



A KILLARNEY CREATION

Course Clerk Steve Harding shares the secret specs of Killarney Raceway in blueprint detail.

WITH HIGH OCTANE action racing to the tune of 600bhp, Rallycross is amphitheatre entertainment at its best. Titanic battles and epic rivalries take place over three continents, with the scene set for the season's close in South Africa. After its first edition in 2017, Cape Town's layout is a calendar highlight for many a driver. Killarney Course Clerk Steve Harding, shares the details of this impressive track.

"The layout process started over a year before the first event. International promoter IMG brought out a professional

circuit designer from UK based company, Apex Circuit Design," says Harding.

"The preliminary design and how the circuit turned out are actually not too dissimilar, and the only real difference is in the detail.

"Every metre of asphalt and dirt is part of a special feature," Harding elaborates. "What makes the circuit great is the relatively long straight at the start to the first corner. When I say 'relatively long straight', this is, of course, in Rallycross terms.

"What I like about the first corner is that it's quite fast and

wide, which lets cars race right the way through it and doesn't thin the field out. We can have up to three cars abreast. And then it tightens towards Turn 2, and the road takes you to the big jump.

"But what really makes Turn 1 so exciting is the dust that gets onto the surface making the corner unpredictable, ever evolving and never quite the same from lap to lap," adds the course clerk.

Surprisingly, there is very little in the way of specs from the FIA, barring a few parameters. The minimum length of the cir-

cuit must be 800m and cannot exceed 1400m while the asphalt percentage must be between 35 to 60%.

Here at Killarney, it's 60% asphalt and 40% gravel, as is the case for many of the newer circuits. The length of the standard lap is 1067m and the joker lap is 98m longer at 1165m. The track is 15m wide at its maximum and 10m wide at its minimum.

"The rest of the circuit is gravel, but it's dust suppressed with a product called Dustex which is made of lignite. Although, it looks like a tar, it's actually derived from tree sap and is fully biodegradable."

However, the FIA stipulates that the joker lap must be slower than a standard lap, and only one small change was made to the joker here in Cape Town. Interestingly, the FIA had concerns that should the event be wet, the joker lap could actually be quicker than the standard lap, and thus a kink was added to slow it down.

"Then you get the circuit homologation process done, and that's where you get the concept approved and that's where all the safety stuff comes in. Things like, where you must have armco, concrete, tires, it's quite a comprehensive process."

There have been some challenges too. Last year, Turn 6 suffered unusual breakup, but Harding explains the diagnosis was simple, and the problem solved for this year's edition.

"We used a relatively new kerb concept, and it had only previously been used against an asphalt surface, so we struggled



a little bit with breakup last year. The cars would travel over it and put 600bhp through two wheels on gravel. So this year we have extended the concrete foundation under the two corners that broke up. That's the only substantial change from last year." Fans might notice that water is drizzled onto the dirt surface before heats. Harding says that organisers are well-equipped to follow procedure between heats, as well as respect the water crisis.

"The circuit has a source of grey water from the municipality, and uses this non-potable water. When not running an event, we still regularly water the circuit and what we use are the two wells: one in Turn 6 and

the other in Turn 6A, which are there to restrict the water table getting too high in the area. Those are pumped and used regularly through the year.

"The water found in these wells is extremely brackish, and totally non-potable. You can't even use it on the grass, because you'd end up killing it! So we are quite green as far as that's concerned."

Harding, along with thousands of fans cannot wait for the first start lights to go out. Killarney's fantastic features create some of the best, most competitive racing, not just in Rallycross, but in world motorsport. The lap record was set by World Champion, Johan Kristoffersson with a time of 40,393 seconds. ■