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Welcome to the latest official Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship newsletter.

The scene is set for three BTCC thrillers at Snetterton this coming weekend. Off the back of arguably the most exciting race of the season so far – which saw Colin Turkington pull off a last gasp victory at Donington to close the gap to title rival Matt Neal – all the ingredients are in place for further drama on a similar scale in Norfolk.

It's worth pointing out that Donington's action wasn't just great for the fans at the track but, thanks to ITV1's commitment, those watching at home. A race stoppage delayed the timetable but, much to its credit, the channel stuck with the action to the end, extending its live national television coverage of the championship by a further 30 minutes. It was a shrewd move that should be applauded...



BTCC IN BRIEF:



RAC's MGs will have the support of 1300 guests at Snetterton as the motoring organisation takes on title sponsorship of the event



Gareth Howell will be looking to add to his maiden race win in 2005 when he rejoins Team Halfords at Snetterton



Giovanardi hopes that Snetterton is where he finally breaks his BTCC duck and Vauxhall achieves its century of wins

THOMMO IS FASTEST AROUND SNETTERTON

New World Touring Car Championship leader James Thompson holds Snetterton's qualifying (1m11.588s) and race (1m12.287s) lap records. Thompson, now with SEAT, set both times during his march to the 2004 title with Vauxhall on a weekend when he also ended a barren run of 11 races without a win for the UK manufacturer...

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RAC SPONSORS SNETTERTON BTCC

RAC has announced it will be the title sponsor of this coming weekend's BTCC race meeting at Snetterton – its 'home' circuit thanks to headquarters in nearby Norwich. Some 1,300 staff from Norwich Union, of which RAC became a part last year, are expected to travel from across the UK to cheer on Team RAC at the Norfolk circuit.

RACE VIDS ON BTCC.NET

Video shorts of the BTCC action in 2006 have now gone live on the championship's official website www.btcc.net. More than 4,500 registered fans have access to the clips which are to be found in the Fans' section under the Audio-Video option.

CROFT & DONINGTON TV FIGURES REVEALED

ITV1 viewing figures for Croft's BTCC rounds peaked at 1.053 million – an audience share of 11 per cent. At the same time, this compared with: BBC1, *Big Cat Trail*, 1.837m; BBC2, *European Athletics Trials*, 1.075m; Channel 4, *T4: Charmed*, 0.712m; C5, *Superman*, 1.271m. Donington's broadcast, meanwhile, peaked at 1.070m – a 14 per cent audience share. Figures for other programmes on at the same time were: BBC1, *Eastenders*, 1.260m; BBC2, *Rugby League: Challenge Cup Semi-Final*, 0.755m; C4, *T4: Friends*, 0.649m; C5, *Danielle Steel's Family Album*, 0.602m.

22-CAR ENTRY FOR SNETTERTON

Snetterton's BTCC entry list is the championship's biggest so far this season, with 22 cars set to take to the track in Norfolk. Team Halfords has confirmed that, just as in 2005, Gareth Howell will join its line-up in a third Honda Integra for the final stages of the season. Howell's role will be to help Steve Neal's squad win the Teams' title, having now established a 42-point lead in the standings from SEAT Sport UK. But Howell is also a potential race-winner; in just nine end-of-season outings last year, he achieved his first BTCC race victory at Silverstone. Elsewhere, after making his BTCC debut at Croft, Turkish touring car champion Erkut Kizilirmak will appear for a second time in a fourth VX Racing Astra Sport Hatch. After missing Donington, Mark Proctor is expected to return in his Fast-Tec team's Honda Civic that last year at Snetterton won twice in the hands of Tom Chilton.

NEAL'S TEAM "FRIGHTENED" CLAIMS TURKINGTON

Colin Turkington says he is pleased that title rival Matt Neal's Team Halfords squad has added a third car to its line-up because it shows it is "frightened" of his pace in Team RAC's MG. Turkington, who slashed Neal's points lead from 37 to 22 at Donington, told official championship website www.btcc.net: "They've obviously got frightened by our pace and Matt feels he needs a bit of back-up." Turkington also added: "I'm actually pleased they're bringing out a third car because it shows that they are very aware of our threat."

SHEDDEN TO STAR IN FRONT OF HOME CROWDS

Scotland's Gordon Shedden will headline the BTCC's first-ever **British Touring Cars Live: Edinburgh** event in his country's capital city centre on Thursday 31 August. The event, right by Edinburgh Castle and taking place during the city's world-famous Festivals period, will see Shedden demonstrate his Team Halfords Honda in front of his home crowd along Johnston Terrace. He will be joined by Colin Turkington (Team RAC MG), Jason Plato (SEAT Leon), Fabrizio Giovanardi (VXR Astra) Mike Jordan (Team Eurotech John Guest Honda), Martyn Bell (Geoff Steel BMW 320i), Jason Hughes (Kartworld MG) Tim Harvey (Motorbase Honda), Adam Jones (Xero Lexus) and Mark Smith (InFront Alfa). The entire BTCC grid will attend the event for a public autograph session. Shedden is scheduled to get the event under way at 16.30 when he takes part in a fire brigade road safety demonstration along Castle Terrace which will house the BTCC's makeshift paddock.

VXR CLOSING ON CENTURY

Vauxhall believes its strong run of form at Donington will continue this weekend at Snetterton – a circuit that has a history of favouring its cars and which is expected to suit its strong engines. The Luton marque has now gone 26 races without a win, but it was at Snetterton in 2004 that it ended a similar barren run. One more win of course would be Vauxhall's 100th in the BTCC and driver Fabrizio Giovanardi was within yards of making it a century at Donington until he was passed at the final bend by Team RAC's Colin Turkington. Giovanardi said: "Losing my first win at Donington still hurts but I'm not angry like I was. I know something about Snetterton because I've tested there before, but only in the wet. It's quite difficult – really fast – but it's a circuit where drivers can really make the difference. We've taken a big jump in performance. Now we can fight."

