



Photograph by William Neill

Desi Henry Secures Sperrins Rally Success!

Desi Henry and Liam Moynihan have won the 'Go' sponsored Tour of the Sperrins Rally, round two of the McGrady Insurance MSA N.I. Rally Championship!

After the opening three stages of the Magherafelt and District Motor Club event, Portglenone's Henry edged out an advantage of 3.2 seconds over number one seed Garry Jennings. However, as the crews entered service, Henry wasn't confident of being able to stay in front.

"I think we might struggle a bit," he said. "When Garry starts getting the power down in the World Rally Car, I think the R5 will struggle but we'll give it our best shot."

Give it his best shot is exactly what he did. Henry was flying through the fourth stage, setting fastest time by almost five seconds. Meanwhile,

Jennings could only manage third fastest time after he spun his Impreza WRC.

"I knew the rally was over when that happened but we enjoyed it," Jennings said. "I'm a lot happier in the car than what I was in the morning. We'll have to do a couple more rallies before Donegal."

With Jennings losing six seconds to the rally leaders on stage four, it gave Henry a bit of breathing room for the final two tests. He still went on to set another two fastest times, handing him the rally win by 12.9 seconds.

"It's good to get the win!" Henry enthused at the finish. "Garry's spin gave us a wee bit of air but I had to keep pushing."

Garry Jennings and Michael Moran slotted home in second with their Go backed Impreza WRC, while third for Derek McGarrity and Paddy Robinson allowed them to maintain their position at the top of the McGrady Insurance N.I. Championship tables.

"We should really have gone on to a harder tyre," McGarrity said, "but I'm happy enough!"

Ryan Loughran and Gareth Doherty arrived home in an excellent fourth overall, picking up the top two-wheel-drive award in the process. The crew survived a scare near the start of the opening stage but settled themselves to set a handful of top five overall stage times.

Scottish visitor, David Bogie, was full of smiles at the finish as he arrived home in fifth overall with his Escort. The result helped him put his recent accident at the Pirelli International Rally behind him when he overturned his Skoda Fabia.

"After sticking the Skoda on its roof at the Pirelli, I thought it would be good fun to come here in the Escort," Bogie said at the finish. "We stiffened the car up for the last loop and it was good."

"We had a really enjoyable day," he added. "Great stages, great weather, great people, and great co-driving!"

Paddy McVeigh and Denver Rafferty blew the rust off to secure sixth overall while Amy Cox and Caron McCormack were flying in their Skoda Fabia S2000 to seal seventh.

"It was a very enjoyable event," Cox said. "The car was perfect, the weather was great and they were good stages."

In eighth overall, James Lavery and Barry McNulty also claimed the class two Group N win aboard their Subaru Impreza.

"We had no major dramas although I made a couple of mistakes on the last stage," Lavery admitted. "We ran wide at the hairpin and I caught the back wheel which filled with mud so there was a bad vibration but it didn't cost us any major time."

Darren McKelvey and Aaron Johnston brought their class eight Evo 9 home in ninth overall while a struggling Stuart Biggerstaff and Anthony Nestor completed the top 10.

"The differentials weren't working on the last two stages," he explained. "The car was wandering all over the road!"

Despite his troubles, which also included an argument with a hedge during the first loop, he just managed to hold off the Citroen DS3 belonging to Niall Henry and Damien Duffin. One-tenth of a second separated the two crews at the finish!

"We've a lot of work to do but we're heading in the right direction," Niall Henry said. "We're still learning what the car can do. It can scare the life out of you!"

Oran Donnelly and Paul Hughes arrived home behind Henry as winners of class six. They selected a harder tyre for the second loop of stages which helped them fend off the challenge from Stanley McKeown and Nigel

Gourley, who were 7.3 seconds adrift.

Retirements

Plenty of crews faced dramas during the day. Joe McGonigle failed to make the start in his Mini WRC due to illness while fellow Mini pilot, Alan Carmichael, was forced to retire after stage one with a slipping clutch.

Philip Allen was the next major retirement. He survived a massive two-wheel moment on stage one but then slipped off the road and into retirement on stage two. Barry Morris and Declan Campbell, who were just outside the top 10 in their Escort after stage one, also went off the road on stage two after a tyre parted with a rim, leaving them to watch the remainder of the rally as spectators.

Others that joined the retirement list included Alan Smyth who was fifth overall until his Evo X broke a shaft near the start of the fourth stage. Marty McCormack (Escort) was thwarted by a misfire while both Kevin McBride (Evo) and Kyle White (Peugeot 208) ended their rallies off the road.

Counting his lucky stars was Banbridge driver David Armstrong. He was lucky to escape unscathed after a big moment on stage one and he also had to nurse a slipping clutch throughout the entire rally. Against all the odds, he reached the finish just outside the top 20.

Next Event

With the second round of the McGrady Insurance backed series now brought to a close, all eyes are turning their attention towards round three of the Championship. The Mourne Rally takes place on 9 June where the battle for the N.I. crown will continue. More details can be found online at www.nirallychampionship.com.

ENDS.

Go Tour of the Sperrins Rally - Top 10

(Full results available from www.rallyscore.net)

- 1 Desi Henry/Liam Moynihan (Fabia R5) 29m 51.9s
- 2 Garry Jennings/Michael Moran (Impreza WRC) +12.9s
- 3 Derek McGarrity/Paddy Robinson (Impreza WRC) +50.9s
- 4 Ryan Loughran/Gareth Doherty (Escort MkII) +1m46.2s
- 5 David Bogie/John Rowan (Escort MkII) +1m52.4s
- 6 Paddy McVeigh/Denver Rafferty (Impreza WRC) +2m10.2s
- 7 Amy Cox/Caron McCormack (Fabia S2000) +2m25.9s
- 8 James Laverty/Barry McNulty (Impreza N12B) +2m30.3s
- 9 Darren McKelvey/Aaron Johnston (Lancer Evo 9) +2m31.5s
- 10 Stuart Biggerstaff/Anthony Nestor (Impreza) +2m40.5s

Press Release and Photographs by Jonathan MacDonald

