

Positive Portugal For McCormack

Marty McCormack takes many positives from his WRC2 debut

April 7, 2014

The Northern Irish driver and his Cork based navigator, David Moynihan, kicked off their first World Rally Championship programme at the wheel of a Ford Fiesta R5 backed by Korean tyre giant Hankook and innovative insurance expert TigerRisk.

It proved to be a rally of firsts for the former British Junior Champion as he turned his hand to his first gravel event in a 4WD car and his first event in a new category R5 Ford Fiesta, perfectly prepared by the Italian A Style Team.

Rally de Portugal was the first event in a 6 round WRC campaign. Over 20 crews are registered in the hotly contested WRC 2 category, and the step up to 4WD was a formidable one as Marty's first experience of his new car was a brief pre event shakedown, leaving little time to acclimatise himself to his new surroundings.

Heavy rain on the pre event reconnaissance made pace note creation difficult, with even Portugal regulars having a hard time reading the correct tyre choice for the changing conditions throughout the event.

The event started well as Marty and David showed their class from the start, setting a steady pace amongst a hugely experienced field on Portugals specialised and unforgiving roads. Thursday evening saw a conservative start on the Algarve spectator stage before the event would begin properly on the gravel stages around Faro on day 2.

A damaged rear anti roll bar on Friday's 6th stage slowed the teams progress as they aired to the side of caution to complete the difficult first day of proper stages. Despite their difficulty they still remained an impressive 22nd overall and 12th in the WRC 2 category as they reached the over night Parc Ferme.

Saturday saw the crew increase confidence with each kilometre, setting consistent top 10 times in WRC2 and getting inside the top 20 overall. A mechanical issue from a damaged turbo pipe on the days final 2 stages would not dent the teams confidence and they continued to set competitive times despite being significantly down on power.

The events final day began well for the team as they picked up where they left off setting competitive times against vastly more experienced competition. Their event however was cut short on the penultimate stage, as a late puncture would cause them to slide off on a slippery downhill right hander. The car had only slight damage and both Marty and David were unhurt, however they were unable to get back on the road and were forced to retire; a frustrating end to what was a very encouraging performance.

Mike Patterson from Hankook commented, "Marty and David approached the event in a professional manner as they consistently improved their pace gathering both experience and valuable data for Hankook tyres."

Marty commented at the event finish, "Despite being disappointed at not being able to finish the rally we completed all of the stages and I have learnt so much about the car and the rally.....it has given me a clear guide of what I need to do to improve"

Marty and the entire team, can take a lot of positives away from this event which they approached with caution, aiming to build experience of both the car and the conditions. Having done that, Marty and David are now raring to go and looking forward to the the next leg of their WRC programme which takes them to the Mediterranean island of Sardinia for Rally d'Italia on 5th June.