BTCC IN BRIEF:



WTCC leader Thompson holds the BTCC's qualifying and race lap records around Snetterton



Dave Pinkney's Honda is now sporting new livery after attracting sponsorship from *Nuts* magazine and *Virgin Radio*



Turkington's sponsor duties took him to RAC Auto Windscreens in Chesterfield recently

HALFORDS MILES AHEAD

Out of 611.8 miles raced so far, Matt Neal has led 149.6, Gordon Shedden, 111.6, James Thompson 93, Colin Turkington 89.8 and Jason Plato 86.1.

CONCENTRATION LAPS

Neal also leads the season's 'laps led' contest on 67 to date, compared to Thompson's 58, Shedden's 52, Plato's 45 and Turkington's 42. And out of 18 races, Neal has achieved 11 podium finishes, Turkington nine, Plato eight and Shedden seven.

OTHER VITAL STATISTICS

Shedden is the only driver thus far this season to have qualified on pole twice and he also has most fastest race laps to his name, five. Turkington, with an unbeaten 3 poles in 2005, has yet to top the qualifying sheets this season... Neal, meanwhile, has earned most bonus points, five, for leading races.

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80-PLUS ATTEND INDIE FORUM

BTCC series director Alan Gow has staged his second forum for prospective independent teams to the championship. More than 80 guests attended a presentation and question and answer session at the Honda Racing F1 Team's Brackley headquarters last week. Also on hand to share their experiences were current privateer entrants Steven Neal (Team Dynamics/Halfords), Dick Bennetts (WSR/Team RAC), Mike Jordan (Team Eurotech), Dave Pinkney (Motorbase), Martyn Bell (Geoff Steel Racing), Dave Beecroft (Xero Competition), John Smith (InFront) and Richard Marsh (Farecla). A similar forum in 2005 proved hugely beneficial for teams weighing up a BTCC programme and in 2006 seven new independent entries have joined the grid.

GORDON'S ALIVE!

Just 18 races into his BTCC career, Gordon Shedden boasts the highest wins ratio of any driver on the current grid. The Scot has won four times in his Team Halfords Honda – equivalent, on average, to a race win every 4.5 races. Next up come: Jason Plato, 28 wins from 204 races (avg. 7.2); James Thompson, 33 wins from 263 races (avg. 7.9); Matt Neal, 25 wins from 304 (avg. 12.1).

JOLLY GREEN GIANT

Jason Hughes was due to test his newly converted bio-ethanol-powered Kartworld MG at Mallory Park yesterday (Wednesday). Hughes became the second driver in the BTCC to 'go green' when he switched to the fuel, made from farming crops, at Donington. In addition to the obvious environmental benefits, the Preston driver claims better engine response and cheaper fuel are two of the reasons behind his decision.

VX RA RA RA!

Fabrizio Giovanardi, Tom Chilton and Gavin Smith will act as cheerleaders when their VX Racing crew takes on BTCC title sponsor Dunlop in a fun football match at Mulbarton FC's ground near Norwich tomorrow night (Friday). "I believe there are going to be pom poms involved, but I draw the line at a ra-ra skirt!" said Smith.

LEGGATE'S MINI ADVENTURE

BTCC racer Fiona Leggate set a new lap record and, despite a spin, still finished sixth when she made a guest appearance in the Mini Challenge series at Thruxton last weekend.

RAC DUO 'ON THE ROAD'

Team-mates Colin Turkington and Robert Collard continued their UK tour of all things RAC prior to race meetings with separate visits in the North Midlands prior to Donington's BTCC fixture. Turkington met staff at RAC Chesterfield, while Collard spent Friday morning at Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club's Trent Bridge ground where he met up with players Chris Read and Mark Ealham.

PINKNEY GOES NUTS

Dave Pinkney has attracted sponsorship from leading men's magazine *Nuts* and associate brand *Virgin Radio*. Pinkney's Motorbase Performance Honda sported a new livery at Donington and is being used to promote 'Formula Nuts' – a magazine reader competition to win a race in the BTCC's supporting Renault Clio Cup.

ORANGE GUSH

Team Halfords' and Team RAC's fight for supremacy on the BTCC race track spilled over onto the spectator banks at Donington when, between them, they invited along close to 3,500 guests to cheer on their cars. That's a lot of orange caps. Of its guests, Halfords catered for 350 VIPs in a massive 100-metre long hospitality suite.

SUPPORT SERIES ROUND-UP

Renault UK received 32 orders for its new-for-2007 Renault Clio Cup race model within hours of unveiling it at Donington's BTCC race meeting. The BTCC support series enjoyed a similar surge of interest when it was re-launched in 2000 after a five-year absence.

Currently on course to win this year's Clio title is 19-year-old Tom Onslow-Cole (TCR) who, after a win and a retirement at Donington, holds a 95-point lead over former champion Paul Rivett (Boulevard). In SEAT's Cupra series, last year's runner-up Mat Jackson has begun edging clear of the field after back-to-back wins at Donington in his family-run car. In terms of points, Porsche's Carrera Cup is the closest of the BTCC's roofed support series: reigning champion Damien Faulkner (Team Parker) leads, but by only seven points from Tim Harvey (Motorbase), although Danny Watts (Red Line) is the driver on form following two wins at Donington.

In single-seaters, Patrick Hogan (AKA Lemac) continues to lead the Formula Renault table, but by just two points after closest rival Sebastian Hohenthal (Fortec) twice got the better of him to win at Donington. Niall Breen (Fortec) is the dominant force in Formula BMW after a winning streak took him 68 points clear of the field.