

Handbrakes & Hairpins

your insight into the world of rallying



Issue 183 • 20 May 2011

<http://wp.me/pkXc>

Ford Fiestas dominate HMC Rally

Start Ramp

Pierre Campana talks about his IRC pace

Service Park

Williams shines for Team SASOL on HMC Rally

Parc Ferme

IRC Tour de Corse rally reviewed

"The BTA Rally Talsi 2011, is regarded as the "Champion's rally" because actual champions from different countries compete against each other here to find out who's the fastest" - Liga Stirna, p15.

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YouTube explodes with SA Rally videos

Words: Evan Rothman

RapidMotion TV, the producers of the South African Rally Championship's TV broadcasts, put together these five video clips over the course of the HMC Rally this past weekend.

Click on the following URL links to watch these entertaining clips:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q7Z-7mu8q0>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qDkDFRso8U>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuGT-FfomPo>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sv9rHcOQW1U>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXD6hiPMAco>

The broadcasts for SuperSport have as not been finalised as Handbrakes & Hairpins is completed for this week, but schedules will be posted to our web space at <http://wp.me/pkXc> early next week.

Handbrakes & Hairpins also released videos to YouTube of the rally action, and our videos can be found at:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF0xhbj-eb4>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExXKoxAmSpA>

Enjoy the videos! **H&H**

Arai confident of improved pace

Words: Staff Writer

Japanese star Toshi Arai is confident that the pace of his Yokohama-equipped Subaru Impreza WRX STI will improve as he continues his Intercontinental Rally Challenge campaign this year.

Driving the new R4-specification Impreza, Arai took part in what he described as "a very long test session" on last week's Tour de Corse-E.Leclerc. He believes that the lessons learned indicate a strong future for Subaru in the series.

"This was a very long test session," said Arai, who finished 13th overall on the island rally. "We were [in Corsica] to learn and to improve the car. We didn't know so much about this car on Tarmac because we only tested once in Austria. We have done our work on gravel, where we know we can be strong. We are also trying different

Yokohama tyre compounds, which gave us a lot of good information."

Arai will return to IRC action on Sata Rallye Acores from 14-16 July when Subaru will field a second Impreza for Fumio Nutahara. **H&H**

Pierre Campana speaks on his IRC pace

Words: Staff Writer

Corsican rally driver Pierre Campana has been inundated with positive feedback following his incredible fourth place finish at last weekend's IRC Tour de Corse.

The 26-year-old enjoyed a competitive and consistent Tour on home soil, extracting the full performance potential out of both himself and the Michelin-shod Peugeot 207 S2000 car, fighting regularly amongst the front-runners.

Campana put in a tremendous trouble-free performance with numerous highlights, of which SS7, SS9 and SS13 were particularly memorable. SS7 saw him finish fourth in stage after improvements made to the car's handling. SS9 was his best stage performance in terms of finishing position, ending in second place, while SS13 saw him finish just seconds behind the stage leader.

Q: Pierre, has your achievement from last weekend sunk in yet?

A: "I have finally had time to reflect on our performance from last week and it was definitely the highlight of my rallying career to date. To have had the chance to compete in a home rally around the streets of my home town was an amazing feeling and I will never forget the support of the home fans and supporters. I was also lucky to have the backing of a number of partners and supporters who made the participation possible. From Munaretto, Sparco, VP Racing Fuel, and under the watchful eye of Peugeot Sport, as well as Perin, Quotidia and my management team, I'd like to say thanks to everyone for the support which made this result possible."

Q: What was your approach to the event?

A: "Together with the Munaretto team,

Sabrina and I set ourselves some very clear targets and that was to take each stage one at a time without worrying about the end result too much. This approach really helped keep us all focussed and concentrated, allowing us to deal with problems swiftly and professionally. Of course, it is unlikely that we can experience 14 stages of a tough rally like Tour de Corse without experiencing some problems, but we were able to work well to minimise the disruption to our programme – and that made a huge difference. The performance of the Michelin tyres was also excellent and consistent throughout on a tough surface."

Q: Were there any standout stages for you?

A: "We had a few handling issues in the opening stages that required us to drive around a few problems to maintain pace in the top six. The first three stages on the second day were also quite tough but after the team made changes to the rear shocks at service I felt that I had a perfect car underneath me. It was from that moment that we were able to show our real pace. The crash of the zero car in SS6 was unfortunate and I hope that Ari is continuing to recover well. SS7 went well and we set the fourth best time and then, on the final day, we had a really strong SS9 in second place. Generally, though, I was pleased with the quick and consistent pace that we showed throughout the entire event. The fact we were always with the lead group is what has pleased me most; I think our speed and consistency is what people have noticed more than anything."

Q: What's next for you?

A: "One of our key hopes for Tour de Corse was to use it as a platform to demonstrate our potential and to open up a new door for my career. I hope that there are manufacturers out there who have now seen what I can do, in a tough rally against tough opposition, and who are willing to give me a chance to prove myself. With the Tour de Corse result and the result from Rally Monte-Carlo earlier in the year, I think I have shown myself to be a worthy opponent and a valuable addition to any outfit. I am also keen to show what I can do on an international stage and on gravel surfaces, so that is something I can't wait to achieve." **H&H**

The logo for Rally Buzz, featuring the words "Rally Buzz" in a stylized, orange, distressed font against a dark, textured background.

