

MSA
BRITISH
RALLY
CHAMPIONSHIP



MSA British Rally Championship Q&A (formal version)

"The BRC is renowned as the best National Rally Championship in the World, with half its events on gravel and half on tarmac and open to the latest breed of dynamic 2WD rally machinery from a wide range of leading manufacturers, it offers an arena for driver development and a true test of skill and ability.

The Championship, through its professional presentation, global television coverage of highly publicised events, action and live results for spectators on-event or at home, will continue to deliver on its promise to be the springboard for future champions."

Q & A

Interview with Mark Taylor, MSA British Rally Championship

Q1: For 2012, you are making some significant changes to the Championship with the move to a two-wheel-drive only format. Why the change?

The performance levels of modern front-wheel-drive cars have now developed to a point where they are spectacular to watch and provide an ideal technical basis and structured class formula that will encourage the skills of the driver to shine through. With such a wide choice of cars in which to compete, the British Rally Championship has looked to the future and, after much consultation, chose to set the scene for the new breed of exciting 2WD machinery that, when driven well, provides a good basis on which to learn and rewards talent.

Q2: What prompted this decision?

Over the past couple of years we have seen the eligible four-wheel-drive formula become technically more advanced and prohibitively expensive, it has reached a point where it is just doesn't fit with our model for the BRC. Increasingly, more and more car manufacturers are homologating two-wheel-drive cars, which will ultimately improve sustainability of the sport.

Over the past few years, organisers have done as much as possible to ensure that cheque book performance is reduced and there is a return to skill as the most important factor for success.

Q3: Do you think you are on the right track?

YES! We have created change when it is most needed. In my experience the BRC is viewed as the leading domestic rally championship in the world. We are a team that responds to market trends. We have a clear vision of what the British Championship should provide as the pinnacle of the sport in the UK, a product that is in step with what we believe is right for our customers. At the end of the day we have to deliver on our key objectives but not price ourselves out of the market place. We have to create the correct competitive environment, for the competitors, manufacturers and sponsors.

It will be interesting to see if other countries take the BRC's lead and follow in its footsteps with a 2WD format.

Q4: Do you think these changes will tempt manufacturers back to the BRC?

The new format certainly provides the right environment for manufacturers to be involved – either in a supporting role, or as a participating works operation. Indeed, the move to 2WD has established a championship specifically for Manufacturers in 2012 to reflect this.

It's exciting to see that the changes have encouraged Renault to join the BRC alongside Citroën and Ford with their new one-make series: the Renaultsport UK Twingo Trophy, which is for R1 and R2 cars. This should prove to be very competitive, as it offers a chance to win a drive in the Monte Carlo Rally.

Ford and Citroën have yet to announce their prizes for 2012, but I am sure these two series' will again provide great opportunities for their competitors.

It's also fantastic to see that the Pirelli Star Driver competition is continuing in 2012. This time the prize is a fully-funded drive in an R2 Skoda Fabia. It's a massive award and still one of the biggest in British Motorsport at the moment.

Q5: The British Championship seems to have been instrumental in trying to provide a place for young up-and-coming drivers. In 2011 the average age of the 35 registered competitors was just 24. Do you think the changes will affect this demographic?

By reducing cost levels back to something that's more realistic and, by focusing on cars that cost less to run - very important in these difficult economic times – we firmly believe the competition will be closer and therefore more exciting. It will also make it more accessible and more affordable to more drivers – especially the younger ones.

The BRC offers a logical step where up-and-coming competitors can progress in an objective way. If they prove they can win at each level, there is no reason why they can't emerge as British Champion and, if they are serious about moving to a world-wide series, winning a domestic championship has to be the best starting point.

Q6: What advice would you give someone who one day wants to be a British Champion?

We have introduced an age limit of 23 for the British Junior Rally Championship in 2012. This will focus on Rally 1 homologated cars, which are affectively standard and provide the ideal platform from which to learn the essential skills needed to be successful. The class is supported by two manufacturer-backed one-make series', each offering progressional prizes for their champions. I expect other manufacturers to join Ford and Renault in the future, as this entry-level category is critical to the modern sport and for the discovery of future talent.

From then on, the BRC offers a joined-up class structure and each step from Rally 1, 2 and 3 becomes a logical progression by giving competitors an increase in performance whilst retaining two-wheel-drive cars. Each level sees an increase in cost, but done objectively, these steps develop the skills required to drive a Rally 3 car quickly and this may eventually be the key that opens the door to becoming British Rally Champion.

You really can't skip the steps, many people have tried and failed. You must have a good basis of skills, including try to get the very best from an under powered car which will punish you when you get it wrong. Each of the two wheel drive classes technically prepare you for the next and ultimately, a current Rally 3 car is the best feeder to latest four wheel drive cars. If you can drive a modern two wheel drive car quickly and become British Champion, you have ever chance of succeeding at the next level.

Q7: Why do you think the BRC is so popular worldwide – especially with foreign crews?

Previous winners have included world rally champions from around the world. And this is no coincidence. They include: Hannu Mikkola, Stig Blomqvist, Ari Vatanen and, of course, Colin McRae and Richard Burns.

