on it straight away rather than taking the whole year."



Renault Academy driver Fewtrell

Di Grassi slams 'stupid' brake rule

Lucas di Grassi has called for the "very stupid" rule he broke in qualifying for FIA Formula E's race in Santiago to be immediately revised.

The Audi driver originally claimed pole position for Saturday's race by 0.526 seconds ahead of Nissan e.dams driver Sebastien Buemi, but was excluded and sent to the back of the grid for violating Article 27.9 of FE's sporting regulations.

This relates to an amendment filed by FE chassis supplier Spark ahead of the race in Santiago regarding brake usage on in-laps during qualifying.

Audi and di Grassi explained that the update requires all drivers to brake in exactly the same way on their in-laps as they do on their flying laps.

It has been introduced on safety grounds to avoid damage to the brakes.

"There are a lot of stupid rules [in motorsport], but this one is a very stupid one," he said.

"I don't know if it's the most [stupid] one, but I think this rule should be revised immediately for the next race.

"Basically I got disqualified by not using my brake pedal in the right way on my in-lap during qualifying.

"I never saw a rule like that – for me it is a completely stupid rule."

He started the race 22nd and was eventually classified 12th after he received a 34-second post-race penalty for contact.

No superlicence points for Ticktum in AWS

The series in which Red Bull Junior Dan Ticktum is trying to secure his Formula 1 superlicence is ineligible for points, MN's sister publication *Autosport* has learned.

The inaugural Asian Formula 3 Winter Series (AWS) was included on the FIA's list of series, published in December 2018, to which F1 superlicence points would be assigned.

Red Bull elected to place Ticktum – who has 35 of the 40 points required – into the AWS, which he has been contesting with Hitech GP.

But points will not be awarded for success in the AWS because it does not fulfil the FIA's criteria.

The FIA's Appendix L regulations stipulate that to be eligible, a series "must be composed of a minimum of five race weekends" and "be held on a minimum of three different tracks".

The AWS takes place over just three rounds, held on two different circuits, with the opener at Buriram in Thailand and the second and third events at former Malaysian Grand Prix venue Sepang.

Ticktum needed a top three in the standings, if the series was an eligible category, to get the necessary superlicence points. But he is down in eighth in the points after incidents at the opening round and car problems in the second event in a tough start to the series.



Arden had one F2 victory in 2018

HWA pairs up with Arden, champion Hubert joins

Arden International has paired with Formula E and DTM outfit HWA for the 2019 Formula 2 season, and signed GP3 champion Anthoine Hubert.

HWA joins Arden as an engineering and technical partner, with Arden looking to rebound from a disappointing season last year where it scored one victory and took second to last in the F2 teams' championship.

Arden boss Garry Horner said: "HWA bring a wealth of engineering expertise and knowledge to the programme and we look forward to working with them."

Hubert, 22, has become a fully-fledged Renault F1 junior, and joins having tested last year with MP. He claims HWA made the squad a more attractive proposition.

"The fact that they are joining with HWA really motivated me to go to them, I hope that the experience of Arden and the professionalism from the structure of HWA can be a good mix and we can achieve great things together," said the French driver.

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Clio prize offers £20,000

The last Renault UK Clio Cup champion will receive a new cash prize of £20,000. Before Christmas it was revealed that 2019 will be the final year of the category before it is axed at the end of the season. The winner of the Graduate Cup – for drivers in their first full Clio season and aged under 23 – will also be rewarded with a cash prize of £5000.

TCR UK 2019 tweaks

TCR UK will alter its qualifying and race formats for this season to bring the series in line with other TCR championships around the world. Instead of having a single 30-minute qualifying session, there will now be a 20-minute session, followed by a 10-minute one with the combined times from these setting the grid for race one. The race duration will also be reduced from 30 minutes to 23 minutes plus one lap.

Hauger moves F4 series

British Formula 4 race winner Dennis Hauger will switch to competing in the German and Italian F4 series with Van Amersfoort Racing this year. The Norwegian took fourth place in the British standings driving for Arden in 2018. His fellow Red Bull-affiliated driver Jack Doohan is expected to switch to a F3-level European series.



The pair will drive a Ferrari 458

Ex-F3 racer de Zille joins up with son to race in GT Cup

Ex-British Formula 3 racer Graham de Zille is planning a return to racing this year after 25 years away, competing with his son Dan in the GT Cup.

The pair is set to race a Ferrari 458 with FF Corse and de Zille Sr tested the car at Donington Park last week.

"I last raced in Renault Clios back in 1993, after doing three years in the British F3 Championship," he said. "I even tested an Andy Rouse Sierra RS500 for the British Touring Car Championship before stopping and then supporting Dan's racing career."

One of the highlights of Graham's racing career was finishing ninth in the prestigious Monaco F3 race in 1985 in his Pegasus Motorsport Ralt. He was partnered for most of his F3 career by Gerrit van Kouwen.

"As Dan had stopped racing too I decided to buy my Ferrari 458 Challenge car for trackdays, but soon got bored and looked for something to race in," he added. "So we decided on GT Cup and we can race it together with FF Corse."

De Zille Jr last raced in 2013 when he was seventh in Porsche Carrera Cup GB, having previously been sixth in the 2011 British Formula Ford Championship with JTR. He also raced in Formula Renault but, after finishing his career, joined Red Bull F1 as a software engineer.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins



Double R won F4 title with Jewiss in 2018

GINETTA JUNIOR STAR SIGNS WITH DOUBLE R

Foster's single-seater move into British Formula 4

By Stephen Lickorish

Ginetta Junior runner-up Louis Foster will switch to British Formula 4 for this season, driving for the frontrunning Double R squad.

The 15-year-old was one of the standout drivers in Ginetta Junior last year, winning nine races, despite it being his rookie campaign. He actually scored more points than champion Adam Smalley too, but was hit with a hefty 27-point deduction for various offences during the season.

Foster won nine races last year in Ginettas



Foster – the son of former British Touring Car driver Nick – admitted that he hadn't planned to move into single-seaters but, because of his age (he doesn't turn 16 until July), he was unable to progress into senior racing.

"I couldn't move on to British GT, for example and doing another year in Ginetta Junior wouldn't really develop any other skills as I had almost mastered it [already]," Foster said. "But we weren't really looking at F4 because of the budget and my physique – as I'm quite tall. It wasn't a route we were planning to

take but I will be using this year as a way to develop more skills."

Foster had tested with JHR Developments and Richardson Racing too but opted to join Double R and follow in the footsteps of fellow MB Partners-managed driver Kiern Jewiss, who claimed the F4 title last season.

Foster added: "I'm not one to go out and say I'm going to win because I don't know and I don't want to put pressure on myself. If we can come away with top four or five at the end of the season [that would be great]."

"I just want to learn as I'm pretty sure we're going back down the tin-top cars route next year. I'm just going to go and have fun – which is what I did last year in Ginetta Junior."

Younger Ericsson joins British F3 grid

Hampus Ericsson – younger brother of ex-Formula 1 and IndyCar driver Marcus – will contest the BRDC British Formula 3 season with Double R.

The Swede contested two rounds of British F3 last season with Fortec Motorsports, recording a best result of third at Donington Park.

The 16-year-old raced in British F4 with the Fortec for the last two seasons. But he joins Double R which won the 2016 and '18 British F3 titles with Matheus Leist and Linus Lundqvist respectively. Marcus raced in British F3 with the team in the 2009 season.

"I did two test days with the team in December and it felt great, the guys pushed me and gave me a great car to drive so I'm looking forward to the start of the season," said Hampus.



Hampus (left) with Marcus

Eastwell to contest Bathurst FF1600 support races

BRSCC National Formula Ford frontrunner Michael Eastwell will compete on the support package of this weekend's Bathurst 12 Hour.

The Mazda Road to Indy finalist will race a Spectrum 010 in the three-race Formula Ford programme, as the series celebrates its 50th anniversary in Australia.

Eastwell will race for Ellery Motorsport, from whom he bought and imported his National FF1600 Spectrum, and has been testing at Phillip Island.

"This has been in the works since last August," Eastwell told MN. "Ellery kept track of my progress and were keen to get me into their car."

"The crazy thing about that track is even if you're the quickest, the slipstream is so huge that you can be 20 car lengths back, pick up the tow and pass by the end of the straight."

"I'm not one of those cocky people who says I'm definitely going to win, but that's always the goal."



Eastwell has driven Spectrum in the BRSCC's National FF1600 series

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OBITUARY

Charly Lamm
1955 – 2019



British Touring Car Championship boss Alan Gow led tributes to Charly Lamm, the head of the BMW Schnitzer team that was part of the UK's showpiece series in the 1990s, who passed away last week aged 63.

The Schnitzer team, the factory-blessed arm of the German marque, was created in the 1960s.

Lamm joined the operation in the 1970s and he progressed to become team manager.

Schnitzer was a powerhouse in the European Touring Car Championship in the 1980s before enjoying glory in the German-based DTM category.

The team first ran the factory BMWs in the BTCC in 1993 and was a success, with Jo Winkelhock claiming the title at his first attempt, while team-mate Steve Soper was runner-up.

The team switched to sportscar racing, which led to victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1999 with the V12 LMR machine.

Lamm worked on BMW projects in the USA and also oversaw its attack on the World Touring Car Championship. He also spearheaded a return to the DTM in 2012.

Gow said: "I'm shocked and incredibly saddened to hear about Charly. He was one of the kindest and most thoughtful people I have ever dealt with. And he was a brilliant team manager, whose work-ethic, knowledge and passion was boundless. The world of touring car racing has lost a true legend."

HARVEY RETURNS TO FF1600 RACING

British Touring Car Championship winner Tim Harvey will return to the wheel of a single-seater this season as he has purchased his original racing car, a Van Diemen RF81 Formula Ford 1600.

The 57-year-old raced in the category in his formative years, and he is now planning a comeback during the 2019 season.

"I loved Formula Ford," said Harvey. "Along with karting, it is the purest form of racing that you can get and it was a launchpad for me. I started off in the Champion of Brands series in 1983 with a car that was two years old because it was all I could afford. However, I managed to finish seventh in the Formula Ford Festival in it in 1983 and that really set my career going."

Harvey, who claimed the BTCC title in 1992 and now commentates on the category for ITV4, said he would look to take

part in as many races as he can.

"I saw a Classic Formula Ford race at Donington Park last year, and thought it was amazing," said Harvey. "I realised that the RF81 could still be competitive in it, so I hatched a plan. I knew [team boss and racer] Jonathan Lewis had bought my old car, and I got in touch with him asking him that if he ever wanted to sell it, I wanted first refusal.

"Eventually he decided to sell it to me, and he is going to run it for me. I will probably do six or so races, and I want to do the Formula Ford Festival and the Walter Hayes Trophy too."

● Tim Harvey's son Jamie, 30, has passed his ARDS test at Brands Hatch and will look to take part in some racing this season too. "He has done some karting and trackdays," said Harvey Sr. "He is looking to have some fun in something like the Citroen C1 Racing Club series – maybe I could join him for one of the longer races..."

Last BTCC race was in 2002



Harvey: BTCC champion in '92



McLaren 570S GT4s will be run in British GT by HHC Motorsport

Multi-year partnership between HHC Motorsport and McLaren for British GT series

HHC Motorsport will switch its allegiance from Ginetta to McLaren after signing a multi-year partnership to run the marque's 570S GT4s as an official McLaren Customer Racing team in British GT.

The Yorkshire-based outfit, which won British GT at the first time of asking in 2017 with Will Tregurtha and Stuart Middleton in a Ginetta G55 GT4, will enter two 570S

GT4s in the championship this season, with potential for a parallel programme in European GT4.

After winning at Rockingham last year, Callum Pointon will remain with HHC and will be partnered by Dean Macdonald, who raced alongside GT4 champion Jack Mitchell at Century Motorsport for the final three rounds of 2018 and

has previous experience of McLaren from racing with Garage 59 in 2017. The second pairing is being finalised.

HHC's Charlie Kemp told Motorsport News that he expects the partnership to bear fruit quickly.

"We never enter anything without thinking that we've got a chance of winning it," he said.

"I've got every faith that

we will continue to do what we normally do which is hit the ground running and hopefully we're in the fight for the championship come the last round."

MN understands that the team would not be severing its ties with Ginetta, which is not represented on the 2019 grid, although McLaren personnel will support the team in British GT this year.

Combe adds Mini class to Hot Hatch series

The Castle Combe Circuit's Hot Hatch Challenge Series will introduce a class for Mini R53s in 2019 after interest from potential competitors.

The circuit's Hot Hatch series was launched in 2017 and has attracted impressive grids since, usually consisting of nearly 30 cars.

Steve Weston, Castle Combe Racing Club competitions director, claims several drivers approached the club about introducing a Mini class which will be open to supercharged machines.

"We have got a few loyal local competitors and my understanding is there's three, maybe four, who have got JCW



Popular: Combe's Hot Hatch series

Minis who came to us and said if they had a class for them they would join," he said.

"If we made another class then they can race against each other.

"I think there's a lot of interest around Minis at the moment because it's their 60th anniversary and they are joining TOCA in 2020, but that's obviously a story this year."

Photo: Jakob Ebrey



Winners of British motorsport's most prestigious titles attended Motorsport UK's annual Night of Champions awards evening at the Royal Automobile Club last Saturday. On hand to present the awards were FIA president Jean Todt and chairman of Motorsport UK David Richards. They were joined by a series of special award winners, each recognised for outstanding achievement in their areas of contribution to the sport. One of them was James Newbold, editor of MN's sister publication *Autosport Performance*, who was presented with the Motorsport UK Young Journalist of the Year award.

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RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Richard Styles

EU VOTE COULD SAVE UK MOTORSPORT

Sport may still be exempt from insurance law



No insurance for crashes

By Jack Benyon

National motorsport took a giant leap towards safety last week when an EU committee voted to exclude the sport from an insurance law which had threatened to send it spiralling into chaos.

The 2014 Vnuk court case set a precedent that all vehicles in the EU should have insurance, even if they are being used on private land, and that the Motor Insurance Directive (MID) was being interpreted incorrectly. The MID is the document that tells EU countries how to make

motor insurance rules.

That would mean all cars competing in motorsport events in Europe would need to be insured individually, and instances such as cars colliding on a racetrack could become road traffic accidents and involve the police.

Dan Dalton, an MEP for the West Midlands, is the son of a former marshal and timekeeper and had put forward the motion of excluding motorsport from the amended wording of the MID to the EU Parliamentary committee he sits on.

The internal market committee voted on the amendment last Tuesday (January 22) and sided with excluding

motorsport from the implementation of the new insurance law.

Dalton had previously said that the result was “too close to call”.

The amendment still needs to be passed by the main parliament, but it rarely goes against the decisions of its committees and the vote in the committee was seen as the most important.

“I am relieved that my fellow MEPs from this committee listened to my concerns about the risk this draft law poses to British motorsport,” Dalton told Motorsport News.

“As the son of a former marshal, I know that this is a way of life for

many people in the UK. This is a victory for common sense regulation.

“What happens next is that all MEPs will vote on this compromise at one of the next meetings in Strasbourg.

“This could be as early as February As a general rule, they will follow what has been agreed by our committee.”

Despite the success, Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers has warned that motorsport isn't out of the woods yet.

The law still needs to be passed before EU elections in May. If it isn't passed by then, it would likely have to start again and that could be catastrophic for Britain as it likely won't have any MEPs by then because of Brexit.

Rawlings moves into Mini Challenge with Jamsport

Monoposto 1000 frontrunner Tom Rawlings will graduate to the Mini Challenge with Jamsport this year.

Rawlings will race the Mini JCW campaigned by champion Ant Whorton-Eales last season, having tested the machine at Snetterton and Donington Park before Christmas.

Seventeen-year-old Rawlings, who was third in the Formula 1000 Junior Rally Championship in 2017, endured a mixed debut season in circuit racing last year.

He took multiple pole positions, won twice and claimed a total of five podiums from the six races he finished, but suffered from poor reliability on his Suzuki-engined Speads. He is focusing on a career away from single-seaters.

“We looked at Formula 4, British F3, and there was just nowhere really after that to branch off,” said Rawlings. “With this, you've got GT Cup, British Touring Cars – there's a bit more opportunity.”

Rawlings is planning some warm-weather testing overseas before the new season, and will join the already-announced Harry Gooding at Jamsport, alongside returnee Calum King and Excelr8 refugee Stuart Gibbs.

Luke Reade will also remain in the category this year, with the former Renault UK Clio Cup driver competing with Excelr8.

● Cooper Pro class frontrunner Toby Goodman will race in the division again this season with Excelr8. He finished third in the standings in 2018.

BMW Car Club expects capacity grid at Donington

The boss of BMW Car Club Racing believes a 42-car capacity grid is possible for the season-opening round at Donington Park and is “worried” about turning competitors away.

The club had considerable success attracting competitors in its debut season last year – even though several BMW racing series already existed – with 21 competing in its inaugural Castle Combe round and 31 in May's Silverstone event.

Series coordinator Neil McDonald has told Motorsport News that interest in the category is continuing to grow for 2019, to the point that entries may exceed the 42-car circuit capacity for the Donington GP curtain-raiser taking place on April 22.

“We've got so much interest we're worried about having too many drivers but hopefully that won't be an issue,” said McDonald.

“We've got a big capacity because we're doing the Grand Prix circuit so it should be fine but we don't know until people register at the end of the day with any of these things. But let's hope we don't have to turn anyone away.”

Drivers who plan to race during the season include two-time Kumho BMW champion and BTCC driver Rick Kerry, ex-Kumho and BMW Cup champion Kevin Denwood and two-time Northern Saloons champion Mike Cutt.

The forthcoming 2019 eight-round season will also be BMW Car Club Racing's first as a points-paying championship.

Twelve new Revolution cars the aim for first race

Revolution Race Cars has finalised the specification of the fledgling manufacturer's first prototype, having made a number of tweaks to the Ford V6-engined machine.

The car will compete in the new-for-2019 UK Sports Prototype Cup series, in which Revolutions will race alongside the BARC Radical SR3 Trophy (open to RSX, RS and SuperSport models).

“There's so much you don't know until you build one, but we've taken 30kg out of the tub, a similar amount from the body, now simplified from 53 components to 23, and made a carbonfibre crash

box,” said Revolution spokesman Roger Green.

“The muleta has covered several thousand miles, and customer tests at the Autodromo Internacional Algarve start on January 29. We have deposits on 10 cars and 12 drivers booked to try it in Portugal before hopefully committing. We're aiming for 12 cars on the grid at Silverstone on April 27.”

Sports Prototype Cup promoter James Bailey has appointed Amanda Abbott, long-time Radical Sportscars' championship manager (and wife of Revolution principal Phil) as series coordinator.



Tweaks have been made to the Revolution prototype's specification

Albone's title-winning cars will still race in 2019

The two cars driven to RGB Sports 1000 titles by Billy Albone will still be raced this year despite his retirement.

