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Competitor fury over worsening driving standards

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**FULL REVIEW OF THE WORLD RALLYCROSS SEASON ▶ P24**

**MAX  
CHILTON**



**'I AM READY TO CONQUER INDYCARS' P22**

**TOYOTA  
READY FOR  
ITS RETURN**



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**MOTORSPORT NEWS** ISSUE **MJ3058** DECEMBER 28 2016

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# STARS CALL FOR RALLY CROSS DRIVING STANDARDS CLAMPDOWN

**Champions irate at what they call "stupid" driving standards**

By David Evans

**Rallycross giants Mattias Ekstrom and Petter Solberg have challenged the FIA to call time on what they see as dangerous and 'stupid' driving in the World Rallycross Championship.**

Both FIA World RX champions talk in glowing terms about the future of rallycross, but both fear that future could be compromised if the governing body and the series promoter doesn't step up and tackle questionable tactics from certain drivers.

Ekstrom told *Motorsport News* he understood that some contact was part of the sport, but he said this season has included too much.

Ekstrom said: "The contact is not right but some people do it - even though they know it's going to ruin somebody's race. And then they say they didn't mean to do it and don't expect anything to happen. Come on! They knew when they touched the bullet they

would crash. If they don't do it, everybody's fine, but then they do it anyway.

"Some guys don't have a good image in the paddock and it's usually those same three or four guys who can't behave."

Solberg echoed those sentiments. He said: "Something has to change now, what we had this year is just not right. What we need is strong rules and fair judgments, that's what's going to be best for the sport. Rallycross is amazing and it has an incredible future, but we need these changes now."

Ekstrom said he wanted to see a change of regulation with a collective penalty system similar to the one in used in DTM.

He said: "If you are a regular driver in World RX you should get one warning, then black flag. Then for number three [warning] it's again black flag and this is carried through the season. If you do something at the next race, it's a black flag straight away - you had your warning at the

start of the season. And if it carries on again then you are refused the start. If you are not allowed to start one heat, this will hurt you. Starting heat two on zero points hurts, but if we have this then people will stop doing things. We all want to see action, but some of what's happening is not action. It's stupid.

"It's really the same as football: if you are a bad boy and get too many yellow cards then you are out for one game. That's what we need."

Ekstrom was at pains to point out that his concern was wider than just one or two on-track incidents and he added that he had no concerns about the control of the racing.

"We have a good race director," he said. "Look at the percentages for him getting it right and wrong, it's probably even better here than in DTM."

The FIA's governance of World Rallycross comes under the off-road commission, but Ekstrom feels the time has come to change



Larsson's dramatic exit from Hockenheim

# HEADLINE NEWS

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Ekstrom wants a rule change

that. He said: "Rallycross is developing so fast, it needs its own commission and its own rules to live and to understand what is going on with this sport."

The champion added a stark warning for both the FIA and promoter saying: "If people don't take care of rallycross and look after the development then maybe we won't have such a bright future as we could have."

"I have my wish list for Christmas and one of them is that [FIA president] Jean Todt will take responsibility – once

you [the FIA] start the world championship you [the FIA] need to be aware that it's running. Everybody has to up their game. You see the driver level is going up and the growth of teams and drivers is faster than the promoter and the FIA for the moment. We have to convince FIA and [series promoter] IMG to keep up, it's not OK anymore just to keep the level you have. The FIA has been the farmer of the sport; I grew up in the paddocks I know this. But we are developing so fast now.

"We are fighting for the audience, whether they are fans at the track or on social media, and if they don't feel fantastic, then they switch off. They make a deal with their Sunday afternoon to tune in to rallycross and we have to make it mega good or they will not come, they will go elsewhere with their time."

World Rallycross managing director Paul Bellamy said he could understand the points raised.

"When you have two world champions talking about this kind of thing, we have to listen to them," Bellamy said. "But we also have to listen to the other drivers. I must admit I agree with what Mattias and Petter are saying and we are working very hard with the FIA right on this subject."

"We will have more technology coming into the cars next year which will deliver as much data as possible to the race director and the stewards. I agree that we need consistency, but at the same time, and as frustrating as this can be, sport is sport and when you have every driver doing absolutely everything in their power to get to that first corner ahead, there will be incidents."

"Rallycross is a contact sport and fans love that element of drama. But, like I said, I see their point and they should rest assured that we're not resting on our laurels – we are working tirelessly to make sure World Rallycross continues on its current trajectory."



Solberg says he has been on the rough end of some dirty driving tactics in 2016



Loeb wants an improvement in form for the 2017 campaign

## Loeb aiming for a better start to his second World Rallycross challenge

Sebastien Loeb says Team Peugeot Hansen has a winter of work ahead to make the 208 WRX competitive in time for next year's FIA World Rallycross Championship.

Loeb, who will return to the series for a second successive season, says he wants to see an improvement in his results in 2017.

"I have enjoyed the racing," he said. "But I am not satisfied for

the results. We need to improve. We need to improve the car. It was not so bad, but I hope we can be more competitive next year. We need to have a better start and when the track is slippery we are missing some grip."

"We need to do a lot of work through the winter to make sure we are ready for next season. I want to be able to get to next year and use

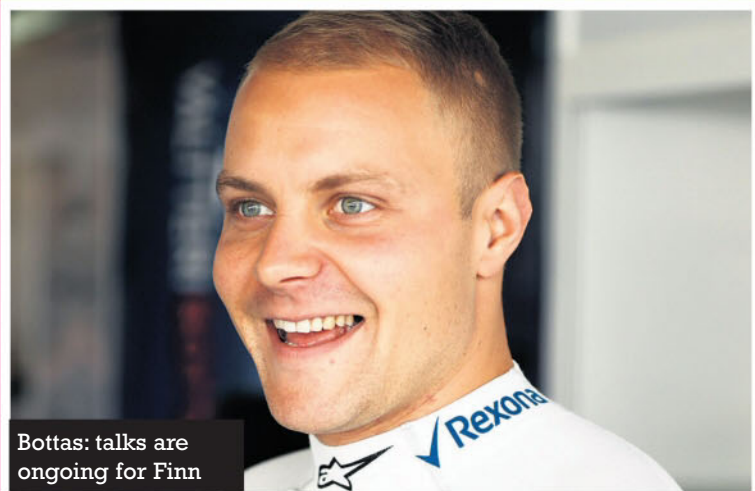
the experience I took this time."

Loeb scored his only victory of the World RX season in Latvia, but was on the podium three more times in the 12-round series – including a third place at his home race in Loheac.

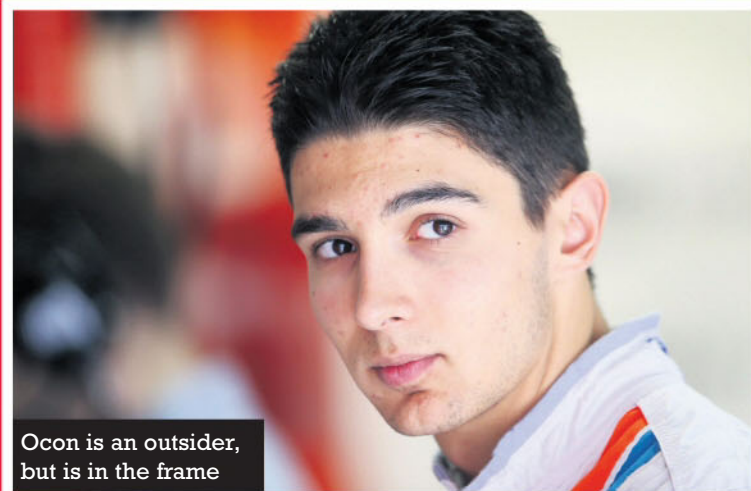
"The sensation is still really nice from rallycross," added Loeb, "I like the intensity on the startline, this is still incredible."

# RACING NEWS

Photos: LAT



Bottas: talks are ongoing for Finn



Ocon is an outsider, but is in the frame

## MOTORSPORT NEWS RATE THE DRIVERS

Mercedes appears to be down to the final four candidates for its final seat. Here is our analysis of the suitability of each.



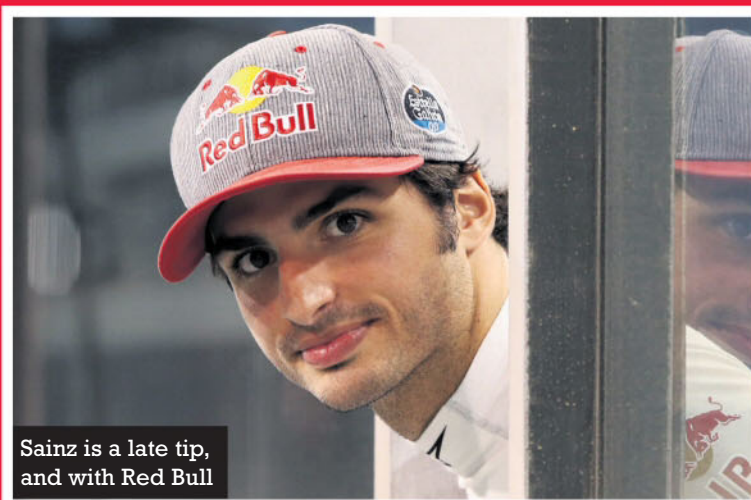
Bottas most likely for Merc

# THE FINAL FOUR

## Mercedes set to promote one of these men to replace Rosberg in 2017



Wehrlein seems second choice



Sainz is a late tip, and with Red Bull

### By Rob Ladbrook

**Mercedes is unlikely to announce Nico Rosberg's successor this side of the New Year, but has narrowed its search down to four potential candidates.**

The Anglo-German squad has been left with little time and a diminishing pool of drivers to choose from to fill its second seat after agreeing to allow world champion Rosberg out of his contract and into retirement.

With Hamilton already locked into the team until at least the end of 2018, Mercedes must decide whether to promote someone from its young driver roster, or negotiate a more experienced racer out of their contract.

With the majority of the field already signed up for next year, the latter

option is proving a tough task.

Mercedes is understood to have recently approached Williams to sign Valtteri Bottas, a driver managed by Silver Arrows head Toto Wolff. Mercedes reportedly offered a £10m reduction on Williams' engine supply bill and the use of Pascal Wehrlein, but the Grove team rejected that.

Mercedes is said to be working on a counter offer.

However, three other drivers have emerged as candidates for the seat – Mercedes juniors Wehrlein and Esteban Ocon, along with Spaniard Carlos Sainz Jr.

McLaren star

New driver will join Hamilton

Fernando Alonso ruled himself out of the equation, telling McLaren Technology Centre staff that he was committed to staying with the Honda-powered team.

Wehrlein is the easiest option, but Mercedes is unsure due to his relative lack of grand prix experience. Ocon is also inexperienced, and has already signed a deal with Force India. However, despite Wolff's suggestion that he didn't want to "interfere" with drivers already in contract, Mercedes could move to poach the Frenchman.

Sainz has a contract with Toro Rosso for 2017, but told reporters in Mexico that he

promotion for 2018, even if Red Bull Racing retains Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen as planned.

When asked if he was willing to release Sainz from his contract, Red Bull head Christian Horner replied: "Why would we do that? Carlos has done a great job. He is a Red Bull driver. We have invested in him to get him into F1 and they are all on long-term contracts so it wouldn't make any sense to feed one of your main opponents with one of your assets."

"You have to give these guys [Mercedes' junior drivers] a chance. Let's see what they can do in a frontrunning car. You don't know until you give them a chance, which is what we did with drivers like Sebastian Vettel, Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen."



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**'Fears grow for  
Coventry Stadium'**

Short oval future in doubt, p29



Aston man will drive Huracan

## Bartholomew to race Lambo in Middle East

British GT racer Jack Bartholomew will head to the Middle East and Asia to continue his career after landing a seat in the Lamborghini Super Trofeo.

The 18-year-old finished second in the British GT4 Championship this year in a Beechdean AMR-run Aston Martin Vantage, after a spell in BRDC F4. He will now move into Lamborghini's Middle East and Asia-based one-make series for the Lamborghini Huracan after agreeing a deal with the FFF Racing team for both contests.

Bartholomew had his first test with the team at Cremona Circuit in Italy recently. He said: "Joining FFF Racing is the right choice. This is part of a multi-year programme that will involve building strong relationships with the same team and, while I know I must work hard, I'm confident I can be competitive from the off."

"I gelled with the car well in the test and I'm really excited to start off in the Middle East Series, which will help me learn the ropes before going into the Asian one."

## Ford to run four GTs at Daytona

Ford is planning to field four cars in January's Daytona 24 Hours as it seeks to back up its Le Mans success this year.

The Chip Ganassi team will combine its cars from both the IMSA Sportscar Championship and the FIA World Endurance Championship to form the four-car entry.

The last time both branches of the team ran together was at the Le Mans 24 Hours, where Ford secured the GTE class victory on the 50th anniversary of its original win with the GT40.

"We didn't have the strongest race at the Daytona 24 Hours last year, but we have a season of learning experiences behind us now and we're proud to come back," said Dave Pericak, Ford's global director of performance.

The manufacturer's final choice on its drivers for the event is as yet unconfirmed, but Ganassi ran Dirk Muller, Joey Hand, Richard Westbrook and Ryan Briscoe during the pre-Christmas test sessions at Daytona.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, LAT

# NORRIS AND CARLIN CONFIRM EURO F3 DEAL



Teenager has already  
raced Euro F3 car



Norris has had plenty of success so far

McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Lando Norris will drive for Carlin in European Formula 3 next year.

The 17-year-old Briton – 2016 Formula Renault Eurocup and NEC champion – had been expected to race in the category with the team having raced for the squad in MSA Formula in 2015 and a part-season in BRDC British F3 this year.

Norris, who also won the Toyota Racing

Series title in 2016 and will contest the series again next year, joins Jehan Daruvala and Ferdinand Habsburg in Carlin's F3 line-up.

"I'm very excited to be joining Carlin and can't wait to contest the FIA Formula 3 European Championship," said Norris. "My aim is simple – I want to win the championship title outright. Although it's my rookie F3 season, I'm totally

confident with the package – the team and Volkswagen.

"I believe I have what it takes to challenge for the title in my first full season of F3 racing especially after the pace we showed at Hockenheim and Macau [Norris's one-off outings in F3 this year].

"Many of the drivers I'm up against will be in at least their second year in

the category so will have a lot of F3 experience on the tracks we'll be racing on. If, in my first year, the outright F3 title is not within my grasp, it won't be for the want of trying and then winning the 'rookie' title is an absolute must."

● The highly-rated David Beckmann will switch from Mucke Motorsport to Van Amersfoort Racing to contest a full season of Euro F3 next year.

## Button signs up for Race of Champions

Jenson Button's first event after taking a sabbatical from Formula 1 will be the Race of Champions in Miami next month.

The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November was likely Button's last race in F1, although he does still have a contract with McLaren that would allow him to return to a race seat in 2018.

The 2009 champion will be joined by David Coulthard in the Race of Champions, which takes place on January 21/22.

"It is always a great event with a special atmosphere," said Button, who has five RoC starts to his name. "You get to race against the best drivers from all over the world and we enjoy our time both on and off the track as we meet old friends from all the



Button signed up for RoC

different motorsport series.

"The main thing is that everyone wants to put on a good show for the fans, and we only pretend to play it cool before giving it everything when we're revving up the cars on the line."

## Herta to Indy Lights with Andretti Autosport

Colton Herta will make his Indy Lights debut in 2017 as part of an Andretti Autosport tie-up with the family that owns the baseball franchise the New York Yankees.

Herta, the 16-year-old son of IndyCar race winner Bryan, finished third in the Formula 3-based Euroformula Open series in 2016 and was a race winner in BRDC British F3, competing with Carlin. He was also third in the MSA Formula standings the previous year.

He will return to the US to compete in Lights, a series his father won in 1993, in a new team that will be headed by Andretti and the Steinbrenner family.

"I'm very pleased to be coming back to race in the States," Herta said. "IndyCar is my goal, so competing in Indy Lights this year will bring me one step closer. I know I have a good team behind me in Andretti Steinbrenner Racing and we should be fighting for wins right away."



Herta won  
in BRDC F3



TF has spot on Le Mans entry

## Hankey and Yoluc for TF's Le Mans assault

TF Sport will retain European GT3 racers Euan Hankey and Salih Yoluc as part of its line-up for its first attempt at the Le Mans 24 Hours next year.

The British GT champion team won a slot on the grid at La Sarthe courtesy of Hankey and Yoluc winning the Michelin GT3 Cup title this year aboard an Aston Martin Vantage.

The pair will now race at Le Mans after extending their deal with Tom Ferrier's team. They will also contest the full European Le Mans Series. A factory AMR driver will join them for Le Mans.

Jonathan Adam has close links with the team, having lifted the British GT3 title this year with TF. Should the Scotsman be unavailable, Alex MacDowall or fellow British GT graduate Ross Gunn could step in.

"Racing at Le Mans has been my biggest dream since I was very young, but it has come sooner than I expected in my partnership with Salih," said Hankey. "Salih has exceeded my expectations and repeatedly surprised me this year."

"He's an eternal optimist – you have to dream of glory or there's no point racing – but 2017 will be a learning year for us. There's a lot to learn, about managing traffic, about the GTE car, which has more downforce and no ABS so requires a more deft touch on the brakes."



Palmer was a  
winner at Estoril

## Palmer stays with R-Ace for Eurocup in 2017

Formula Renault Eurocup race winner Will Palmer will contest a second season in the series in 2017.

Palmer, the 2015 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner, stepped up to compete in the Eurocup and NEC series last year with ART junior team R-Ace GP after winning the BRDC Formula 4 championship.

He claimed a first win during the final round of the Eurocup season at Estoril on his way to seventh in the standings, and has signed up for a second season in the revamped Eurocup with R-Ace.

Renault has increased its backing

of the series, upping its investment while also offering the top two drivers in the championship a place in its Renault Sport Academy.

Palmer said he was confident of fighting for one of those spots after a learning year in the category.

"I'm delighted to be staying with R-Ace GP for a second season in Formula Renault Eurocup for 2017," said 19-year-old Palmer.

"I've learnt a huge amount in my first year racing in Europe and after a strong end to the year as well as a very promising post-season testing programme, I'm very confident of fighting for the title next year."

## RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey



Chilton will race one of the Astra new builds

# CHILTON BACK TO BTCC WITH PMR AND VAUXHALL

## Multiple race winner to return to race in Britain after WTCC spell

By Matt James

**Tom Chilton will return to the British Touring Car Championship next season at the wheel of a Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra.**

The former Independents Trophy winner, 31, will line up alongside Senna Proctor. He has previously driven a factory-backed Astra, when he drove for Triple Eight Race Engineering in 2006.

Chilton began his BTCC career in 2002 and raced through until 2011 before switching to the World Touring Car Championship.

He finished eighth in the WTCC driving a Sebastien Loeb Racing-run Citroen C-Elysee in 2016.

Chilton said: "I am delighted to be back in the BTCC, I have continued to watch as a fan while racing in World Touring Cars and the itch to get back behind the wheel on British soil has never gone away. So you can imagine how excited I was when [Power Maxed Racing team principal] Adam Weaver got in touch, plus to get to return in a Vauxhall Astra, a car that I know and love, is a dream. I am confident that Power Maxed Racing will be frontrunners and scoring podiums, the

team are fantastic, and I can't wait to get behind the wheel."

