

SOUTHERN DRIVERS DOMINATE ON THE SOLWAY COAST

The Solway Car Club delivered another cracking rally for Junior drivers from all 3 UK Junior 1000 Rally Championships on Sunday 5th August. The *usedcarparts Solway Coast Junior Rally* – and this was the seventh running of the Junior only event - has become a bit of a highly anticipated tradition using the military roads within the Dundrennan base near Kirkcudbright. There was no real drama in the Junior event this year, the weather was nice and consistent and the competition was fierce as usual. Whilst everybody is competing to one set of Junior 1000 rules, the event is broken up into 4 separate podiums - overall, the F1000 Junior 1000, the Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge and the Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland. This year, an English driver took top slot overall plus the F1000 section. And the same English driver (registered in both Championships) took top slot in the Scottish section and a Scottish driver took top slot in the Irish section!!

The competition was fierce at all levels but the Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge hunt for glory was weakened when local crew Lewis Haining and Mark McCulloch (Skoda Citigo) hit gearbox problems on stage 3 when lying in fourth place behind the 3 F1000 drivers who would go on to dominate the top 3 positions for the rest of the event. They limped the car back to service and the team did an amazing job changing the gearbox in the service time. But alas, it was all to no avail because a coming together of the fan and radiator ended their day on the next stage. Elliot Payne (Citroen C1), the Overall winner, had registered in the Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge on an earlier trip to Scotland and became the leading Ecosse Challenge driver and held that position for the rest of the event.

Johnnie Mackay (Suzuki Alto) was finding it hard to shake off "the ghost of 2017" (when he went off the road) and made a very cautious start in 2018 to lie seventh overall after the first pair of stages. The "problem stage" was run 4 times and Mackay dropped time on each run through. However, he persevered and ended the day fifth overall, and second Ecosse Challenge driver behind Payne with Gordon Reid co-driving. But the real battle was just behind Mackay and it was for third place on the Ecosse Challenge podium. First time out in his new car - an ex Peter Beaton Citroen C1 - and with new co-driver Steven Brown, Fraser Anderson was battling with Oliver Hunter/Tom Hynd (Peugeot 107) from the very first pair of stages. Hunter went on to open up a 5 second gap going into the final group of 3 stages (approx 13 miles) but a "mishap" on the third last stage dropped him behind Anderson by 4 seconds. The pair then shared the same time over the last 2 stages so Anderson took the third Ecosse Challenge position by 4 seconds. Another first for rookie driver Anderson against fellow rookie Hunter who took fourth Ecosse Challenge position.

Peter Beaton (Peugeot 107) was next, in fifth Ecosse Challenge place but what a story that team had to tell. On Saturday, Beaton's co-driver Dean Ross was out with a senior competitor but late in the day he got a call to say that his Gran up in Alness had died. Without hesitation Angus Beaton (Peter's Dad) decided that Dean had to return home immediately and drove him back to Inverness – a 5 hour journey – returning back at the rally after 3am in the morning with a surprised replacement co-driver in Gavin Kelt. Peter went on to reward them with a solid placing, plus he picked up highest place finisher award in the Junior 1000 Rally Challenge Ireland category.(another of the 3 Junior rally championships being contested by Beaton in 2018)

One place behind Beaton was Andrew Blackwood/Tom Middlemiss (Citroen C1). As usual Blackwood was his usual enthusiastic self and did pretty well on 7 out of the 9 stages!! But on the other 2 he hit problems. On the fifth stage done by the Juniors, he dropped a chunk of time when "we overshot where the road had changed from the last pass through the stage and lost 20 seconds" and then on the third last stage "I made a costly mistake going down a very slippery hill into a tight right corner and I slid off the road into a ditch and lost a minute" So no real damage to the car but Blackwood had to settle for sixth Ecosse Challenge position.

Amy McCubbin/Jane Nicol (Skoda Citigo) were next up in seventh Ecosse Challenge place. Amy enjoyed her day but commented "Not quite the result we were looking for but after a fair few 'hairy' moments we're just happy to have the car back in one piece - well almost in one piece due to a little argument with the scenery on stage 5"

First of the Nissan Micras home was Cameron Davidson with Ian McRae co-driving in eighth Ecosse Challenge place. Using route notes was a whole new ballgame for Davidson – as was stand-in co-driver McRae - and it took a few stages to adjust. But by the end he was swapping times with McCubbin. A very good solid result.

One place behind was Jack Hall/Robin Nicolson in another Micra. Once again the nature of the event was completely new for Hall and it took a few stages to adjust. He was never that far away from Davidson on the short stages but lost out on a couple of the longer ones.

Both Davidson and Hall have benefitted greatly from training courses over the past month and their progress and increased confidence was obvious.

And with the big responsibility of upholding Paterson honours – because both Dad Stuart and Uncle Ian did not get very far on the Senior event on the Saturday – was Alice Paterson/Ian Crosbie (Peugeot 107) who finished in tenth Ecosse Challenge place. Paterson was very cautious over the first couple of long stages but did put in some good times on the other shorter stages. Well deserved praise from the rest of the “Rallying Patersons” at the end.

Third of the Ecosse Challenge Micras, and finishing in eleventh Ecosse Challenge place, was Aaron Webster/Colin Baxter. But for Dad Ian the “fun” began on the Saturday night when the Micra failed scrutineering because of a seized fire extinguisher pull cable – a very common problem. But no matter how hard the cable was worked it would not operate the on board extinguisher. Where do you get a pull cable in Kirkcudbright at 7pm on a Saturday night? By good luck, help came from the vast resources of the local rallying Riddicks. Keith had one he didn’t need at home and it was duly fitted in the morning and away the Websters went.

And completing the roundup of Ecosse Challenge finishers was the youngest of our 3 lady drivers – Erica Winning - with her regular co-driver Mark “Speedy” Runciman in the fourth Ecosse Challenge Micra. The final call from Dad Gordon was – “Remember we are on display at Knockhill next weekend” – and Erica obeyed and added a lot of interesting miles to her driving logbook and took the wee Micra home in good condition.

Of the 13 Ecosse Challenge entries (out of a total of 28 rally entries), 12 made it across the finish line on what was a terrific experience and a tough day's rallying for them all. But the Points table did see a few changes. Johnnie Mackay did enough to open up his lead at the top of the Championship Driver’s table with Lewis Haining slipping back a few places. But jumping up from fourth to second place we have Fraser Anderson, followed by Andrew Blackwood (third) and Amy McCubbin (fourth) Other positions remain almost unchanged but Erica Winning has now moved to top position in the Pre 2003 class in her Micra.

Phew, that was a hectic but terrific weekend.



Elliot Payne/Simon Rogers

Johnnie Mackay/Gordon Reid

Fraser Anderson/Steven Brown

First

Second

Third

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