

Fighting Start from Tindall

The Royal Highland Showground at Ingliston was the setting for the first event of the 2017 Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge - the first outing since Anglesey in November 2016 . Eleven young drivers – all aged 15 to 16 – gathered with their 1000cc rally cars to see who would be in contention to be 2017 Champion. Dunfermline Car Club were the organisers of the 8 stage, 25 mile Blackwood Plant Hire sponsored DCC Junior Stages. This would be the first time back at Ingliston for the Juniors since 2013 and the Junior only Sunday event – which took the same effort to run as the 80 car Senior event on the day before - was a really welcome and appreciated addition to the Championship calendar.

Current Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge Champion Finlay Retson carried number 1 on the side of his borrowed Nissan Micra and enlisted the help of Tom Hynd as co-driver.. Finlay started rallying in 2014 in a similar Micra and from the sounds of the wee car on the first stage, he had lost none of his enthusiasm for the marque. He was followed by Ewan Tindall/Paul Hudson in their Citroen C1. Tindall had taken victory in the first round of the Southern Junior 1000 Championship 2 weeks earlier. And car number 3 was Jude MacDonald/Michael Cruickshank in a brand new “Skoda racing green” Skoda Citigo.

Anticipation was in the air. But the times over the first 2 stages were the reverse of the running order – MacDonald stopped the clocks 2 seconds up on Retson, with Tindall 2 seconds further back. Tindall knew he had a fight on his hands and over the next 2 stages set about making amends. After 4 stages he was equal with MacDonald with Retson in third.

Over the next pair of stages, Tindall continued to build on his lead. After stage 6, he was 12 seconds ahead of Retson and 16 seconds ahead of MacDonald. MacDonald was struggling a bit. The brakes on the new car were proving too effective and they were either on or off!! But a bigger problem was the heat inside the new car. Green is probably not a good reflector of the sun and the temperature inside the wee car was getting higher in the “sweltering” 2nd April sun!! Finally on stage 7, MacDonald had to pull over on the stage with a searing migraine headache. He did recover later after being examined by the event Doctor. But not the way he wanted his first outing to end.

And so at the finish line after 8 stages, it was Tindall first with Retson second – 15 seconds behind.

But who inherited third? It was Johnnie Mackay/Gordon Reid in their new mount – a Suzuki Alto. Their day started well – 1 second behind Tindall after stages 1 and 2. But from there on the day was not without its problems with the Alto refusing to rev over 4000rpm after stage 3. Modern cars get modern electronic problems which can require a specialist with a computer to fix! The problem defied his Dad on the spanners and they soldiered on. But what a reward for persistence – third place. OK – as Johnnie said – “Not the way I would have wanted to get on the podium!” But in rallying, you take it when you can.

Another driver in new machinery finished 4th – Lewis Winder in the ex Brodie Balfour Toyota Aygo. Lewis stayed out of trouble – he had no choice with Jane Nicol sitting beside him – and built his speed up over the day until he recorded a time 4 seconds behind the rally leader Tindall on the last stage. Not a man to show his emotion too much he was obviously chuffed – but quietly so. There is more to come.

Andrew Blackwood/Gordon Winning were next up in 5th place in the 2016 Championship winning Citroen C1. Once again steady progress rewarded Blackwood.

Next finisher in 6th place was Peter Beaton with Kenny Foggo in his “Scottish” Citroen C1. It was one of the very shiney cars to start having enjoyed some pampering by Jonny Adams at Love Street Coachworks over the winter. But Peter was more delicate than the C1, having just got a stookie off his right arm the Wednesday before - which he bent, yes bent, not broken a few weeks earlier - with the Doctor’s words ringing in his ears “Take it easy”!! He did and was rewarded with a good solid finish.

After lying fourth at the halfway, a disappointed Lewis Haining/George Myatt finished 7th after collecting a stage maximum on stage 5. Why – indecision and wrong choice at a split saw them go the wrong way. But the “hungdog, we wiz robbed” look started to wane at the end when he saw that he was 3rd quickest and 2 seconds behind rally leader on the final stage.

Our 2 ladies finished 8th and 9th and both had some technical difficulties to deal with – or at least the service crew Dads did. Amy Mccubbin/Brian Mclelland lost the brakes on the first group of 2 stages and Amy didn't really get her confidence back even after getting the brakes back. But she is relishing the opportunity to get her new “steed” out on the next event. Dad Marc is just about finished building a Skoda Citigo for her.

Alice Paterson/Ian Crosbie weren't really happy from the start and Dad Stuart discovered that one of the front struts was leaking. He replaced them with a pair of standard ones and Alice kept a steady and safe pace up to the end.

9 cars out of the eleven starters finished – Josh Hislop being the other retiree when his power steering failed just before stage 5.

The next outing for the Junior drivers will be in Arbroath on 15th April.



First – Ewan Tindall/Paul Hudson



Second – Finlay Retson/Tom Hynd



Third – Johnnie Mackay/Gordon Reid