Weaver said that he was hopeful the experience Chilton can bring to the team will help push the new programme forwards, and it would also be a benefit to series newcomer Proctor:

"Tom's experience and work ethic is second to none, he knows what's coming and will be a great role model for Senna as well as a proven race winner," said Weaver. "We knew last year that we had the ingredients for success but, like a cake, you can't rush it, but maybe this year we can have our cake and eat it."



Brit last raced in the championship back in 2011



Newsham already has experience of the Chevrolet Cruze

## Newsham to make full-time return to BTCC with BTC Norlin Racing

British Touring Car Championship race winner Dave Newsham has signed to join the BTC Norlin Racing team to race a Chevrolet Cruze in 2017.

Newsham took part in two rounds of the championship in a Power Maxed Racing Chevrolet last season and finished in the points in five of his six outings. He will line up at BTC Norlin Racing alongside Chris Smiley.

BTC Norlin Racing boss Bert Taylor explained: "It was important for us to get a driver

with race-winning experience, and Dave was at the very top of the list of drivers we wanted.

"Dave has shown how good he is when he stepped into the car for a couple of rounds last season and he was challenging for the top six straight away. That is the class that he has."

Newsham, who won two races with an ES Racing Vauxhall Vectra in 2012, says he has an extensive testing programme planned ahead of the start of the 2017 campaign.

"To have been selected for this drive is unreal for me," said the 49-year-old. "The team has some very solid foundations and there is a real desire to win from all parties. This will be the first time I will go into a season with a car that I know so I am full of optimism about it."

"There are some great people assembled at the team, including my engineer Steve Brady. The elements are there for us to take some real steps forward in terms of performance."

## Mini men get Ciceley Clio seats

Mini Challenge drivers Luke Reade and Sam Osborne will move to the Renault UK Clio Cup next season with Ciceley Motorsport.

Reade and Osborne, who finished 11th and 16th in the Mini Challenge standings respectively, will join Max Coates at the team as part of a possible five-car line-up from the British Touring Car squad.

Team boss Adam Morgan said: "Alex and Sam are both great signings and we are delighted to have them onboard. Both have shown great promise in their careers so far and our initial testing with them has gone very well – they will have a great benchmark in Max to work with."

"There is also the likelihood that we will run a fourth and maybe even a fifth car in 2017's UK Clio Cup – interest is extremely high so watch this space."

## Sharp to step up to Porsche Supercup for 2017 with family team

Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Tom Sharp will step up to the Porsche Supercup next season, remaining with his family IDL Racing squad.

The 25-year-old has taken part in the Silverstone Supercup races for the past two seasons but will now switch to the Formula 1 supporting category full-time for 2017. He finished sixth in the GB standings this year.

"It's something I have always wanted to do," said Sharp. "I remember watching it from

quite a young age and I never really aspired to be a driver in F1, I was always focused on racing sportscars.

"We know what to expect but from an organisational point of view it's very different. I'm going to have to learn a lot of new tracks, which is something I haven't done for a long time, so it's going to be a steep learning curve. I think the new car will help to level the playing field."

Sharp will join two-time champion Dan Cammish in

graduating to the Supercup next year and reckons he will be a good benchmark.

"I'm very excited, it's the pinnacle of one-make racing," Sharp added. "You have got to be realistic but I'm in the best position I've ever been going forward. It's going to be tough, every time a new generation car comes in the series becomes more competitive but being realistic I would like to be finishing in the top eight every race and finish higher in the championship than that."



Sharp was sixth overall in Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season

*"I feel my career is back on track"*  
Max Chilton interview, p22



Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Mick Walker, Steve Jones

# SMRC DRIVER TO WIN AUDI TEST



One driver from the Scottish Motor Racing Club will win a funded test with Audi Sport Customer Racing in Europe as part of a new prize put forward by Le Mans legend Allan McNish.

Next year the SMRC will be able to put forward one driver from its portfolio of championships to take part in one of Audi Sport's 2018 pre-season group test sessions in Europe, with a view to promoting Scottish talent on a wider stage.

McNish and Audi Sport Customer Racing head Chris Reinke, both long-standing members of the German brand's Le Mans programme, have put the prize together.

The exact details have yet to be decided, but a test in the single-make TT Cup category,

which supports the DTM, is the most likely. Audi will also release its new RS 3 LMS TCR machine next year, and that is also under consideration.

McNish told *Motorsport News*: "Scotland did a lot for me in my career in terms of support. And it's not just money and sponsorship – it's picking up the phone to the right people and making sure there was always an opportunity around the corner. I had that in my career with help from people like Sir Jackie Stewart, and SMRC chairman

McNish is behind new SMRC prize idea



Hugh McCaig bought me my first kart engine in the early days. Scotland has always been great at shouting about its talent, and we want to keep that going.

"We wanted to give something back to the SMRC as it is club racing in Scotland and a lot of work and dedication has gone in to making sure we have a stable racing platform in Scotland.

"Audi Sport has a great customer racing ladder, with the TT Cup and TCR right up to GT3 racing, so it makes sense to be showcasing new talent there are opportunities to progress." The winner of the new

prize can be chosen from any one of the club's championships, but must be a full SMRC member. McNish said making the scope for the prize as wide as possible was important.

"It could be one of the SMRC champions, or someone who just does a few rounds as they lack budget," he added. "As long as the driver displays the right qualities and the desire and work rate, why shouldn't they get the chance? It gives the club the chance to decide who it would like to give a leg-up in their career."

This prize joins a host of other opportunities offered by the SMRC, which also include funded tests in Mini Challenge cars for the Scottish Mini Cooper Cup champions and McLaren tours for other promising drivers.

## MX-5 racer Sycamore eyeing GT Cup switch

Mazda MX-5 Cup frontrunner Jack Sycamore has tested a Ginetta G50 as he plans to switch to the GT Cup next year.

Sycamore will race in the series with AB Motorsport – which he competed in Mazdas with – alongside fellow MX-5 racer Darren Standing.

He tested the G50 for the first time at Snetterton earlier this month, but the test was ended early after a crash.

"It was going well until the point I made a mistake and put it in the barrier," said Sycamore. "It didn't end the greatest way but it was good to start with.

"The car is a lot quicker than the Mazda, there's a lot more

power and therefore it's very different to drive. Because it's more of a purpose-built race car the brake pedal doesn't move so it's a very fine movement between 10 per cent braking and 100 per cent braking. That was part of the reason for the mistake as it was difficult for me to get used to. Now it's given me a bit of a bill to pay before Christmas."

Sycamore plans to race in the GT Cup next year, but it depends on budget.

"That's still very much what I'm aiming for but it all comes down to budget," he added. "I'm trying to get some more sponsors on board to join my current sponsor TXN Recruit."



Sycamore finished third in the 750MC's MX-5 Cup standings



Littlejohn will race MacMillan Aston Martin Vantage GT3 car

## Radical champion Littlejohn to British GT

Radical European Masters champion James Littlejohn will move into the British GT Championship next year with GT3 newcomer Generation AMR MacMillan Racing.

Littlejohn, 29, has signed to partner Jack Mitchell in the team's new Aston Martin Vantage GT3. He won this year's European Radical title sharing an SR8 with Tony Wells.

Littlejohn (right) will make his British GT return exactly a decade on from his debut in the series when he raced a Brookspeed Dodge Viper GT3 on a one-off appearance at Oulton Park in 2007.

"I'm really excited about this deal as GT3 has moved on a lot since

I last raced one," said Littlejohn.

"I know Richard Dencer at MacMillan really well as he looked after me when I was doing some Formula 3 in Asia, he invited me to test alongside Jack and we got on really well.

"I'm going from an ultra-lightweight aero-dependant car into a much heavier, more powerful machine. I've also raced historics in recent years so I'm used to the weight and the racing technique isn't hugely different in the Aston Martin.

"MacMillan are the new boys in GT3 next year, but we have the full support of [AMR works team] Prodrive and Jack and I will be learning fast, so I don't believe we'll be at a disadvantage."



## DEPUTY EDITOR

# ROB LADBROOK

**"Scottish Motor Racing Club bucks trend"**



**I**n an era of club racing where prizes are more of a rarity than the norm, the Scottish Motor Racing Club truly bucks the trend.

Despite it not being the biggest country in the world, Scotland is arguably one of the best at shouting about the talent it produces, especially in motorsport.

Despite the fact it only has one active permanent race track – Knockhill – the list of top ranking drivers to have come through the ranks of the Fife circuit is superb. Allan McNish, Dario Franchitti, Ryan Dalziel, Paul di Resta, David Coulthard, Jonathan Adam, Gordon Shedden, David Leslie and John Cleland to name a few.

One of the keys behind the success of Scottish motorsport in producing world-beating athletes lies in the community. Nobody forgets their roots, and everybody sticks together as and when they can.

As you can read opposite, McNish is quick to acknowledge the help he got on his career trajectory. His talent was noticed at a young age and established drivers took note and recognised that he was one of the next generation. Scottish drivers tend to be great at looking down the ladder as well as up it, so when key seats and chances become available, they're not shy to pick up the phone to their contacts and suggest 'I know a quick lad who'd suit that...'

That's incredibly influential for a young driver's career, and a hugely powerful tool. Perhaps it's the smaller concentration of members of the SMRC that makes it so special in that regard. But, whatever it is, it makes top teams, their managers and manufacturers sit up and take notice.

As I said prizes are hard to come by in club racing. Sure, you might win a set of tyres here or there or a few hundred quid to cover the cost of your trip home, but there's not much else around in true clubman competition.

The Mazda Road to Indy scholarship is a nice recent addition, giving Formula Ford 1600 drivers the chance to fight it out for a bursary for USF2000. And Scotland's own Neil MacLennan got a shot this year (see page 18).

But, aside from that, there's little out there.

In comparison the SMRC has arranged tests in Mini Challenge machinery for its top Cooper Cup drivers, works with McLaren to organise tours and other prizes, and now this superb chance to impress one of the world's biggest brands at its official factory tests.

IndyCar hero Dario Franchitti also regularly donates a Formula Ford car for a season to help a promising youngster into car racing.

In British GT we have the Ecurie Ecosse team, which brought two superb young drivers in Ciaran Haggerty and Sandy Mitchell to the championship, helping them with sponsorship and creating chances for them to shine.

They also get runs in the McLaren GT3 cars, just as a reward for their strong year, but it's still all essential experience that should set both well on the way in the GT ladder. Bravo to the SMRC, and its senior members for the work they do in helping the next generation succeed.

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# RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

## Lydden legend Connor retires

Lydden Hill regular and stalwart of Formula Ford racing Dave Connor has retired from motorsport at the age of 70.

Connor, formerly a suspension designer for Ford at its Dunton Engineering Centre, started racing in 1982 and is best known for his extended stay and competitiveness in the Formula Ford Kent County Championship.

During his first year of competition, Connor was struck down by a rare neurological virus that left him totally paralysed. He was told he had an 80 per cent chance of survival and might never drive again.

But he made a remarkable return to racing the following year, and continued to race his Royale RP26 at Lydden and Brands Hatch until 1987 when he decided to take a lay-off from racing – his stamina having never fully recovered.

The Brentwood driver did however make a second comeback eight years later, racing an ex-Chris Hall Jamun M92. He enjoyed a fine spell of success that earned him the 'Lydden Master' nickname.

Most recently, Connor bought and raced a Jedi-R1 Yamaha that had formerly been raced by Autosport's Grand Prix Editor Ben Anderson. He made a bid for the unofficial lap record at Lydden earlier this year, setting a time of 39.2 seconds – 0.9s slower than Rob Cox's current record.



Connor has raced since 1982

# CAREY WINS IRELAND SEXTON TROPHY PRIZE

## BOSS winner to put prize funds towards F3 Cup campaign



Carey's hands on trophy



BOSS title was won in Formula Renault

By Stephen Lickorish

**BOSS Ireland champion Cian Carey has won the Sexton Trophy and will use his cash prize to compete in the F3 Cup next year.**

The 22-year-old won £41,000 after the award's prize changed for this year to a cash reward rather than a funded season in National Formula Ford 1600 (see below).

Carey, who won the BOSS title driving a Formula Renault car, will now step up to the F3 Cup with Chris Dittmann Racing. He has

bought an ex-Van Amersfoort Racing Dallara and raced it for the first time at the Walter Hayes Trophy meeting in the Open Wheel Allcomers race, finishing second despite spinning to last early on.

He beat FF1600 racer Jordan Dempsey and Supercars driver Andy O'Brien to win the Motorsport Ireland award.

"I'm delighted – I wasn't expecting it at all so when my name was called out I thought they had made a mistake!" said Carey. "It's massive for me, the financial support from Motorsport Ireland will help me to do F3

Cup next year. We have bought a car already and the class seems quite good next year so it's going to be competitive.

"F3 Cup is a good clubman series but it's still getting recognised. It's a two-year plan, the first year I'm hoping to win a few races and then aim to win the championship the next year. We ran with the team at Silverstone and got within a couple of tenths of the F3 Cup lap record.

"I'm really, really looking forward to it and feel I can be right at the sharp end straight away."

## Award changes means Sexton Formula Ford prize drive is replaced by cash incentive

The prize for the Sexton Trophy has changed for the 2017 season, with Motorsport Ireland electing to award a cash prize rather than a paid-for seat in a Motorsport Ireland backed-Formula Ford.

The prize drive in a Van Diemen Formula Ford run by

Bernard Dolan proved successful in the hands of drivers like Jonny McMullan – who won the BRSCC Formula Ford National Championship in 2015 – but Motorsport Ireland have decided on a new direction.

"It hasn't gone up in value, we've replaced the funded drive

in our Formula Ford car with the cash prize," said Motorsport Ireland CEO Alex Sinclair.

"We've had three or four years in the same car now so we need to move on and look at doing other things. Bernard Dolan did a fantastic job and I don't think there's a better preparer on

these islands at the moment.

"But we feel we'll give the cash and assess the situation as we go. It's hard to know where you go as there's so many different cars in so many different categories."

Jake Byrne won last year's prize but left the programme citing personal reasons.

## Brunton signs Melrose for National FF in '17

Graham Brunton Racing will field a multi-car attack on next year's National Formula Ford 1600 season, and has signed Seb Melrose as its first driver.

Melrose, 18, finished third in this year's Scottish FF1600 points and also contested the Walter Hayes Trophy, making the final. His performances across 2016 also won him Knockhill's Young Driver of the Year accolade.

Godson of IndyCar legend Dario Franchitti, Melrose will handle a brand new Ray

chassis for his first year in the British National series.

"Seb has progressed so much this season and he's ready for the move into the National championship," said team head Graham Brunton.

"He doesn't come from the traditional background of having loads of karting experience and has learned his trade in FF1600 since day one. He works so hard at the sport. He's the first guy to arrive in the morning and the last to leave each night and he's so



Melrose in WHT action

determined to succeed. It'll be a big year for him."

Brunton is expected to field a second car for 15-year-old Michael Macpherson, who became the youngest driver ever to pass his ARDS test at the Scottish track back in January.



Photo: Payley Photography

**Formula Ford racer Andy Charlsey gave shoppers in Petts Wood a surprise last month when he drove his Ray RG15 through the high street of his hometown. Charlsey's outing was part of the town's Christmas lights switch-on event.**

## IN BRIEF

**Caterham classes**  
Caterham's UK championships have been renamed for 2017 so they better reflect the company's road car range. Working up the ladder, the series will now be called Caterham Academy, Caterham Roadsports, Caterham 270R, Caterham 310R and Caterham 420R will be the new name for the R300 Championship. The Supersport championship is expected to continue but not as part of the ladder and there are set to be more changes for the 2018 season.

### Trucks away

The calendar for next year's British Truck Racing Championship has been released and includes events at both Nogaro in France and the series' annual trip to the Truck Grand Prix at the Nurburgring in July. "Nogaro is a non-championship event. We want to attract the French trucks to the UK to run one of their championships abroad, so if we can go and support one of their events, they can come and support one of ours," said Truck Sport UK co-director Stuart Oliver.

### Ice driver to Juniors

**Ice driver Scott McKenna will switch to racing on Tarmac next year after signing for HHC Motorsport to compete in Ginetta Junior. The 15-year-old has previously driven race and rally cars on ice in Sweden and Norway as part of his family's Ice Driver business. The team has also signed the son of French driver Raphael Real Del Sarte. Ruben Del Sarte took part in the Winter Series with HHC last month.**

## Orgee puts winning Van Diemen on sale

Double Castle Combe Formula Ford champion Roger Orgee is eyeing a potential return to the BRSCC National Formula Ford 1600 contest next year.

Orgee has put his championship winning Van Diemen RF00 up for sale along with a machine recently converted to Formula Ford 1600 specification, in a bid to raise funds for his 2017 campaign. His last appearance in national-level Formula Ford competition was at Silverstone in August 2015.

"We're talking with prospective sponsors at the moment about going into different championships, I think one of the main things we are going to do is go for a newer car for a championship shot," said Orgee. "The idea being to sell them both, get some funds and then maybe go for the national championship.

"It would be nice to be back in the national series. Right now we are seeing what we can get together, what sort of money. Then we'll look at calendars and see what fits around my day job [as head of sales at the DYMG performance wheels group]."

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# HISTORICS

'HSCC has a four-race calendar'  
Pre-'80 Enduros are go, below



Photos: Paul Lawrence

## DOWN THE PUB WITH

### MEIRION EVANS

Age: 38 Lives: Newcastle Emlyn, Wales  
Silver Fern Rally winner

#### The plan was hatched a year ago

"Christmas night last year I was bored. There was nothing on the TV and I started thinking about what I was going to do in 2016. I remembered Phil Squires' wife saying there was one rally you had to do before you died. So I put the entry in for the Silver Fern during January and started planning it."

#### He crashed on the Isle of Man

"I decided to take the modern car out to the Isle of Man in September and I got slightly carried away, because it is an awesome car. It was a massive accident; an absolute plane crash. I had to have surgery and have a plate put in my shoulder. I worked hard to get fit again and did a lot of swimming."

#### He loved the NZ stages

"It is an amazing country and the people are just wonderful. The countryside is beautiful and the roads are something you'll never find anywhere else in the world. On the limiter in top gear and drifting the car around bends is just unbelievable."

#### It is a massive commitment

"The only emotion about not doing it again is if you went out early in the rally. There is so much expense, work and planning that if you retired in the first couple of days you'd probably cry until Christmas! But that's only a small part of it and I'd highly recommend it to anyone."

#### He had another car running

"My 2015 car, which I sold to Stewart Reid in Australia, finished second in the historic event, so the PR for my business has been massive. I knew Stewart was going to be a problem and it is a very tough event. On the day I made a mistake and dropped time I was completely drained and I was sleeping between stages."

#### It was a big team effort

"You're on the other side of the world and I guess it feels like winning the World Championship. The guys had all put so much work into it. You need a lot of bits to make it work. You need to have a very fresh new car and a co-driver like Iestyn Williams who is switched on for all the build up to the event. Luckily enough for us, that week we had the best jigsaw and we won."



Evans: Escort exponent

# TWO F2 SERIES TO GO INTO BATTLE

## HSCC has no fears over newly announced French-based series



HSCC hopes to maintain good grids

By Paul Lawrence

**Two race series for Historic Formula 2 cars will go head-to-head in 2017 after Peter Auto revealed plans to add a series of F2 races to its pan-European schedule.**

For the last decade the Historic Sports Car Club has run the Historic Formula 2 FIA International Series, and has already confirmed a six-event

programme taking in some of Europe's leading tracks.

Now, French-based Peter Auto has unveiled a five-event series covering Spa, Dijon, Monza, Paul Ricard and the Hungaroring.