Albone won the 2017 and '18 titles aboard Spire machinery but has decided to take a step back from racing to focus on his business.

Paul Nightingale, founder of the team, confirmed that both Spire GT3 cars would still be back out in the series this season in the hands of Ryan Yarrow and Richard Morris. “[Yarrow] was racing one of ours

for his first season [in RGB last year] and he was getting fairly quick,” said Nightingale.

“He was driving one of the old models so he will benefit from the newer model [2017 car].

“Morris, we ran him at Donington Park in a test day.

“The 2018 car has different front suspension [compared to the 2017 car], it has revised geometry and a dry-sump Suzuki engine instead of a Honda.”



Albone (1) took back-to-back RGB Sports 1000 titles driving in Spire GT3s but has decided to retire from racing

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20th July	Down Rally	Northern Island	Closed Road
4th August	Solway Coast Rally	Southern Scotland	Military Ranges
28th September	Patriot Stages	South East Wales	Single Venue Military

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HISTORICS

'Watts and Soper won Group 1 award'
Legends recognised, below



Photos: Paul Lawrence

DOWN THE PUB WITH

TAPIO MAKINEN

Brother of rally legend
Age: 70 Lives: Finland

His brother was Timo

"When my big brother Timo was driving in the rally world and making a name for himself in the 1960s, I took responsibility of the family transport company. I participated in a few rallies in the late 1960s but it was just as a hobby."

He is doing the Historic Monte

"On my 70th birthday my children showed me a picture of myself taken in Alastaro circuit and said that was the last time I looked relaxed. They said they want the same look back on my face and that's why they signed me up for Rallye Monte Carlo Historique."

He's never been before

"I have never been in Rallye Monte Carlo or even to Monte Carlo for a Formula 1 race. Work took all of my time when Timo was at the top of the rally world. Timo died in 2017."

His brother won in 1965

"The race is driven with the rules from Automobile Club Monaco for cars built between 1955 and 1980. Rallye Historique is also reserved only to car models, which have participated in Rallye Monte Carlo between these years. My brother Timo won the competition in 1965 in a Mini Cooper S with his British co-driver Paul Easter. Our main goal is to finish the rally."

He's in a Triumph TR3

"The Triumph TR3 is small, low, narrow and heavy. Timo praised Triumph's torque of the engine. He said the car's low centre of gravity was a benefit, except the jumping qualities were non-existent."

It will be an adventure

"I have heard that it is a fine event honouring the old rally traditions. This competition is a valuable cultural event. I haven't driven at all in the Alpes Maritimes. I've visited a few times as a tourist. It's nice to feel the atmosphere of the golden times of my brother's career in a car he started his journey with. We go to support this fine rally event's culture."



Makinen is relishing rally

MAKINEN'S BROTHER IN MONTE CARLO DEBUT

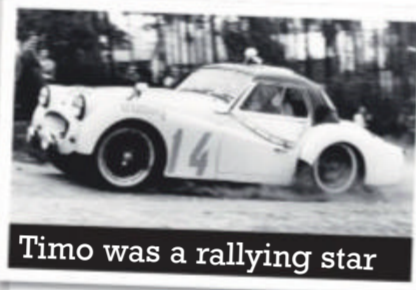
Timo's sibling Tapio to tackle Historique in Triumph

By Paul Lawrence

The brother of the late Timo Makinen will drive Timo's first rally car on this week's Rallye Monte Carlo Historique.

Tapio Makinen will make an emotional debut on the rally in his elder brother's Triumph TR3.

The Finnish driver will be among more than 300 starters on the event that recreates the Monte Carlo Rally of the 1950s. The week-long event starts today from multiple points and concludes with a night section on the Col de Turini. The cars starting from Glasgow will visit Banbury town centre



Timo was a rallying star



Tapio Makinen and co-driver Kari Temonen

tomorrow (Thursday).

Tapio Makinen celebrated his 70th birthday recently with a special present from his children. They secretly arranged for him to be entered in the Monte Historique in Timo's first rally car, a Triumph TR3. Co-driver Kari Temonen has contested the rally as a co-driver three times before.

Timo's career started in 1959

and his first rally car was the 1957 Triumph TR3, purchased in the spring of 1959. Timo, who worked as a delivery driver in their family business, wanted to contest the biggest motorsport events in Finland and the 1959 1000 Lakes Rally, now Rally Finland, was only his second event.

He went on to take many successes at the top of the

sport, but his younger brother Tapio focused his attention on the family business. Timo passed away in 2017.

Brothers Steve and Tony Graham (Lancia Fulvia) are among 10 British crews on the entry list, which also includes John Buffum (Porsche 911), Jurgen Barth (Porsche 924) and former GT racer Daniele Perfetti (Lancia Stratos).

WRC battlers Neuville and Hirvonen to take on the Boucles de Bastogne challenge

World Rally Championship stars Thierry Neuville and Mikko Hirvonen head the spectacular 300-car entry for this weekend's Boucles de Bastogne, the biggest historic rally of the season. Neuville will drive the Opel

Corsa he first used a year ago, while Hirvonen is in a Ford Escort Mk2.

British driver Alan Walker will tackle the event for the first time in his Escort Mk2 and the leading BHRC contender knows

he faces a big challenge.

"It is going to be a massive adventure," said Walker. "It's like a road rally in the daylight: flat-out rallying with passage controls. We'll be making our own notes for Saturday's asphalt

stages and then on Saturday night we get a YouTube link for Sunday's gravel stages.

"We're staying in the same place as Mikko Hirvonen so I reckon my only chance is to get him in the bar on Friday night!"

Gordon Spice Trophy for Silverstone Classic

Fifty years of the Ford Capri will be marked at the Silverstone Classic with a special award from one of the greatest ever Capri racers, Gordon Spice.

Spice, now aged 78, will present the one-off Gordon Spice Trophy to the first Capri home in the Historic Touring Car Challenge race at the July event. Spice was the most successful Capri racer in

the British Saloon Car Championship for five seasons between 1976 and 1980, lifting the class title on each occasion.

"The Capri was by far the easiest car I ever raced," he recalled. "There was absolutely nothing complicated about it – the rear-drive chassis was simple to tune, so it handled really, really well. It was just a brilliant motor car."



Gordon Spice was a master in a Capri

Record breakers and speed kings to be celebrated at this year's Goodwood Festival

The central theme for the Goodwood Festival of Speed on July 4-7 will be 'Speed Kings – Motor Sport's Record Breakers'.

The 27th edition of the hillclimb will celebrate the people and the

machines that set the benchmark or raised the bar. As well as a focus on the Land Speed Record, every area of record breaking in motorsport will be marked, including the most consecutive

wins, the most championships, fastest laps, pole positions and many more.

Goodwood's Will Kinsman said: "We will celebrate the ultimate heroes of motorsport

past, present and future. The team is working to ensure the paddocks are bursting with the most talented drivers alongside the most iconic race machines."

IN BRIEF

Formula 2 prize

The Historic Sports Car Club has announced a new award for the Historic Formula 2 FIA International Series. The Richardson Engineering 'Spirit of F2' Trophy will be presented at the end of the season to the driver who best typifies sporting camaraderie in the series.

DAF up for sale

The ex-Tony Hazlewood DAF 55 V8 Super Saloon is up for sale. Hazlewood originally built the car in the early 1970s and later bought it back and restored it in time to run at the 2011 Goodwood Festival of Speed. It has only been used for demonstrations since and is now being offered for sale due to Hazlewood's illness.

Arctic Circle full

Dutch organisers Classic Events NL have already received 20 entries for the 4400-mile Arctic Circle Rally, which starts near Berlin on June 13 2020.

Brits in Belgium

British crews contesting this weekend's Boucles de Bastogne in Belgium include frontrunners Tim Pearcey and Neil Shanks in their Ford Escort Mk2. Joining them is the Fiat 137 of Andrew Siddall/Alex Lee, while running in the demonstration section are the Subaru Imprezas of Steve Rockingham and Martyn Spurrell.

Clubmans meet up

An open meeting for anyone interested in Classic Clubmans will be held at the White Horse Pub, Stocks Hill near Silverstone, starting at 1030hrs on Saturday February 9. Competitors, engine builders and series officials will all be hand to meet prospective newcomers to the championship.

Watts and Soper

Patrick Watts and Steve Soper have been awarded the Tony Dron Trophy for last year's Group 1 section of the Historic Touring Car Challenge in Watts' Ford Capri. They earned the Tricentral Cup as won by Dron during the British Saloon Car Championship race at the 1977 British Grand Prix.

Legends awards

Chris Ward and John Young (Lister Knobbly) were honoured at the recent Motor Racing Legends awards with the presentation of the Stirling Moss Trophy, the trophy won by Moss for his first British GP win in 1955 at Aintree. John Ure and Nick Wigley collected the Royal Automobile Club Woodcote Trophy for their successful season in their Cooper Bristol T24/25.



Ure and Wigley: RAC Trophy



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FIA DETERMINED TO PUSH THROUGH WRC HYBRID FUTURE

Jean Todt confirms alternative power from 2022 season



Hybrid cars will be in the WRC in 2022

By David Evans

The World Rally Championship will introduce hybrid or electric regulations in time for the 2022 season.

FIA president Jean Todt confirmed the future regulations to Motorsport News during last week's Monte Carlo Rally. Todt talked of his frustrations at the lack of progress in introducing any form of sustainable technology to the WRC and lay the blame for that firmly at the door of the manufacturers.

"Myself, I'm completely in favour of taking into account the evolution of motoring for rallying," he said. "And clearly it is a big frustration for me not to see that rallying has engaged on at least some hybrids and some new technology."

"The reason is, I am told by people who are there to run the business, is that manufacturers don't want [it]. They don't want to change the regulation. They don't want... it's always the reason. For me, this is completely no position; when I go to motor shows in Frankfurt, Paris, China, Japan, Geneva,



Todt annoyed by WRC's hybrid delay

I only see new technologies. For me it's frustrating to see in an FIA world event they don't want new technologies.

"But now, finally the manufacturers say we need some hybrids. The technical people at the FIA, with the input of the manufacturers, [are] working to implement it in 2022. The reason this didn't happen earlier is because they did not want it."

FIA rally director Yves Matton added further detail, involving specific regulation change. The current five-year homologation

cycle runs from 2017-2021.

Matton said: "We know very well what our timeframe is, it will be in 2019 when we release the regulations and this gives [the manufacturers] more than enough time [to be ready]."

M-Sport Ford team principal Rich Millener said the manufacturers were ready and waiting to see the regulations for the future.

"There will be some form of hybrid [in 2022], that's a must," said Millener. "It's the only way some of the [current] manufacturers will stay in the sport and it's the only way for us to attract new manufacturers. It's so important to get those regulations out this year. If we can have those in the middle of this season then that gives the sport six months to go to possible new manufacturers to say: 'This is what we've got, do you want it?'"

Millener admitted the process of bringing a hybrid solution to the WRC had taken longer than it might have.

"The manufacturers all want this," he said. "We all know we want it, but the problem is agreeing what we want;

everybody is putting forward the ideas for the best solution that will suit their own product and that's understandable. The FIA needs to take those views away and come back and tells us what we're going to do. We need to know, for example, will there be common [FIA-supplied] parts and, if so, what will they be?"

"The main argument seems to be between low voltage and high voltage hybrid systems – but how do we integrate those systems and what do we use as a base? Will there be some kind of standardised system across the cars? We're in limbo right now, so we need some direction – we need to know will we as M-Sport need some outside assistance with this? When we moved from the 2015-2017 specification cars, the work was all still mechanical. OK, there were different strategies and technologies involved, but we could do that work ourselves with the help we get from Ford."

While the WRC is still basking in the glory of the current generation of World Rally Cars, Millener said 2022 is

the right time for change.

He added: "I think the timing is just about right: the regs come at some point this year, we start designing the car early next year and we then have one season to test the car in 2021. The end of the five-year cycle is the right time to do this. The current cars will have done their job by then. It looks like we're going to have another really competitive season again this year and for the two following, but then it's time for a change."

The key challenges facing a hybrid and electric solution for the WRC revolve around the roaming nature of the discipline. The average loop on a WRC round involves the cars being away from service for around 170 miles with 50 of those being competitive and running in 'stage' mode. An all-electric solution is unlikely, even though PSA Group CEO Carlos Tavares has admitted to MN that a full electric solution would be the most sellable option for the French firm. There's also discussion of synthetic fuels, but the feeling is that this doesn't go far enough.

▶ HOW OGIER GOT HIS CITROEN RETURN OFF TO A FLYING START

▶▶▶ PAGE 20



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"Tanak set some blistering times"
Monte Carlo report, p20



Photo: Taneli Niinimäki/AKK



Bottas took fifth on the Arctic Rally

MORE RALLIES FOR BOTTAS AFTER STRONG DEBUT

Mercedes Formula 1 star Valtteri Bottas has vowed to return to rallying after a successful debut at last week's Arctic Rally.

The Finn finished the Rovaniemi-based event in fifth overall and set a fastest time in his M-Sport-run Ford Fiesta WRC. Co-driven by two-time world champion Timo Rautiainen, Bottas said: "This was a very nice experience. One goal I had before the start was to get to the finish line and we made it. We learned a lot during the rally and the speed got higher all the time – and confidence in my driving also got better.

"Everything went as planned: we started quite calmly and then gradually increased speed. We were able to avoid big mistakes, even though we had a few moments. I feel great and it was nice to be able to drive the quickest stage time on one of the special stages.

"My co-driver Timo was a huge help in the project and I learned from him a lot. I'm very happy with our cooperation and the project. [At the] latest next year we will drive our next rally here in Rovaniemi."

Rautiainen, who returns to the co-driver's seat alongside Marcus Gronholm at next month's Rally Sweden, added: "The rally went very well. Already at the first rally test [in a Group N Mitsubishi] I had a feeling this could work. On the following World Rally Car tests I knew this could definitely work. Still this achievement was a surprise; the driving style of Valtteri was mature and there were no mistakes.

"He didn't have any fear in the quick parts. Medium-speed turns were the places where we still lost some time. This was a great way to approach the rally, it was an unbelievable performance."

M-Sport team principal Rich Millener said: "The boys were very impressed with his driving. As you'd expect with a Formula 1 driver, the speed was nothing to worry about for him, but his technique between the trees was really good. One of the differences the engineers noticed that he didn't go to full throttle all the time, he's used to searching for the grip – whereas these boys, as soon as they have grip, they're full throttle."

Kristoffersson wins again

Valtteri Bottas wasn't the only driver impressing out of his comfort zone at the weekend – two-time World RX champion Johan Kristoffersson scored his second rally win in a month as he prepares for Rally Sweden.

Driving a Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 prepared and run by his own team, Kristoffersson was quickest on four of eight stages to beat Patrik Flodin to victory on the Mekonomen-Bergslagsrally in Sweden. He also won the Romjulsrally in Norway on the last weekend of last year.

Kristoffersson will tackle a further one-day event in Sweden on Saturday ahead of his home WRC round. The 30-year-old was sixth R5 car home on the Torsby-based event last year and is hoping to improve on that record having switched from a Skoda Fabia to a Polo this time around.

"The car was fantastic," he said. "From the first metre we had no problem at all. I'm enjoying the rallying and really looking forward to Rally Sweden next month. It will be nice to see what sort of speed the other guys in WRC2 are bringing."



Toyota boss disappointed Casino Square wasn't used for the start

Makinen calls for more Monte Carlo miles

Toyota team principal Tommi Makinen has called for the organisers of the season-opening World Rally Championship round to put Monte Carlo back at the heart of the route.

Makinen admitted he was disappointed not to see Monaco's Casino Square being used for the ceremonial start of last week's season-opener. "When I was competing we were based always in Monte Carlo," the four-time event winner told Motorsport News. "Always there was a really fantastic atmosphere around the place and you knew you were

in Monte Carlo Rally – now we don't know that at all. We start this rally from the middle of France. We need to put Monte Carlo back into the Monte Carlo. We need to make this event more of a challenge again.

"Why not start from Monte and then come out on a long loop with six different stages split by a remote service one day and then same again the next?"

WRC Promoter Oliver Ciesla said a return to Casino Square for next season was one of the points to be discussed with the organiser, the Automobile Club of Monaco.

Neuville concerned by rapid Toyota pace

Monte Carlo Rally runner-up Thierry Neuville has urged Hyundai to keep looking for more developments as the Belgian fears the pace Toyota demonstrated at last week's season opener.

Ott Tanak was the highest-placed Yaris WRC finisher in third, with Jari-Matti Latvala and Kris Meeke fifth and sixth.

Talking about the pace of the Japanese manufacturer, Neuville told Motorsport News: "They are dangerous, we said this before, but we see it again here. I hope we have more coming with our car, we are still pushing hard.

But the speed from Tanak was strong and then Kris [Meeke] on the powerstage – OK, he saved his tyres all day for this, but he was four seconds faster than anybody and six faster than us – that's a lot."

Neuville starts next month's Rally Sweden chasing back-to-back wins in the snow, but he knows his hopes will rest with the weather.

"Last year we saw what happened to the cars at the front, they had no chance," he said. "I hope this time the conditions are a little bit different!"



Belgian has called on Hyundai to make more developments

GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

DAVID EVANS

"It felt like an extended French series round"



First there was Gilles Panizzi. And then Francois Delecour. Both of them wandering the streets of Monaco – not together I might add – entirely unmolested on the weekend of the opening round of the World Rally Championship. On the weekend of the Monte Carlo Rally.

Something was amiss. How could it be that such legends of French rallying were untroubled by folk looking to stand aside them before grinning inanely at their own telephone?

It's relatively simple, really. There was a genuine danger that blinking would have meant missing the WRC's visit to the world's most famous principality.

What's become a traditional Thursday evening ceremonial start from Casino Square was dropped this year. The schlep from the service park in Gap down to Monaco and back is something that's long been moaned about.

Last week highlighted how misguided such views were. In the words of Toyota team principal and four-time winner of the world's most famous rally Tommi Makinen: "We need to put the Monte Carlo back in Monte Carlo."

And we must.

Without Thursday night, the only interaction between Monte Carlo and its rally – apart from the finish celebrations – came when the cars arrived in town after dark on Saturday and departed before dawn on Sunday morning. Had it not been for Michelin's tyre transporter and a random Toyota Gazoo Racing truck, you could easily have passed through without really knowing the rally was on.

Makinen advocates turning the event on its head: basing it out of Monaco again and then taking a couple of long loops up into the Hautes-Alpes with either an overnight in Gap or a remote service before extending the Alpes-Maritimes action beyond the Turini and Col de Braus stages.

I love Gap and I love being based in the heart of the event, but last week it felt like the best cars and drivers in the world were competing on an extended French Championship round.

There were a few in Gap who pointed to mine being a complicated position on this one. As you know, Motorsport Network was proud to host the launch of the WRC at Autosport International earlier this month and there was a feeling that a Thursday in Monaco might render Birmingham redundant. Utter nonsense.

