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Josh Just Does It on Junior 1000 Round One!

The first round of the 2015 McGrady Insurance ANICC Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, took place at Kirkistown, for the 500 Motor Club's New Year Stages event. The championship for 14-17 year old drivers, now in its fourth season is also supported by the rally classified website www.rallysales.eu and Superdrive Motorsports Centre. Eight Juniors lined up for the six stages which featured tarmac, concrete and some loose gravel, on a cold but dry day.

Starting at number one was Philip White, the 16 year old who finished third in last year's series in his Nissan Micra. With the experienced Marty McGarrity alongside the pair were fourth fastest on stage one, and ultimately ended the day in fifth, picking up valuable points, and finishing first of the "Micra Musketeers". At number two was 14 year old Peter Bennett, the Loughgall driver with Arthur Kierans alongside in the Citroen C1. A spin on stage one, was to cost valuable seconds, and for the rest of the day Peter was setting similar times to the leaders, to finish a fine third, just twenty-nine seconds behind the winner.

Ending the day in fourth place was Michael McGarrity with Kyle Orr alongside in his Peugeot 107. The 16 year old driver was having a good day, with times very close to the leading three, but on two stages he was held up by back markers on his second lap, losing over ten seconds and had to fight back on the closing tests to clinch that fourth position. In sixth place at the end of the day, was 15 year old Sam Stewart and co-driver Stephen Peoples from Letterkenny in Donegal. They made a long journey to Kirkistown, leaving in thick snow, but really enjoyed their first Junior 1000 event in the Nissan Micra. Along the way they set some very promising stage times, and the Micra's were in quite a battle!

Indeed Bailie McClinton had a dramatic day in his Nissan. The 16 year old Broughshane driver, with Niall Burns co-driving, was having a great battle with Sam Stewart, and was holding him, until an over-shoot on stage five, cost him over two minutes, and partially blocked the track as the car refused to re-start. On the final stage Bailie was the fastest Micra by three seconds, demonstrating great potential once again. On his first ever Junior rally was 16 year old Jack Cairns from Strabane, with co-driver Tommy Hayes making the long trip from Killarney in their Peugeot 107. Jack had very little experience before this, and through-out the day he improved his times to close the gap to the guys in front as he scooped some points in eighth place.

The main focus of the day however was on the battle for the lead, and there was a surprise early on when 14 year old Daniel Harper took a four second lead on the first stage. The Anahilt teenager had driven his Peugeot 107 just a couple of days before the start, and after a brief test was leading his second Junior event. However 15 year old Josh McErlean, who won his debut event at Shackleton, equalled Daniel's time on stage two, and powered his 107 to impressive times over stages three and four to open out a six second advantage. On stage five, Daniel had a great run, equalling McErlean's time, but it could have been so much better after coming to virtually a stand-still to negotiate Bailie McClinton's stranded car. Josh and Tommy McErlean had enough in hand, as they dropped just 0.8 of a second to Daniel on the final stage to seal a narrow 5.3 second victory. It was a fantastic start to the championship and it looks like the racing is going to be extremely close in 2015, as they prepare for round two, back at Kirkistown on the 14th February.

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 1 Positions

1 Josh McErlean/ Tommy McErlean	Peugeot 107	33m25.9s
2 Daniel Harper/ Andrew Bushe	Peugeot 107	+5.3s
3 Peter Bennett/Arthur Kierans	Citroen C1	+23.8s
4 Michael McGarrity/Kyle Orr	Peugeot 107	+40.1s
5 Philip White/ Martin McGarrity	Nissan Micra	+46.3s
6 Sam Stewart/ Stephen Peoples	Nissan Micra	+1m21.9s
7 Bailie McClinton/ Niall Burns	Nissan Micra	+3m9.7s
8 Jack Cairns/Tommy Hayes	Peugeot 107	+5m48.2s

Driver Championship Points after Round 1

1 Josh McErlean	12
2 Daniel Harper	10
3 Peter Bennett	8
4 Michael McGarrity	7
5 Philip White	6
6 Sam Stewart	5
7 Bailie McClinton	4
8 Jack Cairns	3

Registered Co-Drivers Points

1 Tommy McErlean	12
2 Andrew Bushe	10
3 Arthur Kierans	8
4 Martin McGarrity	7
5 Stephen Peoples	6
6 Niall Burns	5
7 Tommy Hayes	4

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Organising Club</u>
17 th January	Kirkistown	500 MRCI
14 th February	Kirkistown	North Armagh MC
14 th March	Bishopscourt	Ballynahinch MC
21 st March	Kirkistown	500 MRCI (Reserve)
04 th May	St. Angelo	Enniskillen MC
11 th July	Bishopscourt	Ballynahinch MC
1st August	Shackleton	Maiden City MC
9 th August	Solway (Scotland)	Solway Car Club
29 th December	Shackleton	Maiden City MC (Reserve)

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