



“It is powerful and its handling is very stable. It is easy to drive and it takes no time at all to feel at home in it. You almost forget it’s a front-wheel drive car...”

CRAIG BREEN

“The 208’s bodyshell is approximately 40kg lighter than that of the 207. In addition, the 208’s long wheelbase ensures excellent stability. “To comply with the regulations, Peugeot Sport has developed for the 208 R2 a brand new, naturally-aspirated, 1.600cc engine based on the 1.6 VTi available for certain versions of the 208 road car. “For the competition version of this engine, we started from a clean sheet of paper and achieved the 185hp specified in the brief. This extremely modern powerplant comes with variable valve timing (VVT) for the intake and exhaust. The Group R regulations specify that the valves must be of the same size as those of the standard engine. Like its air intake dimensions, the 1.6 VTi’s valves are smaller than those of the former 1.6 unit. The main factors which influence performance in the case of a normally-aspirated engine are its valves and intake, so we worked closely with Sodemo to make our new engine driver-friendly by focusing on flexibility rather than on peak power which often goes unused in rallying. We achieved this thanks to the use of VVT. The 208 R2 kits will be sold with the engine built, run-in

and checked on the dyno.” “The gearbox, too, is new. The 208 R2 is equipped with a five-speed, manual, sequential gearbox with the lever mounted on the steering column. The gearbox system is identical to that of the 207 S2000 and represents a significant evolution for a car of this class in which the original gearshift is more conventionally mounted on the floor. The lever is much shorter and also positioned higher, while the shift is more direct and precise because it is in line with the gearbox. “We have carried over the proven three-way adjustable dampers, plus a new, bespoke adjustable hydraulic bump stop which has been developed specially in association with our supplier Öhlins. The R2 also features a specific wishbone arrangement which increases suspension travel. This, in turn, improves traction and is positive for the car’s performance.” The 208 R2’s steering is an upgrade as well. “We have switched from the standard car’s electric power steering to a hydraulic system, combined with a higher ratio. The use of a hydraulic system also permits more accurate feedback of information, notably on

Peugeot’s all new rally car, the 208 R2, will make its world competition debut on the Todds Leap Ulster Rally on August 17/18. French test driver Stephane Sarrazin drove a 208 R2 as ‘0’ car on the recent IRC round in Corsica, but it is expected that an Irish driver will be behind the wheel on the Ulster.

Who that driver is remains to be decided, but it is expected to be either Craig Breen, Keith Cronin or Marty McCormack. FIA Academy World Champion Craig Breen could be the favourite as he has already driven the car at a test session in Corsica. Breen made the headlines at the Tour de Corse, setting a top three time on the first stage of rally in his Sainteloc run S2000 Peugeot 207 before suffering a front driveshaft failure on the second and third stage, dropping over a minute to the eventual winner Dani Sordo in a S2000 spec Mini.

Speaking after the 208 test in Corsica, Craig commented, “I am in a position where I can compare the 208 R2 with all the class’s existing cars and it’s got a great deal going for it, I can tell you. It is powerful and its handling is very stable. It is easy to drive and it takes no time at all to feel at home in it. You almost

the Pirelli Rally. Cronin also recently travelled to France to compete on the Rally Limousin where he set top 3 times amongst the French regulars. The former British Rally Champion has only limited two wheel drive experience but this does not seem to have slowed him much so far.

Marty McCormack, on the other hand, has vast two wheel drive experience having been a Citroen C2R2 and DS3 champion and on the 2010 Ulster put in a great performance against works Citroen pilot Bryan Bouffier, while last year Marty won the British Rally Championship section of the Ulster outright in a Citroen DS3.

The new 208 R2 will be homologated in July and make its debut on the Ulster. It will then compete on a number of gravel and tarmac in France, Italy and Spain and will go on sale as part of a one make series. Raymond Moore of Charles Hurst Group who currently looks after the British and Irish Citroen DS3 series will co-ordinate the 208 R2 series here and has already had a number of inquiries from local drivers.

While the R2 spec 208 will be launched at the Ulster Rally in August, the S2000 spec 208 which complies

Craig Breen testing the new 208 in Corsica

