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Press Information

MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE IRELAND ROUNDS 1 & 2 REPORT

- Circuit of Ireland – 3rd & 4th April 2010
- John McGlaughlin wins round one (top).
- Brendan Cumiskey wins round two (centre).
- Neil McCance scores two second places and wins weekend on aggregate (bottom).



6th April 2010

Easter weekend's Circuit of Ireland Rally produced three winners for the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland: John McGlaughlin and co-driver Crawford Henderson won Saturday's round one, Brendan Cumiskey/Conor Foley won Sunday's round two and, with awards for the weekend presented on aggregate scores from both days, Neil McCance/Sean Ferris took the overall honours having recorded two second places and the highest number of fastest stage times.

Round one – Saturday 3rd April

This year's Circuit of Ireland Rally started in Dundalk at midday on Saturday, with the first day – and round one of the Evolution Challenge - featuring four stages ran twice, all of them north of the service area in Newry. These were followed by SS1 and SS2 combined to form SS9, an 18-mile run in darkness.

McCance started how he finished last year, the 2009 Evo Challenge Ireland Champion and co-driver Ferris setting the fastest times on stages one and two and returning to Newry for the first service halt of the day with a lead of nearly 40 seconds. Albeit with an intermittent misfire in their brand new Evo IX, McGlaughlin/Henderson were second and relieved that their team were able to fix the problem at the service halt.

In third place and only one second behind were Evo Challenge newcomers Sam Moffett/James O'Reilly, who admitted they were still getting used to their Evo. They were pursued by Stanley Ballantine – accompanied by 2009 Evo Challenge Ireland Co-driver Champion Donacha O'Callaghan - who were just four seconds further back.

Then came Cumiskey/Foley, who were concerned about the effectiveness of their car's brakes, followed by Geoff McMahon/Rob Graham who worryingly had their car's steering column come loose when the brackets sheared on SS2. Wille Mavitty/Brian Daniels were next and finding it difficult to get grip in the conditions. In fact, all drivers reported that the stages were extremely slippery, the intermittent rain coupled with the winery conditions during the week leading up to the event had made the roads more treacherous than usual, meaning tyre choice was critical.

With their car back to 100% and now on wet-pattern Pirellis, McMahon/Graham were the quickest Evo on SS3. Then, on the next stage, the lead changed when McCance/Ferris slid up a bank and punctured their car's nearside rear tyre. Deciding to drive through the remainder of the stage rather than change the wheel, they went on to lose around one and a half minutes, which meant that McGlaughlin/Henderson now held the advantage by just over a minute.

Also having problems were Moffett/O'Reilly, when their car's turbo started to detach itself from the manifold and then the wiring from a diff-sensor caused a few concerns. However, things were worse for Ballantine/O'Callaghan, when their car's rear diff stopped working completely and they became the first retirement from the Mitsubishi field.

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With one loop and three stages left to go – including the night-time run - McCance/Ferris knew that unless McGlaughlin/Henderson had problems, then they were best to consolidate their safe second place, which they did. Cumiskey held on to third and, in a last stage dash, McMahon/Graham claimed fourth ahead of Moffett/O'Reilly and Mavitty/Daniels.

"I'm both pleased and relieved to win the first round of the Evo Challenge", said McGlaughlin at the finish. "Without any time to test the new car and having not done a rally for eight months, it all took a bit of getting used to, but with others having problems we were able to keep ahead. It's a great start to the season."

Round one results

1 John McGlaughlin (Cookstown)/Crawford Henderson (Magherafelt)	1:29:01.8
2 Neil McCance (Comber)/Sean Ferris (Omagh)	1:31:06.7
3 Brendan Cumiskey (Dundalk)/Conor Foley (Ballinode)	1:32:37.3
4 Geoff McMahon (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh)	1:33:39.1
5 Sam Moffett (Monaghan)/James O'Reilly (Monaghan)	1:33:48.1
6 Willie Mavitty (Eniskillen)/Brian Daniels (Kilmeaden)	1:34:53.8

Retirements

SS5 Stanley Ballentine (Strabane)/Donnacha O'Callaghan (Mallow) Rear Differential

Round 2 – Sunday 5th April

Sunday's stages featured two loops of the same three stages, two of which were south of the border in the Republic. Once again, McCance/Ferris took the lead after SS1, but it was Cumiskey/Foley who went quickest on SS2.

