

Handbrakes & Hairpins

Issue 122 | March 2010

your insight into the world of rallying



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Welcome to H&H!

Welcome to issue 122 of **HANDBRAKES & HAIRPINS**, your **FREE** weekly insight into the world of rallying!

As always, I hope you enjoy this week's exciting edition!

Yours in Rallying,

Evan Rothman

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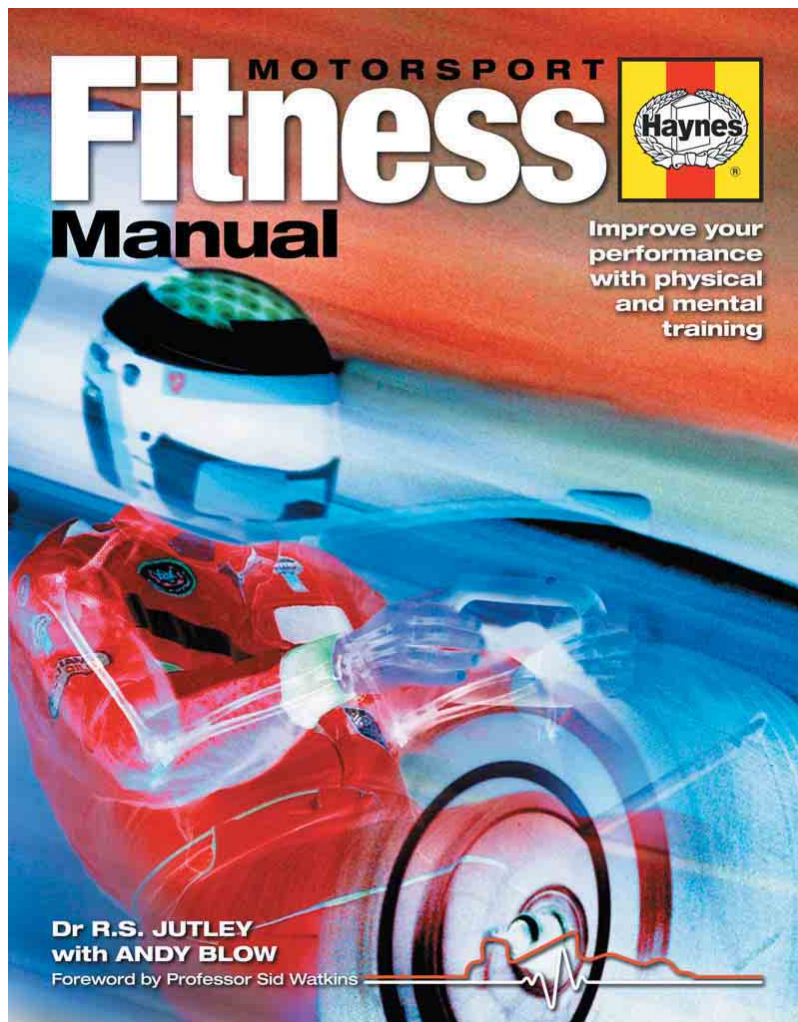
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Peak fitness is a prerequisite for a competitive edge, and top motorsport teams routinely employ medics, psychologists, dieticians and even armed forces specialists to help drivers hone their performance. It's a different picture at national and club level, where poor preparation can blight potential. Here, however, a doctor who competes as a rally driver offers expert information on all aspects of physical and mental fitness, including diet, training, safety and medical regulations.

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R50 000 boost for KZN Regional Off-Road Racing Championship

The KwaZulu-Natal regional off road championship has been given an R50 000 cash boost.

The MSA Off Road Car Racing Commission has made available R50 000 each to the regional championships as part of an initiative to bolster the sport at grass roots level. Four national events on this year's calendar, three in the Northern Regions and one in KwaZulu-Natal, will also be run in conjunction with regional championship races.

"We have introduced various initiatives aimed at growing our sport at grass roots level," said commission president Richard Schilling. "A key element of these initiatives is to nurture regional championships.

Schilling added that each regional association was asked to motivate how they would efficiently use the grant to effectively grow the sport. KZN immediately identified involving local communities in the sport and building up a pool of well trained an enthusiastic marshals as key elements of their future plans.

Under Emmanuel Nzimande, the marshal's representative on the MSA regional committee, a plan is being implemented to build a strong team of marshals in KZN. Nzimande is a former KZN rally champion and also competed at national level as a navigator for Cape driver Derek Jacobs.

Nzimande, together with experienced off roader Rob Spencer and the Natal Off Road Motor Club (NORMC), will provide five trainee marshals for all seven KZN regional events. The first batch of trainees have been drawn from the Clairemont and Inanda Dam areas.

"Motorsport is not just about being a competitor," said Schilling. "Without an infrastructure that has a pool of well trained and dedicated marshals and race officials there would be no off road racing.

"Race officials often give up their spare time to officiate at events and they do it purely for the love of the sport. People who work behind the scenes are the unsung heroes of motorsport, and through proper training and other measures we can show appreciation for the work they do."

The opening round of this year's Absa Off Road Championship is the Adenco 400, based in Darling in the Western Cape, on March 19 and 20. Race headquarters, the start/finish and the designated service point will all be based at the Darling Sports Club. Entrance is free.

- Credit: MSA Off-Road Car Racing Commission

Kris Meeke aims for victory in Brazil this weekend in IRC series

Kris Meeke will start Rally Internacional de Curitiba on Thursday in the knowledge that a second successive victory on the event will put him top of the all-time Intercontinental Rally Challenge winners' list.

Meeke, from Northern Ireland, has won four IRC events, a record he shares with Giandomenico Basso, Luca Rossetti and Nicolas Vouilloz. But with Meeke the only member of the quartet competing in Brazil this week, he knows that victory would make him the most successful driver in the IRC

since the series began in 2007.

The Peugeot UK driver, 30, said: "It's a nice record to have but I won't be starting the rally with that as my only goal. I'll just be aiming to score more points than all of the IRC regulars. That's my job and that's what I do on every rally." All of Meeke's four IRC wins came in 2009. Co-driven by Irishman Paul Nagle, Meeke triumphed in Curitiba, Açores, Ypres and Sanremo in his Kronos Racing-run Peugeot 207 S2000.

- Credit: www.ircseries.com

New rally experience launched with Golden Stages Rally in Cyprus

Eurosport Events and the Cyprus Automobile Association (CAA) have this week announced the creation of an innovative standalone rallying event, the Golden Stage Rally, the first edition of which will be run in Cyprus on 7 November 2010.

The Golden Stage Rally will showcase rallying in a new and exciting way, by making it accessible, understandable and attractive for a wider audience. The compact, fan and television-friendly format will maximise the dramatic impact of the event. It will offer a thrilling spectacle with a complete new experience of the event from every possible angle for spectators and TV viewers.

- The event will be open to all teams and drivers competing with Super 2000, Group N and Group A (up to A7) cars, in both 2-wheel drive and 4-wheel drive categories.
- It will offer a substantial minimum 150,000-Euro prize, split between the S2000, Group N and two-wheel drive categories.
- The Golden Stage Rally will feature one single stage on mixed surface measuring approximately 25-30 kilometers in length, the Golden Stage, run twice.
- The event will benefit from an extensive live production managed by Eurosport Events, which successfully pioneered live coverage from the stages of several IRC rounds. Eurosport Events is responsible for the distribution of the worldwide media rights (including TV rights) and will make footage of the Golden Stage Rally available to broadcasters.
- The Golden Stage Rally will be broadcast in its entirety through Eurosport's network, reaching more than 117 million homes across 59 countries and through Eurosport Asia-Pacific.

Thanks to the strong collaboration and support of the CAA, the first edition of the Golden Stage Rally will take place on Sunday 7 November 2010, following the conclusion of the FxPro Cyprus Rally, the 12th and final round of this year's IRC season.

Marcello Lotti, General Manager of the IRC commented: "With this brand new concept, we want to create a new showcase for our entire sport and an opportunity for the professional and amateur drivers from many series to gather together and take a shot at glory and the prize purse. It will be open to all teams and drivers and the action promises to provide a great show in Cyprus, host venue of the final round of the IRC season and renowned as one of the world's most challenging rally destinations".

President of the CAA Antonis Michaelides said: "The Cyprus Rally has always been about breaking new ground to ensure that world rallying is as exciting and as entertaining as

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possible and with the addition of this innovative new event, we are confident that this year's Cyprus Rally will be the most memorable yet. After the challenge of the Rally itself, to complete the weekend with this one-off 'shoot-out' between the world's best will make it an unforgettable experience for fans and drivers alike."

Chairman of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation Alecus Orountiotis welcomed this new initiative: "Cyprus has built an enviable reputation for hosting world-class sporting events and we are especially proud to be hosting this exciting new event. Our island boasts many strengths, including its outstanding climate, its beautiful scenery, and its extensive range of facilities, and we are sure that the many fans of motorsport who will watch this event will also become fans of our beautiful island."

Organised under the auspices of the CAA, regulations and full details of the stage layout of the Golden Stage Rally will be published soon, giving teams plenty of time to prepare themselves for what is sure to be a new highlight of the international rally season.

Idaho Rally billed as one of the longest stage rallies in USA

American Rally Sport just got better. Rallydrift Inc. is proud to announce that this summer, the Idaho Rally is becoming one of the longest stage rallies in North America with over 150 stage miles (240km) of world class dirt roads, while building a solid event infrastructure with a firm focus on the future.

