



## PRESS RELEASE no. 24 Let's look forward to bouncing juniors!

One of the greatest boosters in the actual ERC season has come with a newly established junior championship. The group of youngsters always show a great action in their R2-class cars so it's highly recommended to the spectators to stay at the rally route until the juniors pass by.

The basic concept of the junior championship is quite simple and relatively financially accessible – participating drivers have to be maximum 25 years old, they can drive any of homologated R2 cars and have to register to the championship, where a part of the registration fee is returned to the driver after participating on three ERC Junior events at least.

So far the youngsters competed in four events – in snowy Latvia, on gravel roads of Azores and on tarmac in Ireland and Belgium. Czech driver Jan Černý is the actual championship leader as he won the two opening rounds in Latvia and Ireland, however he crashed in both following rallies and almost lost his margin. But the Barum Czech Rally Zlín is his home event and that could be an advantage. "We did this rally already five times so we know it very well, it belongs to my favourite events. After crashing at Ypres we had to repair the car completely. But we already tested it in Pačejov rallysprint where also regaining the confidence back was our goal. Looking at the championship points we aim to win in Zlín, but it's going to be a tough fight. At least three other drivers can win," said Jan Černý.

At the moment, the biggest rival of Černý is Stéphane Lefebvre, who has won two junior events in Azores and Belgium. The Frenchman is on the mission also in the Junior World Rally Championship. In Zlín he will use a PH Sport-prepared Peugeot 208 R2. With the same car there will appear for the very first time also the youngest man of ERC Junior, British Chris Ingram. He used to drive a Renault Twingo R2, but his performance came on sight of people from Peugeot UK dealership who decided to support Ingram in all remaining ERC Junior events. "During the summer I sold my Twingo which I had used for last three years. Right after that we started to work on a new project and I'm happy we could set it up before Barum Rally," told Ingram.

The juniors' field is quite numerous and there can be found many interesting names. Such as the Belgian junior shootout winner Gino Bux who has been collecting information about Zlín rally from Thierry Neuville or Freddy Loix, or Norwegian Petter Kristiansen who is well known to Czech spectators due to his Czech championship campaign two years ago. One of the championship favourites is definitely the Italian Andrea Crugnola, a former successful WRC Academy attendee.

Another Briton in the field is Alex Parpottas running with car liveried by candy manufacturer, there is also very fast Pole Aleks Zawada, continuously improving youngster Fabio Andolfi or Opel factory driver Marijan Griebel who will bring a new Opel Adam R2 to Zlín. The list of juniors at the Barum Czech Rally Zlín is enclosed with two luckless and so far no point scoring drivers – local Tomáš Pospíšilík, who slowly switches to rallies from autocross, and Romanian Florian Tincescu who was facing many technical issues at previous events.

But there left few others who won't come to Zlín. Scandinavians Risto Immonen, Mattias Olsson and Steve Rokland have run short of their budgets, Stephen Wright has moved his focus onto Belgian Peugeot 208 Cup and the same reason can be found at Guillaume Dilley as well.



Frenchman Jean-Mathieu Leandri decided to compete only in France after misfortune in Latvia and Kevin van Deijne switched for the JWRC. The last of the missing juniors is Fabio Andolfi's older brother Fabrizio who will be in time of Barum Rally trying to keep the 2WD leading position in the Italian Championship.

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