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# Press Information

## MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE IRELAND ROUND SIX REPORT



- ALMC Stages Rally – 19th July 2009.
- McGlaughlin wins for the second time in succession.
- Series leader McCance sidelined by transmission troubles.
- Last stage dramas decide final outcome.

21st July 2009

For the second time in as many events, John McGlaughlin and co-driver Crawford Henderson emerged as winners of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland, following a day-long battle with current series leaders Neil McCance and Sean Ferris. This time, it was the County Meath-based ALMC Stages Rally – round six of the Irish Group N Mitsubishi series – where they came out on top after a dramatic final stage.

Starting and finishing from the City North Hotel near Drogheda, the rally followed a traditional one-day Irish rally format of three stages run three times, with a service halt separating each loop of 48 kms. The popular event saw an overall entry of 130 cars, eight of which made up the Evo Challenge field.

Fastest out of the blocks were McCance/Ferris, who set a time good enough to place them second in the event overall and nine seconds ahead of the next-placed Evo crew of Alan Carmichael and Ivor Lamont. Carmichael reported that his car was sliding more than he had expected on the opening stage due to the changing grip levels of the rapidly drying road surface, but he and Lamont were ahead of McGlaughlin/Henderson by three seconds.

Others finding the going unpredictable were William Mavitty/Keefe Kilcoyne, who were pushing hard in their Evo VI in fourth, followed by Stanley Ballantine/Donnacha O'Callaghan in fifth, who had overcome a few first-stage frights caused by fading brakes. Geoff McMahan/Robert Graham were sixth and getting used to their new environment, having hired the James Foley Rallysport Mitsubishi Evolution X for this event.

At the first service halt after the opening loop of three stages, the time sheets showed McCance/Ferris as the pace-setters and holding an advantage of 28 seconds ahead of Carmichael/Lamont, who had been slowed on SS2 when negotiating a crashed car. McGlaughlin/Henderson were just one second behind in third, McGlaughlin admitting that having spun in SS2 he was perhaps trying too hard.

Tom White/Robert Murphy were off to a solid start, but had the JFR team check their car's oil level at service, having seen traces of smoke behind the car. Thankfully, the fault was found to be nothing serious. Liam Egan/Mary O'Kane were another crew pleased to get through the first batch of stages, with Egan reporting he was rebuilding his confidence following his off last time out in round five.

The next loop saw Carmichael/Lamont and McGlaughlin/Henderson determined to get closer to the leaders. However, for the second-placed crew SS5 signalled the end of the road, when a heavy impact with a bank towards the end of the stage disappointingly forced them into retirement.

As it turned out, the accumulated times of McCance/Ferris and McGlaughlin/Henderson for the second set of three stages was exactly the same, meaning that it was status quo for the two front-runners. Behind them, Ballantine/O'Callaghan were now gathering pace and causing Mavitty/Kilcoyne to look in their mirrors.

Also setting faster times as they became more familiar with their car were McMahan/Graham, while White/Murphy were also gaining time as their engine worries were now over. However, for Egan/O'Kane it was now a case of just getting to the finish when their car's gearbox suddenly lost fourth and reverse.

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Then, just when the teams had fitted slicks in readiness for a big push in the final loop, the weather played its hand, with showers of rain making sections of road very slippery indeed for some of the crews.

Although enjoying a cushion of 29 seconds, McCance/Ferris spun on SS7 and then again on SS8, which meant that when they lined-up to start the ninth and final stage there was just 11 seconds separating them and McGlaughlin/Henderson. Half way through the stage McCance felt confident his pace would be good enough to stay ahead, but then a noise from the transmission was shortly followed by no drive at all and the series leaders had no choice but to pull-up at the side of the road.

The door was now wide open for McGlaughlin/Henderson, who had started the stage flat out, intent on clawing back the 11 second deficit, but when they saw McCance's car at the side of the road, they were able to cruise to the finish to record their second Evo Challenge victory in as many events.

"Even though we had a good run this afternoon, I didn't think we were going to do it", said McGlaughlin. "I couldn't believe it when I saw Neil and Sean parked at the side of the road, it was a real shame, as we were having another great battle. However, the win does mean that good run next time out could put us in contention for the title."

Behind the leading pair confusion reigned on the final stage, with the wet roads first catching out Ballantine/O'Callaghan who slid into a ditch. It was then Mavitty/Kilcoyne's turn, when they first overshot a junction and then had a high speed spin, which they were lucky to escape unscathed.

Conditions were a little better for McMahon/Graham and they made it through the SS9 without incident. This, added to problems with the stage timing system, meant that no one knew who was second, third or fourth in the Evolution Challenge until organisers had double-checked the results that evening at the rally HQ. As it turned out, the positions stayed the same as they were, with Mavitty/Kilcoyne delighted to finish second and Ballantine/O'Callaghan third.

The outcome of this event sees positions at the top of the Evolution Challenge standings become very close indeed, with McCance ahead by just two points from Egan, Ballantine and Mavitty all sharing second place. However, the series leader is unable to compete in the next round, the Todds Leap Ulster Rally on 21st & 22nd August, which signals that the race for the title is heading for a grand finale in September.

The Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland is supported by: Pirelli tyres, Sunoco Racing Fuels, James Foley Rallysport, Carbone Lorraine, Murray Motorsport, Speedline Corse wheels, PIAA lights, Pacenotes, Sparco racewear and Mitsubishi Motors Ireland.

#### Round six results

- 1 John McGlaughlin (Cookstown)/Crawford Henderson (Magherafelt) 1:17:15
- 2 William Mavitty (Eniskillen)/Keefe Kilcoyne (Westport) 1:20:45
- 3 Stanley Ballantine (Strabane)/Donnacha O'Callaghan (Mallow) 1:21:34
- 4 Geoff McMahon (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh) 1:21:43
- 5 Thomas White (Foulksmills)/Robert Murphy (New Ross) 1:24:51
- 6 Liam Egan (New York)/Mary O'Kane (Maghera) 1:26:59

#### Retirements

- SS5 Alan Carmichael (Ballymena)/Ivor Lamont (Ballymena) - Accident  
SS9 Neil McCance (Comber)/Sean Ferris (Omagh) - Transmission

#### Series standings after round six

Drivers			Co-drivers		
1	Neil McCance	34	1	Sean Ferris	34
2	Liam Egan	27	2=	Donnacha O'Callaghan	33
3=	Keith Cronin	24	2=	Keefe Kilcoyne	33
3=	Stanley Ballantine	24	4=	Greg Shinnors	24
5	William Mavitty	22	4=	Crawford Henderson	24
6	Alan Carmichael	20	6	Robert Graham	21
7	Geoff McMahon	13	7	Ivor Lamont	20
8	John McGlaughlin	12	8	Colin Harkness	18
9	Brendan Cumiskey	8	9	Mary O'Kane	14
10	Tom White	5	10	Robert Murphy	11
10	Michael Murray	5	11	Brian Daniels	6
12	Alan Burrows	4	12	Gavin Burrows	4

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