New stage roads and a change of headquarters are just two of several event improvements on tap for July 2010. The headquarters will move from Mountain Home which hosted the Rally in 2008 and 2009, to Boise Idaho, where the centrally located Idaho State Fairgrounds will serve both as the main service area and provide a spectator friendly venue for a new super special stage.

On 16 - 17 July 2010 Driver and Co-Driver teams in 40 cars will be competing for Idaho's Rally Crown. The two competitive days will be jam packed and should deliver an unforgettable experience. The Boise Convention and Visitors Bureau will help to host Stage Control Crews and other key players in the event structure to further help to lift the overall quality of the Rally.

Idaho's roads are considered to be among the best in North America. The twisty and smooth surfaces require a team's full attention throughout the whole race and the roads contribute heavily to previous years Idaho Rally's earning a great reputation and it being widely considered as a "must attend" event among those in the Rally Community.

Idaho Rally competitors will be vying for points in the United States Rally Championship, the California Rally Series Championship, and the Pacific North West Rally Championship.

The Idaho Rally and the Idaho State Government are undertaking several bold steps with goals of advancing to the highest level of Rally Sport for 2012/13.

Organization changes will include Pete Soper being announced as the new Sporting Director. Pete is a strong supporter of Rally Events up and down the west coast, familiar with both U.S. and international Rally Regulations and will set new standards in the Organization.

Jens Schkade will remain Rally Director with his focus centered towards success with the commercial side of the event.

- Credit: www.idahorally.com

BRC announces Dulux Trade as new title sponsor for 2010 season

The British Rally Championship is proud to announce the industry-leading manufacturer of paints and high performance coatings, Dulux Trade, as its title sponsor for the 2010 season.

The British Isles' only international rally series will be called the Dulux Trade MSA British Rally Championship from today (26/02/2010), and its association with such an esteemed brand reinforces the championship's status as one of the most respected in the world.

British Rally Championship Managing Director, Mark Taylor, said: "We are extremely proud to have been chosen by this established, professional brand and look forward to working with Dulux Trade in its association with the MSA British Rally Championship. The Championship brings a great deal of excitement and entertainment to its supporters, and the sponsorship provides a fun and dynamic platform for Dulux Trade to provide incentives and competitions for its existing and potential customers, as well as its staff. Using the Championship to build on the emotional side of the brand will help promote its pioneering products and services to a new, wider audience base."

Commenting on the sponsorship deal, Dulux Trade Communications Manager, James Green, said: "Dulux Trade is renowned as a high performance brand among the world's finest decorating professionals, and we have recently been looking for an innovative way to bring the Dulux Trade brand name and associated messaging to an even broader audience. The British Rally Championship fits the bill perfectly, as like Dulux Trade, the championship revolves around performance under pressure, and has a long history of success."

The official launch of the 2010 Dulux Trade MSA British Rally Championship will be on the 9th of March at the Dulux Trade headquarters in Slough, ahead of the first round at the end of the month. The sponsorship deal will run for two years and the British Rally Championship reserves an option to continue beyond that period.

2010 Dulux Trade MSA British Rally Championship calendar:
27 March – International Bulldog Rally North Wales
23/24 April - Pirelli International Rally
28/29 May - Jim Clark International Rally
8/9 July - International Rally Isle of Man
20/21 August - International Rally NI
24/25 September - International Rally Yorkshire
- Credit: www.rallybrc.co.uk

Al-Qassimi enters Middle East Rally Championship for 2010

Sheikh Khalid Al-Qassimi has registered for the 2010 FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) at the 11th hour and entered this week's Kuwait International Rally. The event is based in Kuwait City and takes place on 04 - 06 March.

The Emirati's decision could throw the title race wide open, with Qatar's Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah taking part in Rally Mexico next week and unable to add to the 10 points he scored in Qatar last month.

Al-Qassimi and Ulster co-driver Michael Orr pushed Al-Attiyah all the way on the opening round of the eight-round series, but a series of penultimate stage punctures prevented them from reaching the finish in their Ford Fiesta S2000.

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the Ford Fiesta S2000 will be a welcome break from Al-Qassimi's hectic schedule of events with the BP Ford team and a Ford Focus RS in the FIA World Rally Championship, where he opened his campaign with 13th overall in the recent Rally Sweden.

"I won the title back in 2004 and have always enjoyed my time competing closer to home," admitted Al-Qassimi. "I didn't finish in Qatar and was not registered for the championship, but I proved that the Ford Fiesta is a competitive package and feel that we have a great chance of taking maximum points in Kuwait and beginning a title challenge."

Al-Qassimi is the fifth most successful driver of all time competing in the FIA Middle East Rally Championship and has amassed six regional rally victories in his career, surpassed only by Mohammed Ben Sulayem (60), Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah (35), Saeed Al-Hajri (11) and Roger Feghali (seven). Taking victory in Kuwait would give Al-Qassimi the opportunity to equal Feghali's current tally of regional rally victories.

Al-Qassimi hopes to take part in remaining rounds of the series in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus and Abu Dhabi, but will miss the Jordanian round at the end of March, because he will be taking part in the same event with a Ford Focus RS. This car is not eligible for MERC points.

The Kuwait event will run under the patronage of His Excellency the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and under the presidency of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Dawood Al-Sabah, President of the KMSC and chairman of the organising committee.

- Credit: www.rallybuzz.com

Toshi Arai crashes in shakedown tests ahead of P-WRC Rally Mexico

The second round of the FIA World Rally Championship will officially get underway this weekend, but there was drama even before the recce began for Japan's Toshi Arai and his new British co-driver Daniel Barritt.

The pair, expected to be front-runners in the P-WRC competition, were carrying out a test with their Subaru Impreza on Monday and completed one pass of the gravel road - at an altitude of around 2000 metres above sea level - without any problems.

Arai's new co-driver Barritt later complained that there had been some interference in the intercom system, but the Japanese launched the Subaru into a high-speed roll on the second pass through the stage.

Arai and Barritt escaped injury but their car sustained damage to its front-end and roof and the test was abandoned. Arai's car was taken to a garage in Leon for emergency repairs and was returned on Tuesday afternoon. Subject to a satisfactory scrutineers' inspection, Arai is expected to start the rally on schedule.

- Credit: www.wrc.com and www.rallybuzz.com

Juho Hanninen confident of victory in IRC Rally Curitiba this weekend

Juho Hanninen hopes the similarity between the stages in Curitiba and his native Finland will give him an advantage when the Intercontinental Rally Challenge resumes in Brazil this weekend.

Skoda driver Hanninen has never competed on the high-speed gravel event before but watched video footage of the stages prior to flying to Curitiba, where he is currently carrying out reconnaissance of the route alongside co-driver Mikko Markkula.

"The blind crests and surface, which seems quite smooth, reminds me of Finland," said Hanninen, who is currently second in the IRC drivers' standings. "Maybe it will help me get a good result this weekend."

- Credit: www.ircseries.com

Antoine L'Estage and Nathalie Richard lead Rally America standings

Quebec driver Antoine L'Estage and his co-driver Nathalie Richard finished in second place at this past weekend's Rally in the 100 Acre Wood, Round 2 of the Rally America series and the third event counting towards the North American Rally Cup.

After a strong second place finish at the first round of the year, the duo from St-Jean-sur-Richelieu (Qc) arrived to the two-day gravel rally in Missouri five points behind the series leader. Driving their Rockstar Energy Drink Royal Group Mitsubishi Evo X to another second place finish this past weekend vaulted the team into top spot on the leaderboard. Antoine L'Estage finished 21 seconds behind Ken Block, who earned his fifth consecutive victory at this particular rally. "At the end of Friday night, we were comfortably in second place, over forty seconds ahead of Ken. Our plan Saturday morning was to push hard and close the gap between us and first place (Travis Pastrana).

"On the second stage of the morning, we drove through a watersplash and our windshield completely fogged up, forcing us to stop on the stage. That and a subsequent puncture on the same stage cost us almost a minute and a half, and dropped us down to third place," explained L'Estage. "Travis eventually didn't finish the rally and we were unable to make back the time we had lost earlier in the day. We went to the rally with the intentions of winning it and the same still applied for the next event," he added.

Antoine and his five-time North American champion co-driver Nathalie Richard set the fastest time on four of the competitive road sections. This podium finish almost guarantees L'Estage an invitation for his third trip to the ESPN Summer X Games, to be held this August in Los Angeles. It also marks important points for the North American Rally Cup, a championship that L'Estage and Richard are also currently leading. Winning this year would be Antoine's third North American title in four years.

With the Rally America series lead, and no damage to the competition vehicle, L'Estage and Richard would like to travel out west to Round 3 of the championship, the Olympus Rally, in April. L'Estage has never competed at this Olympia, Washington event but hopes to add the rally to their 2010 programme.

Antoine L'Estage holds two Canadian Championship titles (2006 and 2007), as well as two North American titles (2007 and 2008) and a total of 19 overall victories on both sides of the border. As for Nathalie, she has four national championship titles (Canada and USA) and twenty-eight overall victories. In 2009, Nathalie was crowned North American Rally Champion for an impressive fifth time.

Antoine L'Estage and Nathalie Richard participate in the 2010 Canadian Rally Championship and select Rally America events with the support of Rockstar Energy Drink, Royal Group, Yokohama Tires, Mitsubishi Canada, Drenth Motorsport Gearboxes, Garrett Turbos, Énergie Cardio, Libra Racing, OMP Racewear and MBF Racing. For more information on the team or on rallying in general, visit Coyote Rallye .

