



Chairmans Report

As you are aware earlier this year we felt compelled to postpone the Bishopscourt Rally. A provisional date of the 19th of June 2021 was proposed for the running of the event, and we can now confirm that this date has been confirmed by the ANICC, Bishopscourt Racing Circuit and the other championship clubs. We only await Motorsport UK's final sign off which we have been told should be a formality. It would be remiss of us however not to point out that these arrangements are subject to no further deterioration in Northern Ireland's circumstances and no imposition of stricter restrictions. More good news is the confirmation that Bishopscourt 2022 will take place on the 12th of March and the 2022 Down Rally is planned for the 23rd of July. The safety of our members and the wider Motorsport Community is paramount in our minds, and we will continue to monitor how July's Rally will run in respect of the restrictions that may have to be imposed on spectators, and how social distancing will be managed amongst competitors and officials. In the meantime, keep yourself, your friends, and your family safe.

Brian



Chris Patterson is set to start his first World Rally Championship event in two and half years partnering M-Sport's Gus Greensmith on April's Rally Croatia. Replacing Elliot Edmondson who has been Greensmith's navigator for more than 2 years, Chris will bring years of top-flight experience to the team as Greensmith continues his learning curve in his first full year in a World Rally Car. We wish him the best of luck next month in Croatia.

More good news is that all Irish partnership of Craig Breen and Paul Nagle has been confirmed by Hyundai Motorsport on Rally Croatia. It will be the Irish pair's first asphalt WRC round with Hyundai. The team will field Ott Tanak and Thierry Neuville at No1 and No2 in i20 WRC cars meaning that Dani Sordo misses out again. Croatia's sealed surfaces will provide a sterling challenge for the 2019 Irish Tarmac Rally Champions, but Craig and Paul should feel completely at home on the asphalt. Craig hasn't competed on a WRC asphalt event since finishing seventh in a Citroen C3 in 2018. Croatia will be Breen and Nagle's third WRC start since then. The Croatia Rally features 20 stages but there will be no super special with the cancellation of the Zagreb stage. Paul Nagle had one of his earliest tests in a competitive car partnering Kieran O'Neill on their run to 2nd overall on the 1998 Killarney Historic Stages Rally.

If you have any news or stories for the next Newsletter, please let Harry know.



This month we lost two big names from the motorsport world, F1 and MotoGP have commenced testing and the BTCC testing starts soon. In this edition, I have tried to bring you updates from around motorsport I hope you enjoy your read.



Sabine Schmitz

Racer & Broadcaster

Sadly in March we lost the wonderful Sabine Schmitz to cancer, Flying the flag for women in motorsport Sabine made history at the WTCC race of Germany in May 2015 when she became the first female

driver to score a point in the modern era. The German superstar whilst making her debut in a Chevrolet RML Cruze, finished 10th to score one point. Speaking shortly afterwards, Schmitz said: "There are not many sports where men and women compete together. It's more or less motorsport and some horse-riding. You need someone to look at who does it. I think I wasn't too bad driving against all the professionals, the world champions and the Formula One drivers." After placing P11 in Race 2, Schmitz returned to the WTCC for the two Nürburgring Nordschleife races in 2016 and matched her 2015 results. Michèle Mouton, Rally legend and President of the FA Women in Motorsport Commission, said "Sabine's achievement in scoring points in the WTCC of course broke new ground and demonstrated a huge talent. But she achieved so much more in life and her career both in motor racing and broadcasting. She was a tremendous ambassador for FIA Women in Motorsport, and it makes us all extremely proud in terms of what she accomplished and the many women she inspired to follow in her footsteps. This is a great loss, and our hearts go out to all her loved ones." François Ribeiro, Head of Eurosport Events, which promoted the WTCC and is now the promoter of the WTCR – FIA World Touring Car Cup, said: "It was a joy to welcome Sabine to the FIA WTCC. Although she knew the track very, very well, the car and the category were completely new to her. But she showed a true fighting spirit and a real talent to score points in both events. Out of the car she was engaging, enthusiastic and extremely approachable. It was a privilege to have known her, even for just a short time, and all our thoughts go to her family and friends."

As well as her achievements in the WTCC, Schmitz was a two-time winner of the 24h-Rennen, the Nürburgring 24 hours. She also enjoyed a successful career in broadcasting and was a presenter on the BBC Top Gear programme where she humbled the egotistical Jeremy Clarkson when she destroyed his time around the Nordschleife in a highly modified jaguar but did hers in a Transit Van.



MARCH / APRIL



Loeb splits with Elena after a 23-year partnership

Sebastien Loeb and long-term co-driver Daniel Elena have parted company after 23 years together. Loeb admitted "it wasn't an easy decision" to make and it is understood that he called Elena himself to deliver the news to him, having most recently competed together at this year's Dakar Rally for the Bahrain Raid Xtreme team. The Prodrive-build BRX1 car's debut at the Dakar Rally was marred with mechanical

problems including a broken suspension arm on stage six and a damaged bearing on stage seven. Retirement followed for the pair on stage eight when they picked up two punctures in the opening 80km and only had one spare wheel. Posting on his official Instagram account this afternoon, Loeb wrote: "After five Dakar rallies together – and after discussions with the team – we concluded that maybe it would be good to try something else. "It is not without a heartache that we will not start the next edition as teammates. It wasn't an easy decision to make or the easiest phone call to make after these 23 years, but I have no doubts about your ability to bounce back.

