

Dwane again!!

Saturday 07 May saw the third round of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship at the Larne Motor club Kirkistown Circuit. Thankfully someone in Larne Motorclub had been a good child and we were all rewarded by a beautiful day's weather with the sun splitting the trees, and a very pleasurable light wind which just kept everyone's temperature down enough to make the day pleasant.

Due to the excitement of getting out to play on such a lovely day several people were having too much fun which resulted in several red flags over the 2 practice runs. Thankfully there was no major damage done and only a hint of cement dust as we started the timed runs around the 1300hrs mark.

Before we mention the event itself we need to report a very big milestone for 1 Ssprint on 08 May 1982 at Kirkistown circuit at an Ulster Automobile Club event. On that day Gary finished 23rd overall and fourth in class. It's ironic that 39 years and 364 days later Gary is back at Kirkistown competing in another sprint, in another mini. Sadly on this occasion he was a bit slower overall and finished 38 overall but he was more successful in the class battles taking third in class. That is quite an achievement to still be competing 40 years after your first event. Looking down the entry list from 40 years ago there is 1 other competitor who competed then and is still competing nowadays, but sadly wasn't here today, and that's Robert McGimpsey!! Massive congratulations to both Gary and Robert for reaching this milestone, and here's to another 40 years racing!!

Right from the start Robert Dwane hit the ground running in his OMS 25, which he later proved to be a good move, as he set a blistering run on 116.11 secs which turned out to be the fastest time of the day as well as a new class record by nearly 2 seconds! This time was to prove to be out of everyone else reach and Tim Woodside, fresh from a Northern Ireland win at the previous weekends British Hill climb Championship round at Craigantlet, and having won the last round too, came second with a best run of 123.39 and Jim Hutchinson rounded the top 3 out with a third overall and a time of 132.24 secs. I will come back to Jim in a minute as he needs a few column inches in his own right!!

Looking back through the time sheets you can see that Rob Dwane's car is simply a rocket ship in a straight line. It's incredible to watch and listen to. Rob was clocked at 120mph through the speed trap on lap 1 and Tim Woodside who was second fastest was 10mph back on 110 mph. On lap 2 Rob was clocked at 137 mph which was just under take off speed of a Eurofighter Jet, with Gerard O'Connell second fastest through it at 111mph.

As mentioned above third on the day, and my winner of "driver of the day" went to Portadown's Jim Hutchinson in his RSR Escort. Jim drove the wheels off his RSR escort and placed it third overall with a final time of 132.24 secs which took 4.7 secs off Roger Gages previous class record at the circuit. This is an outstanding drive to put a tin top saloon third overall in front of single seaters and "locaterfield" style cars Jim had an extra battle to contend with on Saturday as this was the first time that he and Gerard O'Connell had ever been at the same event in their Escort RSR's together so there was a big battle royale between these 2 drivers to see who was the fastest in

an RSR. Gerard finished a mere 1.58 secs behind Jim after an epic third run but just couldn't catch Jim who has now been crowned the fastest man in an RSR Escort!! I do however suspect that this battle will be rekindled in the future and that the gap between both drivers will decrease, and watching this happen will be a delight. Its battles like this which make our championship so wonderful.

Another fabulous drive came from new comer Ethan Faulkner in his Mk4 Jedi. Ethan had never been to Kirkistown before so was completely blind to the circuit when he commenced his first run. This didn't seem to put him off as he finished fourth overall on a 132.51sec run which was only 0.27 secs behind Jim Hutchinson. Had it not been for the oil spill just at the end of the second run Ethan may well have found the 3 tenths of a second he needed to take his first ever podium. There are a couple of things which you need to appreciate about Ethan just to appreciate how good this result is. The first is that this is only his second ever event and the second is that his Jedi MK4 Is only 1000cc, ohh and don't forget that he had never been to Kirkistown before!! Mark my words this young lad is a star of the future!!!