Appreciation for the launch across the WRC was universal and, coming 12 days ahead of Monte Carlo, it provides a perfectly timed springboard into the new season. Casino Square complements the NEC perfectly. It's possible that's the first time that sentence has ever been written, but it's absolutely true.

Looking beyond the logistics, what a fabulous start to the season round one provided. An absolute thriller that's sure to act as a precursor to a sensational year. Understandably, there were frustrations at WRC Promoter's All Live service falling down from time to time and I can completely understand that feeling of being short-changed. But I watched first hand as those in charge worked night after night in pursuit of a workable solution. They're getting there. We've taken a big leap in the last 12 months and we're in a different world from 2017.



AGREE/DISAGREE?
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RALLY NEWS

GRONHOLM'S PACE STUNNER

Two-time champion impresses Toyota team with Finland test speed

Marcus Gronholm stunned the Toyota Gazoo Racing team with his pace at the first of two tests aboard a Yaris WRC ahead of his return to competition in Rally Sweden next month.

The two-time world champion was driving the car in anger for the first time in Finland last week. He completed 100 miles of running in his one day in the car and, while the team remained tight-lipped on his pace, it's clear he was close to the squad's current crop of drivers. Gronholm refused to be drawn into

talk potentially pushing for a sixth Rally Sweden win, but admitted he was surprised at how quickly he'd felt at home in the car which won last year's manufacturers' world championship.

"I drove this car two years ago on the Harju [street] stage at Rally Finland," he told Motorsport News.

"Before that I had done maybe six miles of testing and that's all. Since then I didn't drive.

"The feeling came really quickly in the snow when I was testing this time. The car was very, very good and easy to

drive, this is important. Of course, it took a little time to get in to it, but it was nice."

Gronholm hasn't competed at the highest level since finishing 21st on Rally Sweden in a Ford Focus RS WRC in 2010. He ran fifth initially, but his event was spoiled by an electrical problem aboard his private car.

The Finn did, however, record fastest time on his favourite stage, Sagen. But talk of an overall challenge is far from his mind ahead of next month's rally.

"There is absolutely no chance for me," he said. "It's one thing to go down

the test road and find that I can still do what I do, but when we go to the stages I don't have the rhythm that these guys have who are driving in these cars all the time. I want to enjoy myself. I will take away all of the risk from the notes – you know I have the word 'maybe' there in the notes before to maybe got flat out, but this time I won't have that word. I want to reach the finish."

Gronholm will test the car for one more day in search of a final pre-event set-up just ahead of the February 14-17, Torsby-based event.

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Gronholm showed pace in testing

PORSCHE IN R-GT CUP RALLY ATTACK



Dumas has woken Porsche up to rallying

Porsche has confirmed its competition department in Weissach will develop its first official rally car for the 2020 season.

The German manufacturer will prepare a rally version of the motorsport-only 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport to enter the FIA R-GT Cup next year. While there is no official confirmation, there's strong speculation of a one-make series for the 425bhp machine as well.

Former FIA R-GT Cup winner and Porsche factory driver Romain Dumas has been involved in the development of a Cayman GT4 Rallye Concept Car. Dumas drove this as course car at last year's Rally Germany.

While next year's motor is based on the all-new GT4 revealed last month, Dumas' efforts were a key factor in Porsche's official return to rallying.

A communication from Porsche Motorsport stated: "The appearance of the Porsche Cayman GT4 Rallye Concept Car at the 2018 Rallye Deutschland yielded positive feedback. The response from the rally fan camp, teams, drivers and series organisers was a decisive factor in going ahead with the



The 718 Cayman GT4 motor

new development programme.

"The comparatively low operating cost of the new R-GT-regulation vehicle is a major advantage, thanks to its close affinity to the production car."

The 718 GT4 Clubsport runs a 3.8-litre flat six engine and rear-wheel-drive configuration.

Porsche has enjoyed success in rallying, winning the Monte Carlo with Vic Elford, Bjorn Waldegard and Jean-Pierre Nicolas and Corsica with Jean-Luc Therier. Much of that success has, however, come through the work of private preparation firms such as Prodrive. The British team worked on the 911 SC for world championship rallies before this car became the basis of the 959 which would go on to win Dakar.

Welshman Evans determined to bounce back after shunt curtails his challenge on Monte Carlo Rally

Elfyn Evans flew directly from last week's Monte Carlo Rally to begin his Rally Sweden pre-event test – with the Welshman determined to put his round-one crash firmly behind him.

Evans had been running sixth in his Ford Fiesta WRC before a

puncture delaminated and dropped him to seventh and he then went off the road and crashed heavily in SS10.

"We had a straightforward left-hander we'd used many, many times," said Evans. "I didn't believe I had done anything massively

different, but maybe there was a particularly low grip level there – a few other cars were close. We went off and there was a steep bank with trees on the outside, that dragged the car in and we ended up staying there."

Evans will be back in the Fiesta in

northern Finland this week.

"I'm looking forward to getting straight back to it," he said. "It wasn't part of the plan to start on a bad note, so I want to put that right immediately and then get going with Sweden."



Evans has test planned



Citroen was down to one car after Lappi's woe

Citroen engineers press on with investigation into Lappi's painful engine failure to find a fix

Work on fixing the engine fault which silenced Esapekka Lappi's Citroen C3 WRC began before the Monte Carlo Rally even finished.

The French squad began investigating the issue immediately and Pierre Budar declined to make further

comment until the results of that work had arrived.

"I am not happy with what happened to Esapekka," he said. "We have to find this and fix it and the same with what happened to Sebastien on Sunday. We know this was a

problem with the throttle, but we don't know exactly what was the reason. It was so frustrating that we could not get near to the car to find out what was going on – fortunately he [Ogier] could make this repair himself and he could manage this problem to

still take the win, but we have to work on these things and get them right. It's nice for us to take the 100th win – we are still the most successful manufacturer in the sport and to do this in the 100th year of Citroen shows the rally story is very strong for us."

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'British win on the Monte for Greensmith'
WRC support action, p22



ARMSTRONG IN R5 RETURN WITH DIRT RALLY GAME



Armstrong's '16 livery can be used in game

Reigning World Rally Championship eSports champion Jon Armstrong will return to competition for the first time in 16 months on the Galway International Rally in a Ford Fiesta R5 as part of his work with the *DiRT* video game.

Armstrong – who impressed on two prize outings in a DMACK Ford Fiesta R5 in the 2017 WRC2 series – hasn't competed since Rally Spain of that year.

Codemasters, the company behind the new *DiRT* game –

which is released on February 26 this year – is backing Armstrong in a Derek McGarrity-run Fiesta R5 in the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship season opener.

"I think it will be a really good talking point for the game, when people see the *DiRT* name on the side of the car," said Armstrong, who will be partnered by usual navigator Noel O'Sullivan on the event.

"It's really nice they see the value in me doing the rally and being the face of the game. It's going to be interesting to see

how the community of gamers respond to it and I think they will respect the company even more when they see they are actively taking part in a rally."

The Northern Irish driver has been key in developing the new game – alongside East African Safari winner Ryan Champion – which is supposed to perform more like a simulator, closely mirroring reality. The franchise is a continuation of the famous *Colin McRae Rally* games.

Armstrong is hopeful of fighting at the front and that

the outing could spawn more rallying in reality this year.

"It's a one-off at the minute," he added.

"If the first one goes well, it would be hard not to try and get the budget together and do some more. Hopefully I'll get a test before the rally to get up to speed. "I don't know what to expect.

I could be a bit rusty, but hopefully doing eSports has kept the competitive mindset active.

"There's 25 R5 cars and a good scope of people to compare ourselves to, like Craig Breen."

MN'S MAN ON THE MANX

CHRIS BOYDE

"Has national rallying turned a corner?"



As the major championships gear up to start a new campaign – MN Circuit Championship excepted – how welcome has it been to see a New Year start with such positivity at national level in both the UK and Ireland?

Entry lists are filling on both sides of the Irish Sea; North West Stages surge for entries was quite incredible with over 160 entries for its 120 places, while rumours say the opening Irish Tarmac Championship counter in Galway next month might host an astonishing 25 R5 crews, something that would have been unthinkable just a few months ago.

The Scottish Government's closed roads motorsport consultation ended on Monday, and hopefully another step towards the return of events north of the border follows. Meanwhile, the trickle of new closed roads events to the south shows both demand and excitement, that is matched by new opportunities being announced on several levels for our up and coming drivers.

It all leads to a genuine feeling that a bumper year is in prospect, and that national rallying across these islands may finally have turned a corner, away from the insurance and regulatory gloom of the past few years.

Encouragingly, on the Isle of Man we are also seeing these green shoots.

The Manx Rally Championship begins on February 9 with a single venue event, the Jurby Stages. The entry has already exceeded expectations in terms of both numbers and quality. The extent that strong social media engagement has played in this, as with the NW Stages, cannot be understated and is a lesson for all events going forward.

The last planned Jurby airfield events were scrapped in 2015 and 2016 due to a lack of entries, despite it serving a much-needed entry-level route into the sport for newcomers, given that the remaining Manx events are all multi-day. Over 10% of the entry received for this year's event is indeed from first timers.

Entries open for the Manx National Rally next month and it will be interesting to see the level of demand. Organisers Manx Auto Sport are hoping to push the number of available places up towards 130 in expectation and many leading crews have already booked ferries and accommodation, so the signs are good.

The rally becomes a double-header round of the Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship this year, but club president Mark Ellison confirms that it will retain its compact timetable, with eight stages on Friday evening into the night and eight more on Saturday, covering 130 miles.

Further ahead, the question mark over Rally Isle of Man will also hopefully become clearer in the coming weeks. Clerk of the course Robert Graham is hopeful that an event will happen this term, though acknowledges there are still many hurdles to overcome, and potential dates, format and length are still under consideration. He is also aware the clock is ticking.

So much for a quiet winter...

As elsewhere throughout the British Isles, anticipation is high for action to begin.

Perennial SRC frontrunner Pearson for full season

Garry Pearson will return to the Scottish Rally Championship this year for a first full-season since he lost the 2016 title on a final-stage retirement.

Ford Fiesta R5 driver Pearson only had sporadic outings in 2017 and '18, but has secured the services of co-driver Dale Bowen for his attempt at the

championship title this season, starting with the Coogie Urquhart Snowman Rally on February 9.

"I think 2016 was one of the closest finishes in the history of the Scottish Rally Championship and when you think that it's 51 years old this year, it really says something," said Pearson.

"Sadly, I only contested

one rally in 2017 and last year only saw sporadic outings, but the desire to get back on top was as great as ever.

"This season will certainly be about the title and my goal is most certainly to become Scottish champion in 2019. I have something to prove and show my full potential."



R5 rally return for Pearson in SRC bid

IN BRIEF

Entry levels
The North West Stages can start 120 cars, not 100 as stated in last week's Motorsport News. The Garstang event runs closed-road stages for the first time this year, and has received over 160 entries in what some are expecting to be one of the best rallies of the UK calendar year.

Kelly's i20 R5
Manus Kelly has chosen a Hyundai i20 R5 for his Irish assault this year. The three-time Donegal International winner will contest the Galway Rally on February 9, but is yet to commit to a full Irish Tarmac

calendar, and hasn't done so for a number of years. He will be joined in Galway by Paul Barrett in a Ford Fiesta R5, who confirmed his participation last week.

Consultation
The Scottish Government consultation into closed-roads for motorsport concluded on Monday (January 28). MN understands over 200 people answered the questionnaire, which is a part of the process for any new law. The findings will be collated and then it will be decided if the law is put to parliament for a vote.

Rally First champion Hodge back in the BTRDA

Rally First champion Dominic Hodge will take on the 1400S class in this year's BTRDA armed with a wide-track Nissan Micra, returning after a two-year absence from full-time competition.

Bampton driver Hodge, 67, narrowly headed off Richard Wells in Rally First 1.4 by four points, with three class wins.

Having only done one event since – the Plains Rally in 2017 – Hodge will now return with the car prepared by Micra expert Matt Humphris, and co-driven by his 2016 title-winning partner Stefan Arndt.

"The financial controller, Mrs Hodge, has given permission for the full season," said Hodge, who has been working on the Dyson electric car in his everyday job. "I have no clue how I will do. If I can be competitive, I will be happy. If we get the odd class win, we'll jump for joy."

A rule change midway through last year allowed events to seed 1400 cars further forward. Since 2015, cars had run in order of anticipated speed meaning the smaller 1400 and historic cars ran at the back.

While Hodge says this isn't the only reason for his return, it has played a part.

"The bonus, definitely, is being able to run at the front of the field," added Hodge. "I wouldn't say it is the only reason for returning, but it certainly helps."

While the change came last year, it didn't give crews much time to refettle cars that had been in hiding since the unpopular rule change.

Crews have been able to prepare since June, and the result has been strong. Only 16 1400-class cars took part in the BTRDA in the entirety of 2018, while 17 have entered for the season-opening Cambrian alone this year.



Hodge won RF1.4 in '16

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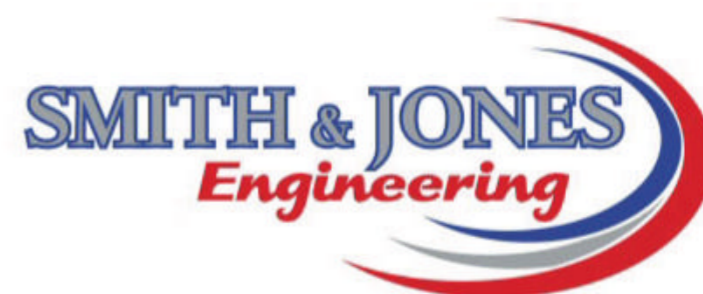
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7 Jul	Greystoke Stages (West Cumbria MC)	Greystoke	www.greystokestages.co.uk
27/28 Sep	Trackrod Clubman's Trophy (Trackrod MC)	North Yorkshire	www.rallyyorkshire.co.uk
3 Nov	Malton Forest Rally (Malton MC)	North Yorkshire	www.maltonmc.co.uk
7 Dec	Grizedale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

Tarmacadam Challenge

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

Mixed Surface Challenge

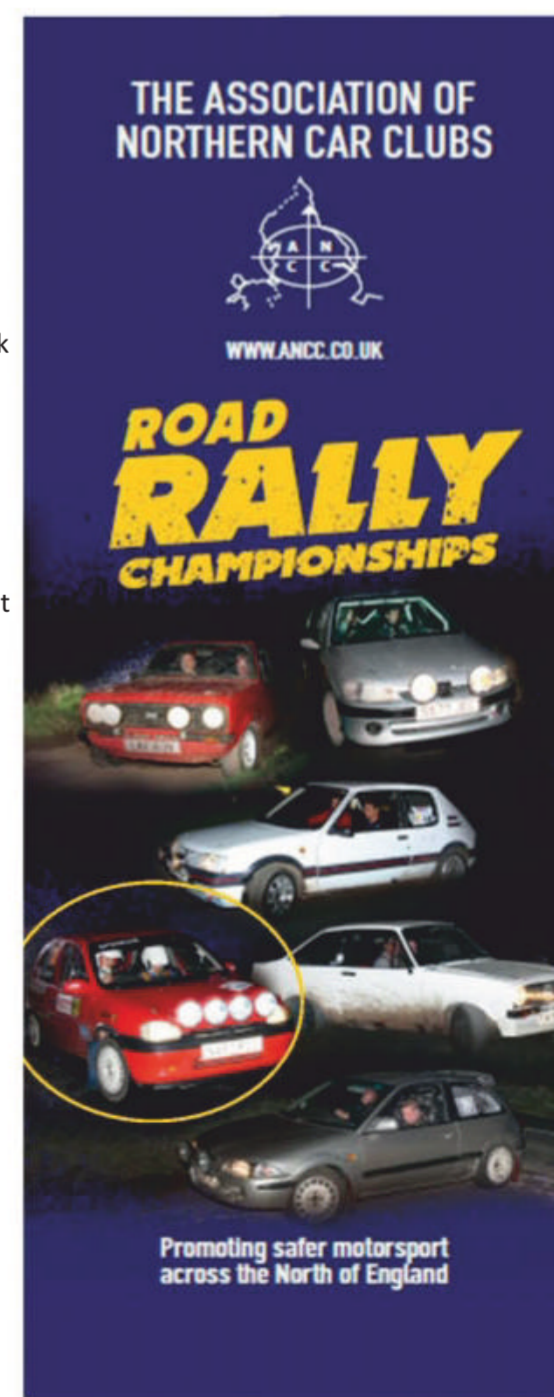
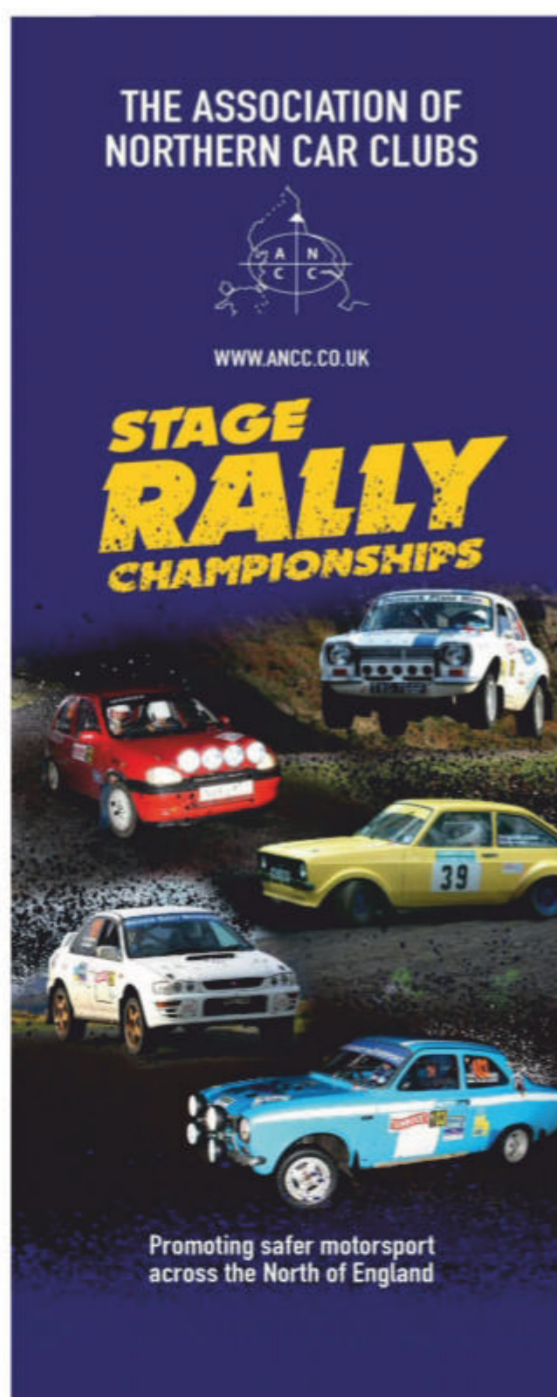
17 Feb	Jack Frost Stages (Darlington DMC)	Croft	www.darlington-motor-club.org.uk
7 Apr	Lookout Stages (Trackrod MC)	Melbourne	www.trackrodmotorclub.co.uk/lookout
21 July	Twyford Wood Stages (Mid Derbyshire MC)	Twyford Wood	www.mid-derbyshiremc.co.uk
22 Sep	Heroes Stages (Pendle DMC)	Weeton Barr.	www.pendledistrictmc.co.uk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

2019 NORTHERN ROAD RALLY 2019

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

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RALLY NEWS

Photos: William Neill, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

TARMAC CHAMPIONS ROW OVER RIGHT-HAND-DRIVE R5 CAR RULES

Disagreement over introduction of converted cars



RHD R5s are competing in Emerald Isle already

By Jason Craig

Two Irish Tarmac champions are at odds over a rule change that has opened the door for right-hand-drive R5 cars to compete on rounds and collect points that go towards the drivers' title.

