

National motorsport championship starts Friday

Over 40 entries have been received for the three-day Sidvin-MAI Motorsport Rally of Mysore, the first round of the Indian National Rally Championship (INRC), commencing here Friday.

The record number of entries has somewhat made up for the absence of Team MRF who have decided against participation in the event due to various reasons while holding out a threat of pullout from the entire championship itself.

While MRF's decision has cast a long shadow over the event that begins with Spectator Special Stage near the Lalit Mahal palace Friday afternoon, the team's absence has not dampened the enthusiasm of those involved, be it the organisers or the participants.

The Rally Star Cup (RSC) class has attracted the most number of entries, 22. This category is meant for newcomers and first-timers and the large turnout only reflects the health of the sport.

However, entries in the other classes are rather thin. The 1600cc has six participants, 1400cc nine and the Gypsy four, while the N+ class that boasts of modified cars, has just three, including local favourite, Lohit Urs who will be driving a 1600cc Maruti Baleno as a private entry.

Urs, who has been with Team MRF for the past few seasons, could not resist the temptation of participating in his hometown rally given the massive fan following he enjoys.

The affable Mysorean will be up against the newly launched two-car team of Red Rooster Racing who have entered 2000cc Mitsubishi Cedia (N+) to be driven for 2004 National champion Vikram Mathias and young Amitrajit Ghosh.

Also in the fray is the Team Wind Speed from [Hyderabad](#) that was launched recently. It boasts of a four-car team of Girijashankar Joshi and Sanket Shanbhag in 1600cc class, and Mazdyar Vatcha and Shravan Kumar in the 1400cc.

The event, offering a total prize-money of Rs 2.8 lakhs, will be run over three primary Special Stages (route closed to non-Rally traffic), the Alpha (9.5 Kms), Beta (10.01 Kms) and Gamma (7.3 Kms), according to Shivu Shivappa, the Clerk-of-the-Course (CoC).

The Special Stages, located near Maddur, about 50 Kms from Mysore, would be run thrice on Saturday in one direction and twice on Sunday in the reverse to make up 111Kms. In all, the participants would be covering a total distance of 419 Kms, that includes 308 Kms of Transport section.

The Golden Landmark Resorts are the hospitality sponsors, while SLN Properties and Hindustan Motors have chipped in as associate sponsors, according to BS Sujith Kumar, head of Prosports, the organisers.

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