

02.07.15
News release

Pryce perfectly placed in Poland

Welsh rally star Osian Pryce holds a top-four Junior World Rally Championship position after the opening Rally Poland stage today (Thursday).

The world's finest rally crews contested just one test in Mikołajki, north-east of the nation's capital Warsaw, this evening. Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss completed the 1.55-mile (2.5km) stage fourth in the Juniors, 2.7 seconds off the lead.

"We made a sensible start," said Pryce, "nothing dramatic, just nice and clean around that stage.

"Dale and I are aiming high here in Poland and the real competition starts tomorrow (Friday). We showed we have the speed to run with these boys last time out in Portugal, but now we want to make the result stick. It's no secret that we've got some funding issues for the rest of this season, but here and now we've got one thing on our mind: winning this round of the Junior WRC. The money can wait, we'll sort that one out on Monday morning!"

Prior to the opener, the 22-year-old Welshman made his final Rally Poland preparations with two runs through this morning's 2.29-mile (3.7km) shakedown stage.

Pryce said: "Shakedown went well for us. I was happy with the car, the set-up and the way it was running, so there was no need for me to do any more."

Some of the scenery and culture in Poland have taken Osian back in time. Back to when he was a 16-year-old starting out in the sport. And that moment was just a hop, skip and a jump through Lithuania from where he's competing now: Latvia.

He added: "Being here in Poland reminds me a lot of when I started my rallying career in Latvia, six years ago. Parts of the stages are very similar, except the roads are a little bit faster here. Geographically, we're not that far away."

But what a journey Pryce has made in those six years: twice coming within an ace of winning the British Rally Championship title, blitzing the opposition on his WRC 2 debut on Rally GB last year and leading the Junior World Rally Championship regulars on his debut in Portugal earlier this year.

There's no doubting his speed. Which is just as well, because speed will be more important than ever in the Polish Lake District this week.

"The stages are *so fast*," said Pryce. "The pace notes we made during the recce are crucial – if you brake too much for a corner, you fail to carry the speed into the next section and that can cost vital time. I love the roads though, they're fantastic and a real challenge."

The sandy nature of the surface means this latest round of the Junior World Rally Championship shouldn't provide the kind of mechanical challenge Osian's Autosport Technology-run DS 3 R3-Max endured last time out in Portugal. But the rising temperatures will make things tough for Osian, Dale and their Michelin tyres.

"I thought we'd escaped the heat when we left Britain early this week," said multiple British Rally Championship event winner Osian, "but it seems to have followed us! The weekend's going to be a bit of a scorcher with temperatures above 30 degrees and, while the sun shines most of the time in Wales, it doesn't usually get that hot!"

"The temperatures don't bother me from a driving point of view, but the rules state that we have to run the softer Michelin tyres – the same ones we will use on Wales Rally GB in November – which might make tomorrow (Friday) interesting in managing the tyres we have."

Following shakedown, Osian attended the FIA pre-event press conference, where he joined, among others, Polish superstar and former Formula 1 racer Robert Kubica.

A full transcript of the press conference is available here (<http://www.fia.com/news/wrc-2015-lotos-rally-poland-fia-press-conference>) or on request.

Tomorrow in detail

Start: Mikołajki 0715

Three stages run twice; one stage run once

Service: Tyre fitting zone (in Gołdap) 1335

Parc ferme (end of day): Mikołajki 1935

Longest stage: Stancyki (39.12km/24.30 miles)

Competition day one distance: 155.04 km/96.34 miles

Total day one distance: 520.36 km/323.35 miles

In all honesty, Osian and Dale should only have one thing on their iPods as they prepare for tomorrow's first stage: Prelude Op. 28 number seven. Obviously.

This is Chopin country. Remember? The one in A major? Heineken advert? Gotcha.

Frédéric was actually born a few miles south of the Masurian Lakes, around which Osian and Dale will be hurling their DS 3 R3-Max tomorrow, but the

composer definitely left them a legacy to live up to. It was said Chopin's poetic genius was based on a professional technique that was without equal in his generation. That's what Osh's aiming for.

Not playing the piano, mind. Winning the Junior WRC. Having said that, if he doesn't land some sponsorship soon, he might be forced to take up the piano.

In the meantime, there are some roads to be raced north-east of Mikołajki tomorrow. Dale had better be on it with the maps, though. If they overshoot Gołdap on the A65, they'll end up in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad or Калининград as it's known locally.

The Citroën DS 3 R3-Max Osian's ride this week in detail

Engine: EP6 CDT 1598cc turbo, direct injection developing 234bhp and 430Nm at 3000rpm.

Bodyshell: Reinforced body with welded, multi-point roll cage.

Transmission: Front-wheel drive with six-speed sequential gearbox, activated from steering wheel-mounted paddle. Differential is self-locking ZF.

Suspension: front MacPherson struts with BOS three-way adjustable dampers.

Numbers: Bore and stroke 77 x 85.8mm width 1715mm length 3948mm wheelbase 2465mm fuel tank capacity 67 litres weight 1230kg.

Brakes: Alcon forged 4-piston front calipers, 2-piston rears. Vented discs 330 x 34mm (front) 300 x 8mm (rear). Hydraulic handbrake. Wheels: 6 x 15-inch.

About Osian Pryce

Date of birth: 24.02.93

Lives: Machynlleth

Co-driver: Dale Furniss

First rally: Rally Kurzeme (Latvia) August 2009 – 37th overall, eighth 2WD

British Rally Championship event wins: 4

British Rally Championship results: 2nd (2013/14), 3rd (2012)

World Rally Championship starts: 4

World Rally Championship class wins: 1

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About the Junior WRC

Won by such rallying greats as Sebastien Loeb and Sebastien Ogier, the Junior WRC title remains the most sought after drivers' title outside of the World Rally Championship itself.

The series is open to drivers under the age of 28 and is fought out over some of the world's most demanding rallies. The diversity of events Osian is hoping to contest this year is incredible: he'll go from flying 50 metres at a time through the forests of Jyvaskyla on what's known as the Finnish Grand Prix (Rally Finland) to the agonisingly slow Rally of 10,000 Corners (Tour de Corse).

Crews score on six of seven rounds of the Junior WRC. Osian and Dale missed the opening round of the season on Monte Carlo and will, therefore count all six from the calendar listed below.

All Junior WRC crews will drive the identical Citroën DS 3 R3-Max, the latest evolution of Citroën Racing's super-successful 1600cc turbocharged, front-wheel drive rally car. And all the crews will run identical Michelin tyres on all six rallies.

Osian and Dale will also compete for the WRC 3 title, which is the FIA's support series for category R3 cars.

Osian's last rally...

Rally of Portugal (May 21-24)

The combination of punctures, trouble with the dampers, auxiliary belt and electrical issues, powersteering failure and brake problems meant Osian and Dale didn't finish. In fact, they only managed eight clean stages over the three days. But, of those eight, they were fastest on three and in the top three times on another three. Not bad for their first time in Portugal.

And this rally...

Rally Poland (July 2-5)

A super-quick gravel round, Poland was one of the most popular rallies of last year. The event will run wholly within Poland this time, after experimenting with a cross-border route in Lithuania last year. Run out of the Polish Lake District town of Mikołajki, the event is always one of the best attended by fans.

Lotos Rally Poland detail:

Date: July 2-5

Base: Mikołajki

Stages: 19

Competitive distance: 194.82 miles (313.53 kilometres)

Total distance: 741.01 miles (1192.50 kilometres)

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