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Fan Foto Featured: Tor Andre Børresen

WRC Rally d'Italia Sardegna

Jari-Matti Latvala/Miika Nattila (Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team)

Camera: Canon EOS 7D

Image Data: f/8.0; ISO 100; 16mm focal length; 1/250th sec



Exciting changes for IRC's Rally of Scotland

Words: Staff Writer

RACMSA Rally of Scotland organisers have revealed several exciting changes to the route of their Intercontinental Rally Challenge qualifier scheduled to run from 7 - 9 October.

Following the ceremonial start at Stirling Castle on Friday 7 October, crews will tackle two runs in the dark of the all-new nine-kilometre Carron Valley stage through the forests around the Carron Reservoir.

Action resumes on Saturday 8 October from Perth Airport and will feature famous gravel tests such as Craiggvean, Drummond Hill and Errochty. All stages are based in the county of Perthshire and will be run twice with both Craiggvean

and Drummond Hill featuring minor route changes from 2010. The second Drummond Hill stage will take place under the cover of darkness prior to the overnight halt at Perth Airport.

Sunday's stages are contained in Stirlingshire and the action begins with a third run through the Carron Valley stage. Crews then head to the Loch Chon and High Corrie stages, which incorporate sections of the Loch Ard test, and are split by a remote service halt in Callander. High Corrie is the longest stage of the rally at 27 kilometres.

The event draws to a close at Scone Palace where two short stages and the ceremonial finish will take place.

"I sincerely believe that what is in store in 2011 for teams, drivers, officials, sponsors and, most importantly, the public, will make the

Rally of Scotland a must-see event and we hope that as many people as possible will come out to support the event in October," said Andrew Coe, Chief Executive of event organiser International Motor Sports.

Rally of Scotland forms round 11 of the 12-event IRC series. **H&H**



THIS WEEK'S BEST VIDEO

<< Here is a video tribute to Henri Toivonen from 1986, with scenes of the rally legend in action on the world's stages for you: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSu2EYrj0Wc>

Send evanrothman@gmail.com your favourite rally-related videos to to be featured in this section. Or, send us a twitter to [@Evan_Rothman](https://twitter.com/Evan_Rothman) or a message on Facebook.

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Croatia Rally starts this weekend

Words: Staff Writer
Pictures: Archive

There's a legitimate satisfaction for the organisers of the Croatia Rally who have a total of 59 entries in this event, an uncommon figure for the country of which about half are foreign crews.

There are 16 crews registered for the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), including all the main candidates for the 2011 title, starting with the reigning European champion and current leader of the series, Luca Rossetti and Matteo Chiarocci on the Grande Punto Abarth, the 2006, 2009 and 2010 European Rally Champion car.

In the rally there will be a contingent of all the main S2000 models: Abarth Grande Punto, Ford Fiesta, Peugeot 207 and Skoda Fabia. Among the favourites for the overall victory is the two-time European champion Renato Travaglia, former Italian national champions Piero Longhi and Andrea Dallavilla, former European 2WD champion, Czech Anton Tlustak, former Bulgarian champion Dimitar Iliev and outstanding drivers such as Polish Maciej Oleksowicz, Italian Luca Betti, Pole Szymon Ruta, Frenchman Cyril Vosalho, Croats Niko Pulic and Juraj Šebalj, Slovenian Rok Turk and Hungarian Janos Szylagyi.

It is worth noting that thanks to the organisers' decision to offer free entry for female crews, there will be two such teams at the start, one from Bulgaria, Ekaterina Sratieva and Blagovesta Milanova and one from Croatia, Lana Sutlović and Anamarija Pozojević.

The Croatia Rally is valid for the FIA European Rally Championship, the FIA Central European Trophy, for the Croatian Regional Rally Championship and for the Croatian Rally Championship.

The competition, based in Rijeka, will be held this weekend. **H&H**



Williams shines for Team SASOL

Words: Staff Writer
Pictures: Evan Rothman

Jon Williams and Cobus Vrey top-scored for Team Sasol on the third round of the South African Rally Championship, claiming their best result since returning to the sport behind the wheel of their Sasol Ford Fiesta S2000. It was a frustrating event for Mark Cronje and Robin Houghton, who ended two places further back in the twin Team Sasol Ford Fiesta, hampered by clutch problems throughout the 170km route. A superb SS4 win – by just 0.2sec – helped Williams to sixth overall on the final timesheets and lifted him to seventh in the Championship ranks, just one point behind the defending factory Volkswagen Champion Enzo Kuun.

"I'm very happy with the result. It was a good drive and the team made real progress. I had a clean day on Friday and decided to have a push early on Saturday to see what would happen. The second Saturday stage was very rough over the second half and I lost a lot of time there because I backed off over the jumps which were harsh. We dropped to eighth after that stage and I need to learn how hard I can push the car in similar conditions", Williams related at the Emalaheni finish.

"I was rattled by Hergen's accident [the VW crew hit a photographer]. We were the next car to arrive and the stage was stopped, leaving us standing around for nearly

an hour. We had a wrong slot in SS10 which cost us 25sec, but I was able to fight with and hold off people like Enzo (Kuun) and Giniel (de Villiers) which is very encouraging for me", Williams added.