Monster Ducati

Production has begun at the Ducati factory of the new Ducati Monster, which will be available in all Ducati dealerships starting from April 2021. The new model is inspired by the original 1993 philosophy: a lightweight and essential sport with a frame derived from the Superbike and a powerful engine that is at the same time perfect for road use.

The new Monster is an ideal motorcycle both for those approaching the world of two wheels for the first time as

well as more experienced motorcyclists and it's ready to provide fun to new generations of motorcyclists thanks to its easy-to-manage performance from its 937cc L-twin engine producing 111bhp at 9,250 rpm, it's extremely low weight, has a nimble and intuitive chassis and state-of-the-art electronic equipment.

The ergonomics of the bike have also been improved by moving the saddle closer to the handlebar, which allows the rider to maintain a more upright position with less load on the wrists, and greater control over the bike. The new Monster is equipped with three Riding Modes (Sport, Urban & Touring) that make it possible to shape the character of the bike according to tastes and needs.

To encourage the entry of young enthusiasts into the world of two wheels, the bike is also available in a depowered version for A2 license holders and prices start at £10,295.



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F1 Commentator and Motorsport Legend Passes

Motorsport fans across the English language speaking world are saddened to hear of the passing of Formula 1 commentator Murray Walker. The British television personality, who was 97, was regarded as 'the voice of Formula 1' and first commented on a Grand Prix at

Silverstone in 1949. He was the lead commentator on British TV for 25 years, working for the BBC between 1976 and 1996 and ITV between 1996 and 2001. Walker retired from full-time commentary after the 2001 US Grand Prix but continued to work in F1 and in motorsport right up until his final years. Paying tribute to Murray, FIA President Jean Todt said: "I am very sad to learn that Murray Walker has passed away. A Formula 1 commentator for over 25 years for the BBC and ITV, most notably alongside James Hunt, he was the voice of Formula 1. All the FIA Family pays tribute to him. My thoughts are with him and his loved ones." Formula 1 also issued a statement saying the series was "immensely sad to hear that Murray Walker has passed away. [Walker's] passion and love of the sport inspired millions of fans around the world. He will forever be a part of our history and will be dearly missed." Tributes to the late commentator came from across Formula 1, including from all 10 current F1 teams, as well as from current and former F1 drivers such as 1996 F1 World Champion Damon Hill, 1998-'99 champion Mika Häkkinen, George Russell, Sergio Pérez, Alex Albon, Paul Di Resta and Karun Chandhok.



Ulster Rally

The Ulster Rally is now planned as the finale of the 2021 BRC (BRC), completing a six-round calendar that features four gravel and two asphalt rallies. Championship organisers originally unveiled a seven-round calendar in December with three asphalt rallies at the head of the schedule before four further events in the forests. However, Covid has resulted in the cancellation of

the Circuit of Ireland, Tendring & Clacton and Jim Clark Rallies meaning the 2021 season will now begin with the Nicky Grist Stages in July. As per the original schedule, the Grampian Forest Rally and Trackrod Rally Yorkshire will follow before the first asphalt event, the Mull Rally. The Cambrian Rally and then the Ulster will close out the year.

BRC Manager Iain Campbell said: "It's been an extremely tough time for all forms of motorsport over the past 12 months or so and the BRC hasn't escaped the challenges caused by the pandemic".

"But we have been working very hard behind the scenes to create a calendar worthy of the Championship title and I truly believe we have come up with an exciting, challenging yet cost-effective offering for our BRC top-flight, Juniors and National competitors.

"Of course, we were disappointed to lose the opening three rounds of the calendar and we were eager to ensure we could still provide a six-round series that encompassed both gravel and asphalt surfaces, as well as each event having a unique format and style".

BMW BTCC Livery



Team BMW will sport a new livery for the 2021 British Touring Cars Championship (BTCC), all of them bearing the iconic 'M' colours. Colin Turkington from Portadown runner up in last years championship, Tom Oliphant and Stephen Jelley will form the three-pronged attack on the UK's leading motor racing series. Inspired by the classic BMW Motorsport liveries of the 1970s, the M- stripes, resplendent in Bavarian blue, dark blue and red, adorn a menacing matt-black base coat, creating a sharp and modern look. The 3 Series

has enjoyed a stellar life in the BTCC since it was debuted in April 2019. A win on its maiden weekend was the start of an incredible season that delivered a one-two finish in the Drivers' Championship and a record-equalling fourth title for Turkington.

The Manufacturers' title capped off a magnificent double; and there were two more championships secured in 2020, as BMW equalled the BTCC record of five consecutive Manufacturers' successes and Team BMW scored a fifth Teams' title in seven years. All three entries will proudly carry the BMW FIRST logo to promote the brand's aftercare subscription service that offers customers exclusive access to a range of benefits and products to enhance BMW ownership.

The cars will also promote "My BMW", a new app designed to offer a full connected-car experience, BMW M Performance Parts and BMW Original Motor Oil as part of the livery. The new livery will make its track debut as two days of pre-season testing get underway at Brands Hatch on Wednesday 23 March. All three cars will attend the BTCC season official launch event at Silverstone on April 22 and the first race at BMW UK's local circuit, Thruxton, on May 8-9.