Loudon furthers family traditions

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News release

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Stuart Loudon's grandfather rallied an MG, his father rallied an MG Metro 6R4. And both make the world's best biscuits. Little wonder Stuart will take a break from keeping the Caramel Wafers coming to co-drive Keith Cronin in Portugal next week.

Stuart's career has been heading in the direction of the World Rally Championship ever since he watched Fergus, his father, preparing for a West of Scotland Championship-winning season in 1990.

Rallying, along with Tunnock's and Teacakes, is in the blood for Stuart. Which is why the 27-year-old's 2015 programme is the source of such pride, not to mention the potential. Courtesy of another family – the McRaes – just up the road from Loudon's Uddingston home, the county of Lanarkshire will forever be on world rallying's map. But Stuart's keen to show it's not just drivers who come from his part of the world.

"I've been working towards this moment for a long time," he said. "I've competed on numerous rounds of the World Rally Championship with Rob [Barrable], but when there was no programme at the start of the season, I started to worry that I might be in for a quiet 2015.

"Keith called me in February and said he wanted to fly in from Ireland to talk to me about the year ahead. The chance to contest the WRC 2 is massive for both of us. You would have to say that this is the biggest year in both of our careers."

With an agreement in place, Stuart got the chance to sample Keith's driving when they ran a Subaru Impreza WRC as course car on the West Cork Rally earlier this year.

The pair found immediate success at 135 mph down the narrow lanes of south-east Ireland.

"The trust between a driver and co–driver is vital," said Stuart. "If I tell Keith the road is absolutely straight on the other side of a blind brow, he needs to believe me. 100 per cent – that's the only way pace notes can work. Keith committed to what I was telling him straight away. That's key to a partnership in competition; we feed off the confidence we have in each other.

Since that West Cork outing, Stuart and Keith have also tested together in the Citroen DS 3 R5 they will use in Portugal next week.

"The test went well," said Stuart. "It was really useful for me to sit in the car and get acclimatised to the co–driver's seat before we get to Portugal. We did around 100 kilometres of testing in the rally car and then a further day making pace notes.

"One of the challenges for me is that Keith's system of notes is the total opposite to Rob Barrable's way of working. For Rob a 'six' corner was flat-out, but for Keith a 'six' means a very, very slow corner, while a 'one left' is a left-hand corner taken as fast as the car will go. The tone of voice used in calling the notes is vital, especially when you're slowing the car from a series of high-speed corners into a square junction or hairpin."

Stuart knows Portugal and has enjoyed success on Europe's westernmost world championship stages in the past, finishing second in WRC 2 with Barrable in a Ford Fiesta S2000 in 2013. The pair returned for last year's event and again bagged a top-six result, this time in a Fiesta R5.

The Vodafone Rally of Portugal has, however, undergone significant change in the last 12 months, with a wholesale move upcountry from the Algarve to the Porto region. The event is now based in Matosinhos.

From Portugal, Stuart will compete on six more of the world's best and most iconic rallies in pursuit of the WRC 2 co-driver's title. He will contest Rally of Italy (Sardinia, June 11-14); Rally Finland (Jyvaskilya, July 30-August 2); Rally Germany (Trier, August 20-23); Tour of Corsica (Corte/Bastia/Ajaccio, October 1-4); Catalunya Rally (Barcelona/Salou, October 22-25) and Rally GB (Deeside, November 12-15).

Before Stuart starts his world championship adventure, he has an incredible busman's holiday planned this weekend. He will co-drive for 2012 British Touring Car Champion Gordon Shedden in a Ford Escort Mk II at the McRae Rally Challenge, an event being run on Saturday and Sunday at Knockhill to mark the 20th anniversary of Colin McRae winning his world title.

About WRC 2

WRC 2 is the second tier of the FIA World Rally Championship and the main feeder for co-drivers and drivers into the sport's top flight. The cars used are turbocharged, four-wheel drive and only marginally slower than the World Rally Cars – the Formula 1 cars of the forests.

Stuart will be co-driving for Keith in a DS 3 R5. The car has been designed, developed and built at Citroen Racing's Versailles factory, the same place the Xsara WRC, C4 WRC and DS 3 WRC (cars which captured Citroen eight World Rally Championship manufacturer titles in 10 years) were built.

The R5 is a purpose-built rally machine, developing 280bhp which enables it to go from zero to 100mph and back again on gravel in around the same time it takes a hot hatchback to get to 100mph on asphalt.

Stuart's six best scores from the seven rounds he starts will count towards the championship tally.

The WRC is made up of 13 rounds and WRC 2 crews can start any seven of those events – which is why some competitors have already scored points from the first four rallies of the season.

About Vodafone Rally of Portugal

Date: May 21-24

Base: Matosinhos, Porto

Stages: 16

Competitive distance: 218 miles (352 kilometres)

Total distance: 950 miles (1529 kilometres)

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We are talented, passionate, committed and caring individuals. Together we make a great team. We make your team.
Sentences, make, don't, words, alone.
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But, while we're doing that, we're doing it with an arm around you. You're the reason we're here.