

# Alesi joins with Loeb for RoC

French motorsport hero Jean Alesi is the latest star name to sign up for the Race of Champions extravaganza at the Stade de France in Paris next month.

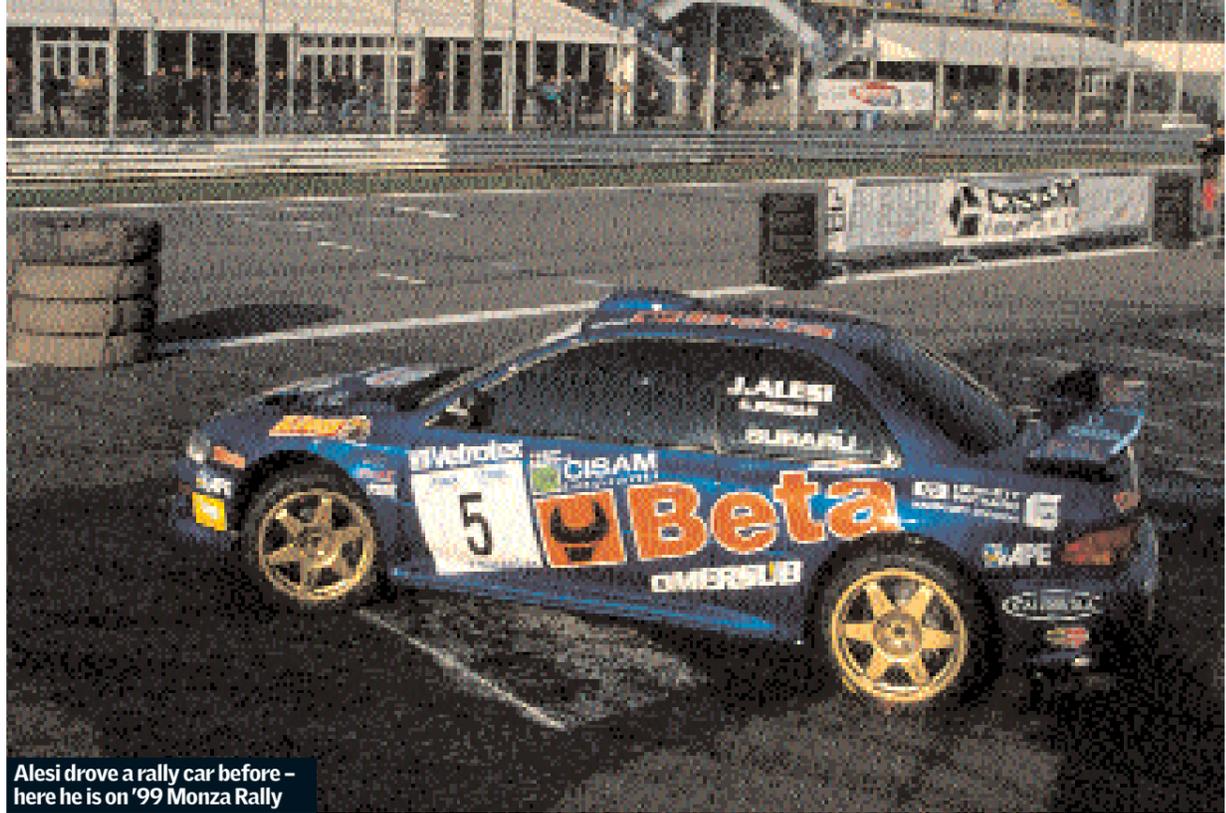
Alesi will line up alongside World Rally Championship points leader Sebastien Loeb for the home team at the former football World Cup final venue.

Alesi said: "I have been asked to do this event for so long now, but this is the first time I have been able to do it. Sebastien and I will form a good combination. I have always followed his career. We have the opportunity to put on a great show."

On the subject of a return to racing against seven-time Formula 1 world champion Michael Schumacher, Alesi said: "I raced against him for 10 seasons, it is nothing new to me. As for Colin McRae, he is a tough guy who should be good to race against. The rally drivers will be the ones who make the difference."