For McGlaughlin/Henderson, Sunday was not going to be a repeat of Saturday as the intermittent misfire returned - almost right from the start - and then a blown turbo in SS2 slowed them even further. However, for McCance/Ferris it was certainly a case of *deja-vu*, when they collected another nearside rear puncture on SS3, this time losing 30 seconds in the process.

With Cumiskey/Foley revitalised with fully operational brakes, they were only three seconds behind McCance/Ferris after SS2 and therefore surged into the lead by over half-a-minute as crews entered the first service halt of the day after stage three. Moffett/O'Reilly had fixed their Saturday problems and were going well in third, with Ballentine/O'Callaghan in fourth, their return to the Evo Challenge field made possible by the James Foley Rallysport team who had replaced the broken differential during the overnight halt.

However, it was a frustrating day for McMahon/Graham, when suspected fuel pump problems meant that their engine was not running as it should and even cutting out completely in some of the stages. But for Mavitty/Daniels things were not going their way, having gone up a verge on a slippery left-hander the oil cooler was damaged by a protruding rock and they had no choice but to retire.

It was also nearly game over for McGlaughlin/Henderson, but after changing their car's turbo and exiting the service area with just one second to spare, they continued for the remaining three stages in order to get more points on the board.

Although clawing back a few seconds from the leaders in the final loop, McCance/Ferris could not make up the lost time and settled for their second - second place of the weekend, with Cumiskey/Foley delighted to be back on the top step of the Evo Challenge podium for the first time for nearly two years. Moffett/O'Reilly held on to take a fine third, with Ballantine/O'Callaghan fourth and McMahon/Graham fifth and just relieved to make it to the finish.

"Once the car was back to 100% everything else clicked into place", said Cumiskey. "I really enjoyed today and it's good to know that I haven't lost too much pace having not rallied for so long."

Taking the aggregate scores for the weekend into account, McCance/Ferris and Cumiskey/Foley each scored 20 points, but McCance/Ferris took the honours as they recorded more fastest stage times. In the same way, McGlaughlin/Henderson ended their weekend third on aggregate.

"To be honest, it wasn't the weekend I was hoping for", said McCance. "However, to have two punctures and to come away with two second places, a win on aggregate and be equal first in the championship can't be too bad. It puts us in a good position for the start of the season."

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Round two results

1	Brendan Cumiskey (Dundalk)/Conor Foley (Ballinode)	53:52.2
2	Neil McCance (Comber)/Sean Ferris (Omagh)	54:17.5
3	Sam Moffett (Monaghan)/James O'Reilly(Monaghan)	54:40.1
4	Stanley Ballentine (Strabane)/Donnacha O'Callaghan (Mallow)	54:58.3
5	Geoff McMahan (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh)	56:37.5
6	John McGlaughlin (Cookstown)/Crawford Henderson (Magherafelt)	58:38.8

Retirements

SS3	Willie Mavitty (Eniskillen)/Brian Daniels (Kilmeaden)	Oil Cooler
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The third round of the 2010 Irish Evolution Challenge is a one-day National status event, the Carlow Stages making its debut in the Mitsubishi series calendar on 9th May.

For the first time this season, the winner of the Evolution Challenge in each of the three countries it takes place, UK, Ireland and Sweden, will win the same prize: A supported drive in the FxPro Rally Cyprus, the final round of the IRC (Intercontinental Rally Challenge). Then, whichever of the three teams are first home on this event, will be crowned European Evolution Challenge Champions.

The 2010 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland is supported by: Mitsubishi Motors, Pirelli tyres, Sunoco fuels, JRM, Cyprus Automobile Association, Fairways Mitsubishi, Donnelly Group, James Foley Rallysport, Speedline Corse wheels, Murray Motorsport, CL brake pads, Sparco racewear, Pacenotes and PIAA lights - who sponsor the junior award for under 25-year old drivers.

Championship positions after rounds 1 & 2

Drivers

1=	Neil McCance	20
1=	Brendan Cumiskey	20
3	John McGlaughlin	17
4=	Sam Moffett	14
4=	Geoff McMahan	14
6=	Stanley Ballantine	7
7	Willie Mavitty	5

Co-drivers

1=	Sean Ferris	20
1=	Conor Foley	20
3	Crawford Henderson	17
4=	James O'Reilly	14
4=	Rob Graham	14
6=	Donnacha O'Callaghan	7
7	Brian Daniels	5

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