After months of meetings between championship officials, the Tarmac Rally Organisers' Association, clubs and teams, a compromise to the long-running issue was found.

But despite the ITRC releasing a statement on the ruling, it is yet to be passed by Motorsport Ireland's Rallies Commission, which doesn't plan to meet before the ITRC season opener in Galway.

The British Championship has already made a similar move but will allow its RHD R5s to win National-permitted events outright.

Garry Jennings believes the move is "a farce" given that converted R5 cars cannot win ITRC rallies outright, not even the National rally for non-homologated cars.

"It doesn't make any sense whatsoever. How can a car be eligible for points but not victories?" he asked.

"Most teams have their plans already set in stone and this isn't going to change anything. It's like you having all the items on your child's Christmas list bought and then on Christmas Eve, when all the shops have shut, they change their mind. At that point it's too late. You have what you have.

"Proton has the Iriz in right-

hand-drive but there are none available yet, and Hyundai has said if it can find 10 customers who want a right-hand-drive i20 R5 that it will homologate the car. I have spoken to all of the teams and ones like M-Sport are just too busy to even think about this."

Those who have come out in support of the move include Desi Henry, Jonny Greer and 2015 Irish Tarmac winner Donagh Kelly who has swapped his 2008 Ford Focus WRC for a Skoda Fabia R5. Those three drivers all compete in left-hand-drive cars.

"In the interests of protecting our sport longer term we need to keep it interesting, vibrant and healthy for everyone," Kelly said. "We need sharp competition and if we attract a few more cars why not do it?"

"Years ago people like Austin McHale and Bertie Fisher did work on their cars and there was never any problem – there was never talk of homologation. Right-hand-drive R5 cars should be allowed."

MN understands 24 R5 cars have entered the Galway International Rally – soon to become 25 – including three right-hand-drive variants.

The Irish Tarmac Rally Championship reached a new low in the R5 era with just four of the cars starting the last round of 2018, the Cork '20' Rally.

But with a number of drivers electing to switch to the category over the winter, including a host of series champions, the championship has received a major boost.

Breen to Irish Tarmac while waiting for WRC chance

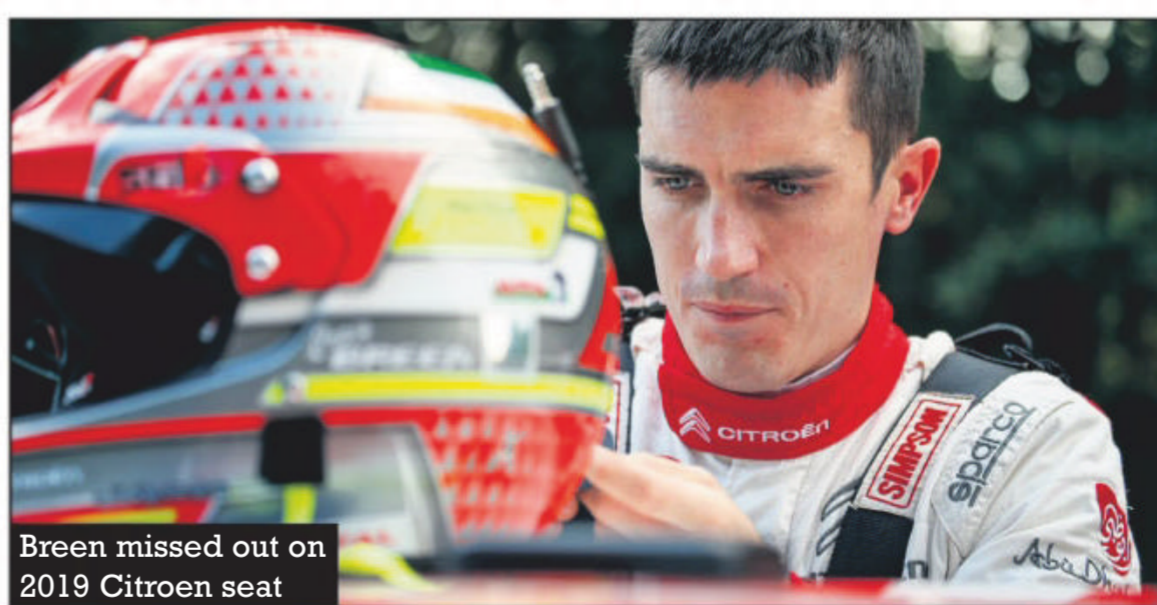
Craig Breen will continue competing in Ireland during his World Rally Championship hiatus, contesting the opening round of the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship on February 9.

Breen missed out on a WRC seat this season after two years with Citroen, the French marque slimming down to two cars and signing new drivers Sebastien Ogier and Esapekka Lappi.

Breen co-drove for his father, Ray, on the Willie Loughman Rally in Kilkenny earlier this month, but hasn't competed on Irish soil since a one-off Ford Escort Mk2 outing in 2017, co-driven by his friend Patrick Croke.

The 28-year-old last contested an ITRC round when he won his second straight Circuit of Ireland Rally in 2016, and has confirmed he could do more events while he is without a WRC seat.

"This is by no means a sign of our intentions in the WRC," Breen – who will drive a Ford Fiesta R5 – wrote on social media. "Since I was a child I have loved everything about Irish rallying more than anything else, and suddenly having the chance to do these events is something that genuinely brings a smile to my face during these difficult times. After all, the best roads in the world are sitting here waiting."



Breen missed out on 2019 Citroen seat

Devine skips JWRC in favour of R5 outings



Devine targets West Cork after ruling out Junior WRC

Callum Devine will not contest this year's Junior World Rally Championship for a second season, and will take on more outings in an R5 car this year instead.

Devine, the 2017 Junior British Rally champion, contested the JWRC last year finishing fourth, with five stage wins over the six events.

He had made his R5 debut in a Ford Fiesta on Wales Rally GB in 2017, impressing with a car that didn't have the latest updates, on his way to 13th in class.

Devine is targeting the West Cork Rally as his first of the season, having pulled an optimistic entry for the Galway Rally.

"It's a bad time for us at work at the

moment," Devine told MN. "I want to go to West Cork, it will be nice to go against the BRC boys. I've planned that and Donegal for now, and if things are going well I'd like to do GB and maybe a WRC round, I want to see where our pace is at.

"We're kicking ourselves in a way because it [the BRC] would be perfect for us [because of two shared rounds with Irish Tarmac]. I think that's why the likes of the Moffetts [Sam and Josh] have gone that way. I think you'll get a lot of Irish guys doing it."

In his only ITRC outing in an R5, Devine finished third in class and fifth overall on the hotly-contested Donegal International Rally last June.

Gass gets Skoda but no Galway

Irish Tarmac Rally champion Darren Gass has acquired a Skoda Fabia R5, but will miss next week's Galway International Rally as the car is being converted to Tarmac spec.

The 30-year-old had intended to campaign his Subaru Impreza S12B WRC but he had to review his plans after the car was purchased by Felix Brito in Tenerife.

"Jonny Crozier of Crozier Motorsport is going to run the car for me but I really don't know what events I will do right now," said 2012 ITRC champion Gass, who missed over two years of rallying before contesting two events in 2018.

He is also likely to contest the West Cork Rally, the second round of the ITRC, and could also start the Mayo Stages which opens the Irish National Rally Championship.

Crozier Motorsport will likely hire the Fabia out.

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INSIGHT

Photos: LAT, Mike Petch/M Photographic

Series hopes to attract gentleman drivers. *By Stefan Mackley*



Jaguar XE Project 8 cars will be used

A NEW SERIES FOR THE ELITE

Among the hundreds of stands at Autosport International earlier this month there was one in particular that was making its first appearance at the event.

Located just a few yards away from the main entrance at Birmingham's NEC it was difficult to miss, but bared a name that unsurprisingly not many people will have heard of before... until now.

Series Elite is a new category for 2019 and fundamentally is aimed at motorsport enthusiasts over the age of 40 who want to go racing.

It will be run under the British Automobile Racing Club banner and will hold five rounds in the UK at Brands Hatch (twice), Silverstone, Donington Park and Snetterton, as well as a sixth round at the Algarve circuit. Featuring a Pro and Am class, each weekend will consist of practice, qualifying and two races of 20 and 30 minutes in length.

It's the brainchild of Graeme Glew, father of 2009 Renault UK Clio Cup champion Phil, who is no stranger to the world of motorsport. Having formed his own Formula Ford team and racing school at Cadwell Park in the 1980s, he brought through young talent such as future Formula 1 driver Julian Bailey before moving into sports management.

He believes there is a gap in the motorsport market for a series aimed at wealthy individuals who want a VIP experience as well as to go racing.

"I've spent all my motorsport

career introducing young drivers [into the sport] and unfortunately in many cases the young drivers now have to come from a wealthy background," he says.

"So I suddenly thought to myself 'well who can afford to go racing?' and then you look at all the trackdays around the UK and you think those are the guys that become addicted because they get the cars, they go on track but what do they do next?"

"They do Series Elite. They come and buy a car that's equally as powerful as what they've been used to and have some fun with it against like-minded people."

Two of the cars that Glew speaks of were on show at Autosport International having been converted into race-spec.

They are Jaguar XE Project 8 SVO cars, boasting a V8 five-litre supercharged petrol engine capable of just under 600bhp, Pirelli Trofeo tyres, eight-speed automatic gearbox and four-wheel drive.

It's an impressive piece of kit and Glew states that nearly 60 drivers have tested the machines, of which Jaguar have limited production to only 300.

At least 20 of them have been purchased by Series Elite with drivers able to finance, rent or buy the cars outright.

But initially it wasn't Glew's first choice when he conceived the idea for the series and approached Jaguar two years ago.

"We had a situation where were going to use the Jaguar F-Type GT4 spec car which we launched back in April 2018," recalls Glew. "Then Jaguar said they weren't going to proceed with the GT4 programme



Series Elite founder Graeme Glew

but would we like to test the Project 8 car?"

It's not the only change to have taken place, with the age limit dropped from 50 to 40 after two drivers under the original age limit approached Glew wanting to race.

"Rather than turn them away we said 'right, the minimum age is 40 now' and that's the reason that we did that," adds Glew.

The fleet of Project 8 cars will be run centrally by Slidesports, creating a one-make arrive-and-drive experience, and Glew hopes the new series can have 12 cars on the grid for its opening round in May but is wary of the pitfalls that trying to start a new series brings.

"Nothing is more frustrating to me at the moment than people who have tested the car and say 'yes I'm interested, I want to race this car but I want to see how it goes first' but that's the same with anything that's new," he says.

"Year one is a series, year two will be a championship and then we'll attempt to try and get on a specific calendar. The BARC have been very, very accommodating, we're going



Autosport International had Series Elite stand



Limited to just 300 cars, Jaguar has been tested by almost 60 drivers

to support a couple of truck races, we're going to support a classic car event, so we're kind of a guest appearance at the moment at each event."

Drivers planning to enter Series Elite can earn their ARDS racing licence through the series on a fast-track course, which will also be done in tandem with Ferrari Challenge UK.

Like Series Elite, the BRSCC-run Ferrari Challenge UK is new for this year and could even be considered a rival series as it tries to attract a similar demographic of driver.

But Glew is keen to point out his series is specifically catered for the elder 'gentleman' driver who may have raced in their younger days or fancy taking up the sport now.

"It's very important that we have, nothing against the young driver coaches, but we want a more mature driver coach because that's what our drivers want," says Glew.

"One of our coaches is Ray Grimes whose been around a long time and he started with me at my racing school 30-40 years ago.

"So it's important to get the right

level of coaching, the right level of hospitality and the right level of events [for our clients]."

And while the series could just be seen as an exclusive VIP racing club, Glew also wants to make sure that drivers are given every possible opportunity to improve.

"These guys need to know that being a racing driver isn't just about driving a car around a track, and people like iZone will teach them things about eye-track, they've got the simulators, reaction test and really what we're trying to do is take these 40-year-old plus drivers and turn them into young drivers," says Glew.

"Nobody has said what a ridiculous idea, or this isn't going to work, everyone says what a great concept and to partner somebody like Jaguar is superb."

Getting a new racing series off the ground is hard enough, let alone creating one that's successful, and it's unclear yet whether Series Elite is a name that motorsport enthusiasts will begin to remember or if it is another new series which will fade into obscurity. ■

RALLY MONTE CARLO

BY DAVID EVANS

The French champion marked his team switch with a classy victory

Sebastien Ogier put his head back and yelled. Yelled. What did he shout? He doesn't remember. It doesn't matter. The words weren't important. It was a release. A physical act. A celebration.

Now nobody in the 108-year history of this event he adores is more successful than him; he sits on seven wins, level with countryman Sebastien Loeb. On an event which marked Loeb's first outing with a factory team other than Citroen, Ogier's success brings up a 100th World Rally Championship win for the French firm. The irony wasn't lost on anybody that Loeb had dug the foundations for Citroen's success in Versailles, scoring 79 of those 100 wins. Loeb is history as far as Citroen's concerned. Ogier's the future. At least for the next two years.

But it was the here and now of round one that presented Ogier with his biggest headache. Starting the Monte in a third different car in four years would give him another significant challenge.

As had been the case a couple of years ago when he started out with M-Sport, Ogier was short on mileage in the C3 WRC. Ahead of the rally, he was happy to sidestep at least some of a spotlight that picked out Ott Tanak and his Toyota as favourite and Loeb's swashbuckling story that carried him from the podium on the Dakar Rally in Peru to a new chapter of his career in less than a week.

"Maybe," said Ogier quietly, "there are not so many people betting on me."

If the odds were long, he shortened them considerably on Thursday morning. First in line for shakedown, Ogier fired the Citroen into a two-mile test and laid down a marker. Out of the box, run one, nobody could come within 2.6s of him. Talking to him straight after, he pointed out that shakedown counts for nothing. In physical terms, he's absolutely right. Psychologically, it was a solid first punch. One that would be countered beautifully an hour or so later by a fellow first-timer: Kris Meeke in his Toyota Yaris WRC, who set the final benchmark.

As the crews headed into the mountains for the first time, it was Hyundai's Thierry Neuville who found himself centre of attention. After a prolonged dry period in the southern Alps, snow fell 24 hours earlier, transforming some of the stages hours after the crews had completed their recce.

Stage one was, for example, packed with plenty of snow on Wednesday night. A day on? Who knew? The sun had been out and anything facing south would surely have melted. But, with darkness, came plummeting temperatures. Another question: the stuff that's melted, how much of that's frozen?

Studs with a couple of soft slicks in the boot: That was the only sensible option. Everybody went with it.

Everybody except Neuville. He went with two super soft slicks crossed diagonally with a pair of Michelin's Pilot Alpin 41 CL studs.

As sure as everybody was of the snow and ice in SS1, Neuville was just as confident of a largely dry second test.

The Belgian's Hyundai was 26.8 seconds down on Tanak's benchmark opener. Now for two... Thierry pulled 11s out of everybody and went to bed third, just behind Ogier and early leader Tanak.

Arriving back in Gap just before 2200hrs on Thursday, Ogier smiled thinly.

"That choice [of Neuville]," he said, with a pause, "that took balls."

Neuville eased his way into the lead on Friday morning, making the most of a rather fortuitous cancelled stage (read on for details of how Tommi Makinen vented his spleen at the FIA and Automobile Club de Monaco) and when Tanak stopped to change a puncture on SS7, this year's Monte became a two-horse race with Ogier and Neuville more than a minute ahead of everybody.

One stage earlier, Neuville's heart had been in his mouth. Not having driven the i20 on studs on dry asphalt, he turned into the first left-hander and... nothing. The studs offered zero grip. With quick thinking and some amount of good fortune, Neuville bailed and shot down a perfectly placed escape road. He lost 20s, and all the momentum. His tyre choice had been geared towards that stage.

He declined congratulations at containing the time loss to Ogier to just two seconds.

"We could have been 17s or 18s ahead," he said. "Now he definitely has better tyres for the next one."

He wasn't wrong; he'd seen the last of the lead. Ogier hit the front on stage seven and stayed there.

From Saturday morning, everything was stacked in Ogier's favour – including the roads. This first day of the first WRC weekend of 2019 would undoubtedly be Seb's favourite. With the opening test done, the crews return to the N85 for a liaison section running down the Route Napoleon – a road, as the name would suggest, of significant national importance. A bit further south and thoughts of France's foremost military genius were set aside in favour of the D14 and a trip through Forest-Saint-Julien, population 302.

"This is where I came from," said Ogier. "Going through my village on this road section is such a special feeling."

The leader of the Monte Carlo Rally had selected a very special place to stop and change his tyres for the next stage.

"I did it outside my ex-neighbour's front door," Ogier told MN. "That made him smile. You know this place is a small place without much happening. For me to come to where I am from makes me really proud and it's always quite humbling for me to go back."

Posters of Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia hung from walls of houses as the locals waged a propaganda war on everybody else on the entry list. The atmosphere in the place is a highlight for neutrals, if a touch intimidating for their rivals.

Across the four stages through 'his valley', Ogier gained 2.3s over Neuville. Heading south for Monaco and a final day including the now traditional brace of runs over Cols de Turini and Braus, Ogier was 4.3s ahead.

"It's intense," said Ogier. "But if the

OGIER STRIKES EARLY



Seventh win for Ogier (r) on Monte Carlo Rally

Sebastien Ogier held his nerve in Monaco

weather stays dry, our car should be good on the stages in the Maritimes."

Neuville fronted up. He'd given it everything. "I couldn't go quicker," he said.

What Ogier wasn't telling the world was that he had a much deeper concern. In the closing kilometres of the last stage, he'd noticed his Citroen pushing on when he came off the throttle. He said nothing. For now.

Just after 0600hrs on Sunday morning, Ogier slotted his C3 in alongside Neuville's Hyundai. The pair had 15 minutes to decide on their final tyre choice of the event. When they headed inland they would be faced with two runs of two stages on the same boots.

