

News release – event review  
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## **Loudon lands top 10 after Ypres adventure**

Glasgow rally star Stuart Loudon scored his second consecutive top 10 result\* in the British Rally Championship when he guided Thomas Preston to ninth place on a typically tricky and challenging Ypres Rally this weekend.

Featuring as a round of the British Rally Championship for the first time, the Belgian classic, which started from Ypres on Friday afternoon, bared its teeth as it claimed high-profile scalps including local hero and World Rally Championship frontrunner Thierry Neuville, who rolled off the road on the opening evening.

Stuart didn't escape Friday night unscathed as he and Tom dropped the Skoda Fabia R5 into a ditch for three minutes.

"It's only when you've been here that you really appreciate how tricky this rally is," said Stuart. "On the surface, it looks straightforward: lots of straights with junctions, but you can lose so much time in the braking zones for those corners. It's crucial that a driver understands the grip and how to read the road – which is tricky when it can change from corner to corner.

"This was Tom's first time in Ypres and he coped really well with that lack of previous experience. The Friday night moment came after we cut a corner which had a bit of a lip in it; you kind of needed that cut through the right-hander to commit to the next left over a crest. When Tom saw the cut wasn't on, because of the lip, he opened the steering slightly and that unsettled the car. I felt it break away and looked up from the notes to see one of those big concrete barriers coming at us, fortunately we missed that and clobbered a smaller concrete pole. That chucked us into the ditch where we dropped three minutes."

With the Skoda escaping with damage to the door on Stuart's side, the pair pushed harder into Saturday.

"I was impressed with the way the times came down and the way Tom's pace improved," said Stuart, "he learned very quickly. We went off on Saturday, but that was a typical Ypres thing and it didn't cost us too much time.

"Ypres is a long, tough and quite tiring event. Friday afternoon and night are non-stop and then you go into this monster Saturday, which is just fantastic. I didn't get out of my overalls until one in the morning on Sunday and that kind of day is quite unusual in the sport these days. I loved it. I loved being back in the car competing again – it's so useful to get the seat time.

“Ahead of the event, Tom and I talked about the importance of getting knowledge from this rally and all of that knowledge is at the finish. I was really pleased we got right through the stages, the experience of driving the Fabia R5 on Tarmac in Belgium will help Tom when it comes to the next BRC round, the Nicky Grist Stages which is half asphalt and half gravel.”

That Builth Wells-based event (July 8/9) will be Stuart’s next outing alongside Thomas.

Between now and then, Stuart returns to the World Rally Championship where he will work as a co-ordinator with M-Sport. The British-based squad arrives in the Polish Lake District in the lead of the both the drivers’ (with Sébastien Ogier) and manufacturers’ championship. Having stood on the podium to celebrate Ogier’s victories in Monte Carlo and Portugal, Stuart is hoping to be enjoying a glass of champagne in Mikolajki on Sunday.

“Working with M-Sport this season is a fantastic opportunity for me,” he said. “Rarely do co-drivers get to see this side of the sport and this side of an operation like M-Sport – but it gives me such a valuable insight into what it takes to succeed at world level.”

\*Stuart finished 10<sup>th</sup> on the Pirelli International Rally (29/30 April) with Alex Laffey (Ford Fiesta R5).

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**Stuart Loudon** is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 92 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.