RALLY NEWS

Perez will use Focus WRC

Perez cautious over Gold Star bid

Former BTRDA Gold Star champion Steve Perez says he will register for this year's series, but will see how he fares on the Wyedean Rally before committing to further rounds.

The energy drinks magnate will use his Ford Focus WRC on the Forest of Dean-based rally on February 11. He has yet to finalise his programme for the rest of the year, but will take in selected historic events in his Lancia Stratos. Perez will also contest the historic Silver Fern Rally in New Zealand and Rally Barbados.

"I'll pick and choose a bit," said Perez, who won the Gold Star title in 2010 but didn't register for points last year. "The problem is that I have too many cars – it's like having three girlfriends, you have to decide which you love the best.

"I'll do the Wyedean in the Focus and register for BTRDA points. If I win that I'll do the Malcolm Wilson Rally (on March 4) and see how it goes. It should be a very competitive season."

Big prize boost for top Irish Citroën star

The top junior driver in this year's Citroën Racing Trophy Ireland could win an end-of-season prize package worth more than 13,000 euros (£11,000).

The leading junior driver in the series for C2 R2 Max machines will be given 10,000 euros towards contesting the French championship Rallye du Var at the end of next year, along with free tyres from Pirelli. There will also be 3000 euros available for the overall series winner, on top of 3000 euros for the winner of each round.

"It's a great prize package, and could be worth a lot if a junior winner takes the title outright," said series chief Raymond Moore.

This year's series will run over six rounds, largely supporting the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship. The series will skip the ITRC-opening Galway Rally on February 4/5 in favour of the West Cork Rally on March 17/18. It will then visit the Circuit of Ireland, Killerney, Donegal, Ulster and the Cork '20'.

Munro added: "Galway is just too early for us, and West Cork is a rally all our crews enjoy. We'll be running in the full Intercontintal Rally Challenge section of the Circuit, which is very exciting. It will be good to expose our crews to international-level scrutineering and recceing. It will add another challenge to the championship."

Eight crews are understood to have signed up so far, and organisers are hopeful of securing at least 12 cars for the first round.

Photo: Simon Arron

BRANDS HATCH TO GET RALLY REVAMP

Kent circuit will be reworked to improve action for spectators

Rallying proved a hit for both spectators and drivers

By Matt James

Brands Hatch boss Jonathan Palmer says that he will rework the Kent track to improve spectating at the circuit's single venue rally and has promised more rally events on his land.

Palmer visited the TRS Ltd Brands Hatch Stages last Sunday and said he was impressed with the rally. He said he would work with the event's organisers, the Chelmsford Motor Club, to improve facilities for fans at the next running of the event.

The event, which was won by Jeremy and Mark Straker in a Darrian, took place in front of a crowd of around 1000 fans. The eight Tarmac stages used a mix of the Brands Hatch circuit and some of the pits and paddock link roads.

"I was really impressed with the event and it certainly left a favourable impression," said Palmer, who is the chief executive of Brands Hatch's owner MotorSport Vision.

"We are going to look at doing more for the spectator and try and work out some prime spots for viewing that we could open up and make it even more accessible for fans.

"The way the space was used was so innovative and the stages were challenging. It is one of those things that you wonder why it hasn't happened here before. Rallying certainly has a future at Brands Hatch."

Sunday's event, which drew 80 entrants, was the second of the Chelmsford Motor Club's rallies at Brands Hatch. Palmer said that he could consider starting up his own rally series through his MotorSport Vision Racing arm.

"We had a single venue event at Snetterton at the end of last season, so we could easily put together a calendar across some rounds there and some at Brands Hatch. We will certainly look into the idea."

Junior star Wheeler to run in new Fiesta

Junior 1000 graduate Chris Wheeler will contest this year's REIS Get Connected MSA Asphalt Rally Championship in a new Ford Fiesta MS1, and will use the car for the first time on this weekend's K and R Mitsubishi Stages.

The 17-year-old from Torquay has bought one of the new entry-level cars from M-Sport, and will contest Tarmac events this year to build experience of the car ahead of an expanded programme in 2012. Wheeler will have his first competitive run in the car at Brean Leisure Park this weekend.

"We think the MS1 is the way to go for us, and we can get a lot of testing done in the car," said Wheeler, who used a Toyota Yaris and Citroen C2 in J1000 events this year. "Because the gravel suspension for the car isn't fully developed yet we're going to stick with Tarmac, and we're aiming to do Rally GB at the end of the year before we upgrade the car to R2 spec and do more gravel in 2013."

Gravel ace Bird in asphalt switch

Top World Rally Car privateer Paul Bird will contest the MSA Asphalt Rally Championship for the first time this season.

After many years of contesting gravel series, most notably winning the 2005 ANCRO gravel title, Bird is now switching to tarmac in his Dom Buckley Motorsport-prepared Ford Focus WRC07.

Penrith-based Bird took a record-breaking fourth win on Sunday's Jack Frost Stages Rally at Croft, in one of two pre-season tarmac events he is using as testing, the other being the North West Stages near Blackpool next month. The Asphalt series begins with the Tour of Epynt on March 11.

"I'll still do the odd gravel rally but it knocks the hell out of your car," said Bird. "Some of my best results have been on Tarmac, especially in the Isle of Man, so it makes sense to give it a go. I know I'll have to go some to match the likes of [reigning Asphalt champion] Damian Cole and company but there's no reason why I can't be competitive this year."

TEG Sport Fabia R2 to make Brean debut

Photo: Jakob Ebrey

Fabia will be driven by Newby and Korhonen

The new TEG Sport Skoda Fabia R2 that will run in this year's British Rally Championship will have its first competitive outing on the K and R Mitsubishi Stages at Brean Leisure Park this weekend.

Seventeen-year-old Arron Newby, who will be joined in TEG Sport's BRC squad by Pirelli Star Driver Jukka Korhonen, will drive the car on the two-day event at the Somerset caravan park.

"I did the event last year, and it's a great place to give a car its debut," said TEG Sport boss and Arron's father Stuart Newby. "There are some tight sections and some wider bits that you can really push in."

Following this weekend's event Korhonen will take part in the car's first two full gravel tests. Newby added: "The Fabias usually only run on Tarmac in the Czech Republic, so we've been working hard to beef up the underside protection for them to run on gravel."

●Arron Newby was a late entrant on last weekend's Jack Frost Stages, driving a Ford Escort to 27th overall.

WYEDEAN RALLY
SATURDAY 11TH FEBRUARY 2012
Don't miss the premier opening round of BTRDA series
VOTED BEST BTRDA ROUND 2009 & BEST ASWMC EVENT 2010
CLASSIC, PRIME CONDITION, FOREST RALLYING STAGES ALL SET IN THE SMOOTH FOREST OF DEAN AND WYE VALLEY
*** Classes for ALL categories of Historic Cars ***
visit: www.wyedeanrally.com email: lilianturley@btinternet.com
Team GMF Motor Factors Wyedean Rally Winner 2012...? IT COULD BE YOU

YOUR VIEWS ON WRC TV DEAL >>>>>>>>>>>>>>> PAGE 34