

22.05.15
News release

Osian leads then loses on his Junior WRC debut in Portugal

After a head-turning, Junior World Rally Championship-leading start to the Rally of Portugal last night, Welshman Osian Pryce continued that pace into the gravel stages this morning.

Pryce's THORUtilities and G&M Pryce-backed Citroën flew through a shortened morning right at the sharp end of the leaderboard. Unfortunately, an electrical problem silenced the DS 3 R3-Max on the finish line of the Viana do Castelo stage close to the Spanish border; a faulty alternator was diagnosed by the hugely disappointed Autosport Technology team.

Osian will return to the Portuguese stages tomorrow, but his hopes of winning his first ever Junior WRC round are dashed – he will incur a time penalty for not completing all of today's route, ruling him out of a fight for points he was leading 24 hours earlier.

The opening day of the Matosinhos-based Rally of Portugal was packed with drama. Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss were robbed of their chance to drive the classic Ponte de Lima stage after forest fires started in the area last night and the fire department ruled the region too dangerous for the crews to enter.

When Friday morning did get underway, Osian was just three tenths of a seconds off the fastest Junior WRC time in SS3 – but having taken 1.3 seconds out of everybody in just two miles at last night's Lousada superspecial stage – he would have remained in the lead of the category.

Not far into the next stage, Osian suffered a problem with the front-left damper, seriously upsetting the handling and traction on the Welsh DS 3 R3-Max. Despite driving the car in that condition for almost 10 miles, Osian contained the time loss to the class leader to less than a second per mile, while opening the gap his nearest rival in third place to almost 50 seconds!

It was at the end of that test, however, where disaster struck. The engine cut out at the end of SS4 and refused to start. The car was recovered to service, where it was fitted with a new alternator, battery and damper in time for tomorrow's stages.

Osian said: "The positive from this event so far is that I have learned what's needed to lead the Junior WRC. Before the event people were asking me what was possible and I honestly had no idea. Now, I know..."

"The disappointment in retiring is just massive, but it's definitely a bitter-sweet feeling, having led on our first time in the Junior WRC. The damper

problem on the second stage we did today definitely cost us quite a bit of time – and probably the chance to take the lead back. It was hard to drive the car; there were quite a few impacts under braking for the slower sections and with no suspension on that corner, the impact was coming straight through the car.

“Under acceleration, that wheel was really juddering. It was tough for the car. When we got to the end of the stage, I told Dale I thought we might have lost half a minute and dropped down the leaderboard quite a way – but we were still second, and still right in the fight!

“When I went to pull away from the finish of the stage, the car cut out and just wouldn’t start. We push-started the car and got a little way down the road before the battery ran out of charge. That was it. Finished. Heartbreaker!

“With a couple of hours to reflect on the day, I’m definitely looking at the positives now. When I came here, I had no idea where I was going to be or what might have been possible. Obviously, there’s a very, very long way to go in this season, but we know where to pace ourselves to be at the front. And it’s not about putting the car on the doorhandles and going absolutely flat-out, it’s about using the head, driving sensibly and not wrecking the thing.

“We’re going to come back tomorrow and approach the stages in the same way. Disappointed as we are to be out of the race for a maximum point score, it’s hard to be too down when we know we’ve got a day in a great rally car on some of the world’s best roads planned for tomorrow!”

Today in numbers: Osian did what, when in his class?

SS1: 1st fastest (1th in Junior WRC) wins his first ever Junior WRC stage

SS2: Stage cancelled

SS3: 2nd fastest (**1st in Junior WRC**) just 0.3s down on another fastest time

SS4: 2nd fastest (2nd in Junior WRC) *completes stage with broken damper*

Retired after SS4 with electrical failure

Tomorrow in detail

Start: Matosinhos 0730

Three stages run twice

Service: Matosinhos 1300

Parc ferme (end of day): Matosinhos 1825

Longest stage: Fridão (37.67km/23.40miles)

Competition day one distance: 165.40km/102.77miles

Total day one distance: 586.64km/364.66miles

Osian and Dale will head further inland on Saturday than any other day. And they’ll be heading for the hills again – this time they’ll be winding their way through Portugal’s sixth highest peaks. Interestingly, they’ll pass some tungsten mines along the way. Tungsten is used to tip the spikes fitted in Michelin’s tyres for Rally Sweden. We thought that was interesting anyway.

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 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 will 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 Citroen DS 3 R3-Max, the latest evolution of Citroen 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.

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: 3

World Rally Championship class wins: 1

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About Vodafone Rally of Portugal

Date: May 21-24

Base: Matosinhos, Porto

Stages: 16

Competitive distance: 218 miles (352 kilometres)

Total distance: 950 miles (1529 kilometres)

Website: www.rallydeportugal.pt

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