



McGARRITY WINS CIRCUIT OF KERRY - ON A TIE-BREAK

Report Courtesy of Martin Walsh Dunlop Championship Media Coordinator

Yet again, the Circuit of Kerry Rally, was decided on a tie break, the fourth time in recent years. In an exciting third round of the Dunlop National Rally Championship, Derek McGarrity and co-driver, James McKee (Subaru) edged out long time leaders, Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally (Subaru WRC), who led by seven seconds entering the seventh and final stage.

Niall Maguire (Subaru WRC), who was co-driven by Enda Sherry, took third place - 31 seconds further adrift, Maguire is the new leader of the Dunlop series, pre-event leader, Mel Evans (Subaru WRC) was one of the retirements.

Barry Meade (Ford Escort) won the Modified category and Alan Ring (Mitsubishi) won the Group N category.

Just like he did last year, Kevin Barrett (Subaru) set the fastest time on the opening stage, the Maynooth driver was five seconds ahead of Circuit of Ireland winner, Derek McGarrity following the completion of the famous Desmond's Grave stage. Pre-event series leader, Mel Evans (Subaru) was third - four seconds further adrift with Niall Maguire, Kevin Kelleher and Manus Kelly completing the top six. Evans was quickest through the second test with McGarrity setting the pace on the third stage. At the Tralee service halt, Barrett held a ten second lead over McGarrity, rally leader Barrett recalled a moment on S.S. 3 when he cut a corner too tight and mud filled the rim of a rear wheel causing a vibration. McGarrity was relatively content in second with Maguire up to third. Kevin Kelleher led Group N but was penalised some 15 seconds for early arrival at one of the controls, however, he was more concerned about a soaring temperature gauge. Declan Boyle (Escort) was the top two-wheel drive exponent, he was fifth overall but Barry Meade, also in an Escort, was only a mere second in arrears. Eamonn Daly (Mitsubishi) was seventh overall followed by Evans, who lost time when a turbo pipe came adrift. The Escorts of Ed Synan and Paul Purtill completed the top ten.

Mark Jasper, who was seeded at seven in his Hyundai, was well down the order, his car developed steering trouble and slipped to fifteenth overall. Elsewhere, Manus Kelly crashed out while Mike Quinn lost substantial time when he slid off the road on the third stage.

McGarrity reduced Barrett's lead to just two seconds on the fourth test as Niall Maguire set the best time to remain third - 20 seconds behind McGarrity.

Evans lost more time on the fourth stage and retired when a pipe split. Another driver to retire was Kevin Kelleher, his Mitsubishi overheated. On stages five and six, Barrett extricated a total of five seconds from McGarrity and arrived at the final service halt with a seven second lead over his rival. Ironically, both suffered some transmission glitches.

Meanwhile, Maguire increased his pace and was 18 seconds behind second placed, McGarrity.

The race for supremacy in the Modified category was intense, with Declan Boyle, who was fourth overall, a mere second ahead of Barry Meade. Boyle remarked that his Escort has

some transmission woes while Meade endured a spin on Stage 5.

Ed Synan and Paul Purtill, also in Mk. 2 Escorts were next in classification in a top ten that also included Mark Jasper (Hyundai Accent WRC), Adrian Hetherington (Ford Escort) and Alan Ring (Mitsubishi). Jasper continued to suffer due to the lack of power steering and a lack of power. Ring, who had decided to use the stages as a test exercise, was somewhat surprised at his new role of Group N leader.

In an exciting final stage, McGarrity punched in the best time and finished seven seconds faster than his rival and took victory on a tie break from a disappointed Barrett. Maguire's third place was enough to promote him to top of the Dunlop leaderboard.

In the Modified category, both Meade and Boyle had skirmishes on the final test, Meade fared best, despite some front wing damage while Boyle lost over five minutes. Ring won the Group N category and Jasper brought his Hyundai home in sixth place.

The Escorts of Paul Purtill and Ed Synan were seventh and eighth respectively with Lloyd Hutchinson (Mini), who won the "Driver of the Day award and Richard Whelan (Honda Civic) completing the top ten.

1. D. McGarrity/J. McKee (Subaru WRC) 1h. 4m. 40s.
2. K. Barrett/S. Mullally (Subaru WRC) 1h. 04m. 40s.
3. N. Maguire/E. Sherry (Subaru WRC) 1h. 05m. 11s.
4. B. Meade/J. Hickey (Ford Escort) 1h. 07m. 12s.
5. A. Ring/B. Duggan (Mitsubishi) 1h. 08m. 46s.
6. M. Jasper/D. Whyatt ((Hyundai Accent WRC) 1h. 08m. 50s.
7. P. Purtill/K. Shanahan (Ford Escort) 1h. 08m. 52s.
8. E. Synan/D. O'Connell (Ford Escort) 1h. 08m. 55s.
9. L. Hutchinson/K. Flanagan (Mini) 1h. 10m. 09s.
10. R. Whelan/C. Fitzgerald (Honda Civic) 1h. 10m. 17s.

Dunlop National Rally Championship (Positions after Round 3): 1. N. Maguire 44 pts; 2. M. Evans 40 pts; 3. D. McGarrity 38 pts; 4. K. Barrett 36 pts.

