

News release – event preview
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No Belgian buns for Teacake king of the stages Loudon

Uddingston's Stuart Loudon will busy himself with three jobs in as many weeks, starting with co-driving at one of Europe's biggest motorsport events, this week's Ypres Rally.

Stuart will co-drive for Tom Preston at the classic Belgian event, joining him aboard his Skoda Fabia R5 run by reigning British Rally Championship team, Carlisle-based CA1 Sport.

Stuart is scheduled to arrive back in Scotland on Monday (June 26). He will be back to the family business at Tunnock's – where he works as an engineer on the production of those most Scottish of treats, the Caramel Wafer, Teacake and Snowball, to name but a few – on Tuesday (June 27) before he flies out to join the M-Sport World Rally Team, where he will help co-ordinate the current World Rally Championship-leading squad's assault on Rally Poland.

"It's going to be quite a hectic few weeks," said Stuart, "but I really can't wait to get stuck in. Priority number one is, and always has been, co-driving. For one reason and another, I haven't done enough of that this year, but I will be with Tom for the next two rounds of the British Rally Championship, that is Ypres and the Nicky Grist Stages in Wales.

"It's fantastic to be out competing again in a very good car at a really good level. Coming back to Tunnock's on the Tuesday means I'll keep in touch with the current day job before joining M-Sport in what's shaping up to be a sensational season.

"We've been so busy in the factory recently, it's incredible. We're at capacity to keep up with demand for the biscuits and that's meant some fairly long hours and working weekends. Being a family business, that commitment comes without questions, but it's brilliant to be getting out to do some rallying. Ultimately, my aim remains to join the elite bunch of co-drivers at the top of the World Rally Championship and doing these three jobs is definitely a means to that end."

I don't know you... but I trust you

Stuart and Thomas haven't met before, but following a pre-event test in Belgium on Tuesday and a mid-week recce of all the stages, the pair will hurl themselves headlong into some of Europe's trickiest and most technical asphalt tests with implicit trust in each other's skills.

"Jumping in alongside a driver I don't know is nothing new for me," said Stuart. "I've done it with guys from Japan, Abu Dhabi and all over the world

and I'm pretty well versed in how to get on in these situations. You do just have to get in, find a rapport and find a rhythm with the notes – it helps that Tom and I at least speak the same language!"

When Stuart co-drove Ryoza Saito on the Monte Carlo Rally in 2013, it was something of a challenge. Saito spoke no English and Stuart's Japanese is limited to the demands of Nippon Kitchen or NanaKusa in downtown Glasgow.

"I'm a bit more careful about who I jump in with now," said Stuart. "I've known Martin [Wilkinson, CA1 Sport owner] for a long time now and when he asks me to co-drive for somebody I'm happy to work with him; if it's somebody he respects then I'll, most likely, feel the same way. Thomas and I are doing the Nick Grist Stages after Ypres which gives us the chance to settle in and get to know each other."

History, heat and one heck of an atmosphere

Stuart competed on the Ypres Rally in 2012, running comfortably in the top 10 before the Ford Fiesta R5 he and Robert Barrable were competing in broke its gearbox. The pair were forced to retire, but not before Ypres had left its mark on Stuart.

"What an amazing place," he said. "The rally is just awesome and the atmosphere is phenomenal, definitely one of the best I've ever known on a rally. You just get so many people coming from all over Europe to watch some superb stages. The rally takes over the town's central market square and becomes one big party.

"But underlying all of that is a real sense of history. The significance of the town of Ypres and the surrounding area in modern history is huge for the British crews going over there. It's a rally where it's not hard to put the battle for British Rally Championship honours into perspective."

The Ypres Rally offers 260 miles of competition in a beautifully compact 20-stage route. The challenge is increased this season with what are expected to be higher-than-average temperatures.

"We're looking at 30 degrees on a couple of the days," said Stuart. "That means the temperatures in the car could be rising to well north of 40. The good thing about Ypres is that you do get some nice, long straights where driver and co-driver will be able to take a quick slug from the drinks tube. What's vital on these events is a good level of fitness. I've been working hard in the gym recently, so I'm ready for the physical demands this rally will place on me."

The Ypres Rally starts on Friday afternoon (June 23) and finishes shortly after 2100 on Saturday night (June 24). Further information is available from the event website: www.ypresrally.com

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 91 rallies, 19 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.