

News release  
15.03.17

## Rally star Pryce aims for British and world glory in 2017

Welsh rally star Osian Pryce will chase this year's Prestone British Rally Championship (BRC) title as well as glory on the world stage in his biggest and most exciting programme ever.

Osian will drive an Alpheria-Hills Ford-backed Ford Fiesta R5 in the BRC, starting with this week's Border Counties Rally in Scotland.

In addition to his seven-round British commitment, Pryce will tackle three rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) in a Ford Fiesta R5 prepared by two-time world champion squad M-Sport.

Pryce's entry at Rally Poland and Rally Finland comes courtesy of winning last year's Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy, the WRC-based one-make series for world rallying's most promising young drivers.

"This is my biggest year ever," said Pryce, 24, "it's what I've been working towards since I started in the sport at the age of 16.

"The Prestone British Rally Championship is unfinished business for me. I competed against Britain's best for three years; I finished third in the first season and second in the next two. I've got the chance to close the BRC out now and that's really important for me."

The BRC has moved on since Pryce last competed at the highest level of British rallying. The series is now dominated by high-tech, four-wheel-drive turbo-charged R5 category rally cars, cutting edge machinery designed to get the best out of the drivers while offering fans the best show on earth. And there will be plenty of competition for Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss.

"The BRC is going to be a huge battle this year," said Pryce. "There are a lot of drivers in different cars and all of them are capable of scoring well and challenging for the title. More importantly, a lot of the guys did the series last year and banked plenty of data from the rallies.

"I guess we come to the championship as underdogs; we've got less experience of the R5 car than most and we've been away from the BRC for a couple of years. Take this week's Border Counties [Rally] as an example, I've never driven these Tweed Valley stages before. But I'm not worried about that. Dale and I will just get on with what we're doing."

Osian's BRC is supported by Alpheria and Hills Ford, with the Fiesta R5 prepared by Spencer Sport.

"I've got a lot to thank Alpera and Hills Ford for," said Pryce. "I'm looking forward to putting together a campaign which will repay their faith in Dale and I. As for Spencer Sport, they're ideally placed to be running a car in the BRC; they have great knowledge of the rallies, the conditions and the set-up needed to get the most out of me and the Fiesta."

Ten rallies at the highest domestic and world level of rallying represents the perfect year for Pryce.

"Apart from a full World Rally Championship campaign, this is about the perfect season," he said. "The amount of time I'm going to be spending in the Ford Fiesta R5 will be invaluable this year and combining the BRC and WRC is a fantastic solution for us."

Pryce's first two WRC outings of the season will be backed by DMACK and M-Sport, while he returns to the Alpera/Hills Ford Fiesta R5 for his home WRC round, October's Dayinsure Wales Rally GB.

Pryce's programme was tailored following an invaluable morning spent at M-Sport's Dovenby Hall headquarters in Cumbria, where he met with former British Rally Champion and now head of M-Sport's vast world championship effort Malcolm Wilson OBE.

"The time I spent with Malcolm was so, so useful," said Pryce. "We talked through everything and it became clear where my priorities lay: I want to win the BRC, but Poland and Finland give me the chance to get out at the highest level, driving for the team which is leading the World Rally Championship. That's an unbelievable opportunity and one I want to make the most of. The priority will be to learn as much as we can during Poland and Finland and then have a big WRC attack when we come home to Wales for Rally GB."

The first of Osian's perfect 10 comes in the Scottish Borders on Friday (March 17).

### **Osian Pryce Q&A**

Starting with the Border Counties, how concerned are you that you've never competed there before?

OP: *"I'm genuinely not worried about that. At the end of the day we'll get the same two-pass recce as everybody else and what follows is a stretch of road to drive as quickly as possible along. That's all there is to it, no need to overcomplicate it or over-think it."*

How did the deal with Hills Ford come along?

OP: *"I was doing some tutoring with Will Hill, he's the son of Tim Hill, one of the owners of Hills Ford. I got talking to them and we did a deal for last year's Wales Rally GB. That was all a bit of a rush job and I don't think anybody felt we did the best job possible – so the agreement carried over to the British Rally Championship. Hills Ford has been fantastic, not least*

*because of their help in DDFT (Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy) last year, but this year, they're bringing Alphera, the team's principal backer with them."*

Hills Ford, haven't we heard of them in rallying before?

*OP: "Absolutely, but you might better remember them as Brooklyn Ford. This was the team that was running guys like Gwyndaf Evans and Phil Collins in the British Rally Championship in the late Eighties."*

Who will be your biggest rival this year?

*OP: "That's a tricky one, there are so many good drivers out there to choose from. I guess Keith [Cronin] is probably the one, he's got good speed and a championship-winning pedigree."*

You'll be in the dark for the start of the season, quite literally. The first two stages of the 2017 Prestone British Rally Championship are a brace of nighttime runs through the Craik stage. Looking forward to that?

