

Handbrakes & Hairpins

your insight into the world of rallying



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RALLYE MONTE-CARLO RETURNS TO THE WRC TO THRILL FANS AND CREWS ALIKE

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Editor Evan Rothman

Favourite rally car? Audi Quattro S2
Current favourite WRC driver? Mads Ostberg
Favourite WRC rally? WRC Rallye Deutschland
Favourite rally? Total Rally, South Africa

Tweets too much about rallying, loves nothing more than spectating on a forest rally, and has aspirations of being the world's greatest rally journalist. He's also oftentimes seen with a camera in his one hand and his mobile phone ringing in his pocket at the most inopportune times.



Photojournalist Eva Kovkova

Favourite rally car? Citroën C4 WRC
Current favourite WRC driver? Mads Østberg
Favourite WRC rally? Vodafone Rally de Portugal
Favourite rally? White Nights Rally, Lahdenpohja, Russia

Likes to walk in the Swedish snow forests or on Portuguese dusty hills, likes to freeze, to get wet in the rain or to melt from the heat during photo hunts for flying cars and smiling faces. Also is knowing as a press ice bear working for South Africa :)

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START RAMP

- 07 Decisions, decisions: Novikov chooses...
- 08 Tuthill Porsche Challenge for 2012
- 09 VW in the WRC, with Skoda
- 10 Ford unveils the new team

CONTENTS

SERVICE PARK

- 13 Even more thrills in 2012

PARC FERME

- 17 More gold for Skoda
- 18 WRC Rallye Monte-Carlo preview



OPENING SHOT

The 2012 Dakar Rally is now finished, and the all-new Toyota Hilux reached the finish line in third place overall after 9,000km of competition. Former winners of this event, Giniel de Villiers and co-driver Dirk von Zitzewitz showed that consistency and a measured driving attitude pays off. Picture: Motorpics.

START RAMP

DECISIONS, DECISIONS: NOVIKOV CHOOSES...



Words: **Evan Rothman**
Picture: **WorldRallyPics**

Towards the end of the 2011 World Rally Championship season, Russia's Evgeny Novikov became the first regular WRC driver to compete in two different current rally cars back-to-back.

The 21-year-old star who competed in 2011 under the Stobart Ford M-Sport Rally Team in a Ford Fiesta RS WRC switched for one event in a Citroën DS3 WRC.

Keeping mum on his thoughts on the differences (and similarities) of the two machines, his bid for more action in 2012 would be closely monitored to see which brand he would continue in the 2012 World Rally Championship.

Novikov will be aiming to contest the full season this year, but has signed up for a minimum of eight rounds thus far. And what machine will he be piloting?

To compare rally cars back-to-back in tests is useful. But, to experience the cars in such conditions in the white-

knuckle heat of competition is totally different. With strong performances in both machines, highlighting the similarities of these beasts, engineers were clamouring for any insight from the Russian on which car was best. Pubs and bars the world over have been kept open long after the final round has been called, with punters debating which car is the one to race.

Malcolm Wilson is not a man to be underestimated. His business, the successful M-Sport in Cumbria, United Kingdom, produces state-of-the-art rally weaponry. And, it is with the Fiesta RS WRC that Novikov will drive in 2012.

Does that answer the question as to which rally car is the best to have? It seems the debate will be continue to rage on despite this decision from Novikov, though.

As in 2011, partnering the diminutive Russian is the highly experienced Frenchman Denis Giraudet.

Known for his fearless driving attitude and hell-for-leather style, Novikov admitted in an interview that he will build on his season-ending consistent performance.

"On the last two races I was driving on the directions to slow down," said Novikov. "Naturally I will build on this stability and then, little by little, build up my speed. But it will depend on the race. In some races, like Monte Carlo and Sweden, I will go carefully to gain experience for the future but in others like Greece I will go to the maximum."

It is the "maximum" that the rally world loves, and very few rally drivers currently in the WRC adopt this attitude. Here is to you, Evgeny, to a high-speed 2012! **F&H**

RALLYING IN A PORSCHE 911? TUTHILL PORSCHE CHALLENGE 2012



Words: **Handbrakes & Hairpins**
Picture: **Archive**

The Tuthill Porsche Challenge – the only one-make rally series for historic Porsches in the world – will enter its second season in 2012 after bringing Stuttgart’s finest machinery to asphalt and gravel stages all over Great Britain last year.