Williams' sixth place helped Ford take the Manufacturer's prize on the event.

Cronje/Houghton had a steady start to the rally, setting competitive times well inside the top ten until the clutch started to slip as the Fiesta headed to the overnight parc ferme.

Faced with a probable 130sec penalty for service lateness if they opted to change the component, or race on knowing they would not be at their peak and lose time to their rivals, Cronje and Houghton chose the latter option.

"On Saturday morning, the clutch pedal went to the floor," Houghton explained. "We bled the clutch before the start of every stage. We could only start on half throttle and over the last five stages, we used the starter button to get going. There were a lot of hairpins and we couldn't use the handbrake to flick the car around. I would call it a scrappy rally."

"It was difficult to commit to corners knowing that if we ran wide we could be out of the rally. It's one of those things I must take on the chin," said Cronje. "We have a lot of work to do but we're headed in the right direction. We'll get there."

The next outing for Team Sasol Ford Fiesta is the Toyota Dealer Rally Gauteng on 10 - 11 June. **H&H**



Strong debut for MML Sports R4 Lancer Evo X

Words: Evan Rothman

Picture: Jim Blackstock Communications

Pundits always herald the introduction of a new rally car with caution. Great for the sport, new rally machines are welcomed. However, issues of reliability often blight the success of its debut. When a team and manufacturer get it right though, as MML Sports has, it is a treat to witness.

MML Sports recorded a stunning competition debut for its R4 specification Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X. At the hands of former Finnish Rally Champion Jari Ketomaa, the third round of the Latvian Rally Championship was the scene for this first outing. The Rally Talsi (of which there is a full event report elsewhere in this issue) saw the MML Sports Lancer Evo X R4 running at the front of the field and was running in second place overall behind a WRC-specification Ford Focus RS WRC. Hitting a rock on the final stage, only 07sec

behind Georg Gross's Focus RS WRC. The two crews traded positions no less than five times over the weekend, but on the final stage Ketomaa struck a rock and instantly punctured his tyre. He lost nearly 03min 30sec and dropped from second to ninth overall.

Commenting at the finish, MML Sports Managing Director John Easton, said: "It seems like luck wasn't on our side. Jari was definitely on for second place, potentially the win, but the rock in the road put paid to that. Coincidentally, the usual Group N winner also hit the same rock and suffered the same fate, so at least Jari was in good company!"

"Even though we didn't get the result we felt we should have, I am extremely encouraged by the pace the car has shown. To be here after just a short pre-event test and be fighting with a pair of World Rally Cars on our R4 Lancer Evo X debut is very gratifying. We were treating this event as effectively a test – we have carried out very little development running post-homologation

– so to claim three scratch times is fantastic.

"We hoped the R4 car would have potential, but this weekend it's been a lot quicker than we had anticipated and we still have a lot of options to test so I am confident that we could get even more speed from it. The R4 specification is already between 0.5sec and 0.75sec per kilometre faster than our Group N version over the same stages.

"I think our next event could either be here in Latvia or possibly, south Estonia again with Jari. Ott Tanak will be doing Estonia in the Fiesta S2000, so hopefully we could get a better idea of the car's pace against a top driver in a top car.

"I guess everyone is disappointed that we didn't get a podium result this weekend, but the pace and reliability of the car have been superb. On balance, I'd say this is an excellent debut." **H&H**



Welcome, South Africa's international visitors

Words: Evan Rothman
Picture: Patrick Vermaak

The Ford Fiesta S2000 needs no introduction to South African (and international) rally fans. This mighty machine built by M-Sport in the United Kingdom has swept to numerous rally victories the world over in the most trying conditions. With the likes of Mikko Hirvonen, Jari-Matti Latvala and Matthew Wilson as test and development drivers for this rally car, it comes as no surprise to see its superior form on stages and leading rallies.

Jon Williams needs no introduction to rally enthusiasts the world over, but a little refreshing will do no harm. As winner of the Pirelli Star Driver selection in 2008, he contested the inaugural Pirelli Star Driver series over selected rounds of the World Rally Championship in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX. In fact, this talented driver came out tops in this challenge! Williams, a rising rally talent in South

Africa before heading over to Europe to compete in the Pirelli-backed series in 2009, piloted a Volkswagen Polo S2000. His driving skill and determined personality saw him fight for a seat in the South African Rally Championship for 2011, after he was unable to secure a drive in time for start of the 2010 season. This is his first season back in action after more than a year out of a rally car and his performance on this past weekend's HMC Rally where he claimed sixth position overall.

In this article's accompanying photographs, the gentleman sitting alongside Williams may look familiar to some eagle-eyed World Rally Championship fans: Markkko Martin. Martin was factory Ford WRC driver alongside double WRC Champion Marcus Gronholm. After his retirement from the WRC as a driver, Martin busied himself as development driver with the Subaru World Rally Team and he turned his attention to mentoring up-and-coming young drivers. His latest protégé is Ott Tanak, the Estonian driver who

sensationally finished seventh overall in the WRC Rally d'Italia Sardegna to finish ahead of WRC cars.

