

McCormack ready for his Italian job

Benny Hill won't be there. And nor will Michael Caine. Nobody will be blowing any bloody doors off. And no gold will be stolen.

Forty-five years after the original, Marty McCormack will lead his own team on his very own Italian Job. With less involvement from the Carabinieri and, hopefully, no driving through a sewage network, McCormack will emerge from his Mini Cooper S, er, Ford Fiesta R5 with the right result.

The analogy with a movie once voted the 27<sup>th</sup> greatest British film of all time is being stretched here.

Marty and his TigerRisk team won't be in the Italian Alps. They're not going to Switzerland and they definitely won't be racing around the roof of Fiat's Lingotto building in Turin.

They will be in Italy. Just not on the mainland.

Instead, Marty and his co-driver David Moynihan will be heading for Alghero on Sardinia's north-west coast. From there, with Hankook tyres beneath them and an M-Sport-built Fiesta around them, they will do WRC 2 battle down some of the finest gravel roads in the world.

Marty spent two days developing 2015-specification tyres with Hankook in northern Italy (and no, he didn't see a Lamborghini Miura go off the side of a mountain and nor did he drive bus) earlier this month. That time offered him both a fascinating insight into tyre technology and valuable time in the car.

It also made Marty more desperate than ever to get back in the car.

"It's just fantastic to drive," said the two-time British Junior Rally Champion. "I've learned a lot since my first event in the car in Portugal last month and one of the main things David and I have been working on is my pacenotes."

The pacenotes contain the vital information collated on two reconnaissance runs through the stages, taken in a standard road car at no more than 70kph/43mph. Moynihan then calls the notes back to McCormack when the two are competing at full-speed during the rally. The notes describe the road and the corners ahead. While Marty has plenty of experience of making pacenotes, the way he describes the road is different for a four-wheel drive car; the braking point and speed carried through the corner varies considerably from the two-wheel drive machinery he has driven previously.

"I've tried to simplify my pacenotes," said Marty. "I've worked on things like the angle of entry for the corner, which will help me translate what I'm hearing into the speed I need to be carrying at the apex."

And there will be lots of apexes to be clipped on 17 stages next week – but most of them will come on Saturday’s Monte Lerno stage. More than 500 marshals will line the route of the 36-mile test which runs in the morning and afternoon. Getting through Monte Lerno will be a challenge in itself.

“It’s that stage that I’ve been focused on during all those hours in the gym,” said McCormack. “From what I’ve seen, the road is quite twisty and it’s going to be very, very hard work – which is why fitness, focus and hydration have been key to my preparations for this round.”

In terms of results, Marty is well aware of the experience of those around him.

He added: “You look at guys like Nasser [Al-Attiyah] and [Ott] Tanak and they’ve done this event a few times and have so much experience of the cars. I have to be realistic and understand that, on my second event in the car, I’m not going to beat them on speed. What I will be doing on this event is erring on the side of caution and finding a balance between speed and consistency; we saw on the last WRC 2 round in Argentina (Rally Argentina wasn’t one of Marty’s nominated rallies) that a sensible approach can bring rich reward – that will be what we’re chasing in Sardinia.”

In terms of tyres, the primary choice for Marty will be Hankook’s hard gravel cover (H1) with 16 alternative, soft-compound (S1) tyres available in case of wet or colder than expected weather.

And, once the job’s done, Marty will join the boys on the back of the bus. The bus bound for the airport, that is. Not Switzerland.

And, before we go, over to Charlie Croker. He’s got a great idea...

### **Itinerary\***

Thursday June 5

SS1 Citta’ di Cagliari (1.30km/0.81 miles) 2113

Friday June 6

SS2 Terranova Nord 1 (20.00km/12.42 miles) 1135

SS3 Terranova Sud 1 (12.40km/7.71 miles) 1213

SS4 Coiluna-Crastazza 1 (20.29km/12.61 miles) 1308

SS5 Loelle 1 (27.30km/16.96 miles) 1344

Remote service – Budduso 1449

SS6 Terranova Nord 2 (20.00km/12.42 miles) 1557

SS7 Terranova Sud 2 (12.40km/7.71 miles) 1635

SS8 Coiluna-Crastazza 2 (20.29km/12.61 miles) 1730

SS9 Loelle 2 (27.30km/16.96 miles) 1806

Service – Alghero 2100

Saturday June 7

SS10 Monte Olia 1 (19.27km/11.97 miles) 0918

SS11 Monte Lerno 1 (59.13km/36.74 miles) 1023

Service – Alghero 1334  
SS12 Monte Olia 2 (19.27km/11.97 miles) 1654  
SS13 Monte Lerno 2 (59.13km/36.74 miles) 1759  
Service – Alghero 2110

Sunday June 8  
SS14 Cala Flumini (8.98km/5.58 miles) 0739  
SS15 Castelsardo (14.00km/8.70 miles) 0920  
SS16 Tergu-Osilo (14.88km/9.25 miles) 1002  
SS17 Cala Flumini (8.98km/5.58 miles) 1208  
Finish – Alghero 1330

\* Please note, times for first car on the road.

**Event data:**

Number of stages: 17

Total distance: 1403.41km/872.08 miles

Total competitive distance: 364.92km/226.76 miles

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Shakedown: Putifigari (4.300km/2.67 miles) Thursday June 5, 0700-1100

Time: GMT +2

Sunrise: 0557

Sunset: 2054

Average temperature range (month of June): 15-25 Celsius

Average rainfall (month of June): 13mm