

## Delight for Oli Hunter at Kames

Round 7 (out of 8) of the 2018 Junior 1000 Ecosse Challenge must go down as one of the most memorable and competitive events we have seen in the 7 year life of the Championship. The arena was Kames Motorsport Complex at Muirkirk, East Ayrshire and the occasion was the Albar Kames Junior Rally with Support from ISS (Aberdeen) Ltd . On a day when the sun shone out of a blue September sky and no real incidents on the track, we witnessed an epic battle between some of the best young rally drivers in Scotland.

The day started with Lewis Haining/George Myatt (Skoda Citigo) continuing to lead from the front as they had done the previous weekend at Condor in Arbroath. But hot on Haining's heels was "local" lad Oli Hunter from Ayr with Tom Hynd co-driving in their Peugeot 107. It was obvious from the word go that Hunter was very happy with his local venue and over the first 8 stages never let Haining get more than a couple of seconds out of his sights. Haining led by 2 seconds going into the lunch break. But Hunter turned the tables on the first pair of stage of the afternoon and moved 1 second in front. After the next pair of stages it was 3 seconds in front with Haining pulling it back to 1 second going into the final pair of stages. But Hunter and Hynd held their nerves and came out of the final stage still 1 second ahead. Hunter started his Junior 1000 rallying career almost exactly 1 year ago at exactly the same event and venue and in the same car (ok – with some new panels and paint) and the same co-driver. Were they happy at the end – you bet!! Oli is never short of a smile but he was beaming . And rightly so. And what about Haining? Demonstrating the true spirit of the Championship, he was the first to congratulate Hunter and acknowledge just how good a day he had had. And anybody who knows the Kames venue will appreciate just how good these two drove all day. Kames may be a short circuit but it has tricks up it's sleeves around almost every corner.

But what about the other 10? Well we saw other battles, exceptional performances and a couple of "didn't go to plan" moments.

Johnnie Mackay/Gordon Reid (Suzuki Alto) came out of the first pair of stage a couple of seconds behind the front 2. Things didn't improve over the next few stages and he held third place for the first 6 stages. But he came under pressure from Peter Beaton/Dean Ross (Peugeot 107) who shared 3<sup>rd</sup> place after ss6. And then on the 2 stages before the lunch break, Andrew Blackwood/Richard Stewart (Citroen C1) crept past to move 1 second in front in third place. Mackay was struggling to work out what was wrong. The car seemed to be fine and he reckoned that he was driving cleanly and not making mistakes. But the time wouldn't come and he finished in fourth place.

So where had Blackwood come from? An overshoot on the second stage left him down in sixth place. But by the lunch break he had clawed his way back up with times on the same pace as the leader and moved ahead of Mackay on stage 8. He started the afternoon session 12 seconds behind the leader and the pace at the front was so hot that he finished third, 21 seconds behind the leader. An excellent result nevertheless.

After a promising morning, Peter Beaton lost a chunk of time on the first afternoon stage after doing a double loop but held onto fifth place behind Mackay.

And in sixth place and highest placed Micra was Cameron Davidson with late late recruit co-driver Kenneth McRae. The pair enjoyed a very clean run with Davidson's karting experience helping a lot on the twisty Kames track.

Amy McCubbin took her Skoda Citigo home unscathed in seventh place with her 2017 co-driver Brian McClelland making a welcome return for this event. The Citigo never missed a beat all day.

Second Micra home was Jack Hall/Robin Nicholson in eighth place. Jack got quicker as the day went on as his confidence and familiarity with Kames improved. By the end of the day his stage times were getting much closer to leading Micra driver Davidson.

After a very fraught last minute search for a co-driver, Willie Pollock stepped forward to sit with Aaron Webster who came home in ninth place.

If there was great joy in the winner's camp, there was equal great joy and pride in the camp of the final car to finish. Erica Winning started and finished 7 events in her very first rallying season and at the age of 14, with no previous driving experience, delighted herself, her family and everybody in the Junior 1000 "family". Just out to enjoy herself and gain experience, Winning always had a smile and with experienced co-driver Mark Runciman really showed what the Championship is all about.

And the 2 who didn't record a finish.

After an extremely distressing 24 hours, Fraser Anderson/ Steven Brown appeared with the "old" Micra after rolling his Citroen C1 the previous weekend. The Micra had suffered some front end damage at Crail back in June and had not really had much TLC since then. At several points on the Saturday before the rally it looked as if they wouldn't make it, but Dad George persevered and they were there on Sunday morning. But whilst the Micra had been fitted with some new panels, radiator etc and passed scrutineering, it was not handling the way it should. So rather than have an off and damage the car further they decided to throw in the towel at the lunch halt.

The other non finisher was Alice Paterson/Ian Crosbie (Peugeot 107) Things went well in the morning and Paterson was enjoying herself in eighth place at the lunch halt. But a mishap at the merge on the second pair of stages in the afternoon saw the 107 take to the grass and encounter one of the marker tyres damaging the steering and suspension. So onto the trailer.

And so the Championship will go down to the wire at the final round at Cadwell on 17<sup>th</sup> November. The top slot will be between Johnnie Mackay and Lewis Haining. It is going to be a blinder.





2018 Supporters



Lawrence of Kemnay