Out of the car, Ogier clamped his phone to the side of his head. Neuville watched on, arms folded. Outwardly, this looked like more psychology, leaving Thierry wondering what his rival was talking about. What did he know? What was he finding out? The

tentative Citroen-bound glances kept coming. Little did he know at the time, Ogier was struggling to make his car work properly.

"It was a real stress," said team principal Pierre Budar, from the team's Monaco base in the Novotel. "We could take no data from the car. We could do nothing. All we could do was advise over the phone."

When he came off the throttle, the pedal was returning to 20 per cent rather than zero.

"I adjusted the pedal as much as I could," Ogier said. "I lifted the pedal to rest at about 10 per cent. It wasn't perfect, but it gave me a chance to fight in the powerstage."

Fortunately he'd kept his lead ahead of the last test. Unfortunately for him, Neuville had closed to 0.4s.

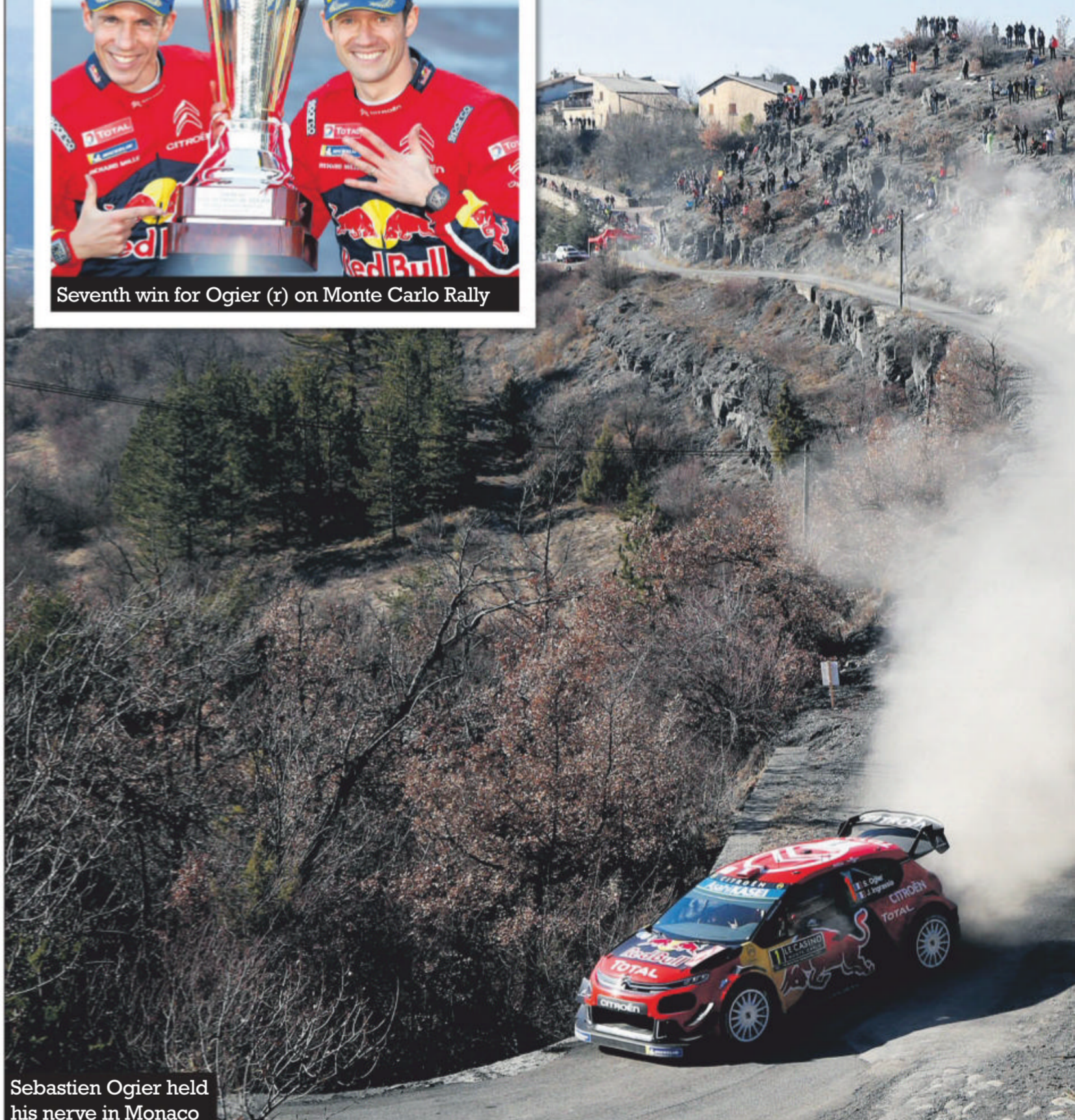
Incredibly, in a new car (admittedly one that's probably at its raciest) on these roads in these conditions) that wasn't working properly, Ogier brought it home.

"The relief was incredible," he said. "That's where the emotion was coming from. When I went to the last stage, I didn't know what would happen. We know now it's a sensor that's gone crazy, but I didn't know if the thing would break completely."

"The 100th win for Citroen and me being only the second person to win this event with four different manufacturers [don't forget his Peugeot, IRC win in 2009] is all good. But these are symbols; the icing on the cake."

The cake? Maximum points.

"I needed that win to start the season," he said. And he said it in a way that he knows there's plenty of work to be done in the weeks ahead. The Citroen's not as capable as his Ford Fiesta of the previous two years. Worse still, it's Sweden – a rally which regularly crucifies the first-on-the-road championship leader – next. Ogier raised eyes at the memory of his bad-tempered bete noire of 12 months ago.



Tanak was thwarted by a puncture

"We just judged everything perfectly"
WRC 2 Pro winner Greensmith, p22



ROUND 08

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com

ONLY FOR CITROEN



on't remind me to that," he said. "I can't enjoy this one before I have a chance to think about that." Ogier didn't particularly want to be reminded of the Toyota challenge. Third, fifth and sixth for Tanak, Jari-Matti Latvala and Meeke demonstrated consistency, but it was Ogier's weekend speed that really impressed Ogier and Neuville. And there was a sublime powerstage performance, which left Meeke 3.9s faster than anybody. And, don't get me wrong, the scrap was massive for Ogier and for third. Everybody was pushing, everybody was giving everything and yet Meeke still went faster than anybody. Which begs the question of why Toyota dropped this one? In a nutshell, it brought the wrong rims. Lightweight wheels cracked and crumbled causing punctures for Tanak and Meeke.



Thierry Neuville was able to push Citroen all the way to the finish

STAGE TIMES



Meeke won Powerstage

- **SS1 La Breole-Selonnet (12.90 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 13m02.0s **Leader**
Tanak **Second** Meeke +5.0s
- **SS2 Avancon-Notre-Dame-du-Laus (12.79 miles)**
Fastest Neuville 13m18.5s **Leader**
Tanak **Second** Ogier +9.1s
- **SS3 Valdrome-Sigottier 1 (12.45 miles)**
Stage cancelled
- **SS4 Roussieux-Laborel 1 (14.94 miles)**
Fastest Loeb 14m42.1s **Leader**
Neuville **Second** Tanak +4.9s
- **SS5 Curbans-Piegut 1 (11.48 miles)**
Fastest Ogier 13m49.1s **Leader**
Neuville **Second** Ogier +3.4s
- **SS6 Valdrome-Sigottier 2 (12.45 miles)**
Fastest Ogier and Latvala 13m39.5s **Leader** Neuville
Second Ogier +1.4s
- **SS7 Roussieux-Laborel 2 (14.94 miles)**
Fastest Loeb 14m26.6s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +14.0s
- **SS8 Curbans-Piegut 2 (11.48 miles)**
Fastest Neuville 13m25.5s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +2.0s
- **SS9 Agnieres-en-Devoluy-Corps 1 (18.53 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 20m54.0s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +5.6s
- **SS10 St-Leger-les-Melezes-La Batie-Neuve 1 (10.48 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 10m12.1s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +5.3s
- **SS11 Agnieres-en-Devoluy-Corps 2 (18.53 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 19m54.5s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +4.1s
- **SS12 St-Leger-les-Melezes-La Batie-Neuve 2 (10.48 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 9m53.2s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +4.3s
- **SS13 La Bollene-Vesubie-Peira-Cava 1 (11.44 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 11m40.3s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +3.3s
- **SS14 La Cabanette-Col de Braus 1 (8.44 miles)**
Fastest Tanak 9m52.4s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +3.2s
- **SS15 La Bollene-Vesubie-Peira-Cava 2 (11.44 miles)**
Fastest Neuville 11m25.5s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +0.4s
- **SS16 La Cabanette-Col de Braus 2 [Powerstage] (8.44 miles)**
Fastest Meeke 9m37.3s **Leader**
Ogier **Second** Neuville +2.2s

COLIN CLARK

"Time to panic: I headed straight for the barrier..."



I know, I'm a bit odd for a motorsport correspondent. I really don't like to drive fast. I know my limitations, my skills behind the wheel only just about stretch to negotiating the daily school run. And sometimes, even with that relatively simple motoring challenge, I fail.

I've been traumatised by rally drivers, yes, thank you very much Hayden Paddon. And I'm not too much of a bloke to admit that those were genuine tears of terror when you took me for a wee spin in your Hyundai i20 WRC in Finland a few years back.

I get more than my fair share of thrills by immersing myself in the world of rally and marvelling at the outrageous skills and talents of our rallying community.

So hands up, deep down, I'm a coward.

But I'm also a Scotsman, and a massively stereotypical Scotsman at that. And that's where this little story starts – at the car rental desk in Geneva Airport. "Would you like a car with winter tyres sir?" asked the smilingly courteous desk boy. "It's only an extra 150 Euros." Bloody hell, don't be daft, that's more than I paid for the whole car for the week, why in the world would I shell out that much for four rings of deep cut rubber?

Oh my goodness, that was one very poor judgement call on my part.

Fast forward to Sunday afternoon, Sebastien Ogier has just taken Monte Carlo win number seven after the most gloriously engaging battle throughout the course of the rally with Thierry Neuville. I'm back in Gap, just about to set off to return to Geneva – across the mountains.

Now, snow has been noticeable by its absence on this Monte, but this is the Alps, and it can come at any time. And Sunday afternoon, it dumped with startling speed and vengeance on my summer-tyre shod VW Polo.

I steadily climbed the hill through driving rain, then slippery sleet, and a few miles out of Gap, full on blizzard conditions. And that is when my wee Polo started telling me to think about plan B. The traction control went into overdrive, the tyres spun madly and I was going nowhere. Time to turn around and head back down the hill.

But heading downhill in full snow is so much more challenging than heading up hill. As I was to find out on the first hairpin. Now this was a steep hill, but I was only doing 20mph. There was a hairpin approaching. I applied the brakes, slowed the car and gently turned.

I'm a passenger. We actually sped up, with the wheels locked, the steering obsolete and I was heading straight for the concrete barrier.

It was time to panic. It didn't last long though, because before I knew it, I'd smacked, banged, scraped, shuddered to a halt. I was in the barrier.

The Polo actually absorbed the majority of the impact, so having had a quick and sheepish check around, I was good to go. The moral of the story – don't be so bloody Scottish all of the time.

NOW TURN OVER TO READ MN'S DRIVER RATINGS

RALLY MONTE CARLO



BY DAVID
EVANS

RALLY ESSENTIALS

What a difference a year – or two – makes. M-Sport team principal Rich Millener cut a slightly forlorn figure harbourside first thing on Sunday morning. For the last two years, he and Malcolm Wilson have been at the very heart of this event, winning it with Sebastien Ogier. This time the highest-placed factory car was **Teemu Suninen** in 11th place. The Finn crashed on the first stage, and was crashed into as Kalle Rovanpera caused close to £10,000 worth of damage bouncing off the back of the factory Fiesta WRC to stay on track in SS1. Suninen's team-mate **Elfyn Evans** was chasing sixth when he got slightly off line on Saturday afternoon and slammed into the trees.

Citroen's manufacturers' effort is on the back foot to start with. When **Esapekka Lappi** bounced his C3 WRC off a rock on Friday and then retired with an engine fault on Saturday, it was halved, leaving little to cheer about apart from a stunning run from Sebastien Ogier.

On the face of it, **Andreas Mikkelsen's** miserable run continues, but actually the Norwegian was very much more at the races in Monte. After crashing out of third, his new boss Andrea Adamo said: "First of all, I said thank you to him because he has shown he is back; he was third and I will never kick in the ass someone who crashes when they are fighting for the lead and they make a mistake."

One-time Formula 1 racer – and former Subaru works driver – **Stephane Sarrazin** guided a Hyundai i20 R5 run by his own team to ninth place, finishing just 10s behind **Yoann Bonato**. Sarrazin wasn't registered for WRC 2 points.

Japanese star and Toyota Gazoo Racing junior driver **Katsuta Takamoto** took a trouble-free 13th with Dan Barritt alongside him in a Ford Fiesta R5.

Day one: 25.69 miles; 2 stages

Weather: clear -5°C-0°C

End of day one: 1 Tanak/Jarveoja 26m33.0s; 2 Ogier/Ingrassia +9.1s; 3 Neuville/Gilsoul +14.3s; 4 Lappi/Ferm +45.2s; 5 Latvala/Anttila +46.4s; 6 Evans/Martin +48.2s.

Day two: 77.74 miles; 6 stages

Weather: clear/sunny -4°C-10°C

End of day two: 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 1h37m17.3s; 2 Neuville/Gilsoul +2.0s; 3 Mikkelsen/Jaeger +1m17.7s; 4 Latvala/Anttila +1m25.1s; 5 Loeb/Elena +1m25.9s; 6 Evans/Martin +1m47.5s

Day three: 58.02 miles; 4 stages

Weather: clear/sunny -5°C-12°C

End of day three: 1 Ogier/Ingrassia 2h38m30.0s; 2 Neuville/Gilsoul +4.3s; 3 Loeb/Elena +1m58.7s; 4 Latvala/Anttila +2m01.0s; 5 Tanak/Jarveoja +2m16.0s; 6 Meeke/Marshall +5m26.8s

Day four: 39.75 miles; 4 stages

Weather: clear/sunny -2°C-15°C



Evans' rally came to an abrupt end

Continued from page 21

Makinen explained: "For the last two years, these wheels have worked – but there's been more snow and when the snow is at the side of the road you can't cut the corner. The drivers had to cut the corners and this was problem."

Back to Makinen's frustration at the loss of the first run through the Valdrome test on Saturday morning. Thousands of fans had packed the final mile or so of the stage, forcing its cancellation.

Packed with snow and ice, most teams had gone with four studs for the stage, except Hyundai. Neuville had three studs and Loeb two. Dropping the opener from the loop was a big bonus, allowing Ogier to exploit his slick-biased tyre package.

Makinen ranted: "All three stages should have been cancelled. Our complete strategy was based to the overall loop – we lost our [Tanak's] lead and nobody takes responsibility for that. The FIA doesn't care what happens at the end of the season, what happens if we lose the championship because of this?"

FIA rally director Yves Matton labelled those comments as unprofessional and aggressive. He was backed up by a visiting president Jean Todt. But as the three sat to talk things through, the Finn declined the opportunity to back down.

Makinen's frustrations would, no doubt, be offset by the unrelenting speed the cars had shown once they got onto a more stable footing. Meeke's debut pace came in for the most praise.

"Absolutely brilliant," was Makinen's description. But Tanak's run of six fastest times to rocket him back onto the podium was deeply impressive.

Talking of deeply impressive, one word: Loeb. Asked to summarise his new driver's performance, Hyundai's new team principal



Meeke overcame wheel rim problems

Andrea Adamo didn't take long. "I need only one word: amazing!" He called that right.

Fastest on two of the 15 stages, the Alsatian shunned a lack of experience of his Hyundai and employed a serious caffeine intake in an attempt to offset the ravages of jet-lag. Regardless of which continent his body clock was residing on, Loeb's pace and performance was superb. Ultimately – and predictably – he was disappointed not to have clung to third and the podium, but he'd done his job and delivered points and his new employer to

an early lead in the makes' race.

Beyond that, he'd delivered an exceptional story line in what's already shaping up to be a blockbuster of a championship. In scenes reminiscent of the WRC's first appearance in his home town of Hagenau nine years ago, Loeb rule looked to have returned – even in Ogier's backyard. The pre-event autograph session was beyond even the significant effort of Hyundai's private security firm. In the end, Loeb's celebrated co-driver Daniel Elena had to take control.

He jumped up onto a table and shouted at the crowd to stop

pushing and sort themselves out.

They fell into line. Briefly. But mass hysteria followed the Sebs everywhere last week. Fourth was a frustration for Loeb, but once he's found his feet and tested for more than a day and a half, he'll have an even bigger part to play.

"We're here at the end," said Loeb. "It's OK, but I was pushing and we weren't very quick. We have to understand. I test for Sweden next week. I drove nearly every day in January and I'm happy to stop now. Now I'm going to sleep."

Rally Sweden, round two... what a way to wake up.

Greensmith delivers in fine style

Talking at the pre-event press conference, Gus Greensmith warned that he'd missed opportunities in WRC 2 last season. He wouldn't be doing the same this time around.

Given this was the Manchester driver's maiden Monte in anything with more than two driven wheels – and his only previous outing had ended early when his Ford Fiesta R2 ran sick half way through the season-opener – nobody expected too much of him.

Fast forward to Sunday's post-event presser and M-Sport's rising star has delivered a dream and provided a silver-lining to the dark cloud which had hung over the Cumbrian corner of the service park for much of the rally.

Greensmith and returning co-driver Elliott Edmondson were bang on the money in the Fiesta R5. A WRC 2 Pro win was guaranteed the moment Kalle Rovanpera slithered into the back of Teemu Suninen's already ditched Ford Fiesta WRC on SS1 but, such was the speed and force of the Briton's effort, you'd have backed him for a win against the teenage Finn.

Not satisfied with a WRC 2 Pro

win, Greensmith chased local star Yoann Bonato, whose Citroen C3 R5 headed him initially. The Frenchman can point to a puncture opening the door for Gus to come through, but Greensmith was slowed by a long brake pedal and overheating issues on Friday morning.

Seventh overall and leading the WRC 2 Pro series, Greensmith admitted he was still coming to terms with the last four days.

"It hasn't sunk in," he said. "We could have gone a lot faster, but we just judged everything from Friday onwards. I was a bit nervous in the final day, but we've done it. Amazing."

Rovanpera's event went from bad to worse, after his co-driver got him lost and they were penalised one minute for approaching a time control from the wrong direction. Then they stopped to change a puncture. This wasn't the Monte many predicted for the apparent chosen one. He'll be back.

Adrien Fourmaux landed a merit-worthy second behind Bonato in WRC 2. The Frenchman has swerved a JWRC campaign to jump straight into an R5 car this season



Greensmith was the class of the field in his M-Sport Ford Fiesta R5

and his early pace looks to be paying dividends. Ole Christian Veiby placed his Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 third, with Rhys Yates fourth (and an impressive 14th overall).