Team SASOL, the latest and quickest privateer team to enter into the hotly contested Class S2000, has been gaining on the factory entries from Volkswagen and Toyota in the last three events. This team was launched one week ahead of the start of the season, and at the team's launch Markkko Martin presented the cars to drivers Jon Williams and Mark Cronje. Martin has no direct role in the team, but he has taken Jon Williams under his wing...

Jon's first session in the car was with Markkko in the car alongside him, pushing him and offering insight into the car and driving skill. What more could you ask for? Markkko and Jon spent a day putting the car through its paces, and such guidance from a driver as experienced and knowledgeable from Markkko has proven its value. With each successive stage, Jon is moving closer to the podium! **H&H**

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Rautenbach mugs Wilken to win the HMC Rally

Words: Evan Rothman
Pictures: Evan Rothman

Mugged: to attack and rob someone in a public place. This dictionary definition succinctly summarises this past weekend's HMC Rally. There's not been a motorsport mugging more dramatic than that of Conrad Rautenbach/Nicolas Klinger (G-Fuel Ford Fiesta S2000) on Charl Wilken/Greg Godrich (Basil Read/Bizhub Ford Fiesta S2000), and never has the old adage of 'it ain't over til its over' rung more true than here.

After a superlative performance on Day One and Two of the HMC Rally, Round Three of the South African Rally Championship, Wilken had impressed on his Class S2000 rivals his ever-increasing pace. The factory entries from Volkswagen and Toyota seemingly had no answer for the privateer Ford Fiestas this event, as Rautenbach and Wilken were locked in a stage-for-stage slug-out for the overall victory.

Rautenbach was the first competitor to run over Day One's three stages, and in SS1 and SS2 the Zimbabwean driver was able to maintain the slimmest of margins over Wilken. In SS3, a 20.38km speed test, Wilken was able to capitalise on Rautenbach's road-sweeping duties to clear the Zimbabwean driver and the rest of the field by 07.3sec at the overnight halt.

Dusty, loose sand and slippery corners proved demanding for all competitors, as a handful number of crews were already seen on the Retirement List after 41.75km of competition. Come the end of this event, only 27 of the original 40 starters reached the finish.

Only 34.9sec separated the top ten on the overall classification after Day One, but what was even more impressive was that the top eight were spread out by less than 20sec. Of the top ten crews on Day One's leader board, only five were factory-backed while the other five were privateer entries. This message was to be reiterated on Day Two's eight stages and 130.76km of stage distance.

Seemingly proving this journalist's point, Jon Williams/Cobus Very (Team SASOL Ford Fiesta S2000 won SS4, while Hergen Fekken/Pierre Arries (BP Ultimate Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000) and Johnny Gemmell/Drew Sturrock (Castrol Toyota Auris S2000) won SS5 and SS7 respectively. All other stages were claimed by Wilken (four wins) and Rautenbach (three scratch times) over the event's eleven scheduled tests.

Day Two's third stage, SS6, was cancelled when Hergen Fekken struck a photographer. The event was put on hold while emergency medical personnel attended to the severely injured Deon van der Merwe. He was airlifted to

Pretoria to a hospital, where he currently remains under medical care as he battles for his life.

The action resumed on SS7 as Gemmell not only won the stage but also moved up the leader board from fourth overall to second and to within 04.6sec of Wilken. Rautenbach was in third position, only 03.6sec further adrift. After a short Service, crews were sent out to attack SS8 and SS9, and the Wilken versus Rautenbach battle kicked into a higher gear. The young Zimbabwean set the fastest stage time through SS8 and inched to within 05.9sec of Wilken and 01.9sec behind second-placed Gemmell. Wilken responded in SS9 with another fastest stage time and was able to add a couple of seconds to his lead over the chasing Gemmell and Rautenbach. Leeroy Poulter/Elvene Coetzee (Castrol Team Toyota Auris S2000) who were running in fourth position all weekend were struck with alternator problems, losing over 12min to their competitors in SS9 and effectively ended their points-scoring run at the HMC Rally. This eased the pressure for the top three competitors as they entered the final two stages of the event, allowing them to fully concentrate on the battle for the win.

8.9sec lay between Rautenbach and two crews between him and the rally lead. In SS10, a 17.31km-long



stage, Rautenbach floored his rivals when he posted not only the fastest stage time but also leapfrogged the two leaders to claim the overall lead with a 03.8sec advantage. This incredibly hot pace saw Gemmell drop off in this stage to 34.2sec behind the leader and only 01.5sec ahead of fourth-placed Jan Habig/Robert Paisley (BP Ultimate Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000).

With only 4.67km remaining and only 03.8sec between the two leaders, SS11 was nail-biter to say the least. Wilken blitzed the stage to win it, but Rautenbach only allowed the other Ford Fiesta S2000 driver to close to within 02.5sec of his lead. This his second win of the season has consolidated his position atop the Drivers' Standings, now 18 points clear of Johnny Gemmell in second position.

The team most impressive over the course of the weekend was Team SASOL of Jon Williams/Cobus Very and Mark Cronje/Robin Houghton (both piloting M-Sport Ford Fiesta S2000s). With their performance improving on each round, this team is now in a position to attack for podium-paying positions. Their rivals have been warned!

