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### **Josh's Junior 1000 Joy at Shackleton!**

The final round of the 2014 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, took place at Shackleton, for the Maiden City Motor Club's Turkey Run event. The club enthusiastically welcomed the Junior's to Shackleton for the second time this season, after the scheduled final round to be run at Kirkistown in October by the North Armagh Motor Club didn't run. However the Junior's absolutely relished the chance to drive again on the fast, open spaces of Shackleton, and cold December conditions brought extra challenges for the 14-17 year old drivers. Indeed patches of ice were on the circuit and the club allowed the crews to drive through stage one at their own pace, everyone getting a nominal time for the stage.

It was a fortunate decision for Belfast's Michael McGarrity, as his Citroen C1 broke a drive-shaft near the start, and the team were able to repair it before the first properly timed second stage. There was very hard luck for Bailey McClinton however, as his Micra blew a head-gasket in the start queue on stage one and he became the first retirement. Leading the Juniors away was the UK and Junior 1000 Ireland Champion William Creighton with Liam Regan alongside in their C1. William deservedly won the UK Young Rally Driver of the Year Award at the Professional Motor Sport World Expo Awards in Cologne, having started his rallying in the Junior 1000 Ireland series last year. It was no surprise that he was fastest on the first timed test, a full five seconds in front of the nearest challenger, but there was a cruel surprise on the next test, the C1 off the road having broken a front strut. Not the best way to bow out of the Junior 1000 series, but this talented young driver will be one to watch in the future and he is a worthy Junior 1000 Ireland Champion.

The big battle for second place in the championship was really alive at Shackleton, with Newry's Eoghan Bogue favourite to claim the position. Crumlin's Philip White was the main challenger for that coveted position, and Michael McGarrity's outside chance evaporated with electrical delays on stages three and four. Philip White had the experienced Marty McGarrity alongside for the very first time, where pushing hard, to be a second up on Bogue's similar Micra on stage two. Bogue took two seconds back on stage three then White took them back on the fourth test, this becoming a ding-dong battle for third place. On the final two stages Philip mounted an attack which leapt him into second with Eoghan backing off to claim fourth place, still enough to claim that coveted second position in the championship. It was great performance from the Micra driver's at a venue that suited the extra speed of the C1's and Peugeot 107's.

Finishing a fine third was Loughgall's Peter Bennett, with British Rally Champion co-driver Arthur Kierans alongside. They had held second place on stages three and four, only for White to steal position on the closing stages. Peter has also had some great runs in Scotland this season, and he will be a real challenger for the 2015 series, his day including a fastest time on stage five. A newcomer to the series was 14 year old Daniel Harper, a multiple karting champion this season, who took over his sister's Micra for his first rally. Despite the car cutting out on stages three and four with fuel pump problems the Anahilt teenager held off Michael McGarrity to claim fifth place, and put up some promising stage times. And what a day it proved to be for the newcomers as Kilrea's Josh McErlean made his debut in the series, in the ex James Partridge 107. The 15 year old who has been rally-sprinting a Suzuki Swift for several seasons, was second fastest on the first proper stage, and took over the lead when Creighton retired. Fastest times on stages three and five meant that he took a superb nine second victory.

The 2015 Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland starts at Kirkistown on 17th January and with exciting new talent it promises to be a very competitive season of rallying.

## **McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 8 Positions**

- 1 Josh McErlean/ Tommy McErlean Peugeot 107 39m51s
- 2 Philip White/ Martin McGarrity Nissan Micra +9s
- 3 Peter Bennett/Arthur Kierans Citroen C1 +14s
- 4 Eoghan Bogue/ Aidan O'Connor Nissan Micra +33s
- 5 Daniel Harper/ Andrew Bushe Nissan Micra +1m22s
- 6 Michael McGarrity/James McKee Citroen C1 +1m24s

Pictures thanks to Kevin Glendinning- [www.kgrallypics.com](http://www.kgrallypics.com)

### **Championship Points after Round 8- (Best Five of 8 count)**

<b>1</b> William Creighton	60 pts*
<b>2</b> Eoghan Bogue	48
<b>3</b> Philip White	46
<b>4</b> Michael McGarrity	42
<b>5</b> James Partridge	30
<b>6</b> Alex Harper	25
<b>7</b> Peter Bennett	24
<b>8</b> Bailie McClinton	14
<b>9</b> Josh McErlean	12
<b>10</b> Daniel Harper	6

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*The Junior 1000 Rally Challenge is affiliated with the Association of Northern Ireland Car Clubs and the MSA.*

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