Saturday really was a day of hard charges. Dan Campbell pushed hard in his Toyota Starlett to finish 6th overall and fastest modified car a mere 1.64 secs ahead of his father Garry in a similar but different Toyota Starlett. Also fighting hard were the Hawthorne twins David and Steven who swapped tenths of a second all day with each other as well as Scott McMullan who really is driving the wheels off his Reis Aero. Scott took the class 7 win by a mere 1.09 secs from David Hawthorne with Steven Hawthorne 1.12 secs back.

Whilst were mentioning the Hawthorne`s, between the entire family there were 7 drivers competing on Saturday including Nicola Hawthorne who made her maiden outing in the clio 172 which her daughter Amy has been competing in so well of late. Amy proved to be the fastest female Hawthorne whilst her dad David proved to be the fastest Hawthorne overall. Poor Nicola is bound to have had some stick on Saturday night. Also Amy and Nicola were the first ever mother and daughter dual entry at a speed event in Northern Ireland so there's a wee bit of trivia for you all.

Working down the paddock there were some superb drives up and down the paddock and it was great to see Andrew Kernohan taking 3rd in 6b in his Clio. His new race suit has brought him some fresh luck, and it was good to see the return of Rudy Tate and Andrew Straney in Rudy`s Locost Megablade. Once again Andrew showed Rudy how to drive his car pipping him by 3.24 seconds but Rudy did manage to get the award for the closest cut of Silage so far in 2022. His days following the young farmers about have proved to be useful!! Its fair to say that these 2 fellas have some superb fun in whatever they drive and they are also in the thick of the craic round the paddock.

Another returning face was that of Chris Rogan who appeared in a Mazda MX5 in class 2b. Chris showed us that despite growing a beard he has lost none of his previous pace and hopefully we can persuade him to do more events in the future. Seumas Hobbs also made a very welcome return to the paddock in his Maguire Mini and proved to have lost none of his touch.

As well as returning faces we had 2 new comers with us as well. Jonathan Smith debuted his beautiful green Mk2 escort in class 6a but sadly he suffered clutch problems which sent him home early, alongside Jonathan was his good friend Gary Moore who usually races his fiesta in the Kirkistown Fiesta championship. Gary also had a good day and enjoyed doing a full days racing and not having to go home to fix body panel damage sustained during the day. Hopefully this will encourage him to return to the paddock again

In terms of the Categories we will start with the Road going category where the car in front was once again a BMW. Andrew Robb was out again and took the category and class 2 win as well as 17th overall in his BMW. Conor Hamill pushed him hard but couldn't get the deficit below the final 1.29 secs which really doesn't do the battle justice. Third went to the hard charging and ever improving Crawford Ewing in his Megane. Crawford finished 4.64 adrift of Conor and ahead of the returning Michael Clarke. Conor Hamill leads the overall category championship ahead of Andrew Robb and Crawford Ewing but there's only 5 points between them and Andrew is certainly catching Conor.

Dan Campbell took the Modified Category championship honours today a mere 1.64 secs ahead of second placed Garry Campbell in their Toyota Starlets. Oliver Cormican was third a mere 0.36 secs ahead of fourth placed Stewart Strain in his 205 gti. Ken Colbert was 5th in this battle. Despite being in warmer climes and therefore missing today's event Stephen Colbert still leads the modified championship race 4 points ahead of Dan Campbell with Ken Colbert third in the family sunbeam.

In the specialist Category Jim Hutchinson took the category win in his RSR Escort on his way to finishing 3rd overall and fastest tin top. Jim did have to work hard though as Gerard O'Connell pushed him hard in his RSR Escort to finish 2nd in category to Jim a mere 1.58 secs down on Jim, despite a clinker of a last run to try and seal the win. Scott McMullan was third in category and finished ahead of both of the Hawthorne twins as he continues to get more comfortable in his Reis Aero. Jims win puts him jointly on top of the category with Scott McMullan its then a 3 point jump to joint third between the Hawthorne twins with Gerard Next up in his Escort. This is going to be a really tight finish this season and rest assured whoever wins this deserves to win it!!