The BP Ultimate Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000s of Fekken/Arries, Habig/Paisley and Enzo Kuun/Guy Hodgson and backed by Giniel de Villiers/Ralph Pitchford were not able to mount a serious challenge this past weekend, but are not to be underestimated. Their factory team counterparts at Team Castrol Toyota

proved to be within grasp of winning this event and of securing more podium positions and points, but Poulter/Coetzee's unfortunate mechanical problems put paid to those plans.

Team Total in Class S2000 have left their mark and have also been the privateers to take the fight to the factory crews that have for so long dominated this sport. Jean-Pierre Damseaux/Carolyn Swan (Team Total Toyota RunX S2000) were running as high as eighth on SS8 and were looking to secure more valuable Championship points, but their car struck a mielie plant that left their windscreen shattered. This distracted Damseaux only momentarily to run wide into a corner and to roll their rally machine as they fought to keep the car on the road. The crew recovered well to finish the event 11th overall. Teammates Mohammed Moosa/Grant Martin in a similar Toyota RunX S2000 were left to rue a weekend that could have been. They saw their rally take a turn for the worse on Day One with severe clutch problems that meant the crew had to start SS2 and SS3 on their starter motors. The oil circulation feeder pump failed and the squad scrambled to change this part on their car's gearbox and incurred a 01min time penalty for lateness. Day Two started off strongly for the crew, posting impressively quick stage times. Their hard work was erased by brake problems and a snapped sidshaft. This crew brought their Toyota RunX S2000 to the finish in 12th position overall.

The two Pirtek Peugeot 207 S2000s of Hein Lategan/Johan van der Merwe and Visser du Plessis/Gerhard Snyman once again started off promisingly, but mechanical woes left them fighting for position outside of the top ten. Once the teething problems with these machines have been sorted out, they will undoubtedly be challenging for more Championship points. Handbrakes & Hairpins will feature all the action from the Junior Championship in next week's issue. The next event on the South African Rally Championship's calendar is the Toyota Dealer Rally – Gauteng on 10 – 11 June. **H&H**

OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

- 01) C. Rautenbach/N. Klinger**
Ford Fiesta S2000 - 01h 37m 01.5s
- 02) C. Wilken/G. Godrich**
Ford Fiesta S2000 + 02.5s
- 03) J. Gemmell/D. Sturrock**
Toyota Auris S2000 + 35.1s
- 04) J. Habig/R. Paisley**
Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000 + 45.4s
- 05) H. Fekken/P. Arries**
Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000 + 50.9s
- 06) J. Williams/C. Vrey**
Ford Fiesta S2000 + 01m 17.7s
- 07) G. de Villiers/R. Pitchford**
Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000 + 01m 21.0s
- 08) M. Cronje/R. Houghton**
Ford Fiesta S2000 + 01m 45.3s
- 09) E. Kuun/G. Hodgson**
Volkswagen Polo Vivo S2000 + 02m 28.9s
- 10) N. Ryan/G. Tyrer**
Volkswagen Polo S2000 + 03m 02.5s



Neuville wins IRC's Rally Corsica

Words: Evan Rothman
Picture: IRC Series

The Intercontinental Rally Challenge could not become any more of a hotly contested series than it is at the moment. Regular readers may recall similar such words in January when reporting on the IRC's Monte Carlo Rally. This past weekend's IRC Tour de Corse reinforces my argument.

Bursting with talent, Thierry Neuville powered his Team Peugeot Belgium-Luxembourg 207 S2000 to victory with co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul. Claiming his first IRC victory, he also set the record for being the youngest ever IRC event winner in its five-year history. The 22-year-old driver said: "This is an incredible result after such a long rally. I never imagined I could win in the IRC so soon and never dreamed that I would win here in Corsica. But Nicolas and I have done a great job together and the car has always been good. I'm very happy."

The Tour de Corse, a technically demanding event, is best told from the point of Day Three's action: the first two days of the event saw the crews posturing and juggling for positions to set themselves up to attack for final positions on Day Three's afternoon loop of stages. Heading into these stages, Neuville held an overnight lead of 23.4s over Jan Kopecky (Skoda Fabia S2000) and Andreas Mikkelsen (Skoda Fabia S2000). This leg was the longest of the rally too at 138.44km.

Kopecky posted the fastest stage time on the day's opening speed test to shrink Neuville's lead to 14.5s. Neuville fought back to claim the fastest

stage times in the next three stages, and this was enough for the youngster to consolidate his lead to drive to the finish.

Belgian ace "Fast" Freddy Loix (Skoda Fabia S2000) pipped Andreas Mikkelsen (Skoda Fabia S2000) to third place overall, and Loix now also moves five points clear in the Drivers' Championship.

The massively experienced Loix was in fact trailing Mikkelsen in fourth place, but the Norwegian rising star was struck with a right front tyre puncture on SS12 that saw him drop more than 03min as he struggled to replace the damaged tyre. Mikkelsen was forced to settle for sixth overall.

A puncture on Day Two also robbed Bryan Bouffier of a podium result, but after fighting back to fourth overall the Frenchman's hard work became undone when he crashed out of the rally on the final stage. Handbrakes & Hairpins' has followed the progress of Pierre Campana since he shot to stardom in selected French rallies, and piloting a Peugeot 207 S2000 for the first time in the IRC, Campana didn't disappoint here either. On his home rally, Campana grabbed fourth overall, despite puncturing 5km into the final stage.

