

### **Tim Woodside – the man to beat**

What a day, jeppers what a day. This was a common comment to be heard around the paddock of Nutts Corner on 23 September where North Ulster Car Club had once again hosted one of their famously superb events to make up round 7 of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship.

With an entry of 80 cars the event started at 10am and with 2 practice runs and 3 timed runs completed the event was completed by 1530 on a day which had unusually superb weather and a great bunch of drivers all looking for a great days craic. Its testament to how good a day, and how popular our championship is when we can get 80 entries to an event at the end of September.

After a couple of small stoppages in practice, where a couple of drivers decided to test the skills of the marshals on the day the timed runs started around lunch time and like a delayed train making up time the event just motored on! It was a superb event to watch, and the craic and banter round the paddock was awesome. There were also many drivers who were fulfilling their marshalling duties on the day.

Amongst the entry there were potentially at least 6 people who could take top honours in their single seaters. There was also a superb entry of road going cars with 19 in total pushing hard to take the honour of fastest roadgoing car. Within this there were 8 Mazda MX5`s which is great to see bearing in mind that a couple of years ago this class was almost dead in the water.

Looking further down the entry list it was great to see Gordon Fogarty making a comeback in his Fiat X19 after a small engine rebuild turned into a much bigger project. Gordon is normally only seen competing in Hillclimb`s but decided to participate here and see what he could do. We also saw Stanley Orr making a return to the championship in his Micra Challenge car which he has built for the new Micra Challenge Rally class. Stanley is a class act behind the wheel and many years ago was untouchable on the roads and forests of Northern Ireland and beyond. He then took a bit of a holiday and retuned to the sport circa 10 years ago in an escort Mk1. Stanley did several sprints in this car before focusing on the British Historic rally championship in which he did superbly well. Stanley has decided that Historic Rallying is now too serious and so built himself this little Micra in which he pulled off a super drive. It shows that you can`t hide talent.

Another non normal entry on the day was that of Kells man John McDowell in his flying Escort Mk2. John is another Hillclimb genius who decided to come for the craic and he was superb to watch. John is usually very neat and precise on a hill, probably due to the proximity of banks, walls and even trees but on a sprint circuit he was able to drive the little escort like he stole it and he even gave Richie O`Mahoney a run for his money as the most entertaining driver of the day and that`s no mean feat!!

It was also great to see Steven Gault out again for his first event of the season and on a day of firsts Brian Crawford debuted his new MNR Vortex at his first sprint and Rodney White debuted his brand spanking new Sunbeam on its first ever event. This car can only be described as stunning. The attention to detail in the build is

phenomenal and the car looked and sounded amazing. Rodney also gave us a tour of his beautiful new car which can be seen on the championship Facebook page.

We also had a few drivers making their championship and indeed sprint debuts on Saturday as well. Out for his event was Jonathan Gibson in his new to him Renault clio which some of us recognise as the car Amy Hawthorne was using to great success. Also breaking his "sprint duck" was Ben Woodside. Ben is no stranger to the sport as his father is Tim Woodside who proved to be the fastest man here today! After watching Ben in his little Starlett, it's obvious that the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree. Watch out for Ben in the future. Next up in the line of "Newbies" was Tommy Towbar himself Tommy Murray who came out to play in a Civic Type R. Tommy advised me that he has been drawn to the sport by the other Murrays who all compete, so its great to see another member of Clan Murray having craic in the paddock. These family battles are starting to mount up!

In terms of results Gary Milligan had a superb run to take class 6a honours in his little mini finishing ahead of Gordon Foggarty and Karl Johnston. Which was no meant feat. It all just seemed to click for Gary and he was going so well that it was joked that Gerry McGarrity was actually driving the car. There are even rumours that he was seen seeking some help from above the night before the event. Obviously, he made a good impression and the divine inspiration was channelled his way!! James Lightbody took a superb class 6b win narrowly pipping Seamus Murray and multiple Northern Ireland champion Ken Colbert. This was a superb result for James. James Graham took a super class 13 win in his little Van Diemen ahead of multiple champions Henry Campbell and Adrian Pollock. James was on superb form.

However, for me the drive of the day went to Downpatrick's Noel Strain in his mini. Noel has had trials and tribulations since he traded his Nova and built this little mini. He has had a fire in the car and numerous gearbox issues but everyone could see the potential in the package and knew that when it clicked it would click. At this event it clicked and Noel took a superb drive to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> in class 11 which is the big rally car class in a car which was considerably under powered compared to those around him. Noel drove the socks off himself and the wheels off his car and for a man of so few words the look on his face when he completed his third run and was interviewed on his return to the paddock was priceless!! Well done Noel this result was very well deserved!!

