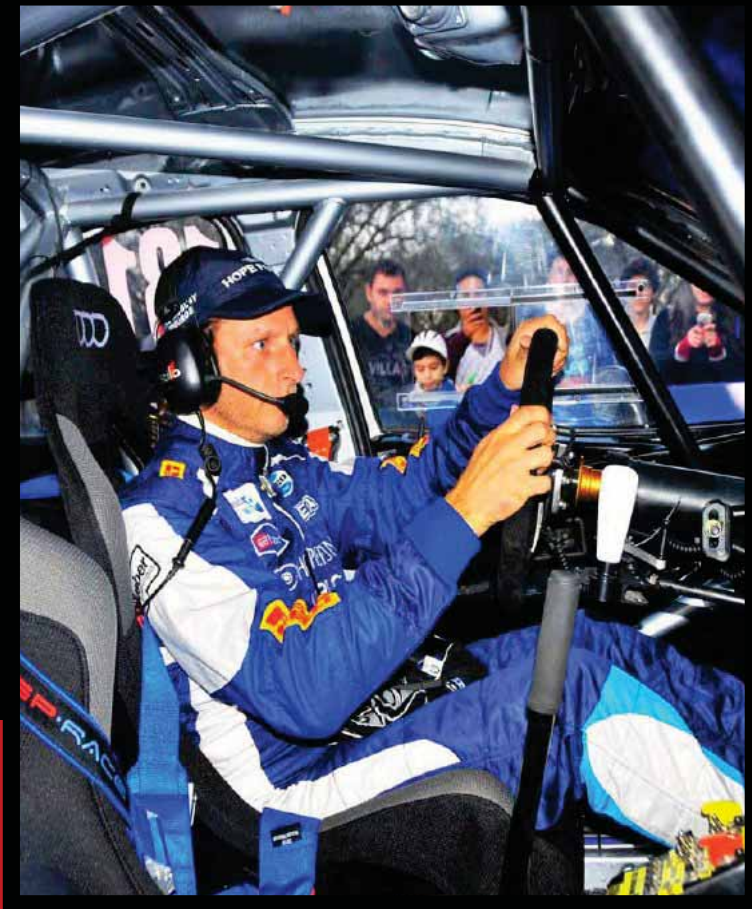


RALLY INSIGHT

MAXI RALLY CARS

Martin Holmes



Every now and again some rally team wants to emphasize the supreme excellence of their latest car and names it their “Maxi”.

“The most interesting aspect for us at Rally Argentina was seeing just how the Maxi Rally cars performed compared with the RRC.”

Title photo above:
MM62 RA14 Nalbandian Chevrolet AgileMR.

Moving on quickly from a little loved 1969 BMC car called the Austin Maxi, Renault used the Maxi name more than once with successful rally cars, starting from their second version updated 5 Turbo, continuing the policy with the Megane Formula 2 car. Peugeot then did the same with their 106 Kit Car. The promoters of the British Rally Championship in 1997 even decided to rename Ford's Evo 2 Escort RS2000 Kit Car the “Maxi” to suit their purposes. The FIA never called the Ford a Maxi, they also never officially called the cars “Formula 2”, and “Evo” was little more than usually journalistic slang. These were days of calling cars what you wanted to! Each of these so-called Maxi cars enjoyed their esteem for the few short years they were in vogue, before they became obsolete or the formulae changed, and the cars were put in storage to become cars for

Legend event enthusiasts in due course.

The name Maxi has however once again become quite the rage. Very recently we have had the New Zealand rally Championship calling some of the cars built to their “Extreme” rally formula as “Maxis”. In Argentina, however, a more established use of the name Maxi emerged four years ago, when the national federation gave their blessing to a new silhouette, controlled power train formula, called “Maxi Rally”.

And so we now have the Argentina “Maxi” story...

The Maxi Rally concept came about when the available supply of competitive cars in

“Driver Nicolas Fuchs presented a special car which in reality was a VW on which Mitsubishi badges were applied.”

