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Blog

## **Finding fortune, misfortune and adventure in China**

*After tackling the first round of the Chinese Rally Championship with Alister McRae, Lanarkshire co-driver Stuart Loudon shares his thoughts on competing in the Far East for the first time.*

China has a lot to answer for. Apparently, the Tartan Army's well-chronicled life of misery started in the second or third century, in Linzi – the capital of the ancient Chinese state of Qi.

It was there and then that *cuju* came to pass: kick ball with foot.

Sepp Blatter agrees with this chronology, so I think we can be fairly confident...

Enough about football. You came here for rallying. And maybe a little bit about China.

The first thing I would like to talk about is the enthusiasm for rallying in China. It's massive, the people just love the sport. They are polite, inquisitive and very friendly. I really wasn't sure what to expect from China, but now I'm really looking forward to going back.

The stages we used around Chenzhou were great, a real challenge for Alister's driving and for my reading of his pacenotes – the description he dictates to me describing the nature of the roads ahead. I've been used to drivers using numbers to define the severity of the corners; for a co-driver, that's the easiest system, usually involving just a number and a letter (l for left, r for right), but Alister prefers the descriptive system which meant finding an abbreviation for words like hairpin, fast or square.

I put my time aboard my China Southern flight east to good use and came up with a code which worked really well.

Everything worked really well with Alister, although we were thrown in at the deep end a little bit with a raft of problems on the opening day. On reflection, not much more could have gone wrong on that first day, but equally things couldn't have gone much better on the second.

As a co-driver, you look for things to click with a driver. When the calls and corners match, everything works in perfect harmony in the car. I felt like Alister and I hit that sweet spot on day two. Yes, there will still be some rough edges to file down on future rallies, but for a first time together, it was great.

And it was truly memorable to be co-driving Alister McRae, former British and Asia Pacific Rally Champion and member of world rallying's most famous family.

Alister had been to China a few times before – as you would imagine for a guy who has won the FIA's regional title over there.

But me, I had no clue. In fact, the only clues I'd been given ahead of the event were not to expect any clues. And none came. But that only served to add to the adventure.

It was fantastic. OK, the result could have been better, but there's more performance and reliability to come from the car and, once that's there, Scotland will be a force to be reckoned with in China!

I'll leave you with more news of fascinating Chinese endeavor: not only did football come from the place, but also... ice cream. It's reckoned, around 2000BC, Chinese foodies added snow to a milk and rice mixture to make the forerunner to what we know ice cream to be today.

If they like snow, they'll love the Snowball.

**Stuart Loudon media enquiries**

Sandra Evans

+44 7887 693993

[Sandra@wordspr.com](mailto:Sandra@wordspr.com)