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Fiestas flock from far and wide for Welsh finale

Following his first win for Fiesta Sporting**Trophy** International (FSTi) in Rally Catalunya last month, Lithuanian Vytautas Baranauskas (23) will be aiming to finish the 2007 championship in similar style on Wales Rally GB (30 November to 2 December), despite tough competition for he and co-driver Gediminas Celiešius from experienced European FST drivers.

The seven-round series follows the FIA World Rally Championship calendar and Wales Rally GB is the final round of the competitive FSTi championship. The forest stages of Rally GB will be the fourth gravel event of 2007 for the crews in their identical 2-litre GpN cars, with seven stages in darkness for the Fiestas. In addition to the FSTi series, the Fiestas are run in 11 national championships around the world, giving drivers the option to switch between championships in order to gain more experience before progressing to the WRC.

Joining FSTi from England are James Everard (22) and co-driver Mark Ammonds who finished sixth overall in the FST UK championship out of a total of 24 drivers. Having competed against his fellow British competitors throughout the year, Everard is taking the next step and challenging fellow European FST competitors on his home ground, amongst whom are Italians Giovanni Caposiena (29) and co-driver Barbara Perugini.

Winner of the 2006 FST International Shootout and third in the 2007 Junior Swedish Championship is Victor Henriksson (19), originally from Stockholm but currently residing at M-Sport in the UK. Henriksson competed against 23 top Fiesta drivers in the Shootout last December and earned himself a placement working for the BP-Ford World Rally Team. Instead of working on Rally GB, Henriksson and British co-driver Mark Walker have secured a deal to compete on their first WRC event with the assistance of sponsors Allfab and Pole Position Indoor Karting.

This year's FST International Shootout will take place at M-Sport on 3 and 4 December. First and second-placed drivers plus one 'wildcard' coming from FST championships from Sweden to New Zealand will compete for a residential contract with M-Sport to work for the BP-Ford World Rally Team for the 2008 season. 2007 FSTi Champion Barry Clark (25) and Baranauskas have already secured their places at the Shootout and the FSTi wildcard will be selected following Rally GB and announced on 2 December. They will compete against 23 drivers in a series of physical, media, psychological and driving tests, with the winner selected by Malcolm Wilson, Managing Director of M-Sport.

Victor Henriksson, 2006 FST International Shootout winner said:

"To finish this amazing year by competing on my first WRC event is a dream come true. My plan for the rally is to boost my experience and get some stage mileage under my belt by building increasingly faster stage times throughout the three days. It will be so much fun to drive on the WRC stages and fantastic to compete on the same stages as Marcus [Grönholm] and Mikko [Hirvonen]. I hope to be able to repay all the faith that Malcolm [Wilson] and M-Sport have entrusted to me this year by obtaining a solid result, as well as thanking my new sponsors PPIK and Allfab who have given me this great opportunity to show my speed in the UK."

Vytautas Baranauskas said:

"Winning FSTi on Rally Catalunya in October gave me a real boost in confidence and I'm hungry for another victory. I will push for the win in Wales, but I already have second place in the championship, so I don't need to push too hard. It will be one of the toughest weeks of my life, with the rally followed immediately by the Shootout. But I'm really looking forward to both events and will try to enjoy myself above all."

Joining the FSTi competitors will be the Castrol supported Ford Rallye Sport Turkey crews of Emre Yurdakul (24) and Burcu Cetinkaya (26). Yurdakul and co-driver Can Erkal have competed in 2007 Neste Oil Rally Finland in the GpN Fiesta, as well as the Turkish Rally Championship in a Ford Focus and the Turkish Fiesta Castrol Rallye Cup. Cetinkaya has competed against Yurdakul in the Castrol Rallye Cup, as well as selected events in the FST Belgium championship. Belgian Frederic Miclotte will join her as co-driver.

Emre Yurdakul said:

"We, as Ford Rallye Sport Turkey, won the Manufacturers' title in Turkish Rally Championship this year and during the season I tried to do my best for the team with Focus WRC car. So they trusted me for the next year and FSTi 2008 is very important for our team's next plans. I hope I can again be successful and win the FSTi Rally GB following my success in Rally Finland. Our car is in very good condition and I get prepared very well mentally for this rally. Rally GB stages are very different than I'm used to because in Turkey you can never see this much rain. This rally again will be big challenge for me but I'll do my best. Also Castrol Fiesta Rallye Cup Turkey's Champion Lady driver Burcu Cetinkaya is entering Rally GB and will be enjoyable to race against her, believe me, she is really tough!"

Championship standings after round 6 of 7:

			NOR	POR	SAR	FIN	GER	SPA	GB	TOTAL*
1	B CLARK	GBR	10	10	10	10	10	8	-	58
2	V BARANAUSKAS	LIT	DNF	6	4	8	8	10		36
3	E VERTUNOV	RUS	8	5	8	-	-	-	-	21
4	S HUGHES	GBR	5	8	6	-	-	-	-	19
5	G BARBATI	ITA	-	4	5	-	-	-	-	9
6=	S BIELTVEDT	NOR	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
6=	JM SANTANA	SPA	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
8	M MONTEIRO	POR	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
-	V HENRIKSSON	SWE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
-	J EVERARD	GBR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
-	G CAPOSIENA	ITA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

*Best six of seven scores to count toward final championship points

Event specifics:

Total distance: 1271.94 km Number of stages: 17
 Stage distance: 359.54 km Number of stages in darkness: 7

For further information, please contact Fiesta Sporting Trophy International Co-ordinator, Kate Rhodes, on +44 (0) 7894 622 492 or krhodes@m-sport.co.uk. Copyright free images available at www.fiestasportingtrophy.com.