- Credit: Coyote Rallye Media Services and www.rallybuzz.com

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Features

your insight into the world of rallying



HERGEN FEKKEN: FOR THE WIN IN 2010

This week's EXCLUSIVE interview is with defending South African Rally Champion Hergen Fekken. The fastest rally driver in South Africa speaks to **HANDBRAKES & HAIRPINS** about this season and his bid for the title again in 2010.



Story by Evan Rothman
Picture by www.motorpics.co.za

H&H: Congratulations on successfully defending your South African National Rally Championship title in 2009. How did you see your rallying season pan out?

Hergen Fekken (HF): On the first stage of the year it started badly for the us and the whole Volkswagen team, when Enzo almost rolled, damaging his suspension and then delaying Habig and myself by more than two minutes.

Luckily, we could fight back up to third overall and salvaged some points.

From there we had a very good results up to the sixth event – the Volkswagen Rally - and already had three wins, a second and a third in the

bag. We were leading the championship by 14 points and still had to drop a score, so it was starting to look like the championship was in the bag.

BUT, luck seemed to run out with a seventh position on the OSRAM Rally after two flat wheels in the longest stage of the rally, and then a fifth overall after we lost a lot of time after roling the car on its side.

These two events cost us a lot of points, and going into the final event we were level with Johnny Gemmel/ Peter Marsh. We caught them slightly off guard on the first stage of the final event in a very muddy and tricky stage and gained a 23sec advantage that we defended until the demise of Gemmel/ Marsh with engine trouble. We then just had to get to the end of the rally to win the championship. So you could say it

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was a UP-DOWN-UP year.

H&H: It was a close fight for the title this season against your team-mates Enzo Kuun and Jan Habig, as well as the Castrol Toyota Auris S2000s of Johnny Gemmell and Mark Cronje. Who did you see as your strongest competitor in 2009?

HF: Johnny Gemmel was definitely our main rival. He also won three events, with Enzo Kuun and Mark Cronje the only other winners with one event each.

H&H: What are your memorable rallying moments from 2009?

HF: Winning the Volkswagen Rally in July with Enzo Kuun in second and Jan Habig in third stands out. This first time Volkswagen had a 1-2-3 on their own event after a number of years of Volkswagen not being able to win on their home event.

H&H: What was your favourite event of the past season?

HF: Definitely the SASOL Rally – well organised with a huge spectator following.

H&H: Did you have any moments in your rally car when you thought, "This is going to hurt?"

HF: Not this season, but quite a few times in the past. Accidents are a part of rallying and as Sarel vd Merwe once said to me, "If you have never had an

accident, then you have never tried to push as fast as possible."

H&H: You have been competing in National rallies for a number of years, with great success. What are your fondest memories to date?

HF: As you say I have been competing for a number of years, so I have quite a few fond memories. Winning my first South African National Championship title in 2008 rates top of the list and repeating it in 2009 a close second.

I also enjoyed our trip to Namibia to compete in the TOTAL Tara Rally at the end of last year – the guys there still enjoy their rallying.

I also have found memories of when I first started on the National Rally scene with a small budget and my friends servicing: we had good times on our trips all over the country, squashed up in a service van towing the rally car.

H&H: With South African rallying ever more competitive, and even rally timing measuring stages times at 0.1 of a second, you have a talent to extract that little extra something out of your car to edge out that tenth or more of a second from your rivals. How do you do it? How do you know when to push for the maximum at those times?

HF: I'm not really sure, but I think that all of the top guys are very good in our country and can win on any given event,

but I think that it comes down to who wants it the most and is willing to push harder.

This is where rallying becomes a bit of a mental game: you pick a stage and gain a few seconds and this puts the pressure on your rivals forcing them to push harder and sometimes to make a mistake. Knowing when and where to push is the trick.

H&H: In 2009 punctures did not plague too many top crews. In past events, such as the 2008 Sasol Rally where a number of teams suffered multiple punctures in some stages, what is the effect of a puncture on your stage time?

HF: As I said earlier our championship started to go sour on the OSRAM Rally with two flat wheels on the first stage which was unfortunately also the longest stage. We lost 2min 14sec on that stage. After fighting back on the event we could only manage seventh overall.

Rallying has become so close that losing 1min dops you back to fourth, fifth or worse. Getting a puncture is like a death sentence.

H&H: Floating your car sideways into a corner is a thing of beauty. From the spectator's point of view, it looks relatively easy. We all know this not to be true.

HF: It is not that easy, but I have been driving for so many years that



it is second nature and I don't even think about what to do anymore and correcting happens instinctively.

H&H: In Formula One, drivers speak of "tunnel vision," where time seems to slow down for them, allowing them to reach a higher level of concentration. As a rally driver do you also find this happens when pushing hard at the edge of your limits?

HF: I don't really experience it like "tunnel vision", but I find that when I really push the stage feels short and is over too quickly.

H&H: You have successfully defended your Championship title. What is the next challenge you have set for yourself?

HF: Pierre and I have set achieving the hat-trick in 2010 as our short term goal.

In the long term I would like to not only win more rallies and championships locally, but compete overseas in competitive machinery to see where we rate.

H&H: As a highly talented driver, what do you do to keep your driving skills sharp during the off-season?

Nothing! This is one of the biggest problems of our sport locally. The costs involved in testing and "practicing" is prohibitive. In most other sports you do training and/or practice in between events, but in rallying this seldom happens and you only get back into the car on the next event. This is also one of the reasons it takes one so many years before you reach the top.

H&H: This coming season there are a number of new crews in Class S2000. Toyota's Auris S2000 gained in speed throughout last season, and your team-mates also pushed you hard to the finish line in each event. What will your strategy be to keep at the head of the leaderboard for the 2010 season?

HF: Our strategy will be much the same as it was this year. We will push hard where we can and try to keep out of trouble. An accident means a no score for the championship any other finish means points, so our focus will be to finish every event with as much points as possible.

This worked well for us over the last two seasons where we managed to finish every event. Reliability of the car comes into play, but this has not been a problem with our Volkswagen Polo, and hopefully will not be a problem this year.

H&H: When not behind the steering wheel of your Volkswagen Polo S2000, what do you do?

HF: I am Civil Engineer specialising in Structural Engineering by trade. Together with my four partners, we run a well-established Engineering Consultancy with many years of experience providing services in all disciplines of Civil Engineering namely - Structural engineering, Traffic and transportation engineering, Roads Design, Township Services, Earthworks Design and

Contract Administration.

I play a bit of golf socially (I'm not that good at it).

H&H: The World Rally Championship's regulations ruling out the current WRC-spec cars in favour for an S2000+ specification machine form 2011. You've now been competing in S2000 since the concept was conceived. Do you ever think of attempting a WRC event in an S2000?

HF: I have and I do. Pierre and myself are working on a plan to get there soon. Watch this space...

H&H: Behind the scenes, rallying is as political as any other form of motorsport in general. How do you not allow this to affect you in the rally car?

HF: The politics used to get to me, but I have managed to mentally force myself to focus only on the road in front of me while driving in a stage. My dad used to say, "If you are thinking of anything else you are not driving as fast as you can." I try to live by those words.

H&H: The glory days of the current WRC cars are numbered. From 2011, they will be running S2000-spec rally cars. What are your views on this?

HF: Firstly I am going to try to get to a WRC before the end of the year to see the current machines once more – they are awesome. As far as S2000 goes, I think the change was necessary to get more manufacturers into the sport. The rules of S2000 and the costs make it much more viable for other manufacturers to get in on the action and I can't wait for that to happen. We have seen that the S2000 rules make for very close rallying, so I think the change will be good for the sport.

I am not so sure that they should use the 1600cc turbo engines that they are talking about – we will have to wait and see.

H&H: Rallying attracts thousands of spectators to events around the world, and hundreds of thousands attend WRC rallies. This popularity, however, does not seem to apply to our rallying locally. What can be done to improve rallying for spectators and competitors in South Africa?

HF: The promoting of the events should be improved and be done by a dedicated marketing team for the whole championship.

I find that often people say to me that they would have loved to attend an event if they had known about it.

And on the SASOL Rally I often hear spectators say to me that they make sure they attend the SASOL Rally every year. I think we must get them there once, and they will be hooked – who wouldn't?



HISTORIC RALLY CARS IN ACTION

Top names from all spheres of motorsport will be in attendance at this year's Race Retro. Stig Blomqvist, Keith Cronin and the some very exotic rally machinery will take to the Rally Stage in celebration of this sport.

Story by Evan Rothman
Pictures by Newspress

Taking place on 12 - 14 March at Stoneleigh Park in the United Kingdom, this three-day event brings historic motorsport enthusiasts the chance to see their favourite machines and sports stars up close and in action, and there will even be talks hosted by the stars recounting the golden years of motorsport.

According to event organisers, the best in two-wheel drive and four-wheel drive action will be on offer. Brian Culcheth will pilot the family-sedan-turned-hero-rally-car the Triumph 2.5PI. The reigning British Rally Champion Keith Cronin will drive the awesome Aston Martin V8 Rally GT on the rally stage.

Stars in their cars include Russell Brookes in an Opel Manta 400 and a Ford Sierra Cosworth. Also to be seen are the V8-engined Chevrolet Firenza, a Datsun 260Z, an Alpine-Renault A110 and a 1980 Porsche 911 SC. There will also be a Fiat Ritmo (Strada) Abarth, Fiat 131 Abarth, Lancia Delta Integrale EVO, Triumph TR7 V8 and a Rover V8 Vitesse.