Now the big talking point was the overall battle. As I said 6 drivers had the potential to win the event and the top 9 were separated by just over 9 seconds. Alan Cassells set the pace in the first timed run taking the lead with a 92.76s run which proved to be his fastest of the day. However, Tim Woodside and Gerard O'Connell had other ideas. Gerard was fighting for the championship and needed as high a finish as he could get to maintain his fight to be 2023 SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Champion so he set off after Alans time as did the hard charging Tim Woodside. Gerard pushed as hard as he could and left his braking to the maximum everywhere. Tim Woodside seemed to be on rails in his Pilbeam as both drivers chased the clock. Tim gave a masterclass in driving and set the FTD to take the event win with a 92.69sec run, just nipping ahead of Alan. Gerard did his absolute best and set a 93.49s to take third. Both drivers gave us a masterclass in single seater driving round Nutts Corner and it was incredible to watch this battle unfold. If ever anyone wanted to see how to drive a

single seater fast, run 2 on Saturday was the place to learn. It's safe to say that no one anywhere could have got any more out of either of these cars on that run. Both drivers carried immense speed right round the circuit, leaving their braking right to the max and being totally reliant on the grip from their tyres. It was as far from a drag race as you could ever be!! Anyone who watched these 2 drivers on that run knew that they had just witnessed something very special. Fourth in class went to Graham Thompson who was driving his home built GTR Turbo. Graham, who I was speaking to was simply out for a days craic. He was on very old rubber and just fancied a day out of the workshop and boy did he have a days craic finishing 4<sup>th</sup> overall and only 1.89secs off the win finishing fractionally ahead of Richard McGimpsey in his RMG. Ethan Faulker took class 14 honours and 6<sup>th</sup> overall in his little Jedi finishing just ahead, by only a tenth of a second ahead of Ryan McGimpsey in his Jedi who was seventh. It was ironic that Richard McGimpsey pipped Ryan today because Ryan has just been crowned 2023 NI Hillclimb Champion after marginally pipping brother Ricky to the title. Congratulations Ryan but Ricky is adamant that he's winning next year!

Now in terms of the categories, the unofficial category of fastest mini in the west was clearly taken today by Gary Milligan. Gary drove the wheels off the mini and it was great to see everything finally clicking into place for Gary. Gary pipped Karl Johnston by 1.76secs which was incredible as both Karl and Gary were going hard. Sadly, Gerry McGarrity was not out to race against these 2 today as he was marshalling but Gary was going so well that there was a rumour circulating that it was actually Gerry in the blue mini and not Gary!!

The modified category win went to the very hard charging Jaye Nevin who was clean flying in his wee 205. Jaye finished 13<sup>th</sup> overall and a mere 1.53 secs ahead of his father Stephen who was second modified car home in his Escort Mk1. Third modified driver home was Raymond Johnston in his mark 2 escort a mere 0.17 behind Steven Nevin.

In the specialist category Richard O'Mahoney was the man to beat in his RSR Escort. Richie as always was full of craic and loving life and he has now finally got to grips with the escort. Second specialist driver was David Hawthorne who only had Brian Crawford for company with Brian being the third specialist competitor.

The Roadgoing category was a very closely fought affair with Conor Hamill taking the category win in his BMW M3 ahead of Crawford Ewing Jnr in his Meganne with Aaron Vance coming third in his BMW, At the end of the day there was only 1.32secs between the 3 drivers.

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge Emma Campbell took the trophy win by a mere 2 tenths of a second on corrected time from Jenny Pollock. Amy Hawthorne was a mere 0.72secs behind Jenny in third, again on corrected time, so once again the Heaslip Ladies Challenge was a very closely contested thing.

The next, eighth and final round of the 2023 SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship is scheduled to take place at Kirkistown on 28 October, Halloween, and this event is hosted by 500MRCL. Entries can be found on [WWW.rallyscore.net](http://WWW.rallyscore.net)

Now for the class battles:

### **Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc**

Paul Forsythe made a welcome return to the class today and took a very safe class win and 33<sup>rd</sup> overall in his fabulous little Peugeot 106. Paul finished ahead of Alan Wallace, who got himself confused with Alan Titchmarsh, or perhaps it was Charlie Dimmock as he gave the circuit infield a short back and sides on his first practice run. Thankfully Alan was unscathed, but the little del sol needed some TLC after its Flymo impression. None the less Alan / Charlie battled on for the remainder of the day and finished ahead of Ben Woodside who was new to the sport and new to the class in his little Toyota Starlet.

