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# Press Information

## MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE IRELAND REPORT - ROUNDS THREE AND FOUR



- Larsen Circuit of Ireland Rally  
11th & 12th April 2009.
- Neil McCance takes victory on both rounds.
- Alan Carmichael scores double second place.
- William Mavitty ends the weekend third on aggregate.
- Heavy landing sidelines 2008 Champion.
- Liam Egan's 100% scoring record nets him series lead.

14th April 2009

Neil McCance and co-driver Sean Ferris scored back-to-back resounding victories in rounds three and four of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland – the Larsen Circuit of Ireland Rally - which took place over the Easter weekend. They led the nine-car field of Group N (production class) Mitsubishi's right from the start and drove a near perfect rally, McCance pleased to have lost none of his form after recovering from an operation a few weeks ago.

Prior to the event, organisers of the Evolution Challenge were delighted to see entries more than double since the opening two rounds in West Cork. The pay-as-you go registration – rather than a start-of-season up-front payment option – proving to be popular amongst competitors.

The two-day circuit of Ireland is one of the country's classic events and, although based in Dundalk, all of the competitive mileage was situated north of the border. The two-day format saw round three of the Evo Challenge take place over Saturday's eight special stages and round four over Sunday's four, longer and more technical tests, with points allocated for each day and the awards for the weekend based on aggregate scores from both rounds.

### Round Three

Making a welcome return to the Mitsubishi series after taking the title last year, Brendan Cumiskey and co-driver Richard Hyland – who was drafted in just before the event – were the top seeded crew in the Evo Challenge. However, their rally didn't last long, when the car landed so heavily following one of the notorious jumps in stage one, the bottom of the radiator split.

Even with suspension damage as well, Cumiskey managed to get the car out of the stage and top up the radiator, but the engine overheated in SS2 and he and Hyland had no choice but to stop at the side of the road.

Although admitting to be apprehensive after having a kidney removed six weeks beforehand, McCance was back on the pace straight away and was quickest on Saturday's opening stage by 20 seconds, ahead of Geoff McMahan/Robert Graham. Just three seconds behind were Alan Carmichael/Ivor Lamont, who were getting used to their brand-new Evo IX, and William Mavitty/Keefe Kilkoynne who were impressing in their Evo VI.

With SS2 cancelled because of an incident in the National B category of the rally, Evo Challenge crews counted just three of the four stages before the lunch-time service halt, where most crews reported that the undulating roads required high levels of concentration for both the driver and co-driver, many reporting narrow escapes or overshoots.

McCance/Ferris increased their advantage to 56 seconds ahead of Carmichael/Lamont, who were gathering pace having adjusted the suspension settings on their new car, even though an intercooler pipe had been damaged on a jump and the intercom had stopped working for a while. McMahan./Graham were now third, whilst Mavitty/Kilkoynne held onto fourth after having to contend with severe brake judder.

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The afternoon's four stages featured another two runs of two and, although with slightly more flowing roads, crews still found themselves subject to overshoots and spins – particularly on the final two stages when the rain started to fall. For the earlier runners the surface was mainly dry, but for the later crews the wet conditions made a significant difference, especially as all were caught out on slick tyres.

McCance/Ferris had such an advantage, their slower times were still enough to see them retain the lead ahead of Carmichael/Lamont. Stanley Ballantine/Donnacha O'Callaghan had been gathering pace all day and claimed third place ahead of Mavitty/Kilcoyne, who dropped time following a spin on the final stage.

McMahon/Graham lost a certain podium position on the wet roads, where as Alan and Gavin Burrows spun on the entry to a junction in SS8 and clouted a bank. Although damaging a number of components, they eventually made it to the finish in seventh place. In contrast, Tom White/Robert Murray and Liam Egan – with new co-driver Mary O'Kane - had clean runs during the day to finish sixth and eighth respectively.