Both series will be open to cars built to period regulations for Formula 2, Formula Atlantic and Formula B: starting from 1967 and running through to the end of 1978.

Competitors are concerned that there are not enough active cars to support two series.

Grahame White of the HSCC said: "There are hardly enough cars for one series, let alone two. But this makes no difference to our plans and we will continue to support Historic F2 as we have done since 2006. The HSCC is totally committed to running these cars and we have a very good calendar, which we hope

the competitors will support."

Patrick Peter said: "British entrants who feature on our grids on a regular basis, and who also race in F2, asked us if we were interested in running this series. Personally, I love F2s. They are more agile than F1s and have the advantage of being cheaper to run. Our aim is to start with a grid of around 15 to 20 cars, increasing to 20-25 in 2018."



Thornton will go to NZ

## Bumper field lined up for New Zealand leg of Formula Junior tour

Grids of 50 cars are expected in New Zealand in January and February for sector five of the Formula Junior Diamond Jubilee World Tour.

The New Zealand leg of the most ambitious series in historic racing will take in five meetings on five weekends at five tracks, covering

both north and south island. This part of the World Tour is for the Denny Hulme Trophy.

More than 15 cars from the UK are making the trip to join a strong local contingent and a nine-car group from Australia, including Joe Ricciardo, father of F1 racer Daniel, in his Brabham BT6.

Leading UK-based contenders for the series, which starts at Hampton Downs on January 20-22, include Greg Thornton (Lotus 20/22), Robin Longdon (Lola Mk5A) and Peter Anstiss (Lotus 20/22). Series prime mover Duncan Rabagliati will race his Alexis HF1.

### OBITUARY

#### Derek McMahon 1941-2016

Derek McMahon, who died recently aged 75, was a key figure in Irish racing through the 1970s and backed drivers like Derek Daly.

McMahon was born into a garage-owning family in Donegal and was instrumental in the formation of the Donegal Motor Club. He supported Daly as he won the 1977 British F3 title during a rapid rise to Formula 1 and then ran Eddie Jordan in F3.

Derek McMahon Racing later evolved into Eddie Jordan Racing as McMahon took a step back, but he still supported young Irish racers. In the 1970s McMahon also raced and entered cars in Special Saloons and famously once took on Gerry Marshall in a running race at Silverstone.



Dutch crew won Rally of the Incas

## Married couple claim Rally of the Incas win

Belgian husband-and-wife crew Joost Van Cauwenberg and Christine De Landtsheer won the Classics division of the Rally of the Incas, a 27-day event across the roads of South America.

A total of 45 crews started the Endurance Rally Association's event on November 13 from Buenos Aires and covered

6200 miles before finishing in Lima on Friday, December 9.

The winning crew were in a 1973 Porsche 911.

Chuck and Pam Lyford won the Vintageants section in their 1938 Chevrolet 'Fangio' Coupe.

British Bentleys were second and third in the hands of Paul Carter/Vincent Fairclough and Graham and Marina Goodwin.



Bianchi will field his S2000

## Bianchi returns to S2000 in a Chevron

Regular historic racer Tony Bianchi is going back to his racing roots to field a Sports 2000 Chevron B52.

"It's 30 years since I raced one," said Bianchi, who raced a Tiga towards the end of the original Sports 2000 era. "I was looking for a Tiga and found the Chevron."

The Chevron is one of only three or four of such models produced and was the 1980 prototype car raced by Costas Los. More recently it has been owned by Julian Maynard but has probably not run for five years.

Bianchi will share the Delta Motorsport-tended car with his wife Pia in the Pre-'80 Endurance series next season.

## IN BRIEF

### Rare cars sale

Silverstone Auctions will host two dedicated competition car sales in 2017, starting at Race Retro on Friday February 24. The company, which sold cars with a total value of £26 million last year, will then hold a classic competition car sale in the Silverstone Wing on the Thursday of the Silverstone Classic weekend on July 27.

### Blockley on tour

Historic single-seater racer Jim Blockley has shipped the Formula Junior Caravelle Mk2 to New Zealand for the next leg of the category's Diamond Jubilee World Tour. Blockley bought the car, the second of only three Caravelles produced, from marque founder Richard Utley earlier this year. More recently, the car has been raced to great effect by Callum MacLeod.

### Old Stagers run

The 2017 HRCR Old Stager Championship will take in the Solway Coast Rally on the Dundernnon Military Ranges in the south of Scotland. The historic will compete on the Saturday of this event, running alongside the Junior F1000 competitors. Other new events on the schedule include the season-closing Cheviot Stages on Otterburn.

### Listers at Goodwood

Sixty years after he won the Sussex Trophy at Goodwood's Easter Meeting, Archie Scott Brown will be celebrated at the 75th Goodwood Members' Meeting with a race dedicated to Listers. A full field of 30 Lister sports-racing cars will contest the new Scott Brown Trophy over the weekend of March 18/19.

### HSCC's enduros

The HSCC has confirmed a four-race 2017 calendar for the Pre-'80 Endurance Series. The series for sports-racing, GT and Touring Cars of a type that competed in international races up to the end of 1979 will run on the GP circuits at Silverstone (May 20/21) and Brands Hatch (July 1/2) as well as late season races at Spa and Dijon.

### Monte Carlo or bust

A total of 20 British crews are in the 333-strong entry list for the 20th Rallye Monte-Carlo Historique, which runs from January 25 to February 1. Among them are brothers Steve and Tony Graham in their Lancia Fulvia. Heading the field will be 2016 winner and 2012 British GT champion Daniele Perfetti in his Alpine Renault.

### Hopkins in the Sun

Talbot Sunbeam driver Dave Hopkins is planning to contest both the Midnight Sun Rally in Sweden next August and the Roger Albert Clark Rally in November. A recent engine rebuild has got the 1600cc car running strongly and Hopkins and co-driver Tony Vart will also contest the gravel rounds of the BHRC.



Hopkins will see Midnight

# RALLY NEWS

Meeke hopes C3 will allow for a title challenge



Photos: Citroën Racing

## NEW 2017 CITROËN WRC MACHINE UNVEILED

### Kris Meeke's new mount to attack world title



New challenger launched in UAE

By David Evans

Citroën will field three cars for the season-opening Monte Carlo Rally, with Craig Breen starting in a DS3 WRC alongside the newly launched C3 WRCs of Kris Meeke and Stéphane Lefebvre.

The Waterford driver is expected to get his first taste of the C3 at round two in Sweden, where he has more experience than Lefebvre. Breen and Lefebvre are expected to have a C3 each in time for Rally Portugal in May. Khalid Al-Qassimi will make his first start in a C3 WRC later in the year.

Citroën's official return to the World Rally Championship was launched in Abu Dhabi last week. The choice of venue reflects the continued partnership between the Citroën team and the UAE capital.

Talking to *MN*, Meeke admitted he was ready to realise his lifetime ambition of fighting for the title.

"All my life I have waited and wanted the chance to have a shot at the world championship," he said. "And now that feels so real. We've been away quietly doing our testing and our own development, but now it's here and we're on the road now the car's been launched. I'm ready."

Breen said he was happy with his slightly lower profile arrival in the series, using a 2016 World Rally Car. "That's perfect for me," he said.

"Monte's one heck of a challenge. I'm happy to be going there to get some experience and some mileage.

"Like Kris said, this is the realisation of a dream. Honestly, it's incredible to be working with a brand like Citroën – a real honour."

Team principal Yves Matton laid out the team's ambitions at the launch, saying: "In 2017, we want to win races in normal conditions, by beating our competitors.

"And then in 2018, our goal is to

bring home at least one of the world titles."

The Belgian admitted there would be pressure on the team after its season-long official sabbatical.

He added: "When I read certain comments, I note that a lot of people are expecting the C3 WRC to be fast right from the word go. We certainly have pressure on our shoulders.

"The team is perhaps not as well-established in this environment as before and we'll need some time to settle back in.

"We won't be getting carried away. We'll treat this challenge with the respect it deserves."

#### TECH SPEC

##### Citroën C3 WRC

**Engine:** 1600cc turbo  
**Bore/stroke:** 84x72mm  
**Power:** 380bhp @6000rpm  
**Torque:** 400 Nm @4500rpm  
**Gearbox:** Six-speed sequential hydraulic shift  
**Differentials:** active centre, mechanical front and rear  
**Clutch:** cerametallic twin-disc  
**Suspension:** MacPherson struts  
**Brakes:** 300mm/370mm discs, four-piston calipers (gravel/asphalt)  
**Steering:** hydraulic rack and pinion  
**Wheels:** 7x15-inch/8x18-inch (gravel/asphalt)  
**Length:** 4128mm **Width:** 1875mm  
**Wheelbase:** 2540mm **Weight:** 1190kg



Thumbs up from world champion after Fiesta run

### Ogier completes first full test since confirming M-Sport deal with two days in Sweden

Sebastien Ogier began his career as an M-Sport World Rally Team driver just before Christmas, testing the Ford Fiesta WRC for two days in Sweden.

The Frenchman completed close to 300 miles at the test based near Are.

Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia departed for holiday straight after the test and will return to the car in the second week of January, when they

will drive for two days in the French Alps ahead of the Monte Carlo Rally.

Team principal Malcolm Wilson said: "Everything went well with the first test, there really wasn't a lot to report. Sebastien raised a couple of small things which we can easily sort, but we're very happy. As you can imagine, there's a fantastic feeling in the team right now and that goes right through the whole staff at

M-Sport – it's had such a positive effect across the board.

"I've already seen some of the documentation and dealings with Julien [Ingrassia, co-driver] and with Seb and they are very, very professional. Like I said before, it's now no surprise that they are four-time champions. They're very focused on the job and looking to get themselves in the best position possible to take a fifth straight title."

Wilson is confident two days of running will be enough for the defending champion to dial himself into the Fiesta ahead of the Monte.

"We've done a lot of testing on asphalt and we're confident in the car's performance," said Wilson. "If you look at how quickly he's adapted to the car, I really don't see it being a problem for him. I have no concerns about that at all."

**DAN ROOKE: YOUNGEST BRITISH RALLYCROSS CHAMPION**

**PAGE 28**



The Strength of Experience

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# DAKAR RALLY PREVIEW

'Furuseth secures 2017 BRC deal'  
Adam being readied, p14



Photos: Red Bull Media Pool

# LOEB READY TO TAKE A STEP FORWARD ON DAKAR



Loeb experienced the event in 2016



French master wants more

Sebastien Loeb will start next week's Dakar with a shadow following him closely – the shadow of Peugeot team-mate and 12-time winner Stephane Peterhansel.

The Dakar's most successful competitor ever has pledged to help nine-time World Rally champion Loeb win in South America at just his second attempt next month.

"Loeb can win Dakar," Peterhansel told *Motorsport News*. "He's probably the best driver in the world, he can learn very quickly. He made some mistakes on his first Dakar, but he is really intelligent and he won't make the same mistakes again."

Loeb's pace in the early stages of the 2016 Dakar was exceptional, with the marathon rally rookie running off into an early lead. His hopes of victory were lost when he crashed his Peugeot 2008 DKR.

Peterhansel added: "We know that Sebastien is the future of Peugeot in the Dakar. We will try to help him, I can drive like a shadow for him in the future – I don't mind now I've reached my target of 12 wins."

Loeb admitted his second Dakar would be slightly easier, with the experience of September's Silk Way Rally under his belt. Loeb had been in contention for victory on the Moscow-Beijing event until a navigational error from co-driver Daniel Elena cost

them dearly towards the end of the 16-day competition.

"I have one year of experience," Loeb told *MN*. "This is more than I had last year, but it's not the same as the 20 years' experience some of my rivals have. I am confident we have made a good job of our preparations and it's the same for the team, for Daniel [Elena] and for the car. For sure, the motivation is here."

"Can I win? I hope I can, but it's still very complicated; when you start this race you still have two weeks to go to the finish, that's a long time and a long way. It's really important for me to be able to find the right sort of rhythm for the roads we are driving. In the first week on this year's Dakar, I was able to go quickly and make good times, but then I was caught out: I made a mistake by going too fast in a difficult section and I crashed."

While Loeb focuses on his driving, he admits it's taking time to come to terms with the

bigger role Elena plays in the car.

"It's a real partnership in the car now," he said. "It's 50:50 and I must trust what he says. Sometimes it can be frustrating when you have put in a lot of effort and you feel like you have driven a good stage only to come to the end and you have dropped 10 minutes because you got lost in one junction."

Loeb admitted he wasn't a big fan of Dakar's emphasis on navigation.

"I hope it will not be decided like this [on navigational errors]," he said. "I hope the speed and the performance from the car and the crew have some value in the final results. If they don't then I don't find it so interesting."

Having enjoyed roads more akin to the World Rally Championship than Dakar last season, Loeb admitted he was expecting a tougher test next week.

"I don't know so much about the route," he said. "But I think

we know we are not likely to have so many WRC roads this time. That will be better for some of the guys who have more Dakar experience and it means there might be more navigation."

While Peterhansel talks of helping Loeb to victory, the Alsatian star still lists the 12-time winner among his rivals.

"It's all of my team-mates who can be strong," said Loeb. "We know about Stephane and Carlos [Sainz], both of these guys have won Dakar before. And now there's Cyril [Despres] as well. His [Silk Way] win has shown he can go fast and he has good experience of competition on the event."

"As well as that, I think we have to watch for Nasser [Al-Attiyah]. With him in the Toyota I think it can be a threat, especially because they have more power with a big restrictor for their [petrol] engine and a smaller one for our [diesel] engine. As for the Minis, I don't know. I know they have a new car, but I don't know – it's all been quite quiet from them."

Starting from Asuncion on January 2, the crews depart Paraguay on a 12-stage, 13-day marathon comprising 5,500 competitive miles. The rest day on Sunday January 8 sits at 4,000 metres in Bolivia, the world's highest capital city. The ninth South American Dakar finishes in Buenos Aires on January 14.



Peugeot has developed its new machine for 2017 challenge

## X-raid team boss Sven Quandt asks for clarity over regulations for the longer term

X-raid team principal Sven Quandt has called on Dakar organisers to make clear their long-term intentions for technical regulations.

Quandt's squad prepares the official Minis which have won four of the last five Dakars, but he has grown increasingly disillusioned with the regulations governing the South American event.

While running its current Dakar programme, X-raid has been developing a two-wheel-

drive buggy in parallel, with a view to changing the Mini's configuration in the future.

Quandt said: "For two years, we have been working on the two-wheel-drive car and it's a nightmare to know which way to go. We need more consistency. If Peugeot is winning Dakar again next year, then the two-wheel-drive cars could be penalised with the balance of performance and suddenly four-wheel drive is the right answer. "We need to make some

direction from the FIA about the regulations, for sure it's costing too much for us to be developing two different cars."

Quandt added that the favourites were decided as soon as the route for the January 2-14 rally was written. With less WRC-style roads this season, it appears Peugeot's four-strong team of two-wheel-drive 3008 DKRs will be stronger.

He added: "The organisers of the Dakar can decide who is winning their race. If they

include lots of bumps and straights in the route then, sorry, a four-wheel-drive car cannot win. The two-wheel-drive cars have less resistance in the drivetrain and they have more suspension travel to cope with the bumps. I told the FIA, we need just five centimetres more suspension travel and we can compete with the two-wheel-drive cars, but they will not give it to us – they say this will make the cars too fast. But aren't the two-wheel-drive cars too fast?"

## GROUP RALLYING EDITOR

# DAVID EVANS

"Haill is a fantastic servant to rallying"



**T**he new dawn's coming; cars are being launched and tested from the bottom of the French Alps to the top of the Arctic Circle. 2017 can wait until next week.

For the last words of this year, I'm going to turn to a man who is retiring from our sport after more years than he would probably care to remember: Andrew Haill.

I must admit I was slightly disappointed in the MSA's press release last month, which detailed a 2017 sabbatical for the MSA Asphalt Rally Championship "following the retirement of long-time championship coordinator Andrew Haill."

The communication was, I felt, a little light on gratitude for a man who'd put more than two decades into a series.

When I joined *MN* as assistant rallies editor, I was left in no doubt about the importance of the EARS/*Motoring News* Tarmac Rally Championship.

Had there been any doubt, a call from Haill on my first morning in Standard House soon put me right.

From 1997 until 2000, I covered national rallying, spending on average 35 weekends of the year following the exploits of Britain's best and happiest of amateurs. About 10 of those weekends were spent in the company of AKH.

But it wasn't just Andrew in those days, there was the quintet including Ron Jackson and George Brown, who timed the events, series scrutineer Colin Salkeld and photographer Chris Miles-Williams. I was taken under their collective wing and shown the highlife from a season which started from the Britannia Hotel, Newcastle Airport and headed south via numerous trips over Epynt and a dash across the water to Wexford, to the Hendra Caravan Park in Newquay.

There was rarely a dull moment. And even if reporting on three John Price title wins from four (he only lost the fourth to Chris Wood on countback in 1999) might have been a touch mundane, it at least prepared for me dealing with single driver domination ahead of my move to the world championship...

A particular highlight of my time with Andrew and co. came in 1999, by which time the series was known as the Safety Devices National Macadam Championship. For a couple of years, we'd been pondering Belgium and its obvious asphalt delights, so there was significant excitement when the Elckerlyck Rallysprint was listed on the calendar.

A trip to Eckers-like was planned and the six of us couldn't have looked more out of place: Belgium wasn't Brecon. And what had they put on their chips?

As ever, Andrew kept his drivers in order brilliantly, but at one point came face-to-face with a Flemish-speaking official. Andrew let him finish his inordinately long question before smiling with a one-word answer/statement.

"English!"

Clearly, that was the answer said official was looking for. He didn't trouble us further.

I will always look back on my time with Andrew and the boys with an enormous fondness and would like to take this opportunity to thank AKH for all the help he gave me in my early career.



**AGREE/DISAGREE?**  
mn.letters@haymarket.com

# RALLY NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Thomas Myre Hansen

## FURUSETH GETS AN ADAM

### Norwegian driver will return to BRC for asphalt rounds



Duggan's Adam (r) will be repaired in Norway



Furuseth (l) agrees deal with Simon Mauger (r)



The Twingo was taken to the limit in 2016 JBRC

**By Jack Benyon**

**Junior British Rally Championship runner-up Sindre Furusetth will upgrade from his outdated Renault Twingo R2 to a Vauxhall Adam R2 for 2017, dovetailing JBRC asphalt rounds with the Junior European Rally Championship.**

The Norwegian impressed in the BRC last year, presenting a regular challenge to eventual champion Rob Duggan on

gravel rounds, before frontrunning on his first attempts at asphalt rallying.

Furuseth will rent the Adam R2 from Vauxhall British Rally team boss Simon Mauger. It's the car Duggan crashed on Wales Rally GB in October.

"It's quite badly damaged but my guys in Norway don't think it's too bad and they'll help me build it up again," said Furusetth.

"We'll run it as an Opel on select international rallies in

Europe, probably some Junior ERC [European Rally Championship] rounds and then we'll come back to the UK for the Tarmac rallies and run it as a Vauxhall there.

"In the ERC we'll do Latvia and we'll probably do Poland as well which is a Tarmac rally."

It was thought the Norwegian driver wouldn't return to the BRC this year, but a chance to develop further on asphalt was central to his plans. He will

compete in Ypres, and on the Ulster and Isle of Man, although his participation in the latter is dependant on budget.

"The goal next year is to win every rally we attempt as we know we have a great package now on gravel and Tarmac, and a competitive car," said Furusetth. "If we don't win the Tarmac rallies in the BRC next year then the other drivers are better, it's that simple.

