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# Press Information

## MITSUBISHI RALLIART EVOLUTION CHALLENGE UK ROUND FIVE REPORT

- Severn Valley National Rally - 30th May 2009.
- Intense, day-long battle, decided on the final stage.
- Daniel Barry wins for the fourth time this season.
- Simon Hughes finishes a close second.
- Nik Elsmore finishes an even closer third.



1st June 2009

Round five of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge witnessed the closest battle of the year so far, the hot, dry and dusty conditions in the mid-Wales forests provoking fierce competition, the final results seeing Daniel Barry and co-driver Martin Brady claim their fourth victory of the season. They crossed the line just ten seconds ahead of Simon Hughes/Craig Parry, with Nik Elsmore/Craig Drew a slender 0.7 seconds behind in third.

Starting and finishing at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells, the Severn Valley National Rally uses some of the best forest stages in the UK and is therefore regarded as a favourite by many competitors. Five of the 10 registered Evolution Challenge crews were entered, which although is less than previous years, the Mitsubishis still represented 30% of the National A field.

The event featured four stages before the first service halt, followed by another two before the second. It then concluded with the longest of the day – a 16-mile run through Radnor Forest.

The gauntlet was laid right from the word go, when Barry/Brady stopped the clocks on stage one just 1.6 seconds ahead of Hughes/Parry, who in-turn were 2.6 seconds ahead of Elsmore/Drew. But on the longer 12-mile stage two, Hughes/Parry reversed the position by emerging 2.2 seconds ahead, Barry reporting he couldn't seem to find a rhythm and feeling below par due to a cold.

After the third stage Hughes/Parry were just 1.2 seconds ahead. Then, on stage four, Barry/Brady went on the offensive and came into service leading the Evo Challenge by three seconds, Hughes reporting that he needed to make some adjustments to his car's suspension.

Elsmore/Drew were not far behind in third, with only a gap of 7.9 seconds between them and second place – even following a spin in SS3. For the first two stages they were being challenged by Owen Murphy/Dai Roberts, who had finally got to the bottom of their car's previous electrical problems. However, they now found that the turbo was not providing enough boost and Murphy became frustrated not to be mixing it with the leading pair.

Adding to his problems was a missed note at the end of SS3 when the car slid wide, clouted a bank and seriously damaged the rear off-side suspension. Although managing to limp back to the service halt, the prospect of taking a first win was now very much in question.

Icelandic Rally Champion Daniel Sigurdarson and co-driver Isak Gudjonsson were debuting their Evo X in the Evolution Challenge and, although treating this event as a learning exercise for their new car, their pace was more than respectable. However three spins on SS3 - as Sigurdarson tried to find the limits of his car's handling - lost them over 30 seconds, the delay seeing them in fifth place at the service halt.

The next two stages saw Barry/Brady edge further ahead of Hughes/Parry, but not by much – in fact on stage six the leading trio of Evos were so close they were only separated by one-tenth of a second! Having set the fastest Evo Challenge time on SS5, Elsmore/Drew were closing the gap in third – and were ready to pounce if either of the leaders faltered.

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Murphy's car now had all its wheels pointing in the same direction, but to his dismay, it was still down on power and he looked unlikely to make any impression on the leaders. Therefore, at the second service halt, the time sheets showed Barry/Brady ahead by two seconds from Hughes/Parry, with Elsmore/Drew 15 seconds further back. It was therefore all down to the final stage in Radnor Forest.

Not far from the start Hughes/Parry spun and lost an agonising ten seconds before getting going again. Then, Barry/Brady did a similar thing, their car straddling a ditch momentarily – all of which meant that Elsmore/Drew were now right with them.

As the anxious crews checked each other's times at the end of the stage, the clocks revealed that Barry/Brady had come out on top by just over 10 seconds. However, having recorded another fastest Evo Challenge time, Elsmore/Drew very nearly overhauled Hughes/Parry, just 0.7 second separating the second and third-placed crews at the finish.

Murphy/Roberts did the best they could in the afternoon and were relieved make it to the finish – picking up the Sunoco Spirit Award for their efforts, whilst Sigurdarson/Gudjonsson were delighted to record a trouble-free run and confirmed that their last-minute decision to enter was well worth the trip from Iceland.

"The hot and dusty conditions made this a tough event, but I've really enjoyed it", said Barry. "We've had a great battle all day, which went right to the final stage and you just couldn't afford to make a mistake. This is my fourth win in the Evo Challenge this season and things are now looking really good for the title."

Barry and Brady also finished third overall and continues to lead the MSA National Gravel Championship by two points.

The UK Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge now takes a short break before the sixth round, which sees a return to the Welsh forests with the Swansea Bay Rally on 18th July.

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 - Round five results**

1 Daniel Barry (Enniskerry)/Martin Brady (Navan)	1:04:48.6
2 Simon Hughes (Abergele)/Craig Parry (Llanymynech)	1:04:58.9
3 Nik Elsmore (Coleford)/Craig Drew (Bream)	1:04:59.8
4 Owen Murphy (Cork)/Dai Roberts (Carmarthen)	1:06:20.0
5 Daniel Sigurdarson (Iceland)/Isak Gudjonsson (Iceland)	1:06:53.9

#### **Championship positions after round five**

##### Drivers

1 Daniel Barry	58
2 Simon Hughes	50
3 Nik Elsmore	39
4 Owen Murphy	29
5 Alan Carmichael	18
6 Andreas Magnusson	8
7 Daniel Sigurdarson	7
7 Neil Armstrong	4

##### Co-drivers

1 Martin Brady	58
2 Craig Parry	40
3 Craig Drew	39
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:** After a fierce day-long battle in the mid-Wales forests, Daniel Barry and co-driver Martin Brady recorded their fourth win of the season in round five of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge, the Severn Valley National Rally (*copyright free image*).

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