



## **Bushwacker Win for Mark Donnelly as Title Race Heads for Down!** **Round Seven-2016 MSA ANICC McGrady Insurance Northern Ireland Rally Championship**

The Omagh Motor Club's Bushwacker forest rally was once again held over some of County Tyrone's classic forestry stages such as Lough Braden, Carrickaholten and Slievedoo, and despite the wet weather, it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd or the competitors on a closely fought event, a popular round of the McGrady Insurance NI Championship.

Saturday's winner was 24-year-old Mark Donnelly. The driver from Greencastle outside Omagh co-driven by Stephen O'Hanlon was charging in his Super 2000 Ford Fiesta. This 2 litre naturally aspirated four wheel drive machine was some sight and sound through the fast forests, as Mark a former NI Group N champion, battled to try and get ahead of former 2wd champion, Adrian Hetherington in his Corolla WRC, who had led the event from stage one. Hetherington had a ten second lead going into stage nine, but was to drop twenty seconds when his Corolla collected a puncture after hitting a rock. Mark Donnelly pulled another two seconds on the final stage to take a maiden NI Championship round victory. *"It's an unbelievable feeling to win this rally"* said Mark. *"We had an aim at the start of the rally to be on Adrian's pace and it was a very tough task. We succeeded on stage one when we equalled his time, but we lost time at a chicane on stage two, and also had to fight to keep Niall McCullagh at bay. We got three more stage wins however and then Adrian had some bad luck and then we were there. It was a great rally and a big thank-you to Omagh Motor Club and all the marshals who stood out in atrocious weather."*

Omagh's Niall McCullagh was an impressive third, just seven seconds further back in his second drive in an S14 Subaru WRC. Strabane's Martin Cairns, a former Bushwacker winner, was fourth in his WRC Fiesta ahead of the Mitsubishi of Darren McKelvey and Tipperary's Pat O'Connell, whilst former NI Champion Kenny McKinstry completed a troubled rally in seventh. Eighth was a fine finish by Dungiven's Seamus O'Connell, topping the two wheel drive crews in his MK2 Escort. Cathan McCourt was ninth ahead of NI Championship leader Derek McGarrity in his Fiesta WRC. It was a difficult day for the Glengormley driver, with mechanical niggles, and he was unable to clinch his seventh title on Saturday. MK2 Escort mounted Camillus Bradley still has an outside chance of the title as the series heads into its final round in County Down. Other important class winners included Paul Britton (Subaru Impreza) who took Group N in eleventh overall, Neil Harron (Toyota Corolla) Class 1, Mervyn Galbraith (Vauxhall Nova) class 3, Alan Smyth (Suzuki Swift S1600) class 4, Bryan Jardine (Ford Escort MK2) class 5, John Gordon (Ford Escort MK2) class 6. The eighth and final round of the McGrady series is back to tarmac for the Rathfriland Motor Club's Down Rally on closed public roads on the 15<sup>th</sup> October.

### **2016 McGrady Insurance MSA ANICC Northern Ireland Rally Championship—Round 7 Results**

1st Mark Donnelly/ Stephen O'Hanlon	Ford Fiesta S2000	29m57s
2nd Adrian Hetherington/Gary Nolan	Toyota Corolla WRC	+0:12
3rd Niall McCullagh/Ryan McCloskey	Subaru S14 WRC	+0:19
4th Martin Cairns/Gary McElhinney	Ford Fiesta WRC	+0:25
5th Darren McKelvey/Graham Henderson	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo	+0:59
6th Pat O'Connell/Mark Wiley	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo	+1:10
7th Kenny McKinstry/Noel Orr	Subaru S14 WRC	+1:13
8th Seamus O'Connell/Sean Magee	Ford Escort MkII	+1:20
9th Cathan McCourt/Brian Hoy	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo	+1:24
10th Derek McGarrity/James O'Reilly	Ford Fiesta WRC	+1:43

### **2016 McGrady Insurance MSA ANICC Northern Ireland Rally Championship 2016—Rounds**

1	Pacenotes Stages Kirkistown	Tarmac	North Armagh Motor Club	13 <sup>th</sup> February
2	Circuit of Ireland National	Tarmac	Ulster Automobile Club	7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> April
3	Tour of the Sperrins	Gravel	Magherafelt & District MC	7 <sup>th</sup> May
4	Mourne Rally	Tarmac	Newry Motor Club	11 <sup>th</sup> June
5	Tyrone Stages Rally	Tarmac	Cookstown Motor Club	30 <sup>th</sup> July
6	Ulster National Rally	Tarmac	Northern Ireland MC	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> August
7	Bushwhacker Rally	Gravel	Omagh Motor Club	24 <sup>th</sup> September
8	Down Rally	Tarmac	Rathfriland Motor Club	15 <sup>th</sup> October

\*Reserve events- Enniskillen MC- 3th September, Ballynahinch & District MC 12<sup>th</sup> November

To keep up to date please check out the NIRC Facebook page-<http://www.facebook.com/nirallying> and check out [www.anicc.org.uk](http://www.anicc.org.uk) for the series regulations and latest points. Full rally results available on [www.rallyscore.net](http://www.rallyscore.net)

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