



# Renotes

## The Magazine of the Renault Owners' Club

### March 2020



RENAULT OWNERS' CLUB

# ANOTHER SEASON



## Another Season - More Milestones for the Sandero Rally Ladies

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Looking back on 2019, Cristiana Oprea and Diana Hațegan managed another great rally season, competing in their Sandero 0.9 TCe aka Sean D'Or. Because of a shortfall in their budget, they had to choose between either tarmac or gravel events for 2019 and, although Cristiana did not complete a full season in the Dacia Cup this year, she managed good results on the tarmac special stages.

They scored their first podium in the very first event of the 2019 Romanian National Rally Championship, the Argeș



Rally, in which they finished second overall in the Dacia Cup. They became the first ladies crew ever to step on the



overall podium of the Dacia Cup in all of the thirteen years of the event's history.

After a strong season's debut in May, the summer brought Cristiana a big challenge : five rallies in six weeks, during June and July. After a quick detour into the co-driver's seat on the gravel of Bacău Rally, Cristiana and Diana competed for a second year in Bulgaria's Sliven Rally. It was not a boring event at all : right at the end of the first stage, they had to take a crash-course in mechanics, because they had to repair the cable connections to the gearbox. They just missed out on a podium position, but they gained valuable experience and a fourth place in class as well.

Back in Romania, Cristiana competed in the Harghita Rally, but she missed out on an overall Dacia Cup podium place by only 7,4 seconds. It was great training for what followed



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: the ladies made their debut in the European Rally Championship, with a more powerful Peugeot R2 specification rally car. On the Rally di Roma Capitale, they became the first Romanian ladies crew to ever compete in the ERC and they also won the ERC Ladies Trophy in the event. The summer marathon ended with Sibiu Rally, but exhaustion made its mark on Cristiana.

“It was probably the hardest lesson of all in 2019, knowing when to take a break and just enjoy the results so far. I wanted to return at the wheel of my Dacia and to prove that I had gained experience in the ERC, but I was simply too tired and euphoric after the Rally Roma to be able to achieve good results in Sibiu”.

After a much-needed summer break in August, the girls climbed back into the rally car in time for Transilvania Rally, the most popular rally in Romania. Although the competition in the Dacia Cup was tough, they managed to find a good rhythm and to record the fourth fastest time in a Dacia on one of the longest and most beautiful tarmac stages in the country : the downhill Dângău stage, thirty kilometres of twisty, tricky roads. Another top five finish was great, but not what Cristiana had hoped for.

Cristiana and Diana ended their season with a home event in Bucharest, a rally display where several VIP co-drivers had the chance to experience rallying from inside the car. This was the end of a beautiful and fruitful chapter for the Dacia rally ladies. Their plan is to attract more sponsors and to upgrade to an R2 car, which will allow them to continue their European rally journey.

“These last four years were a crazy and beautiful adventure and I will always cherish the memories I made while racing Sean D’Or on the special stages. Cupa Dacia will always have a special place in my heart, at it is where I made my debut and constantly grew into a rally driver. The Dacia Cup family is where I learned that a handshake and your colleagues” respect can be more valuable than a trophy at the end of a rally. But the time has come for a new challenge, which will definitely expand my perspective and enhance my skills. I can’t wait to see what the future brings!” said enthusiastic rally driver Cristiana Oprea about the 2020 season.

