

News release
30.04.23

Mission accomplished for Max McRae in Portugal

- Solid start to Max's European-based programme at the Rali Terras d'Aboboreira
- 18-year-old immediately on the pace in The Racing Factory-run Peugeot
- Portuguese roads give seat time and experience ahead of ERC debut next month
- Six-round Junior ERC starts with Rally Poland (May 20/21)

Max McRae enjoyed a strong debut with The Racing Factory, posting times which would keep him at the front of one of the most competitive classes on the Rali Terras d'Aboboreira.

Having landed into his new life in Europe, moving north from Western Australia, just days earlier, the 18-year-old took a big week very much in his stride.

The DirtFish-based driver tested The Racing Factory's Peugeot 208 Rally4 on Monday before completing the recce later in the week, ahead of three Friday night stages. The bulk of the competitive mileage came through Saturday on an event based very much in WRC Rally of Portugal territory in Amarante.

With an astonishing 34 Rally4 cars on the entry list, Max and co-driver Mac Kierans were ready for a competitive baptism of fire.

Despite having zero experience of the roads, Max was immediately on the pace through the opening stage. Fourth quickest and less than 10 seconds off the lead, the Scotsman was happy. He maintained a similar pace throughout the event.

"I came to this event with a few priorities," said Max. "The main one was to get seat time in a car very similar to the Opel I'll be driving in Junior ERC from next month. I was also really keen to work with The Racing Factory in competition for the first time and, of course, I wanted experience on fast gravel in mainland Europe.

"Outside of Australia, Wales is the only place I've driven on the dirt, so this was a really important one for me.

"I'm happy with what we achieved. The team was fantastic and the car was great, I'm really pleased with that. The pace was good. I know where we are, I know how hard I was going. The last thing I was going to do here was push and risk putting the car off the road.

"We achieved all of our objectives and ticked all the boxes. And we got to drive some awesome roads! My dad and gramps had told me a few stories about rallies in Portugal and I got a glimpse of what makes the place so special this weekend. The stages were fantastic and the atmosphere with the crowds were just great.

"Now for Poland and the Corsa..."

SPONSORS IN HERE

Max's Junior ERC calendar

Rally Poland

May 20/21

Poland

Gravel

The fast, but soft and sandy, gravel roads through the Polish lake district provide a stern challenge for Max's Junior ERC debut. Running in a two-wheel drive car further down the field, he'll have to deal with the full range of conditions from lovely smooth gravel to some of the most rutted roads he's seen in his short career.

Tet Rally Liepāja

June 17/18

Latvia

Gravel

Bound for the World Rally Championship next season, Latvia's ultra-quick gravel roads will provide one of the most spectacular – and fastest – weekends of the year. It's on these stages that world champion Kalle Rovanperä cut his teeth less than a decade ago.

Royal Rally of Scandinavia

July 7/8

Sweden

Gravel

The Värmland forests are well known to rally fans the world over... but not like this. The Swedish Rally was the WRC's winter event for decades, but with the nation's world championship counter moving north to Umeå, the roads around Torsby will now be pressed into summer action.

Rally di Roma Capitale

July 29/30

Italy

Asphalt

The first Tarmac outing of the season takes the McRae name to the Italian capital for a rally that's grown and matured into one of Europe's classic encounters. Based out of the thermal town of Fiuggi, south-east of Rome, the stages will be packed full of tifosi out to enjoy the highest profile rallying mainland Italy has to offer.

Barum Czech Rally Zlin

August 19/20

Czech Republic

Asphalt

Definitely one of Europe's biggest and best-known events. Part of the ERC schedule for almost two decades, the high-speed, bumpy Tarmac stages offer a real challenge. And it's not just the roads, the vegetation and meteorology can work against the crews with sometimes changeable weather affecting grip as the cars dive in and out of the forests.

Rally Hungary

October 7/8

Hungary

Asphalt

The final round of the season takes Max and his fellow Junior ERC competitors to the challenging and tricky stages around the Zémlen region.

The car, the challenge

The Opel Corsa Rally4 Max will drive this season is the same model which won the Junior ERC title last season. Designed and built at Opel's motorsport factory in Germany, the car develops more than 200bhp from its 1200cc turbocharged engine. Drive is transmitted to the front wheels through a plated limited-slip differential and a five-speed sequential gearbox.

It is the very definition of a pocket rocket.

It's also the car which holds the key to the next step on Max's journey. Success in Junior ERC through 2023 would mean an assisted step up into the Junior World Rally Championship for next year.

Ends