

The Loudon-clear guide to... Nicky Grist Stages

We've had the Scottish, now it's time for the Welsh. This weekend's Nicky Grist Stages is one of the most talked about events in British rallying, not least because it's recreating something fantastic from years ago.

It's 29 years since Wales hosted a round of the British Rally Championship running a split format with stages on Epynt one day and through the surrounding woods the next day. But this weekend, that classic Tarmac-gravel mix is back on the agenda.

The British Rally Championship's getting back to its halcyon days and Elfyn Evans is turning in a performance worthy of that vintage too. He was superb on the Scottish and last weekend's World Rally Championship counter, Rally Poland, where he finished second in WRC2. The Nicky Grist will be his third Ford Fiesta R5 outing in as many weeks. He's certainly not short on seat time – and, don't forget, he's got a 100 per cent record at home this year having won the season-opening Mid Wales Stages.

This weekend will be an interesting one for Fredrik Åhlin, who doesn't have masses of four-wheel drive experience on asphalt and even less on Epynt. The military ranges will be a great leveler this weekend; pacenotes will be more important than ever on Sunday's featureless stages where the road is so tough to read.

It's easy to get drawn in to a big push on Epynt, but that place and those roads can bite. I have to say, though, I'm really excited by this rally. We all know about the long and illustrious history of the fabled Welsh Rally, so I think we owe Nicky himself and the Quinton Motor Club a debt of gratitude for reviving an iconic format. All we need now is for Russell Brookes and Mike Broad to come back in their Andrews-liveried Opel Manta 400 to defend that 1987 win.

Not that you'd forgotten, another great feature about this weekend is British rallying's best ever buy one get one free offer – with a BTRDA round coming your way on Saturday.

The rally ahead...

MSA British Rally Championship round 5/7

Date: July 9/10

Based: Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells

Service: Builth Wells/Epynt Ranges

Stages: 18

Competitive distance: 103.69 miles (166.86km)

Liaison distance: 137.42 miles (221.14km)

Total distance: 241.11 miles (388km)

Longest stage: Drovers Return 11.84 miles (19.05km)

Shortest stage: Tank (SS15/18) 4.36 miles (7.01km)

Sunrise: 0505

Sunset: 2131

Itinerary

Saturday July 9

Ceremonial start – Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells 0830

SS1 Crychan 1 5.92 miles (9.52km) 0934

SS2 Halfway 1 6.05 miles (9.73km) 1003

SS3 Route 60 1 4.92 miles (7.91km) 1041

SS4 Monument 1 5.46 miles (8.78km) 1108

Service Builth Wells 1138

SS5 Crychan 2 5.92 miles (9.52km) 1352

SS6 Halfway 2 6.05 miles (9.73km) 1421

SS7 Route 60 2 4.92 miles (7.91km) 1456

SS8 Monument 2 5.46 miles (8.78km) 1523

Service Builth Wells 1553

Sunday July 10

SS9 New Road 11.77 miles (18.94km) 0916

SS10 Quarry 1 4.39 miles (7.06km) 0951

SS11 Cilieni 1 4.52 miles (7.27km) 1007

SS12 Quarry 2 4.39 miles (7.06km) 1022

SS13 Cilieni 2 4.52 miles (7.27km) 1038

Service – Epynt Ranges 1045

SS14 Deers 1 4.42 miles (7.11km) 1141

SS15 Tank 1 4.36 miles (7.01km) 1156

SS16 Deers 2 4.42 miles (7.11km) 1212

SS17 Tank 2 4.36 miles (7.01km) 1227

SS18 Drovers Return 11.84 miles (19.05km) 1253

Finish – Groe Park, Builth Wells 1323

Top 10 entries

1 Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)

2 Fredrik Åhlin/Morten Abrahamsen (Ford Fiesta R5)

3 David Bogie/Kevin Rae (Škoda Fabia R5)

4 Tom Cave/James Morgan (Ford Fiesta R5)

5 Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton (Peugeot 208 T16)

6 Josh Moffett/John Rowan (Ford Fiesta R5)

7 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan (Škoda Fabia R5)

8 Jonathan Greer/Kirsty Riddick (Citroën DS3 R5)

9 Jamie Anderson/Ross Whittock (Ford Fiesta R5)

10 Matt Edwards/Will Rogers (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)

Stuart Loudon's key stage:

SS9 New Road 11.77 miles (18.94km)

Who can make the transition in driving style quickest and most efficiently?