"We got a great deal from Simon, I think he really wants us to drive a

Vauxhall on the BRC rounds. And I think it's a better car than the Twingo. The car is good but to have top results in Europe I think we needed to upgrade from the Twingo. I think we did everything we could for the Twingo so it's time for an upgrade."

Out of six rounds in 2016, Furusetth only finished off the podium once, in Carlisle, after a puncture. He won the Scottish Rally, one of the two events Duggan didn't win.

### Josh Moffett heading to European Rally Championship



Moffett: Billy Coleman award win at fourth try

Josh Moffett will compete in the European Rally Championship next year after winning the Billy Coleman Award earlier this month.

Moffett - British Rally Championship winner on the Circuit of Ireland this year - won £41,000 towards his championship assault. The Irishman is aiming to win the new prize for drivers in R5 cars under 28 years old in the ERC Junior category. The winner will receive a drive in a World Rally Car on a European round of the WRC in 2018.

"We're planning on doing the European championship next year," Moffett said. "We're going to start and see how we get on and see how the budget is. It all depends on how we're getting on and if we can have a good stab at it.

"We've done a few of the rounds before. They're very good rallies and it's a good championship to do. There's also a new junior class for R5 cars, for drivers under 28, that's made it interesting for us. We're hoping for a good shot at that, to see if we can win it."

The move will mean Moffett is unlikely to compete in the BRC at all next year, and will only compete on select Irish Tarmac rounds.

"For logistical reasons it's difficult to do everything," he added. "We're probably going to give the BRC a pass this year and we'll do whatever Irish Tarmac rounds we can."



**Three-time British rally champion Keith Cronin (l) and navigator Mikie Galvin (r) have won the inaugural FIA Celtic Trophy. Run over five events in the UK and Ireland, the duo took maximum scores on two rounds to head Sam Moffett to the title. Class winners included David Guest and navigator Paddy Robinson (Group N) and Callum Devine/Keith Moriarty (two-wheel drive).**

### BRC returns to terrestrial TV coverage with Channel 4 for second season

The British Rally Championship has secured terrestrial television for its second season continuing with Channel 4.

The BRC returned after a one-year hiatus this year with coverage on C4 and BT Sport. The championship hasn't confirmed whether it will continue with BT Sport but is looking at other options.

Hayfisher will continue to produce the programmes.

"We are delighted that the series

has been well received in an encouraging first year and that has enabled us to extend our relationship with Channel 4," said BRC managing director Ben Taylor. "We have some exciting plans to develop the programme and build on the strong content that Hayfisher produced in 2016 to ensure that we reach wider audiences."

Richard Hayfisher of Hayfisher Productions added: "Hayfisher Productions is delighted to once

again be producing BRC shows for Channel 4.

"Rallying in Britain continues to grow and we look forward to working with everyone again to grow the series further and bring the action to Channel 4 in 2017."

The decision on who will present the programme/programmes next year is still to be decided. MN's WRC columnist Colin Clark presented this year's coverage and is likely to return to the fold.

*"Toyota reveal new WRC challenger"*

The Yaris WRC unwrapped, p20



Photos: chasingthecars.com

## IN THE SERVICE PARK WITH...

### DARREN GARROD

Age: 37 From: Abersoch  
Co-driver extraordinaire competing worldwide

#### He is Canadian champ

"This year has been a good year as I've been competing in Canada with Subaru Rally Team Canada with the now nine-times CRC winner Antoine L'Estage. This year we won the manufacturers', drivers' and co-drivers' championship. In China I co-drove for three-time BRC winner Mark Higgins in the Subaru Rally Team China but we have only done two events this year. We did get to compete on the final round of the BRC in the DMACK [Ford] Fiesta R5. I have also done a couple of home events with my friend Robert Swann in his Subaru Impreza WRC S12B."

#### The events are a mix

"Rallying in Canada is a real mix. Some events you expect snow and get hot and dusty gravel, and some events you get snow when you were hoping for dry loose. It's always different. The championship starts in February in Quebec – which is usually icy – and returns to Quebec in June. Then it's Vancouver, back to Quebec, the Rocky Mountains, the eastern-based Rally of the Tall Pines and finally back to the Rocky Mountains. We had a mechanical failure on round one. Round two we won, round three we rolled out of the lead and round four we had another mechanical failure. But we then won all the remaining rounds."

#### The food is different in China

"Rallying in China is also some experience. Mostly due to the complete different culture and the food! This year we have ex-Subaru factory driver Chris Atkinson in a Prodrive-built VW Golf, Manfred Stohl in a Citroen R5, Jari Ketomaa is in a Beijing Motors car [BAIC Senova G50]. Mark [Higgins] and I are in the Subaru that's been built by Vermont Sports Cars USA who David Higgins drives for. In China we rally on hot asphalt roads in the South to the frozen lakes of North China and the hot Gobi desert that borders Mongolia but we do use WRC studs on the snow-ice events there."

#### Bikes were the beginning

"My interest in motorsports comes from my dad who was a motorcycle speedway rider back in the late 1960s and early '70s. I'm the first in the family to turn into cars and my mother used to take me out of school to go and watch the RAC Rally in Penmachno in the early '90s! My first ever rally was my local road rally back in 1998 with a friend in an Austin Metro. I finished in last place with all my mistakes."



Garrod (l) with L'Estage

# MSA ENGLISH SERIES TO FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE



Sam Bilham won in 2016

The MSA English Rally Championship has been overhauled to include gravel and asphalt rallies as well as four-wheel-drive cars and over two-litre machines for the first time.

The championship has run in its current guise, with cars under two-litre and two-wheel drive only, since 2005. But despite opening the championship up it remains class structured.

The two-wheel-drive cars remain in with a chance of clinching the series next year.

"We're still a class-based championship," said BTRDA chairman Howard Wilcock. "It [the championship] won't automatically go to a four-wheel-drive car. It could go to any class, 1400cc, 1600cc, a two-litre. It was to try and open it up to more people and we also did a survey of competitors and this is what they asked for. We hope it will prove popular."

The series adds the asphalt-based Tyneside Stages, Nicky Grist Asphalt Stages and Dukeries Rally to the championship. In doing so, the championship becomes the

## CALENDAR

### MSA English Rally Championship

RALLY	DATE	WHERE	SURFACE
Somerset Stages	April 8	West Somerset	Gravel
Carlisle Stages Rally	June 10	Kielder Forest	Gravel
Nicky Grist Stages	July 8	Mid Wales Forests	Gravel
Nicky Grist Asphalt Stages	July 9	Epynt Ranges	Asphalt
Tyneside Stages	Aug 6	Otterburn Ranges	Asphalt
Dukeries Rally	Aug 20	Donington Park	Asphalt
Woodpecker Stages	Sept 2	Shropshire	Gravel
Trackrod Forest Rally	Sept 30	North Yorkshire	Gravel

only one in the BTRDA with asphalt next year.

The MSA Asphalt Championship folded last month with a year's hiatus in the offing, while the BTRDA Challenge won't run this year. It was introduced in 2015 and used many of the MSA Asphalt rounds.

"The asphalt championship isn't running next year, so we're not running the BTRDA Challenge either because that depended on those events," added Wilcock. "In doing this [changing the MSA English Championship rules], we were still trying to have a championship with an element of asphalt in it. It is

still the English championship and most of the events are still in England."

The addition of the Dukeries Rally – a single-venue event held at Donington Park race track – makes it the first event of its kind to feature in the BTRDA.

"Although it's a single-venue rally, it's a type of rally that happens in England. We thought the inclusion of that gives you a different element. It's a summer event which will give you a place to bring sponsors and family. It's a bit of variety. It's still best six scores count in the championship so you don't have to do every event."

## Meadows to BTRDA for senior rally debut

Tommi Meadows will step up from the Junior Formula 1000 Championship to the BTRDA in 2017.

Meadows – who won the UK Young Rally Driver of the Year Award at the World Expo earlier this year – has been building a 1400S-spec Ford Ka for two years, and plans to debut it on the Malcolm Wilson next year.

"My time in the Juniors has been valuable but I'm ready for a new challenge," he said. "I like the circuits, but I think my driving style will suit the forests. I turn 17 in February so I'll have a month to pass before the Malcolm Wilson."

"We'll do the rest of the BTRDA and maybe a few asphalt rallies, ones I've done before like the Solway Coast."

The car has been built along with A Frame Engineering from a bare bodyshell ahead



Meadows is building a Ka

of Meadows' debut campaign at senior level.

"We were going to go 1400C but the suspension wasn't as strong [standard suspension is required by regulations]. With the seeding we wanted to build the strongest car we could. We wanted to get the proper suspension on it and make sure we'd be finishing all the rallies if we can."

"The engine compared to the others isn't very special. It'll have 150bhp which is still a lot more than the Micra."

## ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Stefan Taylor took victory on Chelmsford MC's famously challenging Preston road rally event, with twice previous winner Adrian Gladwin navigating their Proton Coupe.

The winners didn't have it their own way as they suffered severe visibility problems on section four, 'Kentford', one of the very few wet and muddy parts of the route.

Owen Turner and Rob Henchoz received a large penalty at Ingham and scored a puncture relegating them to third, behind Paul Sharp and Paul Barrett.

**Results**  
**Organiser:** Chelmsford Motor Club **When:** December 3/4 **Where:** Writtle, Chelmsford **Championships:** None **Route:** 180 miles **Starters:** 57  
1 Stefan Taylor/Adrian Gladwin (Proton Coupe) 14m32s; 2 Paul Sharp/Paul Barrett (Rover 25) +3m12s; 3 Owen Turner/Rob Henchoz (MG ZR); 4 Keith Lane/Martin Lane (Ford Ka); 5 Richard Oxley/Andrew Lowe (Proton Satria); 6 Paul Boxall/Matt Beebe (ZR 105); 7 Rob Kitchen/Ed Rutherford (ZR); 8 Craig Bellworthy/David Smalley (Ford Puma); 9 Ed Scott/Ben Scott (Satria); 10 Lee Burgess/Simon Walsh (Peugeot 205 GTI).

## GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

# JACK BENYON

**"The UK is dying for new single-make series"**



**T**here's been lots of positive news to offset the negative news in rallying's off season.

It all starts at the top of the tree and Sebastien Ogier joining M-Sport will hopefully breathe new life into rallying in the country, encouraging non-specialist media to pay more attention and more people to give rallying a go.

We've also had news of the M-Sport one-make series in Ireland for M-Sport's new Ford Fiesta R2 National, with another UK-based series in the offing in the coming months.

I think those are a good idea. A homologated single-make car which can be upgraded to R2 specification, and allows juniors to go and learn – pacenotes especially – before jumping into the ultra-competitive Junior British Rally Championship is very worthy.

But for me, there's still a gap. There is a gap for a through the floor budget single-make championship. It should be something you can complete a year in for less than £15,000.

There are championships out there that do that sort of thing, and by no means am I criticising those. For example, I got a chance to compete in the Fiesta ST Trophy earlier this year, a one-make series for the Ford Fiesta STs.

While the ST Trophy is almost undoubtedly the best single-make gravel-based championship in the country after just one season, it does have two minor downsides.

The championship is dominated by the M-Sport-built Fiesta, but a 'clubman' spec car has also been built by rallye and drafted into the regulations. However, that car isn't currently as competitive as the M-Sport car (especially when driven by me) and although the car is relatively bulletproof and a lot of fun, it's not quite at the M-Sport car's level due to a trade off between quality and cost.

The other minor problem with the ST Trophy is the gravel-based calendar. While many of the drivers entering the Trophy come from the asphalt-based Junior 1000 Championship, Juniors still need to be competing on 'proper' senior asphalt rallies where they can write their own notes.

Another championship currently competing is the GwynneSpeed Challenge, which is massively underrated as a place to go and learn your craft. While the championship is mixed surface, for youngsters wanting to learn how to write notes, the series lacks here as all the events are done on organiser's notes.

So, while none of the above is assassination of the two championships mentioned – as I happen to rate them both extremely highly – I still feel there's a hole for another championship for drivers aspiring to national and international level.

Something of a half-way house between the ST Trophy and the GwynneSpeed Challenge. A half-way house offering parity of cars, a mix of asphalt and gravel on larger National B events.

It's the next step in providing a pool of talented youngsters a defined route to the newly re-established British Championship.



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# SHERWOOD ENGINES



NEIL WILLIAMS AND HIS CO DRIVER PETER JAMES ARE THE 2016 WELSH HISTORIC RALLY CHAMPIONS



JASON PRITCHARD WITH CO DRIVER PHIL CARKE WON 2016 MINTEX MSA BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORIC RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP



DRIVERS SEAN BROWN AND DANIEL BROWN WON 2016 HISTORIC SPORTSCAR RACING SPRINT SERIES AND VINTAGE ENDURO CHAMPIONS, USA



RYAN BARRETT AND CO-DRIVER PAUL MCCANN WON THE 2016 KILLARNEY HISTORIC STAGES RALLY



MEIRION EVANS AND CO-DRIVER IESTYN WILLIAMS WON THE HISTORIC TROPHY AT THE NEW ZEALAND SILVER FERN RALLY.



FRANCOIS FOULON AND CO DRIVER MATTEI SÉBASTIEN ARE THE 2016 FRENCH TARMAC VHC CHAMPIONS

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# INSIGHT: HISTORIC FF1600

Photos: Paul Lawrence

# BETTER THAN EVER AT

# 50



Callum Grant topped title race

Historic Formula Ford 1600 has just enjoyed another epic season and now the class heads for its 50th anniversary season in 2017. **Paul Lawrence** looks at the explosion in interest.

**J**uly 2 1967 was a landmark day for motor racing as Formula Ford made its debut at Brands Hatch. The inaugural race drew a 20-car field and was won by Ray Allen in a Lotus 51. In fact, most of the cars were Lotus 51s, prepared by the local racing school Motor Racing Stables, powered initially by 1500cc Ford engines.

Due on the grid that day was a young Richard Mallock in a front-engined chassis from the family marque, but he went off at Druids on the warming-up lap and may well, therefore, be the first person to have crashed a Formula Ford.

Brands Hatch boss and Formula Ford creator John Webb's promotional concept of a complete car, ready to race, for less than £1000 ensured that the class really took off as the 1600cc Kent engine propelled Formula Ford to unimaginable levels of competition across the world. The racing, over the next five decades, has been consistently epic and many reputations have been made in the class.

It is the cars from the first five seasons, up to the end of 1971, that populate the HSCC's Historic Formula Ford Championship. The

first retro class for Formula Ford was the once-successful Pre '74 category, but nothing has blossomed over the last two decades like the Historic division, with a cut-off date designed to keep out the more advanced chassis from the mid-1970s.

The story of the historic series goes back to the early 1990s and a recognition that an affordable historic single-seater category was needed. Formula Ford fitted the bill and former race car trader and seasoned racer Chris Alford was pivotal to getting the idea off the ground within the HSCC.

Initially, the category ran as a series of races but by 1995 it had earned its stripes and Lotus 61 racer Bryan Hayward was the first champion. The concept remains a winner, relying on simple spaceframe chassis, the bomb-proof Kent engine and durable and effective control Avon tyres. These are cars that average people can afford to own and run and, despite the runaway popularity of the class, the cars are still affordable at a time when the values of other historic single-seaters continue to climb.

A race-ready car starts from around £20,000, though top cars can nudge up towards £30,000, while a season's running cost for the competent amateur, including some testing, comes in at around £7000.

## CALENDAR

### Historic Formula Ford

DATE	VENUE
April 8	Donington Park
May 20/21	Silverstone GP
June 17/18	Cadwell Park
July 1/2	Brands Hatch GP
July 28-30	Silverstone GP
Aug 5/6	Croft
Aug 26-28	Oulton Park Intl
Sept 23	Snetterton
Oct 21/22	Silverstone National

Pre-1972 Formula Ford 1600s running to period regulations, using control Avon tyres and the 1600cc Ford Kent engine.  
More details: [hsc.org.uk](http://hsc.org.uk), [historicff.co.uk](http://historicff.co.uk)

Regular racer Chris Sharples reckons that the category is just as affordable today as it was 50 years ago. "The original £1000 price for a car compared with a list price of a Ford Anglia of £600. Take a current price of £20,000 for a Formula Ford and compare it to today's £14,000 for a Ford Fiesta and the ratios are very similar," says Sharples. "But today your race car won't depreciate and whereas back then you would regularly throw away the tyres, nowadays the Avons give a very full life."

While the bang for buck ratio is as good as anything in historic racing, series prime mover and Merlyn racer Andrew Mansell says that the success of the category has a lot

to do with what happens off the track. This is one of the most sociable championships of all, with a lot of effort put into bringing drivers together over race weekends.

"The championship maintains a strong social side with hospitality and regular dinners in the paddock with a focus on inclusion of partners, family and friends," says Mansell. "We are a group of friends both on and off the circuit and you will get help to solve your problems."

It is clear that drivers who have shared a laugh the night before are less likely to drive into each other in the races.

Mansell believes that Historic Formula Ford is the cheapest genuine historic high-profile single-seater championship in the UK: "The value of cars is maintained and they are simple to prepare and maintain, which requires a basic level of knowledge and a simple tool kit."

With well-defined regulations and consistent scrutineering, the class offers a very level playing field and the quality of racing is consistently outstanding. "This is racing without any of the driving aids or aero, relying on driver skill and racecraft," says Mansell. "We have close and exciting racing all the way through the field and everyone on the grid can expect a real race. Although the

culture in Historic Formula Ford is very competitive, the level of aggression that is often a part of modern racing has no place with us."

At the front of the pack, there have been many epic wheel-to-wheel battles, yet very few tangles. There is camaraderie among the top drivers and racers like category champions Callum Grant, Sam Mitchell and Benn Simms along with key contenders Rob Wainwright and rising teenager Benn Tilley have banter and respect off the track. Former multiple champions Neil Fowler and Nelson Rowe also drop in from time to time to keep the new crop on their toes. In fact, in 2017, as many as seven former champions, with 15 titles between them, are likely to be on the grid at some point.

The 2016 season was marked by huge grids, regularly requiring split races and concluded with a 50-car entry for the Silverstone finale. That could become the norm in 2017 as the 50th anniversary celebrations kick in. Headline races include the 50th anniversary weekend at Brands Hatch and the Silverstone Classic.

The signs are clear that the boom in Historic Formula Ford will run and run. For fun racing among like-minded individuals, it has few equals. The category may be 50 years old but it clearly still has a great deal to offer. ■



Packed grids, such as this at Cadwell, were a feature of the '16 season



There are plenty of cars available



Stars such as Tiff Needell have been tempted back to Formula Ford

# INSIGHT: THE ROAD TO INDY



White (r) came close to prize



# FORMULA FORD £160,000 PRIZE

In December, three drivers competing in the UK in 2016 headed to Laguna Seca for the

**A**n Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman walk into a bar. But only because they raised it so high.

In early December Formula Forders Ollie White, Niall Murray and Neil MacLennan headed to Laguna Seca in search of the Holy Grail: a £160,000 prize towards a season in USF2000 courtesy of the Mazda Road to Indy Shootout.

And they really did set the bar high. The trio did a fantastic job of matching up against 15 other drivers, all of whom had won some sort of championship in their domestic seasons, in contention for the massive prize.

Irishman Niall Murray had a ticket courtesy of winning pretty much everything in Formula Ford in the UK

this year. The National Championship, Martin Donnelly Trophy, Formula Ford Festival and the Walter Hayes Trophy all went back to Ireland with the Bernard Dolan-run Van Diemen driver.

