

News release
21.04.17

Osian chases northern highlights

Recognised the world over as one of rallying's greatest challenges, Welshman Osian Pryce will head to the fearsome Kielder forest complex chasing a second consecutive win on next weekend's Pirelli International Rally.

Osian hasn't competed on the Carlisle-based British Rally Championship round since 2014, but two years ago he headed south as a winner. Naturally, he wants more of the same this time, but given his lack of experience with the Alpera Finance Hills Ford-backed Fiesta R5, his focus is on a top-three finish.

In an effort to get to know their sensational Fiesta better, Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss competed on Rally North Wales earlier this month. Fastest on every stage, they dominated the event to win by more than a minute.

"That was a really good rally for us," said Osian. "Obviously, it's nice to win the local one, but at the same time it was important for us to test things on the car and in the car. We did that and we came away with a good feeling for the next event."

The familiarity Osian enjoyed on his native Welsh stages has been replaced by Kielder and its constant question marks; the country's largest manmade forest is a tough place to play, even in the kindest of conditions.

"Kielder's so, so fast, you have to have everything absolutely spot-on with the pace notes," said Osian. "When you're committing to blind crests at more than 100mph, you need to know exactly what's coming next. One of the problems with Kielder is that it's quite featureless. I've done the Pirelli as a BRC round four times now and I've driven most of the roads – but I still don't feel like I really know the place very well. The last time I was up there I won... it's always nice to be going back to a place you left smelling of champagne!"

"We get sent an onboard film of the route, which I've been studying quite hard. In the couple of years I've missed the event, they've clear-felled quite a lot of places and it's hard to get your bearings. There's no doubt, this is a tricky rally and the plan for us is to keep our nose clean, stay out of trouble and chase a podium. You can never feel confident of a result or even a finish in Kielder until you're over the ramp with the points in the bag. The challenge this place poses is often underestimated and I'm sure there will be a sting in the tail waiting again next weekend."

Sting in the tail or not a podium on the first BRC round of the season and the Welsh win has given Osian's season a very positive start.

"Confidence is good in the Fiesta R5," he said, "winning North Wales helped with that, but there's still more to come from me and from the set-up. We'll work on that at next week's pre-event test (Wednesday), but the key for Dale and I is to keep the points coming on these early rounds where we're building up our knowledge of the car. Much as we'd like to be winning every rally we start, we have to accept that's unlikely and we have to take as many points as possible with an eye to the title."

Following Osian's test in Kielder, the Spencer Sport team will look to further refine the set-up of the Aphaera/Hills Ford Fiesta, dialing the car into the precise requirements for what will likely be some of the season's fastest rallying.

Pirelli International Rally – the detail

April 29-30

Based: Carlisle

Service H&H Carlisle

Stages: 8

Total distance 269 miles

Competitive distance: 100 miles

Media officer: Ed Graham – edgraham@btinternet.com

Itinerary

Saturday April 29

Start Carlisle 1100

Service H&H Carlisle 1130

SS1 Whitesike 1 10.47 miles 1255

SS2 Black Fell 1 15.34 miles 1329

Service Kielder 1350

SS3 Clintburn 1 14.69 miles 1529

SS4 Claver Hill 1 9.09 miles 1557

Service Carlisle 1716

Parc Ferme 1804

Sunday April 30

SS5 Whitesike 2 10.47 miles 0918

SS6 Black Fell 2 15.34 miles 0952

Service Kielder 1013

SS7 Clintburn 2 14.69 miles 1116

SS8 Claver Hill 2 9.09 miles 1144

Finish Brampton 1253

Kielder: it's a conifer-clad cliché

Before Matt LeBlanc and well before Clarkson, BBC Top Gear used to run regular rally reports called... *Top Gear Rally Report*. These shows were hosted by William Woollard and Tony Mason, two men who knew exactly what Kielder meant to the rallying community.

“Killer Kielder,” Woollard would say from his position perched on the edge of a desk, “is a place which regularly swallows rally cars whole.”

He’s not wrong. Titan of our sport Markku Alén added some colour to Osian’s preview to the season-opening Border Counties Rally and he can do the same here. Kielder, Markku, what does it mean?

“Maximum bad place.”

Three words summing up the deep ditches better than most. But, don’t forget, Osian and Dale have conquered Kielder before and they’ll be looking to do the same again next weekend.

Osian’s five Carlisle facts

Every year 475,000 cubic metres of timber is harvested from the Kielder forest. That’s a lot of wood. And an awful lot of sawdust.

London 2012’s Olympic torch passed through one British city twice. Which one? Carlisle, of course.

Paris, Milan... Carlisle. No Chanel collection would be the same without Carlisle-based Linton Tweeds – tweed supplier to the French fashion icon since the 1920s.

Carlisle vicar Sidney Swann cycled 301 miles from Carlisle to London in 24 hours in 1902. Naturally, he didn’t do it on a Sunday...

... In the same 24 hours, Carrs of Carlisle produced more than six and a half million custard cream biscuits. Carrs does that every day. The vicar doesn’t.

Last time...

Rally North Wales

01.04.17

Based: Dolgellau

Stages: 6

Stage wins: 6

Result: 1st

This 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. Britain’s largest manmade forest plays host to round two. The straights are long and the ditches deep.

Next time...

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.

The rest of 2017...

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.

2017 **Podium** on his BRC return and series debut in a Ford Fiesta R5 at the Border Counties Rally. **Dominates** Rally North Wales, winning every stage.

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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