*OP: "Absolutely. I love driving in the dark. I've done a bit of it on Rally GB and some other events. It's a great part of the challenge and, as long as we've got the right lights on and they're all set-up well, I love it – it's such a sensory thing when you're going 100mph between the trees in the pitch black!"*

This year's BRC goes to the world-famous Ypres Rally this year. Have you been there before?

*OP: "I haven't done Ypres before, so I'm really looking forward to it. By that point we will have had a few events in the car, so we should be more familiar with the Fiesta, the team and everything. I've heard so many stories about that rally, it'll be fantastic to get out there and see what it's all about. It'll also be nice to be heading south, having driven up the M6 for the first three rounds of the BRC!"*

You're going to be running on DMACK tyres in the WRC, what about the BRC?

*OP: "Yes, we'll be using DMACKs all year. It makes a lot of sense for me to get used to the DMACKs in the BRC, so we're fully up to speed for the world championship events. I worked closely with DMACK last season and it's a great opportunity for me to continue a relationship with a young and dynamic company like DMACK."*

What about the WRC rounds, how much are you looking forward to them?

*OP: "Massively! I've done Poland a couple of times and run well there – we were leading the class on both occasions before we had mechanical trouble – third time lucky this year! Poland's a great place, it's so quick. What's really good is that it comes in the middle of three back-to-back events, so we start there absolutely match-fit."*

And Finland?

*OP: "Finland's just huge. There's lots made about Finland being rallying's spiritual home, but until you get there and fly a car flat-out through the air on*

*the Ouninpohja stage, you just can't believe how true that really is! This will be one of the highlights of the year as well as a gilt-edged opportunity to work with M-Sport."*

Finally, what about Wales?

*OP: "There's no place like home! When I was talking to Malcolm Wilson, he looked at our programme and highlighted the opportunity we had in Wales. Like he said, we come home on the back of nine rallies at a really high level. We'll come home right on the boil and hopefully on the back of a very successful season. This year's Wales Rally GB could be the icing on our cake!"*

### **Border Counties Rally – the detail**

March 17-18

Based: Jedburgh

Service Newtown, St Boswells

Stages: 9

Total distance 270 miles

Competitive distance: 60 miles

Media officer: Lara Holman – [media@bordercountiesrally.co.uk](mailto:media@bordercountiesrally.co.uk)

### **Itinerary**

Friday March 17

Start Jedburgh 1900

SS1 Craik 1 (6.33 miles) 1951

SS2 Craik 2 (6.33 miles) 2047

Service Newtown St Boswells 2153

Parc Ferme Jedburgh 2250

Saturday March 18

SS3 Wauchope (8.26 miles) 0914

SS4 Hyndlee (6.66 miles) 0931

Service Newtown St Boswells 1017

SS5 Elibank 1 (8.31 miles) 1140

SS6 Yair 1 (4.99 miles) 1204

Service Newtown St Boswells 1234

SS7 Cardrona (4.62 miles) 1404

SS8 Elibank 2 (6.85 miles) 1445

SS9 Yair 2 (4.99 miles) 1509

Finish Jedburgh 1601

### **Beautiful Borders**

Markku Alén's eyes narrow. He remembers the Tweed Valley. Actually, he doesn't. But with a bit of prompting, he does. This place almost cost him his one and only victory on the RAC Rally.

"Elibank..." he says, the memory returning. Elibank indeed. Having already inverted his Lancia Delta HF Integrale at an innocuous-looking Chatsworth hairpin, the Flying Finn did it again in Elibank, losing the lead to Hannu Mikkola's Mazda 323. No matter, Markku made the time back and still won.

Legends like Alén know names like Craik, Yair and Cardrona only too well. Wauchope's another classic – but best not mention anything remotely close to Kielder to Alén (he hated the place).

The opening round of this year's Prestone British Rally Championship not only takes the crews through some of Britain's best stages, it also visits one of the most beautiful parts of the world. The scenery around the Tweed Valley is as captivating as it is all-consuming. Providing the mist's not down. If the mist is down, then it looks... well, it looks a bit misty.

If Friday is indeed a bit dreich, Craik in the dark will be one of the challenges of the season.

### **Osian's five Jedburgh facts**

Located 10 miles north of the border with England, the town of Jedburgh is firmly Scottish. And that means this town of 4,000 folk contributes to Scotland having the world's highest population of red-haired people. As much as 13 per cent of the Scottish population have red hair with around 40 per cent carrying the recessive red-haired gene (Ireland's second with 10 per cent, if you're asking...).

Scotland rugby captain and scrum-half Greig Laidlaw comes from Jedburgh.

