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Press Information

MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE UK ROUND EIGHT REPORT

- Trackrod International Rally Yorkshire
26th September 2009.
- Nik Elsmore wins final round of the
season and claims second place in the
final series standings for the second year
running.
- Already-crowned 2009 Champion Daniel
Barry retires after stage two when damage
caused in Ulster incident causes rear
suspension mountings to break.



27th September 2009

The eighth and final round of this year's Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge, the Trackrod International Rally Yorkshire, saw Nik Elsmore and co-driver Craig Drew record their first victory for the season and, in doing so, secure the runners-up spot in this year's championship.

Starting and finishing at Pickering Showground, the event featured a loop of four stages in forests over the North Yorkshire Moors on Saturday morning, followed by a main service halt and a spectator stage within the showground. The afternoon saw a re-run of the morning's four stages, the total route providing competitors with a competitive distance of 90 miles.

The event also hosted the final round of the MSA British Rally Championship and therefore witnessed a strong Class N4 field, the category shared by the Evolution Challenge cars and, with the weather more like Summer than Autumn, the pace was fast and furious right from the start.

With the championship already wrapped up two rounds ago by Daniel Barry and co-driver Martin Brady and the sport suffering overall by the effects of the credit crunch, the Evo Challenge saw three entries for its 2009 finale. However, due to an industrial accident two days before the event, although not too badly injured, Alan Carmichael reluctantly had to withdraw his and co-driver Ivor Lamont's entry.

This made it a head-to-head fight between Barry/Brady and Elsmore/Drew and, with the already-crowned champions wanting to equal the record of six wins in a season – a statistic set by Phillip Morrow in 2007 – and with Elsmore/Drew eager to claim at least one victory this year, the race was on.

Following the first stage there was nothing in it, Barry/Brady emerging from the 14 mile run through Langdale just 0.8 seconds ahead, a familiar margin between front-running Evo Challenge crews. Such was the pace of the Evo Challenge pair, the time sheets showed that Barry/Brady had set the third-fastest overall time through the stage and Elsmore /Drew the fourth.

However, that was all to change in SS2 – a 16.6 mile run through Dalby – when Barry felt something give-way at the rear of his car as he and Brady left the start-line. With their car handling very strangely, they limped through the stage to find that the left-hand rear suspension mounting bolts had pulled out of the bodywork, a failure in no doubt caused from the impact sustained in the Ulster accident a few weeks ago.

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With two stages still to go before the service halt and no-way of fixing the problem without some major mechanical surgery, Barry and Brady decided to call it a day. This left Elsmore/Drew out on their own, but they too were suffering from a dilemma in Dalby, having to drive with a punctured front left tyre after hitting a pot-hole half way through the stage.

Knowing that they had to finish to claim second place in the series standings, Elsmore/Drew opted for a sensible approach to the rest of the day's proceedings. However, although driving well within their limits, the crew were delighted to find that their stage times were comparable to many of the leading BRC runners. They were therefore delighted to cross the finish line to take their first Evo Challenge victory of the season and finish a credible eighth overall.

"It's good to get at least one win under my belt this season – even though it's on the final round", said Elsmore. "But the most important thing was to get to the finish and claim second place in the championship. Although having to watch our pace and not take any chances today, I've really enjoyed this event and I've been very pleased to have set some top five overall times. It's an excellent end to the season."

The overall winner of the event was Keith Cronin in a Mitsubishi, his victory over Mark Higgins seeing him and co-driver Greg Shinnors become British Rally Champions. Stuart Jones finished second overall, with Jonny Greer third, making it a podium of former Evolution Challenge competitors.

With the Rally Yorkshire being the final round of the ninth season for the UK Evolution Challenge, series organisers are now making plans for a tenth. Further details are scheduled to be announced in the next few weeks.

The 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge is supported by Mitsubishi Motors UK, Ralliart, Pirelli tyres, Sunoco fuels, JR Motorsports, Speedline Corse wheels, Carbone Lorraine brakes, Walkinshaw Performance, Sparco racewear and PIAA lights - who sponsor the junior award for under 25-year old drivers.

Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge entries

1 Nik Elsmore (Coleford)/Craig Drew (Bream) 1:23:22.9

Retirements

DNS Alan Carmichael (Ballymena)/Ivor Lamont (Ballymena) Injury
SS2 Daniel Barry (Enniskerry)/Martin Brady (Navan) Suspension

Final Championship positions

Drivers

1 Daniel Barry	70
2 Nik Elsmore	55
3 Simon Hughes	50
4 Alan Carmichael	30
5 Owen Murphy	29
7 Daniel Sigurdarson	17
6 Andreas Magnusson	8
8 Neil Armstrong	4

Co-drivers

1 Martin Brady	70
2 Craig Drew	55
3 Craig Parry	40
4 Dai Roberts	29
5 Ivor Lamont	18
6 Patrick Walsh	10
7 Henrik Hulterkog	8
8 Isak Gudjonsson	7
9 Max Ferri	4

ENDS

Photo: Nik Elsmore and co-driver Craig Drew rounded-off this season's Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge UK with a win on the eighth and final round, the Trackrod Rally Yorkshire. The victory sees them finish the year as runners up in the championship standings (*copyright free image*).

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