The stars of the show will undoubtedly be the Group B monsters from Audi. Stig Blomqvist will be driving a range of ex-works Audi quattro rally cars on the Rally Stage. In celebration of 30 years of quattro four-wheel drive system, Audi will also exhibit a very rare

works rally car...

The quattro four-wheel drive system was first unveiled at the Geneva Motors Show in 1980, and pioneered the four-wheel drive technology in production road cars. It then turned its focus on the World Rally Championship, and in 1980 Hannu Mikkola debuted the first ever Audi quattro rally car - the one in which he won the rally by more than 30min! This actual works car will be on display in an exhibition hall at Race Retro.

Joining the quattros will be a further selection of Group B rallying monsters from the recently formed, 'Rallying with Group B' club. Expect to see Ford RS200, MG 6R4, Lancia 037, Peugeot 205T16, Porsche RSR supported by Stratos, Rover V8 SD1, Manta 400, TR7V8, and of course the Rothmans Escort, all the genuine article from Rallying's illustrious past.

Featuring more sharp turns and an amazing power slide for the drivers to enjoy, the new course is also much more visitor friendly with a raised spectator viewing bank and all tarmac paddock where enthusiasts can get up close to the cars in service.

Show Operations Manager David Alderson said: "We've run the rally stage in its established location for six years now and whilst it was enjoyed by all, it was time to raise the bar for the drivers and give the visitors a better view of all the action. The new stage is also much more convenient, situated

less than 200 metres from the front of the exhibition halls. I'm really excited that we can finally bring the action close to the exhibition halls and save our rally enthusiasts from that long cold trek through the park."

The new rally stage is still all Tarmac, with the start and finish line adjacent to a spectator area. The course begins with a 90 degree left turn into a fast straight with a midpoint yump, then left again along a shorter straight before a sharp left and right complex. This is followed by a dramatic double left directly in front of the spectator viewing area, so expect the fast boys to make this one long power slide before they make a 90 degree right back to the start/finish. The stage lap length is 800 metres and cars will complete two laps on each run. This allows two cars to be in action on the stage at any one time.

Race Retro opens at 09h30 each day, and tickets are available at the gate or via www.raceretro.com

BREEN IN GRAVEL TEST FOR BRC

6 March 2010

Craig Breen focuses on the British Rally Championship as he prepares for his campaign with a gravel test this weekend in his Ford Fiesta S2000.

Story by www.rallyprint.com
Pictures by www.rallyprint.com

Craig opened the year with a fantastic second overall in the West of Ireland at the Galway International Rally, the team will now focus on their second championship campaign for 2010 as Craig mounts his challenge for glory in the British Rally Championship.

Following a four week break Craig will now begin a month of intense action during March and early April.

In preparation for the opening round of the British Rally Championship (The Bulldog International Rally North Wales) and the second round of the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship (The Circuit of Ireland), Craig will use two events as test sessions to fine tune the "Kick Energy" Ford Fiesta Super 2000.

Up first is his home forestry event in Carrick on Suir, Co. Tipperary the Wm. Loughman Forestry Rally, then a week later Craig and the team will make the trip to Claremorris for the Mayo Stages Rally.

Craig on, getting back behind the wheel for his next outing said: "After four weeks away from competition, I need to get some competitive miles on the car and to bring myself back up to peak performance before the beginning of the BRC.

"I have been testing an S2000 over the intervening weeks as part of my job at M-Sport, but it wasn't my car and there's nothing like the heat of battle to get the blood pumping.

"The stages for the Wm. Loughman are some of the best gravel tests in Ireland and the main aim of the team is to have a good gravel package for the Bulldog.

"I also want to fine tune my tarmac setup for the Circuit of Ireland and that's why we're taking in the Mayo Stages.

"The Circuit will be as tough as usual and the stages will be faster than Galway so it's important to get a competitive event in before we head there."

The Wm. Loughman Forestry Rally will mark the first anniversary of Craig's navigator Gareth Roberts joining the team.

Twelve months ago Gareth took over note calling duties and over the first weekend of their partnership the pairing tasted success.



WILKEN UNVEILS NEW RALLY MACHINE

04 - 06 March 2010

The Basil Read/bizhub Ford Rally Team of Charl Wilken and Greg Godrich are gearing up for their debut on the Total Tour Natal Rally on the first weekend in March.

Story by Flip Wilken Communication
Picture by Nadia Bezuidenhout

The car arrived in the country just ten days before the team is due to head to the coast with a few days of testing shoehorned into their busy pre-event schedule.

"I can't wait to drive it", Wilken said after taking delivery of his Fiesta. "It looks better in real life than it does in photos – it's simply stunning. The 'office' is a nice place to be. The seating position is quite far back for optimum weight distribution, but all the controls are well placed and it's very comfortable".

Expectations are high for the debut of the class S2000 Ford Fiesta after it won the famous Monte Carlo Rally and the Qatar Rally on its competitive debut on the same weekend in late January. Wilken is quick to play down the Basil Read/bizhub Ford team's chances though.

"The Fiesta will run in Natal with the set-up as M-Sport delivered it to us, which is not optimal for our tyres. I won't have enough seat time either. We'll squeeze in a shake down before heading to Durban and fit in a bit more testing but that's about it before the first stage," Wilken said.

The 2008 and 2009 Production Car Champion continued: "It will take the team a while to learn how to fine-tune the car and get the best possible set-up to suit the Dunlop tyres we use locally. We'll do the very best we can and hopefully repay Basil Read, Konica Minolta and Ford for their confidence in us. I would certainly hope we are in contention for a podium place though".

Wilken was quick to dispel the left-hand drive disadvantage: "The layout won't be an issue, although the seating position that's quite far back in the car might take some getting used

to. I drove a left-hand drive car when I went to a rally school in 2003 and I was fine after an hour or so".

"Spectators are in for a feast this season with ten cars capable of winning a rally. The Tour Natal is different though. You could have a good driver running in 17th place and winning stages because the racing line has been swept clean. Someone that far back could have an advantage of a second per kilometer over the leaders. It should bunch up the field quite nicely", Wilken said of the massive 17-car S2000 entry for the opening round.

Co-driver Greg Godrich is confident of his driver's ability to adapt to the left-hand drive car. "After a few kilometers of testing Charl won't have any issues. My only problem will be trying to get in on the wrong side of the car!"

Wilken and Godrich finished a season-best second overall on the 2009 Tour Natal Rally. What is a realistic result for the Basil Read/bizhub Ford Team in KwaZulu-Natal this year? "A win would be the cherry on top and a brilliant worldwide marketing opportunity for Ford! A podium place is a realistic and achievable goal – very realistic", Godrich concluded.

The Ford Fiesta S2000 has been designed to the latest FIA rules by M-Sport, the highly acclaimed engineering firm responsible for the design and operation of Ford's record breaking Ford Focus World Rally Championship team.

The Fiesta is the first S2000 car designed to the FIA's new 1820mm maximum width regulation, which gives the Ford a marked lateral grip advantage. The suspension is based on the MacPherson strut system and features Reiger shock absorbers, the same as used on the WRC Car.



JON WILLIAMS: THE YEAR THAT WAS 2009, pt 2

There are not many rally drivers this world who are able to lay claim to having competed on the world's best rally roads. Even fewer drivers can state they have done so with a full factory-backed car underneath them. Only five drivers currently in the world have attacked rally stages as Pirelli Star Drivers. One such driver is South Africa's very own Jon Williams.

Story by Evan Rothman
Pictures by www.fia.com

In this the second and final installment of Jon's awe-inspiring campaign as a Pirelli Star Driver in 2009, **HANDBRAKES & HAIRPINS** brings you the highs and lows, challenges and successes of Jon's fantastic rise in world rallying.

Finland is regarded as the spiritual home of rallying; and, who can argue with the fact that they boast the most World Rally Champions? Finland is a specialist rally, a unique event in world rallying. The event was billed as the fastest, most thrilling and dangerous round on the World Rally Championship calendar for 2009, and being the only Pirelli Star Driver to never have competed in Scandinavia Jon set off for SS1 with his customary determination and commitment.

As in Greece, Jon was the only driver to bring his Pirelli-liveried Mitsubishi across the finish line while his fellow Pirelli Star Driver competitors were caught out by their inexperience at driving on the fast Finnish gravel roads. He and co-driver Gwynn were seeded further down the field for day One of the event, and this resulted in them losing valuable time when a competitor in front of them struggled with mechanical problems, forcing Jon to follow for 10km on SS1. The second day of this event presented better results for the young South African: he rocketed up the leaderboard, and finished a highly respectable 21st overall and only fifth in Group N. Remember, Rally Finland is the fastest, dangerous and one of the specialised rounds on the World Rally

Championship calendar!

"What a rally!" said Jon after the event. "I can tell you, I'm thinking of selling my house to make sure that I get back to this event next year. It's just been fantastic. Okay, the first day was tough when we kept catching the car ahead. We had a smashed windscreen and damage to the front of the car from following him and trying to get past him. I got pretty wound up at the time, but I calmed down and got into the second day and then just had a ball. I was two minutes behind Nicos when I started the day, but I just focused on trying to catch him. All day, I set target after target to take time out of him and get past him. It was amazing, we were taking 15 seconds a stage back. I think I was helped a little bit by the fact that I'd driven a lot in ruts in Africa, so I had a good idea how to keep the speed up on the second run at the stages.

