



Smiths set to battle it out in the forests

THE Smiths from Fintray on the outskirts of Aberdeen are the second most famous rallying family in Scotland behind the McRae clan.

Dad Andrew is a highly-respected competitor with more than 30 years' experience blasting through forests.

Following in her father's tyre tracks, daughter Lorna, below, is the current British Ladies Rally Champion and as such, a mighty fine driver in her own right.

However, despite their relative successes, to date the pair have never gone head-to-head on a full-blown stage rally. But that's all set to change this weekend as they take on the Gleaner Oil and Gas Speyside Stages in identical Peugeot 205 cars as part of the Brick and Steel 205 Ecosse Challenge, Scotland's premier one-make rally series.

Smith senior is a regular driver in the Challenge, and persuaded Lorna to take a break from hurling her usual four-wheel-drive turbo machine around in the British Rally Championship, to come out and give the Challenge heroes a one-off masterclass in flat-out rally driving.

The pair briefly crossed swords on hillclimbs a few years ago and if the times from Lorna's early days are anything to go by, we can look forward to a cracker in the forests of Speyside.

"Dad and I were always very close to each other in the hillclimbs," recalls Lorna. "We were never more than two or three hundredths of a second apart."

"I don't know which one of us will come first on the Speyside," the freelance engineer added. "But I've got a well-prepared car, so I'd like to think I have a good chance of coming out on top."

So Andrew knows he is going to be up against it to win this battle.

Nonetheless, he won't be the only one gunning for Lorna on the Speyside.

"The organisers wanted me to come out to give the young teams a demonstration," Lorna explained.

"But with all the cars being the same, I think it might be the youngsters showing me how quick they really are!"

Indeed, nobody will be more keen to show their true pace than current Challenge leader Alick Kerr.

"It would be really good to see a few of the other British or Scottish Champions brave enough to do something like this," said the 17-year-old from Bothwell.

"Lorna's times will be a great benchmark for all Brick & Steel 205 drivers."

His thoughts were echoed by fellow shooting star Robbie Pearson who said: "It will be interesting to see how Lorna's times compare to ours. If she hasn't had much time to get used to the car, we could be right up there with her."

And with any luck, a few years down the line Alick and Robbie will be the ones coming back to show Scotland's next batch of rallying hotshots just how it's done.

The event will be flagged off from the TA Centre, Edgar Road, Elgin at 9.30am tomorrow.