The Championship offers a mix of both asphalt and loose gravel surfaces. It is the topography and geography of the events that make it an ideal proving ground and place

to learn your craft. There is a huge difference in the characteristics of each of the forests, the terrain and tracks - and it's the same for the asphalt events too.

Therefore, the BRC provides a unique opportunity to develop the skills needed to become successful at world level. But you have to be a proven winner first!

Q8: So what about the events in 2012?

For 2012, the British Championship will feature six events - all of them 'great' rallies in their own right, using 'classic' stages and run by highly-experienced teams of dedicated people. The BRC prides itself on providing competitors with the best events in the UK - and there's no doubt that this trend will continue in 2012.

The season kicks off in spectacular style with the Rallye Sunseeker in the south of England. This high-profile event made its BRC debut last year and, taking place at the end of February, it's a great way to start the season.

It's then the Bulldog Rally of North Wales in March for round two, providing a new two day format, the event uses some of the best forest stages in Europe - many of them used in this year's Wales Rally GB. Another forest rally follows, this time in the daunting Kielder Forest, with April's Pirelli Rally.

The surface then changes to asphalt for two events: the always impressive Jim Clark Rally, which takes place on closed public roads in Berwickshire in May. There is a mid season Sponsors' Day before the always popular Toddsleap Ulster Rally in August, which will again be based in Antrim.

For the final event of the year it's a return to gravel and the Yorkshire Rally. Another two day format, starting and finishing in Scarborough, the event will again see teams use some of the iconic stages of British Rallying, the forests of the North Yorkshire Moors providing a perfect arena in which to decide the British Champions.

Q9: Why is Rally Isle of Man missing?

There have been issues that have led to its cancellation this year. Looking to the future, the BRC has left the gap between the Jim Clark and Ulster Rallies deliberately so, as soon as the circumstances are right, it is hoped that the Rally Isle of Man will return to this slot in 2013.

In the meantime, the championship has decided to use the summer break to hold a promotional event aimed at competitors, teams and their sponsors. This will provide a great opportunity to entertain current and potential sponsors and their guests, allowing them to offer passenger rides, corporate hospitality and provide access to a once in a lifetime, money can't buy experience.

Q10: So what else is in store for the BRC in 2012?

As well as appealing to competitors, the 2012 BRC is also aiming to increase its appeal to the public: with city centre starts, autograph signing sessions, spectator viewing areas and more access to information on the web. And of course, added to this, there's the fantastic television coverage of every round brought to us via Sky Sports!

The championship is running a media only day to kick off the new season giving regional and national journalists an opportunity for passenger rides and unique interviews with the new teams and drivers.

And it's also worth mentioning that the BRC is conscious of ecological issues and, together with the MSA (the sport's governing body in the UK) the events and competitors, it is continually looking at ways in which to improve its green credentials and currently leads the way as a rally championship.

Q11: So do you think the BRC has all the right ingredients?

Yes I do, by reducing cost levels back to something that's more attainable and, by focusing on cars that cost less to run, the BRC firmly believes the competition will be closer – and therefore more exciting. It will also make it more accessible and more affordable to more drivers - very important in these difficult economic times.

Added to this, the make-up of the events, the international rules and having reconnaissance on all rallies allows drivers to experience the sport's whole package, plus develop their skills and speed to enable them to progress through the ranks. In addition, the Championship sees a 50/50 split of tarmac and gravel mileage, which provides a real test of all-round driver, co-driver and car ability.

There are also evocative elements that bring drivers to the Championship, with classic stages in Dalby and Kielder Forests combined with the twisting tarmac of Northern Ireland and the Scottish Borders – two of only three areas where closed public road stages are available in the UK.

Q12: Well, it's certainly looking like an exciting year ahead.

Yes, I am really looking forward to it. In essence, we have taken the best from previous years and combined it with a host of new features. I believe this new format will set a benchmark for championships all over the world and one that will underpin the future of our sport in the UK. I think we're in for one of the most exciting seasons yet. I can't wait!

Production BRC

Q1: So, with a 2WD only format for 2012, what will happen to the four-wheel-drive cars that have competed in the British Rally Championship previously?

We fully acknowledge there are competitors who would prefer to use 4WD cars and want to take part in high-profile and well-organised rallies that consist of more than 40 or so miles.

Therefore, for 2012, we have put together a brand-new series that will allow them to compete on BRC events. It is called the Production BRC (PBRC) and will cater for N4 and R4 class cars.

However, because there are a lot of competitors who have cars that are not upgradable to R4 – such as Evos 7 – 9 and Imprezas N9 – N12, we have added controlled regulations that will allow them to upgrade their cars to a higher-spec and therefore, enable them to compete with S2000 and latest R4 machinery.

The series will follow all six rounds of the British Championship, with the events running under a National status and, in general, will be shorter distances. Therefore, competitors will enjoy a significant reduction in costs, although they will enjoy many of the same benefits they would get if they were competing in the main BRC event.
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