"I feel like everything is coming together a bit more now. I feel more at home in the car – and don't forget this is only my fourth ever event in this kind of Group N machine – and I feel I learned more than ever on this rally. Before the start, it was my dream to make the top 10 [in Group N] but then suddenly we were moving into the top five. Amazing. I've had to be patient with my development and build things up slowly this season, but this is some of the reward. I'm here with another finish under my belt, which is great for me and the team, and my speed is getting better and better. There is no doubt that I've never driven faster or flown further on a rally. I watched some of the in-car footage last night and it's just insane!"



Flashback: Read pt 1 in Issue 121

If you missed last week's issue featuring part one of this article, please click here to read the first installment: <http://wp.me/ppkXc-hR>

To download last week's issue (issue 121) for free, please click here: <http://wp.me/ppkXc-i4>



"The other driver to come away from here having learned a great deal and showed another great step forward is Jon Williams," said Phil Short, Pirelli Star Driver Supervisor. "I've been absolutely delighted with the way he drove this rally. He was handicapped by a poor seeding on the opening day, but the way he dealt with that and the problems of running in the dust has been tremendous. Since that first day, Jon has driven brilliantly.

Mario Isola, Pirelli Rally Manager said: "Once again, there were positive aspects of this rally for the Pirelli Star Drivers. We saw Jon Williams again improving his speed. He is now considerably closer to the front-running pace of Group N cars on a round of the World Rally Championship and once again we saw him making the best of his opportunity and getting the full mileage in."

The fifth event for the Pirelli Star Drivers was Rally Spain. This was the only asphalt event on their schedule. Young charger Jon gave rally bosses and teams more consider as he performed consistently well in his first all-asphalt rally. Unfussed by the pressures and expectations, Jon's Spanish weekend was marred by his Lancer suffering a broken gearbox only 3km from the end of Day Two while running in second place of the Pirelli drivers and sixth in Group N. His team mechanics were able to swap out his gearbox that evening and he restarted the rally on Day Three under SupeRally regulations. In trying to make up lost time, Jon slipped off the road on the first stage of the final loop on Sunday afternoon, dropping 14 minutes. He ended the rally 17th in Group N.

"There was so much to learn on this event," said Jon. "We were looking after the brakes early on and working out how much we could lean on them, then we had to learn about the grip levels. It's completely alien to me, but I started to understand where the grip was on the road and how to get the best out of the car. Early on in the event we were two seconds per kilometre down on the front of Group N, but we halved that and then carried on working on reducing the gap. The set-up of the car is so important, we worked out that running the rear of the car stiffer was the best way, but these were all things we were doing for the first time on asphalt.

"Unfortunately, some of the other cars had some engine trouble, so the team turned our engine down a little bit to put less stress on it. That meant we couldn't really push out of the slower corners, there wasn't so much boost. We had a problem on stage 16 when I slid wide in a corner and the front of the car came to rest on a rock. George [Gwynn] and I couldn't get the car off ourselves and we lost time getting out of the stage. The only damage to the Lancer was the front bodywork, there were no mechanical problems. I lost a little bit more time in the next stage while I made sure everything was fine and straight on the car. That was a shame, not the best way to end the event. For my first event on asphalt, I was

happy with the pace we were ultimately achieving."

Britain's round of the FIA World Rally Championship draws to a close the first season of the all-new WRC-based young driver development programme. All five Ralliart Italy-tuned Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs made it to the finish of this final round of the WRC, with only Jon suffering a significant technical problem when his car broke its gearbox on Saturday afternoon. Jon returned, however, to deliver his British co-driver Gwynn a much-appreciated finish on his home round of the Championship. The African-English partnership ended the event 15th in Group N.

Jon said: "Never having competed here – or in these kind of conditions before – I was really hoping that I would be able to get a few runs at shakedown to get a good idea of how the car was running and how it would work on the rally. But then the turbo blew on the second run at the stage, which meant our test for the event was over a bit earlier than expected. I think the blown turbo might have caused us some trouble during the event as well; we were down on power through the first day, we just had no power and the anti-lag system wasn't working. The team thinks that some of the turbo might have gone into the catalytic converter, so that, the ECU and the anti-lag was changed at the end of day one. The first day was tough for me, though. You need to have the confidence in the car and you need to know you have the power there to keep you on the road if you get into a slide. We had a pretty big moment on the stage before lunch on Saturday: there was a fast right into hairpin left and I got it wrong. Luckily there was a gate and we spun through the gate. We'd been having some noise from the front of the car at that point – and then the gearbox went on the first stage out of service which was so disappointing. I was going from fourth to fifth gear when it broke. We were back on Sunday and got the chance to drive those stages which was good, but I really wanted a good finish on this event for George [Gwynn, co-driver]. I can't believe the year is over now. I can't believe the places I've been and the events I have done. It's really given me something to build on for next year."

For 2010 Jon Williams is back in South Africa and is hungrily looking to sink his teeth into rallying. With economic conditions as they are around the world, signing sponsors and supporters has become even more complex. In search of a drive for this season, Jon's hunt began in Europe. Due to the current Rand-to-Euro exchange rate he is unable to feasibly compete in Europe. Jon turned his attention to the South African National Rally Championship, but negotiations for a drive were fruitless after a major backer withdrew their sponsorship due to international economic pressures. This talented and future rally champion would like to meet prospective sponsors to discuss a future in rallying.

Events

the full event previews and reviews

ACTION APLENTY IN TASMANIA

ARC: RALLY TASMANIA

26 - 28 February 2010

Scott Pedder and co-driver Jon Mortimer have completed a perfect return and opening round of the ARC 2010 with three leg wins from three in a dominant performance at Rally Tasmania.

Story by www.rally.com.au

Not only was this the return of the Pedders Suspension Rally Team, but it was also Scott Pedders first significant event on tarmac. Despite limited testing and no data from 2009, Pedder and Mortimer, together with their team, found a balanced setup early that allowed them to push when they needed.

Scott Pedder stated after the event: "Full credit to the Race Torque Engineering team. There's truly something special about the car."

The victory was also significant for other reasons. "It's been 20 years since a Pedders Suspension Rally Team round victory," said Pedders. "It's just a very special way to return to a championship that I truly love. In a word? Ecstatic!"

For co-driver Jon Mortimer, teaming up with Scott Pedder in 2010 has paid off at round one. "It was a very good drive by Scotty, very well controlled. We're really happy."

The boys agreed that their favourite stage was Hellyer, a stage that was repeated in some way three times across the weekend. "I know why they call it Hellyer," said a beaming Mortimer.

On the other side of the garage, Mark Pedder and co-driver Cat Smallbone were also celebrating a triumphant return to the series. Where Scott has been out of competitive rallying for over a year, for Mark it has been more like five years. "It's a tough way to return - not only with a new team, co-driver and car - but also on bitumen, a surface I have experience on whatsoever!"

It was a steep learning curve for the pair and learn they did - taking seventh in Leg One, fourth in Leg Two and then a controversial eighth in the final leg after a few issues with both the car and officialdom. Overall they finished fourth for the weekend - a brilliant result that exceeded both their own and the pundits expectations.

It was an upbeat Mark Pedder who looked forward to the next round - The Quit Forest Rally in Western Australia. "Back to the gravel and hopefully back to the same or better form. Cat and I are working together really well. The cars have been faultless. We'll just need to find a good setup for the gravel and hopefully the good results will follow."

Evans Motorsport's Simon and Sue Evans in their Tankformers WRX threw everything they had at the Pedders yellow and black Evo IX, but were unable to make any significant

gains. The reigning 2009 Champions were not too disappointed, being in a new car and on a surface they are not overly familiar with. "It was probably the hardest I've driven in a long time and the car held up really well- and it's just good fun".

"We were both getting used to the new car," said Sue Evans. "We had a bit of a spin and then had a chat on a transport stage - it was all good from then on."

Despite what appeared to be a terminal blown engine gasket, Justin Dowel and co-driver Matt Lee in the drive of the day were able to not only nurse their Evo IX to the finish, but even maintain highly competitive stage times and hold on to their overnight third place.

"We've had a few head gaskets in the past and we backed the timing off to take some of the power out of it," said Dowel. "We knew that taking the chance of replacing the gasket was just too risky. But it's a great result and we'll now look forward to hitting the gravel."

After what was looking like a weekend to forget, Eli Evans and Glen Weston were able to salvage both pride and points after finishing third in today's final leg. Persistent tyre and handling issues undermined what appeared on paper to be an ideal weekend to snatch a victory for the distinctive Honda Civic Type R.

Attention will now turn to the more familiar marbles and forest roads of Western Australia when the Championship continues in Round Two at the 2010 Quit Forest Rally from 16 - 18 April.

Final ARC Rallt Tasmania Classification:

Australian Rally Championship Category:

- 01) S. Pedder/J. Mortimer - 01h 43m 56,1s
- 02) S. Evans/S. Evans + 49,9s
- 03) J. Dowel/M. Lee + 03m 03,0s
- 04) M. Pedder/C. Smallbone + 04m 23,5s
- 05) R. Smart/R. Smart + 05m 29,2s
- 06) E. Evans/G. Weston + 06m 09,3s
- 07) C. Drake/E. Moynhan + 08m 22,9s
- 08) S. Shephard/J. McCarthy + 09m 11,8s
- 09) B. Fullerton/H. Reardon-Smith + 15m 06,0s
- 10) S. Knowles/M. Knowles + 15m 59,2s

IRC HEADS TO BRAZIL FOR RD 2

IRC: RALLY CURITIBA

04 - 06 March 2010

Slippery gravel roads await IRC's best crews!

