

Dunlop National Rally Championship Round 2

Review

Courtesy Of Martin Walsh Dunlop NRC Media Coordinator

EVANS CREAMS THE MAYO

Welsh pair, Mel Evans/Patrick Walsh (Subaru) made it two wins from two starts in the Dunlop National Rally Championship courtesy of their victory in the Claremorris based McWilliam Park Hotel Mayo Rally.

At the conclusion of the nine special stages, Evans/Walsh were 20 seconds ahead of the Subaru WRC of Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally. Billy Coleman Award winner, Craig Breen, who was co-driven by Dai Roberts, finished third in his Ford Fiesta S2000 - a further 21 seconds behind.

Just four of the top cars managed to finish the opening stage as Derek McGarrity was caught out on a gravel strewn square right hand junction. His Subaru WRC understeered up a bank and rolled over so slightly causing minimal damage but his rally as over.

Fastest stage time was set by Nenagh Rally winner and Dunlop National Rally Championship leader, Mel Evans, who was five seconds faster than the Subaru of Kevin Barrett. Aaron MacHale, in his Ford Focus, was equal third - twelve seconds further behind as he experienced brake problems towards the stage. Craig Breen was amongst a host of drivers that were held up by the McGarrity accident and they all received MacHale's time.

Maguire was further down the order. MacHale was the fastest driver through the second test, Logboy while Breen was the pacesetter through S.S. 3, illustrated by a slightly damaged front spoiler. At the Claremorris service halt, Evans held a six second lead; it could have been more were it not for a spin on S.S. 3 where he also lost time when his Subaru stalled. Second placed Kevin Barrett, was seven seconds ahead of Breen, with MacHale a second further behind in fourth.

Daniel McKenna (Ford Escort) was the star of the two-wheel drive category, he held an impressive fifth overall - four seconds ahead of Niall Maguire and 23 ahead of his closest class rival, Manus Kelly.

The top ten was completed by the Escorts of Declan Boyle and Damien Gallagher and Sean Flanagan (Subaru), who led the showroom category.

Maurice Moffett (Toyota Starlet) had a short-lived rally and

retired with steering trouble; Trevor Mulligan slid his Escort off the road and out of the rally on the first stage and Sean McHugh retired his BMW Compact with driveshaft problems.

Evans was quickest on S.S. 4 but lost about 20 seconds across the rest of the second loop. On S.S. 5, The Welshman stalled his Subaru and slackened his pace towards the end of S.S. 6 after a rain shower made the conditions very greasy. Meanwhile, Barrett continued to charge and was only a second behind the rally leader. Breen in third, was off the road briefly after a jump. At the Claremorris service halt he remarked, "There's isn't anymore I can do, now it is time to make sure we get the car home."

MacHale and Maguire were fourth and fifth respectively. There was considerable change in the Modified section. Daniel McKenna hit a chicane bale and retired his Escort and his nemesis, Manus Kelly slid his Escort off the road. Their indiscretions promoted Declan Boyle (Escort) into seventh and lead of the two-wheel drive category.

However, he was being chased down by Damien Gallagher (Escort), who was only ten seconds behind. Camillus Bradley (Escort), Sean Flanagan (Subaru) and Victor Hunter (Escort) rounded off the top ten. Aaron MacHale retired his Ford Focus WRC before the start of S.S. 7.

On the final loop, Evans put the issue beyond doubt as he gained 17 seconds on the seventh stage, thereafter, he duly slackened his pace accordingly to secure his second win in succession. Barrett took a deserved second with Breen, who overshot on the final stage, finishing third overall and Maguire fourth. Declan Boyle (Escort) won the Modified category and Sean Flanagan (Subaru) won Group N.

Donegal's, Geoffrey Dolan (Sunbeam), who was seeded at 137, finished 18th. overall and won the "Driver of the Day" award. Kevin Kelleher (Mitsubishi) and Michael O'Brien (Ford Focus WRC) were amongst the non-starters.

1. M. Evans/P. Walsh (Subaru WRC) 1h. 17m. 09s.
2. K. Barrett/S. Mullally (Subaru WRC) 1h. 17m. 29s.
3. C. Breen/D. Roberts (Ford Fiesta S2000) 1h. 17m. 50s.
4. N. Maguire/E. Sherry (Subaru WRC) 1h. 18m. 42s.
5. D. Boyle/B. Boyle (Ford Escort) 1h. 20m. 59s.
6. D. Gallagher/P. Garry (Ford Escort) 1h. 21m. 10s.
7. C. Bradley/C. Henderson (Ford Escort) 1h. 21m. 37s.
8. V. Hunter/M. Doherty (Ford Escort) 1h. 22m. 52s.
9. S. Flanagan/B. Miller (Subaru) 1h. 23m. 10s.
10. E. Ferry/D. Heena (Ford Escort) 1h. 23m. 22s.

Dunlop National Rally Championship (Positions after Round 2): 1.
M. Evans 40 pts; 2. N. Maguire 28 pts.

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Dunlop National Rally Championship.