



For Immediate Release: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013

## **Derek Storms to Another Bishopscourt Victory!**

It was yet another win for Belfast's Derek McGarrity in stormy conditions, at one of his favourite venues- Bishopscourt on round two of the Carryduff Forklift M.S.A Northern Ireland Rally Championship. It wasn't quite so simple for the multiple Northern Ireland Champion however. Ballynahinch and District Motor Club had laid out an all new format for the McGrady Insurance Bishopscourt Stages. New sections and rather unsavoury weather was to provide a real challenge for the crews and produce some surprising results, not least Jonny Leonard's fine second overall in an out-dated Group A Mitsubishi Evo 6.

Right from the first of the 14 stages there was drama. Running first on the road was Derek McGarrity, who was driving Garry Jennings S12 Impreza, in an effort to improve the set up for Garry. It clearly needed improving as Derek and co-driver Neil Doherty were only ninth fastest, after a moment on standing water at the first hairpin. "Sometimes it was a jet-ski you needed today!" Derek later quipped. The wide track WRC's were struggling to get the power down in the monsoon conditions as Kieron Graffin in a Group N Evo 9 recorded fastest time, ahead of Trevor Ferguson and Davy McElroy in their Subaru N12, with Ballygowan's Mark Massey and James McKee third, and Jonny Leonard in his Group A Evo 6 fourth.

After two stages Kieron Graffin still led from Mark Massey who was using a hired Evo 9, and now Peadar Hurson and Damien Connolly had slipped into third, with a fastest time on stage two with the WRC Escort. However it wasn't to last long as Peadar broke a prop-shaft on stage three and it was all over. Kenny McKinstry was debuting a S14 Impreza he had acquired from Derek McGarrity, and was settling into the car in fifth spot. Leading the two wheel drive race at this stage were James and Rebecca Kennedy in 13<sup>th</sup>, whilst event sponsor Fintan McGrady was debuting a new MK2 Escort, but was sadly to join the growing retirements list.

Mark Massey led for just one stage, then dropped thirty seconds on stage four and a hard charging Derek McGarrity was now in the lead, with fastest times on both stages. By stage six Derek's lead was 5.8 seconds. Derek McGeehan and Darragh Mullan in the Corolla WRC had moved into second after a very quick time on stage four and were keeping the pressure on. Jonny Leonard and Jackie Elliott were just 6 seconds behind in third, the Enniskillen pair revelling in the wet. They had Kevin Barrett just 2 seconds behind in his S11 Subaru, with Kenny McKinstry and John McGaffin next up. A crew really making a move were James Laverty and Francis Regan in their N12 Subaru, second fastest overall on stage 6, and they were after a much coveted Group N victory.

By stage ten of fourteen, Derek McGarrity's lead had extended to 14.7 seconds, over McGeehan who would have to watch his mirrors for the advancing Jonny Leonard in third. By this stage, former kart racer James Laverty had moved into the Group N lead ahead of Mark Massey, and Kieron Graffin who had lost time, being penalised for allegedly taking a short cut.

James Kennedy in 11<sup>th</sup> overall was still leading the two wheel drive race. Just behind him in a fascinating battle for the 1600 class. Alan Smyth in his C2 R2 held a narrow lead over Barry Greer's Fiesta R2 and Andrew Wilson's home built Starlet RWD, but this battle was soon to be for over two-wheel drive honours, as at a merge junction on stage 11, there was an unfortunate collision between leader James Kennedy and popular Scot Allan Mackay in his Anglia. Both cars were heavily damaged but thankfully there were no injuries to either crew, so now that three way battle for the 1600 class also became the overall two wheel drive race.

Indeed there were many class battles. Colin Price and James Stevenson revelled in the wet, taking a fabulous 15<sup>th</sup> overall and class 3 in their Corsa. The overall two wheel drive and class 4 race was to be won by Alan Smyth and Peter Thompson a tremendous 9<sup>th</sup> overall, from Barry Greer in 10<sup>th</sup> and Andrew Wilson 11<sup>th</sup>. JT Warnock and Andy Hayes scooped the class 5 honours in 17<sup>th</sup>, with David Crossen and Pam Irwin 19<sup>th</sup> and first in class 6. Crumlin's Keith White recovered from an early disaster to claim class 7, and climb back to 12<sup>th</sup> in the immaculate MK1 Escort.

