

KELLY WINS ROSE HOTEL CIRCUIT OF KERRY RALLY

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With the lead role alternating on several occasions, victory in the Rose Hotel Circuit of Kerry, round two of the Triton Showers National Rally Championship, went to the Donegal/Monaghan pairing of Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley (Ford Focus WRC). They finished 16.4 seconds ahead of the Ford Fiesta WRC of another Donegal/Monaghan duo, Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly. Clonmel's Roy White and his Cork co-driver James O'Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC) were a minute and 19.3 seconds further behind in third.

On the opening stage that skirted between Camp and Castlegregory, Kelly was 3.1 seconds ahead of Boyle with White a further 3.5 seconds behind and followed by Cork's Darragh O'Riordan (Ford Fiesta WRC), on his first outing since winning the Fastnet Rally last October. Chris Armstrong (Escort) was a fine fifth with Joe McGonigle (Mini WRC) rounding out the top six.

Boyle was best through the second stage, the only driver to break the four minute barrier, he moved 3.5 seconds ahead of Kelly, however, the latter made a great response on the third stage and moved ahead of Boyle by just seven tenths of a second.

At the Tralee service park rally leader Kelly declared, "It was tricky but it's a great battle, that's what we are here for." Boyle admitted that he pushed hard through the second stage and was happy with his performance.

Third placed White, 24.3 seconds further adrift reckoned he wasn't aggressive enough.

O'Riordan occupied fourth and like many more, remarked on the superb quality of the terrain.

Joe McGonigle lost a few seconds when his Mini WRC was off the road albeit briefly on the third stage, he held fifth followed by the Subaru WRC of Niall Maguire.

Elsewhere, Chris Armstrong (Escort) led the two-wheel drive category despite a spin on the third stage where he also stalled his Escort. Monaghan's John Doogan, also in an Escort, was next and the top ten was completed by Aidan Wray (Mitsubishi) and Kenny McKinstry (Subaru WRC). Wray had a slow start and the brakes caught fire at the end of the opening stage. McKinstry also had brake troubles when the pedal went soft near the stage finish. Although classified eleventh, PJ McDermott (Subaru WRC) withdrew after the gearbox casing cracked.

The fourth stage that began close to the scenic Inch beach, was followed by a repeated of the opening three stages. Of those, S.S. 6, Caherconree, that began in Camp proved decisive.

There, Boyle cut a corner and punctured the right front wheel and lost some twenty seconds and the lead to Kelly, who had a few moments on the stage. On stage seven, Kelly was a fraction of a second quicker than Boyle and returned to the final service with a lead of 14.1 seconds.

For his part, Boyle reckoned that he could gain time on stage eight, the repeat of stage four and headed out to the final four stages in confident mood.

White, 46.2 seconds further behind in fourth spot opined that he tried harder but need to steady his Fiesta WRC at high speed.

McGonigle was untroubled in fourth place 7.7 seconds ahead of the Fiesta WRC of Darragh O'Riordan while, Niall Maguire (Subaru WRC) was comfortable with his pace, he was sixth.

Leader of the two-wheel drive category, Chris Armstrong (Ford Escort) had an issue with the steering that locked up on the sixth stage. Stuart Darcy (Darrian T90) was 16.6 seconds behind but was concerned about rising engine temperature. Kenny McKinstry was tenth and much happier with the brakes of his Subaru WRC.

Leader of the Group N category, Aidan Wray was concerned that his Mitsubishi was losing power, Trevor Bustard and Paul Barrett were second and third respectively, the latter lost brakes and substantial time on the fourth stage.

On S.S. 8 where Boyle expected to make inroads to Kelly's lead, it was the latter that punched in the best time to move 15.7 seconds ahead. Although Boyle was quickest on the final two stages (S.S. 9 and 10 - S.S. 11 was cancelled) Kelly took the honours. Boyle won the Triton Showers Drive of the Day award. White was third. Elsewhere, the only major change to the top ten was in the Modified category as Armstrong overshot on two occasions on S.S. 8 allowing Darcy to win the category by 17.9 seconds.

Meanwhile, in the Motorsport Safety Group N category, Wray retired with a mechanical issue and Donegal's Trevor Bustard (Mitsubishi) took his first showroom class win in some six years. Paul Barrett/Antony Nestor (Mitsubishi) retired on S.S. 8 with a damaged oil cooler.

Victory in the Junior category went to Monaghan's Jonny Treanor (Honda Civic) and his co-driver Paul Sheridan while the Historic section was won by Mark Falvey/Damien Fleming (Ford Escort).

1. Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley (Ford Focus WRC) 51m. 01.2s.
2. Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC) 51m. 17.6s.
3. Roy White/James O'Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC) 52m. 36.9s.
4. Joseph McGonigle/Ciaran Geaney (Mini WRC) 53m. 27.8s.
5. Darragh O'Riordan/Andy Hayes (Ford Fiesta WRC) 53m. 50.7s.
6. Niall Maguire/Enda Sherry (Subaru WRC) 54m. 33.5s.
7. Stuart Darcy/Keith McCarthy (Darrian T90 GTR) 55m. 23.1s.
8. Chris Armstrong/Chris Melly (Ford Escort) 55m. 41.0s.
9. Johnno Doogan/Cairan Marron (Ford Escort) 56m. 00.7s.
10. Kenny McKinstry/Kenny Hull (Subaru WRC) 56m. 08.1s.

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