



KBB

TOUR OF THE SPERRINS RALLY 2009



Walsh's Hotel
Maghera



RALLY REPORT NO.1 - METEOR ELECTRICAL SERVICE - SATURDAY 9.30am

Rain, rain, go away, come back another day! That's what everyone is hoping at the start of this year's very wet KBB Tour of the Sperrins Rally. Competitors left the Walsh's Hotel start ramp in Maghera amid persistent rain with little sign of any sun. We can only hope that there is some truth in today's weather reports, and that the conditions will brighten up, hopefully not too late in the day.

Five stages are on the cards today, and it's Derek Mc Garrity in his Subaru Impreza WRC who heads a field of 64 competitors for round four of the Hankook MSA N.I. Stage Rally Championship. The event is also a counting round of the Tintmaster Club Championship, and the 64 crew entry list is quite remarkable in these straitened times.

Derek last won the Tour of the Sperrins back in 1996, so can 2009 be his lucky year for TOTS win number 3? Kenny McKinstry and Denis Biggerstaff will be determined to stop him in his tracks, and they currently share second position in the series standings. McKinstry, winner of the Larsen Circuit of Ireland National B rally, starts the event at number two ahead of Dromara's Biggerstaff.

There's one notable name missing from today's KBB event. Seamus Leonard, who currently lies fifth in the series standings, has decided to "pull the pin" on his Hankook Championship campaign. The Omagh driver has been plagued with mechanical problems of late, so instead he has decided to concentrate on supporting his two sons, Declan and Dara Leonard.

With Leonard out of action, a trio of Group N drivers follow Biggerstaff with Cookstown's John McLaughlin heading the Sunoco Fuels sponsored category. Navigated by Crawford Henderson, the crew will have plenty of opposition to contend with this weekend, not least from Neil McCance and Kieron Graffin who complete the top six seeds. Their job should also be made slightly easier as Alan Carmichael is among the non-starters.

There is also a large contingent of Superdrive 2WD contenders, with Draperstown's Camillus Bradley heading the entry. Declan McNaughton and Trevor Moore also have their eyes on victory, and all three men are seeded just outside the top 10.

The Montgomery Motorsport historic category continues to attract a small but high quality selection of crews to the Hankook series. Philip Hunter returns to action with his Escort, while Alan Jardine and Derek Boyd will be hot on his heels in Davagh.

And on a final note, this year's KBB event got off to a difficult start when Clerk of the Course, Stephen McFerran, was admitted to hospital earlier this week with blood poisoning. We'd like to wish him a speedy recovery, but at least he's safe in the knowledge that he has a MAD Motor Club team behind him to keep the show rolling in his absence!

More news later!

Grainne O'Kane and Jonathan MacDonald at a wet Meteor Electrical.