

Young McRae is ready to tackle South Africa rally

FORMER British Rally Champion Alister McRae is heading for South Africa later this year, driving a Mitsubishi Evo 8, prepared by Neil Allport Motorsport from Auckland, New Zealand.

He will be competing in the Zulu Rally South Africa 2006 which will be staged from May 25-27.

It will be the biggest and best motor rally ever to take place in that country.

The event, based in Durban and surrounds, is a round of the FIA African Rally and South African National Rally Championships but, more importantly, it doubles as South Africa's bid for inclusion in the World Rally Championship.

Lanark driver McRae has previously competed on the Safari Rally but this will be his first competitive outing in South Africa.

Alister recently had his first taste of rallycross when he performed demonstration runs in a

Mini alongside leading Irish driver Andrew Nesbitt at Mondello Park, Ireland.

They took to the track to promote Junior Rallycross in Ireland, where the sport's governing body is to introduce a class for children aged 14 and over.

Meanwhile father Jim failed to start the opening round of the Armajaro MSA British Historic Rally Championship.

The Lanark man had been a pre-event favourite for the Robin Hood Stages but he was out before the rally even started, when the gearbox of his Prefab Porsche 911 tried to select two gears at once between scrutineering and the official start. McRae senior does, however, hope to tackle some championship rounds later this year.

Bothwell teenager Alick Kerr will be out to maintain his excellent form on the 2006 Brick and Steel 205 Ecosse Challenge when the series hits the forests of the Scottish Borders on

Saturday.

Kerr posted the fastest Challenge times in nearly all of the stages on the opening round of the series, coming home over a minute ahead of his nearest class rival.

And the youngster reckons he can be just as quick on the Brick and Steel Border Counties, which takes place on Saturday.

A solid run on the non-championship Snowman Rally gave Kerr gravel experience and an opportunity to get to know his new co-driver Tom Hynd.

Hynd joins the Kerr team from fellow 205 Challenge competitor Roy McLennan, and hopes he can use his vast expertise to aid 18 year-old Alick's development as a driver.

As if one highly-talented young County driver wasn't enough, another two up-and-coming rally stars from Lanarkshire will be joining the Brick and Steel 205 Ecosse Challenge this weekend.

Larkhall's 24-year-old Colin Main is set to make his long-awaited comeback from injury on the Border Counties, and is tipped to be right on the pace despite being out of rallying for over a year.

Joining Alick and Colin on the starting ramp in Jedburgh will be 17-year-old Jonathan Smith from Crossford, who is set to become one of the youngest drivers in the country.

"I've just got my rally licence and can't wait to get out," said an excited Jonathan.

"Our aim is to give Jonathan as much experience as possible this year," said his mentor Jim Brown of Coltness Car Club, a well-known and popular figure in Scottish rallying, and who also runs the Colin McRae Forest Stages Rally.

"We'll take each event as it comes and will hopefully be able to get some advice from experienced drivers as the season goes on," he added.