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge Sheryl McBride took her first win of the year with an outstanding drive in her Global GT light. Sheryl had a corrected deficit of 2.48 secs from second placed Amy Hawthorne who is steadily getting faster. Kathy McDade took third on the day as she struggles to come to terms with her new Honda Civic. She also struggles to obtain some fairy dust for the fuel tank but I'm sure she will track some down for the next event. Fourth in class went to Emma Campbell today in her little 106 in which she had some mechanical issues. Nicola Hawthorne finished fifth in the challenge but as this was her first event she was running with a conversion factor of 1 which severely hampered her final times. In the overall time sheets Nicola would've been the third fastest lady on the day. Today's result puts Sheryl 2 points ahead of Emma Campbell who had been leading it, and has more event wins under her belt. Kathy is third ahead of Amy Hawthorne and Catherine Donnelly. It's still very close at the top

For some the most important category is the fastest mini in the west. Once again this went to Karl Johnston who once again drove the wheels off his little mini. Karl was incredible to watch as he explored every inch of the tarmac as he pushed super hard to keep Gerry McGarrity behind him. In the end Gerry lost out by a mere 1.28 secs to Karl. Third place went to Gary Milligan again who had a disastrous day with fuel issues which he traced back to a fuel pump. In true sportsman style Gerry McGarrity lent Gary a fuel pump to let him get a proper run.

Unfortunately the Erne Trophy sprint on 04 June at St Angelo airfield has had to be cancelled due to circumstances beyond the control of Enniskillen Motorclub. The championship are trying to invoke the reserve championship date on 09 July to replace this round as the fifth round of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship. Keep watching the championship facebook page and the ANICC website for details.

Now for the class battles:

Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc

Paul Forsythe took a commanding class win with a time that put him in 33rd overall in his super quick Peugeot 106. Stephen Donnelly was the next man to take the charge to Paul and he finished second in his Ford Fiesta 4.11 secs behind Paul but 6.65 secs ahead of third placed Alan Wallace. Kathy McDade had a solid run to fourth and Mark Brogan was marshalling at this event so sadly was unable to compete. Championship wise Alans third gave him sufficient points to overtake Mark Brogan by 1 point in the class battle whilst Paul Forsythe`s second win pushed him to third place 1 point behind Mark and 2 off the lead. Kathy has a strong fourth place whilst Stephen Donnelly is fifth and the strongest person in the class as he is propping the others above him up.

Class 2a – Road cars over 1700cc

Whilst preparing this class I read last months and realised that all I had to do was copy and Paste the Nutts Corner report in for class 2A as once again Andrew Robb lead the way to class honours a mere 1.29 secs ahead of Conor who was closer to Andrew today that he was at Nutts corner. Third place again went to Crawford Ewing in his Renault Meganne. Fourth and the fastest man in the second half of the class battle went to Michael Clarke who made a welcome return in his Lotus Elise. Michael had a great battle with Ian Thompson in his older and heavier Porsche Boxster and Graham Dines who returned in his little Clio. Amy and Nicola Hawthorne rounded out the class in their Clio in that order. In terms of the championship its close at the top As Connor Hamill leads Andrew Robb by 2 points, Crawford Ewing is a further 3 behind Andrew Robb and then there`s now a 5 point jump to Michael Clarke in fourth.

