



Championship
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ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET...

With just over six weeks to go to the start of the 2012 REIS – Get Connected MSA Asphalt Rally Championship, the season is already shaping up to be a memorable one! Regulations for the opening round, the Tour of Epynt (11th March), have been available online for a couple of weeks and, of the first 20 entries received, 14 had expressed their intentions to register for the Championship!



2010 & 2011 Champion – and now joint headline sponsor! – Damian Cole is returning to try and make it three-in-a-row. Since the Championship first ran, back in 1984 (this our 30th year!), only Pete Doughty has achieved a hat-trick of victories (1994/5/6) as, surprisingly enough, John Price's twelve titles came in ones and twos, but never three consecutively. So, the gauntlet has been thrown down but, as is ever the case, it won't be easy....



'All the usual suspects' are set to return – John Indri has already registered and he will not only be hoping to better his 3rd overall in 2011 but also to make the newly-instigated Millington Darrian Challenge his own.

Thanks to the arrival of a new sponsorship deal, Simon Mauger's Escort is now sporting a revised livery but we know from past experience that, whatever colour it is, it will be a force to be reckoned with, not only amongst the two-wheel drive contingent, but also alongside some much more modern and powerful machinery.



Rejoining the Championship this year, after time out to relocate his business, is Andy Fenwick who has recently bought himself a Subaru WRC. Hailing from the north-east of England, Andy is a past winner of the Jim Clark National Rally and has amassed considerable success on his 'home' events on the Otterburn Ranges.

Stafford's Mark Jasper is another early registration – he and co-driver Don Whyatt are back with their MG Metro 6R4 and, hopefully, the gremlins that gave them such a torrid time a couple of seasons ago will have been sorted out, leaving the popular duo to get on with the job of scoring points!



We also hear rumours that 2009 Champion Melvyn Evans is set to register again.



The Welshman contested the Manx National Rally last year – and won it! – but it would be great to see him out on some other rounds....

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Meanwhile, Cumbrian Paul Bird is gearing up for a season of asphalt events. He has just won the Jack Frost Stages for the fourth consecutive year and is also contesting the Legend Fires North West Stages in his Ford Focus WRC07 as a precursor to attempting the MSA Asphalt Rally Championship for the first time.



Anyone wishing to register may do so, either by downloading the regulations and registration form from the Championship website www.asphaltrallying.com or by going to www.btrda.com/membership and following the instructions therein.

As was the case in 2011, a competitor's best five scores, from the nine events, will count towards their final tally and, in this way, everyone can choose a programme to suit their individual budgets. With such a varied calendar, it goes without saying that some events will be more expensive than others, but don't be put off by the fact that a ferry crossing is required to a couple of rounds – or eight if you live on the Isle of Man or in Ireland! Speak to Craig Thorley, at Just Ferries (Tel: 01759 301010/E-mail: info@just-ferries.com) who will help you to get the best deal on your travel and also bear in mind that, once across the water, you can live quite frugally and still enjoy yourself!

With publicity in mind, the Championship produces both previews and reviews of each event and, win, lose or draw, we try to mention every registered contender, even if it is only with a finishing position. There is also a section on the Championship website for competitor's own press releases – it is a great way to give your sponsors some extra 'advertising and, so, please feel free to make use of it.

The television coverage of the Championship, which proved so popular last year, is to continue as part of the two-year sponsorship package with REIS and Get Connected. Presenter Paul Woodford is moving across to front the programmes on the BTRDA Gravel Rally Series, while



Brid Deery – who those of you who have been across to Ireland for the ALMC Stages will already know – takes over for the Asphalt Championship. She has worked with the 'Special Stage' team before and has been the face of the Irish National Rally Championship for a number of years.

Well, the signs are that she will have plenty to talk about, and plenty of people to talk to – bring it on!...



www.get-connected.com
www.reis.co.uk