



Hankook MSA Northern Ireland Stage Rally Championship

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Photo by NeilPics.co.uk



Kenny takes top points on the Hankook NI Championship section of the Circuit of Ireland Rally...

The 2011 Hankook MSA Northern Ireland Stage Rally Championship continued with the Donnelly Group Circuit of Ireland Rally over the traditional Easter weekend and with the Hankook NI Championship running on the Saturday stages only, the pace was expected to be hot right from the beginning.

Four times Circuit of Ireland winner Derek McGarrity, having swapped his Mitsubishi Evo X for the familiar S11 Subaru, lead the 99 crews out from the Armagh City start followed by the local challenger Darren Gass at number two, Kevin Barrett at three and current Hankook MSA NI Rally Championship leader Kenny McKinstry seeded at number four.

The 'Hollow' test kicked off the 2011 event and McGarrity immediately opened out a 2.9 second gap over the opening nine miles ahead of Kenny McKinstry with Kevin Barrett a further 0.6 seconds behind in third. The expected challenge from young Darren Gass came to an abrupt end just three mile into the first stage with gearbox woes bringing his rally to a premature end.

On stage two McKinstry reclaimed 2.8 seconds back from McGarrity's lead to close the gap to a scant 0.1 seconds after the first 16 competitive miles. Behind the McKinstry/McGarrity battle, Kevin Barrett had settled comfortably into third ahead of the leading Group N contenders with Philip Morrow initially slotting into fourth overall on stage one until fuel issues on the second test dropped him out of contention, allowing Donagh Kelly and Neil McCance to battle it out for production class honours.

McKinstry was again fastest on the third stage, Clady 1, beating Derek by just over 7 seconds to grab the rally lead, but McGarrity retaliated on the next two tests, taking back 5.9 seconds on stage four and another 4.5 seconds on stage five to arrive at the halfway point service with a lead of 3.4 seconds.

Kevin Barrett maintained his third place with Neil McCance heading a frantic battle for Group N ahead of a hard charging Garry Jennings in fifth and Donagh Kelly in sixth, all driving Mitsubishi Evo 9's. Next up came the first of the 2wd brigade with welsh visitor Phil Collins heading Wesley Patterson by just over 6 seconds with the Mitsubishi's of Brendan Comiskey and Sam Moffitt rounding out the top ten.

After service, the event made its way to the 'Power Stage' for two short runs round the Lisburn City centre. McGarrity again headed the timesheets in front of an estimated 15,000 spectators, and live internet coverage, to consolidate his 12.3 second lead knowing well that the next two stages were on McKinstry's home turf around Banbridge.

Sure enough, McKinstry clawed back 4.7 seconds on 'Banbridge North 1' and a further 4.1 on the repeat of his home test to leave just 2.7 seconds between himself and leader McGarrity going into the final 'Clady' stage, a stage that Kenny had been 7 seconds faster than his rival earlier on in the day.

The final test was going to be decisive and McGarrity was first on the road, stopping the clocks on 10:10.5, over 6 seconds faster than his time for the stage earlier in the day. McKinstry also bettered his previous fastest time by 4.2 seconds but more importantly his time of 10:06.2 was enough to deprive McGarrity of the lead and ensured he claimed maximum points in the Hankook MSA NI Championship at the end of day one by just 1.6 seconds.

In the Group N battle, Neil McCance held the upper hand over both Garry Jennings and Donagh Kelly for most of the day while the MkII Escort of Wesley Patterson slipped past the similar car of Phil Collins on stage 9 to slot into seventh place and the 2wd lead. However, stage 10 was also to prove decisive for the leading production and 2wd runners.



Full results from all the Hankook MSA Northern Ireland Rally Championship can be found at www.rallyscore.net

Donagh Kelly, lying just 4.4 seconds behind Jennings, entered the final test in determined mood, but his charge was halted when 2wd leader Wesley Patterson dramatically crashed out of the 2wd lead. With the stage now blocked, everyone bar the top four were awarded a time of 10:30.8 but more importantly, Jennings was one of that four and with a time of 10:18.2 he was able to leapfrog McCance to claim the Group N lead. Phil Collins therefore inherited the 2wd lead, and seventh overall, ahead of the Darrian T90 of John Dalton with Alan Ring and George Robinson rounding out the top ten.

Top 10 finishers at the end of the Saturday stages:

- 1. Kenny McKinstry/Kenny Hull - Subaru Impreza S8 WRC – 1:03:02.3**
- 2. Derek McGarrity/James McKee - Subaru Impreza S11 WRC – 1:03:03.9**
- 3. Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally – Subaru Impreza WRC – 1:04:47.7**
- 4. GarryJennings/Damien Connelly - Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 – 1:05:17.2**
- 5. Neil McCance/Jonny Hart - Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 – 1:05:21.1**
- 6. Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan – Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 – 1:05:34.2**
- 7. Phil Collins/Derek Brannigan - Ford Escort MkII - 1:05:54.8**
- 8. John Dalton/G Jones - Darrian T90 GTR - 1:05:21.1**
- 9. Alan Ring/Adrian Deasy - Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 - 1:06:23.1**
- 10. George Robinson/Tommy Speers - Subaru Impreza WRC - 1:06:24.7**

Provisional Overall Championship Points after Round 3:

Kenny McKinstry 36 points
George Robinson 22 points
Derek McGarrity 22 points
Connor McCloskey 20 points
John McGaffin 20 points
Donagh Kelly (GpN) 16 points

Up to date Championship standings and full results from the Saturday only event are available to download from the stage rally section at www.anicc.org.uk and www.nirally.com



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McCance takes Sunoco NI Group N win despite dramatic final stage...