Ollie White was chosen as a wildcard from James Beckett's SuperSeries, and Neil MacLennan swept all before him in the Scottish Championship. All three championships had joined Mazda's new programme for 2016, sending their winner to compete for the prize in the all-new shootout.

It all spawns from Mazda's backing of young talent. The marque puts well over \$4 million (£3.2 million, but it would have been more last year, thanks Brexit) into finding and nurturing the best young talent from all over the world. It doesn't even get involved with the politics; Murray, White and MacLennan all came from Ford-powered championships – Ford being a major competitor of Mazda. It is committed to finding the best talent.

"We want talent that can rise to the top," says Kyle Kimball, manager of operations for Mazda Motorsports in North America. "That's how we tell our story. Success comes when that person comes from the grassroots, from F1600, from Spec Miata [roadcar-based

Mazda MX-5 championship], goes through all of the steps and makes it to the IndyCar Series. We want the talent, whether it's from the United States, Britain, Australia, that can come in and rise to the top."

So with a set of judges onboard – which included IndyCar race winner Scott Goodyear, IMSA SportsCar frontrunner Joel Miller and current IndyCar racer Spencer Pigot – the plot was set and the drivers assembled on the east coast of the US in Monterey. And *MN* was along for the ride.

The format was simple. Each driver got three sessions in a Mazda-powered car with a similar chassis to a Formula Ford 1600, built by Ray. Some of the differences to the UK-powered Kent machine included flappy paddle gearbox instead of a H-pattern, plus tyres with less grip and the obvious increase in power from the 1600 Kents.

The judges were out on the Laguna Seca circuit watching for a host of things to set each driver apart, the tangible or intangibles that would result in the manufacturer parting with a hefty amount of dosh come the end of the two days.

"The main thing we're looking for is speed, consistency, and how the drivers

learn the track and the car," says Pigot, a graduate of the Mazda Road to Indy ladder, through which Pro Mazda and Indy Lights titles helped him progress all the way to IndyCar. "Also, how they apply the feedback through the day. We're looking at speed with consistency; are they dropping a wheel off, locking up and pushing too hard? The basic stuff. I think there's a lot of good guys out here who will make our decision tough."

And the test was a tough one. Bear in mind, this is Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. If you haven't driven round it on *Gran Turismo* so much that your eyes have bled, here's the professional to run you through the challenges it offers.

"It's such a unique and difficult track," adds Pigot. "There's elevation changes, hard braking zones, fast corners, blind corners, you get a bit of everything. To put a full lap together here really shows that you're a very good driver. I've raced here one time and it was one of the tougher tracks to get used to. I think it's a perfect place to have a shootout like this."

Murray, MacLennan and White all took time to properly adapt to the circuit, but the judges considered the fact that some of the contenders hadn't

driven on the circuit before. Progression throughout the day was a vital part of impressing the powers that be.

The opening day was a corker for Murray. Only Oliver Askew came close to matching or beating the Irishman's times, and it looked like Murray's trait of sweeping all before him would continue with Trump-like domination of the US too. But Askew was a formidable opponent. In just his fourth car race, he was shipped over to the Formula Ford Festival with the Team USA Scholarship this year and was a podium challenger before a puncture. In his fifth car race, his first in the wet, he was Murray's closest challenger and finished second in the Walter Hayes Trophy.

White was also a strong contender on the first day, if a little off Murray's pace. But he'd done enough to make the final as the pace began to improve into the second morning. His lock-ups and overshoots became less and less as the consistency arrived just in time to catapult him into the final.

As the youngest of the group MacLennan had an exceptional attitude to the whole process, during which it would have been easy to become overawed. There was an air of



Askew won the big £160,000 prize



Murray (1) was disappointed

# STARS AIM FOR IN AMERICA

chance to win a big prize courtesy of Mazda. By **Jack Benyon**



Maclennan learned from the experience

acceptability that reaching the final would be difficult, but the Scot improved each time out on the track. He'll certainly be a frontrunner at the award next year should he make it back.

"I'm absolutely delighted to be honest, the competition was really close, and really fair," says Maclennan. "The six drivers they've picked are really quick. This isn't the end for us, we're happy."

The final did include our Irish and English entrants. However, Murray, by the end of the two days, in his own words, was beaten by himself.

He was a little out of sorts in the morning, while White was trending upwards with his pace. And so it was proven in the next session. White took pole in the penultimate element of the shootout; a 20-minute qualifying session. Murray was out of sorts and at the back of the six finalists despite his form on the previous day.

The last element of the process was a 30-minute race. And it delivered just like the fans of Formula Ford in the UK will know this sort of racing can, but with improved Mazda power.

White got off to a great start, but soon Askew was reeling him in. The two went wheel-to-wheel for two or three

laps, much to the glee of the judges. Jonathan Bomarito – Mazda sportscar driver – gave an excellent running commentary to the other judges over the radio. "Oh my gosh," he gasped as the duo went through Turns 3 and 4. Watching at Turn 11 with Joel Miller; it was incredible to see the drivers setting each other up and tactically manoeuvring to defend or attack. It was a lesson in driving beyond the drivers' years.

Askew got ahead, and the race was over: White's day-two performance had brought him into the conversation for winning the award while Murray had gone backwards. It was a heartbreaking end to what has been a phenomenal season.

"Today for whatever reason – whether it was the tyres or something else – the time just wasn't there," Murray says. "In the race I squeezed every tenth out of the car, I was very consistent in the car, but it wasn't quick enough."

And so, it was down to the winner. It was Askew, but that doesn't tell you everything. He took it after an assured and consistent couple of days in the car. He even credited racing in the UK in helping him win the award.

White had hoped to make the final as

a pre-event target. But not winning still packed a hurtful punch.

"I'm obviously disappointed not to win," confirms White. "The problem is your expectations rise, as soon as I was in the final six I was thinking about winning it. It's disappointing to miss out."

"It was an epic race with Oliver; we were wheel-to-wheel for two-or-three laps. We nearly made contact in a few places but we came out of it unscathed. "When I started the weekend I was a bit off the pace, but I chipped away at it and I'm proud of my effort."

Askew walks away with \$200,000 towards his USF2000 campaign next year, and there's more on the ladder Mazda supports in the sidebar (right).

It's no surprise drivers from all over the world are heading to compete in Mazda's championships. Look at Pigot. He went from Pro Mazda to IndyCar with barely any personal cost. He may support Manchester United, but he's a kind and approachable guy, lucky to have made it to where he is thanks to the process.

Keep your eye on America and the Road to Indy ladder. We're likely to see many more of our British and Irish talents heading out there in the future. ■

## THE MAZDA ROAD TO INDY LADDER

The Mazda Road to Indy provides a clear path from its entry slicks-and-wings USF2000 series to IndyCar. It's even more impressive on Mazda's part when you consider it has no involvement in IndyCar either as a team or engine supplier. USF2000 boasts a new car next year, which will increase costs from teams, but the ladder is more attractive in the sense that in 2018 USF2000 and Pro Mazda will share chassis. So instead of buying a new chassis, USF2000 will be able to be upgraded to Pro Mazda. Here's the Road to Indy ladder from bottom to top.

### USF2000 (new car for '17)

**Chassis:** Tatuus USF-17 (F3 safety spec)  
**Tyres:** Cooper Tires  
**Engine:** Mazda MZR two-litre (sealed), four-cylinder, 170bhp  
**Rounds:** 14  
**Prize:** \$400,000 (£320,000) (step into Pro Mazda)  
**2016 champion:** Anthony Martin

### Pro Mazda (New car in 2018, same chassis)

**Chassis:** Elan Technologies (changing to Tatuus USF-17 in 2018)  
**Tyres:** Cooper Tires  
**Engine:** Mazda Renesis rotary engine (sealed), 260bhp  
**Tyres:** Cooper Tires  
**Rounds:** 12  
**Prize:** \$790,000 (£632,000) (step into Indy Lights)  
**2016 champion:** Aaron Telitz

### Indy Lights

**Chassis:** Dallara IL-15  
**Tyres:** Cooper Tires  
**Engine:** Mazda MZR-R two-litre turbo (sealed), 450bhp  
**Rounds:** 16  
**Prize:** \$1,000,000 (£800,000) (step into IndyCar)  
**2016 champion:** Ed Jones

Road to Indy poster boy  
Spencer Pigot



# LAUNCH-TOYOTA WRC CAR

**T**here were definitely times when the good people of Puuppola must have feared this moment might never actually happen. And it's probably worth confirming – for those Toyota Gazoo Racing folk who still haven't had a moment to catch up – the Yaris WRC has been launched. It's arrived.

Normally a launch brings an overwhelming sense of relief from within a team. They've made it.

Shortly before team principal Tommi Makinen was invited on stage to really start proceedings, *WRCLive's* Becc Williams – the host for the launch – goes through the gears in her build-up, culminating with a line which must have sent shivers down the spines of the collected white shirts about the place.

"Monte Carlo can't come soon enough for this team," she reasons.

I suspect it can.

The more experienced among the team had learned to avoid the bright lights, for fear of being pictured standing, staring like the proverbial rabbit.

Toyota's latest recruit Jari-Matti Latvala was the most succinct in his appraisal of the team's preparations for the 2017 season.

"We made this car in seven months," he says. "Volkswagen did it in one and a half years. We need one more year for the development of the Yaris."

Latvala had studiously avoided any attempt to lure him into any kind of comparison between the car he had been testing in the French Alps a day before the Helsinki launch with the Polo he'd been pounding around shortly before Wales Rally GB in October.

He said plenty by saying nothing at all.

Understandably, the world was looking forward to next season and the prospect of a winning return for Toyota. And why not? The last time the Japanese giant returned to full-time rallying in 1998, Carlos Sainz started the season with a win in Monte Carlo. The Corolla WRC, you suspect, had significantly more development than the Yaris.

Looking back at the firm's sporting pedigree and history made for a sensible tactic in deflecting some of the trickier questions about next season. Being one of the sport's more studious sorts, Latvala reached straight for stories from the past. And personalised them.

He's a man whose own collection of cars includes a brace of Group A Toyota Celicas.

"Coming here is like coming home," he says. "In 2003 I did my first rally – Winter Rally Estonia – in a World Rally Car in a Toyota Corolla WRC. It was a 1999 car. And before that, I was driving a 1986 Corolla GT."

From the age of 16, Latvala entered just about every rally sprint going in

Finland and he did so at the wheel of the rear-wheel-drive GT. As a brief aside, as soon as he turned 17, he bought a Renault Clio, came to Britain for his first rally proper: the Dukeries. He went off.

As a driver who lives and breathes rallying, Latvala knows Toyota's history inside out and the sense of responsibility at waking such a sleeping giant is clear.

"Toyota have been in the world championship first time in 1973," he says. "But then it was a big disappointment in 1999 when they stopped. And now they are back and I'm very happy to be back with them. They are really committed to fight for the title and the championship."

Just not next year?

"No, not next year."

To the casual motorsport observer, the lack of development time for Toyota must be quite confusing. Isn't this the company that first started working on a 2017-bound Yaris WRC in December 2013? That's the December 2013 that's three years ago...

Yes and no.

That was the other Toyota. That was the Toyota based in Cologne; the Toyota that clinched both World Endurance titles a couple of years ago, not to mention the seven World Rally Championship crowns in seasons past.

This is where Toyota's story gets slightly confusing. Instead of sticking with Cologne and its already advanced development programme, the project was diverted north to Puuppola, in Finland: the home of four-time world champion Makinen.

That meant scratching out a year and a half of Toyota Motorsport development and starting with an almost clean slate at Toyota Gazoo Racing in August last year.

Almost, because TMG has retained the engine development work. Helsinki's new dawn wasn't the time or the place to be raking over old coals, but to the casual observer the situation still took some understanding.

Makinen worked hard to land the deal he'd always wanted, but the task is only going to get harder from here on. And the weight of expectation accompanying Toyota's return doesn't help.

"This is a very exciting moment for me," says Makinen. "To come back with Toyota makes me very proud."

And Makinen has been right at the heart of that comeback. He was the first man to test a Finnish-built Yaris and he's the man who's seen the most changes.

"Every area of the car has moved forward since that first test," he says. "The aerodynamics are completely different, the engine has moved forward a lot too and of course the suspension, the differentials and, I would say, the driveability of the car. We have come a long way."

Far enough?

"The coming season is the year where we try to reach the good position during every single rally," he says. "We need a three-car team to compete for the manufacturers' title and that will be in the year 2018. We give our maximum effort with Juho [Hanninen] having completed the massive test programme and Jari-Matti's massive experience. With these two things, we try to reach best ever development programme in 2017 to be ready for 2018."

Talking of drivers, what about Sebastien Ogier? How close did Makinen come to signing the Frenchman?

There's a typically long Tommi pause while he considers his options.

"We try to find the best driver line-up available," he says. "A month ago it was completely different and we were lucky enough to be in the position to find one more seat. With Jari-Matti, we managed to get a driver who is one of the most experienced, his technical knowledge is the highest level of all the current drivers, he can give good feedback and help us to improve ourselves."

Ogier's decision not to join Toyota wasn't a huge surprise, what was surprising was that Andreas Mikkelsen

– the man who won on Volkswagen's last ever official outing in Australia last month and has shown Latvala a fairly clean pair of heels in the sister Polo all season – was overlooked.

"Of course, we know they are both fast drivers, but we are here to learn and go forward and Jari-Matti's experience was one of the most interesting reasons," says Makinen by way of an explanation why he hadn't added the Norwegian's name to the books.

Instead, he'd gone home and signed a third Finnish driver (WRC2 champion Esapekka Lappi is the team's test driver, who will tackle around seven rounds next season) to the team based in Finland and run by him, one of the highest-flying Finns.

Hanninen saw this one coming.

"I don't know how much it matters that the drivers are all from Finland," he says. "The team's language is English, so I don't think it matters where we come from. Being Finnish, maybe we're going to get some straighter feedback from the boss when we've finished the event!"

But what about that boss?

And what about Makinen and the stories of disharmony in the team

and between Finland and Japan?

Hanninen laughs.

"I can promise you," he says, "this talk of disharmony has been coming much more from the media than it has been inside the team. Much more. Honestly, the atmosphere is fantastic. These guys who have been on the testing programme, they have been one month away from their homes and working like hell, but still they have been laughing."

"Tommi has really taken care of this, there's no politics and everybody has the same target. It is helping that he's a driver himself, so he knows what is making the team happy – including the small things. This is important when we have been so busy. And we have been busy, you can believe we have not been sitting in meetings, no, no, we have been in the field working."

And while they've been in that field, it's been Britain's Tom Fowler – a man whose WRC teeth were cut at M-Sport and his engineering nous honed in the nuclear energy industry – who's been overseeing operations.

Looking at the Yaris it looks like fairly standard 2017 fare: nose front with a jutting bottom lip, flared arches and

# BRINGING THE

## After a tough birth, David Evans watched the wrap



Toyota Yaris will be developed



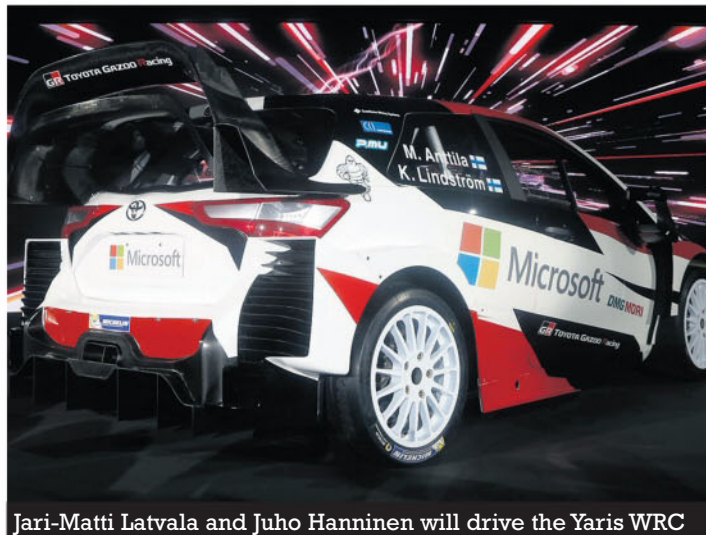
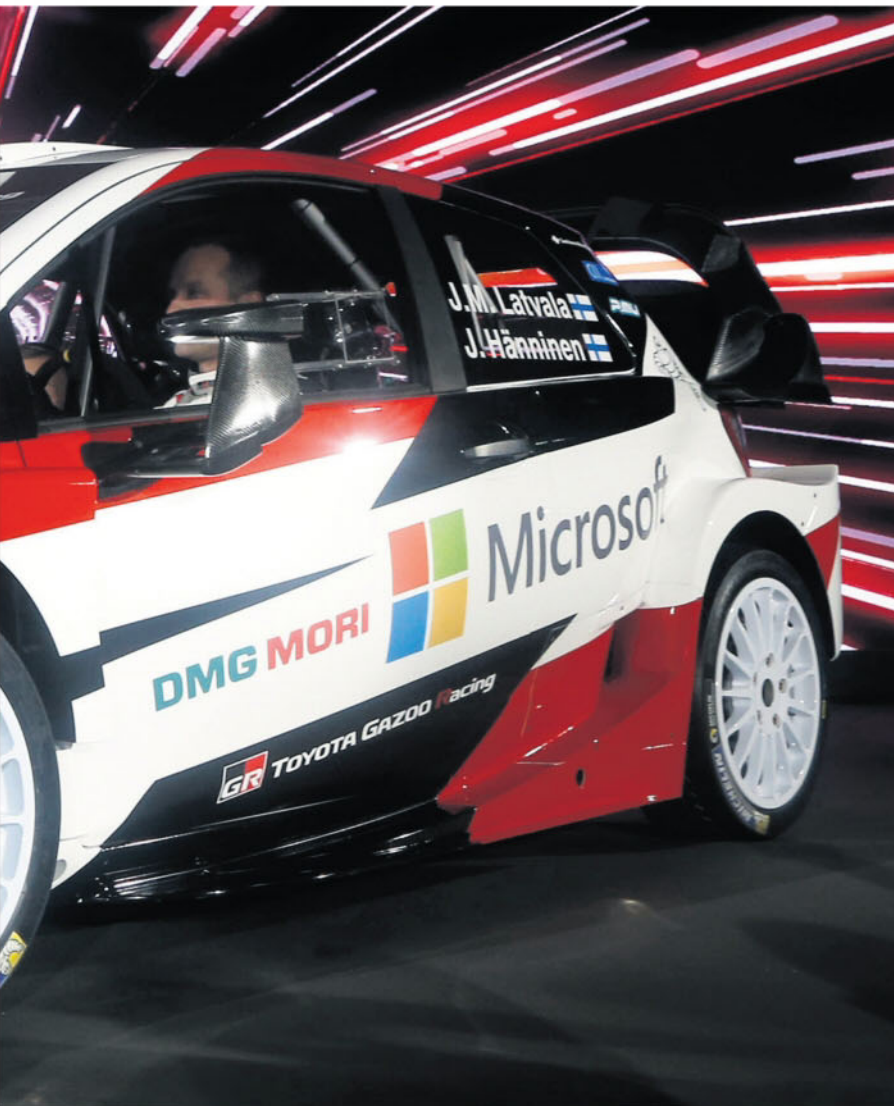
Latvala is full of optimism



Aero has some fine detailing

# THE NEW YARIS INTO FOCUS

...s come off the new Toyota WRC car



Jari-Matti Latvala and Juho Hänninen will drive the Yaris WRC



Designers have worked on the styling at the back of the car

## TIMELINE OF THE YARIS

**December 2013:** Toyota Motorsport GmbH – the Japanese firm's independent motorsport arm in Cologne – confirms it will be building a Yaris WRC.