Argentina for use in national rallying became centred exclusively on Mitsubishi and Subaru cars, offering little variety and no incentive for participation by the local manufacturers. The new Maxi Rally formula encouraged the local motor industry to produce cars which carried their corporate name, but took advan-

tage of available power trains and immediately became attractive. The main feature of the formula was the controlled engine design, which the local specialist company Oreste Berta, based at Alta Gracia in Cordoba province, was commissioned to develop and supply. In the absence of available power units of 2-litre normally-aspirated design, a purpose designed engine capable of achieving performance equivalence with the existing “Group” based cars was required. The base engine was the aluminium block Honda Integra, prepared in 2370cc form, with wet sump.

Long reliable engine life was the main design objective, and extensive use was made of under-stressed components.





Argentino14 Ford Ka Junior.



Argentino14 Fiat Palio Junior.



Argentino14 David Nalbandian1.



Argentino14 Federico Villagra and fanclub.



Argentino14 VW Gol Trend MR.



Argentino14 Citroen DS3 MR.



MM62 RA14 Chevrolet Agile MR.



MM62 RA14 Ford Fiesta MR engine.

The engine remained normally-aspirated, and as supplied to teams it produced a healthy 285bhp. The standard four-wheel-drive, six-speed sequential transmission systems are based on Subaru components, which the national Barattero company supply, and the whole package is sold to teams as a kit including the engine, gearbox, shock absorbers, brakes and all. All that's required is a body shell and abera cadabera, you have a competitive rally car!

With the kit, individual car preparation companies could then prepare their competition cars based on what model of production car they chose, so long it was recognisable as a model in the B-sector market.

“The main feature of the formula was the controlled engine design.”

The first Maxi Rally car, based on the locally marketed Volkswagen Gol Trend production car, was built by the Barattero company at Almafuerde during the 2010 season, and from start of the 2011 season there were silhouette style cars on the start line in the guise of Volkswagen, Kia Rio and Fiat Punto cars. The formula was alive.

The first event in which Maxi Rally cars were admitted

was the Rally San Antonio de Areco, run in the flatlands of Buenos Aires province in muddy conditions, where Juan Marchetto's traditional turbocharged Mitsubishi was unbeatable but on only the second round [Rally Villa Dolores in Cordoba province] the new Fiat Punto Maxi Rally of Claudio Menzi was the winner. By the end of the first season no fewer than twenty Maxi Rally examples, representing one make or another appeared in competition.

Three companies were involved in Maxi Rally car construction at the outset Barattero, Federico Villagra's company VRS which constructed Ford Fiestas and Marcos Ligato's company Tango



MM62 RA14 Ford Ka Junior.



MM62 RA14 VW Gol Junior.



MM62 RA14 Peugeot 207 MR engine.



MM62 RA14 Maxi Rally experimental 1.6 turbo engine.



MM62 RA14 Renault Clio Junior.

“Moving on quickly from a little loved 1969 BMC car called the Austin Maxi.”

Rally Team which produced a Chevrolet Agile version. Since then a wide variety of designs have emerged. Last year the Peruvian driver Nicolas Fuchs presented a special car which in reality was a VW on which Mitsubishi badges were applied. Also appearing at Rally Argentina were Maxi Rally versions of the Peugeot 207 and 208, a Fiat Palio and a Citroën DS3.

Phase two of the Maxi Rally project started in 2013 with the Junior project using two-wheel-drive six-speed transmission and 190bhp engine, using similar design principles to the Maxi Rally cars. Seven of these Junior cars also appeared at Rally

Argentina, cars constructed as Fiat Palio, Ford Fiesta, VW Gol and Ford Ka cars while there are also projects using Chevrolet and Renault Clio cars. Meanwhile the FIA in 2012 allowed Maxi Rally cars to be regionally homologated, which permitted these cars to be available for use in the Codasur championship.

Fast forward to Rally Argentina, when the national rally championship cars ran in the same stages as the WRC event, and when the current Maxi Rally cars include Citroën, Ford and VW cars, three of the four marques which are officially entered on the WRC series. A spokesman for the national series said “yes, the most interesting aspect for us at Rally Argentina was seeing just how the Maxi Rally cars performed compared with the RRC, the R5 and the Super 2000 cars entered in the full WRC event”.