

All roads lead to rally history being made

By **Phil James**

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Motorsport history will be made this weekend when the 2019 Legend Fires North West Stages Rally, in partnership with Simpson's Skoda, becomes the first closed road motorsport event ever to be staged in the north-west.

The rally, which aims to raise thousands of pounds for charity, is going ahead thanks to the co-operation of Wyre Borough Council, Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, Garstang Town Council and parish councils throughout the route.

Starting with a ceremonial start in Garstang town centre tomorrow evening at around 7pm, Saturday sees the rally start from its new headquarters at Myerscough College at 8.30am.

Competitors will then head off to the closed roads special stages, the first of which, the Nicky Nook Stage to the east of Garstang, gets under way just before 9am.

Spectators can also catch the rally action on the Stay-

nall Stage that first runs at 10am near Stalmine.

Both the Nicky Nook and Staynall Stages are run three times during the day.

Up until its latest staging in 2017, the event had been based on the Fylde coast, with Promenade stages at Blackpool and Fleetwood.

Friday's ceremonial start promises a carnival atmosphere complete with the renowned Samba Espirito drum band.

The band will play ahead of car one as it reaches the High Street shortly before 7pm, after which the Town Cryer will announce the start as cars proceed over the official start ramp.

Leading crews will then be flagged away by Garstang Mayor Leah Hynes and Youth Mayor Robert Ibison.

Crews will be interviewed while awaiting their run over the ramp. Rally director Dave Read said:

"This promises to be the biggest rally start for a clubman rally in the UK and it's largely thanks to the efforts of the Garstang Town Council and the Myerscough College Motorsports Department."

Leading the field away at

120

Cars in the field on Saturday



Blackpool South Shore's John Stone, whose company are the main event sponsors, is seeded nine Below, 2016 winners Simon Bowen and Richard Robinson in the Subaru Impreza WRC Pictures: www.pro-rally.co.uk



car one is Arron Newby, co-driven by Andrew Leech, who won the event in 2017.

Hambleton duo Simon Bowen and Richard Robinson, who won the 2016 rally, are seeded at car six in their Subaru Impreza WRC and former World Rally Championship contender Neil Wearden, from

Preesall, starts at car 46.

Wearden, who is co-driven by Hambleton's Callum Cross, takes the wheel of the Hyundai i20, in which he won in his class on the Questmead Stages near Wigan earlier this month, when Bowen was the outright winner.

His car is a WRC replica, in-

itially built for Top Gear Magazine but an almost standard 1.6l 2WD car.

Blackpool South Shore Motor Club member John Stone, whose company Legend Fires are the event's main sponsors, is seeded at car nine in his Ford Fiesta WRC.

He is just one of a number

RALLY SCHEDULE

8.30am: Myerscough College
8.58am: Nicky Nook Stage (Scorton Showground)
10.03am: Staynall Stage (Back Lane, Stalmine)
10.57am: Main service (Myerscough College)
12.18pm: Nicky Nook Stage (Scorton Showground)
1.23pm: Staynall Stage (Back Lane, Stalmine)
2.17: Main service (Myerscough College)
3.38pm: Nicky Nook Stage (Scorton Showground)
4.43pm: Staynall Stage (Back Lane, Stalmine)
5.45pm: Ceremonial finish (Myerscough College)
9pm: Awards presentation (Guy's Thatched Hamlet)

of South Shore members and Garstang and Preston Motor Club members who are hoping to go well on home ground.

They all face some tough competition, with the 120-car field having attracted some of the UK's top tarmac rally crews.

The final outcome will only become known at the champagne-spraying finish, which is scheduled to take place in the Myerscough College International Horse Arena at 5.45pm on Saturday evening.

Badminton battles decide the semi-finalists

By **James Oakes**

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Cup action continues for Blackpool Badminton Association clubs, with some thrilling handicap ties in the Gazette Trophy.

Hesketh A made the most of their 150 points on the handicap to defeat Kingfisher A in the first round. The ladies got Kingfisher off to a great start, making 44 points, but the men could only gain 17, leaving 90 to make up in the mixed.

A gain of 52 wasn't enough as Hesketh held on to win by 37 points and earn a meeting with Poulton in the semi-finals. Richard Percival and

Sheena Carberry won most games and points for Hesketh, while Chris Foote and Rachel Dewhurst won more for Kingfisher but finished on the losing side.

Pilling B had an advantage of 170 but this wasn't enough to beat Poulton, who had almost wiped this out by the halfway stage.

After winning the ladies' by 95 and the men's by 40, Poulton piled on the pressure in the mixed to win by a margin of 83, 21-3 in games.

Nikki Wilford, Michelle Skinner and Ant Forrest all won by 100-plus for Poulton, while Alex Fleming was Pilling's best.

In the Lids derby, the division two B team beat their division one A clubmates with

a 160 handicap. The A ladies clawed 65 back but the B men stood firm, only surrendering 24 points.

That left the A team needing 71 from the 12 mixed games and they gained 55 from the first five sets. However, the B pair of Lisa Musson and James Leigh not only contained them but managed to win a game for a plus-three score to seal victory by 19.

Beth Cowell (+76) and Jen Tsang (62) were the best performers for the A team, while James Leigh played a crucial role by conceding only 17 for the B, who face Fleetwood A in the semis boosted by a handicap of 225.

Fleetwood overcame a handicap of 195 against Kingfisher B, winning the ladies'

by 60 and the men's by 64. The match was decided in four sets in the mixed.

Kingfisher finished 43 adrift despite the best efforts of Sarah Woodhouse and James De Wolf. Biggest hitters for Fleetwood were Caroline Andrew (+110), Tim Vickers (98) and James Lester (89).

In the Bridgewood Trophy, Kirkham Charter B and Kingfisher C played off scratch after both teams finished at the foot of division three.

Kirkham won the ladies' (16) and Kingfisher the men's (26) before the match swung back Kirkham's way in the levels with an 8-4 win and a final points margin of 53. Katie Kinder (+61) was Kirkham's best and Harry Hywood (21) was Kingfisher's.

They next play Ribby Hall B in another scratch match after the latter beat their A team with an 80-point start.

The B team conceded only 15 points in the levels (ladies six and men nine), leaving the A team a tough task but pull back 65 in the mixed.

But in the first four sets the B team gained nine points to put the tie out of reach. The A team managed 45 points from the last two sets but it was too late as they lost by 29.

Carol Howarth (+44) was the A team's best but the decisive contributions came from the B team's John Wright (who won five games for +23) and Melanie Bunney (four wins, +7).

Kirkham Charter A faced a 110 deficit against Stanley B

but seemed on their way after picking up 61 on the levels, the ladies winning by 40.

In the first three mixed sets they gained another 26 but Stanley fought hard in the remaining six games, minimising Kirkham's points gain to nine to secure an overall win by 14. Stanley's Jake Meakin only conceded 19 points from eight games, while Kirkham's Emma Gilfoyle (+74) and Ian Chase (44) were best on the night.

Next time their advantage will be cut to 80 against Lids C, who defeated Hesketh B with 50 start. Lids won more games (15-9) and the match by 85 points, gaining points in all three sections. Mark Green (+36) and Nean Pilkington (29) gained most for the winners.