

13.05.16
News release

Osian's World Rally Championship dream is alive

Welsh rally star Osian Pryce will return to the World Rally Championship next week with his eyes firmly fixed on the sport's biggest prize.

The 23-year-old is competing in this year's Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy (DDFT), which means five WRC rallies in a Ford Fiesta R2T against the best competition from around the world.

The first round is next week's Vodafone Rally of Portugal (May 19-22), run in the north of the country on fast gravel roads around Porto.

DDFT victory in 2016 would give Osian and co-driver Dale Furniss the keys to the next step on the road to rallying glory: a full season of WRC2 competition next year. WRC2 is the feeder series for the World Rally Championship itself.

"I'm so excited about this season," said Pryce, "we've waited a long time for this opportunity and now Dale and I are going to grab it with both hands."

WRC action is nothing new for Osian, who played a starring role on the first two Junior WRC rounds last season, before mechanical problems halted his charge in Portugal then cost him a win in Poland.

Those disappointments are behind him now.

"What happened last year is history," said Osian. "What I do take from those two events is experience. Twelve months ago, I was going to Portugal, my first foreign world championship event ever, and I really didn't know what to expect. I must admit, I was really nervous this time last year. But then I got there and Dale and I were on the pace – that has helped to really settle me down for this season."

DDFT is a joint venture between DMACK Tyres and two-time World Rally Champion firm M-Sport.

All the Ford Fiesta R2Ts are prepared to an identical specification and run by M-Sport on DMACK rubber for the five rallies to come.

Osian and Dale met their fellow DDFT crews at a two-day induction course at M-Sport's impressive Dovenby Hall base in Cumbria.

"Spending the two days up there was really useful," said Osian, "we got to meet everybody, including the engineers and guys from M-Sport and we got to do some workshops and a bit of training."

“One of the most impressive and exciting things was knowing who had walked through that front door at M-Sport before us – drivers like Colin McRae, Carlos Sainz and Marcus Gronholm. I know we are in a completely different situation to the one they were in, but that’s our target and a place like Dovenby Hall really inspires you to achieve and fulfill your goals.”

Osian tested a Ford Fiesta R2T for the first time this week.

“I started competing in a Fiesta,” he said, “but this is a very different car to that one. This R2T’s an amazing piece of engineering – with plenty of power coming from a one-litre, three-cylinder engine. The chassis is fantastic and really rewarding to drive. I only did half a day testing the car, but that was enough for me to know I’ve made the right move this year.”

Osian and Dale’s five-part adventure starts from Matosinhos, near Porto, in Portugal on Thursday (May 19).

- ends

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: 57

British Rally Championship event wins: 5*

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

World Rally Championship starts: 5

World Rally Championship class wins: 1

Website: osianpryce.com

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

About Rally of Portugal

May 19-22

Based: Matosinhos

Surface: gravel

Stages: 19

Competitive distance: 368km (228.67 miles)

Total distance: 1683.90km (1046.37 miles)

Website: www.rallydeportugal.pt

Rally of Portugal itinerary

Thursday May 19

Start Guimarães 1810

SS1 Lousada 3.36km (2.08 miles) 1901

Friday May 20

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| SS2 Ponte de Lima 1 | 27.44km (17.05 miles) | 0930 |
| SS3 Caminha 1 | 18.03km (11.20 miles) | 1014 |
| SS4 Viana do Castelo 1 | 18.70km (11.62 miles) | 1103 |
| Service Exponor | | 1330 |
| SS5 Ponte de Lima 2 | 27.44km (17.05 miles) | 1539 |
| SS6 Caminha 2 | 18.03km (11.20 miles) | 1623 |
| SS7 Viana do Castelo 2 | 18.70km (11.62 miles) | 1712 |
| SS8 Porto Street Stage 1 | 1.85km (1.14 miles) | 1903 |
| SS9 Porto Street Stage 2 | 1.85km (1.14 miles) | 1918 |
| Service Exponor | | 1950 |

Saturday May 21

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------|
| SS10 Baião 1 | 18.66km (11.59 miles) | 0942 |
| SS11 Marão 1 | 26.31km (16.34 miles) | 1024 |
| SS12 Amarante 1 | 37.67km (23.40 miles) | 1152 |
| Service Exponor | | 1325 |
| SS13 Baião 2 | 18.66km (11.59 miles) | 1532 |
| SS14 Marão 2 | 26.31km (16.34 miles) | 1614 |
| SS15 Amarante 2 | 37.67km (23.40 miles) | 1742 |
| Service Exponor | | 1915 |

Sunday May 22

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| SS16 Vieira do Minho 1 | 22.47km (13.96 miles) | 0704 |
| SS17 Fafe 1 | 11.19km (6.95 miles) | 0908 |
| SS18 Vieira do Minho 2 | 22.47km (13.96 miles) | 1004 |
| SS19 Fafe 2 | 11.19km (6.95 miles) | 1208 |
| Finish Matosinhos | | |

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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.

Rally Portugal

May 19-22

Based: Matosinhos

Surface: gravel

Osian outings: 1 (2015, retired - mechanical)

Osian says: "This was my first ever foreign round of the World Rally Championship last year. I was really nervous before the start, but once I was in the car and on the stages, everything settled down. And we were quick as well, setting fastest times and leading. Unfortunately, we had quite a few problems with the car and didn't make the finish.

"Portugal has such history in the World Rally Championship, it was a real privilege to come and compete here last year. There were so many fans, it was amazing and the roads were just fantastic!"

Rally Poland

June 30-July 3

Based: Mikolajki

Surface: gravel

Osian outings: 1 (2015, 2nd Junior WRC)

Osian says: "Poland was a real bitter-sweet experience for Dale and I last year. We led the Junior WRC round for pretty much the whole event, only to suffer an alternator problem on the final day. We finished second and I was absolutely gutted. Imagine that... second on only my second ever Junior WRC round and I was disappointed; that shows how close we'd come to winning.

"Poland was probably the fastest rally I had ever done. And the stages this year will be just as quick, demanding exactly the same commitment and the perfect set of pace notes to get them right. Carrying speed through the corners is so important – it's in these areas that this rally will be won or lost."

Rally Finland

July 28-31

Based: Jyvaskyla

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!"

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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