

ROSE HOTEL CIRCUIT OF KERRY RALLY ATTRACTS STRONG ENTRY

Preview courtesy of Triton Showers

Proud sponsors of the Irish National Rally Championship.

The splendid and scenic west Kerry region provides the backdrop to Sunday's second round of the Triton Showers National Rally Championship, the Rose Hotel Circuit of Kerry Rally that has attracted a strong entry. Four former national champions are amongst the 130 plus entry list with Donegal's Declan Boyle (Ford Fiesta WRC) first into action over the eleven-stage rally. Boyle, from Lettermacaward and his Monaghan co-driver James O'Reilly made the perfect start to this year's Triton series when they won the opening round Mayo Rally on Achill Island last month. Indeed, they netted the maximum score of twenty-one points as they also secured the single point for posting the fastest time on the Power Stage. Boyle is a double winner of the Vard Memorial Trophy, he won back-to-back titles in 2013 and 2014, but his title challenges over the last few seasons have been blighted with niggling issues. Despite an electrical problem en-route to the opening stage in Mayo, Boyle was in terrific form as he took the laurels. It certainly won't be a jaunt around west Kerry where the terrain (used for the first time in seven years) and his rivals combine to provide formidable opposition. On each of the last two occasions (2016 & 2014) that the Tralee based event was a counting round of the national series, Boyle has taken victory.

Another Donegal driver Donagh Kelly (Ford Focus WRC) will be one of Boyle's main rivals, a national champion in 2015, Kelly may decide to chase the Vard Memorial Trophy should be amongst the major share of the Triton points in Tralee. He was very much in the hunt in Mayo until a time consuming puncture dropped him way down the order before he recovered to claim tenth overall.

Meanwhile, Clonmel's Roy White (Ford Fiesta WRC) was another to have difficulties in Mayo, he slid off the road at the end of the opening stage and although he re-joined under Rally2 it was little more than seat time. He won Triton series in 2016 but is still chasing that elusive victory in a championship round.

Fourth in the first round, Donegal's Joe McGonigle continues his Triton championship campaign in tandem with gaining more experience in his first season behind the wheel of his Mini WRC.

There's little doubt that Niall Maguire (Subaru WRC) has bitter-sweet memories of the Circuit of Kerry, the former triple national champion has won and lost events in Kerry on a tie-break. No other event in Irish rallying has been decided on tie-breaks as much as the Circuit of Kerry and while Maguire was involved in three such events, the last tie-break finish was in 2012 when local hero Thomas Fitzmaurice denied Cork's Brian O'Mahony, although the latter went on to win the Dunlop title.

In 2010, last year's winner Derek McGarrity (Ford Fiesta WRC) beat Kerry native Kevin Barrett (Subaru WRC) to claim the spoils after a tie-breaker.

The legendary Kenny McKinstry (Subaru WRC) is also competing on the Rose Hotel backed event along with Middleton's Darragh O'Riordan, who will campaign his Fiesta WRC that has been converted to right hand drive.

The aforementioned Kevin Barrett occupies the number eight berth in the Triton backed Subaru WRC in a top ten completed by Louth's Brendan Cumiskey (Ford Fiesta WRC) and Donegal's PJ McDermott (Subaru WRC).

Ex-Irish forest rally champion London based Corkonian Michael O'Brien (Ford Focus WRC) is making his first appearance of the season on Irish roads.

Another former champion – Tyrone's Aidan Wray (Mitsubishi EvoX), who has won the Motorsport

Safety Group N series within the Triton campaign, heads the showroom category in Tralee. Opposition will emanate from Maynooth's Paul Barrett in the Vado liveried Mitsubishi EvoX and Donegal's Trevor Bustard (Mitsubishi EvoIX).