The inaugural series, which hosted guest appearances from stars such as Francois Delecour and Jimmy McRae, was won by London-based businessman Andrew Barnes: his first rally title.

“It was a lot of fun, and the cars were not only beautifully-prepared, but extremely easy to drive,” said Barnes. “My work commitments meant that I had little time to spare for motorsport this year, making the Tuthill Porsche Challenge the perfect arrive and drive package, with some fantastic rallies and a great social scene.”

Once more, the Tuthill Porsche Challenge will feature five events within the British Historic Rally Championship: four on gravel and one on asphalt, from April to October as per the calendar below. For a fully inclusive price of £42,250 (plus VAT if applicable) competitors will have the use of a rally-prepared 3.0-litre Tuthill Porsche 911, which can be personalised to carry

sponsors’ logos.

All other costs, such as accommodation, entry fees, insurance, consumables, parts and servicing, are contained within the price – meaning that competitors just have to turn up and drive.

Tuthill Porsche is the country’s foremost preparation firm when it comes historic Porsche rally cars, and the list of drivers who have competed for the Oxfordshire-based team reads like a veritable “who’s who” of the sport. Bjorn Waldegard, the inaugural 1979 World Rally Champion, won the Safari Rally for Tuthill Porsche in 2011 (the first time that Porsche has won the African classic) and previous Tuthill drivers include Markku Alen, Stig Blomqvist, Michele Mouton, Walter Rohrl and Patrick Snijers.

Once more, some exciting prizes have been put into place for the challenge, which are unique at this level. The winner of the 2012 Tuthill Porsche Challenge will receive a fully-paid entry into an FIA European Historic Rally Championship round, using one of Tuthill Porsche’s full-specification 3.0-litre Porsche 911s.

The second and third placed driver and co-driver will enjoy a two-day course at Tuthill Porsche’s renowned ice-driving school in Norway, which runs every year from late December to March.

Tuthill Porsche director Richard Tuthill, who himself competed on the

Porsche Challenge this year with a one-off drive on the Severn Valley Rally, said: “We launched the Tuthill Porsche Challenge last year with the objective of giving competitors the most value for their time and money that we possibly could, enabling them to enjoy their rallying without worrying about the organisation or any hidden extra costs. As well as a very competitive championship, it’s proved to be tremendous fun, and we put just as much emphasis on the social side as we do on the action in the forests. The calendar brings together some of the most legendary stages in the UK, on both asphalt and gravel, so it’s only right that we give our competitors the chance to enjoy them in a legendary car: the Porsche 911. As the only one-make rally championship for historic 911s in the world, we’re proud to occupy a unique position on the international rally calendar once more.”

Tuthill Porsche Challenge 2012 calendar:
Bulldog Rally (gr) - 24 March
Pirelli Historic Rally (gr) - 28 April
Severn Valley Stages (gr) - 9 June
Ulster Historic Rally (asp) - 17-18 August
Colin McRae Stages (gr) - 6 October

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.francistuthill.co.uk> and
<http://www.norwayicedriving.com>. **H&F**



VW IN THE WRC: WITH SKODA

Words: **Evan Rothman**

Picture: **Volkswagen Motorsport**

The Volkswagen World Rally Championship (WRC) campaign kicks off in earnest this week. No, their much publicized Polo R WRC will not turn a wheel. Nor will there be a Volkswagen entered to take on the WRC's 2012 season-opening Rally Monte-Carlo this week. In fact, their only signed driver to the squad will contest the event in a Skoda Fabia S2000. Sebastien Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia will make their Volkswagen competition debut in a Skoda, not a Volkswagen (although admittedly Volkswagen owns the Czech brand).

This event running from 18 - 22 January is the first of 13 rounds of 2012 WRC calendar, and Ogier is expected to only compete in the Polo R WRC at the end of this year should development of the rally machine be on track. Knowing the Germans, it will be an astonishing bit of kit too!

Of greater interest to readers of Handbrakes & Hairpins would be the inclusion of Dutch star Kevin Abbring

and co-driver Lara Vanneste to compete in this event in a second Skoda Fabia S2000 as part of Volkswagen's "Wings for Life" driver search programme. Abbring last year claimed the SWRC win in the season-ending WRC Wales Rally GB in a Skoda Fabia S2000, and is a talent the German company cannot ignore.

