

## Ferguson Seals Ninth Championship Title

The eighth round of the 2023 Northern Ireland Autotest Championship, sponsored by McMillan Specialist Cars of Antrim, took place on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August at Transport Training Services, Nutts Corner. Organised by Dungannon Motor Club and sponsored by Jewellery Repairs Services, Cookstown, the competition was tough on both cars and drivers, but as at the previous seven rounds it was Stewartstown's Steven Ferguson who took the win comfortably from David Thompson.

Steven set the benchmark for the other Championship competitors, setting fastest time on nine of the twelve tests on Saturday, despite some gearbox troubles early in the day and an uncharacteristic penalty for the reigning champion. Mark King and Robin Lyons battled it out for third and fourth, the advantage going to Lyons in his Mini Saloon.

With Ferguson taking the Overall win, this elevated Adam Lowry to his first Class A Championship win and eighth place overall. It was the younger of the Lowry brothers, Jack who would finish runner up in class, with Peter Grimes taking third after a hydraulic problem with his Mini Special cost him precious time.

Trevor Ferguson took the Class B win finishing 22.7 seconds ahead of Paul Lowther in his rear wheel drive sports car with Mark Ferguson in third after a great drive from the young Coagh man.

Robin Lyons took the Class C win with a faultless drive in his Mini Saloon. Brothers Andrew and Richard Earney would finish second and third respectively in class despite mechanical issues with their shared Mini Saloon.

David Thompson took the Class D win ahead of Mark King who was getting to grips and tweaking his Nova's new engine throughout the day. Ardboe's Damien Mooney took the third spot in class, with Dungannon's Gary Campbell finishing fourth.

In the Clubman category classes, Jordan Burns in his Ford Fiesta Special took the Class A win alongside the overall Clubman Challenge category win, with Ian McCann in his Vauxhall Nova taking the runner up spot in both class and category. Gordon Buckley took the Class B win in his Westfield. Taylor Gribbon in his Nissan Micra would take the Class C honours. Clubman Class D was again made up of all Mazda MX5's and it was James Mansfield who took the class win from Lawrence Baird, with Ian Lowry settling for third.

There was again a small but highly experienced and competitive turnout in the Advanced Challenge category. Adam McMullan took the Advanced Class A honours in his Toyota Starlet Special. Robert Dickson in his Mini Saloon would take the overall Advanced Challenge win alongside the Class C honours, with Robert Robinson in his Toyota Yaris finishing second in class. Gareth Dillon in his Mazda MX5 would take the Advanced Class D win, as well as finishing third overall in the Advanced Challenge.

In the Production Car Class Andrew Molyneaux Senior would take the class win, with Adam Ferguson and Andrew Molyneaux Junior taking second and third respectively.

With only two rounds to go, a ten point advantage and eight back to back wins in the 2023 season, sees Stewartstown's Steven Ferguson seal his ninth NI Autotest Championship title, equalling the record set by Sam Bowden. David Thompson currently holds the runner up spot with a five point advantage over Andy Blair in third. Mark King finds himself just one point behind Blair in fourth.

The penultimate round of the season will take place on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August, with the event hosted by the Coleraine & District Motor Club taking place at the Northwest 200 Pits. With some overall and class positions still to be decided, its set to be a thrilling day of action on the north coast.

McMillan Specialist Cars Northern Ireland Autotest Championship Round 8

Overall Winner – Steven Ferguson

**Championship Category:**

Class A – Adam Lowry

Class B – Trevor Ferguson

Class C – Robin Lyons

Class D – David Thompson

**Clubman Category:**

Class A – Jordan Burns

Class B – Gordon Buckley

Class C – Taylor Gribbon

Class D – James Mansfield

**Advanced Category:**

Class A – Adam McMullan

Class B – No Competitors

Class C – Robert Dickson

Class D – Gareth Dillon

**Production Car Category:**

Class P – Andrew Molyneaux Snr