

The Loudon-clear guide to... John Mulholland Motors Ulster Rally

How can this be the penultimate round of the British Rally Championship already? After a year away, the successful return of British rallying's top flight has been the talk of 2016.

The final two chapters both involve the Irish Sea. The last round runs on one of world motorsport's most famous islands, the Isle of Man, but this week we're overflying Douglas for a second trip of the season to Northern Ireland and the Ulster Rally.

This rally offers a similar challenge to that of round two, the Circuit of Ireland, with the winner needing to find that perfect blend of speed and precision in what are likely to be some of the most changeable conditions and grip levels of the season.

All eyes will, of course, be on Elfyn Evans as he chases a second British title for the Evans' household, following father Gwyndaf's 1996 success. But it's also well worth keeping an eye on what's certain to be another enthralling installment of the Junior BRC battle as homegrown heroes Rob Duggan and Gus Greensmith attempt to stave off the Nordic challenge of Sindre Furuseth and Mattias Adielsson.

The rally ahead...

MSA British Rally Championship round 6/7

Date: August 19/20

Based: Ebrington, Derry/Londonderry

Service: Ebrington, Derry/Londonderry

Stages: 14

Competitive distance: 133.86 miles (215.41km)

Liaison distance: 287.69 miles (462.97km)

Total distance: 421.55 miles (678.38km)

Longest stage: Rousky (SS10/14) 15.88 miles (25.55km)

Shortest stage: Butterlope (SS3/6) 4.36 miles (7.01km)

Sunrise: 0612

Sunset: 2052

Itinerary

Friday August 19

Ceremonial start Guildhall Square, Ebrington 1300

SS1 Holly Hill 1 11.58 miles (18.63km) 1400

SS2 Mary Gray 1 8.03 miles (12.92km) 1458

SS3 Butterlope 1 4.70 miles (7.56km) 1539

Service Ebrington 1650

SS4 Holly Hill 2 11.58 miles (18.63km) 1825

SS5 Mary Gray 2 8.03 miles (12.92km) 1923

SS6 Butterlope 2 4.70 miles (7.56km) 2004

Service Ebrington 2102

Saturday August 20

SS7 Slievekirk 1 8.76 miles (14.09km) 0737

Service Ebrington 0830

SS8 Drumnahoe 1 8.91miles (14.33km) 0936

SS9 Barnes Gap 1 9.07 miles (14.59km) 1012

SS10 Rousky 1 15.88 miles (25.55km) 1043

Service Ebrington 1227

SS11 Slievekirk 2 8.76 miles (14.09km) 1309

Service Ebrington 1402

SS12 Drumnahoe 2 8.91miles (14.33km) 1508

SS13 Barnes Gap 2 9.07 miles (14.59km) 1544

SS14 Rousky 2 15.88 miles (25.55km) 1615

Finish Ebrington 1800

Top 10 entries

1 Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)

2 Alastair Fisher/Gordon Noble (Ford Fiesta R5)

3 Keith Cronin/Mikie Galvin (DS3 R5)

4 Fredrik Åhlin/Morten Abrahamsen (Ford Fiesta R5)

5 David Bogie/Kevin Rae (Škoda Fabia R5)

6 Josh Moffett/John Rowan (Ford Fiesta R5)

7 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan (Škoda Fabia R5)

8 Martin McCormack/David Moynihan (Škoda Fabia S2000)

9 Garry Jennings/Rory Kennedy (Mitsubishi Mirage)

10 Sam Moffett/Karl Atkinson (Ford Fiesta R5)

Stuart Loudon's key stage: SS7 Slievekirk 1 8.76 miles (14.09km)

The Ulster's always a great rally and the route for this year's event is fantastic. Starting lunchtime Friday and finishing 29 hours later after 14 stages and 133.86 miles (215.41km) of competition will make for an intense and intriguing fight. And all of the roads used this week are worthy of the World Rally Championship – they're all classics. But the first stage on Saturday morning could be decisive. It's a good hour after sunrise, but if the weather's a bit murky and misty, with some low cloud hanging around, this one could be a real challenge. If I were competing, I'd be looking at this one as a target stage, a place to get in there and take some time. With service straight after, this could be somewhere to make a difference.

Stuart will be watching... #27 Matt Edwards/Will Rogers (Ford FIESTA R5)

After dominating this year's BRC2 title, Matt Edwards and Will Rogers step up to the frontline of British Rally Championship competition with a Ford Fiesta R5 this week. Let's see if that Group N speed transfers to the cutting edge of R5.

