

28.07.16
News release

Solid start for Osian's Finnish adventure

And so it has begun. Osian Pryce's Neste Rally Finland dream became a reality this evening, when he drove the opening stage of an event he's been thinking about since he was a boy.

Second quickest – missing the stage win by just six tenths of a second – it's tomorrow when the real work begins.

For drivers the world over, rallies don't come any bigger, faster or higher (car from road-wise) than this week's round of the FIA World Rally Championship. Rally Finland is the king-maker. Not that you'd have thought so if you'd seen tonight's opener around the streets of Jyväskylä; the mile and a bit long asphalt dash means nothing and has very little in comparison with the gravel roads lying in wait – but still Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss loved it.

The Welshmen, who secured the first part of the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy prize (two paid drives in next year's World Rally Championship) at Rally Poland earlier this month, tested their Ford Fiesta R2T at this morning's shakedown stage before preparing themselves for SS1 this evening.

"Shakedown was good," said Osian. "It was important to get back in the car and get a few miles on the loose under our belt again. We haven't done anything since Poland and even though it's only three weeks since that event, it feels like a really long time out of the car.

"Even the street stage tonight is famous. When you watch YouTube footage of Rally Finland and the 1000 Lakes going back to the Eighties and Nineties, you see this stage being driven by Hannu Mikkola in an Audi Quattro, Tommi Mäkinen in a Mitsubishi and Colin [McRae] in a Subaru of some sort. Just this mile-long stage is a very, very big deal – there's a story on every corner of this event. It's fantastic to be here and to be competing.

"But the focus is tomorrow and the first stage proper: Mökkiperä. I've dreamed of this moment for a long time, but it's a reality now and with that reality comes expectation – I want to win DDFT and I want the next two prize drives that are up for grabs on Sunday afternoon."

Osian's five favourite Finnish facts:

If you take a taxi in Finland and the cabbie's playing Summer Holiday by Cliff Richard, he has to pay Richard royalties. It's the same if Highway to Hell comes on, he owes AC/DC. In fact, while you're onboard, it's the same with any music: if he plays, he pays royalties. Once you're gone, he listens for free. Most cab rides in Finland are very quiet.

Don't butt in! Finnish culture frowns on anybody interrupting on a conversation.

But do get naked... in the sauna. It's nothing but the birthday suit when you step inside the hottest room in town.

And don't try to use a public telephone – there aren't any. But... there are more than five million mobile phones in Finland, not bad for a country with a population of 5.4m!

Finland hosts the annual Mobile Phone Throwing World Championship. *Seriously*, slinging your cell has been a national sport since 2000. The current record is held by Dries Feremans, who hurled his handheld 110.42 metres in 2014. The 2017 World Championship event, held in Savonlinna next March, is bidding for title of Winter Sport of 2017.

Tomorrow is:

Friday July 29

Osian's day starts: 0730

Osian's day finishes: 2230

Number of stages: 11

Competitive distance: 91.16 miles (146.70km)

Total distance: 382.20 miles (615.07km)

Longest stage: SS4/9 Jukojärvi 13.20 miles (21.25km)

Shortest stage: SS12 Super Special Harju 1.41 miles (2.27km)

Meet Osian...

Date of birth: 24.02.93

Lives: Machynlleth

Co-driver: Dale Furniss

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

Rally starts: 59

British Rally Championship event wins: 5*

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

World Rally Championship starts: 7

World Rally Championship class wins: 2

Website: osianpryce.com

* Including Osian's dominant National Rally Cup victory on this year's Mid Wales Stages

About Rally Finland

July 28-July 31

Based: Jyväskylä

Surface: gravel

Stages: 24

Competitive distance: 333.99km (207.54 miles)

Total distance: 1370.66km (851.72 miles)

Website: www.nesterallyfinland.fi

Rally Finland Itinerary

Thursday July 28

Start Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1842

SS1 Harju 1 2.27km (1.41 miles) 1900

Friday July 29

SS2 Mökkiperä 1 8.60 miles (13.84km) 0713

SS3 Halinen 4.19 miles (6.75km) 0746

SS4 Jukojärvi 1 13.20 miles (21.25km) 0902

SS5 Surkee 1 9.28 miles (14.95km) 1039

SS6 Horkka 1 9.38 miles (15.10km) 1132

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1234

SS7 Äänekoski-Valtra 4.59 miles (7.40km) 1410

SS8 Mökkiperä 2 8.60 miles (13.84km) 1508

SS9 Jukojärvi 2 13.20 miles (21.25km) 1638

SS10 Surkee 2 9.28 miles (14.95km) 1815

SS11 Horkka 2 9.38 miles (15.10km) 1908

SS12 Harju 2 1.41 miles (2.27km) 2030

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 2050

Saturday July 30

SS13 Ouninpohja 1 20.50 miles (33.0km) 0808

SS14 Päijälä 1 14.60 miles (23.50km) 0911

SS15 Pihlajakoski 1 9.01 miles (14.51km) 1034

SS16 Saalahti 1 2.73 miles (4.40km) 1152

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1242

SS17 Ouninpohja 2 20.50 miles (33.0km) 1448

SS18 Päijälä 2 14.60 miles (23.50km) 1551

SS19 Pihlajakoski 2 9.01 miles (14.51km) 1714

SS20 Saalahti 2 2.73 miles (4.40km) 1832

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1922

Sunday July 31

SS21 Lempää 1 4.28 miles (6.90km) 0828

SS22 Oittila 1 6.33 miles (10.20km) 0921

SS23 Lempää 2 4.28 miles (6.90km) 1115

SS24 Oittila 2 6.33 miles (10.20km) 1308

Finish Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1413

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Now say hello to the Ford Fiesta R2T

