

News release
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The Snowman, it's just not cricket (but it is like it)

Ordinarily, rallying doesn't offer a natural comparison with cricket. Glasgow co-driver Stuart Loudon is, however, uniquely placed to make just such an appraisal.

In 2014, Stuart guided Graeme Swann – one of the world's best offspinners – through a treacherous Wales Rally GB route. The pair rolled on the first stage, but still made the finish.

At Saturday's Snowman Rally, Stuart started working with 18-year-old driver Lawrence Whyte. Again, the first stage tripped the pair up and again, they made the finish.

"I remember with Graeme, so much of what he'd achieved in cricket had come through experience," said Stuart. "He'd spent years working out how this pitch worked or how to read that batsman. He'd built up his knowledge, learned his craft and knew just when the guile and greatness was needed.

"Rallying is just the same; it's so much about experience. If Lawrence was a circuit racer, he could go to Knockhill and drive lap after lap after lap. He could drive in the sun and the rain and understand quite quickly the optimal line through Duffus Dip in each of those conditions. You can't do that in rallying.

"You get one shot at these roads each year. What Lawrence learned today, he'll build on when he's back next time. And, don't forget, with every car that passes down the stage, the condition of the road changes; rocks get pulled out, holes get deeper. Nothing stays the same. That's rallying.

"It's been a very long time since I've competed on an event with such varied conditions as today's Snowman. Today offered a huge opportunity to take a whole load of experience and that's what Lawrence and I did."

The forests around Inverness were littered with icy corners, the fourth and fifth tests remained snow-packed, while a theme common to all six stages was the mud.

It was the ice that did for the Scottish pair's hopes of a top-10 finish in their Ford Fiesta R5. Slipping off on the first stage, three and a half minutes were lost as the car was returned to the road, while a spin damaged the front suspension on the penultimate test. Despite those transgressions, they arrived at the Inverness finish 18th overall. And full of experience.

"There's no doubt Lawrence learned plenty today," said Stuart. "Those

conditions were absolutely terrible at times. We were arriving at corners and the road was just like glass; the first stage where we went off was a nightmare. The car in front of us was straight off and in the same ditch we landed in.

"Days like today are about getting to the finish and understanding how you got there. That's what Lawrence has done. I'm impressed with how he picked himself up after that first stage. The confidence and consistency really came through the day and that's very, very encouraging. This has been a tough event, a bit of a baptism of fire for Lawrence driving a very quick rally car in a competitive series like the Scottish Rally Championship. But he's brought the car home and now we look forward to building on that experience at the Border Counties next month (March 10, Jedburgh).

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

Result: 18th

Stuart Loudon media contact:

Sandra Evans

Sandra@wordspr.com

+ 44 7887 693993

Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 98 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.