"After Sébastien's impressive victory in December as a Volkswagen factory driver at the Race Of Champions we are very much looking forward to finally contesting our first joint rally," says Volkswagen Motorsport Director Kris Nissen. "Monte' is the mother of all rallies in general, which makes it a great place for this premiere. With its changeable conditions of asphalt, ice and snow, it's one of the most challenging events on the calendar. And even though we're not competing for championship points this season we'll naturally be giving our best at each run."

Worth mentioning is that on Ogier's first attempt at this rally, he won it in 2009. "Monte is a legend and a very special rally," said Ogier. "I'm happy to see it back on the WRC calendar and about being able to contest my first

rally there with the Volkswagen team. For us, this year will primarily be about gathering experience and concurrently developing the Polo in order to compete with a strong and competitive package in 2013."

For WRC Rally Sweden, however, Abbring moves out of the Fabia to be replaced by reigning Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) series champion Andreas Mikkelsen. Together with co-driver Ola Floene, Mikkelsen aims to impress Volkswagen with his speed. But, Mikkelsen and Abbring both aged 22, will be sharing that Skoda Fabia S2000 throughout 2012 as they battle it out with each other in the Volkswagen Young Driver Programme. Bring your popcorn to watch this most entertaining battle! **H&H**

FORD WORLD RALLY TEAM: NEW IDENTITY, NEW CHALLENGE



Words: **Handbrakes & Hairpins**
Picture: **WorldRallyPics**

The all-new Ford Fiesta RS World Rally Car livery was revealed last week when the company's official team unveiled the new colours that will adorn the car in the 2012 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC).

Ford World Rally Team director Malcolm Wilson and Ford of Europe motorsport chief Gerard Quinn unveiled the livery for the eye-catching Fiesta RS WRC at the Autosport International Racing Car Show in Birmingham, motorsport's traditional start-of-season showcase event.

The team will continue to be sponsored by Castrol EDGE. Branding for Castrol's global range of best-in-class motor oils will feature prominently in the Fiesta RS WRC's new livery for the upcoming season, as it did in 2011.

The Fiesta RS World Rally Car, with its four wheel-drive transmission and 1.6-litre EcoBoost-inspired engine will once again spearhead Ford's challenge in the 2012 and 2013 championships. The car, based on the best-selling Fiesta road car, claimed a clean sweep of the podium in both the first and final rounds of its debut season last year.

Finland's Jari-Matti Latvala and

co-driver Miikka Anttila, who topped the world rankings for special stage victories in 2011 and won the final round of the championship in Rally GB last season, are confirmed as team leaders for 2012.

They will be partnered by former world champion Petter Solberg and Chris Patterson, who have signed a one-year agreement to drive the team's second Fiesta RS WRC in all 13 rounds. The experienced Solberg won the world title in 2003 and the 37-year-old Norwegian has 13 world rally wins to his name. It will be his second stint with Ford, having launched his world rally career with the team in 1999.

Gerard Quinn, Ford of Europe's



senior manager for motorsport, said: "We have a great partnership with M-Sport and its leader, Malcolm Wilson, and great technical partners in Castrol. Our strong driver line-up includes Jari-Matti Latvala, recognised as one of motorsport's rising stars. Already regarded by many as the fastest driver in WRC, during 2011 he showed consistency and expertise on all surfaces. We believe he will flourish in his new role as team leader with the Ford World Rally Team, and look forward to seeing his pace light up the special stages around the world.

"The addition of Petter Solberg to the team brings one of the sport's

most experienced and flamboyant drivers back to the team where he started his top-level career. A drivers' world title in 2003 and 13 world rally victories are testament to his abilities and his vast experience will be a great asset to our driver line-up."

