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## **Gould steps up to FST showdown on the Pirelli International**

Twenty-year-old rally driver Adam Gould, winner of the 2007 Fiesta Sporting**Trophy** International Shootout, showed class winning pace on last week's Pirelli International Rally near Carlisle, but his rally was brought to an abrupt end when a rogue rock damaged his car's front suspension.

Gould, a member of the British Rally Academy, had difficulties in raising a budget and had all but given up on competing on the championship opener, until a last minute offer from Richard Asquith of Autosport Technology materialized.

Gould hadn't driven the Autosport Technology car before and first drove it during the pre-event shakedown, and nor did he have any experience of co-driver Tim Line. To add a further challenge, Gould hadn't competed in the dark before, conditions in which the four opening stages would be run on the Friday evening.

The R2 class in which Gould was competing was spectacularly competitive, featuring some highly decorated young drivers that would really challenge the young Gould. A Swedish attack came in the form of Fiesta Sporting**Trophy** Sweden champion Andreas Sjölander and last year's FST International Shootout winner Victor Henriksson, alongside a significant challenge mounted by Fiesta Sporting**Trophy** International champion Barry Clark. French rally star Simon Jean-Joseph also promised to be very quick indeed.

The night stages were especially tricky given the heavy rain that had fallen throughout the day, and Gould found adapting to the new car's handling traits particularly difficult. However, all was going well until the fourth stage, when the car developed a slight misfire, which would remain throughout the event. Even so, come the end of the opening day, Gould lay in third position in class, having set some consistent stage times, and was within 30 seconds of second placed Sjölander in the Fiesta ST.

On the first stage of the second day however, Gould picked up the pace and managed to beat the class leading Jean-Joseph by a second. On stage six, Gould endured a heart-in-mouth moment when his car's rear end hit a high sided bridge, sending the car bouncing over to the other side of the bridge and causing damage to both rear quarter panels, as well as bending the rear beam. Mechanical damage was minimal though, and the car was handling largely as it had before the incident, and little time, if any, was lost.

Stage 10, however, saw disaster strike. The stage was extremely rough, and, as Gould rounded a tight corner, he hit a large rock right in his path breaking a wishbone. This then sent the car towards a concrete bridge on the next corner, breaking a ball joint on the opposite side. Gould was forced to retire within sight of the stage finish.

"I'm disappointed to have not finished," said Gould, "I'd like to thank Autosport Technology and ppik.net for enabling me to compete on this event, and I hope we can put forward a deal to be able to compete on the Jim Clark rally next month."

Gould is now preparing for Rally d'Italia Sardegna, where he will be working with the BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team as part of his contract for winning the FST International Shootout. Based at M-Sport HQ in Cumbria, Gould has so far performed a wide variety of duties on-event in Rally Monte Carlo, Rally Sweden and at home in the team's state-of-the-art workshop, as well as testing in the Focus RS WRC 07.