Yates made the perfect start to his maiden WRC 2 campaign, helped immeasurably by the guiding hand of Denis Giraudet. Never having driven in anything like the conditions he witnessed last week, the Chesterfield Skoda Fabia R5 driver's star shone almost

as brightly as that of Greensmith.

"We've done our own thing here," said Yates. "I've come to learn, but where the conditions have allowed we've pushed on and the times and splits have shown that we've made real progress. Honestly, the whole event has been such an eye-opener though – from the start of our test all the way through to that final stage. I've absolutely loved it. We haven't put a mark on the car and we're ready to go again now."

SUPPORTS

ROUND 08

DRIVER ANALYSIS BY DAVID EVANS



SEBASTIEN OGIER 10/10 CITROEN C3 WRC

Delivered the perfect start to his second stint at Citroen. And did it in the most dramatic fashion, nursing a throttle problem and with nothing but tenths in hand over Neuville. The defending champion was utterly brilliant in his home town and on a rally he loves.



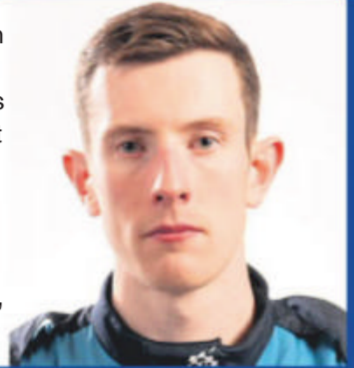
ESAPEKKA LAPPI 3/10 CITROEN C3 WRC

Fairly forgettable Citroen debut for the Finn. Running fourth after Thursday night's two stages was definitely the highlight. Damaged the front-left of the C3 WRC on Friday afternoon's opener and then retired permanently with an engine problem on the first stage of the weekend.



ELFYN EVANS 3/10 FORD FIESTA WRC

Showed he has the speed with second quickest on SS7, but high-speed crash three stages later was definitely not the start he and new co-driver Scott Martin needed to the new season. Evans was brave and kept the taps open, hoping to pull the Fiesta back to the road, but it ended in the trees.



TEEMU SUNINEN 4/10 FORD FIESTA WRC

Disastrous start to only his second ever attempt at the Monte Carlo Rally, when he dropped the Ford Fiesta WRC on a shockingly icy approach to a left-hander. Nosed the thing into a ditch and stayed there. Superallied through the remainder with some encouraging times.



PONTUS TIDEMAND 3/10 FORD FIESTA WRC

Came to the French Alps chasing experience on his first time out in a current generation World Rally Car, but got caught out when he broke a wishbone in a stage-six cut. Stopping to change a puncture cost more time on Saturday morning. Next stop, home and Rally Sweden.



THIERRY NEUVILLE 9/10 HYUNDAI i20 WRC

Did all he could to carry the fight to the local hero, but ultimately came up ever so slightly short. Didn't really put a wheel wrong in what was a great start to the season – now needs to put the disappointment behind him and move on very quickly to defend his Swedish win of 12 months ago.



ANDREAS MIKKELSEN 4/10 HYUNDAI i20 WRC

Had just moved up to third and was starting to look like his old self again when he tried to carry too much speed through the final long fast right-hander on SS9. The Hyundai slid wide and removed its left-rear wheel against a rock. Game over.



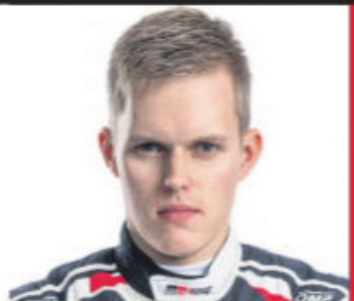
SEBASTIEN LOEB 9/10 HYUNDAI i20 WRC

Simply superb. A win was a dream too far, but this driver deserved a podium. Couldn't really get comfortable with the car on his i20 debut, but put that and the post-Dakar jet-lag behind him to score fastest times on what was a stunning start to his six-round programme.



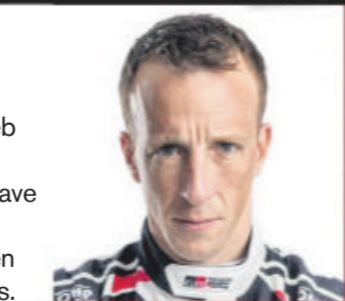
OTT TANAK 8/10 TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Lost out when the first stage was canned on Saturday morning and the early leader was 30s behind when he stopped to change a puncture. Fought back with fastest times galore, but the podium's bottom step felt like scant reward.



KRIS MEEKE 8/10 TOYOTA YARIS WRC

The Northern Irishman demonstrated superb pace on his WRC return, his debut for Toyota and his first time with Seb Marshall calling the notes. Unfortunately, when he might have been playing for a podium, his Monte was a tale of three broken rims. Powerstage win was class.



JARI-MATTI LATVALA 6/10 TOYOTA YARIS WRC

Fiddled with the car throughout the event in search of improved turn-in and less understeer and a sixth-stage scratch showed the speed was there. But ultimately, he was forced to give best to his hard-charging team-mate and a fast-returning Frenchman.



GUS GREENSMITH 8/10 FORD FIESTA R5

Overcame an unnervingly long brake pedal and some leaf-related overheating issues (they filled the radiator cover) on Friday morning to dominate the WRC 2 Pro category with the drive he's threatened for the last 12 months. Superb effort and well deserved result for the M-Sport driver.



MOTORSPORT NEWS STAR DRIVER



SEBASTIEN OGIER

The defending champion never sleeps so well on the Saturday night of a WRC round – certainly not when he's fighting at the front. Last Saturday night, as he dozed, myriad things played on his mind. Would he finish? Could he finish? Would he win? Could he win? Yes, yes, yes and yes. It takes more than Thierry Neuville and a dodgy throttle to beat him.

MOTORSPORT NEWS WOODEN SPOON



KALLE ROVANPERA

All the talk, all the hype and only countryman Teemu Suninen's Fiesta WRC is enough to keep him out of a ditch that would undoubtedly have swallowed his Skoda Fabia R5 whole. Stopping and changing a puncture meant more misery for the 18-year-old. He won't be down for long though.

RESULTS

Round 1/14, 87th Rallye Automobile de Monte Carlo 2019, January 24-27

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Citroen C3 WRC	3h21m15.9s
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+2.2s
3	Ott Tanak (EST)/Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+2m15.2s
4	Sebastien Loeb (FRA)/Daniel Elena (MCO)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+2m28.2s
5	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+2m29.9s
6	Kris Meeke (GBR)/Sebastian Marshall (GBR)	Toyota Yaris WRC	+5m36.2s
7	Gus Greensmith (GBR)/Elliott Edmondson (GBR)	Ford Fiesta R5	+13m04.6s
8	Yoann Bonato (FRA)/Benjamin Boulloud (FRA)	Citroen C3 R5	+13m56.5s
9	Stephane Sarrazin (FRA)/Jacques-Julien Renucci (FRA)	Hyundai i20 R5	+14m06.8s
10	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA)/Renaud Jamoul (BEL)	Ford Fiesta R5	+16m03.4s
11	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/Marko Salminen (FIN)	Ford Fiesta WRC	+17m56.8s
20	Pontus Tidemand (SWE)/Ola Floene (NOR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	+29m34.6s
31	Mauro Miele (ITA)/Luca Beltrame (ITA)	Citroen DS 3 WRC	+38m17.5s
R	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/Scott Martin (GBR)	Ford Fiesta WRC	SS10/accident
R	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)/Janne Ferm (FIN)	Citroen C3 WRC	SS9/engine
R	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Anders Jager (NOR)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	SS10/lost wheel

CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS

DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier	29
2	Thierry Neuville	21
3	Ott Tanak	17
4	Kris Meeke	13
5	Sebastien Loeb	12
6	Jari-Matti Latvala	10
7	Gus Greensmith	6
8	Yoann Bonato	4
9	Stephane Sarrazin	2
10	Adrien Fourmaux	1

MANUFACTURERS

POS	TEAMS	PTS
1	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	30
2	Citroen Total WRT	25
3	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	25
4	M-Sport Ford WRT	14

NEXT RALLY

Will the running order slow Ogier down in Sweden?

RALLY SWEDEN FEBRUARY 14-17

INSIGHT

Photos: LAT, Dan Bathie

Following all the controversy, **Lucy Morson** looks at what the future holds for the all-female category



W Series is new category in 2019

The launch of W Series – an all-female racing championship – last October unsurprisingly caused a

huge difference of opinion and provoked an enormous reaction on social media from drivers themselves right through to casual fans.

W Series will appear on the DTM support bill for six rounds from May to August this year and aims to provide female racing drivers with an extra stepping stone in their pursuit of top-level drives in motorsport.

It's also hoped it can raise the profile of its competitors to the outside world with the intention of inspiring a new generation of young girls. It will offer 18 drivers, and two reserves, a fully-funded Formula 3-level drive in Tatuus T-318 machinery and a guaranteed share of a prize fund totalling £1.1 million.

But one of motorsport's major selling points has always been that it is one of very few sporting disciplines in the world in which women can compete on equal terms with men, even at the highest level. As a result, the cynicism and criticism faced by W Series has been vociferous and at times not without fair reason.

There have been questions over just how damaging it might be to have any future W Series champion struggle upon returning to competing against men, particularly considering just how hard it is for women to break into motorsport in the first place.

There are also concerns that separating male and female

competition does more to further gender inequality than it does to improve it.

This criticism is something which W Series CEO and sports lawyer Catherine Bond Muir, who embarked on the project three years ago while on an extended career break, is particularly keen to address.

"I spent six months doing research and initially I was sceptical about the idea, for all of the reasons that have been raised," she says. "But I'd like to bring up this very emotive word that people are using: segregation."

"We aren't segregating, what we are doing is creating a new platform for drivers to go on. We're giving them a free drive to get an experience that otherwise they wouldn't have had."

"If you look at motorsport at the moment, women are just getting test drives or they're just a reserve driver. What we're doing is putting 18 women on the grid, full-time, getting driving and racing experience."

"There is an assumption that our women are stopping competing by joining W Series. To 'go back' to competing with men would mean they'd have had to have stopped, and they never have stopped competing with men."

Porsche Carrera Cup GB driver Esmee Hawkey is among the diverse list of 60 drivers vying for a spot on the grid in the first selection process, which took place in Austria from January 24-28. But Hawkey will still enjoy a full programme on the British Touring Car Championship support bill this year, owing to W Series' condensed calendar.

"I think this is a great starting point for creating female role models

in motorsport," she says. "We're not creating a series just like Formula 1 solely for women, for me, that would be segregation. F1 is the top level any driver wants to get to, so to create a top level just for women it would mean there is nothing to aim for."

Le Mans 24 Hour winner Alex Wurz and 13-time F1 winner David Coulthard – the latter who is also a backer of the series – played a key role in the selection process, alongside former IndyCar driver Lyn St James. The same assessment criteria was used in Wurz's role as part of the FIA Institute Young Driver's of Excellence Academy from 2011-2015, with focus on road-car control, driving techniques, simulator exposure, fitness and media ability.

There will be another weekend of selection in southern Europe in the early spring, which will determine the final grid ahead of the first round at Hockenheim on May 3-5.

The initial contest will tell if the W Series can be successful in its aim to boost female participation in motorsport. Considering the inescapable gender imbalance at the moment, it can't hurt to try something new, even if it has exposed a minefield of opinion. ■

"We are not segregating"

Catherine Bond Muir



Series will use Tatuus T-318



Hawkey will still race in Carrera Cup

DAVID COULTHARD

Former Formula 1 driver and W Series supporter



Why are you backing W Series?

"I had a younger sister, who is unfortunately no longer with us, but I believe she was more naturally talented at driving than I was. It just so happened that the opportunity and the weight of the family support went to me as I was six years older and I think there is a more obviously established route for a professional career for men than there has been for women. I love the world of motorsport;

the deadlines and the people that are involved because I think it brings out the best in all of us. I want this to bring out the best of the women's talent out there."

What outcome would you see as a success for the series?

"For me, it would be if we could create positive role models and take away this glass ceiling. That would bring more

women into racing, creating more female racing drivers. It's exactly what my sister could have been if she was alive and armed with the opportunities I have today."

What would you say in regards to criticism of the series?

"In terms of the backlash, there are always going to be people who disagree when you are doing something different to what they are

doing or what they believe in. All of the people involved in W Series are having a real go at it and giving this our best shot. Someone needs to make the first step and we're all putting our time and effort into this. The racing world will tell us in time whether they also share that vision. There will be six races in 2019 and we will have a champion. That champion will have a spotlight and big cheque to then progress their career to the next level."

Q&A

FEATURE

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

How Sam Tordoff and Rory Butcher want to take AmD to the next level. By Matt James

AIMING TO GATECRASH

THE BTCC'S ELITE



Tordoff has assembled a dream team at AmDTuning



Butcher will be looking to build on the 2018 progress

Sam Tordoff's decision to ally himself with AmDTuning.com's ambitious British Touring Car Championship programme with its newly acquired Honda Civic Type R was a surprise. For a multiple race winner, joining a team which has yet to taste glory seemed an odd decision.

However, it was driven by a deep-seated desire to sample what has been one of the best cars on the grid for years.

"I have always wanted to race a Honda Civic FK2," says Tordoff, who was beaten to the 2016 championship by Gordon Shedden driving the same example of the Japanese hatchback. "I know it is a good car. There was never a way in at Dynamics, which runs the factory Civics, and, I didn't want to go to any of the teams that were running the customer cars at the time."

But that chance has come now. After his narrow defeat in 2016, Tordoff, who had raced a WSR BMW 125i M Sport in that season, took a year away from tin-tops to battle in British GT, but returned to the BTCC with Motorbase Performance in 2018. He qualified the Ford Focus RS on the front row of the grid for the first race of the season at Brands and eventually took a win at Silverstone towards the end of the year, but it was a campaign blighted by bad luck.

"I didn't leave Motorbase Performance—we just couldn't put a deal together, and that is the way motorsport goes sometimes," says Tordoff. "I had been speaking to the team and we thought it was on for 2019, but it just fell apart. I had also been talking with [AmDTuning.com boss] Shaun Hollamby for a while, and asked him to keep me in the loop. I knew he was looking at buying the Hondas from Eurotech Racing and we kept in touch. Things began to get serious in last November, and it all just clicked together." Tordoff had tested for AmDTuning.com



Motorbase for comeback in 2018

CV
Sam Tordoff
 Age: 29 Lives: Bradford
 BTCC track record
 Starts: 152 Wins: 7 Poles: 5
 Best championship finish: 2nd in 2016

in one of its Audi S3s at the end of 2017 when he was looking to return to the BTCC but opted for Motorbase instead as AmD was going through an expansion. "Now that I am here and it isn't as much of a jump as some onlookers think. There were several things that I wanted, and we were able to make them happen," explains Tordoff, who is the group operations manager of the car dealership JCT600. "I was able to get engineer Craig Porley, who worked with Eurotech last year. I have brought [experienced BTCC man] Malcolm Swetnam from Motorbase to be team manager and I have brought a number one mechanic and a data engineer. I have created my own group around me, and that is very important. Also, having Rory Butcher as my team-mate was vital—I insisted with Shaun that I wanted him there. I wanted a competitive team-mate and Rory fits the bill perfectly."

That means that Tordoff's title fight with Shedden has come back into focus. Butcher is Shedden's brother-in-law and the three-time champ has driven the car many times. The advice from the other side of the garage will be useful—Tordoff will be working with Shedden, rather than against him.

"Gordon and I are friends," says Tordoff. "We would be silly to ignore what he can offer. Having Rory was so important too and I've found him such a pleasure to work with. We co-operate on things—even commercial deals—and there is a good feeling."

Tordoff will fulfil his ambition in the Honda, has assembled a brains trust at AmD and has Butcher pushing him hard in the same operation. The ingredients are there to truly flourish in 2019. ■



Tordoff is impressed with Butcher

A couple of sixth placed finishes might not seem like much of a return from Rory Butcher's 2018 British Touring Car Championship campaign, but look a little deeper: he was in one of the oldest cars on the grid and in his first full season at this level.

He was also with AmDTuning, which had just expanded to run four cars for the first time. If you look in terms of the levels of experience and the machinery at his disposal, Butcher's was probably one of the stand out performances of the season.

Not that the Scot will admit as much, because he has already got his eyes looking firmly forwards. Remaining with the AmDTuning squad was a no brainer given the strong relationship forged between the two last season, but now the son of Knockhill owner Derek has the chance to make real progress up the grid in the ex-Eurotech Racing Honda Civic Type R.

"Last year it was a difficult season," admits Butcher. "When you have to be happy and satisfied with just breaking into the top 10, it is not normal for a competitive driver. But that is just the way British Touring Cars are and I think we got the most out of the package that we had at the time."

Finishing 17th in the points did turn heads for the ex-Porsche and GT racer, even if he did feel frustrated with his own results. The ultra-competitive BTCC is a true dogfight in the midfield, and that is where Butcher spent most of his time.

"Through my career I have learned that what happens at the front of the field is very different to what happens where I was in the midfield after qualifying," says Butcher. "The guys at the front are perhaps a bit more comfortable. They understand that if they are going to make one more place for a couple more points, then it is maybe not so much a do or die move. Where I was [in the pack] last year, the guys were desperate and we were trying to fight for that last point. Some of the stuff that goes on back there: I hope I can break away from that with the Honda."

Alongside the improvement in the equipment, there will be a change in the way Butcher approaches the season too. Alongside experienced team-mate Sam Tordoff, he is ready to play a longer game.

CV
Rory Butcher
 Age: 31 Lives: Kirkcaldy, Fife
 BTCC track record
 Starts: 42 Wins: 0 Poles: 0
 Best championship finish: 17th in 2018

"Going in to this season, we are definitely taking a step up a gear and I am really excited to drive alongside [new team-mate] Sam [Tordoff]—to have someone with his experience to bounce ideas off and hopefully we can both progress," Butcher says.

"The package is there for us to do the job. If we are not winning races, we have to look back and be disappointed. I am not looking as far ahead as the last round, but it is so important just to score points. Look at what [eventual champion] Colin Turkington did last year—he was just collecting points without too many wins. It is a bigger picture. As much as I want to win races, I am thinking about that too."

And part of that bigger picture is the help that comes from the family, with three-time champion and brother-in-law Gordon Shedden firmly in his corner.

Shedden, for his part, is keen to help Butcher learn in the right way and will not be there to spoon-feed answers to his family member, but can certainly assist when it comes to giving a general direction for the set-up of the machine.

"I am definitely going to pick Gordon's brains," says Butcher. "He has got fantastic experience of the Civic and he will be on hand to help. That is going to be a leg-up that we might not have had, and I am going to exploit it—why wouldn't I?"