The strong Donegal contingent continues with ex-Billy Coleman award winner Stuart Darcy (Darrian T90). In Mayo, he had a tremendous battle with Cavan's Chris Armstrong (Escort) and took the spoils on the final stage. The pair will renew their rivalry in west Kerry and that should be an interesting duel, however, they are unlikely to have it all their own way with Limerick's Ed O'Callaghan, local ace Mike Quinn, Tyrone's Ryan Loughran, Carlow's David Condell and Limerick's Ed Synan - all in Ford Escorts, also on the list. Elsewhere, Clare's Padraig Egan (Subaru), Limerick's Sean Liston (BMW E30), who was fourth overall in Kerry last year, Limerick's Keith Lyons (Fiesta R5), Galway's Pat Kelly (Subaru) and Monaghan's Raymond Conlon (Toyota Corolla) are also amongst the entry.

LOCALS:

As ever, for the local contingent, a strong performance on the Rose Hotel Circuit of Kerry is a very specific target. Last year, Tralee's Tim Enright (Escort) claimed the bragging rights, however, Lyreacrompane man Quinn will endeavour to claim top spot on this occasion. There are others too, such as Kilflynn's Tom Relihan, Killarney trio Charlie Hickey, Ed Murphy and Tadhg O'Sullivan along with Kenmare's Vincent O'Shea, Ballylongford's Tommy Mason, Tarbert's Jason Costello, Lisselton's Pat Barry and Killarney's John Hickey, all in Ford Escorts all vying for success.

Elsewhere, Killarney's Mark Falvey in his Mk. 1 Ford Escort competes in the Historic section.

Two Kerry drivers are in the keenly contested Class 11F - Tralee's Darren Young and Kenmare's Shane McCarthy, both in Honda Civics will face stern opposition from the similar cars of Mallow's Derek Butler and Donegal's Michael Boyle.

In the Junior category of the Rose Hotel Circuit of Kerry, Armagh's Jason Black (Toyota Starlet) is the top seed, he won the opening round of the Triton Junior series in Mayo. The top six also features Monaghan's Jonny Treanor (Honda Civic), Armagh's Gareth Black (Toyota Starlet), Galway's Billy Riordan, Tipperary's Shane Norris and Clare's Michael Hamilton, all in Honda Civics. The local challenge will be provided by the Honda Civic pair of Steven O'Connor and Daniel Chung.

EVENT DETAILS:

Organising Club: Kerry Motor Club.

Clerk of the Course: Richard Talbot.

Rally Headquarters: Rose Hotel, Tralee.

First Car Away: 8. 15am

S.S. 1: 8.50am.

Service: Adjacent to Rose Hotel, Tralee.

Finish Ramp: Rose Hotel, Tralee. 5.00pm.

Top 10 Starters:

1. Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC)
2. Donagh Kelly/Conor Foley (Ford Focus WRC)
3. Roy White/James O'Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC)

4. Joseph McGonigle/Ciaran Geaney (Mini WRC)
5. Niall Maguire/Enda Sherry (Subaru WRC)
6. Kenny McKinstry/Kenny Hull (Subaru WRC)
7. Darragh O'Riordan/Andy Hayes (Ford Fiesta WRC)
8. Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally (Subaru WRC)
9. Brendan Cumiskey/Stephen McAuley (Ford Fiesta WRC)
10. PJ McDermott/Niall Burns (Subaru WRC)

Triton Showers National Rally Championship (Provisional Positions after Round 1): D. Boyle 21pts; J. Moffett 18pts; 3. D. Henry 16pts; 4. J. McGonigle 14pts; 5. N. Maguire 13pts; 6. A. Wray 12pts.

2018 Triton Showers National Rally Championship Diary Dates:

1. Mayo Rally: Declan Boyle/James O'Reilly (Ford Fiesta WRC)
2. Circuit of Kerry Rally (April 8)
3. Cavan Rally (May 27)
4. Sligo Rally (July 8)
5. Tipperary Stonethrowers Rally (August 12)
6. Clare Rally (September 16)
7. Donegal Harvest Rally (October 13)

Media Co-Ordinator,

Triton Showers National Rally Championship.

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