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Josh Wins and Johnston Stars at Junior 1000 Round Four!

The fourth round of the 2015 McGrady Insurance ANICC Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, took place at St. Angelo airfield, for Enniskillen Motor Club's May Day event. Eight Junior 1000 crews lined up for the six stage event, the 14 to 17 year olds tackling an all new lay-out with two laps for the event this year.

Starting at number one was winner of the first two rounds, Kilrea's Josh McErlean. The 15 year old was out to make up for a troubled event at Bishopscourt and beat championship rival Daniel Harper. 14 year old Daniel was about to make Josh's job easy however, as just a mile into the first stage he slid into a concrete gate-post entering the farm-yard section, the co-driver's door taking the blow. Although the wheels were straight the 107 refused to restart and later it was found that the fuel pump had broken on impact. It was another major disappointment for the Hillsborough driver, and his championship hopes for 2015 look dashed.

Not surprisingly Josh got off to a flyer and was fastest on stage one, but the margin of over twenty seconds was surprising. There was some head scratching at service, particularly in the McGarrity camp, as Michael who was second fastest, had beaten Josh at a rally-sprint event the previous day. Stage two was a drier version of stage one, and the Juniors all improved their times by on average eighteen seconds, except Josh who was actually four seconds slower than his first damp run, however he had nudged a bale. Was that stage one time correct? Nobody queried it, so we may never know. That's no discredit to Josh McErlean and his cousin Tommy as there was no doubt they had started well as they were 0.4 of a second faster than second placed McGarrity on stage two, and the rally was heading the Kilrea driver's way.

There were to be a few surprises however as Bailie McClinton was revelling in his Citroen C1, and with co-driver Niall Burns they were setting some impressive times putting them briefly into third position. There was to be an even bigger surprise however from 15 year Armagh driver Karl Johnston on his first ever rally.

Karl had purchased Bailie's old Micra, and had only one tuition session in it at Superdrive Motorsports Centre. Although he displayed natural car control, no-one was expecting him to figure on his first event. On stage two he was third fastest, as the former moto-crosser adapted to the rallying game, and he was visibly carrying a lot of speed through the slippery farm-yard corners. On stage three Josh McErlean dropped time with a re-occurrence of misfire that had plagued him on the last event, and Johnston was on it, taking fastest time by six seconds from Bailie McClinton. Then Karl Johnston kept winning stages. Every stage in fact to the finish by two to three seconds, leaving him just 2.2 seconds behind McErlean at the finish. Karl seems to be carrying on the family tradition for speed as his father Alan was a former British Junior Rally Team driver in a semi-works Toyota in the early 80's, with the Circuit of Ireland's Bobby Willis as his co-driver, and it was a sensational debut for the rally novice.

Michael McGarrity and Davy Graham took a fine third place in their Citroen C1, their times close to the winners all after-noon. In fourth was a jubilant Bailie McClinton, just 0.9 of a second behind his friend Michael, and that was all decided on the final stage where Michael took a second off Bailie. For Bailie however it was a significant signal of new found pace, and he looks set to be front runner at Bishopscourt in July.

Fifth placed Peter Bennett dropped time on stage two, as he just didn't get into the groove on the drying circuit. The rest of his times were around the third place battle, and indeed he took third fastest on the final stage. One poor stage in the series now however and you can drop easily from first to last. Philip White and Marty McGarrity took sixth just a handful of seconds behind Peter. The Crumlin driver had no real problems to report, just a steady start on the first stage costing some time.

16 year old Jack Cairns took seventh despite an early off on stage one. The Strabane driver is very much enjoying his Junior Rally experience. The series also supported by the rally classified website www.rallysales.eu heads for round five at Bishopscourt on July 11th, and although the championship looks to be heading Josh McErlean's way there will be an epic race for victory at this new event.

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 4 Positions

1st	Josh McErlean / Thomas McErlean	Peugeot 107	+23m 20.1s
2 nd	Karl Johnston/ John Henderson	Nissan Micra	+2.2s
3rd	Michael McGarrity / Davy Graham	Citroën C1	+27.3s
4th	Bailie McClinton / Niall Burns	Citroën C1	+28.2s
5th	Peter Bennett / Arthur Kierans	Citroën C1	+36.7s
6 th	Philip White / Martin McGarrity	Nissan Micra	+43.1s
7th	Jack Cairns / Andrew Purcell	Peugeot 107	+2m49.6s

Driver Championship Points after Round 4

1 Josh McErlean	43
2 Michael McGarrity	32
3 Peter Bennett	30
4 Daniel Harper	27
5 Philip White	19
6 Jack Cairns	16
= Bailie McClinton	16
8 Ruairi Bell	10
= Karl Johnston	10
10 Sam Stewart	8

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland Remaining Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Organising Club</u>
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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Regulations and points for the series are available on www.anicc.org.uk