So the equipment is right for Butcher to build on the progress he made last season, and he has firmly established himself as a favourite within the AmDTuning.com team already. It seems that Butcher has found a place he wants to be for a long time: both with the BTCC and with the team. ■



MG was occasionally competitive



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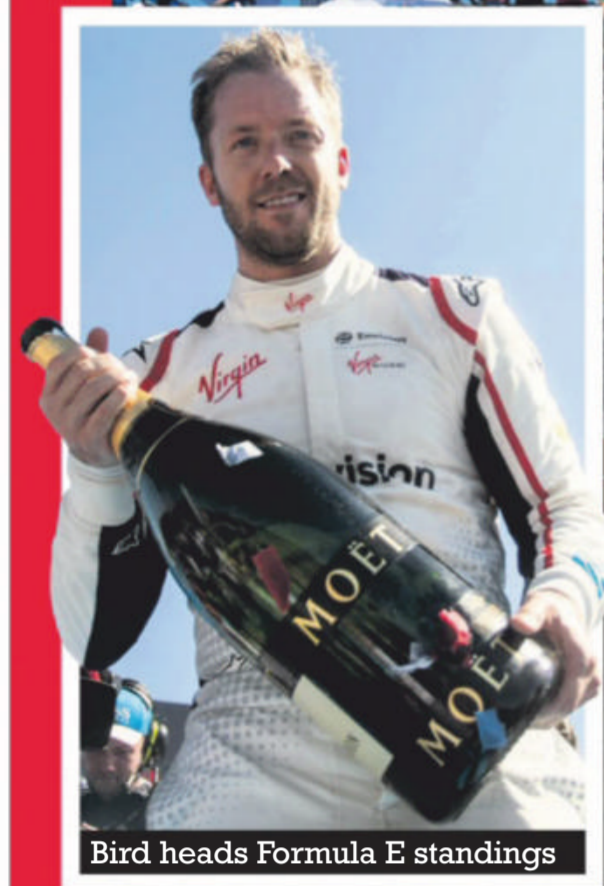


FORMULA E: CHILE

Photos: LAT

Alex Kalinauckas survived the unbearable heat in Chile

BIRD TURNS UP THE HEAT IN SANTIAGO



Bird heads Formula E standings



Briton is first to win in all five FE seasons

Briton Sam Bird, who put Virgin Racing back in the winner's circle in Chile, suffered a nervous end to the Formula E encounter. While the temperatures hit record highs, he was keeping an eagle eye on the heat of his battery.

He managed to keep it cool enough to see the chequered flag, but it was a close-run thing.

Last weekend, Santiago experienced unseasonably high temperatures, which got close to its official record for the time of year. In the process, with the race temperature peaking at 37.9°C, the championship's record of 35°C from Putrajaya in the 2015/16 season was obliterated. What the dry, blazing heat meant for the teams and drivers were pre-race worries about how the new Gen2 machine would cope.

During the race, it meant the asphalt at the 1.45-mile Parque O'Higgins track, melted and broke up – the cars physically carving rough lines at the most severe corners. There were concerns up and down the pitlane about how the batteries and tyres in particular would fare in the extreme conditions. The race started at 1600hrs local time, and the 47m02.511s, 36-lap event would take in the peak of the day's heat.

Sebastien Buemi lined up on pole for the Nissan e.dams squad – a fine reward for a rapid qualifying performance, which followed a heavy

crash in FP1. But it was one that came after long-time rival Lucas di Grassi lost a dominant superpole display and P1 on the grid after falling foul of a new rule requiring drivers to brake in precisely the same way on their in-laps after a hot-lap in qualifying.

Alongside Buemi was Pascal Wehrlein, making just his second FE start for Mahindra Racing (and following a Marrakech race that barely lasted a corner). They were followed by Audi's Daniel Abt and Virgin's Bird.

When the lights went out, Buemi kept the lead off the line and held off Wehrlein through the early stages as Bird battled his way past Abt to run third by the end of the first lap. Buemi, possibly conscious of the need to push on when temperatures were under control, stretched out the buffer to Wehrlein and took his attack mode on lap six, with Bird doing likewise three tours later. This would be crucial for the outcome of the race.

Using the higher power available, Bird rocketed back to Wehrlein and got past going into Turn 1. He shot after Buemi and the trio – with Wehrlein using his first attack mode immediately after being passed by Bird on lap 11 – edged clear of the pack.

They negotiated two full course yellow periods – the first to allow the stricken Dragon Racing car of Maximilian Gunther, a star of qualifying with seventh on the grid in just his third FE event, to be recovered from the pit straight, and a second so debris caused by Stoffel Vandoorne hitting the wall at Turn 3 on lap 18 could be removed.

The second FCY left the top three running virtually nose to tail, and apparently set for a grandstand finish. That all changed over the final third.

First, on lap 22, Buemi crashed at the same Turn 7 right-hander where he had shunted heavily in practice – “fortunately he wasn't injured,” e.dams manager Francois Sicard said of the first accident. In the race crash, the 2015/16 FE champion locked up going through the first part of the corner, got onto the broken asphalt that at this point was causing havoc for the pack, and slid into the wall. Buemi later said a software glitch played a part in both of his crashes.

That left Bird in the lead and having to defend hard against Wehrlein. The German driver took his final attack mode with just over six minutes and one lap of the race remaining. He closed right in on Bird and swarmed all over the British driver. It looked to be only a matter of time before he made a move for the lead, but the conditions came back to bite him. Mahindra warned Wehrlein his battery temperature was critical, and he was forced to back off.

This left Bird clear to take his eighth FE career win and became the only driver to have scored a victory in each of the series's five seasons – only di Grassi can match him on this front if he can score a win later in the year.

Bird took the flag 6.489s clear of Wehrlein, with Alexander Sims taking third on the road, but being dropped to seventh for a clash with Edoardo Mortara. That meant Abt completed the podium ahead of Mortara, and Robin Frijns

RESULTS

Round 3/12, Parque O'Higgins (CHL), January 26, 36 laps – 52.523 miles

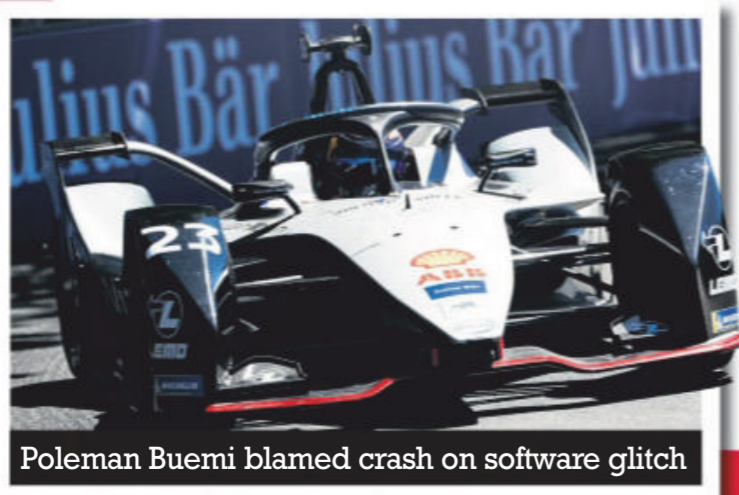
POS	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Sam Bird (GBR)	Virgin Racing- Audi e-tron FE05	47m02.511s
2	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Mahindra Racing-Mahindra M5Electro	+6.489s
3	Daniel Abt (DEU)	Audi Sport Abt-Audi e-tron FE05	+14.529s
4	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Venturi-Venturi VFE-05	+17.056s
5	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Virgin Racing-Audi e-tron FE05	+20.276s
6	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar-Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+23.755s
7	Alexander Sims (GBR)	BMW-BMW iFE.18	+27.590s
8	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO-NIO 004	+45.059s
9	Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Dragon Racing -Penske EV-3	+45.376s
10	Jerome d'Ambrosio (BEL)	Mahindra Racing-Mahindra M5Electro	+46.984s
11	Nelson Piquet Jr (BRA)	Jaguar-Jaguar I-TYPE 3	+48.635s
12	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi Sport Abt-Audi e-tron FE05	+1m03.552s
13	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	DS Techeetah-DS E-Tense FE19	+1m19.706s
14	Gary Paffett (GBR)	HWA-Venturi VFE-05	-1 lap
R	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.Dams-Nissan IM01	31 laps/accident damage
R	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	BMW-BMW iFE.18	23 laps/accident damage
R	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah-DS E-Tense FE19	22 laps/accident damage
R	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.Dams-Nissan IM01	21 laps/accident damage
R	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	HWA-Venturi VFE-05	17 laps/accident damage
R	Maximilian Gunther (DEU)	Dragon Racing-Penske EV-3	12 laps/power loss
R	Felipe Massa (BRA)	Venturi-Venturi VFE-05	12 laps/accident damage
R	Tom Dillmann (FRA)	NIO-NIO 004	10 laps/accident damage

Winner's average speed: 66.991mph. Fastest lap: Abt 1m11.263s, 73.703mph. Superpole: 1 Buemi 1m08.816s; 2 Wehrlein 1m08.925s; 3 Abt 1m08.958s; 4 Bird 1m09.253s; 5 di Grassi; 6 Vandoorne. Qualifying: 1 Wehrlein 1m08.463s; 2 Buemi 1m08.664s; 3 Bird 1m08.868s; 4 Vandoorne 1m08.962s; 5 Abt 1m09.030s; 6 Mortara 1m09.042s; 7 Gunther 1m09.143s; 8 Sims 1m09.147s; 9 Massa 1m09.168s; 10 Lopez 1m09.201s; 11 Evans 1m09.235s; 12 Vergne 1m09.307s; 13 Rowland 1m09.365s; 14 Lotterer 1m09.485s; 15 Frijns 1m09.505s; 16 Paffett 1m09.505s; 17 da Costa 1m09.551s; 18 Turvey 1m09.645s; 19 Piquet 1m09.705s; 20 d'Ambrosio 1m10.083s; 21 Dillmann 1m10.258s; 22 di Grassi. Championship: 1 Bird 43; 2 d'Ambrosio 41; 3 da Costa 28; 4 Frijns 28; 5 Vergne 28; 6 Evans 22; 7 Abt 21; 8 Lotterer 19; 9 Wehrlein 18; 10 Sims 18.

Virgin team boss Sylvain Filippi later explained that given the concerns of the battery temperatures getting out of control on an exponential curve, the team had adopted a “linear” approach to the race. This meant Bird had to produce a level performance all the way through, attack early and clinically when temperatures were low, then manage his pace evenly. He did it

masterfully, although said he was “close” to hitting the 72°C battery shutdown mark towards the end.

“It was different, it was strange,” Bird said of the boiling race. “I could manage the energy OK but it was just the battery temperature that was critical and difficult. But the team managed it very well – they kept me calm, told me what to do and I think we managed it perfectly.”



Poleman Buemi blamed crash on software glitch



Wehrlein was second in his second FE contest

INSIGHT

Photos: Go Slideways/Peter Paltridge, Troy Adamson

How a team of six is aiming to beat the odds in New Zealand. By **Neil Randon**



Team captain Frankie Wainman Jr. leads the line



The world turned upside down for Fairhurst in '18



Semi-final win in 2017 was a British Lions highlight

THE BRITISH F1 RACERS WHO ARE OFF TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

Racer Frankie Wainman Jr has won more major titles than any other driver in the history of BriSCA F1 stock car racing, but there is still one title on his bucket list.

Wainman Jr is captain of Team GB's British Lions stock car team, made up of six drivers from BriSCA F1 who join together to attempt what many believe is the impossible – to win the New Zealand Superstock Teams Championships.

There are 13 teams taking part in the event next weekend at the Robertson Holden International Speedway in Palmerston North. The top four points-scoring teams on Saturday go through to the semi-final knockout stage the following evening, with the winners of those two races facing off in the final.

In each eight-car race, four cars from each team go head-to-head over 10-15 laps. Each team has 'runners' and 'blockers'. Runners attempt to win the race, blockers try to stop the opposition winning. It isn't, however, that straightforward. At any time during the race a driver must be able to swap roles depending on how the race develops.

And that is how the Teams Champs is won. It is not about being in the fastest car, but by being a team player where the best drivers are able to read a race to benefit the team.

The British team, however, is always at a major disadvantage. For 11 months of the year the drivers race as individuals focused on a nine-month season of BriSCA F1 stock car racing. And then they have to acclimatise to driving different cars and a style of racing they only compete in three days a year.

Traditionally, the British outfit spend three weeks in New Zealand, and begin their sojourn in the World 240 Championship at Rotorua on the first weekend, followed by a one-off Teams event seven days later as preparation for the Teams Championship itself the week after.

The British Lions team was created in 2009, and remarkably finished second at its first attempt. The squad has finished runners-up twice since, in 2016 and 2017.

It was in 2017 the British Lions had their finest moment, making the final after obliterating one of the event favourites, the Gisborne Giants.

After the race the four Team GB cars drove along the front straight and pulled up, line astern, in front of the main grandstand. As one, the 15,000-strong crowd roared their approval.

None of the British drivers had ever experienced an atmosphere like it. For Lee Fairhurst, a regular member of the team for the past five years, it was a moment he will never forget.

"Look at that," Fairhurst says, as he raises one of his arms to eye

level. Just talking about that semi-final makes the hairs on his arms literally stand up on end. "To be there was electric. That semi-final was unbelievable."

In the final, the British Lions faced the Hawke's Bay Hawkeyes, who had beaten the outright favourites and home team, the Palmerston Panthers, in their semi-final.

But the Hawkeyes made short work of the Lions in the final.

Wainman Jr's fuel pump failed in the race, and the team captain could only watch from the sidelines. By the end, only Fairhurst was left running.

A gallant effort came to a disappointing end. Fairhurst saw how much it meant to Wainman Jr. "You could see it in Frank's eyes

when we got second that year," says Fairhurst, "The thing is his hunger to win, and that counts for a lot when you are there."

Last year the team comfortably qualified into the last four but were soundly beaten in the semi-final by host team and eventual winners Palmerston North Panthers, with Fairhurst in the centre of the action, being rolled over twice in the race.

"There is no hard feelings when you race over there," says Fairhurst. "We are all in the bar afterwards together and there is a really good atmosphere."

"We've got a good team now, a good group of cars, and some good guys helping us over there, so there is nothing to say we can't



Car damage ruled Frankie Wainman Junior out of last year's contest

win it one year."

But will it be this year? Racing alongside Wainman Jr and Fairhurst is Bobby Griffin, who was part of the 2017 team, but the three remaining drivers are all rookies. Wainman's son Frankie Jr has had just two teams races, while Karl Hawkins and Ben Riley had their first tries in teams races only last weekend.

So it is a relatively inexperienced outfit this time around, but a long-term strategy is being put in place for the future.

"We are in the process of building a team of drivers who can commit to three weeks in New Zealand for the next few years," says team director Guy Parker. "But none of this would be possible without the support we get from the team we have based in New Zealand."

As for Wainman Jr, he is confident the championship title will one day be heading to Britain. "It's all down to how your luck is on the day," Wainman Jr says. "Two years ago was just a dream until my fuel pump packed up in the final."

"It was one of the most frustrating things I've ever had happen in a stock car – being sat there, watching from the infield and not being able to do a thing about it. You feel like you have let everybody down."

"In New Zealand they all say we will never win the Teams Champs, but I know we will. We have a full squad of six drivers this year and I believe all six will make the country proud." ■

SPORTING SCENE

Photos: B Bade, Trevor Coulson

BAKKERUD TO TEAM UP WITH PROST FOR ANDROS TROPHY FINALE

World RX refugee for non-points Stade de France showdown



Bakkerud (l) will join Nicolas Prost (r) in the final Andros round



Bakkerud raced at Lans en Vercors last weekend

By Hal Ridge

Former Ford and Audi World RX driver Andreas Bakkerud will partner ex-Formula E racer Nicolas Prost in the final Andros Trophy event of the season at the Stade de France in Paris next week.

Bakkerud joined Prost last weekend in the penultimate points-scoring round of the season at Lans en Vercors and was second and then fastest in qualifying on the second day in the Elite class, but ran at the back of the final to stay out of the championship fight.

Having been an advocate of World RX's proposed electric switch for 2021 for some time, the winter events

are Bakkerud's first experience of competing in an electric car. "I was surprised that it wasn't a big different sitting inside," he said. "The balance in the chassis is heavier and the weight is lower. The driving style changes as you don't have a clutch, with the petrol cars the clutch is your best friend in Andros Trophy to get rotation, so with the electric car you have to nail the set-up more. "I hope World RX will get more sound out from the cars, then it can be really spectacular."

Bakkerud will join former World RX rival Sebastien Loeb in Paris next week. He said: "I've been told it's crazy to race there and I've heard there are up to 60,000 people at the event and it's big on TV. It'd be nice to get a result."

Dubourg and Panis to battle for Andros title

Triple Andros Trophy champion Jean-Baptiste Dubourg moved a step closer to claiming a fourth successive crown last weekend on the opening day at Lans en Vercors with victory, then finished third on day two to extend his lead.

The title will be decided in an internal combustion engine v electric power showdown in the final event of the year at Super Besse this weekend, as electric racer Aurelien Panis is the only driver that can stop Dubourg taking the title. Panis was third and then fifth in the two rounds last weekend, while his father, ex-F1 racer Olivier, won on day two.



Ex-F1 racer Olivier Panis was the class of the field in race two last weekend



Lithuanian has set out for title

Meskauskas aims for glory in the BTRDA Clubmans Production division in 2019

Citroen C2 racer Juozas Meskauskas is targeting a title challenge in the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship Production category this season.

The Lithuanian driver has spent the last two years developing both his skills and his JD Garage-run Citroen C2, spending much of 2018 working on set-up options ahead of a title attack this year.

"When I started I wanted to win. We've come close a few times and we're still hoping to do that," he

told MN. "Last year we sacrificed the season to find the right settings, with things like tyre pressures and things you are allowed within the tight controls of the class. I think we've found the sweet spot for the car. We knocked over a second off our lap times on some circuits and I think we're in a good position to contend for the championship."

Meskauskas, who finished on the podium at the penultimate round of the series at Blyton last season, says the closer he gets to the front in the

clubman's series, the harder it becomes to succeed. "The closer you are to the front, the guys are often the most experienced, but some of them get too excited too," he added. "That's where all the fun is happening, it's not necessarily the quickest that wins, but the cleverest. I know now much more than I did before, so we're hoping we have a really strong chance to fight for the title this season."

Meskauskas' JD team will also continue to rent out a sister C2 at Clubman events.

Hansen to tackle Swedish event in RX Lites machine

Swede Kevin Hansen will race a Team Faren Supercar Lites machine in the one-day Swedish Winter Championship this Friday in Sundsvall.

Team principal Eric Faren explained: "It's exciting to have Kevin in the car, we've known each other a long time"

Hansen won the RX Lites Cup (now RX2) in 2015 before graduating to Supercar, while Team Faren has run British RX champions Dan Rooke and Nathan Heathcote in RX2 in the last two seasons.



