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News release

## **Loudon lands on cloud nine**

By his own admission, not many of Stuart Loudon's telephone calls start like that one.

"Hi Stuart. It's Gordon Shedden here, I got your number from Allan McNish..."

Did Loudon want to co-drive the former British Touring Car Champion at the McRae Rally Challenge in a Ford Escort Mk 2? Did he want to compete against world champions Stig Blomqvist and Hannu Mikkola, while celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Colin McRae's own elevation to the top of the world?

Yes and yes. And yes again.

That's how Loudon, 27, confirmed his participation in this weekend's McRae Rally Challenge at Knockhill (May 16/17).

"I honestly couldn't believe it when I took that call," said the Lanarkshire co-driver. "It was one of those genuine pinch-me moments; when I ended the call, I wondered: "Did that really happen?"

"But it did. I know it did because I was up at Knockhill with Gordon for a photo shoot last week. I've got to be honest and say, it's a real honour to be involved in an event like this. It's such a high-profile event with guys like Gordon and Hannu Mikkola and Stig Blomqvist among others coming.

"I'm pretty pleased Gordon knows his way around Knockhill – it'll give me plenty of time to get the autograph book out!"

This weekend's event will be Shedden's first ever rally, but the 2012 British Touring Car Champion will be a very different proposition behind the wheel to England cricketing star Graeme Swann – the last novice Loudon helped introduce to the stages.

"When I co-drove for Graeme on Rally GB last year, everything was new to him," said Loudon. "But Gordon has a huge ability behind the wheel. When we were up at Knockhill, he asked if I'd ever been around the circuit. When I told him I hadn't he took me for a lap in a Lotus Elise. We were completely sideways into the first corner. But while I went for the brake, he went for another gear; he had it all under control.

"I can't wait for the event, it's going to be a huge – and, at times, emotional – occasion and a real chance to, once again, show our pride in the first Scotsman to be crowned World Rally Champion."

Not to mention being the first man to show Shedden the way around the stages.

### **Q&A Stuart Loudon**

Did you know Colin McRae?

*I did, yes. I wouldn't say I knew him well, but our family is friendly with the McRaes – they only live just up the road from us. My father was in Coltness Car Club with Colin, so he would come along and help test some of dad's cars sometimes.*

Did you ever sit with Colin?

*I had one chance to sit with him when he was testing... and the car broke on the run before I was due to get in. To have come so close to sitting with Colin McRae and just missing out remains one of the most disappointing things ever.*

What were you doing when Colin won the World Rally Championship in 1995?

*I was counting the minutes until the end of double maths or science or something, so I could run all the way home and get Ceefax on to find out what had happened – it was a pretty tense time! What I wouldn't have done for Twitter back then.*

Do you have just one special memory of Colin?

*There are so many pieces of television footage and so many times I was privileged enough to watch him from the side of the road, when he was competing up here in Scotland. But a really nice memory is from the first time I ever went to the Monte Carlo Rally, five years ago. I was up on the top of the Col de Turini stage and I saw a Saltire. I went over to see whose it was and to maybe have a bit of a chat. When I got there, I was greeted by a group of Italians. I asked about the flag and they said: "It's for Colin..."*

*It never ceases to amaze me how much he's still loved and revered all around the world – and that's just how it should be.*

There was a professional side to the Tunnocks-McRae relationship as well though?

*There was, yes. When Colin was driving for Ford, we got the opportunity to do a personal sponsorship deal with him – that was something we weren't going to miss out on! I can't remember the finer details, but we got a badge on his overalls and, I'd be sure, there was a line in there about a stock of Caramel Wafers for Colin!*

### **The McRae Rally Challenge**

Fife race circuit Knockhill will play host to a two-day national rally as part of a weekend of celebration on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Colin McRae and fellow Scotsman Derek Ringer winning the 1995 World Rally Championship.

A capacity entry for the one-off event will include former world champions Stig Blomqvist and Hannu Mikkola as well as Colin's father Jimmy and brother Alister. Beyond the competition, there will be a unique opportunity to see some of the cars Colin drove down the road to greatness.

The Vauxhall Nova he used on his first ever World Rally Championship outing (the Swedish Rally, 36<sup>th</sup> overall) will be there, alongside the Ford Focus RS WRC 01 he crashed out of Rally GB in 2001, on the verge of a second title. McRae's own creation, the R4, will also be on show alongside a variety of Fords and Subarus from his 14-year career in the world championship.

**Event details**

[www.knockhill.co.uk](http://www.knockhill.co.uk)

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