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MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE IRELAND ROUND 5 REPORT

- ALMC Stages Rally – 18th July 2010
- Sam Moffett takes first Evo Challenge victory and jointly leads series.
- Brendan Cumiskey and Geoff McMahon overcome 'issues' to finish second and third.
- Neil McCance retires after a brake disc shatters.
- Changing weather creates difficult conditions.



19th July 2010

Sam Moffatt and co-driver James O'Reilly recorded their first ever Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge victory on Sunday, when they won round five of the Irish series, the ALMC Stages Rally. They took the lead when early pace-setters Neil McCance/Jonny Hart retired on stage five after clipping a bank and shattering a brake disc.

Starting and finishing at the City North Hotel near Drogheda, the ALMC stages rally followed a traditional Irish rally format of running three stages three times, each loop punctuated with a service halt. Enjoying a reputation of being a well-organised and popular event, the changing weather during 137 kilometres of competition was to make this year's rally tough going for the 140-car field and therefore, the choice of tyres was crucial.

Having taken the Evolution Challenge and the overall event spoils on the previous two rounds, it was perhaps unsurprising that McCance/Hart led the Mitsubishis following the first of the three stages, their decision to contest the first loop on intermediate rubber proving to be a good call. Even so, that didn't stop the 2009 Champion from overshooting a junction in SS2 because of the slippery conditions.

In contrast, Moffett/O'Reilly had opted for slicks and, although second of the Evos and the Group N runners, were finding the varying levels of grip – or lack of it – more than a little un-nerving. Having not competed since the first round, Geoff McMahon and co-driver Robert Graham admitted they were being cautious as they re-acquainted themselves with their car and were therefore pleased to be third.

Brendan Cumiskey and stand-in co-driver Ronan O'Kane were also familiarising themselves with their surroundings. Having damaged his car in the previous round three weeks ago, Cumiskey had hired an Evo IX for this event. Although not visually dissimilar to his own Mitsubishi, his temporary transport delivered its power and handled very differently – not ideal in the testing conditions and therefore the 2008 Champion was a little disappointed to be in fourth.

With the roads drying out during the first loop of three stages, the heavens opened just as cars left the first service halt in Duleek. Caught out on a set of brand new slicks, it was perhaps inevitable that McCance/Hart would encounter a few issues and, half-way through SS4, the car slid wide and rode up a bank.

Unbeknown to McCance, the lateral impact had caused the rear nearside brake disk to fracture and then, a few miles later, it suddenly shattered as he braked for a 'turn left at junction', the pedal going straight to the floor. Fortunately, McCance was able to continue straight on as the road went left and then bring the car to a halt without any problems. Having managed to effect repairs at the side of the road and restore some sort of braking, he and Greer continued to SS5, but unfortunately they had exceeded their maximum lateness and had no choice but to retire.

Suddenly, Sam Moffett who was also on slicks, found himself leading the Evolution Challenge by a comfortable margin of a minute to that of McMahon/Graham and Cumiskey/O'Kane, who were now on exactly the same second as they entered the service halt two. Cumiskey reported that he was still not comfortable with his car, whilst McMahon was concerned that his engine was losing power, the fault later traced to the turbo-charger.

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Much to the relief of all crews, the rain stopped and roads dried out for the final trio of stages. Whilst Moffett/O'Reilly increased their lead – even though they had now swapped to intermediate tyres - McMahon/Graham slipped back, as their power problems became more significant. Therefore, when cars returned to the City North Hotel for the traditional spraying of Champagne, the Evolution Challenge time sheets revealed that Moffatt/O'Reilly had recorded their first Mitsubishi series victory by a margin of one-minute and 23-seconds, with Cumiskey/O'Kane second and 47-seconds ahead of McMahon/Graham.

“We seemed to be caught out on the wrong tyres all day, so it makes getting to the finish an achievement.”, said Moffett. “I’m therefore delighted to take my first Evo Challenge win. It now puts me on equal points with Neil (McCance) and means we are in a great position to fight for the title.”

The sixth round of the Irish Mitsubishi series is the Antrim-based Northern Ireland Rally, which takes place on 21 & 22 August and is the one occasion in the year where crews go head-to-head with teams competing in the UK Evolution Challenge.

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.

Evolution Challenge round five results

1 Sam Moffett (Monaghan)/ James O'Reilly (Monaghan)	1:19:56
2 Brendan Cumiskey (Dundalk)/Ronan O'Kane (Dungannon)	1:21:19
3 Geoff McMahon (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh)	1:22:06

Retirements

SS5 Neil McCance (Comber)/Jonny Hart (Carryduff) Accident/brake disc

Series standings after round five

Drivers

1= Neil McCance	44
1= Sam Moffett	44
3 Brendan Cumiskey	40
4 Geoff McMahon	22
5 John McGlaughlin	17
6 Stanley Ballantine	15
7 Willie Mavitty	5

Co-drivers

1 James O'Reilly	44
2 Conor Foley	30
3 Jonny Hart	24
4 Rob Graham	22
5 Sean Ferris	20
6 Crawford Henderson	17
7 Donnacha O'Callaghan	15
8 Brian Daniels	5

ENDS

Photo

Sam Moffett and co-driver James O'Reilly recorded their first ever victory in the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland, when they won round five, the ALMC Stages Rally and now jointly lead the series with three rounds to go (*copyright free image*).