### **Class 2a – Road cars over 1700cc**

The bigger road car class was a tight affair today with Conor Hamill taking class and category top spot with an impressive 114.45s run which saw him 22<sup>nd</sup> overall in his BMW. However, Conor didn't have it all his own way and only pipped the win in his last run from the trendsetter that is Crawford Ewing Jnr. Crawford hit the ground running and actually was leading the class all day up to the third run. Crawford finished a mere 0.86s behind Conor and only 0.46 secs ahead of third placed Aaron Vance who is still learning his M3. Crawford Ewing Snr finished fourth ahead of Mervyn Johnston, newcomer Tommy Murray and Jonathan Gibson who is another newcomer.

### **Class 2b – Road cars Mazda MX5 challenge**

The MX5 entry today was one of the biggest in its history with an impressive 8 of the little MX5's out to play. Aeron Moody proved to be the man to beat as he took a 1.82sec lead from Wayne Clyde who was pushing hard, and I mean hard. A mere 0.11 secs behind Wayne in third was Mark King who is well known as an autotesting genius, the real "King of the Cones" runs the McMillan Specialist Cars Northern Ireland Auto test Championship. Indeed, Mark Represented Motorsport UK last year in the FIA Motorsport Games and thankfully had configured his brain to allow him to drive past any cones on the circuit rather than trying to slalom through them or indeed reverse between them!!! Barry McCann took fourth in class ahead of Robert and Callum Fitzgerald, Malcolm McQueen, who is another man who is usually seen going round and between cones, and Harry Bar in that order. Its great to see such a resurgence in this class and the racing is very close amongst the competitors.

### **Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production cars 8v**

Gary Milligan was the man on form in 6A today and full credit to him he was flying. Its great to see Gary having such a good run today and boy was he enjoying himself. Gary drove superbly well to take the class by a mere 0.3 secs from Gordon Fogarty in his little fiat X19. Gordon has the reputation of being the man to beat in 6a on the hills, but Gary showed him who was boss today on the flat stuff. Karl Johnston took third in class and simply had no answer for Gary Today despite winning his class the previous weekend in Sligo in the Tom Devaney Hillclimb. William Hutton was back out competing again but sadly had mechanical woes which curtailed his day early.

There was a lot of craic round the paddock about just how fast Gary was going, some reckoned he was missing a chicane, others had a theory that wee Gerry McGarrity was driving the blue mini as a Stig, but these rumours were quashed by the fact that a head was visible over the steering wheel. The latest theory was that Gary had received some form of divine inspiration or assistance on the Friday night whilst out on the tere in Omagh!! Gary was spotted frequenting a certain venue where a divine spirit was discussed. All joking aside though, Gary had a great run and it was great to see him going so well.

### **Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production cars 16v**

James Lightbody continued where he left off at the last round and stayed in front. James has really got to grips with his wee mini and was clean flying. Its great to see. James took a class win and 23<sup>rd</sup> overall with a 114.48 secs which was just 0.89secs ahead of super consistent Seamus Murray in his civic. Both James and Seamus set their fastest runs on their first run however Seamus was soooo consistent that his slowest run was only 0.1 secs, yes 1 tenth slower than his fastest!!!! Third on the day went to Ken Colbert who is continuing to have great fun in the family Sunbeam. Ken left it late, until his last run, in fact to set his fastest run and he was only a mere 0.03secs, yes 3 one hundredths of a second behind Seamus. Not bad when you consider the age difference between Kens Sunbeam and the mini and Honda, it's also old school versus modern technology as well. And I mean the cars not the drivers!! Hard charging Andrew Straney was the best of the rest in fourth ahead of George McMillan, Andrew Kernohan, Dessie Martin and Amy Hawthorne. Dessie was not on his usual pace today as he was out in his BMW mini after an unfortunate roll in his Honda at Knockalla earlier in the month. Having spoken to Dessie since the event Dessie and the Honda will be back, once he's polished a couple of scrapes out of it and he's doing a couple of minor tweaks at the same time, because he tells me that hes winning 6b next year!!!!

### **Class 7 Modified Specialist Production Cars 2WD.**

David Hawthorne was left scratching his head and sniffing his armpits on Saturday morning wondering if he had BO as only 1 other individual came to play at Nutts Corner. Andy, King of the Clan was marshalling as was his younger (and arguably faster, some may even say better looking) brother Steven. Only Brian Crawford ventured to play and he was having a ball. David drove well but only did 1 run which was sufficient to win the class. He told me afterwards that it wasn't as much fun without his Dad and faster brother Steven trying to catch him, however he set Brian Crawford a stonker of a target which Brian was steadily closing in on. This is Brians first sprint in his little MNR Vortex which he is still learning and its definitely not as well set up for sprinting as Davids Westfield but either way both fellas had a great days craic.

