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## MOTORBASE FOCUS BTCC

# RS CONVERSION!

The Motorbase crew have been busy converting the 2017 Focus ST BTCC cars to RS-spec ready to do battle in the 2018 season...



Winter break? What winter break!? With the countdown for the 2018 BTCC season well under way, there was little time to rest on our laurels over the winter months. Nope, no break for us we're afraid. Pretty much as soon as the cars were unloaded from the truck after the last race of 2017, our 2018 season prep began! And with good reason,

we've been making some big updates ready for the season opener in a couple of months!

As you can see from the photos, those 'big updates' centred around converting the Focuses from last season's ST-spec to full RS model for 2018. Unfortunately, TOCA won't let us use the RS's 2.3-litre engine and clever AWD system, but the upgrade was more than a case of just fitting new bumpers. Much, much more!

Aside from the obvious aesthetics and nostalgic links the RS brand has with winning touring car races, the upgrade to RS-spec also offers some aerodynamic advantages too. So, with the team boss' mind firmly made up the decision to go 'RS' for 2018 was taken as the final chequered

flag closed the 2017 season.

To kick things off we delivered a fresh Focus shell to Fibreglass Phil at LJ Marine. His nickname alone should tell you all you need to know about his involvement with the project, but he explains the process. "After the initial design meeting the Focus chassis was set up on a bench so we could establish all the datum points using laser jigs," recalls Phil, "then we could start the basic sculpting and modelling to get the wider arches to blend with the RS bumpers. Then, with the front end sorted, we worked our way towards the rear, shaping and remodelling the side sills, rear quarters, and RS-style rear bumper. Only after we'd done all that, and everyone was happy with how everything





looked, could we start to produce the master moulds."

When Phil and his team had sorted the new RS panels it was then back to HQ to get everything up and running. You may think that just changing the bumper design wouldn't cause any issues, but as a highly-stressed race car everything needs to work in perfect harmony with one another, and as soon as you change one element the whole balance needs readdressing. This also meant that all work had to be carried out in conjunction with the BTCC Technical staff, to ensure the car meets the regulations for next season.

We've actually redesigned the entire cooling package with the help of Pro Alloy. Both the radiator and intercooler have been redesigned and repositioned to better make use of the airflow and altered aerodynamics offered by the new RS design. We then used a temperature controlled rolling road while mountune made a few tweaks to the ECU calibrations to confirm that our changes actually improved things. We did one initial day to run the new kit and see how things performed, before returning to the same dyno a week later with some minor changes based on what we'd learnt the week before. This is a great way to start a base cooling package but nothing substitutes on-track testing for this sort of work. And that's our next objective!

It's been a hectic few weeks for the team; we got the first kits back from Fibreglass Phil in November, but then we had our first rolling road test in early December, and, by the time you read this you would have probably seen on social media and in various show reports that the new cars also had to be ready, in full 2018 livery, for their launch at the Autosport show recently!

At the time of writing the cars are in the truck and heading to Birmingham ready for their big unveiling at the NEC, but as soon as the covers are off and the world's press have finished photographing the cars we'll be straight back into our hectic testing schedule; starting with a UK-based shakedown before heading out to Spain! **FF**

## CONTACT

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