Class 2b – Road cars Mazda MX5

For a class which very nearly vanished off the face of the speed scene last year we had another bumper entry 7 of these Mazda MX5`s out today and Adam Brogan again

proved to be the man to beat however championship returnee Chris Rogan pushed Adam hard in his Mazda MX5 and Adam only finished 0.67secs ahead of Chris. Third on the day went to Paul Magill who was pushing his Mazda harder than I've ever seen a Mazda pushed. He was incredible to watch as he left his breaking to well past the breaking point everywhere. Paul could easily be spotted as he progressed round the circuit leaving plumes of blue tyre smoke at every corner as he locked up on the brakes on the way into the corner and then lit the back wheels up on the way out. If there was a hard tryers award Paul would've won it hands down. Conor Boyle again took honours ahead of Hugh Boyle with Mark Smyth and then Craig Smyth finishing behind in that order. Championship wise Paul Magill still leads the table from Adam Brogan, Conor O'Boyle, Barry McCann and Mark Smyth

Class 3 – Road cars specialist Production cars 4wd

Today was a complete total role reversal from Nutts Corner with the final finishers being the complete opposite to how they finished at Nutts Corner. Alfred Robb used the straight line speed of his Yaris to the max and took the class win ahead of Paul Grady who pipped Tony Grady by a mere 0.59 secs. Once again the craic between these 3 competitors was superb. I was super impressed to hear that Paul Grady, who is a lorry driver by trade had to work on Saturday morning and had kept the wheels turning to a couple of drops before swapping his lorry for a high quality sports car (artistic licence getting a rattle here) and coming to the circuit to compete. Paul had obviously got his eye in in his Scania that morning as he beat Brother Tony on the day. Championship wise Alfred Robb still tops the class and is now 6 points ahead of the Paul Grady who has pulled 1 point ahead of Tony Grady.

Class 5 – Road cars specialist Production cars

Over the years class 5 has been a bit sparsely populated as no one wanted to play with Richard Munnis. Then last year he got some company and they all sprinted off up the timesheets leaving poor Richard behind. This year however Andy Hawthorne has joined the class 5 ranks and by Jove have he and Richard Munnis took to competing!! Richard took the honours at Nutts Corner however Andy took class honours today from Richard by a mere 0.18secs. These 2 fought tooth and nail all day and the battle between them was epic. Davis Buick was out again in his new MNR Vortex and he got steadily faster as the day went on as he grew more experienced and confident in the car. It was also great to see Gardiner McIlwaine out again in his Westfield and he had a solid drive to fourth in class. Championship wise Richard Munnis leads Andy Hawthorne, Davis Buick and Gardiner McIlwaine in that order.

Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production cars 8v

Class 6a was once again going to be a tight battle. On this occasion there were 5 cars entered so it's good to see a bit of an increase in numbers after a couple of lean events to date. Karl Johnston once again proved to be the man to beat, making it 4 wins from 4 starts in his mini as he romped home to a class win 1.83 secs ahead of relative newcomer Chris Nichol in his mini. Chris is fresh from taking the class 6a win at Craigtantlet Hill climb the previous week in very wet conditions. Third went to Gary Milligan in his mini as Gary finished a mere 1.09 secs behind Chris and a further 0.25 secs ahead of fourth placed David Evans who opted not to take his third run.

Interestingly everyone in class 6a and indeed most of the others actually went faster on their third run so perhaps David made a bad decision? Fifth on the day went to new comer Jonathan Smith who sadly had a clutch issue on his debut in his mk2 Escort. Championship wise Karl now leads the way with a perfect score of 20 points, Gary Milligan is second, Chris Nichol third, David Evans fourth and James Schofield rounds the class out in fifth.

Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production cars 16v

With Stephen Colbert away on the F1 Circus this weekend it was left to his father Ken to uphold the Colbert's winning ways in class 6b. Ken took a sound class win ahead of James Light body Andrew Kernohan Dessie Martin and Gary Moore in that order. Andrew Kernohan and Dessie Martin and Andrew Kernohan had a great tussle with Andrew taking the third place by a mere 0.53secs despite having a little off in one of his earlier runs. Championship wise Ken Colbert jumped ahead of Stephen Colbert by 1 point at the top of the pile ahead of Dessie Martin, James Lightbody and Andrew Kernohan in that order.

Class 7 Modified Specialist Production Cars 2WD.

