



# SQUARE LEFT

FEATURES

## Learning the R5 game



One Scottish legend's PlayStation game and the support of a rally winning star was all it took to get Scotland's John Wink behind the wheel of a rally car.

Over three years on from his debut, Wink and co-driver John Forrest have moved on from their Mitsubishi Lancer and into a Hyundai i20 R5, with the pair currently lying sixth overall in the Scottish Rally Championship. Having both started out as novices in 2014, their rate of progression has been startling.

“I was always interested in rallying,” Wink admits, “which was probably largely encouraged by the Colin McRae PlayStation game.

“I also used to love playing around in the farm Land-Rover Defender from the age of about 11; it’s a good job it had a bull-bar! Quintin Milne also got me involved through company sponsorship when he was competing regularly back in 2013.

“Quintin being Quintin, he managed to convince John [Forrest] and I to hire a car for the Granite City Rally and that was it!”

After some impressive results behind the wheel of an Evo including multiple class wins, Wink felt like stepping up to a more potent weapon.

The Hyundai i20 R5 was breaking onto the British rallying scene in the hands of Tom Cave in the BRC, and after visiting the World Championship leaders’ headquarters in Germany, the decision to bring the car to Scotland became a no-brainer.

“John and I are both very competitive, so with the help of previous Scottish Champion Ken Wood, we decided to pursue the R5 option,” Wink explains.

“When we went to Hyundai Motorsport in Alzenau it was very difficult not to want to buy one. John and I split all the team costs which makes the whole project more feasible, so we have absolutely no regrets!”



Now proud owners of the only Hyundai R5 currently competing on the mainland UK, one concern the crew may have is the ability to source parts with less examples rallying and the manufacturer's headquarters over in Germany rather than in Cockermouth like M-Sport's operation.

However, this hasn't been the case.

"We get a lot of support from Hyundai," Wink explains.

"As a customer we automatically become Customer Racing members and this allows us to receive technical bulletins with updates regarding servicing and how to get the most from the car.

"They are also just a phone call away and are always keen to help just as if they were down the road, which obviously is great for us."

Both the i20 and the Lancer that now belongs to SRC rival Michael Binnie are four-wheel-drive, but the two machines require a very different driving style.

"It's not a case of jumping into an R5 and instantly being quicker," Wink says.

"I'm sure anyone with experience competing in an R5 would agree. It's a much more aggressive driving style but when you start to get up to it, you can't get the smile off your face!"

"The in-car footage from the Grampian last year [Hyundai R5 debut] is pathetic," he laughs.

"I think we were just very nervous, but having now done a number of events, we're settling into the car. Winning stages on the Wales Rally GB National and coming close on the Snowman has helped us gain confidence in the car and our own abilities.

"We've received a lot of support from sponsors who have taken onboard the level of investment and passion that goes along with how we want to compete. We've now completed three rally seasons and most of our sponsors have been with us since day one, but we are also now getting very positive feedback on social media as the Hyundai is unique in this country."



Driving an R5 gives Wink the opportunity to not just compete in various championships across Europe, but also the chance to learn from plenty of drivers who are using similar machinery.

The Scot has recently been out testing with BRC and BTRDA front-runner Matt Edwards, beginning a relationship Wink hopes can continue in the future.

"The time with Matt was simply invaluable," he reveals.

"He's a great teacher and worked on educating me on how the driving style could help make the mechanics and the chassis of the car work for me. We're testing with him again soon and are looking forward to having an ongoing tuition relationship with him to knock me into shape!"

And once in shape, Wink is looking towards not just the Scottish Rally Championship rostrum, but a bash at some higher profile events too.

"If we were to get close or onto the podium at some point, that would just be a dream come true," he admits.

"We're going to do the whole of the SRC and select some events out-with the Scottish championship too. We may travel to do some BRC rounds as and when time and budget allows us to. Both my navigator and I have very busy working lives so it can sometimes be a bit of a juggling act."

A juggling act that seems to be going about right just now. The Speyside Stages on April 21<sup>st</sup> is next up for the pair, where they'll be looking to make even more progress.