Fifth place was more than enough to ensure maximum Sunoco NI Group N Championship points for Neil McCance on the Saturday stages of the Circuit of Ireland.

With Derek McGarrity opting to pursue a record equaling five Circuit of Ireland wins, both McCance and Donagh Kelly were ideally placed to improve on their scores after the first two rounds. Also adding some interest to the production class was Garry Jennings, Philip Morrow, Alan Ring and Aaron McHale, and although not registered for NI Championship points, being the top Group N runner at the end of day one would be a race that would be hard to resist.

On stage one it was Morrow who was fastest by 4 seconds ahead of Donagh Kelly with McCance a further 2.2 seconds behind in sixth overall. Jennings slotted in at ninth overall but hit back on the second stage to post the top Group N time to leap into sixth overall. Both Kelly and McCance moved up one place to fourth and fifth respectively when Philip Morrow suffered fuel pump problems and dropped completely off the leader board.

Stage three, Clady 1, and Neil McCance pulled out all the stops to grab fourth overall from Donagh Kelly who was coming under increasing pressure from Garry Jennings. Jennings made his move on the next stage, taking the third fastest time overall to leap up into fifth place and he now turned his attentions on the 10.6 seconds that lay between himself and McCance's fourth overall.

The positions remained static through stage 5 with the three contender all posting times within 3 seconds of each other over the 7 mile Loughgall test and with the next two stages being the 0.68 mile blast round the Lisburn 'Power Stage' little was to change in the overall top ten.

Stage eight saw McCance bounce back to post a time 2 seconds faster than Jennings to keep a useful 9.4 second category lead in hand while Donagh Kelly also kept the pressure on Jennings with a time just 0.3 seconds slower over 4.67 miles. Stage nine was a repeat of stage eight and Donagh Kelly galloped through the stage 7 seconds faster than his first attempt, beating both his rivals in the process and narrowing the gap to Jennings fifth place to just 4.4 seconds with one stage to go.

Stage 10 was to settle the result in favour of Jennings. He was one of only five cars to get a clean run through the test before the stage was stopped due to Wesley Patterson's accident. Caught up behind the blockage, both McCance and Kelly were awarded a notional time of 10:30.8 compared to Jennings's actual time of 10:18.2 therefore the Fermanagh man was able to leap past McCance to end the day top Group N runner in fourth overall.

Further back in the order, 2010 Championship runner up Mark Donnelly returned to the NI Championship with a solid third points scoring position in 14th overall with Trevor Ferguson in fourth in 26th overall.

Top Sunoco NI Group N finishers:

1. **Neil McCance/Jonny Hart** Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9
2. **Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan** Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9
3. **Mark Donnelly/Martin Brady** Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9
4. **Trevor Ferguson/David McElroy** Subaru Impreza
5. **Barry Greer/Suzanna Wright** Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9
6. **D Leonard/D McCafferty** Ford Fiesta ST



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Tenth place overall secures 2wd race win for the Kennedy's...

Hankook
2wd Championship



Drew Stewart and Steven Park carried off maximum Hankook 2wd Championship points on Saturday evening after the dramatic exit of Wesley Patterson on the very last stage of the day.

Patterson had been embroiled in a battle with Welshman Phil Collins and the Darrian of John Dalton (both not registered for the NIRC) and had just managed to get ahead on the penultimate stage before crashing heavily on the final Clady test.

Michael Conlon (18th) took second place points on his first appearance in the series ahead of Fintan McGrady (19th) with Stephen Baxter (28th) pushing the little R2 Fiesta into fourth in the Hankook 2wd points scorers.

McCartney wins Montgomery Motorsport NI Historic section by 0.9 seconds...



In the Montgomery Motorsport Historic category, Dessie McCartney and Andy Johnson enjoyed a 'ding dong' battle, swapping fastest times and the category lead throughout the day with the McCartney Porsche eventually finishing just 0.9 seconds ahead of the Johnson Chevette HSR on Saturday evening.



Harry Brown and Martin McGrath claimed victory in the up to 1600cc historic class in their Hillman Avenger in 66th overall.

NI Historic Category Results:

- 1. Dessie McCartney/Maurice Jellie**
Porsche 911 RS
- 2. Andy Johnston/Jim McSherry**
Vauxhall Chevette HSR
- 3. Harry Brown/Martin McGrath**
Hillman Avenger
- DNF Alan Jardine/Ronnie Knox**
Escort MKI RS2000

New comer to the series, Alan Jardine, was an expected challenger to the Porsche and Chevette crews but a roll on stage two put the MkI Escort pilot out of contention.

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