



SQUARE LEFT

OPINION

Why Corsica could make or break Evans' WRC career



It can't just be me that finds my opinion [column](#) after Rally Sweden now a touch ironic.

In that piece, I argued that M-Sport's Elfyn Evans is the United Kingdom's strongest chance of World Rally Championship success, comparing him to fellow Brit Kris Meeke.

The proof doesn't seem to be in the pudding however, and that pudding could end up being a rather large slice of humble pie for yours truly.

Citroen's Meeke lies fourth in the points after three of the 13 rounds in 2018 and could easily be third after just missing out on second place to Dani Sordo in Mexico, while by contrast Evans has been the worst performing of all the full-time works drivers.

The Welshman is currently 12th in the championship, behind Craig Breen, Dani Sordo, Hayden Paddon and Sebastien Loeb who have all started less rallies than him.

Evans' Monte-Carlo and Swedish rallies can be considered somewhat unlucky.

On the season-opener, his Fiesta RS WRC lost pressure in its front tyre on the very first stage, catapulting its pilot down the leaderboard in the process. Evans then put in a good recovery drive only to be pipped by Thierry Neuville to fifth place by less than a second in the final stage of the weekend.

The story was much the same in Sweden. Any time loss in the ultra-fast forests is severely damaging, and Evans would once again suffer a puncture. Dropping down the order meant he had to run at the front of the field for the remainder of the rally, which with the fresh snow, made it impossible to make any in-roads. He was then sacrificed by his team to give up tenth place to his team-mate Sebastien Ogier.

Evans' Friday curse would strike again in Mexico, but this time the incident was rather more self-inflicted if still with unlucky consequences. After setting some strong times early-on, Evans' rally would fall apart on stage four after hitting a compression in sixth

gear. The rear-end of his Fiesta kicked up into the air, and as the car settled back into the ground, Evans and co-driver Daniel Barritt careered into a bank when trying to correct the tank-slapper, pitching the car into a roll. The pair made it back to service, but Barritt was taken to hospital with concussion and that was the end of their Rally Mexico.

Evans has never had a worse start to a season than this, and only once before has he gone two consecutive events without scoring a championship point. The next round of the WRC in Corsica therefore is one of the most important in his relatively short career.



The good news is the Tour de Corse has historically been a strong event for the M-Sport man. He took a fine second place in 2015 and won the WRC2 class in 2016. All the evidence therefore suggests he can achieve a podium, and that's what he must do.

It's fair to say Evans is stuck in a bit of a rut after a couple of disastrous events. The 2018 championship title might not have been his pre-season target, but already it looks a nigh on impossibility. If he is serious about becoming a serial rally winner and progressing with his career, he needs a strong result and he needs it now. He can argue he has been unlucky all he likes, but that won't change the complexion of the championship table.

Driving for DMACK last year was perfect for him in the sense that he was under the wing of a factory team but was very much seen as a third driver behind Ogier and Ott Tanak.

Now back in the main M-Sport fold, Evans can ill-afford to be letting the side down and letting his results fade like he has been, particularly with the current performance of Hyundai.

It's not time to panic just yet, but the situation needs to be rescued. If not, such is the competitiveness of the current World Championship, the 2018 season could be Evans' last.