Story by www.rally-irc.com

After the snow and ice coated asphalt roads of Rallye Monte Carlo in January, the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) resumes in the Brazilian city of Curitiba from this weekend where the conditions could not be more contrasting.

The slippery mountainous lanes and sub-zero temperatures experienced on the IRC season opener will be replaced by high-speed gravel roads and a near tropical climate for Rally Internacional de Curitiba, the second round of the 12-event IRC series.

Rally Internacional de Curitiba, which became a round of the IRC for the first time last year, is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2010. The event was originally called the Graciosa Rally in deference to the famous Graciosa Road, which connected Curitiba to the Atlantic Ocean several centuries ago.

Consisting of 15 stages covering 217km, the event is extremely compact compared to other rounds of the IRC. The total road distance is just short of 500km. Friday's opening leg is identical to 2009 and is made up of seven stages run to the west of Curitiba with a single visit to the permanent service park at Autodromo Curitiba shortly after midday. The first stage, Campo Magro, is run three times during the day with the Ouro Fino and Curitiba tests repeated once. Saturday's final leg, run to the north east of Curitiba, will feature eight stages and is set to finish with a spectacular superspecial stage in the district of Pinhais close to the service park. The spectator stage is purpose built and will pitch two drivers running side by side against each other. The bulk of Saturday's stages will be used only once with the exception of Rio Pesqueiro and Quatro Barras, which will be run twice.

Unlike some gravel rallies, which are held over punishing rock-strewn terrain, the roads around Curitiba are smooth with numerous blind crests peppering the route. Although the surface is largely sandy, because the roads link small towns and villages, the surface is compact and in theory will not deteriorate when the stages are repeated.

In next week's issue of **HANDBRAKES & HAIRPINS**, do not miss our exhaustive event review along with the drool-inducing action photography of these IRC crews in full fight mode in Brazil. Over the course of the weekend, for breaking news visit <http://handbrakeshairpins.wordpress.com>.



BLOCK MAKES IT FIVE-IN-A-ROW

RA: 100 ACRE WOOD RALLY

26 - 28 February 2010

Ken Block and Alex Gelsomino of the Monster World Rally Team have claimed their fifth consecutive 100 Acre Wood Rally win.

Story by www.rally-america.com
Pictures by Tim Williams/Rally America

American action sports star Ken Block and co-driver Alex Gelsomino have taken their Monster World Rally Team Ford Fiesta to its first win in the Rally America Championship this past weekend in the 100 Acre Wood Rally when they outperformed their former team-mates and arch rivals Travis Pastrana (Subaru Rally Team USA). The win is the first for the Ford Fiesta in a North American Stage Rally and the first for Fiesta in Rally America competition. The win for Block was his fifth straight victory at the two-day 100 Acre Wood Rally.

Block drove the Open Class Ford Fiesta to victory despite having a tough first day and starting the second leg over a minute behind rally leader, Travis Pastrana (Subaru Impreza WRX STi - Open Class). Block was able to gain some ground after Antoine L'Estage (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X - Open

Class) dropped to third place due to a water crossing visibility issue and a puncture on the second stage of the final day.

"I can't tell you how difficult and challenging this weekend has been," said Block. "This is the location of my first national rally win, so I have now won this rally five years in a row and it is a pretty good feeling to get the Fiesta home in first. The Fiesta is a big change from the car I was racing before, but I am finally starting to come to grips with how to drive it and how to go as fast as I can. It is very fun to drive and I am really enjoying the Fiesta."

Subaru Rally Team USA's Travis Pastrana held a fast pace and a comfortable lead over Block and L'Estage until Pastrana broke his car's left rear control arm on the Super Special Stage in Potosi and was unable to continue to the finish on Day Two. With Pastrana out of contention, L'Estage pushed to catch Block, and posted comparatively close

2010 Rally America calendar:

03) 24 - 25 Apr: Olympus Rally
04) 14 - 16 May: Oregon Trail Rally
05) 04 - 05 Jun: Susquehannock Trail Rally
06) 16 - 17 Jul: New England Forest Rally



stage times with him but Block was able to maintain his lead to the end.

Having secured his consecutive second-place finish this season, the Rockstar Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X driver from Quebec, Canada now leads the Rally America Championship with 34 points.

Privateer Bill Bacon joined L'Estage on the podium again despite having some difficulties with his Mitsubishi's new set up, but Bacon's consistency has now put him second in the overall championship standings with 28 points.

At the end of Day One of the rally, Pastrana enjoyed a 22s lead over L'Estage, and Block 46s behind L'Estage. In fourth place was Bill Bacon, within striking distance of third place. The father-son team of Travis and Terry Hanson held a comfortable class lead in the Super Production category, and was looking to add his second class win of the year. 2-Wheel Drive Class ace Chris Duplessis dominated his class in his 1990 Volkswagen Golf.

The high rate of attrition expected from this event saw many notable crews fall by the wayside in the first few stages of the rally. The weather was uncharacteristically dry and sunny for this event, but the running was still tough.

Andrew Comrie-Picard (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X) was due to start the event in first place, but suffered a seized engine during the shakedown stage and was unfortunately unable to start the event. Super Production favorite, Piotr Wiktorczyk, put out a serious engine fire early on SS1 that required another team to drop off their fire extinguisher. The car was not severely damaged from the fire and the crew was OK.

The second day of action saw the father-son team of Travis and Terry Hanson notch up another remarkable performance, winning the Super Production class by over two and a half minutes over their closest rivals.

Tim Rooney and Dennis Hotson placed second in class followed by Wazoo Racing's Tim Penasack and Alex Kihurani.

In the 2-Wheel Drive Class, Chris Duplessis and Catherine Woods remained dominant with another win in their 1990 Volkswagen Golf. Duplessis had reported alignment problems on the first day of the rally, but finished tenth overall with a nearly six minute cushion over reigning Group 2 Champ, Dillon Van Way. John Conley and Keith Rudolph finished third in class.

The Rally in the 100 Acre Wood also hosted the Rally America Regional Championship, where regional winners from 2009 gathered to shoot it out for top honors. This year, the husband-wife team of Henry and Cynthia Krolikowski won the showdown for the Central Region in an Open Class 2000 Subaru Impreza.

The next national event on the Rally America calendar is the Olympus Rally in Olympia, Washington this 24 - 25 April.



Final RA 100 Acre Wood Rally

Classification:

01) K. Block/A. Gelsomino	- 01h 27m 06,1s
02) A. L'Estage/N. Richard	+ 20,9s
03) W. Bacon/P. Watt	+ 03m 18,0s
04) D. Mirra/M. Headland	+ 05m 22,1s
05) T. Hanson/T. Hanson	+ 09m 00,0s
06) J. Burke/B. Sharkey	+ 10m 44,7s
07) C. Decker/M. Rossey	+ 11m 05,5s
08) T. Rooney/D. Hotson	+ 11m 34,5s
09) A. Gruszka/D. Jozwiak	+ 12m 13,4s
10) C. Duplessis/C. Woods	+ 13m 50,4s



LOEB AND CITROEN TO FIGHT BACK

WRC: RALLY MEXICO

04 - 07 March 2010

A complete change of scenery greets the World Rally Championship this weekend. Visiting 13 different locales around the world, each rally is different and exciting for both crews and spectators. The second round of the 2010 WRC season takes place on the American continent for Rally Mexico.

Story by Evan Rothman
Pictures by WorldRallyPics

From the snow and pine forests of WRC Rally Sweden last month, crews now face the dry heat and dust of Mexico. This is the only WRC event held on the American continent. For its re-introduction to the WRC calendar this year, the organisers have planned a route to challenge the drivers and entertain the many thousands of fans lining the rally roads.

The season got off to an explosive start in Sweden, with Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team) claiming victory ahead of their rivals Sebastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroen Total World Rally Team) having to settle for second place. The Ford Focus RS WRC of Hirvonen, which brought Ford their 74th win in the WRC, proved too quick for the Citroen C4s in the snow and icy conditions last month. Hirvonen and Ford head into this event on top of the Drivers' and Manufacturer' Championship standings, thanks to a hard-working team and the support of team-mate Jarri-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila to keep the Citroen Total World Rally Team crews in check.

After a year's absence from the WRC calendar, the rally returns to the city of Leon in the centre of the country 400km northwest of Mexico City. Event

organisers have stayed faithful to their tried and tested format, but for 2010 have included a few changes. The major difference is the introduction of a short street stage in the middle of the opening two legs. On the Day three, just one stage offers new rally roads for crews to learn.

The compact route comprises of high-speed stages in the mountains to the north and east and climb to above 2 737m on the hillsides, making this the highest rally of the season. The altitude takes its toll on the cars as the thinner air means that engines can lose up to 30 percent of their usual power.

WRC Rally Mexico's road surface is hard-packed gravel, with some parts sandier that can become rough and rutted during the second pass. The stages are fast and flowing, although there are slow and technically-demanding sections thrown in for good measure. Covering just 884,58km, the 354,60 competitive stage kilometers are divided into 22 special stages over the three days of competition.

WRC Rally Mexico marks Hirvonen's 100th WRC career start, and he will be leading the pack on SS1 and through Day One's stages. Running as sweep car on the opening stages will undoubtedly cost the young Finn valuable time, but his skill on gravel and his hunger for success in 2010 will surely minimise that disadvantage somewhat.

