

News release  
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## **Stuart swaps the Snowball for the Snowman and a new challenge**

Uddingston co-driver Stuart Loudon starts the new season with a new challenge and a new team as he joins up-and-coming Scottish driver Lawrence Whyte for 2018.

Saturday's Snowman Rally will be the first time Stuart has competed with the 18-year-old, but a pre-season test in south-west Scotland on Saturday has filled the new partnership with confidence.

Ahead of the Inverness-based opening round of this year's Scottish Rally Championship, Tunnocks' fastest biscuit baker Stuart outlines his plans for the season ahead.

Firstly, tell us a little bit about Lawrence Whyte...

SL: "Lawrence is an 18-year-old Aberdonian who has recently started in rallying and is looking to compete in Britain this year."

Is he new to motorsport?

SL: "Not at all. He's competed at a very high level – world level – on quad bikes. But he's keen to switch to cars now. His time on quad bikes has served him really well: during the test it was immediately clear that he has a natural ability and a sense of balance with the car. The other thing I was impressed with was the way he was looking for the grip on the road and how sensitive he was to changes in the car set-up."

What did he change during the test?

SL: "He felt the car was understeering too much, so he came in, talked to the team and they worked on the pre-load for the differential. He drove the car again and was really pleased with it. That's pretty impressive stuff for an 18-year-old."

He's got a bright future then?

SL: "It's very early to start predicting anything, but the basics are definitely there. He finished fifth on the Wyedean Rally [in a Ford Fiesta R5] in England last year and that's a very, very promising start. Jumping off a bike and into a latest-specification Fiesta R5 is no mean feat for anybody, but Lawrence seems to have the confidence and ability to do that. He's got Dom Buckley [Jr] running the car for him and Dom has so much experience of this sport both from driving and running cars – it's the perfect set-up."

The test went well?

SL: "It did, yes. We were running near Castle Douglas and probably got through around 60 miles. There wasn't any snow on the road, which was a bit of a shame because it looks like we might be in for some on Saturday. We got

the chance to test different tyres though, including a run on the snow tyre. Even though there was no snow on the ground, it was important for Lawrence to feel how that really narrow tyre works with the gravel road – it's unlikely that we'll get uniform, deep snow for six stages in Inverness."

What do you think is possible on the Snowman?

SL: "We're seeded at 15, so a bit of snow would be quite nice – the road would be swept clear and we'd potentially be able to make the most of some nice conditions. Look, Lawrence has done one rally in a Fiesta R5 before, the only thing we're looking at here is a finish. We need the mileage and we need the experience, but he's great and he's really listening to what everybody's telling him. He has a very mature approach for a driver with so little experience. I'm looking forward to working with him."

Last time you were on the Snowman, you didn't do too badly...

SL: "I was second with Dale [Robertson, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX in 2016]. I like the stages up there, it's a great place and a great rally. I'm looking forward to the start of the season and competing in a really nice car."

What events will you be doing with Lawrence this year?

SL: We're not sure what the season looks like yet. I'm sure there's going to be some Scottish [Rally Championship] rounds and maybe some British Rally Championship, but it's all about getting some experience for Lawrence.

What about your World Rally Championship aspirations?

SL: They remain as strong as ever. I'm talking to a few folk about some WRC work this year and my aim hasn't changed: I'm still totally focused on becoming a professional co-driver in the World Rally Championship. Working with Lawrence is great and I'm really relishing this opportunity to help a talented young guy with plenty of potential and a fantastic attitude."

**Event data:**

Highland Car Club Snowman Rally

Saturday February 10

Event HQ: Fairways Leisure, Inverness

Start: High Street, Inverness 0900

Stages: 6

Competitive distance: 43.56

Total distance: 128.51

Finish: Fairways Leisure, Inverness, 1600

Finished second with Dale Robertson (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)

Lawrence Whyte 5<sup>th</sup> on Wydean last year Quad Bike

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**Stuart Loudon** is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 96 rallies, 20 of which are rounds of the World Rally Championship and one of which was with an Ashes-winning English cricketer. He makes biscuits in the family business when he's not working towards his dream of becoming a factory co-driver in the WRC.