Increasingly faster with every IRC behind him is Frenchman Julien Maurin (M-Sport Ford Fiesta S2000) who overcame brakes and tyre wear problems to grab his first IRC points. Bruno Magalhaes was also hindered by brake problems this past weekend, but the Peugeot 207 S2000 driver from Portugal was able to find his confidence behind the steering wheel to claim fifth place overall.

Toni Gardemeister (Skoda Fabia

S2000) scored points for the third event running in eighth. The Finn had to limp through the final stage with a broken gearbox. Patrik Sandell took ninth on his IRC debut with Skoda Sweden with Corsican Jean-Mathieu Leandri fighting back from a front-right puncture on SS9 to clinch the final point.

Toshi Arai brought Subaru's R4-specification Impreza to the finish in 13th overall on its first competitive outing. Florian Gonon landed IRC Production Cup honours in his N4 Impreza with Corsican Pierre-Antoine Guglielmi winning the IRC 2WD Cup in a Clio R3.

Guy Wilks unfortunately slid off the road while in third overall on Day Three's second stage. He was unable to get his Peugeot 207 S2000 back onto the road, and was forced to retire from the demanding rally. **H&M**

OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

- 01) T. Neuville/N. Gilsoul
Peugeot 207 S2000 - 03h 20m 51.0s
- 02) J. Kopecky/P. Stary
Skoda Fabia S2000 + 15.5s
- 03) F. Loix/F. Miclotte
Skoda Fabia S2000 + 01m 02.6s
- 04) P. Campana/S. de Castelli
Peugeot 207 S2000 + 03m 59.1s
- 05) B. Magalhaes/P. Grave
Peugeot 207 S2000 + 04m 28.2s
- 06) A. Mikkelsen/O. Floene
Skoda Fabia S2000 + 04m 30.1s
- 07) J. Maurin/O. Ural
M-Sport Ford Fiesta S2000 + 04m 33.3s
- 08) T. Gardemeister/T. Suominen
Skoda Fabia S2000 + 06m 33.3s
- 09) P. Sandell/S. Parmander
Skoda Fabia S2000 +8m28.8s
- 10) J-M. Leandri/P. Marien Leonardi
Peugeot 207 S2000 + 09m 41.5s

IRC Production Cup: F. Gonon/S. Arlettaz
Subaru Impreza WRX

IRC 2WD Cup: P-A. Guglielmi/J-F Porcu
Renault Clio R3



Higgins wins again in Rally America

Words: Staff Writer

Picture: Subaru Rally Team USA

Subaru Rally Team USA's David Higgins and co-driver Craig Drew took a commanding win at the Oregon Trail Rally, Round Four of the 2011 Rally America Championship.

Higgins finished 03min 26.9sec ahead of rival Antoine L'Estage and won ten of the fifteen stages. It was a tight battle with David Higgins, but the Mitsubishi Rockstar crew of Antoine L'Estage and co-driver Nathalie Richard suffered three punctures in a row on Day Two, which cost them the chance to keep pace with Higgins.

Oregon marks Higgins' second consecutive victory of the season, having just won the Olympus Rally two weeks ago in Washington State. Higgins now assumes the overall Championship from Travis Hanson, who has lead the points race since the opening round at Sno*Drift Rally.

The Oregon Trail Rally began Friday with spectator stages held at the Portland International Raceway before moving to the scenic farmlands in and around The Dalles and Dufur for Days Two and Three. Oregon Trail began as a dry and dusty rally, but was consumed by heavy rains and thunderstorms during the middle of Day Two. The inclement weather forced event organisers to cancel the last two stages of Day Two and shorten some of Day Three's stages.

In addition to the changing weather and road conditions, attrition quickly set in for several teams including Subaru Canada's Pat Richard and co-driver Leanne Junnila. Richard was

forced to retire on SS8 due to persisting fuel pump problems. Another notable retirement was Subaru Rally Team USA's Dave Mirra and co-driver Marshall Clarke, who were in third overall before Saturday's stages before crashing out on SS6.

Super Production (SP) driver Ramana Lagemann and co-driver Chrissie Beavis completed the overall National podium by finishing a distant third, despite having engine issues on day one. Lagemann also took the SP class win over Travis and Terry Hanson by a mere 03.6sec, but the results remain provisional pending a protest about Lagemann filed by Hanson. The Hansons put in a solid run and led Super Production up until the morning of Day Three when they began battling closely with Lagemann for the Class win. Travis Hanson is still in contention for the overall Championship and is now closer to securing the 2011 Super Production title. Local driver Paul Eklund and co-driver Jeff Price took third in SP and ninth overall.

In Two-Wheel-Drive, Scion xD driver Andrew 'ACP' Comrie-Picard and co-driver Jeremy Wimpey took the class win and placed seventh overall. ACP, who won the 2010 Oregon Trail Rally in Open Class, finished 26sec ahead of Mazda Speed 3 driver Wyatt Knox.


Knox and co-driver Ole Holter spent the entire weekend entrenched in a close battle with the Scion team, but finished second in Class and eighth overall. Ford Racing Fiesta driver Dillon Van Way and co-driver Jake Blattner finished third in Class and 12th overall, but fell minutes behind ACP and Knox early in the rally after having suspension issues. Brian Gottlieb and co-driver Pat

Darrow finished behind Van Way, taking fourth in Class and 13th overall.

