

Rallying across the Atlantic – two Kerry competitors are Barbados bound.

In little over eight weeks time two well-known Kerry rally competitors will be preparing for one of the biggest events in their long rally careers. Fenit-based driver Brendan Brosnan and Tralee co-driver Sean Moriarty will, for the first time, tackle Sol Rally Barbados 2014, the Caribbean's biggest annual motor sport international. Sol Rally Barbados is a two-day tarmac rally, with 22 special stages run on the island's intricate network of public roads, under road closure orders granted by the Ministry of Transport and Works; the previous weekend's Scotiabank King of the Hill 'shakedown', run under a similar arrangement, features four timed runs on a roughly three-kilometre stage, the results of which are used to seed the running order for the main event. This year Brendan celebrates his 50th birthday and decided to mark the occasion by contesting the famous rally and invited Sean, one of Kerry Motor Club's most experienced co-drivers, to come along. The pair have competed together in the past – back in 1991 Brendan and Sean competed on the Kerry Winter Stages Rally in Brendan's Ford Escort Mk2. It was Moriarty's first ever event as a co-driver before going on international career that included finishing second overall on the Dunlop Irish National Championship in 2002 alongside Patrick Elliott and events in several European countries.

In 2012 the crew wanted to mark the 21st anniversary of their maiden outing by contesting that year's Banna Beach Resort Kerry Winter Rally but the deal fell through near enough the last minute owing to Sean's London-based work commitments. At the time they vowed to would do something else to make up for it. Eighteen months later they find themselves preparing for Barbados but it is not the first time either of them have crossed the Atlantic as both have extensive Rally America experience.

However this is the first time they have to handle the complex logistics of transporting a rally car from Fenit , first to Portsmouth docks in the UK by May 5 and on to the Caribbean Island in time for the first of two events they will tackle as part of the two-week long Barbados Rally Festival that will run from May 21 until June 3. They will use Brendan's rear-wheel drive Peugeot 205, that can be seen in action today a zero safety car ahead of the junior rally, on two separate events over the two weeks. The main event is the 25th running of The Sol Rally Barbados which will run over the weekend of May 31/June 1, with the traditional prizegiving to follow on the Monday; the key events start the previous weekend, however, with Simpson Motors Scrutineering on Saturday and Scotiabank King of the Hill on Sunday. They will be joined by around 40 other European entries, many of whom will be Irish and already they have received great support and advice from regular island visitors like County Monaghan's Maurice Moffatt and Millstreet co-driver Liam Moynihan. However they are not the first Kerry competitors to tackle the event with current Citroen World Rally star Paul Nagle, from Killarney, a past double winner of the event alongside his WRC team mate Kris Meeke. Tralee-based Beaufort co-driver, Diarmuid Falvey is also a past competitor on Rally Barbados with Belfast's Kieran O'Neill.



PHOTO: Chris Meeke being flagged away from Ceremonial Start 2009, second time he won. PHOTO: Corolla is very popular out here (because he is very sideways) Ray Conlan (note Irish flag on aerial). Photos courtesy of Himal Reece/justbajan.com

Neil Barnard, PRO of the organising club, said: "Plans are already well under way to once again deliver an event focussed on its core values of being seriously competitive, while maintaining a

relaxed clubman-type atmosphere. We will of course continue to deliver the level of hospitality that visiting crews and their families have come to enjoy. It's fantastic that Sol Rally Barbados is on the 'must-do' list for so many overseas competitors – it is an incredible tribute to all of our volunteer marshals and officials, who help us stage an event which measures up to world-class standards.”

From small beginnings in 1990, Rally Barbados has grown into the Caribbean's biggest annual motor sport international and a key player in the country's sports-tourism product; it contributes nearly Bds \$4 million to the island's economy each year, much of it in vital foreign exchange, and accounts for approaching 4,000 visitor nights at a traditionally quiet time in the tourism calendar.

The biggest competitor base remains the UK and Ireland, but the event has attracted competitors from as far afield as Australia, Canada, Japan, Kenya, South Africa and the United States, as well as mainland Europe.