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### **Bennett Brilliant at Shackleton! Round 1- 2017 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland**

The first round of the 2017 McGrady Insurance ANICC Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, in association with Rallysales.eu took place at Shackleton near Ballykelly, for the Maiden City Motor Club's MJM Group Turkey Run event. Five Junior 1000 crews lined up for the six stage event, in relatively dry conditions, as the 14-17 year rally stars of the future took to the venue that is one of the favourites of the season.

2016 championship runner up, 16 year old Peter Bennett with co-driver Mac Kierans, put a late entry in with a hired left hand drive Micra, the very car that won the inaugural challenge back in 2012. For the Loughgall teenager this was a day's fun, and he really flung the wee car around to set the pace from the word go. Peter who won the Dogleap event in August at Shackleton took fastest time on each of the six stages to round out the day with a commanding 1 minute 49 second victory. A major tank slapper moment in fourth gear on the final stage was the only real drama as he showed his ability. *"I've had so much fun today with the Micra. We couldn't have pushed any harder and we had some moment on the final stage. We made a late decision to come and contest the event to keep the driving up and it was excellent"* said Peter. As it was a one off appearance Peter elected not to collect championship points, as he prepares to debut an R2 Škoda Fabia later this season when he turns 17.

Scottish visitor 15 year old Peter Beaton is once again committed to contesting the series and he acquired Josh McErlean's Peugeot 107 on the eve of the start. With co-driver Kenny Foggo, Peter started off the event very well, second fastest and revelling in the handling of his new machine. Indeed the Scottish duo looked all set to take that second place and a full haul of points until stage four, when they slid wide on the final muddy bend and got stuck for fifty second on a grass bank. They continued undamaged to collect third and second placed points, and Peter showed an increased pace ahead of the second round at Kirkistown.

15 year old Sam Adams from Armoy was making his rally debut in the Škoda Citigo recently acquired from Peter Bennett, and he started off steadily in third place as he got used to car and venue. Sam however was enjoying every moment of the competition and progressed into second place after Peter Beaton's mistake on stage four. The Armoy teenager had been improving his pace all day under the watchful eye of his co-driver and by the final stages he was on par with Peter Beaton's times, which could make things very interesting for round two!

Another newcomer on his first event was Rory Byrne from Mayobridge in his Volkswagen UP. Rory started strongly just a few seconds behind Sam Adams in his similar Škoda, and indeed finished just twenty seconds behind after an enjoyable days sport. Rory is very much looking forward to round two, and he intends to get in some more practice to further improve his pace.

It was just the second rally for 14 year Marcus McElwee in his Nissan Micra. The Magherafelt teenager had the experienced John Henderson on the notes, but it was to be one of those days for young Marcus. A spin on stage one cost time, and the Micra wasn't handling well all day, not helping Marcus's confidence. On the penultimate stage it was all over as a drive-shaft broke, and we hope that the issues can be resolved for round two, where Marcus could once again show the pace he demonstrated on his debut in August.

### **2017 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 1 Positions**

1 <sup>st</sup>	J5	Peter Bennett	Macartan Kierans	Nissan Micra	0:32:24.2
2 <sup>nd</sup>	J2	Sam Adams	Andrew Bushe	Škoda Citigo Sport	+1:49.6
3 <sup>rd</sup>	J1	Peter Beaton	Kenny Foggo	Peugeot 107	+2:11.7
4 <sup>th</sup>	J3	Rory Byrne	James Byrne	Volkswagen UP	+2:34.4
	J4	Marcus McElwee	John Henderson	Nissan Micra	RET

### **Junior 1000 Driver Championship Points after Round 1**

- 1 Sam Adams 12
- 2 Peter Beaton 10
- 3 Rory Byrne 8

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*Pictures thanks to Philip Stewart- [www.philpics.net](http://www.philpics.net) Regulations and points for the series are available on [www.anicc.org.uk](http://www.anicc.org.uk)*