Hansen will race for Faren

Gundersen and Evjen to join forces to contest single-make RX2 series this season

Former European Rallycross TouringCar champion Ben-Philip Gundersen will remain in World Rallycross' RX2 single-make support category this season having netted a pair of victories in his maiden campaign last year.

He will continue to be joined by fellow Norwegian Sondre Evjen in the JC Raceteknik team in both RX2 and RallyX Nordic.

"Last year was good for me and I know the competition will be at least as high, if not even higher," said Gundersen, who

won the Euro RX TouringCar title in 2016. "My goal will be to be on the podium in both RX2 and RallyX Nordic."

Evjen impressed on his one-off Supercar debut in Latvia last September but will remain in RX2 for another term.



Gundersen will remain in RX2

"Together with the team we will fight for a victory in both championships," Evjen said. "I had a couple of events that went really badly in 2018, which unfortunately meant we were unable to fight for the top of the points. I was sixth in RX2 last year, and third in RallyX Nordic - this year I'm aiming higher."

Both drivers will compete in the Swedish Winter Championship at Sundsvall this weekend.

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MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters

MN SAYS...

Ogier: Class that can shine anywhere

Frenchman was made to work hard, but pulled off a win on Citroen comeback

When the music stopped on the World Rally Championship roundabout last season, six-time champion Sebastien Ogier had landed back at Citroen. He departed M-Sport after two title-winning campaigns and decided to return to the deeper pockets of the French manufacturer that had given him his big break a decade before.

It did seem an odd choice, though. The C3 WRC had been a difficult beast to tame. Only Sebastien Loeb had managed to push the car to a victory in a turbulent 2018. Ogier's M-Sport Ford Fiesta was clearly a more refined machine, and the engineering depth of Toyota and Hyundai had pushed their products to the front of the pack. Citroen was lagging behind.

But Ogier's victory in Monte Carlo, his 45th at the top level, showed that his skills behind the wheel can compensate for a machine that isn't yet on point. Given his experience, he will no doubt extract more from it over the course of 2019, which should be a worry for his rivals in the service park.

Matt James, Editor (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



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



John Henderson knows how to appeal to the Motorsport News art editor Mike Stokoe with his photo of a classic Rover SD1



Robert Clayson's Brands photograph



Chris West's Peugeot 206, by Mike Bouts



Live Action fun, taken by Chris Collier



Christopher and Anthony Newton get dramatic at Brands, by David Degruchy-Jones



ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Ben Lawrence, aged 9, snapped this shot of an MG J2 at the recent Clee Hill Trial



Sideways does it...from David Harbey



Another one from Robert Clayson

GOT AN OPINION?

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

Photos: LAT, Kevin O'Driscoll, Charlotte Motor Speedway, rallyretro.com

TV GUIDE



Final ever races of the GP3 Series took place at the Abu Dhabi Circuit

Catch all the action from the final ever races of the **GP3 Series** in Abu Dhabi ahead of it becoming the FIA Formula 3 Championship in 2019 (Thursday, 1545-1740hrs, Sky Sports F1).

ART's Anthoine Hubert would claim the final title but who would win the feature and sprint races over the course of the weekend?

Relive the 2019 **Dakar Rally** as competitors tackled the gruelling route through Peru (Friday, 0945-1015hrs, Eurosport 1).

Nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb was trying to take his first ever win on the world-famous event and his main opponent for the victory in the final week would be two-time Dakar winner Nasser Al-Attiyah.

Immediately after that you can watch the third round of the 2018/19 **Formula E** season from Chile (Friday, 1015-1115hrs, Eurosport 1). Two different drivers and teams won the opening two races, but would that turn into three?

And finally, catch all the thrills and spills from the opening round of the **World Rally Championship** from the Monte Carlo Rally (Sunday, 1345-1445hrs, BT Sport 1).

Loeb was returning, this time with Hyundai, to try and win his eighth Monte but would face stern opposition.

Sebastien Ogier is now in a Citroen while his main title rivals from last year, Toyota's Ott Tanak and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville, would be hard to beat.

FAVOURITE LIVERIES 1990s JACK BENYON'S TOP THREE PICKS



Ford Escort RS Cosworth 1994

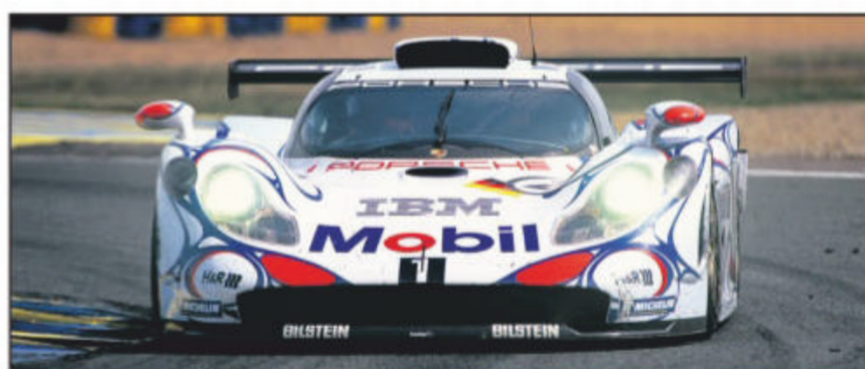
Malcolm Wilson won the 1994 British Rally Championship following a purple patch of Colin McRae (1991 and '92) and Richard Burns (1993), but helped to inspire a generation of rally fans with a bold Michelin Pilot livery. It regularly appears in rally fans' favourite livery lists, and it's definitely on mine. The only improvement would be better Tarmac wheels...

Porsche GT1 1998

At the back end of the 1990s myriad manufacturers were doing battle in the World Sportscar Championship and the liveries of Mercedes, BMW and Toyota were all incredible. But the 1998 Porsche 911 GT1 takes the biscuit with this Mobil 1-themed corker. It won Le Mans with Laurent Aiello, Allan McNish and Stephane Ortelli.

Chevrolet Monte Carlo 1997

Obviously the rainbow Dupont Jeff Gordon paint scheme is one of the most famous in motorsport. But for the 1997 All Star race the team was sponsored by Jurassic Park, and the car was a monster. With every part designed to be as fast as possible without cost consideration – and pushing the regulations to the limit – Gordon wiped the floor with its competition.



NEXT WEEK

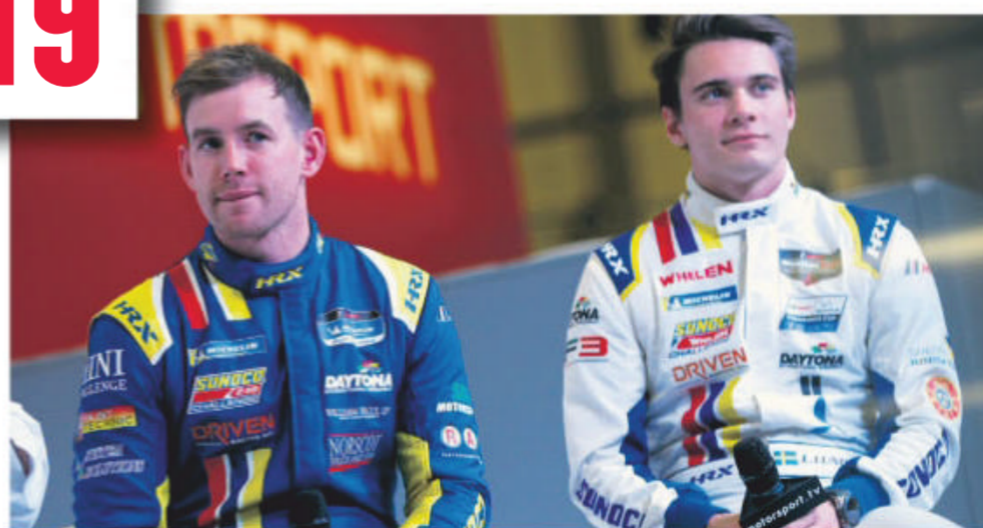
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THE SECRET TO TEAM HARD'S SUCCESS



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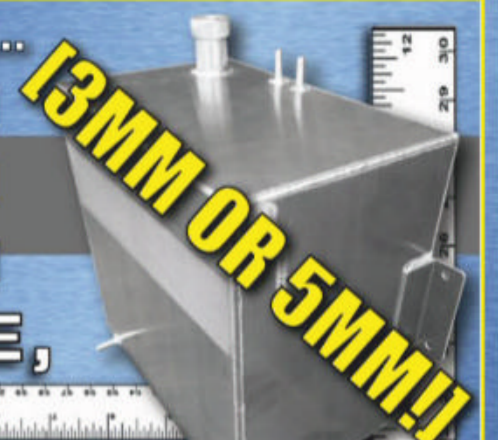
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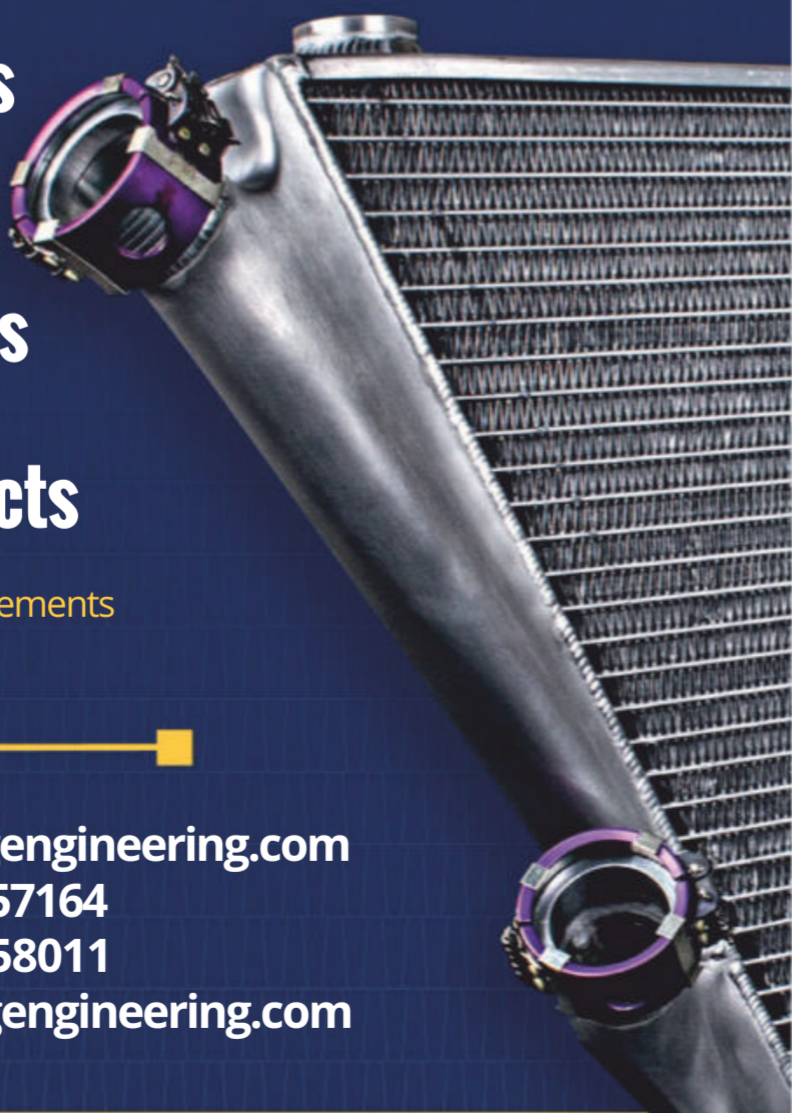
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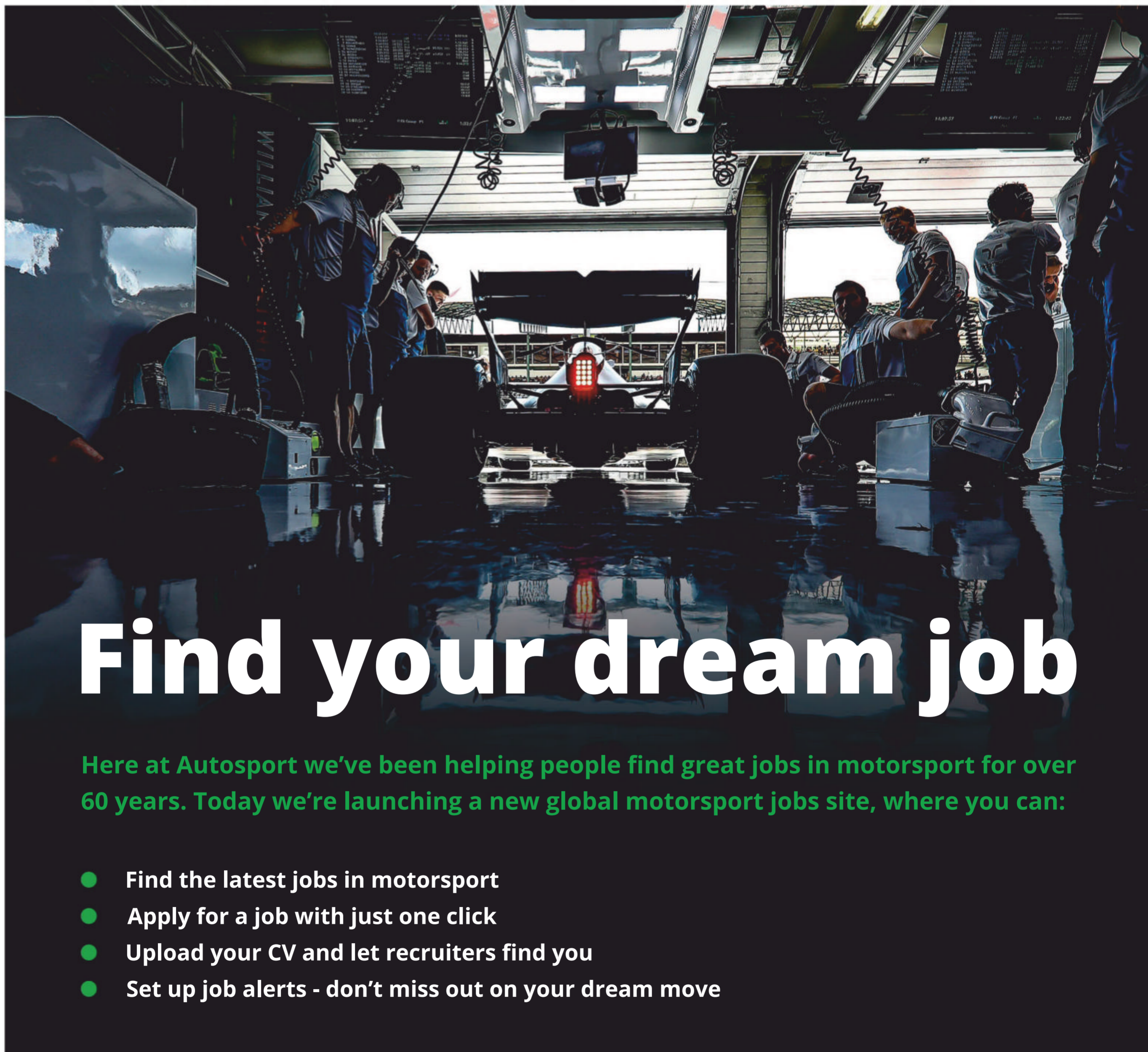


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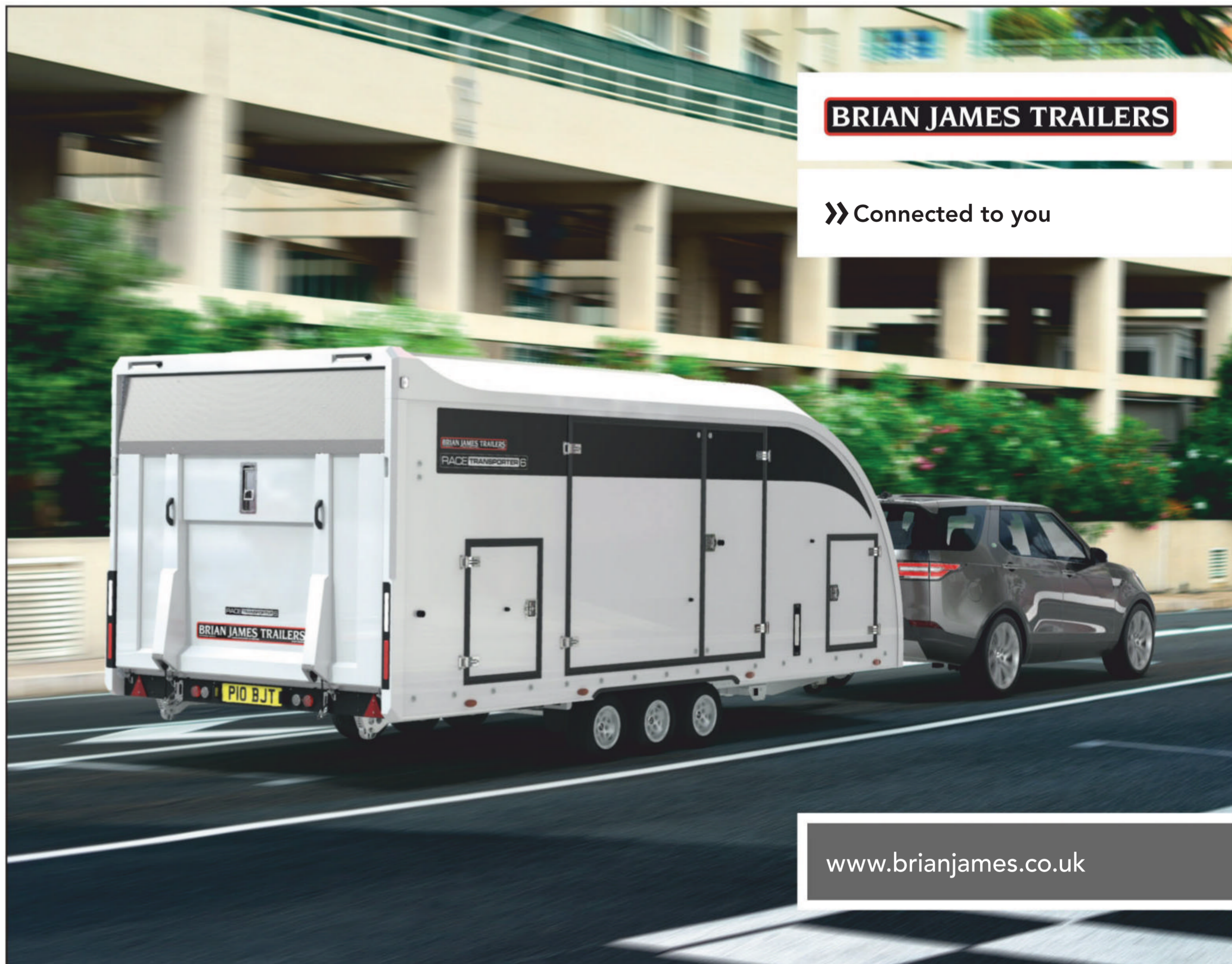
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