

Two in a Row for Thompson

The third round of the 2022 Northern Ireland Autotest Championship, sponsored by McMillan Specialist Cars of Antrim, took place on Saturday 9th April at the Robinson Quarry Masters, Ballymena. Organised by Larne Motor Club, with tight and challenging tests for the Championship contenders, and a little more open version of each for the Clubman, Advanced and Production categories. The venues surface would prove challenging for competitors throughout the field, as the dusty concrete yard gave little grip and tested even the most seasoned of competitors.

It was Manorhamilton's David Thompson in his Vauxhall Nova who was again the man to beat at this event, after another battle for the top spot of the podium with reigning NI Champion Steven Ferguson and fellow Nova driver Mark King. Ferguson would again be the runner-up with only 2.4 seconds separating the top two drivers. King was forced to settle for third place overall after a stall and pylon on the final test of the day cost the Newmills man almost 15 seconds.

Stewartstown's Steven Ferguson would again take the Class A win, with a 28.3 second advantage over the runner up in class, Chris Grimes. Guy Foster had put on a promising performance early in the day but was forced to retire after completing only 8 tests. This left Chris Grimes Junior to take the third place in the class. Newcomer Jack Lowry show some great promise for the future in his recently purchased Mini Special.

Class B was dominated by the father son pairing of Paul and Andrew Blair in their Westfield. Paul taking the class win ahead of son Andrew, with Coagh's Trevor Ferguson in his Silvia Stryker taking third in class.

In the Small Saloon Class C, Jonni McDaid continued his winning run, making it three class wins out of three for the Castlederg driver. The Earney brothers made a welcome return to the class after a mechanical issue at round 1 forced them out of the event and to miss round 2. It would be Richard who would win the brotherly battle to finish second in class, ahead of Andrew after fighting all day with their Mini Saloon after the power steering issue they suffered at round 1 returned.

The Large Saloon Class again had five contenders, but with David Thompson taking the overall win, this elevated Mark King to first in class. Damien Mooney and Gary Campbell battled it out for the runner up place, but it would be Ardboe's Mooney who would get the better of the less experienced Dungannon man Campbell, who would have to settle for third in place at this event. Championship Sponsor George McMillan made a welcome return to the Championship, but a troublesome day forced the seasoned autotester out of the class podium places.

In the Clubman Category, for those with limited experience of Autotests, Adam McMullan again came out on top in his purpose built Toyota Starlet Special despite discovering a tiny hole in his radiator early in the day. Closest to Adam in the category was Ben McKee in his Nissan Micra with Lawrence Baird taking third place overall. Semi-retired WRC Co-driving legend Chris Patterson joined the Clubman category in his Buggy and thoroughly enjoyed his day, despite having a few penalties throughout the day.

There was a small but highly experienced and competitive turnout in the Advanced Category. Former championship competitor Ashley Lamont would make a welcome return in his MG Midget and would take the overall category win. Robert Dickson in his Mini Saloon would finish in second only 1.9 seconds behind Lamont, with Jack Gillis taking third place in the category.

With three rounds now completed David Thompson leads the Championship category, with Steven Ferguson in second and Mark King in third. In the Clubman Category, Adam McMullan leads from Ben McKee in second and Lawrence Baird in third. Jack Gillis holds the lead in the Advanced Category with Robert Dickson second and Gareth Dillon third.

Larne Motor Club will host Round Four at the exciting new venue of The Junction Retail and Leisure Park, on Saturday 23rd April. With a jam packed day planned with fun for all the family, why not come on down and see what it's all about?

McMillan Specialist Cars Northern Ireland Autotest Championship Round 3

Overall Winner – David Thompson

Championship Category:

- Class A – Steven Ferguson
- Class B – Paul Blair
- Class C – Jonni McDaid
- Class D – Mark King

Clubman Category:

- Class A – Adam McMullan
- Class B – No Competitors
- Class C – Ben McKee
- Class D – Lawrence Baird

Advanced Category:

- Class A – Jack Gillis
- Class B – Michael Workman
- Class C – Robert Dickson
- Class D – Ashley Lamont