

27.10.17
News release

Solid start to Slaughter's world-class Welsh effort

James Slaughter has endured a baptism of fire on his World Rally Championship debut at this week's Wales Rally GB – but the Maidstone star has made it through today's opening action with a smile on his face.

Slaughter and the rest of the world's best rally drivers departed Deeside this morning, bound for mid-Wales and a selection of the finest roads around. The blue skies and unusually warm temperatures belied soaking wet gravel roads which offered little if any grip.

From the first corner of the first of the day's six stages, James knew he was in for a challenge.

"I knew this event would be another level," he said, "but I've been surprised at the pace today. I didn't sleep all that well last night, but this is what I've been waiting for and to get into the car and drive this event is amazing.

"I don't have a huge amount of experience of the Fiesta and it's so different to the historic-specification Ford Escorts I've been used to. Where we'd be struggling for grip and sliding around in the Escort, this thing just pulls and pulls – the traction and the power is fantastic.

"It's been quite tricky in some places, the cars ahead have cut the gravel roads up and left some pretty deep ruts. It's quite unnerving when you pull fifth gear and the rear of the car starts moving in the ruts at 90 or 95mph. So much of this is down to confidence in the car and knowing what it can deal with. I'm learning more with every mile we do."

And James has certainly put the miles in today.

He added: "We've already done more mileage than we would have in a British Rally Championship round... and we've still got two days to go. The focus and concentration required is massive, but I'm very pleased with the times and the way the event's going."

Inside the top 40 of the world's best drivers in Wales Rally GB, James is also on the fringes of the top 20 in the category for R5 cars like his Fiesta.

"We had a problem first time through the Hafren stage," he said. "The car overheated slightly, so we had to drop the performance a little bit to let everything cool down. That cost us some time and we were then slowed by the car in front on the second run through that same stage this afternoon.

"The main thing is that I'm absolutely loving it. I grew up watching this event and to compete on the same roads as these guys is amazing."

Tomorrow, things get even more serious as the event moves up Wales for eight stages in some of the world's most fearsome forests and one run across the estate roads of Lord Cholmondeley at Cholmondeley Castle.

"Tomorrow we go into places like Dyfi and Dyfnant, more world-renowned stages and I can't wait," said James. "The second day is where the endurance really kicks in, we'll be up around five-thirty in the morning and we won't be in bed before midnight. It's a long day with a lot of driving and, for many, it's going to be the pivotal day. Let's see."

Tomorrow is:

Saturday October 28

James' day starts: 0730

James' day finishes: 2300

Number of stages: nine

Competitive distance: 142.38km (88.47 miles)

Total distance: 676.62km (420.45 miles)

Longest stage: SS11/13 Dyfi 25.86km (16.06 miles)

Shortest stage: SS14 Cholmondeley Castle 1.80km (1.11 miles)

Meet James...

Date of birth: 26.10.73

Lives: Maidstone

Co-driver: Niall Burns

First rally: Mid Wales Historic Stages, 2008

Rally starts: 27

About Dayinsure Wales Rally GB

October 26-29

Based: Deeside

Surface: gravel

Stages: 21

Competitive distance: 304.36km (189.12 miles)

Total distance: 1488.10km (924.70 miles)

Website: www.walesrallygb.com

Dayinsure Wales Rally GB itinerary

Thursday October 26

SS1 Visit Conwy Tir Prince 1.49km (0.92 miles) 1900

Friday October 27

SS2 Myherin 1 20.28km (12.60 miles) 1020

SS3 Sweet Lamb 1 4.24km (2.63 miles) 1100

SS4 Hafren 1 35.14km (21.83 miles) 1115

Remote tyre fitting zone, Newtown, 1253

SS5 Myherin 2 20.28km (12.60 miles) 1431
SS6 Sweet Lamb 2 4.24km (2.63 miles) 1511
SS7 Hafren 2 35.14km (21.83 miles) 1526
Parc Fermé 1951

Saturday October 28

SS8 Aberhirnant 1 13.91km (8.64 miles) 0755
SS9 Dyfnant 1 17.91km (11.12 miles) 0847
SS10 Gartheiniog 1 12.61km (7.83miles) 0959
SS11 Dyfi 1 25.86km (16.06 miles) 1028
SS12 Gartheiniog 2 12.61km (7.83miles) 1208
SS13 Dyfi 2 25.86km (16.06 miles) 1237
SS14 Cholmondeley Castle 1.80km (1.11 miles) 1548
Service Deeside 1637
SS15 Aberhirnant 2 13.91km (8.64 miles) 1855
SS16 Dyfnant 2 17.91km (11.12 miles) 1947
Parc Fermé 2213

Sunday October 29

SS17 Alwen 1 10.41km (6.46 miles) 0834
SS18 Brenig 1 6.43km (3.99 miles) 0908
SS19 Gwydir 7.49km (4.65 miles) 1006
SS20 Alwen 2 10.41km (6.46 miles) 1109
SS21 Brenig 2 6.43km (3.99 miles) 1218
Parc Fermé 1335

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