

Dungannon Motor Club Targa Rally Springs Back into Action

After a two year hiatus due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Dungannon Motor Club's ever popular Springfling Targa Rally made a welcome return to the motorsport calendar on Saturday 30th April. With Europarts Motor Factors and Home Hardware Stockists as the new sponsor and three brand new tests which would test the crews skills, it would prove to be an interesting days action for all involved. Now widely regarded as one of the best events of this type, the 2022 entry list comprised of forty crews including some visitors from south of the border. It would be one of the ever popular Mazda MX-5s that topped the results, with former DMC Chairman Eric Patterson at the wheel, with his brother-in-law Raymond Donaldson keeping him right from the passenger seat.

After a week of dry and pleasant conditions, the weather took a turn for the worse in the early hours of Saturday morning with heavy downpours throughout the day. The rain didn't dampened the enthusiasm of the marshals who braved the elements to come out and help the club, or the competitors as they worked their way around three loops of tests, all of which were conducted on private properties. The Rally Headquarters was the Cohannon Inn at Tamnamore, and at exactly one minute past ten, the father and son pairing of Trevor and Adam Ferguson pulled away from the start to tackle the first loop of six tests.

As mentioned previously, Dungannon Motor Club had included three new test locations this year, including Lockhart's Lane and PM Engineering's yard near Cabragh. A renewed focus on safety also demanded more marshals, and close to sixty personnel were required to be in position for the duration of the event.

Loop one completed and the crews were back at Time Control B at Patterson's Service Station, with Patterson and Donaldson in first place. They had opened up their lead over just six tests, and the smile on their faces showed that they was really enjoying it. In second spot was father-daughter pairing of Philip and Kim Hunter in their Toyota MR2, followed by Robert Robinson partnered by Jonny McCarthy in a Mazda MX-5. They too were ahead of the front wheel drive Hyundai Accent of Kevin Daly with Alan Williamson in the navigator's seat, with brothers Adam and Mark Brogan lying fifth at after the first loop.

The Novice leaders in Front-Wheel-Drive were father and son Sean and Daire Cleary, running at number thirty eight, and driving a Ford Puma, while Jonathan Watson and Andrew Emerson in their Mazda MX-5, were leaders in the Novice Rear-Wheel-Drive class.

There had been two retirements recorded after the first loop. Stewartown's veteran autotester Norman Ferguson had swapped his Mini Saloon autotest car for his Peugeot 106 GTi and was partnered by Cookstown Motor Club Chairman John Nicholl. They had got off to a steady start and were picking up pace after touching an obstacle on Test 1 – Blackwatertown, which had given the crew a 5 second penalty. However, it wasn't to be this crew's day when they broke a drive shaft on test six on the first loop leaving them out of the running.

Loop two was identical to loop one and upon return to the Patterson's Service Station Control for lunch, Patterson and Donaldson were still in command of the event overall. All the other positions at the top of the leader board remained as they were. Ardboe's Brendan Mooney partnered by Pdraig McAtamane, having borrowed his brother Paul's Vauxhall Nova for the event, was quickly climbing back up the leader board to now lie sixth overall, after he incurred a twenty second penalty for failing Test 2 – Fairview 1 on the first loop of the day.

The final loop of six tests brought the day's rallying to a close back at the Cohannon Inn. Mazda MX-5 was the car to beat this year with two of the top three crews all steering theirs home with ease. Eric Patterson and Raymond finished in top spot, followed by Philip and Kim Hunter only eight tenths of a seconds behind, with Robert Robinson and Jonny McCarthy in third overall. Brendan Mooney and Padraig McAtamane recovered well to secure fourth place, with Kevin Daly and Alan Williamson rounding out the top five.

By now, there had been two more unfortunate retirements, Eoin and JB Shaw in their Mazda MX-5 had a mishap in Blackwatertown ending his day, and Alex Scott and Jody Patterson were forced to retire their Nissan Micra, which left them unable to complete the final loop.

Thirty-six crews were classified as finishers out of forty starters, and at the finish, there was universal praise for the quality of the tests and the smoothness of the running of the event. Before the presentation of the awards, Malcolm McQueen, Clerk of the Course, thanked everyone for their participation in the event, as well as thanking the Dungannon Motor Club team for their help in running such a professional event.

Overall Winners

E Patterson & R Donaldson – Mazda MX-5

Class 1 – Expert FWD

1. B Mooney & P McAtamane – Vauxhall Nova
2. E Byrne & Z Byrne – Toyota Yaris
3. D Burns & J Burns – Ford Fiesta

Class 2 – Expert RWD

1. R Robinson & J McCarthy – Mazda MX-5
2. T Ferguson & A Ferguson – Mazda MX-5
3. D Carnegie & M Fitzsimon – Ford Escort

Class 3 – Semi-Expert FWD

1. K Daly & A Williamson – Hyundai Accent
2. R Haslett & P Haslett – Toyota Yaris
3. C Dunne & B Whyte – Toyota Yaris

Class 4 – Semi-Expert RWD

1. P Hunter & K Hunter – Toyota MR2
2. A Brogan & M Brogan – Mazda MX-5
3. M McKernan & R McKernan – Mazda MX-5

Class 5 – Novice FWD

1. S Cleary & D Cleary – Ford Puma
2. B Mullan & J Scott – Honda Civic

Class 6 – Novice RWD

1. J Watson & A Emerson – Mazda MX-5
2. A Hayes & J Hayes – Mazda MX-5
3. R McPolin & G McPolin – Mazda MX-5