

Rally Fans Thrilled at Sun-Drenched St Angelo

Rally fans flocked to a sun-drenched St Angelo to see almost 120 rally cars battle it out over 6 exciting stages through chicanes, hairpins and typically a very slippery and challenging 'Stock Car' track for over six exhausting hours of hard-fought competition. Yes, it was the Erne Skip Hire & Recycling Mayday Stages Rally, and yes, it lived up to the all the predictions and then some! First out of the starting blocks was Jennings in his fabulous looking and sounding Subaru S12 followed by McKinstry in his similar machine with Damien Toner and Denver Rafferty third off the start-line in a cloud of tyre-smoke in their 2WD, 2.5 litre, glorious sounding MkII Escort. Fourth was the Fiesta WRC of Martin Cairns and Clare Gamble with PJ McDermott, Frank Wray and Phillip Allen in their respective Subaru S12b, Subaru S10 and Mini Cooper WRC. Rounding off the terrific top ten were Chris Armstrong MkII Escort 2.5, William Armstrong [2 litre Escort MkII] and Paul Britton [Subaru Impreza N12]. With an entry list to rival any recent international rally on this island just out of the top ten were Robin Phillips [Subaru S10], Stephen McCann [Ford Fiesta S2000], David Condell [2.5 Escort] and Gareth Sayers [Ford Fiesta S2000]. Outside the top 20 at number 27 were the dark horses of the rally, Matthew Cathcart and Connor Woods in an Evo 9.

Quickest over stage 1 was Cathcart/Woods, beating Jennings by almost 6 seconds! Close behind was Toner just over 3 seconds back with eventual winner Allen, on his first stage rally only 2.4 seconds behind. Jennings and McKinstry's rally came to an all too premature end when McKinstry's co-driver, Kenny Hull, became unwell and was taken to hospital as a precaution. This resulted in McKinstry's team leaving as did Jennings. Toner's Escort really revelled in the dry conditions getting the power down effectively on the smooth dry tarmac to give the 'super cars' a real run for their money and eventually claiming second overall only 3.9 seconds behind Allen at the end with unlucky Matthew Cathcart losing out to third-placed Stephen McCann and Damian Fleming in their Fiesta S2000 who were a mere 1.8 seconds ahead of the hard-charging Cathan McCourt and Brian Hoy in their Evo 9, achieving fourth overall. So fifth then for Cathcart and Woods who lost out over the last stage due to a broken driveshaft. Nevertheless a great result for a talented driver whom the rally fans rarely get to see. Such was the pace at the top that tenth overall, Kyle Orr in his Fiesta S2000 was just 1min 4.6 seconds in arrears.

In the class battles Class 1 was claimed by Jody McManus/Marc Johnston in their rapid Fiesta ST. Only for a puncture McManus would have improved on his 32nd overall. Other local interest in this class had first-timers Darran Flanagan/Benedikt Bastian [Corolla] and more first-timers Dermot Brewster/Brain D'Arcy [Astra GSI] finish 8th and 10th respectively while Neil McGahey/Adam Acheson [Escort RS 2000 MkV] came home 11th in class.

Class 2 was won by Stanley Ballantine/Laura McFadden[Evo 9] with local crews; Gerry Farmer/Mark Britton[Evo], Andrew Bracken/Cara Bothwell [Evo 6] and Nigel Hodgins/Jonathan Smith [Subaru Impreza] in 4th, 7th and 8th respectively. Class 3 was won by Phillip White/Ben Fallis [Nissan Micra] with Declan McGarrity/Sean Wray [Vauxhall Nova] third. Fifth in class were Barry McGill/Brendan Campbell [Escort], Brendan in the 'hot seat'

for once! Sixth in this class were father and daughter team of Davy and Ashleig Forde in their immaculate ex-works Ford Puma. Class 4 winners were Darren Collins/Cathal Colton [Peugeot 205] with local crew Peter Jennings and Peter Hoy in the 'hot seat' claiming fourth place, also in a 205 Peugeot. Alan Smyth with Richard Kinloch in their very rapid Suzuki Swift S1600 claimed Class 5. Ruairi and Kaolan McGarrity wheeled out their Peugeot 106 to take 10th in Class while veteran Tommi McDaid with son Jonni took 13th in Class in their Peugeot 106 Cup car. Top of Class 6 were William Armstrong/William Black [Escort] with Brian Tolan/Colin Irvine [Escort G3] fourth in Class and at seventh were Rodney Donaldson/Chloe McCarthy, also in an Escort MkII. Class 7- up to 2.1 litre 16 valve Class-had several local crews contesting for honours. But it was George Condell/Ashley Trimble in their George Crozier-prepared Toyota Starlet who reigned supreme clinching the top spot by a mere 3.3 seconds from Barry Morris and Declan Campbell in their Escort MkII. In seventh place were Damian McGauran/Darren Curran in their most unusual Honda S2000-engined RWD 320 BMW. [Damian is letting Dad Tommy drive it on the Sprint at St Angelo on July 1st]. Then came the Campbell family teams who entertained the huge crowds all day long with their exuberant sideways driving. Dara Campbell steered his MkII Escort with Geraldine Leonard co-driving to 10th in Class whilst Damien Campbell/Courtney Timlin [Escort MkII] were in 12th place and Ronan Campbell/Caroline Smith were 13th in their MkII Escort. Meanwhile Danny Malanaphy and Mark Carson got as far as stage 4 before succumbing to mechanical failure. Class 8, dominated by the iconic MkII Escort, was won by Brendan McDaid/Damien McGettigan whilst another car from the George Crozier stable, David Condell/Michael Coady came third and favourite Chris Armstrong/Neville Armstrong could only manage fifth. Then Class 9, the 'Big Boys' Class' was claimed by Cathan McCourt/Brian Hoy who just pipped Matthew Cathcart/Connor Woods by just seven seconds – both in Evos. The Juniors Class, run for drivers aged 14-17 in standard cars up to a maximum of 1,000cc, was won by 14-year old Jordan Frazer and Chris Corry in their Citroen C1.

But the day belonged to young Phillip Allen, triumphant on his first stage rally, guided in the McGeehan Motorsport Mini Cooper WRC by veteran Eugene Donnelly. What an achievement! Phillip thanked Eugene, his sponsors and EMC for a great event and mentioned his late father, Glenn, well-known to local rally fans for his exploits in his sideways Escort and 4WD Corolla, for looking down on him throughout the day. Clerk of the Course Ron Neely thanked the competitors, spectators and everyone involved in running such a successful event with a special mention for Declan Magee of Erne Skip Hire & Recycling for their continued and valued support.

For more details and pictures see EMC website and Facebook pages. EMC's next event on St Angelo is the Montgomery Motorsport Erne Trophy Sprint on Saturday July 1st.