Weather with you:

Mix of sunshine, cloud and rain with temperatures ranging from 14 degrees to 20.

Media details:

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Stuart's restaurant recommendation:

The Walled City Brewery, Ebrington Square +44 2871 343336
www.walledcitybrewery.com. A restaurant with a fully operational brewery in the same building's never going to be a bad place to spend an evening.

Recent Ulster Rally winners:

2006: Eugene Donnelly/Paul Kiely (Toyota Corolla WRC)
2007: Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Subaru Impreza S11 WRC)
2008: Eamonn Boland/Damien Morrissey (Subaru Impreza S12B WRC)
2009: Eugene Donnelly/Paddy Toner (Škoda Fabia WRC)
2010: Derek McGarrity/James McKee (Subaru Impreza S12B WRC)
2011: Tim McNulty/Paul Kiely (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2012: Darren Gass/Enda Sherry (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2013: Garry Jennings/Rory Kennedy (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2014: Garry Jennings/Rory Kennedy (Subaru Impreza WRC)
2015: Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan (Ford Focus WRC)

Recent BRC Ulster Rally/*Rally Northern Ireland winners:

2005: Eugene Donnelly/Paul Kiely (Toyota Corolla WRC)
2006: Gwyndaf Evans/Huw Lewis (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)
2007: Mark Higgins/Rory Kennedy (Subaru Impreza)
2008: Mark Higgins/Rory Kennedy (Subaru Impreza)
2009: Mark Higgins/Rory Kennedy (Subaru Impreza)
2010: Craig Breen/Gareth Roberts (Ford Fiesta S2000)*
2011: Marty McCormack/David Moynihan (DS3 R3T)*
2012: Keith Cronin/Marshall Clarke (DS3 R3T)*
2013: Osian Pryce/Dale Furniss (DS3 R3T)*
2014: Dan McKenna/Arthur Kierans (DS3 R3T)*

MSA British Rally Championship stat centre

Rounds run: 5

Mid Wales Stages (March 5), winners: Evans/Parry; Circuit of Ireland Rally (April 7-9), winners: Moffett/Rowan; Pirelli Carlisle Rally (April 30-May1), winners: Åhlin/Abrahamsen; RSAC Scottish Rally (June 25), winners: Evans/Parry; Nicky Grist Stages (July 9-10), winners: Evans/Parry.

Stages completed: 50

Accumulated winning time: 6h19m16.9s

Accumulated competitive distance completed: 416.72 miles (670.64km)

Accumulated liaison distance completed: 844.33 miles (1358.81km)

Accumulated total distance completed: 1261.05 miles (2029.46km)

Longest stage of the season so far: Chirdonhead 16.15 miles (25.84km, Pirelli Carlisle Rally)

Shortest stage of the season so far: Tank 4.36 miles (7.01km, Nicky Grist Stages)

BRC fastest stage times (after round 5/7)

- 1 Elfyn Evans GBR/Craig Parry GBR (Ford Fiesta R5) 33
 - 2 Fredrik Åhlin SWE/Morton Abrahamsen NOR (Ford Fiesta R5) 9
 - 3 David Bogie GBR/Kevin Rae GBR (Škoda Fabia R5) 4
- = Tom Cave GBR/James Morgan GBR (Ford Fiesta R5) 4

BRC stages led (after round 5/7)

- 1 Evans/Parry 29
- 2 Åhlin/Abrahamsen 9
- 3 Josh Moffett/John Rowan 6

Junior BRC fastest stage times (after round 5/7)

- 1 Robert Duggan IRL/Ger Conway IRL (Vauxhall Adam R2) 20
 - 2 Gus Greensmith GBR/Alex Gelsomino ITA 10
- = Mattias Adielsson SWE/Andreas Johansson SWE 10

Junior BRC stages led (after round 5/7)

- 1 Duggan/Conway 34
- 2 Furuseth/Undebakke 10
- 3 Greensmith/ Gelsomino 5

Standings

MSA British Rally Championship standings (after round 5/7)

- 1 Evans 110
- 2 Cave 71
- 3 Åhlin 65

Junior MSA DMACK British Rally Championship standings (after round 5/7)

- 1 Duggan 96
- 2 Furuseth 71
- 3 Adielsson 65

Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 84 rallies, 18 of which are rounds of the World Rally Championship and one of which was with an Ashes-winning English cricketer. He makes biscuits in the family business when he's not working towards his dream of becoming a factory co-driver in the WRC.

Stuart Loudon and Words PR work their socks off to make sure every last dot and detail of the document is 100 per cent accurate – but we can't be responsible for any changes to the itinerary or stage distances.