Former rally star Michele Mouton, a co-organiser of the event, has been testing the cars that will be used in the event, which will be run on a figure-of-eight layout. "It's a very challenging track with little scope for mistakes," she said.

● Skoda WRC driver Armin Schwarz will partner Schumacher in the German team.



Alesi drove a rally car before - here he is on '99 Monza Rally

PHOTO:4

## Two Brits to race in A1 GP

TWO young British drivers will be given the opportunity to make their name on the international stage when the inaugural A1 Grand Prix championship kicks off next season.

It was revealed at the official unveiling of the first six franchise holders last week that the British team will run two salaried drivers - although only one can compete in each race. British businessman John Clemence has acquired the UK licence and has appointed former Formula 1 world champion John Surtees to coordinate the operation.

Surtees said: "We want two good young drivers. And the good thing is

they won't have to bring any money." A1 GP rules mean that countries, not drivers, score points, so unlimited changes are permitted.

The other five franchises issued so far belong to South Africa, China, Portugal, Pakistan and Lebanon.

Pakistan's driver has already been confirmed as Nur Ali, a champion in US regional Formula Star Mazda racing who will compete in the Infiniti Pro Series next year. Lebanon has nominated sometime Formula Ford racer Karim Sammy Pacha.

Eight more franchises will be announced at the South African launch at the start of November.

## Porteiro wins after qualifying furore

WORLD Series by Nissan veteran Felix Porteiro scored a shock win at Barcelona on Sunday on his first outing for Epsilon Euskadi after controversy erupted over the team's exploitation of a rules loophole before he took pole position.

The 21-year-old Spaniard, whose previous best result had been a third place with the Porfesa Competicion team owned by his father, took the fastest time in the Formula 1-style qualifying run-off, the first time this has been used in the World Series.

But Porteiro and team-mate Jean-Christophe Ravier (who qualified third) benefited from the Epsilon

team heating up their cars' brakes. Tyre warmers are banned in the World Series, but warming the brakes indirectly raises the temperature of the Michelin tyres.

Points leader Heikki Kovalainen, who qualified behind both Epsilon cars, said: "I like this system, but some people were warming the brakes and I think that's illegal."



Porteiro (centre) made the most of his pole to take a first win

REINHOLD/LAT



Ex-F1 champ Surtees will coordinate the British A1 GP team

## Pavlovic waits on big prize

FORMER British Formula 3 Championship contender Milos Pavlovic became the first Yugoslav to win an international racing title when he clinched the World Series Lights crown at Barcelona last weekend.

But Pavlovic, 23, now faces an agonising wait before knowing whether he can further his career, despite scooping €180,000 (£124,000) as his prize for becoming Lights champion.

The prize is paid out by series promoter RPM if the new title holder uses it to fund his graduation to the World Series by Renault in 2005, but Pavlovic's team, Vergani

Formula, is only on the waiting list of entrants for the senior category.

There are 28 places available and these have been taken by teams from the World Series by Nissan and Formula Renault V6 Eurocup, which merge next year to form the World Series by Renault.

Vergani has only been an occasional competitor in the '04 World Series by Nissan, but with Pavlovic always struggling for funds it represents his best hope of a drive.

"The plan was to move up together," said Pavlovic. "But this is a big day for my career. I've never had such a good start to my budget!"

Pavlovic

£124k in bag?

## Formula 3000 to live on in Italy

FORMULA 3000 will continue in a new Italian series to be run next year. The series will carry on the legacy of the category following the advent of GP2 and the new Superfund series.

The Rome-based Peroni Promotion Incentive organisation will run an eight-round championship for Zytek-powered Lola B99/50 chassis and resurrect the 'F3000 Italia' name.

The series will be based in Italy, but will feature an 'away' race at Dijon in France in June.

Series spokesman Andrea Ialongo said: "We expect to have between 20 and 25 cars next year."

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