Class 7 was back to its former best with a bigger entry than the last event. Once again Scott McMullan took the class honours for the second time this season finishing a mere 0.6 secs ahead of David Hawthorne. Third went to Steven Hawthorne who was a mere 1.31secs behind David and 6.59 secs ahead of Andrew Straney who pipped Rudy Tate and Ian Robinson in that order. Class 7 is once again living up to its recent form as being a superbly close class. It was great to see Rudy and Andrew Straney back out in their mega blade which Rudy mistook for a lawnmower blade on 1 run. It's also great to see Robbo aka Ian Robinson steadily improving in his car as he chases down the Hawthorne twins. Championship wise Scott now leads Steven by 2 points while David Hawthorne is a further 2 points back. Graham Boyce and Ian Robinson are chasing them hard in that order. Interestingly I was talking to Andy Hawthorne who is considering swapping the road tyres he has to run on his class 5 Westfield for a set of slicks to have a run out in class 7. When you consider he was only 5 secs off the class 7 winning pace today, whilst running on road tyres, Andy is bound to be in the midst of the battle on slicks!!

Class 8 Sports Libre cars Special Saloons

Class 8 finally saw the much anticipated battle between Jim Hutchinson and Gerard O'Connell in their similar RSR Escorts which turned out to be all it was hoped it would be. Jim Hutchinson set a blinder of a first run with a 132.24 run which was enough to put him third overall. Gerard gave it everything he had and on his last run and dropped it to a 133.82 sec but it wasn't just enough to pip Jim. Jim managed to finish third overall and Gerard was fifth overall. This just shows the pace that these 2 fellas were on. Third in class went to Seumas Hobbs who made the long trek up in his Maguire Mini. Seumas proved not to have lost his touch as he pushed hard all day in pursuit of the 2 RSR`s.

Championship wise the determined Jim Hutchinson has now taken the top spot in the class ahead of Richard O`Mahoney, Rory Stephens Patrick Roche, Gerard O`Connell and Seumas Hobbs

Class 9a Sports Libre cars Saloons and GT`s

Class 9a once again fielded a bigger entry with 4 cars competing. Dan and Garry Campbell both were out in their Toyota Starletts which is great to see. So far this season we have had at least 6 different competitors in class 9a which, as the libre saloons class is where the fastest and most modified saloons hang out. On the day Dan Campbell took class honours 1.64 secs ahead of his father Garry. Garry finished 34.07 secs ahead of Third placed Jason Frazer who headed Emma Campbell home by 8.42 secs. Championship wise Dan Campbell is now top of the class tied with Emma Campbell and Jason Frazer on 12 points each. Damien Corey lies fourth ahead of David Francis and Garry Campbell

Class 9b Sports libre Closed wheel sports racing cars.

Class 9b was another lonely affair for Sheryl McBride today as no one else came out to play. Sheryl however did not let this put her off and she drove one of the best drives I`ve seen her make ever when she pulled a cracker second run of 154.46 off. This was almost 8 seconds faster than her first run and this put Sheryl 29th overall. Sheryl also won the ladies challenge too so a successful day for Sheryl!!

Class 10 Sports libre Cars – small capacity Rally cars

Class 10 once again proved to be a clinker of a class when Alan Roddy and Dermot O`Hagan went head to head on the time sheets. Dermot once again finished ahead of Alan Roddy but both drivers were driving very hard. And there was never more than 0.6secs between them. Indeed Alans last run was his fastest run and he got the difference down to 0.3secs. Third in class went to the hard charging Andrew Strain who finished a very respectful 3.12secs behind Alan. Both Alan and Dermot have commented about how much they had had to up their game to stay ahead of the other this year and it`s great to see a class so tightly fought. Championship wise Dermot leads Alan by 2 points at the top of the championship table, with Andrew Strain third, Brian Little fourth and Joshua Baird fifth.