The Oregon Trail Rally ran one Northwest Regional event on each day of the event. Carl Decker and Adam Craig won the 'Wagons Ho!' Regional hosted at Portland International Raceway with 27.4sec over Brian Svedin and co-driver Teresa Buren. Mark Tabor and co-driver Ben Bradley placed third.

Brian Svedin and Teresa Buren won the 'Shunpikur Stages' Regional held on Day Two, finishing 16.6sec ahead of Decker and Craig. Byron Garth and co-driver Greg Allen placed third.

Decker and Craig came back on Day Three to win the 'Trails End' Regional by 36.5sec over Svedin and Buren. Dave and Richard Hintz finished in third place.

The next round of the Rally America National Championship is the Susquehannock Trail Performance Rally (STPR) in Wellsboro, PA, 3 - 4 June. 

OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

- 01) D. Higgins/C. Drew**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi - 01h 21m 42.1s
- 02) A. L'Estage/N. Richard**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 03m 26.9s
- 03) R. Lagemann/C. Beavis**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 06m 11.5s
- 04) T. Hanson/T. Hanson**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 06m 15.1s
- 05) M. Riddle/A. Neumann**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 08m 31.7s
- 06) A. Yeoman/J. Schulze**
Subaru Impreza + 11m 55.6s
- 07) A. Comrie-Picard/J. Wimpey**
Scion xD + 13m 23.4s
- 08) W. Knox/O. Holter**
Mazda Speed 3 + 13m 49.5s
- 09) P. Eklund/J. R. Price**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 13m 57.7s
- 10) M. Goodwin/M. Burnley**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 16m 02.0s



Mads tops Rally Sorland leader board

Words: Tor Andre Børresen
 Pictures: Eva Kovkova

Mads Østberg and co-driver Jonas Andersson collected their second consecutive Norwegian National Rally win of the year when they won Rally Sørland with their Ford Fiesta S2000 and further strengthened Østberg's Championship lead.

Mads Østberg opened the event fastest of all in beautiful weather in southern Norway when he won the first stage on Friday night. But, when Friday's three stages were completed, he was 06.9sec behind Anders Grøndal. On Saturday's first stage, Grøndal increased the lead to 15sec with his Subaru Impreza WRC S10.

However, in SS5 Grøndal and his co-driver Veronica Engan went off the road after having made a wrong note during recce that resulted in them running wide into a rockface this rally is infamous for together with the small lakes lining the roads. From here on, it was an easy win for Østberg. He successfully defended his victory from last year on the rally.

"It has gone smoothly for us. I am very pleased. Our goal today was to push Anders as much as we could, and it worked. Of course, it was a pity that he went off but it can often happen when it's such a hard fight," said Mads Østberg who has his girlfriend Veronica Engan as a co-driver for Grøndal. "It was pretty special to pass them as they had driven off the road. I saw that the car had a lot of damage, and I saw Anders. But when I didn't see Veronica I slowed down to make sure that everything was ok," says Østberg after the episode that took place on the rally's fifth stage.

The person who came closest to Østberg was Sveinung Bieltvedt and co-driver Roger Eilertsen. They took second place in Rally Sørland last year with their Subaru Impreza WRX STi N4. After a difficult winter season, Bieltvedt climbed in the Championship and now lies fifth.

Home favorite Svein Frustøl from the host club Kristiansand Automobile Club finished in third place with his Ford Focus WRC. With co-driver Ragnar Klami, he contested his best race of the season. Club-mate Pål Try, also in an older Ford Focus WRC, took fourth place overall.

Østberg increased his Championship lead significantly with victory at the Rally Sørland. He now stands with 110 points and is 38 points ahead of Thomas Kvam (Ford Focus WRC), who took over second place after this rally. Anders Grøndal remains third overall in the category for the four-wheel-drive cars, despite the fact that he retired this weekend. WRC and N4 cars drive for the same Championship this year and points are awarded according to how many cars run in each class.

In the Championship Class for two-wheel-drive cars up to 2000cc, it was the second win in a row for the young Steve Røklund (18) in his Ford Fiesta ST. It's Røklund's first Championship victory.

"This is amazing. It was unfamiliar with the new co-driver, so we had some trouble yesterday and on the last stage today, but it can't get better than this," said Steve Røklund.

Closest to them was Marius Dahl in his Fiesta, 24sec behind. Third place in the Championship Class for the two-wheel driven cars went to Frank Tore Larsen in his Ford Fiesta R2. He lost

the rally win on the final stage when he lost his brakes.

In the Championship fight, it's very close after this weekend's results. Steve Røklund took over the lead with 67 points, Marius Dahl has 66 and Petter Rølfesen, who finished fourth at this rally, has 65 points.

In the National Championship, it is dominated by southern region drivers. Søren Snartemo won with his BMW M3. He was almost a minute ahead of his club-mate Magne Svardal (Opel Kadett). Kenneth Trysnes took third place in his Ford Puma S1600. Championship leader Ole Morten Korsmo ended in fifth place in Rally Sørland, yet still has a comfortable lead with his Volvo 240. Korsmo has 90 points, while Søren Snartemo in second has 53.

