

HOWARD DAVIES

“Jaffa was on his way to the very top”



There is no doubt in my mind that Gareth 'Jaffa' Roberts would have become a world champion co-driver. He had all the qualities required and more. His personality warmed rooms and his massive beaming smile turned negative situations into positive ones.

Once strapped into the car he was the ultimate robotic co-driver with an ability to adapt to any situation and speed. The tricky path of life through to old age can be extremely cruel, never more so than Saturday last month when young Jaffa's life was taken doing what he loved best.

Jaffa's love for electrics and cars became apparent at a young age, he was forever stripping down car engines and gearboxes and putting them back together. When his parents were out he would drive his dad's Escort Mk2 up and down the lane and around the back yard.

Jaffa cut his teeth in the lanes of Carmarthenshire on local road rallies influenced by his father, Mike, a fair driver himself. His first WRC rally was Rally GB co-driving for close friend Rhys Lloyd in 2006 in a MGZR.

In 2007 he co-drove for Matt Beebe before joining forces with Welsh star Elfyn Evans in 2008, winning the Fiesta Sport Trophy. More Fiestas in 2009 and his first outright win alongside Mel Evans on the Tour of Epynt in a Subaru. His long-standing relationship with Craig Breen started in 2009 and he has co-driven for Craig since then.

In 2010 he also did a couple of rallies with Gwyndaf Evans, the Welshman was well impressed with this young, up-and-coming star. He also did the Monte Carlo with Harry Hunt last year. Roberts and Breen have been inseparable, winning the WRC Academy last year on the last stage of Rally GB. They are leading the current Super 2000 WRC. Such big achievements in such a short time.

WRC stars Phil Mills, Nicky Grist and Phil Pugh all felt Jaffa was on the way to the top of the sport he loved. He had a feisty determination and was very professional in his attitude towards his job.

Jaffa was as confident in Monte Carlo as he was in Newcastle Emllyn, navigating the course car on the famous centenary Cilwendeg two years ago with sponsor Meirion Evans. He smiled all night long. Jaffa was very proud of the Mk2 he built and called it the Group Four Door. He was a true enthusiast.

The highlights of my working relationship in motorsport with Jaffa started with filming the Fiesta series co-driving for Elfyn Evans. Lots of banter. An interview on GB while co-driving for Gwyndaf Evans was another classic, pulling his leg about needing a booster seat to see out of the Lancer. Teaching Craig to speak Welsh during the road sections in Catalunya to give us at Radio some one liners in Welsh at the end of the day. *Drive shaft wedi torri.*

He was modest of his achievements. Last year he won the Welsh Association Wilkinson Sword for