



Walsh's Hotel
Maghera

RALLY REPORT NO.6 – WALSH'S HOTEL FINISH RAMP – SATURDAY 6pm

UNOFFICIAL LEADERBOARD AFTER SS5 - FINISH

- (1) Derek McGarrity/James McKee (Impreza WRC) 35m 08.4s
- (2) Declan McNaughton/Sean Hayde (Escort Mk2) 35m 09.7s
- (3) Raymond Johnston/Rodney Hicks (Evo) 35m 10.1s
- (4) Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan (Evo) 35m 11.6s
- (5) Brian Muldoon/Charlie Beattie (Evo) 35m 20.2s
- (6) Trevor Moore/Ray Fitzpatrick (Escort Mk2) 35m 48.5s
- (7) Neil McCance/Jonny Hart (Evo) 35m 59.5s
- (8) Kieron Graffin/Vincent Fergus (Evo) 36m 01.8s
- (9) Kenny McKinstry/Noel Orr (Impreza WRC) 36m 03.9s
- (10) Trevor Ferguson/David McElroy (Impreza) 36m 06.3s
- (11) Colin Britton/Enda Sherry (Evo) 36m 16.8s
- (12) Denis Biggerstaff/Damian McCann (Impreza WRC) 36m 20.3



In stark contrast to this morning's heavy rain, blue skies and sunshine have greeted the finishers of this year's KBB Tour of the Sperrins Rally. And just as the weather changed, so did the name at the top of the standings. There was a different leader after every stage of the event, and in the end, Derek McGarrity and James McKee claimed a last gasp victory in their Subaru Impreza WRC!



"It was tricky enough," McGarrity said at the Walsh's Hotel finish ramp. "We decided to go on slicks for the final stage which was a very brave choice and it was the wrong choice. But we just did enough to get through!"



Declan McNaughton and Sean Hayde went "absolutely flat" over the final test and nabbed second overall in their Mark 2 Escort. It was an excellent result for the crew, and only for a spin on stage three, it could have been a very surprising victory for Escort man. As they say, that's rallying...



Going into that final stage, Mark Massey and Andrew McVeigh led the event by one tenth of a second from Donagh Kelly and Kevin Flanagan. But Massey's chances of taking the spoils were dashed when he slipped off the road at a '5 right', while Kelly lost out on potential victory with an overshoot.



"We were well up on our previous time," Kelly said. "But then we had an overshoot in the car park and lost about 10 seconds."



Massey retired as a result, while Kelly slipped to fourth behind Raymond Johnston and Rodney Hicks, who completed the top three. Johnston was actually fastest by some margin over that last stage – taking six seconds out of event winner, Derek McGarrity. Stage four's double puncture, which was the result of having no intercom, really dented his chances.



In fact, many of today's crews have had their fair share of problems. Few managed to escape without some dramas, not least event winner McGarrity. The Glengormley driver struggled with a misted up windscreen over the opening three stages, but when the sun arrived, his problems disappeared and his luck changed for the better. It is a well deserved victory in what was probably one of the closest finishes in Tour of the Sperrins history!



Thanks to everyone involved in the running of today's event, especially those that braved the extremely wet conditions. Well done to all for being a part of another very successful KBB Tour of the Sperrins Rally!



Grainne O'Kane and Jonathan MacDonald