**January 2014:** TMG targets a return to the WRC in 2017. Stéphane Sarrazin named as TMG's test driver.

**March 2014:** TMG begins testing a Yaris WRC built to 2014 regulations in Italy. The plan is to start banking current rally data.

**August 2014:** TMG starts testing its Yaris on asphalt, while Tommi Mäkinen builds Toyota boss Akio Toyoda a GT86 WRC for demonstration runs at Rally Finland.

**January 2015:** Toyota confirms Toyota's return to the WRC. TMG is expected to develop the car for the next two years.

**July 2015:** Tommi Mäkinen announced as Toyota Gazoo Racing team principal.

**August 2015:** Mäkinen confirms a new Yaris will be built, replacing the TMG car and development will be done at his Puuppola factory in Finland. TMG will only work on the engine.

**April 2016:** Mäkinen puts the first test miles on his 2017-spec Yaris WRC in central Finland. Juho Hänninen is also spotted driving the car.

**September 2016:** Hänninen confirmed as a Toyota driver in 2017.

**December 2016:** Toyota Gazoo Racing launches its Yaris WRC.

wider sills. But then from the rear, it looks fairly hectic. The rear spoiler sitting above layered aero coming off the back of the rear wheels gives the Yaris real angular menace.

The new regulations have given the most freedom in terms of aero since the end of Group B. The days of bolting the biggest workable rear wings to either end of the cars are gone. The science involved in airflow in modern day rallying is mind-boggling.

"You have to choose what you want," says Fowler. "Previously you were so limited you just went for the maximum. Everybody took the maximum rear wing and bolted it to a hatchback, which made the cars look pretty similar. With this

extra freedom, you have to decide how much drag is acceptable. We've done a lot of work on researching what's the right, the correct level of aero, rather than just going for the maximum aero package.

"We've used the full free box [the rear wing has to fit into a box of specific dimensions] and then tuned the device to what we were trying to achieve. It depends on the size and the shape of your car to find what you can and can't do. This is what suited a Yaris WRC and it may not suit another car."

The downforce and the engine are the areas of the car which have impressed the drivers the most, but transmitting that power and potential to the road means getting the suspension right.

While he was competing, Mäkinen worked with Bos dampers and he was keen to continue that relationship with the French suspension firm.

Fowler says: "We've worked really hard on the suspension, this was one of our key targets from the start. The stages are so individual, you need a car you can tune to the road."

Another big area of change for next season is the re-introduction of an active centre differential. This is where

Mäkinen's experience of hydraulic activation in the transmission helped. And he's seen it from all angles, from competing at the highest levels of the world championship, to tuning the centre differential on a Group N Subaru for a customer.

"We have had to be very open-minded with the centre differential," says Mäkinen. "We've tried everything."

Developing one of these next generation cars hasn't been an entirely straightforward process. With significant rule change has come a significant number of additional rule changes to the rules which had already been made...

"We've had draft regulations all year – they were only finalised recently," says Fowler. "Effectively, the regulations were being written at the same time that you're developing the car. That's meant following small changes in your development plan and that's been very difficult."

Finding a quieter moment with Mäkinen is almost impossible these days, but when we do, it's clear to see the passion and commitment he's putting into the job. Having emerged from a

full-on WRC life when he stopped competing in 2003, it's fair to say he's relishing the return. Especially now he's got a team around him.

"This was one of the hardest things in the beginning," he says, "trying to build the team and get the right people with us. But we've done it. Now we have more than 100 people in the team."

At the top of that team is Akio Toyoda, the president and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation. Toyoda might not have been present at the launch earlier this month, but he's been pivotal in Toyota's return to the sport. And his relationship with Mäkinen has been key to the way the project has unfolded.

You only have to watch the pair of them joking about Mäkinen's early use of red shirts being an old habit from his Mitsubishi days to see how comfortable the pair are together.

"The relationship is very good," says Mäkinen. "And it's good because it gives confidence to the future and confidence to the team – every single member of the team. It's extremely important."

With a five-year commitment to WRC, it certainly is.

Like his executive contemporaries in

the car world, Toyoda's not known for his patience when it comes to waiting for results. Chasing stage victories and podiums might be tolerated in Mäkinen's rookie season as a world championship team principal, but as Toyoda keeps reminding him: "We don't like to lose."

Suggest to Mäkinen that it took the late, great Ove Andersson a couple of years to win with Team Toyota Europe in the early 1970s and it falls on deaf ears. He's painfully aware of the need for results. And quick ones. Which makes the lack of a genuine comparison so difficult.

"We don't know where we are standing for Monte Carlo," he says. "Not being able to compare has made our work much harder."

Toyota Gazoo Racing's technical director Koei Saga eased some of that tension in a brilliant moment of Japanese clarity. Saga steps forward, stares at the car for a moment and says: "We don't know if this will be a nice journey with this [Yaris] or a bad journey. But I am sure, what we will have is a wonderful challenge."

There's no doubting that challenge. ■

"The car has come a long way"

Tommi Mäkinen



# INTERVIEW: MAX CHILTON

# CHILTON

## CHASES THE AMERICAN DREAM

After a difficult Formula 1 spell, Max Chilton is back in top-line single-seaters. By **Rob Ladbrook**



Chilton will stay with Chip Ganassi team

**T**he last three years have been a rollercoaster for Max Chilton. There's been highs, rock-bottom lows and more than a few moments that would test any driver's character.

But finally there's some light at the end of the tunnel. Some consistency is finally in view. Chilton will rejoin the Chip Ganassi Racing team for a second spell in IndyCar next year, marking his first stable race deal since 2014. And it's even a stretch to call the 2014 one 'stable'.

Chilton's Formula 1 career spanned 35 grands prix across two seasons, all with the troubled Marussia team. It's hard to show your talent without the right car beneath you. And it's safe to say Chilton never had anywhere near the right car beneath him. In fact, come January 2014, he didn't know if he would have a car beneath him at all.

"Rewinding back to 2014, that was without question the toughest year of my career," says the 25-year-old from Redhill, Surrey.

"Ironically it was probably one of my best years performance-wise, because I put so much hard work into my fitness and training over the 2013 off-season after my first year in F1 that I was better prepared than ever and started the year really competitive against Jules [Bianchi, his Marussia team-mate that year].

"But after all that work, both Jules and I quickly realised how much trouble the team was in [financially]. In truth I didn't think we'd even make it to Melbourne for the first race that year.

"I was treating every grand prix that season like my last, so I was pushing like mad each session. Various things happened that kept us going, but then we had the tragic events of Jules' accident, and the whole team knew that was it."

Bianchi's fatal accident in that year's Japanese Grand Prix devastated the Marussia team, and Chilton. With the constant fight against bankruptcy in the background, the tragedy on-track sapped most of the fighting spirit that was left. Russia would be Marussia's last race under that title, with Chilton handling the single car.

It was then that the reality of the task of keeping his F1 dream alive hit home, and it was too big an ask.

Despite coming from wealth, Chilton has always been proud of paying his way himself, using as little family funds as possible to do so. He worked tirelessly to secure sponsors, but ultimately felt that being restricted to "driving around at the back" wasn't rewarding those investments fairly.

But there was another side to his F1 exit too, and that was the sheer enjoyment of racing, and Chilton wasn't getting that.

"I knew the chances of a seat for 2015 were slim, and the team [now under the name Manor after a takeover saved it from liquidation] offered me a contract as reserve driver, but it was my choice to reject that and walk away," Chilton explains.

"I see so many reserve drivers that are demoralised and depleted. They put in just as much work and training as the race drivers, and sometimes don't get in the car once all year. That's not me. I love racing, and wanted to race, so F1 wasn't for me anymore."

That decision left Chilton at a crossroads, and for the first time in his career he entered the final months of the year with no firm plan for 2015. That's when the phone rang.

"Traditionally in my career I've

Photos: LAT



First Indy Lights win came at Iowa oval



Chilton is adapting to IndyCar racing



Franchitti is a key ally for team

## How Dario Franchitti's support is vital for Chilton's oval progress

One great asset Chilton has at the Ganassi team is the support of IndyCar legend Dario Franchitti. Following his retirement from racing after his accident at Houston, Texas back in 2013, Franchitti has taken up an advisory role with Ganassi, the team with which he took two of his three Indy 500 wins, and three of his four IndyCar titles.

The Scottish star acted as Chilton's mentor this year, and his support will be key in 2017 too. "I'm hugely lucky to have Dario alongside me," says Chilton. "He was at 90 per cent of my races this year and is a huge help. Sometimes it's not noticeable, as he's giving you small tips and tricks and your brain just absorbs the information as there's so much going on but

when it all comes together in the car you realise the impact he's had. He's been there and done it, and having him help with aspects like the oval races is just invaluable. Working with [team-mates] like Scott Dixon and Tony Kanaan is great too. They've been racing in IndyCars almost longer than I've been racing full stop and they're absolute pros."

always had the next step decided, signed and sorted by around August, and to not have that was really unsettling – technically I was out of a job at Christmas," he adds.

"I had this very long off-season and then Trevor Carlin [head of junior single-seater powerhouse Carlin, which Max had raced for in F3 and GP2] called me. He said he was starting an Indy Lights team and asked if I could come and do the development work on the cars. I wasn't up to anything else and it kept me in a car, so I went for it."

From that testing work, Chilton agreed to also race for the team, prompting a wave of scepticism on social media that an F1 driver stepping down to what is considered a feeder category made little sense.

To Chilton though, it made perfect sense.

"I didn't get why people were critical about me racing in Indy Lights after F1," he says. "I'm one of those drivers that just loves racing, and I believe that it's irrelevant of what you race, so long as you enjoy it."

"I think it's a modern thing, where some F1 guys get on their high horses and are afraid to drop down, but when you look back at the legends of the sport – like Jim Clark, Stirling Moss and such – they'd race F1 one weekend, F2 the next and club events after that. They just loved to be out there competing."

"Yes, you put yourself and your reputation on the line going back down the ladder, but it also gives credit to the guys in the feeder classes if they beat you. Just because you can afford to race in a faster formula, doesn't mean you're better than those who can't. It's competitive whatever you do in

motorsport, and if some top F1 drivers dropped back to GP2 I'm sure they'd struggle for a bit.

"I never felt any pressure going to Lights, it was just people outside looking in and saying it was a weird move, but to me it made perfect sense. I wanted to do IndyCar in 2016, but I didn't want to go and learn oval racing in an IndyCar. I've seen people do that and it doesn't work out and that's the end."

"The season in Lights taught me so much. They're still doing 200mph around Indianapolis, so it's F1 speeds, just a lower series."

Ironically it's on the ovals that Chilton excelled, taking his maiden Lights win at Iowa, mid-season. He says the change in discipline between traditional circuit racing and ovals was far larger than expected.

"Oval racing is completely different," he explains. "I used to watch it on TV and get bored after 10 laps, but in the car it's as far from boredom as you can get!"

"The adrenaline flowing around your body and the concentration required is just intense. The car control is extreme. Even if it doesn't look like the car is moving much, and you really don't want it to, you're using every last bit of skill to keep it pointing in the right direction."

"Even though you're not braking, downshifting and accelerating in the traditional way, the technical element is there, and is perhaps even greater on ovals. You have to feel the most minute set-up changes too. You can make a tiny adjustment and really feel it as you're constantly loading the car on the limit. Every spring and setting

becomes so crucial, and to race in packs at those sorts of speeds is unreal."

Chilton believes he would have been in the fight for the Lights title last year, had it not been for three rounds skipped to be part of Nissan's Le Mans programme (*see right*). He finished the year in fifth place, but that Iowa win opened doors.

"I got some calls from IndyCar teams after the win and from that put together the deal with Chip [Ganassi], which is the team I really wanted to work with," he adds. "They've not been in the sport as long as a crew like Penske, which has been around 50 years, but Chip has already won more in just 25. It was a really exciting move for me, but this year had to be treated as a learning year."

Chilton was up against it, with limited testing before the year, but secured a season-best seventh place in round two, at Phoenix. But from then on a string of technical difficulties and the lack of experience took its toll. Chilton finished 19th in the championship, and second rookie.

"It was a real learning curve," says Chilton. "After Phoenix I thought I'd cracked it, but that was a short oval with loads of downforce and perhaps suited me better. We had good pace at the more traditional tracks, like Watkins Glen where I ran in the top six. I could carry speed through fast, flowing corners, but things just didn't go our way in terms of results."

"The cars are very different to F1 cars, but they're hugely impressive still. F1 will always be the pinnacle, with all of the bespoke design, engineering and money that's spent on those cars, they're mind-blowing to drive. IndyCars aren't mind-blowing to

drive. They're just a bit different.

"Yes, they're heavier and the gearboxes are made like tanks and there's less power, but the downforce is fantastic and the brakes feel amazing because of that. What IndyCar has achieved on a fraction of an F1 development budget is amazing."

"The cars are also a lot easier to race, and the racing is for the drivers and the fans. In F1 you watch a procession and two team-mates fighting as they actually have equal machinery. But aside from that it's not equal. IndyCar is still downforce-related racing, but it's usable and you can follow another car closely without killing your tyres. Aside from the manufacturer-dependant bodykits and engine brand, everybody has the same basic kit. What you're watching in IndyCar is 24 drivers fighting it out and the performance gaps are so much smaller."

This year Chilton has continuity again, for the first time in a long time. He says that can help him work his way to the front of the grid, but isn't expecting success overnight.

"To have the same engineer, who is the person you work most closely with, you form a relationship with them and the team and your team-mates so keeping the crew the same is so important," he says.

"My aim in 2017 is to get on the podium, and if you're fighting for those places then a good finish in the championship naturally follows, but you have to take it one step at a time."

"I'll work as hard this winter as I did back in 2013 to get ready. Right now I feel I'm in the right place, and that my career is back on track." ■

## Nissan: the sportscar false dawn

Having left Formula 1, Chilton had perhaps his busiest year in 2015, when both Indy Lights and a Le Mans programme appeared on his schedule.

Chilton was signed as one of Nissan's six works drivers for its factory Le Mans programme with the GT-R LM NISMO LMP1 machine. That move could have signalled the start of a fresh career in endurance racing for Chilton, but proved to be short-lived.

"I've always loved sportscars, since I did the 2007 Silverstone 1000km race alongside my brother Tom in an LMP1 Zytek and it was an amazing experience even back then, when I was still new to racing and in my first year of F3," says Chilton.

"I've always wanted to do Le Mans, so when the Nissan chance came up I was so excited to be a part of it. But then we arrived at the first test and realised the car was a bit of a red herring, to put it politely. I've heard people call it much worse, and I've called it much worse. But whatever it was, it wasn't a racing car."

"Regardless, we went to Le Mans and had a horrendous race but we at least made it to the flag and I had two of the best stints you could have – day into night and night into day. I remember getting in the car at 0400hrs on Sunday and flying down the Mulsanne, as we were the fastest car through the speed traps with zero downforce and handling, but huge straight-line speed. Everything just seemed totally silent and serene and it was a really odd experience, but sums up what makes Le Mans different."

"I left Le Mans in 2015 saying 'I will do this again' and I plan to at some stage in my career. I'd love to go back in LMP1, but LMP2 also interests me and if anything the racing there is probably fairer as everybody has the same kit."



Nissan "wasn't a racing car"



Marussia deal ended in '14



The loss of team-mate Jules Bianchi (left) was devastating for Marussia

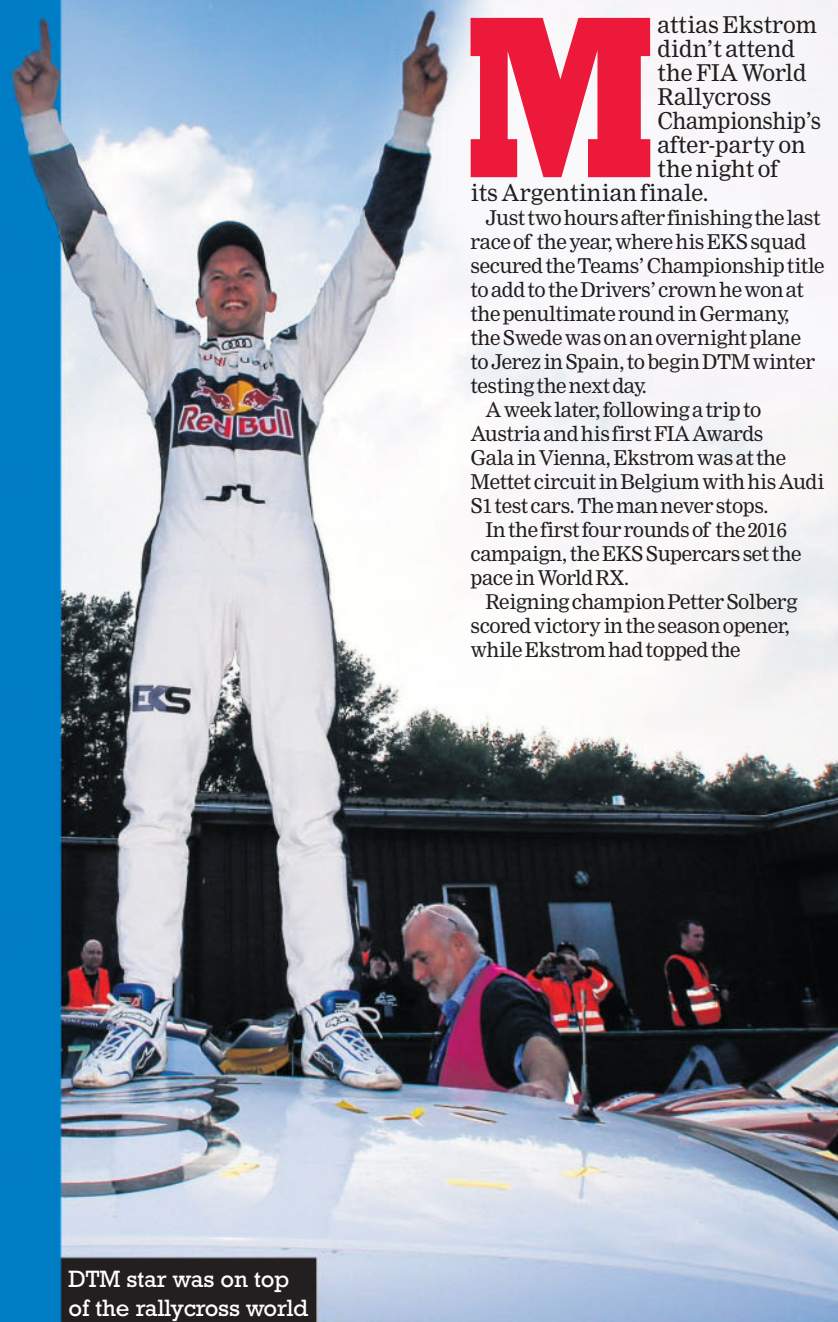


Oval racing is a key skill

# REVIEW: WORLD RALLYCROSS

# EKSTROM JOINS

## DTM star defeats French legend Sebastien Loeb and former World Rallycross champion



DTM star was on top of the rallycross world

**M**attiias Ekstrom didn't attend the FIA World Rallycross Championship's after-party on the night of its Argentinian finale.