"Leading the championship can have its disadvantages, and I now run first on the road for the opening gravel rally of the season," said Mikko Hirvonen. "My rivals have better road positions than me so it will be difficult, but I'll still try to find a way to challenge for the win. I'm not underestimating the difficulties, but I wouldn't swap my win in Sweden for a better start seeding.

"Sweden was the perfect start to the championship for both me and the team. It's important that we build on that in Mexico and continue to take the brave decisions that paid off in the opening round. The first gravel rally of the season is always an interesting one because, with the majority of the championship on that surface, it gives pointers as to how the season may play out," added Hirvonen.

Citroen's factory squad will be looking for nothing less than victory here this weekend. With Dani Sordo gaining confidence in leaps and bounds, he will be pressuring the factory Ford drivers in every stage. Loeb will be chasing for a win, and an all-out attack on Hirvonen will take place here.

"It's a very pleasant rendezvous. You can really feel that the organisers work flat out to make this rally a big event and the spectators always give us a warm welcome. The start in the streets in the historic centre of Guanajuato is one of the highlights of

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the season," exclaimed Dani Sordo.

Sebastien Loeb is also delighted to be back racing in this rally: "I've competed in all the events since the rally became part of the WRC in 2004. The first couple of years didn't attract a huge crowd. Then people started to get interested in our sport and it's now one of the most popular rounds of the season."

"We can't really say that the championship's got off to a bad start with our second place in Sweden, but I'm not going to let Mikko Hirvonen open up a gap in the overall classification," said Loeb. "A win would put us on level pegging. The route's an interesting one from a driver's point of view. The stages aren't too hard on the car and they're a kind of digest of all the challenges in a rally with very quick sections, twisty ones and fliers! Our C4 WRC will be very much at home on this type of terrain, which we know very well. But I'm not going to make any predictions as we haven't raced in such conditions for six months. Mikko Hirvonen has made a lot of progress recently and he's going to start the rally full of confidence and motivation. Last year, he lost the title by a point and I know he won't give an inch this season! I think Dani will put on a good performance again. Although he's a little less experienced than Mikko he's improving at exactly the same rate. He's got every reason to show what he can do and to win."

Sebastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassi (Citroen Junior Team) set the tone for their season with an outstanding performance in the snow stages of Sweden. The Frenchman is more at home on gravel and asphalt surfaces, and here he will be targeting fourth place or higher. His speed is astounding, and has overshadowed the rest of the WRC field. Team-mates Kimi Raikkonen/Kaj Lindstrom, who debuted in WRC Rally Sweden, have not competed in Mexico before, and will be aiming to clock up as much seat time as possible this weekend to learn more about their Citroen C4 WRC for the next four gravel rallies on the calendar.

"We started the season well, with a top-five finish on our first visit to Sweden," said Ogier. "Our objective is to maintain this same pace throughout the season and get closer to the podium on the events that we know a bit already. "In Mexico, we start off with the advantage of having already driven eight of the 11 different stages in the C2 Super 1600. On top of that, we were able to prepare for this rally with a day

of testing in Spain. If there's a chance of finishing higher than fifth, we're certainly going to go for it!"

After a solid start to his 2010 WRC campaign, Matthew Wilson (along with co-driver Scott Martin) is looking forward to WRC Rally Mexico to maintain and improve his pace and standing in the Drivers' Championship points: "It looks like most of the route is the same as the last time we were there in 2008, so that should make it a bit easier to get up to speed. It's been a good rally for us in the past. Hopefully we can build on the start we made in Sweden. It was good to get some points there on what was a really difficult rally, but we want to do even better in Mexico. We're moving from a rally where the conditions helped the car run at optimum levels to one where the high altitude really sucks the life out of it. You have to take the reduction in power into account and some of the stages are pretty rough so you need to watch out for punctures too, but these differences in events are what rallying is all about and it's a great challenge."

Henning Solberg/Ilka Minor, team-mates to Wilson in the Stobart M-Sport Ford World Rally Team, placed one place ahead of them in sixth place in last month's rally. With the talent to finish on the podium, and a car that suits the gravel stages, Henning could well be aiming to move higher up the leaderboard after this round of the Championship.

Brother Petter Solberg and co-driver Phil Mills (Petter Solberg World Rally Team) suffered poor luck on the Swedish stages, but managed to finish in the points-paying positions. After testing his car, the former World Rally Champion will be targeting a podium result by attacking every stage of this rally. He is the dark horse for this event, I think.

Returning to the WRC is the Munchi's Ford World Rally Team piloted by reigning Argentinean Rally Champions Federico Villagra/Jorge Perez Companc. Last seen in the WRC Rally Spain six months ago, Villagra has tested his Ford Focus RS WRC and is hoping to repeat his 2008 performance at the event where he finished seventh overall.

Rounding out the top WRC crews is another Ford team: debuting in the World Rally Championship is the Monster World Rally team of Ken Block and Alex Gelsomino. The American action sports star stated: "This weekend I'll be up against the greatest rally drivers on earth and, believe me, I will be truly humbled because I am basically

a novice in the WRC," he said. "I'm on a good development process to get to the top level and its going to take a while but I'm going to do my best. It's going to be an incredible experience. Success for me would be to finish the event and not embarrass myself too much!"

Bringing his personality to the sport is refreshing. His talents behind the steering wheel of a rally car are impressive, and he should put on a daring display this weekend in Mexico.

The rally this weekend also plays host to round two of the S2000 World Rally Championship (S-WRC) and the Production World Rally Championship (P-WRC). In the S-WRC, several new drivers have entered this rally and most are tipped for this year's title.

Nasser Al-Attiyah (Skoda Fabia S2000) switched from a Ford Fiesta S2000 to his Skoda, and will partner Eyvind Brynildsen at the Rene Georges Rally team. Michael Kosciuszko (Ford Fiesta S2000) starts his S-WRC season this weekend, and will be vying for the top spot here. Former Citroen and Subaru factory team driver Xavier Pons will also be competing in a Ford Fiesta this weekend, in a new team headed by Luis Moya. Expect big things from this driver!

Six S-WRC drivers that nominated Rally Mexico in their 2010 campaigns, only two - Martin Prokop and Eyvind Brynildsen - participated in Sweden. Prokop lies third in the S-WRC standings with a total of 15 points, while Brynildsen is fifth with 10 points.

In the P-WRC, there will be a clash of champions as former double P-WRC champion Toshi Arai (Subaru Impreza WRX STi) takes on reigning P-WRC Champion Armindo Araujo (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X).

Araujo took part in the Rally Sweden last month, and netted a well-deserved podium result. Arai, however, will only begin his six-event season here.

Motorsport's attention will be on Mexico this weekend, and rally enthusiasts are in for a special treat! Read next week's issue of **HANDBRAKES & HAIRPINS** for a full event review.

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50th ANNIVERSARY SEASON KICKS OFF SANRC: TOTAL TOUR NATAL RALLY

20 February 2010

The 2010 Sasol South African Rally Championship marks the 50th anniversary of the series and will feature an unprecedented and very impressive field of 18 cars in the top S2000 class.

Story by Sasol Oil
Pictures by Motorpics

This year marks the return of Ford to the series after an absence of a decade with a pair of state-of-the-art M-Sport-built Fiestas. An extra dimension to the Sasol-backed series is the international flavour with drivers from Zimbabwe and Namibia setting the scene for a classic showdown in the stages across South Africa.

In addition to the overall SA Rally Championship for drivers and co-drivers, the Privateers Rally Championship and the 1600cc Rally Championship have been created, while the Production Car Championship has been scrapped.

Heading the entry list for the opening round, the Total Tour Natal Rally, is the three car Volkswagen Polo squad of double champions Hergen Fekken/Pierre Arries. This team's goal will be to claim a hat-trick of titles in 2010.

The Volkswagen Polos will compete in BP Ultimate livery until the new shape Polos appear later in the season. Although BP has ended their sponsorship of the Volkswagen squad, they remain as fuel suppliers.

The big shake-up in the Volkswagen team is the retirement of Douglas Judd after claiming six titles with Jan Habig over the past 17 years. Habig will have Ralph Pitchford in the hot-seat and this could blunt the experienced driver's challenge over the first few events. The 48-year-old Pretoria-based Pitchford navigated Mark Miller to third overall on the 2010 Dakar Rally and is working hard to get up to speed on the DVD route note system and sprint rallies in general. Last season

was the first that Habig failed to win a single rally since 1996.

Enzo Kuun/Guy Hodgson return for another chance of adding to their 2006 championship in a third BP Volkswagen Polo.

The factory Castrol Toyota squad has endured a major reshuffle with former Nissan Motorsport boss Glyn Hall taking over the reins of the Sandton-based Toyota team. Toyota will start the year with two brand new Aurises for Johnny Gemmell/Drew Sturrock and Mark Cronje/Robert Paisley. Gemmell led the championship for much of last season and, like Fekken, claimed three wins but faces the prospect of "bleeding" his new young Scottish co-driver, who is the son of Bill, the person who created the current DVD route/safety note system.

Mark Cronje/Robert Paisley dominated the Swartland Rally last September and the Castrol Toyota Auris driver knows he has to start delivering more consistent results which should see the former world karting champion as a serious contender for the championship title.

Heading the 13-strong privateer S2000 entries is the double Production Car Championship-winning pairing of Charl Wilken/Greg Godrich in their Basil Read/bizhub Ford Fiesta. Built by M-Sport in the UK much is expected from Wilken and Ford, although he will have to adapt to left-hand drive and may take a few events to get up to speed.

