

MOFFETT TAKES THE MAYO WIN

Monaghan's Josh Moffett (Hyundai i20 R5) and his Limerick co-driver Keith Moriarty took a start to finish victory on the McHugh's Service Station Mayo Rally, the opening round of the Triton Showers backed Motorsport Ireland Rally Championship. At the end of the day's eight stages they had amassed a winning margin of 27.9 seconds over the VW Polo GTi R5 of Dubliner Robert Barrable and his Donegal co-driver Paddy Robinson. The Monaghan/Kerry crew of Stephen Wright/Ger Conway (Ford Fiesta R5) were 32.3 seconds further behind in third.

The two-wheel drive category was won by the Armagh/Galway duo of Jason Black/Karl Egan (Toyota Starlet), who finished just three seconds ahead of Cavan's Gary Kiernan/Darren O'Brien (Ford Escort).

On a brisk morning Moffett set the pace on the opening stage where Barrable made a stunning return after a lengthy absence and was only 1.4 seconds behind with Stephen Wright (Fiesta R5) ten seconds further adrift. It was a similar top three on the second stage as Moffett extended his overall lead over Barrable to 3.7 seconds with Wright 14.2 seconds further adrift. At the Claremorris service park Moffett stated he had taken a steady pace and Barrable's challenge was something he was expecting. Barrable admitted he was surprised to be so close to the rally leader. Wright was untroubled. Fourth placed Aidan Wray (Fiesta R5), who was 33.7 seconds off the rally lead, backed off on the second stage as his tyres had lost their effect.

Meanwhile, Mayonooth's Paul Barrett enjoyed a good run through both stages to occupy fifth place where he was followed by the right hand drive Fiesta R5 of former national champion Tim McNulty, who described his participation as "a learning curve." Brendan Cumiskey (VW Polo GTi R5) was seventh but by his own reckoning was slow through S.S. 2.

The remainder of the top ten included the rear wheel drive Escort of Cavan's Gary Kiernan, who led the two-wheel drive category, VW Polo GTi R5 debutant Eamonn Kelly and the Toyota Starlet of Armagh's Jason Black. Gary McPhillips crashed his Escort on the opening stage. Omagh's Seamus Leonard (Ford Fiesta R5), who stalled his Fiesta R5 on the opening stage lost considerable time when he hit a wall and broke the rear wheel on S.S. 2.

On the repeat of both stages, Moffett edged further ahead with another pair of fastest times to lead Barrable by 15.9 seconds, neither driver had any issues. A steady Wright retained third and McNulty slotted into fourth. "I am beginning to step it up." Barrett had some overheating issues on the fourth stage. Cumiskey was next and Darren Gass performed better on both stages to move into seventh in his Citroen C3 R5 with Eamonn Kelly, Michael Carbin (Mitsubishi) and Gary Kiernan completing the top ten. Kelly softened the suspension; Carbin was pleased with his performances but reckoned his third stage time didn't really reflect his efforts; Kiernan's tyre pressures were all wrong due to a faulty gauge. Former champion Niall Maguire (Fiesta R5) was fifteenth.

Retaining his stranglehold on both stages Moffett increased his lead to 28.3 seconds after S.S. 6. Barrable was content in second but reckoned his selection of a hard compound tyre was incorrect. Wright retained third and Barrett slotted into fourth - a position that changed after each loop. Gass and Cumiskey and Kelly were all pleased with their efforts. McNulty slipped down the order after he overshot on S.S. 5. Carbin and Donegal's Stuart Darcy (Proton) held ninth and tenth respectively.

In the battle for two-wheel drive supremacy, Jason Black (Toyota Starlet) edged ahead of Kiernan (Escort) by just 1.5 seconds, the latter reckoning his tyre choice was too soft.

On the final pair of stages that were shorter versions of the opening stages, Moffett went on to secure the win ahead of Barrable and Wright. Gass netted fourth after Barrett damaged the front of his Fiesta on the penultimate stage when he lost brakes, he retired at the stage finish.

Meanwhile, in an exciting battle for the two-wheel drive category, Kiernan edged ahead of Black on the penultimate stage after he changed tyres but Black set a stunning time to claim a three second win on the very final stage.

Former national champion Declan Boyle and Peadar Hurson were both amongst the non-starters.

Results:

1. Josh Moffett/Keith Moriarty (Hyundai i20 R5) 55m. 43.4s.
2. Robert Barrable/Paddy Robinson (VW Polo GTi R5) +27.9s
3. Stephen Wright/Ger Conway (Ford Fiesta R5) +1m. 00.2s.
4. Darren Gass/Noel O'Sullivan (Citroen C3 Rally 2) +2m. 01.7s.
5. Eamonn Kelly/Conor Mohan (VW Polo GTi R5) +2m. 05.2s.
6. Brendan Cumiskey/Darragh Mullen (VW Polo GTi R5) +2m. 06.8s.
7. Tim McNulty/Paul Kiely (Ford Fiesta R5) +2m. 27.0s.
8. Jason Black/Karl Egan (Toyota Starlet) +2m. 49.6s.
9. Michael Carbin/Dean O'Sullivan (Mitsubishi EvoVII) +2m. 50.8s.
10. Stuart Darcy/Liam McIntyre (Proton) +2m. 52.6s.

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