



Immediate Release No.3...Immediate Release No.3...  
23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011

## Donagh Kelly Wins Down Rally...

Donagh Kelly and co-driver Kevin Flanagan took their first victory on the 2011 FMCCCL Down Rally which hosted the Hankook NI and the Valvoline Irish Forest Rally Championships.

The Castlewella based event attracted over 40 crews who travelled from all corners of Ireland, with one crew making the journey from Kings Lynn in England and another driver, Patsy Keenan, even travelling from the USA for the weekend.

Down District Council Chairman, Councilor Colin McGrath flagged the cars away from the Lower Square in Castlewella, with the crews being led off by two times winner Kenny McKinstry and Kenny Hull.

At number two was Donagh Kelly and Kevin Flanagan. Donagh and Kenny McKinstry have been embroiled in a private battle on the last two events – with McKinstry having to settle for second on the last two rounds, but with wins on the last two Down Rally's, McKinstry was hoping to change his fortunes.



Leading Valvoline Championship contender Enda McNulty was next up in his Subaru Impreza, having a few good results on the Down Rally in recent years. Enda was expected to battle for Championship position with the Monaghan crew of Vincent and JP McAree. Other crews in the top end of the entry list included the rapid MkII Escort of Frank Kelly and Banbridge drivers Emma McKinstry and John McGaffin.

Dromara driver Stuart Biggerstaff, the 2010NI Champion, had planned to start the event at number three, but late gearbox trouble with his Subaru prevented him from making the start.

It was Kelly who kicked off the event by setting fastest time on stage one in Drumkeeragh with McKinstry just 1 second behind, but it was McNulty who made all

the news on the first stage, putting his Subaru on its side just 1 mile into the test and blocking the road for a short time.

Once the blockage was cleared, the crews made their way to the McKinstry Motorsport sponsored Tollymore Stage. McKinstry was fastest this time by just 1 second ahead of Donagh Kelly with the two returning to the first service in Castlewellan Forest Park tied for the lead.

Vincent McAree had capitalized on the retirement of Enda McNulty to lie third ahead of the Escort of Frank Kelly with Stephen Wright, Raymond Mason and Emma McKinstry not far behind.

With the cars re-fettled, McKinstry started the middle loop of the event by going 6 seconds faster than Donagh Kelly on stage three, the P&R Motors Rostrevor test, only for Kelly to take 2 seconds back on stage four in Tollymore and then slash another 2 back on stage five in Castlewellan Park to return to second service just 2 seconds in arrears to Kenny



Frank Kelly moved up to third with the retirement of Vincent McAree on stage three with Stephen Wright, Raymond Mason and Trevor Ferguson filling out the top six.

At the front of the field, a final push was needed by both McKinstry and Kelly if victory was to be assured. Stage five was a repeat of the earlier P&R Motors Rostrevor stage, where McKinstry had been quickest by 6 seconds. This time McKinstry was fastest again but only by 1 second so all was to play for on the final 4.5 miles in Castlewellan Park.

With just 3 second of a lead, McKinstry headed into the last stage but part way through, the Subaru slithered off the road briefly, losing 17 seconds to his rival.

So it was Donagh Kelly who emerged victorious on the FMCCCL Down Rally. At the finish, Donagh said "We have started the event six times and have finished runner up a few times so it's good to win the Down Rally at last."

The third win in a row eluded McKinstry in the end, who still managed to finish runner up this time. Third overall was Stephen Wright, who was the highest placed Valvoline Championship contender after Frank Kelly crashed out on stage six. Regular Down Rally contender Raymond Mason turned in another strong performance to hold off Trevor Ferguson in fifth ahead of Banbridge lass Emma McKinstry at six.

Top two-wheel-drive went to Oran Donnelly in seventh with husband and wife crew James and Heather Kennedy in eighth. The top local crew were Paul Killen and Richard Nelson in ninth with southern crew James Coleman and Kaye Shanahan rounding out the top ten.

Other local crews to feature well in the results were Niall Branniff and Barry Savage from Castlewellan - both of them winning their classes- JT Warnock from Ballykinlar, Downpatrick businessman Fintan McGrady and Christian Cochrane from Seaford.

**Top 6 finishers:**

1. Donagh Kelly/Kevin Flanagan - Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 (GpN) – 38:59.0
2. Kenny McKinstry/Kenny Hull - Subaru Impreza WRC – 39:13.0
3. Stephen Wright/Susanne Wright – Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 6 – 40:42.0
4. Raymond mason/Peter Martin – Mitsubishi Lancer (GpN) – 40:49.0
5. Trevor Ferguson/David McElroy – Subaru Impreza N12 (GpN) – 41:53.0
6. Emma McKinstry/Tommy Speers – Subaru Impreza WRC - 42:17.0



L-R: Event sponsor, Frank McMullan, winning co-driver Kevin Flanagan, winning driver Donagh Kelly and Down Rally Clerk of the Course John Gribben.

**The 2011 FMCC Down Rally was supported by Down District Council.**