Malcolm Wilson, team director and M-Sport managing director, said: "It's great to have Ford onboard as manufacturers again this season and you can see from the new livery how important Castrol EDGE will be again in 2012 as a technical partner. After such a strong performance last year we are really excited about where we can be at the end of the season. With

the car and driving team we have, alongside the experience and expertise of our employees at Dovenby Hall, and our partners, I am confident we can challenge for world titles." **H&P**

SERVICE PARK



Words: **Handbrakes & Hairpins**
 Pictures: **Archive**

The 38th running of the Sno*Drift Rally in Northern Michigan, U.S.A., will once again kick-off the six events that comprise the 2012 Rally America National Championship on 27 - 28 January. Based in Montmorency County, the Sno*Drift Rally is the only snow-covered event where high-powered rally cars will speed, jump, and slide down narrow ice-covered stages.

A record-setting 70 teams from across the U.S.A. and Canada will test their skills on the snow-banked roads that are sure to be an exciting setting to begin the 2012 Rally America National Championship. To view the full Sno*Drift Rally entry list, click here: <http://www.rally-america.com/events/2012/SNODRIFT/entries/>.

Topping the list of teams is 2010 Rally America National Champions, Antoine L'Estage and Nathalie Richard from Quebec, Canada, piloting what is expected to be a revamped 2010

Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X. L'Estage/Richard finished with a solid second place overall in 2011's Championship standings and look to keep the pressure on as a favourite to win it all this year. L'Estage's closest competition is the entry from Vermont SportsCar and Subaru Rally Team USA, is expected to field a 2012 Subaru WRX STI for 2011 Rally America National Championship overall winner David Higgins from the Isle of Man, U.K., - but the official announcement has not yet been made as to who will actually be piloting the



Subaru factory-backed machine.

The top story from last year's Sno*Drift Rally was the history-making achievement of Michigan's Travis and Terry Hanson piloting their Super Production (SP) Subaru Impreza WRX STI to an overall win. It was the first time that an SP Class car won an event outright, which ultimately positioned them for a 2011 Rally America National Championship third-place overall result. The Hansons will test their luck again in challenging the more powerful Open Class cars, but as everyone knows, snow can be an equalizing factor to give anyone a chance of victory.

The Two-Wheel Drive category is always entertaining with its all-or-nothing competitors and has been exploding with top talent over the past few seasons, and the 2012 Sno*Drift Rally will continue this trend. Chris Duplessis, who competed in WRC Academy Class at the World Rally Championship's Wales Rally GB in 2011, returns with a rally-prepared Ford Fiesta R2. He faces strong challenges from television host and longtime Rally competitor Andrew Comrie-Picard who will be piloting a Scion xD as well as 2009 Rally America Rookie of the Year Dillon Van Way as he returns in his

always-fast Ford Fiesta R2.

The 2012 Rally America National Championship season opener will feature the entrance of a number of international competitors. Notably, Belgium Rally Champion, David Sterckx, will make his Rally America National Championship event debut driving a newly prepared SP Subaru Impreza WRX STI with co-driver Karen Jankowski. Chinese Rally Championship driver Tingwu Song begins his full Rally America National Championship effort at Sno*Drift with co-driver Martin Brady in a 2009 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X. Song first arrived on the American



rally scene at the 2011 New England Forest Rally to test the waters. He placed as high as sixth in the Chinese Rally Championship before shifting his attention to America.

Fans attending the 2012 Sno*Drift Rally will have plenty of opportunities to meet their favorite drivers and watch the rally action on more than 190km of competition and at the fan-friendly Ralph Thayer Mazda-sponsored Super Special Stage taking place in the afternoon on Saturday 28 January.

The Sno*Drift Rally begins in downtown Lewiston, Michigan, on Friday

27 January at the 13h00 Parc Expose where spectators will have a chance to view the rally cars on display as well as meet and get autographs from the many drivers and co-drivers prior to the start of the event. The action continues in downtown Atlanta at 08h00 on Saturday 28 January with another Parc Expose before heading to the Ralph Thayer Mazda Super Special Stage.

In addition to the Super Special planned for Saturday, the Sno*Drift Rally organizers are proud to announce the return of the Ralph Thayer Mazda-sponsored Sno*Attack 2-Wheel-Drive Class competition supporting grassroots

rally competitors. The top five overall 2WD finishers of the Ralph Thayer Mazda Sno*Attack competition have a chance to split over US\$5,000 in prize money.

