



Duckworth boosts WRC entry to a record-breaking 11

Former UK national rally champion Roger Duckworth will make his third trip to Sol Rally Barbados (June 1/2) this year . . . and that means a record-breaking 11 entries in the two classes catering for World Rally Cars. In doing so, Duckworth also breaks a personal record – he has rarely rallied outside the UK, twice in Ireland and twice in Portugal, so competing in a foreign country for a third time will be a new experience!

Having thoroughly enjoyed his two previous visits – both were prize drives for winning Rallye Sunseeker National – he was quick to enter again, once he knew his car would be ready, but that was by no means certain, as he explained, “Sadly, on the rallying front since last year, there is no story to tell - the car caught fire on the dock when it arrived back from Barbados and it has taken until now to get the repairs done.”

The Intrynsis sponsored Subaru Impreza WRC S6 falls into WRC-2, where his opposition will be the newer Imprezas of Britain’s Kevin Procter and Rob Swann, plus Dean Serrao of Barbados, and the Toyota Corolla WRCs of Ireland’s Eddie Power and Barbados Toyota dealer Roger Hill. Duckworth’s co-driver will be the Welshman Alun Cook, who has sat with him many times in the past, although not yet in Barbados.

Thanks to the diligent work of the Autosportif crew, the car was ready for a shakedown in the Alan Healy Memorial Stages Rally (April 7), a single-venue tarmac rally at the Cadwell Park race circuit in Lincolnshire. Winner last year, Duckworth was seeded at one, but had not competed since Sol RB12.

He said, “Apart from the Goodwood Festival of Speed Forest Stage driving a car that used to belong to me (Colin McRae’s 1997 RAC-winning Impreza, P12 WRC), I haven’t been out at all! This means I will be somewhat rusty, but am still very much looking forward to Barbados.”

The day started well, Duckworth winning the first stage by six seconds from eventual winner David Turnbull (Impreza S11), but it did not last long. “On the second stage we had an electrical problem, the car cut out several times before stranding us mid-stage. A short investigation found a dodgy connector on the throttle body causing the throttle to keep shutting. Once fixed, we did stages four to 10 (the last) and took fastest on all but one of them.”

Entry at 105 approaching closing date

Entries for the Caribbean’s biggest motor sport event will close on



Roger Duckworth in the new livered Impreza

Friday May 3, with the number standing at 105 as we closed for press.

The cars from Europe, around 30 in number, will ship from Portsmouth on the English south coast on a Geest Line freighter the following Tuesday. The trans-Atlantic voyage to the Bridgetown Port in Barbados takes ten days, after



Roger Skeete

which Barbados Rally Club (BRC) officials will clear the cars through Customs and arrange their transportation to secure storage to await the arrival of their owners.

Form book opens for Sol Rally Barbados

Two former winners of the Barbados Rally Club’s (BRC) premier event have started their preparations for Sol Rally Barbados 2013 in perfect fashion this year. Victories for Jamaica’s Jeff Panton in Trinidad and local ace Paul Bourne in Barbados – more than once - have kick-started weeks of debate across the region on the prospects for Sol RB13.

Fans at Rally Trinidad at the end of March – it’s the first of the Caribbean’s ‘Big Three’ rallies each year - enjoyed a battle between Panton (Total Ford Focus WRC06)

and Neil Armstrong of Barbados in the Monster/Sol/Chefette/Digicel/Virgin Atlantic/Gunk/Hankook Tyres/Redline Fuels/Simpson Finance/Simpson Motors Suzuki SX4 WRC.

Although on his WRC debut, having claimed two-wheel-drive honours in Sol RB for the past two years, Armstrong achieved his first WRC stage win and finished second to Panton over two days of high-speed loose-surface stages. During the event, Armstrong said, “We are trying to keep it relaxed and take it one stage at a time. There is so much to learn. We are having a blast, though!”

The same weekend in Barbados, Bourne (Chefette/Banks/LIME/MQI/Castrol Focus WRC07) was fastest in both directions in the double-header ‘Spring Blaze’ tarmac sprint, organised by the Motoring Club of Barbados Inc (MCBI), and also the opening rounds of the BRC’s Virgin Atlantic Championship.

Rally Barbados winner in 2003 and ‘07, Bourne said, “I’ve been busy since November, so I really had to make a mental effort to switch back into motor sport mode. I felt good in the car, however, and wanted to go for the win in both directions, since I didn’t accomplish that last year.”

His closest challenger was Roger Skeete (Sol/Michelin/Simpson Motors/Da Costa Mannings Auto Centre Subaru Impreza WRC S12), 12-time winner of the BRC’s premier event, who was faster in the afternoon practice and first official run. He noted the importance of early-season events as preparation for Sol RB13. “We started cautious,

given how things went at last year’s opening event. Also we are trying a few new things on the car, new bump and rebound settings, along with some different tyres.”

The stand-out performance of the day came from two-wheel-drive winner Josh Read, fastest on every run and third overall in the Stihl/Gliptone/Hankook/SDRR/Weetabix/Royal Purple/EZone Toyota Starlet. A top ten finisher in Sol RB for the past two years, Read said, “We are running a new Autronic ECU, which Dennis Heath really put some effort into tuning. We rebuilt the suspension and re-wired the car in the off-season and must now pull the differential for a check on that. It’s disappointing not to have Neil Armstrong in two-wheel-drive this year, but if I can’t get at him in the Starlet I’ll aim for the SX-4.”

Read’s most consistent challenger was Ian Warren (Simpson Motors/Automotive Art Suzuki Swift), another regular top 10 runner in Sol RB. Happy with his day’s work, he said, “I’ve been smiling ear to ear. Today was a full day of testing, we changed settings on every run, barring the final one of the day. I don’t mind being behind Josh today, but this will be a very competitive year.”

Just three weeks later, on April 14, the MCBI ran its second event of the, another tarmac sprint, titled ‘Hammer Time. Bourne again headed the time sheets at the end of the day, once again getting the better of Skeete, while Armstrong wowed the home crowd with his first appearance at home in the SX4 – despite the car arriving back in the island from Trinidad only two days before the event, and his crew working until the early hours to switch gravel suspension for tarmac suspension, he soon settled. Improving throughout the day, he finished third, just eight-tenths behind Skeete, who was in turn 1.5secs adrift of Bourne.

In two-wheel-drive, Read again finished the day in front, 3.4secs ahead of Warren and only five-hundredths behind Roger Hill’s Esso/Nassco/MotorMac Toyota Corolla WRC.

As the man said, “This will be a very competitive year.”

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