

PRESS RELEASE no. 15**European championship elite is coming to Zlín**

The list of registered crews for the 52nd edition of the Barum Czech Rally Zlín 2023 was revealed just eleven days before the start of the event. On 18-20 August, the competing crews will be fighting for important points in the European Rally Championship (ERC) and PSG Czech Rally Championship (MCR) standings. 114 crews from 22 countries have registered with the Zlín organisers, with no one missing from the European Championship leaders, but France's Yoann Bonat. This is the best quality starting field to appear in Zlín in recent years. Hayden Paddon, Mads Ostberg, but also the last European champions Efrén Llerena, Alexey Lukyanuk or Chris Ingram will come. Fans of rallysport can look forward to a comparison of elite drivers of the European championship with the Czech top.

Jan Kopecký (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2), the king of Barum rally, has won the Zlín rally ten times in total, of which the last seven years in a row he has not found any conquerors. This year, a whole pack of predators in line are going after him. One of the biggest attractions for the spectators is the appearance of two leading drivers who have won the World Rally Championship in the past, namely Hayden Paddon from New Zealand (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) and Mads Ostberg from Norway (Citroën C3 Rally2). The thirty-six-year-old driver from distant Oceania is almost certain to become European champion and will appear in the Czech Republic for the very first time. The last three European champions Efrén Llerena from Spain, Alexey Lukyanuk (both Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) in the colours of his new home country Cyprus and the UK returnee Chris Ingram (VW Polo GTi R5) will also be at the start.

Among the European top drivers, Martinš Sesks from Latvia, winner of two gravel rallies in the ERC, Mathieu Franceschi from France, Mikko Heikkilä from Finland, Simon Wagner from Austria (all Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) and Andrea Mabellini from Italy (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) will also be at the start. Joshua McErlean from Ireland (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) could be a dark horse, while Simone Tempestini from Romania and Miklós Csomós from Hungary (both Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) are also aiming high. Filip Mareš is a regular among the Czech top drivers in the European championship and is eighth in the overall standings. Erik Cais (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2), having started three times in Europe this year, concentrates his efforts on WRC2 events, where he achieved excellent results in Monte Carlo and Sardinia. Alongside Kopecký, also the extremely fast Dominik Střiteský (Škoda Fabia R5), winner of the recent Bohemia Rally, and Adam Březík, for the first time in a Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo, will be fighting for points in the Czech championship. Additionally, Martin Vlček (Hyundai i20 R5) will be driving with ERC1 priority.

The international field will include Věroslav Cvrček Jr., Aleš Jirásek, Jakub Jirovec, Petr Tnovec (all Škoda Fabia R5). In the ERC3 category, the fresh European Champion Jon Armstrong from Great Britain (Ford Fiesta Rally3) will appear for the Czech spectators. The national field will consist of many-times Czech champion Václav Pech (Ford Focus WRC) and former F1 driver Tomáš Enge (Toyota Yaris GR), Petr Nešetřil (Porsche 997 GT3), Pavel Ševčík (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX) and others.



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The Junior European Rally Championship (JERC) offers an interesting show and Zlín will witness a tough battle for seconds on the special stages as well. The front-runners are Ola Nore Jr. of Norway (Renault Clio Rally4), the classification leader, Norbert Maior of Romania and Robert Dapra of Italy, who leads the ERC4 standings. There is also Victor Hansen from Sweden and Max McRae from Australia (all Peugeot 208 Rally4) driving with a British licence. Eleven drivers will be fighting for points in the Junior Championship and 15 names in the ERC4 classification, including Zlín driver Jaromír Tarabus (Peugeot 208 Rally4). It will be interesting to see how the Czech drivers will compare with their European competitors in the 2WD category. Apart from Tarabus, David Štefan (Peugeot 208 Rally4), Filip Ocelka (Renault Clio Rally4), Peter Surovič (Opel Corsa Rally4), Dominik Brož (Peugeot 208 R2) and others will definitely shuffle the cards in 2WDs.

Out of the total number of entries, 70 crews will compete in the international field, of which 41 have ERC priority. 24 drivers will compete in ERC1, two in ERC3 and 15 in ERC4 (including 11 juniors). The entry list includes a total of 34 cars in the Rally2/R5 category. Adding variety to the starting field there will also be six women behind the wheel. Adrienn Vogel from Hungary (Peugeot 208 Rally4), Ekaterina Statiyeva from Bulgaria, Cristiana Oprea from Romania (both Opel Corsa Rally4), but for the first time also Rachele Somaschini from Italy (Citroen C3 Rally2), Aoife Raftery from Ireland (Peugeot 208 Rally4) and Czech driver Eliška Slavíková (Škoda Fabia) will show their driving skills on the Czech tracks. The attention of the media and spectators will certainly be focused on the world hockey champion and former successful NHL defenseman Filip Kuba (Peugeot 208 Rally4).

More information available at www.czechrally.com and don't forget to follow Barum rally and Star Rally Historic on the official Facebook, Instagram, Twitter accounts and other press information.

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Roman ORDELT
press agent
Barum Czech Rally Zlín



Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně



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