Engine: 999cc turbo, 12-valve, three cylinders

Max power: 180bhp @ 6,200rpm

Max torque: 250Nm @ 4,000rpm

Transmission: Sadev five-speed sequential gearbox, plated limited-slip differential and uprated driveshafts
Suspension: Adjustable Reiger dampers, Eibach springs
Brakes: 285mm discs four-piston calipers (front gravel); 310mm discs four-piston calipers (front asphalt); 280mm discs two-piston calipers (rear); hydraulic handbrake
Wheels: OZ Racing 6x15-inch (gravel); 6.5x15-inch (asphalt)
Dimensions: length 3982mm; width 1695mm; height 1481mm; wheelbase 2490mm
Weight: 1030kg

Osian's guide to 2016

Osian and Dale will contest five rounds of the World Rally Championship in the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy. Here's the details and an Osian download on the big five.

Been and gone...

Rally Portugal

May 19-22

Based: Matosinhos

Surface: gravel

Osian outings: 2 (2015, retired – mechanical; 2016 1st in DDFT)

Result: **1st**

Stage wins: 4

Stages led: 1

Osian and Dale took a sensible approach to the first half of the Porto-based opener, but still remained in the top three throughout the event. Moved to the front on the final day and took the win by almost two minutes.

Rally Poland

June 30-July 3

Based: Mikolajki

Surface: gravel

Osian outings: 2 (2015, 2nd Junior WRC)

Result: 2nd

Stage wins: 8

Stages led: 4

Rarely has second place been celebrated in quite such a fashion. Osian's result secured him the first major victory of the World Rally Championship season so far. Leading the points race after the first two DDFT rounds, Osian and Dale are now confirmed as factory DMACK drivers for two WRC events in a Ford Fiesta R5 next season.

Happening now...

Rally Finland

July 28-31

Based: Jyväskylä

Surface: gravel

Osian outings: 0

Osian says: "Talk to anybody involved in rallying and they'll talk about Finland. It's the spiritual home of our sport. OK, recently we've had a couple of French guys dominating the sport, but Finland's where it's at when it comes to the big heroes in the world championship. And you only have to take a look at the roads to see why some of the best drivers in the world come from here. The speed's high and the jumps are just incredible – we'll be flying through the air for 30 or 40 metres at more than 100mph this summer. Can't wait for take off!"

Up and coming...

Rally Germany

August 18-21

Based: Trier

Surface: asphalt

Osian outings: 0

Osian says: "This is a rally of three parts: the vineyard stages, the military testing ground and the country stages. The vineyards are absolutely full of hairpins, winding their way up and down the Mosel valley; absolute precision on the handbrake is called for here. Baumholder is an area used by the army to test tanks, which means plenty of surface changes from good asphalt to really broken concrete; the big danger here is from hinkelsteins, these are massive lumps of rock at the side of the road used to keep tanks on the straight and narrow. And if they don't move for tanks, they're not about to move for our Ford Fiesta R2T!

"Finally, the country roads. We'll feel a bit more at home here, these are not too dissimilar to what we see in Ireland. And, running through the countryside, these stages are prone to the same kind of cow-related surface changes we see in Ireland..."

Rally of Spain

October 13-16

Based: Salou

Surface: gravel/asphalt

Osian outings: 0

Osian says: "Two rallies in one when we get to the final event in Catalunya. The first day is on the gravel, which looks to be fairly similar in places to Portugal, but then it's a weekend on the asphalt. The Tarmac stages are all really nice and now some of the most famous in the world. Generally, they're double-width roads which flow quite nicely and allow you to carry good speed.

"Like the four events before Spain, I can't wait to get there and try them out for myself!"

About the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy

The brainchild of M-Sport World Rally Team principal Malcolm Wilson and DMACK managing director Dick Cormack, the DDFT takes the best young

drivers from around the world and pitches them into a five-round fight for the biggest prize south of the World Rally Championship itself.

There's a season in a Ford Fiesta R5 car at rallying's second tier – WRC2 – on offer to the winner after five rounds. The structure of DDFT has changed slightly this season, with rallies being paired (Portugal and Poland; Poland and Finland; Germany and Spain) and the crew gathering the most points from each of those two rallies will win two rallies in the R5 car next season.

Winning a full WRC2 season of 2017 competition in an M-Sport Fiesta R5 will require consistent speed from Osian and Dale this year.

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