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McErlean Wins Epic Second Junior 1000 Round!

The second round of the 2015 McGrady Insurance ANICC Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, took place at Kirkistown. Eight Juniors lined up for the six stages laid on by the North Armagh Motor Club, for what proved to be a great event, the Junior's for the first time doing two stages back to back.

Starting at number one was round one winner Josh McErlean, the 15 year old with a new co-driver Damien Duffin. The 107 driver took a 4.5 second lead on stage one, but the expected battle with Daniel Harper who ran him so close on round one never materialised, when a drive-shaft broke on stage one and the 14 year old was stranded. He re-joined the event for practice recording a fastest time on stage three, but it was a major blow for his title ambitions.

It was never going to be simply a two horse race however, as Michael McGarrity started in a new car, the ex Alex Vassallo Citroen C1 which has won twenty seven Junior events in the UK. This new car, enabled the 16 year old Belfast driver to once again to show his ability and he closed to within 2.5 seconds of Josh with two stages to go. However a moment running wide on stage five and he lost time on the final loop dropping to third, just fifteen seconds off the winner. It was a good showing from Michael however.

Snatching that second place was 14 year old Peter Bennett, the Loughgall driver with Arthur Kierans alongside in the Citroen C1. He set a scorching fastest time on the final stage. Peter had dropped some time on the slippery opening loop but really came back in the later stages, to grab that second place, and has put himself right in the title race.

Philip White, the 16 year old in his Nissan Micra, was lying fourth going into the final two stages, but it had been a day of drama for the Crumlin driver and co-driver Martin McGarrity. They started well with a good time on stage one, but a major high speed shunt into the barrier on stage three, and were lucky to continue. It all came to a sad end however on stage five, locking up into a chicane, striking a lorry tyre and damaging the front suspension.

That left 16 year old Jack Cairns taking fourth place in his 107 Peugeot. Jack had experienced driver Andrew Purcell in the passenger seat, and his times improved a lot from round one, but he did have a few dramatic spins along the way! In fifth place was series newcomer Ruairi Bell in his Superdrive Nissan Micra. He had last year's champion co-driver Liam Regan alongside and after a steady start, also picked up the pace. The 15 year old made the trip over from London for the event and will for the next round, his father Harvey Bell having been a top co-driver in the past.

That wasn't all as 16 year old Bailie McClinton arrived at Kirkistown with the ex-William Creighton Citroen C1. Despite limited practice in the car the Broughshane driver was fifth after stage two, but retired on the third stage with a mechanical problem.

The win however belonged to Josh McErlean, who held onto the lead all day, despite clouting a chicane on stage four. "It was a great day" said Josh. "It was very close, and the guys were coming back at us today, but very enjoyable once again. It really is a great championship."

The championship for 14-17 year old drivers, now heads for Bishopscourt on the 14th March and is also supported by the rally classified website www.rallysales.eu

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 2 Positions

1 Josh McErlean/ Damien Duffin	Peugeot 107	32m 17.7s
2 Peter Bennett/Arthur Kierans	Citroen C1	+10.5s
3 Michael McGarrity/Kyle Orr	Peugeot 107	+15.6s
4 Jack Cairns/Andrew Purcell	Peugeot 107	+4m02.7s
5 Ruairi Bell/ Liam Regan	Nissan Micra	+5m02.0s
6 Daniel Harper/Andrew Bushe	Peugeot 107	+7m38.4s

Driver Championship Points after Round 2

1 Josh McErlean	24
2 Peter Bennett	18
3 Michael McGarrity	15
=Daniel Harper	15
5 Philip White	6
6 Sam Stewart	5
7 Bailie McClinton	4
8 Jack Cairns	10

Registered Co-Drivers Points

1 Arthur Kierans	20
= Andrew Bushe	20
3 Tommy McErlean	12
4 Martin McGarrity	7
5 Stephen Peoples	6
6 Niall Burns	5
7 Tommy Hayes	4

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland Remaining Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Organising Club</u>
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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