

M-Sport has confirmed the itinerary for the 2012 FIA WRC Academy training days to be held on 6 & 7 March this week. Competitors will complete a two day programme covering both technical and administrative guidance ahead of the 2012 season opener in Portugal at the end of the month.

Supported by Ford of Europe, the 2012 edition will again see competitors behind the wheel of the award-winner Ford Fiesta R2 with control tyres from Pirelli. Focusing on technical set-up, the first day of training will look to familiarise each crew with the Ford Fiesta R2 as they learn how to get the most out of the car with a technical briefing and gearbox demonstration from two of M-Sport's most experienced engineers.

Competitors will then put all they have learnt into practice with a wheel change competition before heading to one of the Cumbria team's regular test grounds for an instruction and assessment session with expert tuition and feedback from Pirelli test driver and four-time Italian Rally Champion, Paulo Andreucci.

Day two will see the crews embark on a day of administrative training and team building with tuition from some of rallying's most respected individuals. Training will begin with a sporting overview from Phil Short and technical talks from WRC Academy partners, Pirelli and Peltor. Short's seminar will inform competitors on the structure, running and preparation required for WRC events while Pirelli representative Fabio di Claudio will look to advise drivers and co-drivers on the various compounds available.

Prospective graduates will then sit in on a media and presentation module from WRC-experienced PR agent Ann Bradshaw, and a Sports Science and Fitness session from the FIA Institute's Dr Tony Turner. Assessing the importance of dealing with the media, Bradshaw will train competitors on a range of topics such as verbal communication, social media and personal appearance while Turner focuses on the importance of fitness and psychology on the world stage.

The 2012 FIA WRC Academy training days will come to a close with a team building exercise focused on exemplifying the importance of teamwork. Encouraging social interaction, the session will see crews conduct a number of exciting mentally and physically challenging activities as they get to know one another.

The extensive programme will see competitors well prepped in all aspects of WRC competition as they embark on the first round of the season at the end of the month.

M-Sport Managing Director, Malcolm Wilson OBE, said:

- ◆ Being a top WRC driver is about more than driving fast. To become a World Champion, a driver must be accomplished in so many other areas and the [FIA WRC] Academy is unique in training some of the world's best young drivers for this.
- ◆ Driving style and speed are always going to be important, and the [WRC] Academy will help improve this, but a driver must also have the right attitude towards the media, towards physical fitness and be fully aware of the preparation required for each event.
- ◆ These training sessions will provide the [WRC] Academy crews with unrivalled access to some of the sport's most accomplished and respected individuals and the knowledge and experience they can provide is second to none!

Brendan and Rhianon arrived in the UK on Saturday ahead of this week's WRC Academy workshop. They will contest the six-round Academy in 2012, commencing with Rally Portugal and the end of March.