

# Duo hit top gear in rally preparations

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Blackpool South Shore Motor Club members have been getting in more 'match practice' ahead of the Legend Fires North West Stages, which is only 10 days away.

With the rally start on March 18 rapidly approaching, John Stone and Simon Bowen have contested multiple events in recent weeks in order to test their cars as well as fine-tune their driving styles.

Such opportunities were provided by the Questmead Stages at Wigan's Three Sisters Race Circuit and the Beverley-based East Riding Stages, a closed road event similar to the forthcoming Garstang-based rally.

Both drivers found the events beneficial to their North West Stages planning, particularly in terms of their cars' suspension settings and tyre choices in varying weather conditions.

The Questmead saw vast areas of the track covered in standing water, though Stone and Bowen recorded impressive results in finishing second and fourth respectively.

In Yorkshire, early-morning frost added an ice-like gloss to the closed roads and resulted in a number of cars sliding onto the grass verges, bringing muddy deposits back onto the already slippery roads.

Both Shore drivers were targeting top-10 finishes, something Stone achieved by finishing eighth in his VW



John Stone (VW Polo GTi R5) and (inset) Simon Bowen (Ford Fiesta S2000T) at the Questmead Stages Picture: www.pro-rally.co.uk

Polo GTi R5.

Bowen had held fifth place before breaking a driveshaft on the penultimate stage and being forced to tackle the final test, unable to replace it.

He got his Ford Fiesta S2000T to the finish but 11th place wasn't what he had

hoped for, nor not what his determined drive deserved.

Stone and Bowen have both previously won the North West Stages Rally, Stone's victory coming in 2004 and Bowen's in 2016, and each will be looking to repeat their earlier successes.

The 2022 Legend Fires North West Stages Rally gets underway with a ceremonial start from Garstang High Street on the evening of March 18.

The rally action takes place the following day over 14 closed road stages with

those that complete the course returning to Garstang that evening for the traditional rally champagne finish.

Full details of where to watch will appear in the Gazette in the week leading up to the rally.

## Poulton win again in battle at bottom

Poulton increased the gap between themselves and bottom club Southport Hesketh by beating them 2-1 in the West Lancashire League.

Josh O'Neil put the visitors on course for back-to-back wins on the hour, and although Southport equalised Sam Haines won it with 10 minutes left to keep Poulton out of the premier division's bottom two.

There was a surprise home defeat for Thornton Cleveleys against Slyne-with-Hest.

Having fallen behind on the stroke of half-time, Thornton levelled through Richard Wright four minutes after the restart only for the visitors to net twice more for a 3-1 victory. TC are still 10 points clear at the top but second-placed Euxton Villa have two games in hand.

Two late goals sealed a 4-2 home victory for mid-table Blackpool Wren Rovers after Tempest United had twice pulled level.

Jack Arrowsmith scored the only goal of the first half and doubled his tally two minutes from time to seal the points. In between, Kian Makepeace and Dejay Delacruz had both restored Wrens' lead after the visitors hit back.

Liam Gledhill gave Lytham Town a dream start at home to Vickerstown with a second-minute goal. But the visitors were level by half-time and it remained 1-1. Third-placed Wyre Villa lost ground on the top two in division one with a 3-0 defeat at Hesketh Bank. The home side scored all their goals in the first half.

The home side scored all their goals in the first half to move six points clear of Wyre, with leaders Milnthorpe a further eight ahead.

## Fleetwood take top spot as the leaders do battle

Only one game was played in the top flight of the Blackpool and Fylde Sunday Alliance but it was one to savour between the top two.

Highfield Social were sitting pretty at the top of the premier division when they welcomed Fleetwood FC but it was the visitors who emerged 6-3 winners. That saw Fleetwood re-

place Highfield in pole position on goal difference, both teams nine points clear of JD Blackpool South in third.

Movement at the top of division one as well as West Coast Sports pulled level with leaders Armfield FC courtesy of their 4-2 win over A&P Autos.

But West Coast have played four more games and so need Armfield to slip up.

Third-placed Re Italiani close the gap on the leaders to three points thanks to a 9-1 victory over Blackpool Town.

Division 2A has new leaders in Spen Dyke after they toppled former top dogs AFC Broadwaters 5-2.

Clifton Rangers are two points off the pace in third after a 5-2 home win over Belle Vue.

This division's other game

saw Highfield climb off the bottom after beating Marston Athletic by the only goal of the match.

Thornton Wanderers strengthened their grip on second spot in 2B with a 3-0 victory over Freckleton, while Fylde Coast Football beat Cleveleys 2-1

And finally, Sencat and Albion played out a thrilling all-division one tie in the Sunday Trophy.

This highly entertaining contest ended 5-5 and it was Sencat who won through 4-2 on penalties.

MARK CAMPBELL



Action between Highfield Social and Fleetwood Picture: KAREN TEBBUTT