Former 80's rally legend Stanley Orr from Killinchy has made a superb come-back lifting the Montgomery Motorsport Historic honours in his MK1 Escort. In the McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Kyle White was the early leader until he broke a front strut on the new loose section, with also claimed a few victims in the main field. William Creighton and Andrew Bushe then took over to secure a 14.7 second victory from Adam and Brian Bustard, with James Partridge and Billy Regan completing the podium.

Back to the top ten and there were a couple more changes afoot on the final stages. Former NI Champion George Robinson was having a consistent run, and had worked his way up to seventh with the Group A Evo 9, until mechanical failure cruelly caused retirement on the final stage. Kenny McKinstry's new S14 was leaving a trail of expensive looking smoke, which led him to pull out. Fortunately it was only a split exhaust heating burning the rear bumper, but Kenny was out.

At the end Trevor Ferguson and Davy McElroy were delighted with eighth and fourth in Group N, finishing just behind a recovering Kieron Graffin and Paddy Robinson. Mark Massey and James McKee were a fine 6<sup>th</sup> overall and second in Group N, but a well-judged drive saw relative rally newcomer James Laverty and the experienced Francis Regan finish over 30 seconds ahead and take Group N. Kevin Barrett and Sean Mullally took fourth, and plan to contest the whole series this season, whilst the battle for second was to take one final twist. Jonny Leonard and Jackie Elliot blasted their Evo 6 into second with fastest time on stage 13, and equal fastest with McGarrity on the final test. It was the drive of the event, and Derek McGeehan got demoted to third.

There was no doubt however who the winners were, as Derek McGarrity and Neil Doherty took a 16.2 second victory. *"It was a real challenge"* Derek explained. *"The new lay-out was a real challenge, but the weather made it especially challenging, especially for the marshals and time-keepers who had to stand out all day in it. The Ballynahinch club did a great job of running the event, and I look forward to next year."*

Round three of the Carryduff Forklift Northern Ireland Rally Championship is the closed road Easter Stages event on March 30<sup>th</sup>. To keep up to date please check out the NIRC Facebook page-<http://www.facebook.com/nirallying> and check out [www.anicc.org.uk](http://www.anicc.org.uk) for the final points positions, series calendar etc.

#### **Carryduff Forklift NI Rally Championship- Rnd 2 Positions**

1 Derek McGarrity/Neil Doherty	Impreza WRC S12	43m12.7s
2 Jonny Leonard/Jackie Elliott	Evo 6 GPA	+16.2 s
3 Derek McGeehan/Darragh Mullen	Corolla WRC	+28.1s
4 Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally	Impreza WRC S11	+38.5s
5 James Laverty/Francis Regan	Impreza N12	+49.6s
6 Mark Massey/James McKee	Lancer Evo 9	+1m 20.6s
7 Kieron Graffin/Paddy Robinson	Lancer Evo 9	+1m 39.5s
8 Trevor Ferguson/David McElroy	Impreza N12	+2m 29.1s
9 Alan Smyth/Peter Thompson	Citroen C2 R2	+2m 35.9s
10 Barry Greer/Damien Duffin	Ford Fiesta R2	+2m 39.5s

#### **Provisional Championship Points after Round 2**

Derek McGarrity – 24 points

Kevin Barrett - 18 points

Derek McGeehan - 18 points

James Laverty - 13 points

Jonny Leonard – 10 points

MSA NI Group N Championship Leader: James Laverty

McGrady Insurance MSA NI 2WD Championship Leaders: Keith White/Paul Mulholland

MSA NI Junior Championship Leader: Colin Price

M E Crowe MSA NI Ladies Championship Leaders: Emma McKinstry/Louise McClurkin

Montgomery Motorsport Historic Championship Leader: Stanley Orr

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