Rally America will feature an online broadcast of the Sno*Drift Rally on <http://www.rally-america.com> beginning at 13h00 EST on Friday 27 January. The free live-streaming broadcast will bring you live stage racing, driver interviews, results, and analysis. This marks the first time that Rally America will live stream a National Championship event. **H&H**

PARC FERME

MORE GOLD: SKODA RECORDS EARLY 2012 WIN



Words: **Evan Rothman**
Picture: **Skoda Auto; IRC Series**

Skoda and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) series have proven a highly successful hunting ground for the Czech firm. With two talented drivers, 2010 IRC Champion Juho Hanninen and Czech speed merchant Jan Kopecky signed up for more with the team in 2012, the factory Skoda Fabia S2000 drivers took on the challenges of Austria's Jänner Rallye.

Held earlier this month, this the opening round of the 2012 FIA European Rally Championship as well as that of

the Czech and Austrian National Rally Championships, this event lived up to its billing as a high-speed thriller.

Three-time IRC runner-up Kopecky snatched the rally win from team-mate Hanninen by 40 seconds. Snow and slippery tracks saw Hanninen, who was the first car on the road, lose precious time to the leaders on Day One. His fight back up the leaderboard on Day Two was not enough for the win, but gave the Czech motor manufacturer a strong start to their 2012 rally campaigns.

Third place overall went to Beppo Harrach (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X) followed by Red Bull Skoda

Team boss Raimund Baumschlager in fourth place in his Skoda Fabia S2000. **H&H**

ROUND ONE: RALLYE MONTE CARLO

WRC 2012 KICKS OFF TO ICY START



Words: **Evan Rothman**
Picture: **MINI WRC**

"It is a classic Monte," said Mikko Hirvonen (Citroën Total World Rally Team) on his thoughts of this week's WRC Rallye Monte-Carlo.

Returning to the World Rally Championship after a three-year absence, this most iconic of rallies is set to start the season off in a dramatic and most entertaining manner.

Apart from the disturbing goings-on in the FIA and the WRC at present, Handbrakes & Hairpins will

focus on an event that has been eagerly anticipated over the past 65 days since the conclusion of the 2011 World Rally Championship (WRC) season.

You may have noted that Finn Hirvonen has crossed over to the French side, while Petter Solberg has filled his seat in the factor Ford World Rally Team. Sebastien Ogier, who wowed all while in the Citroën Total World Rally Team, has shifted to the Volkswagen Rally Team and will contest this week's event in a Skoda Fabia S2000.

Mads Ostberg will not participate in this rally, but is well into

preparations for the WRC Sweden Rally. Taking his slot in the M-Sport Ford Rally Team is Francois Delecour, a former winner of this rally.

With the weather reportedly icy cold, the asphalt sections used for the rally slippery and treacherous, WRC crews are smiling ear-to-ear in the prospect of throwing their rally machines around the tight bends in the mountains surrounding the tiny Monaco principality.

As to who will win this event, the answer is not very clear-cut...

Smart money would place a bet on Sebastien Loeb, eight-times World



Rally Champion, taking the win here. His new team-mate will be out to secure a strong result to impress his new bosses, but my money for the remaining podium places behind Loeb would be Latvala and Solberg.

This rally demands drivers to concentrate 100 percent of the time, to have their pace notes perfect and also have a degree of luck on their side when it comes to the ever-changing weather conditions.

