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Josh Just as Bennett Gets into Gear at Junior 1000 Round Five!

The fifth round of the 2015 McGrady Insurance ANICC Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland, took place at Bishops court airfield, for the Ballynahinch and District Motor Club's Junior 1000 Summer Stages Rally. Running alongside a sprint, the six Junior crews were treated to eight special stages around the Bishops court racing circuit. The lay-outs were flowing, with some challenging corners, all giving the 14-17 year olds much needed practice on sweeping and fast bends, as well as the twisty stuff.

It was to be an incredibly competitive day, with victory going in Josh McErlean's favour, by just one scant second, as leader for most of the day Peter Bennett struggled for gears on two stages. Peter, fresh from a double-header victory the previous weekend in the Scottish series, had the championship co-ordinator alongside at Bishops court, as Arthur Kierans had suffered a minor accident at work, and we all wish him a speedy recovery. For 14 year old Peter, in his Citroen C1 it was an excellent start, fastest on the first stage, joint fastest on stages two and four, and fastest on stage three, to open up a three second lead at the half-way point.

Behind was Josh McErlean and his cousin Tommy in their Peugeot 107, and they in turn were just four seconds ahead of the Citroen C1 of Michael McGarrity and co-driver Ashley Boulton. The similar car of Bailie McClinton and Niall Burns was in trouble however, with fuel starvation, and after completing the first stage they used the rest of the event for testing, setting times within a second of the leaders.

The dry conditions and sweeping nature of the circuit, didn't seem to suit the Micras as well, and Crumlin's Philip White was trying as hard as ever with the experienced Henry Campbell in the hot seat this time. On a good run he was still within three seconds of the leader's pace, and would eventually finish third, with a very useful haul of challenge points. In the other Micra, was Karl Johnston and John Henderson, who made such a sensational debut at St. Angelo. They didn't get time to cycle Bishops court, on their first trip to the Co. Down venue and survived a sideways moment on stage one! It was a matter of the Co. Armagh driver adapting his driving style to suit the venue, and by the end of the event he was within two seconds a stage of his Micra mate Philip White, to claim fourth place.

The hard luck story of the day fell to Michael McGarrity as he ran wide on stage seven and had to cut out the next chicane. With the MSA regulations stating a stage maximum for missing out any part of the track, a certain third place became fifth, as the organisers sadly had no option but to apply the stage max. The punishment didn't fit the crime, but the ever cheerful McGarrity had still driven well all day. In the lead race Peter Bennett suffered a disaster on stage five, as he struggled to get the car into fourth gear on the flat out back straight, the C1 coasting, his three second lead surely gone. But Josh only took one second, to leave to leave the gap at just two seconds. However with Josh nipping another second on stage six, then Peter having gear change delays on stages seven and eight, the rally was to be decided by one second in McErlean's favour, as he had a great afternoon. It was a great battle once again in the Junior 1000 Challenge, and MSA Coach Adam Gould was impressed with the level of driving and the tight battles, as he gave MSA coaching lessons in the afternoon further adding to their days experience.

Last year's McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland winner-William Creighton also made the debut of his beautiful new Peugeot 208 R2 at the event, adding to the excitement. The series also supported by the rally classified website www.rallysales.eu heads next for round six at Shackleton on 1st August. With a new stage lay-out by the Maiden City Motor Club, and our first English visitor coming over, it looks like it's going to be quite some event for the challenge.

2015 McGrady Insurance Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland- Rnd 5 Positions

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| 1st | Josh McErlean / Thomas McErlean | Peugeot 107 | +13m 36s |
| 2 nd | Peter Bennett / Andrew Bushe | Citroën C1 | +1s |
| 3rd | Philip White / Henry Campbell | Nissan Micra | +27s |
| 4th | Karl Johnston/ John Henderson | Nissan Micra | +1m1s |
| 5th | Michael McGarrity / Ashley Boulton | Citroën C1 | +1m42s |
| | Bailie McClinton / Niall Burns | Citroën C1 | DNF |

Driver Championship Points after Round 4

| | | |
|----|-------------------|----|
| 1 | Josh McErlean | 55 |
| 2 | Peter Bennett | 40 |
| 3 | Michael McGarrity | 38 |
| 4 | Daniel Harper | 27 |
| = | Philip White | 27 |
| 6 | Karl Johnston | 17 |
| 7 | Jack Cairns | 16 |
| = | Bailie McClinton | 16 |
| 9 | Ruairi Bell | 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> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1st August | Shackleton | Maiden City MC |
| 9 th August | Solway (Scotland) | Solway Car Club |
| 29 th December | Shackleton | Maiden City MC (Reserve) |

Issued by Andrew Bushe Promotions- www.andrewbushe.com Pictures by Andrew Bushe
Regulations and points for the series are available on www.anicc.org.uk