A second Ford Fiesta is set to appear in the hands of Conrad Rautenbach/Peter Marsh, but the former Citroen Junior World Rally Team member won't have the car until at least the second round of the Sasol Rally

Championship.

Japie van Niekerk/Robin Houghton have acquired an ex-works Toyota Auris and will run under the New Africa Developments banner. This consistent finisher should start as one of the favourites to land the inaugural Privateer's Championship. Their main competition is likely to come from Hein Lategan/Johan van der Merwe in another Toyota Auris, part of a two-car Pirtek/Diesel Technic-supported team. Lategan has been blisteringly quick since he started rallying in 2006. He is joined by the 2007 Production Car Champion Visser du Plessis/Gerhard Snyman who will drive the original S2000 Toyota Auris, converted from its left-hand drive build configuration.

Team Total will field three Toyota RunXs in class S2000, headed by Jean-Pierre Damseaux and new co-driver Carolyn Swan. Damseaux had a difficult season last year, finishing just three rallies from eight starts, while Swan brings 14 years of navigating experience to the team. Damseaux will be looking to add a second rally win to his maiden 2008 Swartland Rally victory.

The flamboyant Cape Town-based Spaniard Fernando Rueda returns with former co-driver Dave Lewkowicz in a second Team Total Toyota RunX. After a season plagued with misfires, Rueda has taken his preparation to a former Toyota Motorsport employee and will be aiming to again be the top performing Total-backed entry.

The current class A6 champions Mohammed Moosa/Grant Martin are taking a giant leap to class S2000 in a third Team Total Toyota RunX, which will be a brand new machine. Moosa has steadily progressed through the ranks

and will be watched with keen interest as his career starts its final phase at the top echelon.

Rounding out the privateer S2000 Toyota entries is Schalk Burger Jr/Armand du Toit. The 2008 Northern Regions Rally Champions will put on a convincing display in their Toyota RunX. Burger has been the class of the regional field and won on numerous occasions last year, while ending his season with a strong fourth overall and first non-works car in the season-closing Toyota Gauteng national rally.

Volkswagen's privateer representatives will be headlined by Evan Hutchinson and Elvene Coetzee in their Motorite Polo. Hutchinson is the current Off Road Special vehicles and Class A7 National Rally Champion, while Coetzee is a highly rated co-driver and the daughter of former champion Kassie Coetzee. Hutchinson's abilities behind the wheel with anything motorized will stand him in good stead as he starts a very steep learning curve.

Theuns Joubert will start his second season in S2000 with a new co-driver. The Mokopane-based Salom Group Volkswagen Polo driver will have the current Class A5 co-driver's champion Carl Peskin alongside in the silver car. He was the top non-works S2000 driver last year and will hope to finish the year in a similar position.

Namibian driver Jaco van Dyk has teamed up with Hennie Botes in an ex-works S2000 Volkswagen Polo. The little known Van Dyk won the Namibian Rally Championship section of the 2009 Tara Rally and ended second overall to Fekken and Arries after setting comparatively competitive times. The pair won the Henties Bay Rally last September, beating Burger Jr/Du Toit and Richard Himmell/Adolf Botes' Subaru STi.

Nicholas Ryan, the 2006 Production Car Champion and co-driver Geoff Tyrer will campaign the ex-Rally Chicks Volkswagen Polo. Ryan has previously run a S2000 RunX but crashed heavily in 2008, ending that particular campaign. He ran a RunX again in the 2009 Sasol Rally, ending 8th and should show well in the unsponsored Polo.

With the focus on the exploding popularity of S2000 teams and machinery, it is inevitable that the lower classes will suffer a dearth of entrants. Class A7 features a two-horse fight between rally debutant Gavin Cronje/Van Aardt Schoeman, who will campaign a Volkswagen Polo with backing from Portable Shade and Signco, and Etienne du Toit/Patrick Vermaak in their ex-Hutchinson championship-winning Toyota RunX.

Etienne du Toit returns to the fray after largely sitting out the 2009 season, barring two outings in a class A6 Toyota Corolla, one of which saw him claim the class runner-up spot last September. He and journalist co-driver Vermaak have the machinery to demonstrate their talents and should be a suitable rival for Cronje.

Michael Otto and Tommy du Toit will compete in the Tour Natal Rally

in their aging but still potent Liqui Moly Toyota Corolla and could cause an upset if the rebuilt A7 motor holds out.

The big news in Class A6 is the appearance of racer Leeroy Poulter who has teamed up with the 2009 Northern Regions Co-Driver's Champion Henry Dearlove. Poulter has competed in motorsport since he was four years old, winning five championships in motocross and four titles in karting. He raced an Opel in the late 1990s, competing more recently in a Class D Nissan Bakkie in the off road championship as well as successfully racing the factory and privateer Nissan 350Z in the Bridgestone Production Car Championship.

Poulter has barely driven a rally car but will learn quickly the intricacies of the Federal Mogul Toyota RunX he will campaign.

After a season's absence, Tjaart Conradie and Tiaan Rabe return with the class A6 championship-winning Toyota Auris campaigned successfully by Mohammed Moosa last year. Conradie was a regular A5 Toyota Tazz competitor, making the little car do things its creators never intended, so much is expected from the Pretoria businessman.

Class A6 stalwart Craig Trott and Robbie Coetzee return for another season in their venerable Team Total Toyota RunX. Trott is a multiple Class champion, exceptionally consistent and could well sneak past Poulter and Conradie as they battle for class wins.

Class A5 remains another big battleground with the reigning champion Gugu Zulu teamed up with Shaun Visser for the new year. The multi-disciplined driver will start the year in his old BP-liveried Volkswagen CitiGolf while the team prepares a new Volkswagen Vivo for introduction later in the year. Likewise, Andre Cleenwerck will have a BP-branded CitiGolf and a new co-driver, Kes Naidoo from the Western Cape.

The CitiGolfs are at the peak of their development and virtually indestructible and so evenly matched, the fight for Class honours is separated by seconds. The champion should emerge from these two teams although new car development later in the year may hamper their progress.

Morne Janse van Rensburg and Dewald Hattingh will continue their learning curve as the Port Elizabeth-based youngster learns the ropes. With Volkswagen's assistance, he will also move to a Volkswagen Vivo around mid-year and his progress will be keenly watched.

The 2007 Northern Regions Rally Champions, Chad Lambert and Nic Prinsloo will campaign a Lambert Steel Toyota Yaris. Lambert had one national outing last year in Class N3 and cleaned up the competition, so this Race-Prep run team could upset VW's plans.

Ashley Haigh Smith and Hilton Auffrey return to add to their fast-developing experience in their Class A5 React Toyota Yaris and podium places should be a realistic expectation.

Another hot driver in the baby class is Komatipoort garage owner Piet Bakkes, who has teamed up with former driver Paul van Wyk in their Sasol

Komatipoort Volkswagen CitiGolf.

In the production car category, former WRC competitor Rautenbach will field a Prodrive Subaru Impreza N2010, the latest machine from the famed stable. It features the latest FIA specification 33mm restrictor and with long-time friend and co-driver Peter Marsh in the hot-seat, they are strong candidates for a top placing come Sunday afternoon. Rautenbach comes 'home' after a season as a Citroen Junior WRC team driver, where he scored a season-best fifth place in the Acropolis Rally, eighth in Poland and again in Great Britain and 11th in Catalunya.

Tjaart Coetzee and new co-driver Pierre Jordaan will tackle the season in their Midas Subaru Impreza. Coetzee, while new to the sport having completed his maiden season last year, claimed three podiums and won the final round, so his experience will be put to good use as he chases the N4 Class title.

The young Zimbabwean charger Chase Attwell teams up with the experienced Dean Redelinghuys in a Subaru Impreza STi for the Tour. Attwell has damaged more cars than any other single driver in the past two years, but has settled down to become a regular Class N4 podium challenger.

Pietermaritzburg-based Mally Saville will do a one-off national with Johan du Toit in Saville's re-built CTH Transport Subaru Impreza.

Class N3, entering its final year as a homologated national rally class will see Riaan Erasmus/Herman Groenewald go head-to-head with Megan and Oliver Verlaque. Both Toyota RunX-equipped teams have competed regularly in regional rallying and these two should ensure a cat-fight for Class honours. Not to be outdone, Lourens du Plessis and Jurg Steyn will try and take as many class wins as possible in their Ford Fiesta ST.

The Sasol SA Rally Championship formally gets underway on Friday, 5th March at the Gateway Theatre of Shopping in Umhlanga Rocks with scrutineering and documentation starting at 18h00.

The Total Tour Natal Rally gets underway from the Gateway Theatre of Shopping at 10h30 on Saturday morning, with teams leaving from the main boulevard for a four stage run in the Stanger area. SS1 will be repeated as SS4 and a central service area will operate in Stanger. The day ends with a 45min service at the Suncoast Casino.

Sunday's action starts at 07h00 with the cars heading for the popular South Coast stages of Gabriel (Ellingham), Renmonet, Esperanza and Isonti. These four stages will be repeated later on Sunday afternoon. The podium and prize-giving will take place at the Suncoast Casino on Sunday afternoon.

BREAKING NEWS: Chris de Wit (former multiple South African Rallying Class Champion) has secured sponsorship for the 2010 season, and this will be unveiled at the start of this rally!

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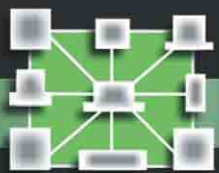
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