

News release
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McRae looks to continue Latvian speed in Sweden this week

- 19-year-old Scot set for summer festival of European Rally Championship action
- DirtFish-backed Max McRae on flying gravel form in Opel Corsa Rally4
- Max joined by father Alister at Royal Rally of Scandinavia this week
- Max: "I know I have the pace to win in Sweden. That's what I'm here for."

This week is a week of firsts for rising Scottish rally star Max McRae. He's never raced Sweden, visited Karlstad, tasted pukka meatballs or met Oliver Solberg.

It's a time of change for the 19-year-old.

"Sweden!" grinned Max. "It's just such a rally place, eh... It's Stig Blomqvist, the Swedish Rally, snow and Oliver Solberg."

This week is some more than others. Snow? No. Some of the world's fastest rally drivers – including Max's Dad Alister and a whole family-full of Solbergs – are descending on Karlstad but the aptly named Royal Rally of Scandinavia is a very different animal to the winter beast which once roamed these parts as a round of the World Rally Championship.

For a start, this is the latest round of the European Rally Championship and there's not a snowflake in sight.

"I lived down under in Australia for quite a long time," continued the DirtFish-backed Opel Corsa Rally4 driver. "And when you're down there in Oz, places like Sweden seem like a fairly long way away – which they are! But to be here now, this is real, it's all happening now."

The McRaes are hanging with the Solbergs in the run up to the latest ERC counter this week.

"There are so many similarities with our families," said Max. "Basically, we all eat, sleep and drink rallying. I've known Oliver for years, but I'd never actually met him until this week. Literally, we said hello, went straight to the quadbikes and just went flat out through the woods for hours. So cool."

This week is, of course, all about Max continuing the Junior ERC-winning pace he established at the last round, last month's Tet Rally Liepāja in Latvia.

"It's great that we showed that pace in Latvia and Royal Rally [of Scandinavia] is about continuing that. This week's a fresh event though, nobody's really driven these roads in these summer conditions – that's good for us. It's a more level playing field where so much is based on a good recce and a good set of notes.

"I've watched a lot of onboards and the roads look fast – maybe even faster than Latvia in places. Obviously it's different without all the snow! What we don't know so much about is

how they will evolve from the first run. What will 100 cars do to the surface? Let's see. It's going to be an absolute blast.

"And we're going there fighting for the win."

Alister will drive Petter Solberg's Ford Escort RS1800 in the event's classic section. One of the highlights for Max and Al is the Colin's Crest section on Saturday.

"It's pretty special to have a really famous jump named after your brother and uncle," said Alister. "I was competing with Colin back in the day when he made that big jump in the Vargåsen stage – it's a fantastic place and a great place to fly. It's going to look different without the big snowbanks to keep you on the straight and narrow though..."

"It'll be great for Max to get in there and have a look, as you can imagine it's something he's watched a fair few times on YouTube! Me? I'm there to enjoy the occasion. Max is the one with the job to do, he's the one pushing for the win in Juniors."

Max and co-driver Mac Kierans arrived in Sweden on the back of a disappointing Rali del Castelo Branco outing in Portugal. Their Opel Corsa Rally 4 suffered transmission failure on successive stages, ruling them out of the all-asphalt event.

Ends

Max's Junior ERC calendar

Rally Poland

May 20/21

Poland

Gravel

Result: 6th Junior ERC

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

Result: 5th Junior ERC

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.