Just two hours after finishing the last race of the year, where his EKS squad secured the Teams' Championship title to add to the Drivers' crown he won at the penultimate round in Germany, the Swede was on an overnight plane to Jerez in Spain, to begin DTM winter testing the next day.

A week later, following a trip to Austria and his first FIA Awards Gala in Vienna, Ekstrom was at the Mettet circuit in Belgium with his Audi S1 test cars. The man never stops.

In the first four rounds of the 2016 campaign, the EKS Supercars set the pace in World RX.

Reigning champion Petter Solberg scored victory in the season opener, while Ekstrom had topped the

intermediate Classification and gone out in the semi-finals. However, at the next three events, Ekstrom claimed victory and that was the bedrock for his title charge.

A double DTM champion, Ekstrom has raced in the top-level German series since the start of the millennium and has clearly learnt a lot about developing a car, and team.

Last winter, the squad did only a small amount of testing but did most of it early, before Christmas, meaning they had the winter period to assess where they needed to improve and prepare for the following year.

Ekstrom's early season victories this year were the backbone of his title success, coupled with rarely making mistakes on track with his clean and precise driving style.

He consistently racked up points, especially at the Intermediate stage of events, and used his experience to know when second was enough, his eyes firmly fixed on the end goal.

At the three-day test in December,

EKS was developing on lessons learnt through the season, preparing for its title defence. Ekstrom's passion for winning has not dimmed, despite claiming his first world crown.

While the margins are small in World RX, the only man aside from Ekstrom to mount a substantial title assault was two-time champion, Solberg.

The Norwegian has also learnt how to win titles in recent years and, despite only finishing on the podium three times until the penultimate round, he remained in championship contention. The final points table, in which he is fourth, doesn't do Solberg's 2016 performance justice.

The Norwegian continued to develop his Citroen DS3 into one of the fastest cars on the grid thanks to the efforts of his PSRX team.

As expected, Solberg was also one of the fastest drivers at each event, and was neck-and-neck with Ekstrom in the standings for much of the year.

The championship turning point came in Latvia, round 10, in their Q2

race. Ekstrom passed Solberg in the third corner. Solberg then retook the position, after making contact with the rear of his rival's Audi. Solberg was disqualified from the race and, as a result, didn't make the semi-finals for the first time in World RX history. Ekstrom finished the event second to pull away in the points.

Solberg almost certainly didn't mean to push Ekstrom into the wall in Latvia, and the consequences were significant on his title challenge.

Since switching from the WRC, Solberg has spent a large proportion of his time in rallycross at the front of the field and therefore perhaps lacks the finesse of someone with Ekstrom's experience at racing wheel-to-wheel, one of the key ingredients to the Swede's success.

Such was the competitiveness of World RX in 2016 that four drivers; Solberg, Johan Kristoffersson, Andreas Bakkerud and Sebastien Loeb, entered the season finale with a chance of finishing in the



Ekstrom took his first world crown

## TOP 10 DRIVERS

### 1 Mattias Ekstrom

Car: Audi S1

Team: EKS

Wins: 4 Podiums: 6

Championship position: 1

It's almost inconceivable to think that 2016 was experienced driver Ekstrom's first full campaign in an FIA-sanctioned championship. But, it was, and he won the drivers' title for himself and the teams' crown with his EKS squad.



### 2 Petter Solberg

Car: Citroen DS3

Team: Privateer Wins: 1

Podiums: 4

Championship position: 4

Solberg started his title defence in the best possible way with victory and, although he didn't win again, the Norwegian remained in the fight for the title until missing the semi-finals in Latvia (round 10). He dominated the final round in the fight for second in the points, until semi-final contact put him out.



### 3 Kevin Hansen

Car: Peugeot 208

Team: Peugeot Hansen

Academy Wins: 0

Podiums: 0

Championship position: 15 (Euro RX: 1)

Perhaps a surprise entry in MN's top 10. The young Swede dominated in the European Championship in his first Supercar year. But, he also impressed on World RX outings, often faster than established Peugeot stablemates Sebastien Loeb and Timmy Hansen and twice finished fourth.



### 4 Andreas Bakkerud

Car: Ford Focus RS RX

Team: Hoonigan Racing

Division Wins: 3

Podiums: 6

Championship position: 3

Like Kevin Hansen, Bakkerud is an out-and-out rallycross driver, having climbed through the ranks of the sport to the top level. For 2016, Bakkerud joined Ken Block's new team with a new, developing car and delivered on his potential, with three wins.



### 5 Johan Kristoffersson

Car: Volkswagen Polo

Team: Volkswagen RX

Sweden Wins: 1

Podiums: 3

Championship position: 2

Kristoffersson should arguably be higher up in MN's rankings. Regarded as one of the best racers in World RX, the Swede was always fast and when the car and circumstances allowed, he was in the fight for podiums.





Photos: FIA World Rallycross, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

# THE CHAMPIONS

and fan favourite Petter Solberg for WRX honours. By Hal Ridge

top three overall in the points.

First and second in the event for Bakkerud and Kristoffersson (while Solberg went out with damaged steering from contact in the semi-finals) meant they joined Ekstrom at the FIA awards. But, it was close; Kristoffersson was second on 240 points with Bakkerud and Solberg tied on 239, the younger Norwegian claiming third on countback of wins.

Bakkerud, a driver who has climbed up through the ranks of rallycross, joined Ken Block's new Hoonigan Racing Division team in a pair of new Ford Focus RS RX Supercars for this year.

Having moved to Supercar in 2013, Bakkerud was the experienced World RX driver in the squad and despite Block scoring the first podium for the Focus at round two, Hockenheim, it was Bakkerud who led the team on track through the year.

His first win with the squad was delivered in dominant fashion at Hell in Norway, Bakkerud taking a clean

sweep of fastest times and race wins through the weekend. The Norwegian has worked hard to get to his current position and has a 'never give up' attitude, highlighted in Germany when he made it to the podium in the final while his car filled with fumes from a broken exhaust, when many others would have stopped. Bakkerud's three wins were impressive for a first campaign for the new car.

Like compatriot Ekstrom, Kristoffersson is also a successful circuit racer but has rallycross ability too, and always extracts the maximum from his machinery. When conditions are inconsistent, the Swede is at his best and in mixed weather at Loheac, France he scored his first and only victory of the year. He would have won sooner, and more often, but was blighted by punctures, contact and a spell where Volkswagen RX Sweden's Polo lost pace compared to the opposition.

It was a hard-fought season for reigning teams' champion, Team

Peugeot-Hansen, which lost out on retaining the title to EKS at the last round.

Nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb joined the squad, alongside Timmy Hansen and, while both were regularly in the fight for podium finishes, the team's 2016 chassis wasn't a big progression from its previous contender.

Loeb also had to get used to the rough and tumble of door-to-door racing in rallycross, and was overly cautious early in the year. His home event at Loheac was a turning point, the French star putting his 208 in places he hadn't previously and two rounds later, he earned his first win in Latvia.

Loeb had the other difficulty of having to learn the circuits through the year, but on a new venue to everyone, he dominated the final. With a season under his belt, if the team produce a solid car for next year, Loeb can be a contender.

Hansen won too, in Canada. It is a circuit that doesn't suit the 208 with less

straight-line speed compared to its rivals, but a determined drive and the correct tyre choice mean that he joined Bakkerud, Solberg and Ekstrom as having won in every year of World RX.

The 2016 season also brought a return to form for triple-European champion Timur Timerzyanov. Having switched teams for the second time in as many years he showed flashes of brilliant pace.

Swede Kevin Eriksson produced one of the moments of the whole motor racing year in Germany. The OlsbergsMSE driver passed the entire pack around the outside of the first corner in the final, sideways, to claim a first career victory.

It was an incredible season for Ekstrom and his EKS team, but nothing stands still.

There have been few announcements of who will be driving where next year, but if this season has been anything to go by, predicting a winner ahead of each event will be nigh on impossible. ■



Solberg stayed in contention until the penultimate round of the season



Bakkerud's star shone brightly



Seb Loeb struggled initially



Eriksson won plaudits for his overtaking move of the year in Germany



Another Hansen, another title...

## Kevin keeps it in the family with ERX win

The FIA European Rallycross Championship was dominated in 2016 by reigning RX Lites champion Kevin Hansen, driving a year-old World RX specification Peugeot 208 in the five-round series.

The Swede won the opening four events, claiming maximum points in Norway, Sweden and Spain to lift the crown.

At the final round in Latvia, Hansen was spun off on the opening lap of the final, but produced the comeback drive of the year to finish the race second and almost seize victory from outgoing champion Tommy Rustad.

The experienced Norwegian switched to British team Albatec Racing for 2016, but it was the team's 2015 driver Jerome Grosset-Janin who fought Hansen for victory at round one in Belgium and, for the second year in a row, finished second in the points.

Tord Linnerud switched to the European Championship for 2016 and was regularly on the podium to finish third overall. Rustad was fourth.

Former GP3 race-winner Tamas Pal Kiss made a full-time switch to international rallycross in an ex-Peugeot-Hansen 208 and raced with the frontrunners in the series all year and finished on the podium in Norway and Latvia. Disqualification from the final in Sweden for an onboard camera infringement ended his chances of finishing on the overall podium in the title chase.

Irish drivers Derek Tohill and Ollie O'Donovan contested full campaigns in their Ford Fiestas and both made three semi-final appearances. Albatec Racing owner Andy Scott raced a third 208 for his team and made the semi-finals in Sweden and Spain. He rolled in Sweden after contact with team-mate Rustad on the opening lap.

Krisztian Szabo won the Super1600 title at the final round, beating Dane Ulrik Linnemann. Ben-Philip Gundersen also claimed the TouringCar crown by a single point from Magda Andersson. Cyril Raymond won the single-make RX Lites Cup honours.



Rustad was deposed as champion

### 6 Timmy Hansen

**Car:** Peugeot 208  
**Team:** Team Peugeot-Hansen  
**Wins:** 1 **Podiums:** 6  
**Championship position:** 6

Hansen has impressed since switching to rallycross in 2013, shrugging off comparisons with his successful father, but 2016 was his biggest challenge to date with a new team-mate. Regardless, there was little to choose between him and Loeb all year.



### 7 Sebastien Loeb

**Car:** Peugeot 208  
**Team:** Team Peugeot-Hansen  
**Wins:** 1  
**Podiums:** 4  
**Championship position:** 5

Despite his undoubted experience, Loeb was effectively a rookie this season, and had a bit to learn. The Peugeot wasn't the fastest car this year, and Loeb had to learn the circuits. But, at a new venue to everyone in Latvia, Loeb claimed his maiden victory in style.



### 8 Timur Timerzyanov

**Car:** Ford Fiesta  
**Team:** World RX Team Austria  
**Wins:** 0  
**Podiums:** 1  
**Championship position:** 8

The triple European Rallycross champion switched teams for the second time in as many years, but felt at home in the Austrian squad. Had it not been for punctures and steering troubles, the Russian would have been on the podium more often.



### 9 Toomas Heikkinen

**Car:** Audi S1 **Team:** EKS  
**Wins:** 0 **Podiums:** 3  
**Championship position:** 7

Ekstrom's team-mate started strong with two podiums, but couldn't match the pace of his colleague for much of the year. A real team player, 'Topi' assisted Ekstrom in his quest for victory, and scored enough points for the squad to win the Teams' title too.



### 10 Janis Baumanis

**Car:** Ford Fiesta  
**Team:** World RX Team Austria  
**Wins:** 0 **Podiums:** 0  
**Championship position:** 10

Having combined selected Supercar outings in 2015 with winning the Euro RX Super1600 title, Baumanis moved to World RX full time for 2016 and impressed with consistently fast pace. A fastest qualifying time in Germany proved his potential.



# INSIGHT: EURO TRUCK RACING

Photos: Richard Kienberger/FIA ETRC



Big grids have returned to FIA trucks



Trackside crowds are huge



The on-track action is all thrills

## THE BIG RIGS READY TO MAKE A BIG SPLASH

New promoters are revolutionising the European truck racing scene. By **David Addison**

**B**ack in 1984, Donington Park was packed. It was grand prix day and there were fans everywhere. The Multipart British Truck Grand Prix, that is.

Since its first steps, truck racing has soared in popularity but also suffered some major problems along the way. But for 2016, the FIA appointed a promoter of the European Championship for the first time and things are looking brighter than ever.

When truck racing hit European shores, already popular in America, rules were generous and needed honing fast.

Truck magazine publisher Andrew Frankl was keen to see the sport start in the UK and, along with motorsport impresario Andrew Marriott, Frankl started the ball rolling. Marriott found a venue and wrote some regulations, with classes split on horsepower. With a few star names pitched against unknown truckers, the event was a big success and circuits and drivers wanted a part of the action.

So, too, did the manufacturers and it wasn't long before MAN, Volvo and Mercedes-Benz were spending serious money on winning. True to form, manufacturer money drove out the privateers and the advent of an FIA-sanctioned championship also had the effect of streamlining race meetings, by dispensing with the standalone races for each class and an all-in final, plus co-driver races, and enforcing a smaller timetable of races. The festival atmosphere was gone.

Mercedes was the key spender, making its truck racing team as slick as its DTM operation, and

drivers from sports cars, touring cars and motorcycle racing were behind the wheel.

"They were good times," remembers former motorcycle racer and truck racing favourite Steve Parrish. "Mercedes took it very seriously and we had some great engineers and good drivers, so it was very competitive. We were able to do ultra-fast engine changes, for example, and they were great times but I suppose it was inevitable, given the costs, that they couldn't last forever."

Inevitably, the costs took their toll and as the manufacturers started to drift away, the privateers kept the series alive. The FIA introduced a Truck Racing Commission and it, along with the efforts of FIA race director Tony Iddon, worked on finding dates and keeping a calendar alive.

For 2016, though, a promoter was finally appointed. ETRA, the European Truck Racing Association, is headed by Georg Fuchs, formerly with SRO, and Rolf Werner, with the German governing body ADAC as a major stakeholder.

"The idea came out of discussions between the promoters," explains Fuchs. "Many of the promoters in the championship had strong events but they all felt that the championship as a whole could be stronger. They felt that if they all were stakeholders, each would be working for the same aim. In the end, though, it didn't work out that way but we had been so involved that we felt it was worth taking the challenge and doing the job ourselves."

Although the FIA ratifies the calendar and regulations,

ETRA is in charge of the organisational, sporting, commercial and marketing matters and the signs are positive after year one.

"We had some difficulties, like some bad weather for a few events," says Fuchs, "but on the whole it was a positive season. We have learnt a few things along the way and tried to take all the positives of the past and build on them, as well as introducing some ideas of our own."

Amongst the new ideas is the Challengers Cup, which allows entrants to come and go on a race-by-race basis rather than committing to the entire season, and a fan village that is the home of post-race podium ceremonies and press conferences that takes the drivers to the crowd.

"We found that was a success," says Fuchs. "The fans love it and the drivers like it as they are right in the heart of the paddock."

And if you want proof that truck racing is alive and well, look at some of the key events on the calendar. The Nurburgring Truck Grand Prix commanded 120,000 fans last season with truck parades and displays on and off the track, and it is a significant shop window for the major manufacturers. The paddock, full of people, played host to trade stalls and VIP hospitality as the leading truck builders showed their wares. Le Mans, the venue for the season finale, is another to bring a huge crowd, with races for the

French Championship making a busy weekend of action.

"Truck racing appeals to the whole family," says racer Ellen Lohr who is one of the best ambassadors you could find for the sport. "When the German Truck Grand Prix clashed with the F1 Grand Prix one year, we had more people at the trucks than they did for the cars! Our events are more than just racing. We make sure that there are things happening on and off the track all weekend, the paddock is open and the sport is on the up again. It is one of the most spectacular forms of motorsport and we need to emphasise that."

ETRA arranged live television coverage for selected events in 2016, with a highlights programme of all rounds, and that is an area that is under review for expansion in 2017. With entries up, and a number of new drivers and teams coming into the championship in 2016, with top Brit Ryan Smith among them, the signs are all looking good for the future.

And it is not just the sport that has evolved, it is the rigs themselves. From the road-going trucks that left their cargo in the paddock and went racing in the '80s, these are now purpose-built racers that are like huge touring cars, especially the bonneted trucks. They are lower, more stable and have stiffer suspension than their earlier cousins, but that hasn't decreased the

spectacle. With 1200bhp engines, and a maximum of 13-litres, these mighty monsters do 0-60mph in five seconds and the 30mph-100mph speed is around seven seconds which puts them on a par with a Porsche 911 GT3. Impressive stuff.

With a pan-European calendar again for 2017, including a repeat hook-up with the Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup at Hungaroring in August and its live television package, Fuchs is optimistic of further progress for next season.

"For 2017 we now have to continue to communicate what a great championship this is from the point of view of the events, the fan entertainment and the synergy's that also combine racing and industry. We will do this as a team across all media and ensure that the teams, drivers, partners and fans enjoy a strengthened and prosperous future together."

"Our aim is to get more manufacturers interested again in the ETRC. If we continue to develop the product then I am confident they will start to come again and we can aim towards taking it somewhere close to its 1990s peak."

With grids growing, more new drivers entering and a team of people pushing for its future, European truck racing is looking stronger than it has for many years. It has certainly come a long way... ■



FIA grids are expanding

# HIGHLIGHTS: SHORT OVAL HITS

Photos: mkpics.net and Colin Casserley

There were some fierce battles on the ovals. By **Matt James** and **Colin Casserley**

## SALUTING THE OVAL OFFICERS

**T**he short oval racing scene in this country is remarkably strong, with a host of high-profile events across all formulas bringing thousands of fans trackside. They are fought out between hundreds of drivers. With venues up and down the country, there are a host of big titles to battle for in the United Kingdom. Here, we look back at some of the highlights of the 2016 season.



**What:** National Hot Rod European Championship  
**When:** April 9/10  
**Where:** Lochgelly, Fife, Scotland  
**Winner:** Carl Waller-Barrett  
**What happened:** There was chaos at the first start when Carl Waller-Barrett, Chris Haird and Glenn Bell tried to go into the opening turn together. The resulting collision caused a red flag. On the restart, Kym Weaver worked his way to the front before his car broke. That allowed Waller-Barrett back into the lead and he was able to escape a dice between Bell and Haird.



**What:** National Hot Rod points finale  
**When:** May 30  
**Where:** Foxhall Heath, Ipswich  
**Title winner:** Carl Waller-Barrett  
 Danny Fiske won the event, but all eyes were on the fight further back. Title rivals Shane Bland and Carl Waller-Barrett blasted out of the final bend side-by-side to cross the line in a virtual dead heat. Waller-Barrett's transponder had packed in, leaving it down to the scorer and stewards to judge who'd got to the line first. They were unanimous in declaring Waller-Barrett ninth and champion by a single point – over Bland.



**What:** BriSCA F1 British Championship  
**When:** June 11  
**Where:** Skegness Stadium  
**Winner:** Frankie Wainman Jr  
 After a few lean years, by his standards, Frankie Wainman Jr was rejuvenated in 2016. It was far from an easy victory for Wainman, who was involved in a first-bend pile-up but, as a rain shower hit the track during the race, Wainman showed his prowess and he nursed the car around to pick up his eighth British championship title.



**What:** National Hot Rod Thunder 500  
**When:** June 18  
**Where:** Foxhall Heath, Ipswich  
**Winner:** Shane Murray  
 Already a world title holder in two-litre Hot Rods, Shane Murray was a relative newcomer to the top flight in Nationals. He had started a campaign in his homeland of Northern Ireland, but didn't have enough points for a slot in the World Final. Instead, he opted for the Thunder 500 and took the title after a great scrap with Billy Wood. Carl Waller-Barrett took third position.



