



National Rally Championship



GARETH MacHALE WINS GALWAY SUMMER RALLY

DUBLINER Gareth MacHale (VW Polo GTi R5) and co-driver Brian Murphy won the Bluebird Care Galway Summer Rally, the penultimate round of the Triton Showers backed Motorsport Ireland National Rally Championship. Their victory bridged a twelve year gap since their last victory (Cork '20' International Rally in 2010) during which time MacHale took a sabbatical from the sport.

At the end of the nine stage Athenry based event they finished 22.9 seconds ahead of Dubliner Robert Barrable and his Donegal co-driver Paddy Robinson (Ford Fiesta Rally2) with the Skoda Fabia R5 of the Waterford/Wexford duo of Andrew Purcell/Andy Hayes a mere 0.7 of a second further behind in third. (second and third places are subject to change).

Cork driver David Guest (Ford Fiesta Rally2) posted the quickest time on the opening stage Tiaquin where he was 1.4 seconds quicker than the VW Polo GTi of Gareth MacHale with Andrew Purcell (Skoda Fabia R5) a further 2.8 seconds behind in third; Robert Barrable occupied fourth spot - 4.3 seconds off leader Guest. The second stage was cancelled for organisational reasons.

Guest also punched in the best time on S.S. 3 to extend his lead over MacHale to 5.1 seconds, the rally leader expressing that his Fiesta Rally2 struggled under braking. MacHale opted for a harder tyre that was more beneficial for the second stage that was cancelled. Monaghan's Brendan Cumiskey (VW Polo GTi R5) in third had a steady run as he expressed his intent on pushing harder through the repeat loop. Former national champion Peadar Hurson (Fiesta WRC) slotted into fourth followed by Purcell, who opined that he wasn't driving to his full potential. Barrable in fifth was a little disappointed with his times as he felt he had pushed hard on both stages. Seventh placed Richard Moffett (Toyota Starlet) had a scare on the way to the first stage when his car lapsed onto three cylinders before the matter rectified itself. The top ten was completed by Joe McGonigle (Ford Fiesta Rally2) and the Escorts of Dessie Keenan and Patrick McHugh. Elsewhere, Citroen C3 debutants Tim McNulty and Paul Barrett were 13th and 20th respectively, the latter backing off after a scare on the opening stage.

Out on S.S. 4 Purcell set the pace but it was MacHale that topped the leaderboard - a second ahead of Guest with Purcell just 0.4 of a second behind in third. Then, on the longest stage of the rally, Guest slid off on some gravel and beached his Fiesta Rally2.

MacHale set a cracking time to open up a 13.4 second advantage over Cumiskey with Purcell third. On S.S. 6, the trio were separated by just 0.6 of a second. In overall terms, MacHale arrived at the final service in Athenry with a lead of 13.8 seconds followed by Cumiskey with Purcell 1.1 seconds behind. Rally leader MacHale remarked that while he was setting a strong pace, he wasn't taking any chances. Purcell overshot a junction on S.S. 5. Behind the

leading trio, an untroubled Robert Barrable (Ford Fiesta Rally2) held fourth from the Fiesta WRC of Peadar Hurson.

In the two-wheel drive battle, Monaghan's Richard Moffett (Toyota Starlet) took almost six second from his rival, Cavan's Gary Kiernan (Ford Escort) on S.S. 6 to move 12.3 seconds ahead, they were sixth and seventh respectively followed by Gareth Sayers (Ford Fiesta Rally2). Tim McNulty in ninth stalled his VW Polo R5 twice on the start line of S.S. 5; Joe McGonigle, who spun on S.S. 4 was tenth.

On the final loop, MacHale went on to seal victory in his right hand drive VW Polo GTi R5. Cumiskey rolled his VW Polo GTi R5 out of third place and the rally. Purcell was best on the final stage but a brave bid to reel in Barrable fell short by a fraction of a second.

Moffett won the two-wheel drive category as his rival Gary Kiernan (Escort) clipped a rock on the penultimate stage. Sayers, McNulty and McGonigle were next in a top ten completed by Escort pair, Kerry's Conor Murphy and Donegal's Patrick McHugh.

1. Gareth MacHale/Brian Murphy (VW Polo GTi R5) 51m. 49.6s.
 2. Robert Barrable/Paddy Robinson (Ford Fiesta Rally2)+22.9s.
 3. Andrew Purcell/Andy Hayes (Skoda Fabia R5)+23.6s.
 4. Richard Moffett/Darragh Kelly (Toyota Starlet)+1m. 05.4s;
 5. Gary Kiernan/Paul Sherdian (Ford Escort)+1m. 25.2s.
 6. Gareth Sayers/Gareth Gilchrist (Ford Fiesta Rally2)+1m. 40.8s.
 7. Tim McNulty/Paul Kiely (VW Polo GTi R5)+1m. 43s.
 8. Joe McGonigle/Ciaran Geaney (Ford Fiesta Rally2)+1m. 44.4s.
 9. Conor Murphy/Sean Collins (Ford Escort)+1m. 50.9s.
 10. Patrick McHugh/Pauric O'Donnell (Ford Escort)+1m. 59.2s
- (Results are provisional, second and third place are subject to change)

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