



Hirvonen advises crews on how to tame fast Finnish stages

After arriving at Neste Oil Rally Finland on Sunday 24th July to prepare for the third round of the WRC Academy Cup, the Class of 2011's off-stage tuition programme kicked off with a guest lecture from Finnish rally hero and Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team driver Mikko Hirvonen.



Like the WRC Academy crews, Hirvonen began his career at the event in a 2WD car before climbing the WRC ladder to dominate the rally with his first home win in 2009. As he donned his teacher's cap yesterday morning, his advice to the crews was: "spend as much time doing recce and perfecting pace notes as possible. It's a tricky rally, so it's important to pay attention to detail and learn the roads, especially the crests and sharp turns. Some of the stages this year are new so we are all in the same position, tackling them for the first time. You have to be focused and well-prepared, but also know when and how to relax. It is a rally you can really enjoy. And afterwards – everyone can have a party!"

Mario Isola warns protecting tyres could be Key to success



As the WRC Academy crews look ahead to Day One of Neste Oil Rally Finland this Thursday, they don't only have to be careful to protect their Ford Fiesta R2s, but also their tyres. Mario Isola, Pirelli Motor sport Racing Manager, offers priceless advice on how to handle their control-tyre: "They have to learn how to manage the tyres, because this can be key to success in motor sport. Young drivers often push to the maximum wanting to complete the stages as fast as possible, but I am confident that the WRC Academy crews will show the necessary skill to look after their tyres, by not cutting too much or hitting big stones. This, and choosing the right time to make important tyre changes, will help them avoid punctures and allow them to drive fast without pushing the tyres over the limit."

Triumph for Breen at Rally Estonia

Pirelli Star Driver Craig Breen (IRE) was delighted to come out on top of the seven WRC Academy crews competing in their own Ford Fiesta R2s at Rally Estonia after a grueling battle left Brit Alastair Fisher only one second behind his Irish rival. A broken driveshaft put current series leader Egon Kaur (EST) out of contention on his home event after Day One, but he was pleased to pick up a clean sweep of stage wins in the 2WD class on Day Two.



An early leader at both Vodafone Rallye de Portugal and Rally Italia Sardegna, Breen hopes that his result in Estonia is a positive omen for Neste Oil Rally Finland this weekend: "Topping the WRC Academy crews was a huge bonus for us in Estonia, but knowing we have a good set-up to start with in Finland is even better. The car felt really good and hopefully this feeling will transfer over to the WRC Academy car next week, I just can't wait!"