

## Irish Tarmac Rally Championship Round 2 Preview

Round 2 of the 2018 Irish Tarmac Rally Championship, the UAC Easter Stages Rally takes place this coming weekend in Antrim and with the top eight drivers in the series all competing it promises to be an intriguing event. Championship leader Josh Moffett leads the way after an excellent result in West Cork and is the top seed in his Fiesta R5. Josh & co-driver Andy Hayes will be looking for a start similar in fashion to the opening round when they pulled out a big advantage over the first four stages. It can be a risky decision, but it paid off in Clonakilty and helped ward off a late challenge from his brother Sam to take top points. 2017 champion Sam Moffett with Karl Atkinson co-driving took some time to settle in Clonakilty, but once he got happier with tyre choice in his Fiesta R5, he closed the gap down to less than ten seconds by the end. Seeded at number 2, they will be one of the favourites to take top points by Saturday evening.

Robert Barrable & Desi Henry are next up and there was very little to separate the pair on the opening round, with only a late spin dropping Henry behind his Dublin rival. Barrable will again appear in a Fiesta R5, but Henry after a strong showing in Fiesta on round one, has decided to switch back to Skoda for this weekend. Despite limited time to test, Desi will be familiar with the Skoda and will prove a real threat to his rivals once he gets settled into the new car. Jonny Greer & Kirsty Riddick saw a solid run in Clonakilty ruined by a late puncture in their Fiesta. For the Easter stages Jonny will be using the car Desi Henry drove in West Cork as he awaits the arrival of a new Citroen C3. With the stages in more familiar territory in round 2, he could throw a cat amongst the pigeons in the final shakeup.

Daniel Cronin, Stephen Wright and Eugene Donnelly are also in the line-up and Cronin was impressive in Clonakilty, edging ahead of Wright over the final stages as he gets more familiar with his Fiesta R5. Donnelly made his first appearance in a Hyundai R5 on the opening round and took some time to get used to the characteristics of an R5 car, but with more seat time behind him, he will look to up the pace even more in Antrim. William Mavitty who leads Group N will be looking to strengthen his defence of the title won in 2017 with another maximum score in his Mitsubishi Lancer.

Wesley Patterson (Escort), Kevin Eves (Corolla), Eugene Meegan (BMW 1M) & Joe McQuillan (Lancer) are just some of the drivers lined up for Modified championship points with all three having scored on the opening round. Eves took top points on the opening round as he got the defence of his 2017 title off to a good start and will be looking to maintain momentum in Antrim. With the Historic Championship leader Owen Murphy not on the entry list the opportunity arises for several drivers to move back into contention. Andy Johnson can move into second place in his Chevette HSR with top points over the weekend while Ernie Graham will be looking to get some points on the board after missing the previous round. Others to watch out for will be Stanley Orr and Martin Freestone both in a Mk1 Escort. The Junior category has only two drivers entered, with wildly different fortunes for both on the opening round. Gary McNamee took an impressive win, while Gareth Deazley was unfortunate to go off the road close to the finish and will be hoping for better luck this time.

The twelve stage event begins in Ballyclare on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> with the first stage at Lady Hill starting at 13:41. Service on both days takes place at Six Mile Leisure Centre. The opening days action ends with Lyles Hill at 18:23 and the first car is due into Parc Ferme at 19:13. On Saturday a further six stages take place with the first car due at the finish ramp at the ECOS Centre in Ballymena at 15:00.

Kevin O'Driscoll,  
T.R.O.A. Press Officer,  
Email: troapro@gmail.com