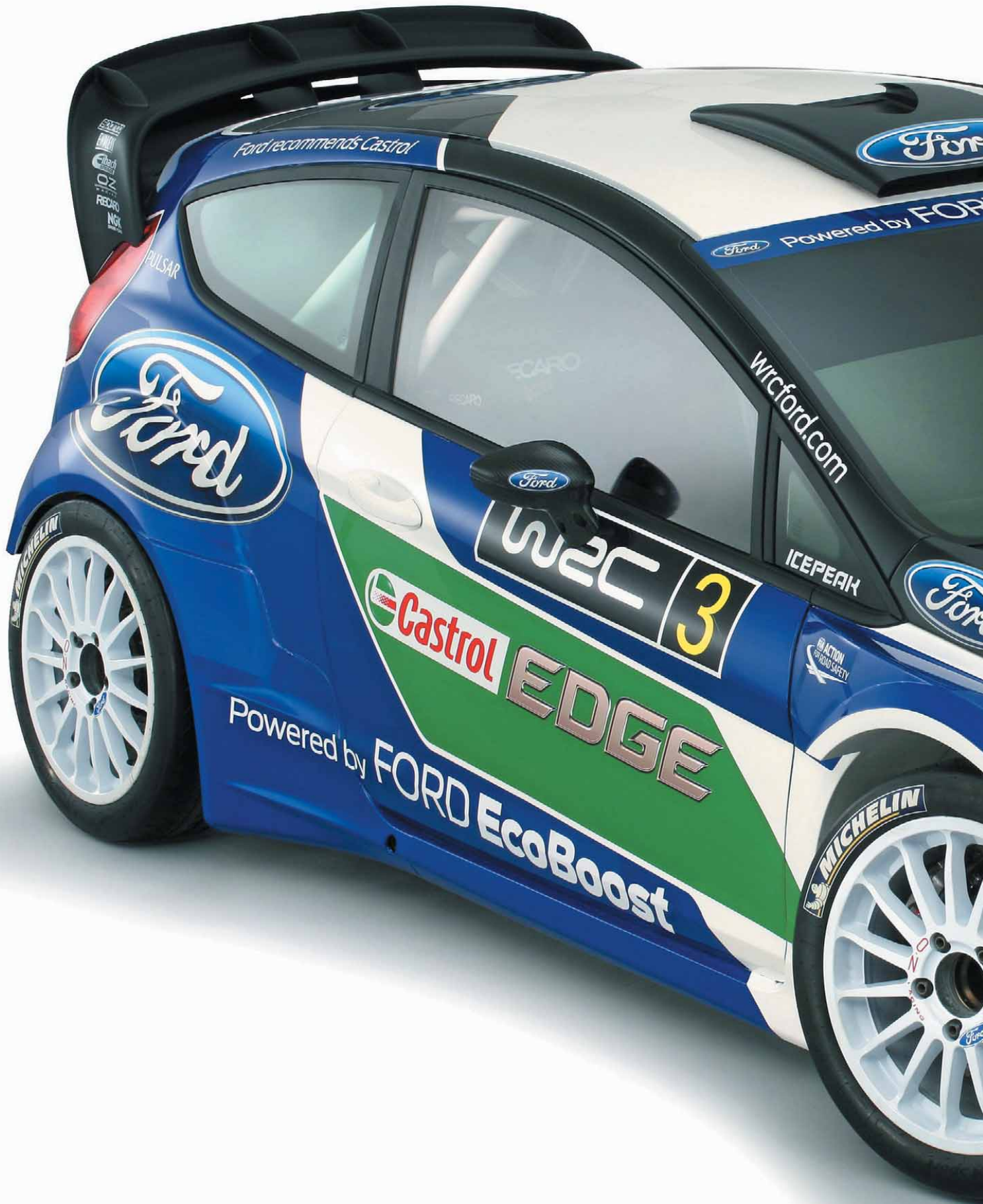
In recent years, the weather played a large role in the outcome of the rally, as for some crews the stages were

passable but for others heavy mist, a sudden downpour or a later start time meant darkness. That is the spirit of the Monte, the reason this event is so revered the world over.

Unlike other WRC events, the Rallye Monte Carlo kicks off tomorrow at 18h00 with its traditional Ceremonial Start. Rally action proper starts on Wednesday morning and concludes on Sunday morning after 18 stages and 433.36km of competition.

The first two legs on Wednesday and Thursday include more than 130km of action each in the Ardèche region, to

the west of Monte Carlo. Friday's third leg covers stages east of Valence in the Vercors mountains and Haute Loire region, before the long journey south to Monaco. A Saturday afternoon restart precedes two loops of two tests in the Alpes Maritimes, including a double pass over the legendary Col de Turini. The single 5.16km Power Stage concludes the action on Sunday morning, with bonus points available to the fastest three drivers. The finish ceremony takes place at Monaco's Palace on Sunday afternoon. **H&H**



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MICHELIN

CLOSING SHOT

The new-look Ford World Rally Team has chosen a cleaner livery for their Fiesta RS WRC. Of course, the Blue Oval looks menacing in the blue and green colours. Drivers Jari-Matti Latvala and new signing Petter Solberg have both completed extensive pre-season tests and the results have been very positive. This week's WRC Rallye Monte-Carlo will be a highly thrilling event!

Picture: WorldRallyPics.