Last year 1,188,000,000 bottles of whisky were exported from Scotland...

... And from 2021 that number will increase by 25 million bottles a year, thanks to a new distillery opening close to Jedburgh.

The Capon Tree – located two miles south of the town centre on the banks of the Jed for those of you who fancy a look – is one of Britain's 50 most significant trees. It's reckoned to be more than 1000 years old and a former meeting place for the Border Clans. Its trunk might have split in half, but that 10-metre diameter is still pretty impressive. (Probably best not mention the Fortingall Yew, which is reckoned to be between 3000 and 500 years old and has a chunkier trunk of 16 metres in diameter and is firmly rooted in the Perthshire village of Fortingall).

### **Osian's 2017**

BRC round 2/7

Pirelli International Rally

April 29-30

Based: Carlisle

Time to be brave. And stay mainly in the middle of the road. Europe's largest manmade forest plays host to round two. The straights are long and the ditches deep.

BRC round 3/7

RSAC Scottish Rally

May 19-20

Based: Dumfries

Slightly earlier date than usual might keep the midges away, but the challenge of classics such as Castle O'er and Twiglees will remain.

BRC round 4/7

Kenotek Ypres Rally

June 23-24

Based: Ypres

One of European rallying's greatest asphalt rallies (not to mention the brilliant atmosphere), former winners include Walter Röhrl, Henri Toivonen and Kris Meeke.

*WRC round 1/3*

*PZM Rally Poland*

*June 29-July 2*

*Based: Mikolajki*

*The second fastest round of the World Rally Championship, Rally Poland involves three days tearing up gravel tracks of the Polish Lake District.*

BRC round 5/7

Nicky Grist Stages

July 8-9

Based: Builth Wells

The BRC's only mixed surface event includes the best asphalt action on the fearsome Epynt military ranges together with forest stages which were once a regular feature of Britain's round of the World Rally Championship.

*WRC round 2/3*

*Neste Rally Finland*

*July 27-30*

*Based: Jyväskylä*

*The fastest round of the World Rally Championship. You pull top gear on Friday morning and leave your car there until Sunday afternoon on a fast-forward journey through the forests of Finland.*

BRC round 6/7

John Mulholland Motors Ulster Rally

August 18-19

Based: Londonderry/Derry

A mainstay of the British Rally Championship, this mid-summer asphalt spectacular brings some of the UK's best lanes – quite often in some of the wettest and trickiest conditions.

BRC round 7/7

138.com Rally Isle of Man

September 14-16

Based: Douglas

The Manx. If Markku Alen knows about Elibank, Ari Vatanen will never forget the Isle of Man. The world over, these stages are known, loved, loathed and respected. A brilliant way to end the BRC season.

*WRC round 3/3*

*Dayinsure Wales Rally GB*

*October 26-29*

*Based: Deeside*

*The final European round of the WRC takes crews through the forests of mid and north Wales, passing Osian's front door along the way. Rain, sun, ice and even snow regularly feature to embellish one of the world's finest motorsport events.*

**Osian Pryce** – date of birth: 24.02.93

2009 **Aged 16**, Osian heads to Latvia to contest the Latvian Rally Championship (drivers are allowed to compete from aged 15).

2010 Just days after passing his driving test, Osian starts his first season of competition in the UK, driving a Ford Fiesta ST. The **highlight** of 2010 is a **class win on his World Rally Championship debut** at Rally GB.

2011 Stays in the Fiesta for a season learning the ropes in the British Rally Championship, the pinnacle of the sport in the UK.

2012 Ends his first BRC season in a front-running Citroen DS3 R3T with **two podium finishes** and **third in the standings**.

2013 BRC championship runner-up after a **hat-trick of wins** in the second half of the season.

2014 Just misses out on BRC title after final-round thriller.

2015 Steps up to **Junior World Rally Championship** and **leads on his debut** (Rally Portugal) in the sport's premier feeder series. Finishes second on Rally Poland, having led until a mechanical problem late in the event.

2016 **Wins** the FIA World Rally Championship's **Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy** with two event victories and three podiums from five starts.

### **Ford Fiesta R5**

Engine: 1600cc turbo, 32mm restrictor

Max power: 280bhp @ 6,200rpm

Transmission: Sadev five-speed sequential gearbox; Sadev front/rear differential

Suspension: Adjustable Reiger dampers; MacPherson struts front/rear

Brakes: 300mm discs four-piston calipers; hydraulic handbrake

Wheels: OZ Racing 7x15-inch

Dimensions: length 3982mm; width 1695mm; height 1481mm; wheelbase 2490mm

### **Osian Pryce media office:**

Sandra Evans

[Sandra@wordspr.com](mailto:Sandra@wordspr.com)

(+44) 7887 693993