

# CROSSED WORLDS

RALLYCROSS EXCITEMENT HAS HIT FEVER PITCH AT THE END OF THE SECOND FIA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP. BUT WHY HAS THIS NEW ADDITION TO THE FIA CALENDAR CREATED SO MUCH BUZZ? WE ASKED JOURNALIST JD VAN ZYL TO FIND OUT...

**Hailed as “the most exciting sport in the world”** by the BBC’s *Top Gear*, rallycross is taking the world by storm, and it’s not hard to see why. If F1 were a bottle of elegant Bordeaux best enjoyed over a sophisticated meal, rallycross would be a shot of tequila slammed down the throat at your local, and chased with another.

Born and bred in Britain, rallycross has been around since the 1960s. But many only really started taking notice of the sport when it went mainstream last year with the first ever FIA World Rallycross Championship. Now, at the end of its second FIA season, the sport continues to go from strength to strength. But what is it about rallycross – or simply RX for those in the know – that has the crowds hooked?

For one, it’s brilliant fun for spectators. Drivers come in at flat-out speeds right off the bat, events are staged in an arena-like environment which enables viewers to get right up close to the action, and the rules of combat are much more relaxed than with other motorsports (in other words: plenty of bumping each other without drivers getting a slap on the wrist).

And then you have the cars... Flame-spitting 2.0-litre turbocharged monsters that can rip from 0-62mph in under two seconds – that’s faster than a Formula One car off the line. It’s the perfect adrenaline cocktail.

## GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY

It works like this: each race starts with five drivers at a time battling it out in four heats of four laps. The fastest 12 drivers from these heats move on to the semi-finals where six contenders at a time fight it out over two races – only now there are six laps in each race.

As if that isn’t confusing enough, all drivers also have to pass through a ‘joker lap’ once in each race. This extra gravel loop – boasting a nice jump for some guaranteed airtime – adds two to three extra seconds to the lap time, and deciding when to play that card is a very strategic decision. 🍀



## DAKAR CALLING

Peugeot was victorious\* in the 2016 Dakar Rally with a modified 2008. Head to page 28 to find out more about this year’s competition and the car.





“ WE’VE BEEN REALLY FIGHTING FOR THE VICTORIES, LIKE IN NORWAY, WHERE WE CLAIMED THE FIRST EVER ONE-TWO FINISH IN WORLD RX HISTORY ”

For the ultimate test of mettle, or metal as it were, there is the grand final. The top three drivers from the semi-final brawl for overall victory over one race of six laps, resulting in some truly thrilling battles for track position.

Compared to other motorsports, rallycross is a unique beast. It boasts the brutal acceleration of F1, but the track is much, much tighter and features both tar and gravel sections. So it’s like rally? Not quite. Rally is run in stages racing against a clock, instead of each other, and stages often cover hundreds of miles so it isn’t anywhere near as compact or action-packed. Rallycross cars are equally unique.



#### THE DNA OF PUREBRED RACING

Peugeot’s involvement in motorsport is one of the broadest in the industry, and spans 122 years. The brand has claimed titles in the World Rally Championship and Sportscar World Championship, while ventures into such celebrated competitions as the Dakar Rally, Pikes Peak, Le Mans and Indianapolis, as well as other endurance races, have all been crowned with success.

While Peugeot has been active in rallycross over the last couple of years, the brand stepped up its commitment by a number of notches when the new World Rallycross Championship was born. Peugeot wanted to be part of the championship from the outset and, as a consequence, linked up with one of the most prominent operators in the sport to form a force to be reckoned with – Team Peugeot-Hansen.

#### A FAMILY FIT FOR FIGHTING

As 14-time FIA European Rallycross Champion and 10-time Swedish Rallycross Champion, you don’t have to dig deep to uncover team boss Kenneth Hansen’s credentials. With an established, winning rallycross team as a foundation Kenneth, alongside his wife Susann as Team Manager, and their racing driver sons Timmy and Kevin, forming the nucleus of the team along with French driver Davy Jeanney.

Understandably, 23-year-old Timmy Hansen was born with a love for the sport practically coded into his DNA, though interestingly he initially cut his teeth in circuit racing and built a strong career in single-seaters. It was only in 2013 that Timmy made his RX debut, and what a debut it was.

He was named Rookie of the Year, and finished the season with a bronze medal in the European

The World RX Championships ventures across numerous continents, from Portugal to Estering in Germany, pictured here, to Argentina and Canada.



#### PEUGEOT 208 WRX TECH SPECS

- Engine:** 4-cylinder 2,040cc turbocharged
- Transmission:** Sadev 6-speed
- Chassis:** Peugeot 208
- Suspension:** Öhlins
- Weight (with driver):** 1,300kg
- Power:** 600bhp and 900Nm
- 0-62 mph:** Approximately 2 seconds

#### DID YOU KNOW?

WRX cars are fitted with a special ‘bang-bang switch’ on their dashboard. Officially known as ALS – or anti-lag system – this is what transforms the car into a monster. When activated, flames shoot through the turbo to keep it spinning at super-high revs every time you lift your foot off the throttle, which is one of the secrets that make rallycross cars so lightning quick.



Although the Ford Olsbergs team provided a stern challenge, Team Peugeot-Hansen was victorious in the team standings by the end of the 2015 season, winning almost half the races thanks to drivers Timmy Hansen and Davy Jeanney.

Championship. Timmy's upward trajectory continued into 2014 when he steered the team to its maiden world championship success in the Italian RX round and ultimately finished the 2014 season in fourth place. But the young Swede was just beginning to hit his stride.

"At the start of the 2015 season we didn't get as many points as we would have liked," explains Kenneth. "But then we had a big turning point in Germany where we really dominated the race. Since then, we've been really fighting for the victories, like in Norway, where we claimed the first ever one-two finish in World RX history. It was magical!"

This has culminated in a 2015 manufacturer victory for Team Peugeot-Hansen, contributing to the team's meteoric rise within the sport.

**A LOT OF ROCK AND SOME HEAVY METAL**  
Starting life as a Peugeot 208 T16 R5 Rally car, the WRX contender undergoes a complete metamorphosis. The result is a turbocharged all-wheel drive tornado that boasts 600bhp under the bonnet (that's 300bhp per litre) and more torque than a Ferrari 488 GTB, making it the fastest-accelerating car on the planet, apart from a dragster.

As if keeping all that power in check on a tight muddy bend isn't challenging enough, helping hands such as traction control and electronic differentials are banned in rallycross. Fortunately, thanks to space-age materials such as Kevlar, carbon fibre and very high-grade aluminium, rallycross cars can soak up bumps and jumps that would destroy other cars.

While the rallycross version of the 208 isn't

available to us mere mortals, there is the next best thing in the shape of the New Peugeot 208 GTi by PEUGEOT SPORT. This impressive hot hatch has a 0-62mph time of 6.5 seconds, eye-catching dual-paint Matt Black and Red finish, Brembo fixed four-piston calipers with 323mm brake discs and Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres. The result is an accomplished road car that utilises all the learnings from top-end motorsport know-how and produces a vehicle with applied credentials and tuned features, making it a very capable pocket rocket. Its bigger brother, the new Peugeot 308 GTi by PEUGEOT SPORT, is our cover star this issue and can be seen in detail on page 10.

"There are so many things that I love about rallycross," concludes Team Peugeot-Hansen principal Kenneth. "The intensity, the action and how compact the whole park is. Some people say rallycross is a bit rock'n'roll. I say it's far more like AC/DC." ■



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