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News release

Stuart takes Scotland to the People's Republic

It might have been the wafer and caramel combination; more likely the roasted coconut sprinkled on top. Either way, the Chinese couldn't get enough of Scotland's favourite biscuit baker.

And Scotland's Stuart Loudon and Alister McRae couldn't get enough of China.

The flying Scotsmen's wings were clipped, however, when they hit trouble on Monday's opening day of the Chenzhou Rally. The pair bounced back brilliantly on day two, posting times quick enough to trouble the podium-dwellers in their BAIC Senova (that's the name of the car, think Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X) on Tuesday's second and final leg.

For Stuart, last week was a glimpse into another world. He went from a world-renowned nation of dog-lovers and landed in a place where man's best friend is bred for the plate.

"I absolutely loved it," said Stuart. "OK, discovering that dogs are bred to eat was a little bit strange – as was finding a duck's head on my plate one evening; I wouldn't mind but there was no hope of me tucking into that with the chopsticks. I passed on it.

"But the place and the experience was just incredible. I've truly never seen anything like it. Every time we stepped out of the hotel there was another crazy moment, to the point that seeing a helmet-less woman on the back of a moped with a gas canister slung over her shoulder became nothing out of the ordinary. It was brilliantly mad."

The rally in – some sort of – detail

The BAIC Senova Rally Team's pre-event test went well. The first stage of the rally, less so.

Stuart said: "Going into the second corner of the rally, Alister hit the brakes and the windscreen filled with engine oil – we couldn't see a thing. A mile or so later the powersteering failed and then three miles in we hit a bump and one of the links connecting the right-rear arm to the hub snapped and the wheel folded in. We dragged the wheel about 150 yards and parked up.

"Our rally had lasted just a few of minutes."

Fortunately for the Scotsmen, that left time for an extensive debrief.

"It was six hours before we got picked up," said Stuart. "That's six hours in 35 degree heat and crazy humidity sitting at the side of the road, wondering what kind of wildlife is hiding away in the bushes..."

"Alister and I talked about quite a lot in those six hours. It's fair to say he's pretty familiar with the ingredients for at least half of Tunnock's range of eight biscuits..."

Things *did* only get better

The team worked to re-prepare the car for the second day and delivered a sparkling Senova for the Scots. And the Scots shone.

"I must admit," said Stuart, "We were a wee bit disillusioned on Monday night. When the guys plugged the car into the computer, it turned out that the car had run at 150 degrees for four minutes. It was hot, very hot. After six hours at 35 degrees, I knew how it felt!

"Despite the temperature the engine had run at, the car worked really well and we were able to set some really good times on Tuesday. The car's carrying about 150 kilos too much weight, which Alister reckons we can get rid of before the next round and, once we've done that, I think we're going to have a fairly competitive package."

Most importantly, Stuart and Alister worked well together.

"When I woke up on the first morning of the rally, I thought: "You don't half put pressure on yourself... first rally in China and you're sitting next to Alister McRae!" At the end of the event Alister said he was really happy with the way things had gone, the pace note delivery timing was perfect. That made the event for me!"

Dogs, ducks and Caramel Logs – it was all about the food

"I think I'll be avoiding rice and noodles for a week or two," said Stuart, on being asked what he was most looking forward to on his return to Scotland. "You don't need to ask what I'm looking forward to the most... a Teacake!

"I took some Caramel Logs out to the event with me and they were gone in an instant. The mechanics absolutely loved them – I told them how many more biscuits we made in Uddingston and I think they're pretty keen to come over and sample some of them!"

Tunnock's ready to answer's China's biscuit crisis

After watching his week's supply of Caramel Logs demolished in the blink of an eye, Stuart began thinking about the potential market for Tunnock's in China. All six of the 1.357 billion people in China who tasted Tunnock's for the first time last week loved them.

“It’s definitely something we’re looking into now,” he said. “The guys out there really went for them and the potential export market to China is just huge. Somebody told me 300 million people smoke in China, if only they knew how bad cigarettes are for you and how good Caramel Wafers can be... We’re on the look out for an importer now, but in the meantime I’ll be packing a few more packets in the case for the next trip.”

Coming up...

Stuart will be talking you through his Chinese adventure with a Q&A later this week and a reflective blog next week. Now though, it’s time to turn night back to day – jetlag’s no excuse for Tunnock’s Biscuit Engineer being late in.

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