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News release

Pryce delighted with British Rally Championship podium on his debut in new car

Welsh rally star Osian Pryce made a near-perfect start to this year's Prestone British Rally Championship, taking a podium finish at the Border Counties Rally today.

Pryce, winner of last year's World Rally Championship feeder series Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy, is blending a world programme with an assault on this season's BRC – a series he has twice finished runner-up in. But this season he has stepped up to a Hills Ford/Alphera-backed Fiesta R5 in his pursuit of domestic and global glory.

Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss kicked off their first season in a four-wheel-drive car at this week's Jedburgh-based Border Counties Rally. The Welshmen overcame three punctures and a broken track-control arm to score a solid third place on their first ever visit to Scotland's Tweed Valley stages.

Pryce arrived at the start of the event on the back of a successful pre-event test and admitted he was still feeling his way into the Spencer Sport-run Fiesta for the first half of the rally. A step-by-step approach worked perfectly and resulted in him scoring fastest time on the event's penultimate test, the second run through the Elibank stage.

"I'm happy with this result," said Osian. "If you consider that, just a few weeks ago, we were sitting with our sponsors Hills Ford and Alphera working out the best way to go about this season – and in the intervening time we've sourced the car and a team and scored a podium. That's a pretty good result as far as I'm concerned."

A puncture just a handful of corners into the second of two Friday night stages cost Osian dearly.

"We lost the left-front tyre after about 10 corners," said Osian. "There was a big cut in the sidewall, something had sliced it right open. That left us six miles or so to drive on a flat. We lost around 35 or 40 seconds. To be honest, that was where we lost the chunk of time. The other two punctures didn't cost us much time."

Despite a sixth-stage deflation, Pryce came out of the Yair stage grateful to still be in the rally. We hit the same rock as David Bogie, but it put him out of the event. It was a proper, football-sized boulder that was right on the line; it was going nowhere. There was a big bang when we hit it with the front-right. That did the tyre and the track-control arm, forcing us to do the last part of the stage with the wheel jammed back into the wheel arch. We'd also had an

intercom problem in that loop – I couldn't hear Dale all of the time, I was snatching the odd note here and there. I was shouting back to him that I couldn't hear him, but he couldn't hear me!"

Spencer Sport fixed the car – and the intercom – at the ensuing Newtown St Boswells service, allowing Osian to go out and beat everybody in the last-but-one stage.

"We'd been building the pace through the rally," said Osian. "We had a really good pre-event test; we didn't do a whole load of miles, but we made change after change to the set-up. When we got to the start, I couldn't believe how good the car felt. To be honest, I didn't really trust that it could be that good and offer that much stability and traction. I drove one of these cars on Rally GB, but it wasn't anything like this. Credit has to go to Spencer Sport for preparing a fantastic Fiesta for us.

"The priority for me on this rally was seat time. I made a deliberate decision not to go too hard too early. I don't have anything like the experience of these cars that the other guys have around me and I needed to get to the finish to build my confidence in the car. I built the speed as the event progressed and that meant we were able to go fastest in stage eight. I was happy with that.

"There's more to come from me and from the car. Honestly, we're nowhere near where we can be with this thing which is why I'm really chuffed to be coming away from round one with good points on the board and a podium in the bag."

This time...

Border Counties Rally

Result: 3rd

BRC position: 3rd

Based: Jedburgh

Service Newtown, St Boswells

Stages: 9

Total distance 270 miles

Competitive distance: 60 miles

SS1: 5th fastest (5th overall) solid start to first stage of the season in new car

SS2: 11th fastest (7th overall) front-left puncture costs 40s

SS3: 3rd fastest (4th overall) happy enough with first daylight stage in new car

SS4: 4th fastest (4th overall) couple of moments, pace notes a bit too

optimistic

SS5: 4th fastest (4th overall) intercom problems, Osian can't hear Dale clearly

SS6: 3rd fastest (3rd overall) puncture and broken TCA

SS7: 3rd fastest (4th overall) clean run to third quickest

SS8: fastest (3rd overall) first fastest time despite puncture

SS9: 2nd fastest (3rd overall) rounds off BRC opener with fifth top-three time

Weather:

Today: rain then sun, overcast 8-13 degrees

Next time...

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. Kielder, Europe's largest manmade forest, plays host to round two. The straights are long and the ditches deep.

The rest of 2017...

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

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