



PRESS RELEASE No 13

Mark Higgins after eleven years back at the Barum Rally

Three-times British rally champion Mark Higgins returns to the Barum Czech Rally Zlín. And like eleven years ago he will start with production Subaru Impreza WRX STi.

In 2003, the Barum rally organizers received Higgins' entry at the very last moment, therefore he was given a not very popular number 13. Back then, his main target was to promote a new Subaru Impreza WRX STi prepared by British team RED. And although Higgins' previous career was related to 2WD cars, he did well also in the new four-wheeler. Despite a puncture at SS Troják, he managed to finish twelfth overall and third in the production cars class. Higgins lights up when recalling the memories from Zlín: **"I enjoyed the event and the atmosphere very much. The rally had a good mixture of stages, which were tricky when wet. I am hoping I will remember much more at the recce. 2003 was my first event in the group N car and with a new co driver. The event did not start well and it took me time to get the car set up and get used to group N. But from memory our times at the end of the event were good, but it was a little late then."**

The native of Isle of Man has quite a rich driving career behind. In the first decade of his driving he used to compete with various 2WDs. In that time he also managed to win overall an ERC event – it was in Rally Turkey 1995. At the beginning of new millennium he focused on the World rally championship, where he competed in PWRC or event with WRC cars as a member of the Ford factory team. During last few years he moved to little bit exotic Asia and only occasionally jumps back to rallies in Europe – like in 2013, when he entered the Wales Rally GB, where he – at the wheel of Ford Fiesta R5 - showed off with tenth place overall in the finish. But Higgins' driving is not about rallying – he has movie and TV experience as well. Beside his cooperation with popular TopGear series he acted as a stuntman in many movies, e.g. James Bond episodes Quantum of Solace or Skyfall .

In the actual season are Higgins' activities related to the China rally championship again. But Mark also accepted an offer from a British JRM Group rally team to promote on the ERC events their newly-built Subaru Impreza WRX STi. The original planned debut at the Geko Ypres Rally finally didn't go on so it comes now in Zlín. **"The new car is just about finished and I hope to test it this week for the first time,"** said Mark.

And will the Zlín route suit to him? **"I like fast and bumpy because of my history on the Isle of Man and Ireland. My favourite surface is tarmac so I look forward to trying the new car in Zlín. I think it will be very hard to beat Super 2000 and R5 cars but we can do our best and hopefully the the car can still surprise a few,"** said Higgins, who also compared the European rallying with the Asian one. **"The rallies in China have many conditions - snow, bumpy tarmac, concrete, smooth gravel and mixed surface events. The competition is also very good with Super 2000 cars and good drivers**





such as Chris Atkinson, Jari Ketomaa, Patrick Sandell, Niall McShea and Manfred Stohl plus the local drivers. Most events have 120 cars entered and very well organised 3 days. China seems to be under the radar in terms of press but definitely keeps my hand in all conditions. I miss rallying in Europe so look forward to a return.”

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