#### Round three results

1 Neil McCance (Comber)/Sean Ferris (Omagh)	1:05:29.5
2 Alan Carmichael (Ballymena)/Ivor Lamont (Ballymena)	1:06:14.9
3 Stanley Ballantine (Strabane)/Donnacha O'Callaghan (Mallow)	1:07:17.3
4 William Mavitty (Eniskillen)/Keefe Kilcoyne (Westport)	1:07:42.1
5 Geoff McMahon (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh)	1:07:55.0
6 Thomas White (Foulksmills)/Robert Murphy (New Ross)	1:09:03.1
7 Alan Burrows (Ballynahinch)/Gavin Burrows (Ballynahinch)	1:09:40.2
8 Liam Egan (New York)/Mary O'Kane (Maghera)	1:11:14.5

#### Retirements

SS2 Brendan Cumiskey (Dundalk)/Richard Hyland (Omagh) Engine

#### Round Four

Although longer than those featured on Saturday, there was no let up for crews for Sunday's four stages which again, saw a loop of two stages run twice. McCance/Ferris carried on from where they left off and, at the interim service halt, they were 14 seconds up on McMahon/Graham who were fourth, albeit after the cross-shaft in the transmission had snapped, meaning that they had to continue with just two-wheel-drive.

Carmichael/Lamont were just one second behind in third, but another hard landing following one of the event's treacherous jumps had broken a rear damper and frantic activity ensued in the service area to try and find a replacement. Sportingly, Mavitty/Kilcoyne – who were in fourth place - came to the rescue with a spare unit, a gesture which saw them win the Sunoco Spirit award.

Unfortunately for White/Murphy the first stage of the day was the end of the road, when the car stepped out of line after a crest, clipped a bank and rolled. The same fate also befell Burrows/Burrows, when they retired in similar fashion a stage later.

Ballantine/O'Callaghan were another not to make it back to Dundalk, when their car's engine lost its power on the penultimate stage – a cruel blow as they also suffered an 11th hour retirement in West Cork. Egan/O'Kane were another crew to be affected by technical issues when their car's turbo-charger lost its boost and had to be replaced at the service halt. However, they made it to the finish and in doing so, Egan became the only driver to have scored points on every round and now leads the championship.

With just one stage to go, it all looked like plain sailing for McCance/Ferris. But just two miles from the end they clipped a rock on the inside of a hairpin and punctured the right front tyre. Although having to drop their pace, they were still able to record their second Evo Challenge victory in as many days, this time by a respectable margin of 56 seconds.

"It's been an excellent weekend", said McCance at the finish. "A few weeks ago I didn't think I would be back in a rally car so soon and to take two Evo Challenge wins makes it even better. It's certainly a great boost to my recovery process!"

#### Round four results

1 Neil McCance (Comber)/Sean Ferris (Omagh)	37:15.2
2 Alan Carmichael (Ballymena)/Ivor Lamont (Ballymena)	38:11.7
3 William Mavitty (Eniskillen)/Keefe Kilcoyne (Westport)	39:09.7
4 Geoff McMahon (Armagh)/Robert Graham (Armagh)	39:10.4
5 Liam Egan (New York)/Mary O'Kane (Maghera)	44:27.2

#### Retirements

SS12 Thomas White (Foulksmills)/Robert Murphy (New Ross) Accident  
SS13 Alan Burrows (Ballynahinch)/Gavin Burrows (Ballynahinch) Accident  
SS13 Stanley Ballantine (Strabane)/Donnacha O'Callaghan (Mallow) Engine

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Round five of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland takes place on 24th May, the Cavan Stages being the first the season's one-day events.

The 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland is also supported by: Pirelli tyres, Sunoco fuel, James Foley Rallysport, Carbone Lorraine brake pads, Murray Motorsport, Speedline Corse wheels, PIAA lights, Pacenotes, Sparco racewear and Mitsubishi Motors Ireland.

#### **Series standings after round four**

##### **Drivers**

1	Liam Egan	27
2=	Neil McCance	24
2=	Keith Cronin	24
4	Alan Carmichael	20
5	Stanley Ballantine	18
6	William Mavitty	15
7	Geoff McMahan	13
8	Tom White	5
9	Alan Burrows	4
-	Brendan Cumiskey	0

##### **Co-drivers**

1=	Sean Ferris	24
1=	Greg Shinnors	24
3	Ivor Lamont	20
4=	Colin Harkness	18
4=	Donnacha O'Callaghan	18
6	Keefe Kilcoyne	15
7	Robert Graham	13
8	Mary O'Kane	9
9	Robert Murphy	5
10	Gavin Burrows	4
11	Richard Hyland	0

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**Photo:** Neil McCance and co-driver Sean Ferris recorded back-to-back victories in the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland, when they won rounds three and four on the Larsen Circuit of Ireland Rally, which took place over the Easter weekend (copyright free image).

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