**What:** National Hot Rod World Final  
**When:** July 2/3  
**Where:** Foxhall Heath, Ipswich  
**Winner:** Adam Maxwell  
 Adam Maxwell continued his form from his title-winning domestic Northern Irish campaign to line up on pole. He fended off Derek Martin initially, but was then hunted down by Shane Murphy. The pair were dicing through traffic when they made contact in turn three, which pitched Murphy into the wall and out of the race. Maxwell won despite a deflating tyre.



**What:** BriSCA F1 European Championship  
**When:** July 17  
**Where:** Northampton  
**Winner:** Dan Johnson  
 The closed grid in the European final often causes a few early-race incidents and this year was no exception. It allowed Shaun Webster to open up a sizable lead in the early stages, but a mid-race yellow flag bunched the field and Dan Johnson took advantage to barge his way into the lead around the halfway point. Johnson held on for the victory.



**What:** National Hot Rod National Championship  
**When:** August 5-7  
**Where:** Hednesford Hills, Cannock  
**Winner:** Adam Hylands  
 Although he didn't win a heat, former European champion Adam Hylands grabbed pole for the National title event and dominated the final. The Northern Irish racer had some scares through some obstinate traffic late on in the race, but did enough to fend off Carl Waller-Barrett and Rob McDonald.



**What:** BriSCA F1 World Final  
**When:** September 3  
**Where:** Coventry Stadium  
**Winner:** Frankie Wainman Jr  
 After battling with Frankie Wainman Jr and Mat Newson in the early stages, Dan Johnson opened up a lead on his rivals. But as he got into the backmarkers, a couple of them tangled in front of him. Johnson had nowhere to go and collided with the lapped cars, puncturing his front-offside tyre. Wainman Jr capitalised on Johnson's misfortune to win.



**What:** National Series Shootout final  
**When:** October 30  
**Where:** Belle Vue, Manchester  
**Winner:** Rob Speak  
 The 12-meeting series culminated in a thrilling last round. Nigel Green had led going into the final round, but he suffered gearbox problems in the meeting heats and was outscored by Rob Speak. Going into the last race, both drivers were still in with a shout of winning but Green's gearbox failed again handing the title to Speak.

# INTERVIEW: DAN ROOKE

Photos: Hal Ridge

# ROOKE IS THE KING OF THE CASTLE

Rooke: Youngest British RX winner



## Hal Ridge speaks to the British Rallycross champion

**W**hen autocross driver Dan Rooke finished his first ever rallycross event, a Clubmans Championship round in November 2014, he had no further plans to compete in the sport.

The outing had been a one-off end of season bit of fun that had resulted in a surprise podium finish.

Less than two years later the Devon driver is now the talk of the sport in the UK. He became the youngest ever MSA British Rallycross champion, even before the conclusion of his first season in Supercar.

It really is what dreams are made of.

But, while Rooke's first two years in rallycross have resulted in title-winning campaigns, winning championships first time out was nothing new to the 19-year-old.

Having dabbled with karting at local club level, Rooke began competing in autocross age 14, and won the MSA British Autocross title at his first attempt.

"I used to watch videos of my dad rallying an Escort Cosworth in the Tarmac championship when I was a kid. That really inspired me," says Rooke, whose skills behind the wheel have been undoubtedly helped by having raced in karts, autocross and between the two gymkhanas and autotests. That gave him a range of skills on different surfaces – something that is invaluable for rallycross.

Despite winning the SuperNational Championship in 2015, the step to Supercar for any driver from lower categories is a large one, but Rooke

took it in his stride at the start of this season. He sampled the 600bhp four-wheel drive Citroën DS3 loaned to his family team by multiple champion Pat Doran on an airfield before the first round.

"It felt like it took a long time to adapt to the car at the first test day," he admits. "I didn't know how it would handle and it was quite scary how fast it went from A to B, as I'm sure everyone says when they try a Supercar for the first time. But, come the last couple runs I got into a rhythm. Going into the first round, I knew how to drive the car a little bit, but the learning curve was still a huge one."

An uninformed onlooker wouldn't have known it was Rooke's maiden event in a Supercar at the season opener at Croft, where he led the final briefly and finished second, but it was through the year that the graduating driver impressed further. Constantly improving his pace, he dominated the fifth round in Belgium in July, the second of three victories.

Then at the close of the year, at the MSA Rallycross Grand Prix, Rooke kept experienced racer and LD Motorsports team-mate Liam Doran honest throughout the entire event, Doran racing a current-specification World RX Citroën against Rooke's version, which last was raced at the top level in 2014.

Rooke puts his improvement not only down to time in the car, but to lessons learned through use of an onboard camera and performance meter system. "I'd never worked with a system like VBox before, but I've learnt how it works and where you can find gains," he says. "I'd say that's probably responsible for a lot of the pace that I've found this



Rooke celebrates title win

season, it really helps me to see where I can improve on a lap."

Alongside his successful British RX assault, Rooke worked as a spotter in the World Championship for Doran in the first half of the year, and also made an appearance in the World RX supporting RX Lites Cup at Lydden Hill with the OlsbergsMSE team. But, despite arriving at the event having never been beaten at the Kent circuit, Rooke didn't make the final.

"I thought it would be reasonably easy coming from a left-hand drive sequential gearbox in the Supercar to the Lites car, because they are similar but with less power," he says. "I found it a lot, lot harder to get settled into. The Lites don't have the power to pull you out of mistakes, so you have to be really smooth. I was disappointed with the result, but it

### CV

#### Dan Rooke

**Age:** 19 **Lives:** Holsworthy, Devon  
**2016:** Citroën DS3. MSA British Rallycross Champion (three wins, Lydden Hill x2 / Belgium), Eighth at British round of RX Lites Cup  
**2015:** Citroën AX. MSA British SuperNational Rallycross Champion (two wins, Lydden Hill x2)  
**2014:** Citroën AX. Third in BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship event at Croft on rallycross debut  
**2013:** Citroën AX. ASWMC Under-21 Autocross Champion  
**2012:** Citroën AX. MSA British Autocross Champion  
**2011:** Competed in local gymkhanas (autotests) but with a passenger due to his age (13)  
**2005-2010** Started local karting

stuff to do on race day, just to give me a bit of an edge going into the races."

Rooke's title victory came in a year where British RX enjoyed a season of strong and competitive Supercar grids, and the reigning champion is hoping to defend his title and more next term. "Everything is budget dependant, and we're working hard on that at the moment, but I want to come back and try to retain my title. Along with that, we're hoping to do the World Championship round at Lydden, and possibly some European events too," he says, acknowledging that there is another big step to take to move up again.

"Being able to tell people what we've achieved when we're talking to them about next year is a great feeling, so it's really sunk in that we did it now. But, I know it's another big step completely to race against guys in the World Championship. Around Lydden, where we both race, I'm about a second a lap off their pace at the moment. With more testing and time in the car, that should come down. It's definitely going to be a new level to find within myself. Petter Solberg has been my idol since I was a kid, so to race against him would be amazing. My dream is to win the World Championship in the future."

Rooke's time in rallycross may have come in just the right period. With the sport continuing to grow, under increasing exposure and commercial interest, there has never been a better time to try and form a career in rallycross. The step into international Supercar competition is a big one, but with more seat time and the correct machinery, you wouldn't bet against this young driver making a name for himself at the next level too. ■

## Rooke made the right decision to jump up to the top Supercar Rallycross class this year

I have to hold my hands up and admit I was wrong. What Dan Rooke achieved in winning the SuperNational title in 2015 was remarkable.

But, having won the two-wheel-drive crown in a converted autocross car at his first attempt, where should he go next? With little budget, what the family

team could muster would have to be spent wisely.

I was asked for my opinion, so I made introductions to leading European Championship Super1600 teams, and left them to it. Rooke's discussions went as far as him testing a Set Promotion Renault Twingo in Italy. I genuinely believed that the best

option for the newcomer to attract more funding and to further his career, was by racing in Europe.

I just couldn't see how the family team would find the budget to even consider racing in Supercar. That wasn't taking into consideration the generosity that Pat Doran showed to Rooke this year by lending him a Supercar.

But, even when I found out at the 2015 British RX awards night that Rooke would remain in British RX, in the top class, I had my doubts.

How would someone so inexperienced fare at that level, and regardless of his achievements, would the national scene provide enough exposure to

attract the required attention to further his career?

The answer is now of course clear. It was absolutely the correct decision for Rooke to take up Doran's offer. He performed impeccably this year and is a name on the lips of many, both inside and out of rallycross.

Hal Ridge

**MOTORSPORT NEWS** says...

# SPORTING SCENE

## Scott to step up to Super 1600 rallycross category

Swift Sport Rallycross Championship race winner Darren Scott will graduate to the Super1600 category in the British Rallycross Championship next season in a Citroen C2.

The 35-year-old, who has been planning to step up to the European-specification category for some time, also plans to race in selected rounds of the European or French Championships, driving the car prepared by JAM Motorsport and Satchell Engineering.

"It's taken a year of talking and planning but I'm happy that it's all come together," said Scott, who missed much of the 2016 season.

"I'm looking forward to the 2017 season in British RX and we're planning to try and compete in some rounds of either the European or French Championships too. Racing in Super1600 has been a goal of mine for a few years now and with the help of Pirtek Medway and my other sponsors, it's now possible."

The British Championship begins on March 19 at Croft.



Scott's Pirtek-backed C2 machine

Photos: Colin Casserley, Hal Ridge and mkpics.net

# DISPUTE PUTS A DOUBT ON COVENTRY'S FUTURE

## Stadium infrastructure removed in a row over the circuit's viability



Coventry is facing some uncertainty

By Matt James

**The future of racing at Coventry Stadium has been thrown into doubt as a new dispute has erupted between the circuit operator and the circuit owners.**

Some of the stadium furniture, including the shale surface, the floodlights and seating, have been

removed by the operator, who claims he owns the items in question.

The future of the circuit had been in doubt during 2016 with the sale of the land, but racing fans were assured that the track would remain operational despite the movements in the background.

Now this latest development means that the track is unsuitable for use by

racers, including the Coventry Bees Speedway team and stock cars, and there is uncertainty as to how long it would take to restore the track to an operational state.

A statement by the owners, Brandon Estates, read: "Fans have been assured previously the sport is safe for next year. That was the case at the time the assurance was given and always the

hope of the landlords. However the extent of the damage to the site has left its present condition incapable of hosting speedway.

"Brandon Estates Ltd cannot comment on why people decided to trash the site. Such conduct was a shock to Brandon Estates Ltd. Having seen the site in its current state, Brandon Estates representatives feel utterly devastated."

## Dates released for National Hot Rod 2017 season



Ipswich will host the World Final on July 1/2

The dates have been released for National Hot Rod meetings over the next 12 months, with the showpiece Spedweekend meeting confirmed on July 1/2.

The season runs from July to July with a winter break. The second part of the 2016-2017 campaign kicks off at Birmingham on March 4, and the final round of the competition is on May 28.

The new season, the 2017-2018 contest, begins at Aldershot on July 23, three weeks after the World Final at Spedweekend.

## CALENDAR

### National Hot Rods English dates 2016-2017 season

DATE	ROUND	PLACE
March 4	Round 8	Birmingham
March 26	Round 9	Wimbledon
April 1/2	European Championship	Lochgelly
April 14	Round 10	Northampton
April 17	Round 11	Ipswich
May 1	Round 12	Hednesford
May 14	Round 13	Aldershot
May 28	Round 14	Northampton

### One offs

DATE	ROUND	PLACE
June 18	Thunder 500	Ipswich
July 1/2	Spedweekend	Ipswich
August 4-6	National Championship	Hednesford

### 2017-2018 season, part one

DATE	ROUND	PLACE
July 23	Round 1	Aldershot
August 28	Round 2	Ipswich
Sept 23	Round 3	Birmingham
Sept 30	Round 4	Northampton
Oct 15	Round 5	Hednesford
Oct 21	Round 6	Ipswich
Nov 5	Round 7	Hednesford

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*MN does not always agree with opinions expressed in letters*

## MN SAYS...

# The two big stories that will rock 2017

There are some huge plots ready to unfold in both the WRC and F1 in the year ahead

There will be two headline stories in the 2017 season, and one will revolve around a particular driver and the other about a particular team. The outcome of both of these plots could well be the talking point of the year ahead.

Firstly, there is the excellent news that Sebastien Ogier has plumped for M-Sport to continue his World Rally Championship career. This will not only be a new journey for the WRC dominator, it is also a stern test for the Cumbrian team itself. Malcolm Wilson has said that the new-for-2017 Ford Fiesta will be among the fastest cars in the championship. With Ogier in the seat, we will see if Wilson's proclamations are true. There will be nowhere to hide for the British team, and this could be the impetus that returns M-Sport to the very top of the tree.

Alongside that, Mercedes is on the cusp of a very important decision that could make or break a driver's career. Despite rule changes, Mercedes will have the best car on the grid in 2017 and whoever it decides to employ as its new driver alongside Lewis Hamilton, the man at the controls will have no excuse either. It will be the prime seat in the best car and will be compared to Hamilton. Whoever takes the drive will have a huge spotlight placed upon him.

**Matt James, Editor** (Twitter: @MattJMNews)



## YOUR PICS



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**ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!**



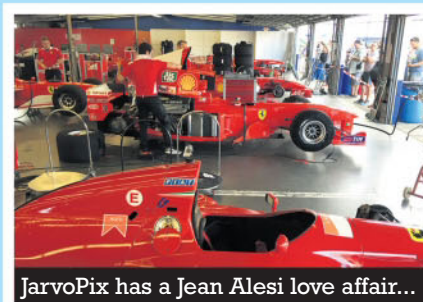
Ben Lawrence, aged seven and a half, has a future in motorsport media with a shot like this



Anthony Knight took this excellent shot at the BTCC showdown at Brands Hatch



Some VW Cup thrills, by Mark Lanyon



JarvoPix has a Jean Alesi love affair...



Matt Shinnors' snowy photograph



Richard Campbell's shot of Finlay Crocker



'Rubber Duck' snapped Martin Dalzell



Samarth Kanal's photo of the big rigs



The Ford GTs at Silverstone by Graham Dally



Matt James and Carl Faux brave the shave at Silverstone, by Lee Fraser



Mark Winstone braved the mud...



Greg Tomkins went to Rallyday

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## TV GUIDE

Short on a club racing fix during the winter break? There's a season review of the **Fun Cup Championship** on Motors TV this afternoon, with all the best bits from the 2016 campaign. With teams competing in identical Volkswagen Beetle machinery, this year's calendar consisted of seven endurance races at six venues, while plenty of the teams also headed to Spa-Francorchamps for the annual Fun Cup 25 Hours race

(Wednesday, 1515-1650hrs). There's more on offer this evening, too, with another **Classic F1** viewing for your fancy (Wednesday, 2100-2145hrs, Sky Sports F1). This evening's pick is the 1991 Spanish Grand Prix, which featured a classic scrap between Williams and Ferrari in changeable conditions. A young man called Michael Schumacher was also prominent in the race, and began to show the sort of form that

would lead to him becoming a household name. And for one final rallying fix of the year, highlights from the **Killarney Historic Stages** earlier this month are also available. With 41 historic starters in a host of machinery – from Ford Escort Mk2s to Sunbeams – the seven stages of action are just the trick to cure any post-Christmas blues for fans of sideways action out there (Friday, 1825-1925hrs, Motors TV).



Killarney Historic is on television

## LISTINGS

**RALLYING**  
**FRIDAY**  
**DECEMBER 30**

■ **Shackleton, County Derry, Northern Ireland**  
**MCM Turkey Run Rally**  
Starts 0930  
Admission TBA  
Web [maidencitymotorclub.com](http://maidencitymotorclub.com)

*Listings correct at time of press. Please check with event organisers before travelling to events*

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

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Autosport Media UK Limited,  
Bridge House, 69 London Road,  
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### EDITORIAL

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8267 5385  
Like us on Facebook: search 'Motorsport News'  
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Editor Matt James  
[matt.james@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:matt.james@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Deputy Editor Robert Ladbrook  
[robert.ladbrook@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:robert.ladbrook@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Group National Editor Jack Benyon  
[jack.benyon@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:jack.benyon@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Junior Journalist Stephen Lickorish  
[stephen.lickorish@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:stephen.lickorish@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Junior Journalist Jack Cozens  
[jack.cozens@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:jack.cozens@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Group Rallying Editor David Evans  
[david.evans@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:david.evans@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Art Editor Mike Stokoe  
[mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:mike.stokoe@motorsport-news.co.uk)

Office Manager Joanne Grove  
[joanne.grove@motorsport-news.co.uk](mailto:joanne.grove@motorsport-news.co.uk)

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Historics editor Paul Lawrence  
Grand Prix columnist Anthony Rowlinson  
Origination/Repro Dave Sternberg

Photography LAT Images: Steven Tee, Glenn Dunbar, Sam Bloxham, Zack Mauger

### SUBSCRIPTIONS/BACK ISSUES

Motorsport News, FREEPOST RTUC-XCCH-THUS, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton NN4 7BF  
UK 0344 848 8834  
Overseas +44 (0)1604 251 457  
Email [help@motorsportnews.themagazineshop.com](mailto:help@motorsportnews.themagazineshop.com)

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Sales Director Matthew Witham

Sales Manager James Robinson

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Classified Sales Ben Kavanagh, Fran Hall

### PRODUCTION

Production Katrina Renwick

### PUBLISHING

Group Publishing Manager Sunita Davies  
Subscriptions Direct Marketing Executive Maria Fernandez

### MANAGEMENT

Managing Director Tim Bulley  
Publishing Director Stuart Williams  
Editorial Director Anthony Rowlinson

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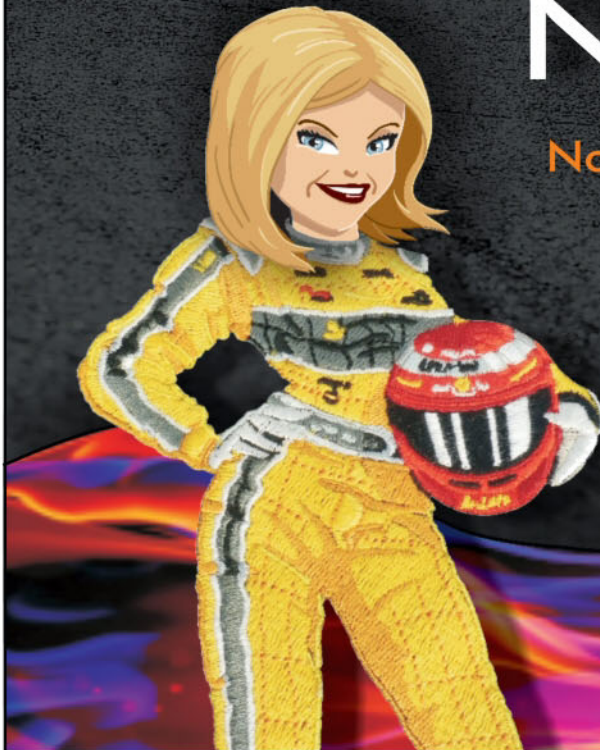
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Application: (cylinders) 8 to 12

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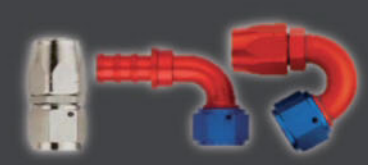
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