Class 11 Sports libre Cars – large capacity Rally cars

After being pipped at the post at Craigantlet the previous week by a superb run by William Carey Stewart Strain returned to Kirkistown with the intention of taking a class win and not being beaten on the last run. However with Norman Armstrong entered along with Derek Robinson this was going to be a difficult win to take. Stewart battled hard all day and was under Dan Campbell`s existing class record on each of his 3 runs as he sailed to the class victory. Norman Armstrong put on a fabulous drive as always to finish second in class ahead of Derek Robinson. It`s great to see some rally cars entering the rally car class again and long may it continue. Championship wise Derek Robinson still leads the class from Stewart Strain and Kevin McLaughlin. Oh and whilst I remember Stewart celebrated a big birthday the week after this event. I wont give away too much but he reckons he can just about

make his age in MPH in first gear, but only on a good day lol. Happy birthday Stewart!!

Class 12 4WD sports Libre Cars

Sadly only Oliver Cormican contested class 12 today after Adrian Kelt suffered mechanical issues in practice. As expected Oliver took the class win and managed to finish 12 overall and third fastest modified car in the overall results. Oliver now has a healthy lead in the class championship ahead of Ian Lancashire.

Class 13 Formula Racing cars

Sadly class 13 was a one horse rodeo today as only Henry Campbell was out. The 2 day race meeting at Bishops court can possibly be blamed for claiming some of our formula Ford competitors. Either way Henry took the class win, and finished 14th overall in the overall results which was impressive driving. Henry`s class win puts him 8 points ahead of Mike Todd in the championship tables with Stephen Wishart third, Nicholas Todd fourth and John Whitley fifth.

Class 14 small Capacity Racing Cars

With only 3 cars entered and 2 starting timed runs class 14 was a very small class today. Indeed the smallest it`s been in a long long time. The Wexford hill climb in Wexford claimed some of the regular class 14 and class 15 drivers as well as a few of our other Irish regulars however the entry was all about quality not quantity today. Brian Fitzmaurice`s run of bad luck continued in practice leaving just Ethan Faulkner and George Stevenson to battle it out. Ethan had a belter of a drive on his first ever visit to Kirkistown and he took the class honours by 4.94 secs from George Stevenson in his Force PT. Ethan`s fabulous drive netted him fourth overall and had the oil slick not been laid down on the second timed runs this position may have improved. Championship wise George Stevenson is still in command however Ethan Faulkner is closing down fast ahead of Thomas Corey Ryan McGimpsey Tom Devaney Catherine Donnelly and Phil Dorman.

Class 15 large Capacity Racing Cars

For numerous reasons such as mechanical issues Other events and other commitments class 15 was very under represented on Saturday with just 3 cars starting the event and only 2 setting a timed run time. Robert Dwane once again proved to be the man to beat in his OMS 25 which he took fastest time of the day and a new class record in with a winning time of 116.11 secs before he sadly also suffered a mechanical issue during his second run. Tim Woodside was second overall with a 123.92sec run. Sadly for him this event ended his winning streak but there are more events to come and I suspect we will see him on top of the podium again in the not too distant future. Championship wise Rob and Tim are tied at the top of class 15 with Alan Cassells third and but in the overall championship hunt Tim Woodside has a 5 point lead over Robert Dwane with Alan Cassells third there too. It`s all very much to play for in class 15.

Class 16a Historic Road Cars

Gerry McGarrity was once again the man to beat in class 16a in his little mini. Gerry drove the wheels off the little car to beat the equally hard charging Jargo Brett by a massive 8.65 seconds. Gerry finished up 31st overall and just a mere 0.02 secs behind the fastest mini from the west Karl Johnston. That's impressive driving. Third in class 16a went to Mervyn Getty who once again battled hard with Vincent Rodgers in their MG BGT's Brian Carson pipped Bill Blair in their minis to round the class out. This win sees Gerry return to the top of the championship battle a mere 2 points ahead of Bill Blair with Mervyn Getty third David Cochrane Ian Paget and Vincent Rodgers in that order behind Mervyn.

Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sport scars

Sadly onlyss Arthur Ovens was out to play today so obviously he took the class win in his little MG Midget but in terms of the class championship Robert Coulter is still the man in front!