After a day on the gravel, the teams will switch the cars to asphalt

specification on Saturday night before sending them down New Road on

Sunday morning. Get your eye in early on the Tarmac and there could be big gains to be made here. Caught napping and this one will cost you dearly.

Stuart will be watching... Sindre Furuseth/Jim Hjerpe #33 Renault Twingo R2 Evo

I've been keeping an eye on the DMACK British Juniors all year and Rob Duggan and Gus Greensmith have been really impressive – but it's Sindre Furuseth that I'll be watching this weekend after his Junior success in Scotland last time out. This is his first year competing outside of Norway and Sweden and he's showing great speed down roads after just a two-pass recce...

Weather with you:

Temperatures in the high teens, topping 20 in the sunniest sunshine. But it might be a bit cloudy as well – with those clouds threatening light rain.

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Stuart's restaurant recommendation:

Seven Stars Inn, Aberedw (01982 560535), Builth Wells. Great pub grub. Alternatively, dive into the Little Chef in Builth. It's never too late for an Olympic Breakfast.

Recent winners:

2006: Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Floene (Ford Focus WRC)
2007: Andrew Burton/Shelley Rogerson (Peugeot Cosworth)
2008: Steve Perez/Stephen McAuley (Ford Focus WRC)
2009: Will Nicholls/Nick Broom (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2010: Steve Perez/Paul Spooner (Ford Focus WRC)
2011: Charlie Payne/Craig Thorley (Ford Focus WRC)
2012: Roger Chilman/Brian Thomas (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2013: Euan Thorburn/Paul Beaton (Ford Focus WRC)
2014: Paul Bird/Aled Davies (Ford Focus WRC)
2015: Paul Bird/Aled Davies (Ford Focus WRC)

MSA British Rally Championship stat centre

Rounds run: 4

Mid Wales Stages (March 5), winners: Evans/Parry; Circuit of Ireland Rally (April 7-9), winners: Moffett/Rowan; Pirelli Carlisle Rally (April 30-May1),

winner: Åhlin/Abrahamsen; RSAC Scottish Rally (June 25), winner:
Evans/Parry
Stages completed: 35
Accumulated winning time: 5h00m28.5s
Accumulated competitive distance completed: 333.67 miles (536.96km)
Accumulated liaison distance completed: 706.91 miles (1137.60km)
Accumulated total distance completed: 1040.58 miles (1674.57km)
Longest stage of the season so far: Chirdonhead 16.15 miles (25.84km, Pirelli
Carlisle Rally)
Shortest stage of the season so far: Tank 4.36 miles (7.01km, Nicky Grist
Stages)

BRC fastest stage times (after round 4/7)

- 1 Elfyn Evans GBR/Craig Parry GBR (Ford Fiesta R5) 21
- 2 Fredrik Åhlin SWE/Morton Abrahamsen NOR (Ford Fiesta R5) 9
- 3 David Bogie GBR/Kevin Rae GBR (Škoda Fabia R5) 4

BRC stages led (after round 4/7)

- 1 Evans/Parry 16
- 2 Åhlin/Abrahamsen 9
- 3 Josh Moffett/John Rowan 6

Junior BRC fastest stage times (after round 4/7)

- 1 Robert Duggan IRL/Ger Conway IRL (Vauxhall Adam R2) 14
- 2 Sindre Furuseth NOR/Jim Hjerpe SWE (Renault Twingo R2) 9
- 3 Mattias Adielsson SWE/Andreas Johansson SWE (Vauxhall Adam R2) 6

Junior BRC stages led (after round 4/7)

- 1 Duggan/Conway 19
- 2 Furuseth/Undebakke 10
- 3 Gus Greensmith/Alex Gelsomino 5

Standings

MSA British Rally Championship standings (after round 4/7)

- 1 Evans 85
- 2 Åhlin 65
- 3 Tom Cave 56

Junior MSA DMACK British Rally Championship standings (after round 4/7)

- 1 Duggan 71
- 2 Furuseth 61
- 3 Greensmith 55

Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 84 rallies, 18 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.

Stuart Loudon and Words PR work their socks off to make sure every last dot and detail of the document is 100 per cent accurate – but we can't be responsible for any changes to the itinerary or stage distances.