

Rallying to Victory



1997 British Rally Champions





Champion performance



Alister McRae makes a splash on his way to British Championship victory for Volkswagen

Since its launch in 1976 the Volkswagen Golf GTI has not only been establishing sales records around the globe, it's been rewriting the motor sport record books. The car which created the 'hot hatchback' class and spawned a host of imitations has enjoyed a race and rally career *par excellence*.

But never has the Golf GTI had such success as it has in 1997. In the hands of Alister McRae and Tapio Laukkanen, the GTI 16V not only swept Volkswagen to victory in the Mobil 1 British Rally Championship but also proved to be the car to have on the World Championship stage.

The yellow 'Colour Concept' Golfs achieved a string of UK rally successes, McRae claiming victory in the Rallies of Wales and Scotland and Laukkanen taking second on the Pirelli International and Scottish events, plus third place in the Manx International, to give the Sony, Revolution Wheels and Pirelli-backed team championship victory.

On the world stage the Golf has proved unstoppable also. Swedish ace Jörgen Jonasson claimed World 2-litre Cup victory for Volkswagen on the International Swedish Rally, with Laukkanen and McRae taking third and fourth places respectively. Alister, the 1995 British Champion, then swept



Alister McRae's victory on the Rally of Portugal put Volkswagen in the lead of the FIA 2-Litre World Cup

all before him on the Rally of Portugal to take Volkswagen's second FIA World Cup win of the season.

Prepared by the specialists at Volkswagen's UK partner team SBG Sport, the GTI rally car is powered by a 280bhp version of the 2-litre 16-valve engine, tuned by Liechtenstein wizard Lehmann Motorentechnik. Power is delivered to the front wheels via a six-speed sequential Gemini gearbox. The vital forest stage and tarmac grip is provided by the rally world's leading tyre maker, Pirelli, with competition wheels from legendary supplier Revolution.

The drivers

Alister McRae

Born 20 December 1970

Lives Lanark



David Senior

Born 31 March 1964

Lives Daventry

With the most famous surname in British rallying history, Alister McRae has always had a lot to live up to, but he shows no signs of failing to follow in the wheeltracks of father Jimmy – five times the British Champion – and 1995 World Champion brother Colin. Alister's rally career began in 1989, when he won the 1300cc class of the Scottish Rally Championship. In 1992 Alister campaigned a Sierra Cosworth prepared and run by SBG – he won Group N on the RAC Rally, his first World Championship event. A spell with the Nissan team brought spectacular results; in 1994 he won F2 on the San Remo Rally and took second on the 1000 Lakes, and in 1995 he won two rounds on his way to outright victory in the British Rally Championship.

McRae's 1997 season was spectacularly successful. He and the Golf took outright victory on the Rally of Wales, then led home team-mate Laukkanen for an historic Scottish Rally Volkswagen 1-2, finishing the season third in the British Championship drivers' title race. He also took 2-litre World Cup victory on the Rally of Portugal.

David Senior has been Alister's co-driver ever since the junior McRae went behind the wheel in 1989. David's career began in 1980 in road and stage rallies.

Tapio Laukkanen

Born 23 September 1969

Lives Lahti, Finland



Risto Mannisenmäki

Born 28 May 1959

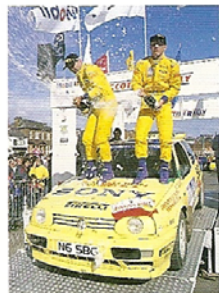
Lives Espoo, Finland

One of the new breed of Flying Finns, Tapio Laukkanen proved in Britain in 1997 that the speed which swept him to Finnish Championship victory in '96 was no flash in the pan.

Laukkanen claimed second place overall in April's Pirelli International Rally, then fought a furious battle with his team-mate McRae on the Scottish International, the Scot pipping him for victory by just eight seconds. Third on the Manx helped earn Tapio sixth place overall in the drivers' championship. Tapio started his rallying career in 1991.

After seven junior wins with a Mitsubishi Galant in '92 he went on to win five of the eight rounds of the '93 Finland novice series and to claim the Finnish Junior Championship. In 1994 he took Group N victory on the Rally of Wales. His first outings with the SBG Sport/Volkswagen team came in '95; he was runner-up that year in the Finnish Championship and claimed a hard-fought fourth in class on the RAC Rally.

Rallying partner to Tapio Laukkanen since 1995, Risto Mannisenmäki was in '93 nominated Co-Driver of the Year in his native Finland.





Volkswagen Golf GTI 16V

Technical specification

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Prepared by | SBG Sport, Daventry |
| Engine | 1990cc, 16-valve, 4-cylinder bore/stroke 83.9/90mm Tuned by Lehmann Motorentechnik Bosch Motronic engine management system |
| Max power | 280bhp plus |
| Drivetrain | Front-wheel drive |
| Gearbox | Six-speed Gemini sequential |
| Clutch | AP Cerometallic |
| Brakes | Gravel – AP 4-pot callipers, 295mm discs Tarmac – AP 6-pot, water-cooled, 355mm discs |
| Suspension | Proflex |
| Tyres | Pirelli |
| Wheels | 17in Revolution |
| Lubricants | Silkolene |
| Length / width | 4020mm / 1702mm |
| Wheelbase | 2475mm |
| F/R track | 1464mm / 1448mm |
| Weight | 970kg |



Volkswagen rally team – 1997 programme

| Date | Event | Championship | McRae | Laukkanen |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------|
| 10-12 Jan | NEC Rallysprint | – | 1st | – |
| 7-10 Feb | International Swedish | World Cup | 4th | 3rd |
| 14/15 Mar | Rally of Wales | British | 1st | – |
| 23-26 Mar | Rally of Portugal | World Cup | 1st | – |
| 26/27 Apr | Pirelli International | British | 9th | 2nd |
| 6/7 Jun | Scottish International | British | 1st | 2nd |
| 29 Jun | Ravens Rock | Irish | – | 3rd |
| 1/2 Aug | Ulster International | British, Irish Tarmac | 5th | – |
| 29 Aug-Sep 1 | Rally of Finland | World Cup | – | 2nd |
| 11-13 Sep | Manx International | British | – | 3rd |
| 30 Oct-Nov 3 | Rally Australia | World Cup | | |
| 23-25 Nov | RAC Rally | World Cup | | |