Rally Sørland comprised eight stages, three on Friday and five on Saturday, and the rally route started and finished in Mandal. The next championship round is Aurskog Høland Rally, Saturday 4 June. **H&H**

OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

- 01) M. Østberg/J. Andersson**
Ford Fiesta S2000 - 01h 5m 12.9s
- 02) S. Bieltvedt/R. Eilertsen**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 01m 27.2s
- 03) S. Frustøl/R. Klami**
Ford Focus WRC + 01m 44.5s
- 04) P. Try/L. W. Andersen**
Ford Focus WRC + 02m 33.3s
- 05) T. Kvam/S. Johnsen**
Ford Focus WRC + 03m 42.8s
- 06) G. Helge Frøslid/D. Sandbekk Bråten**
Subaru Impreza WRX STi + 05m55.4s
- 07) S. Røklund/W. Fønnebo**
Ford Fiesta ST + 06m 06.4s
- 08) S. Snartemo/A. Ingar Stulen**
BMW M3 + 06m 10.4s
- 09) M. Dahl/K. Odegaard**
Ford Fiesta ST + 06m 30.5s
- 10) F. Tore/L. Torstein Eriksen**
Ford Fiesta R2 + 06m 47.7s



Gross beats off Ketomaa to take Rally Talsi win

Words: Liga Stirna

Pictures: Krišs Karnītis and Timo Anis

The third round of Latvian Rally Championship, the BTA Rally Talsi 2011, is regarded as the "Champion's rally" because actual champions from different countries – Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Lithuania, Norway and Finland - compete against each other here to find out who's the fastest. This year, the Champion's trophy went to Lithuania with Vytautas Švedas/Žilvinas Sakalauskas (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X), but the overall winners were Estonians Georg Gross/Raigo Molder (Ford Focus RS WRC). By the way, this was first year that all wins went to guests and not local drivers.

Summarizing this event can be achieved in describing one stage, the very last SS. This the trademark of the BTA Rally Talsi is longest stage in whole Championship – almost 34 km long - determines who the champion of the champions is, who has strongest car and best tactics, and sometimes the outcome is quite unexpected. This year wasn't an exception...

The initial entry list of the BTA Rally Talsi was really promising: 94 cars, almost half of them all-wheel-drive with more than half of them N4 cars that included 11 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs and one brand new Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X R4 that competed in Group A. MML Sports built this R4 and invited experienced Finn Jari Ketomaa to show the full the potential of this car, and it was the right decision. The former

S-WRC driver won SS1 and two more stages later on over the rally, and the entire rally witnessed an exciting fight with Estonian Georg Gross for the overall win. Unfortunately, this fight ended in the very last stage when Ketomaa suffered a punctured tyre. This potential winner finished ninth, yet still kept second place in Group A-plus. Georg Gross also had problems with his car's tyre, but he was fortunate that it didn't deflate. The Estonians took the win, their second-in-a-row in the Latvian Rally Championship (they also won February Rally Sarma 2011).

"After Tallinn Rally, this was good event without any technical issues," said Gross in an interview for www.ruudulipp.ee. "As we're trying to run the whole Latvian series, we will definitely start in Madona which will be a good practice run for Viru Rally."

In fact, of the top three crews ahead of the last stage, only Georg Gross/Raigo Molder kept their place. Raimonds Kisiels/Arnis Ronis (Mitsubishi Lancer WRC) also found SS10 unsuccessful: they retired from the rally with a broken wheel while running third overall...

Andis Neikšāns/Pēteris Dzirkals (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X) held the lead position in Group N4, but they shared the same ill fate of Ketomaa when they had to stop to change a puncture in the last stage and lost more than three minutes and dropped to 16th overall.

Surprisingly even for them to climb from second to first place in Group N4 were Lithuanians Vytautas Švedas/

Žilvinas Sakalauskas (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X) who were lying in ninth before the final stage. Third place went to Latvians Jānis Vorobjovs/Guntars Zicāns (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X), making the podium truly international.

"I'm really satisfied with this rally, stages, organization and, of course, the result. I'm going to return here and I'm sure, I will," after the finish said Vytautas Švedas who got Champions Cup.

The fastest car in the 2WD Class was that piloted by Daniel Erstedt/Marcus Sunth (Seat Ibiza), finishing 29th overall.

The next rally of Latvian Championship is the Rally Jēkabpils-Madona 2011, taking place on 4 – 5 June. **H&H**

OVERALL CLASSIFICATION

- 01) G. Gross/R. Molder**
Ford Focus WRC - 58m 42.87s
- 02) V. Švedas/Ž. Sakalauskas**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 01m 45.92s
- 03) J. Vorobjovs/G. Zicāns**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 01m 57.46s
- 04) M. Neikšāns/R. Bērziņš**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 02m 01.37s
- 05) S. Pärn/K. Järveoja**
Subaru Impreza + 02m 03.61s
- 06) J. Joge/J. Stigh**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 02m 07.59s
- 07) A. Egle/A. Dauga**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X + 02m 21.87s
- 08) R. Jeets/A. Toom**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX + 02m 32.75s
- 09) J. Ketomaa/M. Stenberg**
Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X R4 + 03m 26.55s
- 10) K. Koitla/A. Ots**
Subaru Impreza + 03m 31.66s