### **Class 8 Sports Libre cars Special Saloons**

After personally checking on more than 1 occasion I can confirm that it actually was Richie O'Mahoney Snr driving the RSR on Saturday and not the stig as some individuals believed. Richie had a superb day and was really tramping on, although he

did tell me that he wished Jim Hutchinson would get at least 1 run out this year because he wants to beat him to complete a full sweep of class wins, the championship and being the fastest man in an RSR!! So Jim, if your reading this get the RSR dusted down!

### **Class 9a Sports Libre cars Saloons and GT`s**

Today's class winner was undoubtedly one of the most famous names on the time sheet today. It was superb to see David Francis back out in an Escort Cosworth and boy was he flying. David was great to watch as usual and pushed hard all day finishing up a 17<sup>th</sup> overall and head of the class 9 pack. Jonathan Smith was second in his beautiful escort Mk2 complete with a new oil filter and Jonathan is really starting to come to terms with the bigger horsepower Honda engine. Jason Frazer was third in his mighty metro and Jason has learnt a thing or 2 on the hills this year as he was going exceptionally well to finish ahead of James Tanner in his mini. Over the course of the year we see several people dipping in and out of events in class 9 which is a shame as there are several good fast cars out there if we could only get them all out together!!

### **Class 9b Sports libre Closed Wheel racing cars**

Today saw 2 cars out in class 9b which was superb to see. Ricky McGimpsey was the pace setter in his RGM V2 in which he was simply flying. Ricky got down to a 97.2 secs run which saw him finish 5<sup>th</sup> overall, but more importantly for him he finished ahead of younger brother Flying Ryan McGimpsey. These 2 fellas had an epic fight the length and breadth of the country in the Hillclimb Championship with Ryan taking his first ever crown by the tightest of Margins from Ricky, so Ricky set the tone for next season by beating Ryan today, as a warmup for next season. Second in class 9b was the returning Trevor Allen. Trevor has upgraded his NI Seven into a Radical SR3 which looks as fast as it goes. Trevor is no slouch behind the wheel and proved this by finishing second in class and 9<sup>th</sup> overall with a fastest run of 101.53secs. Trevor did tell me that he was using this as a test day and that the car wasn't quite set up for sprinting so if there's still more to come Trevor will be worth a watching next season!

### **Class 10 Sports libre Cars – small capacity Rally cars**

Raymond Johnston was the man to beat in class 10 today in his stunning white Mk2 Escort. Raymond and Alan Roddy fought hard all day and in the end Alan was only a mere 1.43secs behind Raymond and their on track battle was fabulous to watch. Third in class went to a man more associated with historic, and I mean cars not drivers, with Stanley Orr having a run out in his micra. Stanley pushed hard and was great to see as he swapped from a rear-wheel-drive Mk1 escort to a FWD micra with absolutely no issues at all. Infact you'd think Stanley had driven FWD all his life! If only he could tempt some of the other Micra Challenge drivers out to play!!

### **Class 11 Sports libre Cars – large capacity Rally cars**

It would have taken 3 abacus's to have calculated the total number of horsepower on show today in class 11 and indeed we even had a family of sunbeams as well, but more on this later. Jaye Nevin was the man to beat in his Peugeot 205 as he pushed

like a man possessed to take the class win. Jaye was simply outstanding to watch as he pushed hard on every inch of his run – I've never seen him go as well!! Second in class 11 went to Noel Strain who was simply outstanding. Noel has had headache after heartache with this little mini over the years but everyone said that whenever he finally got it right, he would be hard to work with and today was that day. Noel finished second in class a mere 2.18secs behind Jaye Nevin and only 0.34 secs ahead of third placed David Cochrane in his Escort. John Mcdowell was fourth in his Escort Mk2 and drove it like he'd stolen it as he slipped and slid his way round Nutts Corner. John was easily the most entertaining driver of the day and was great to watch. Fifth went to Rodney White who debuted his new Sunbeam, and boy is it beautiful. Congratulations to Rodney on building such a beautiful car, a car that's almost too nice to be on a stage. (Rodney forget that auld Rallying lark and come and sprint with us). Ian Getty took 6<sup>th</sup> in his escort ahead of Derek Robinson in his sunbeam. Derek and Rodney were parked side by side and the 2 cars together looked like a father and son out for the day. Il not comment on which one was which but its great to see the 2 White Sunbeams together side by side. Its safe to say that if Rodney has 5% of the fun, craic, and success in his new car that he had in the old one he's going to have a cracker future in it. I think today that Noel Strain stamped his name well on truly on the title of "Fastest Strain". I think that the best way to sort this out is to have all the Strains at the same event to see once and for all which of them is fastest – Now fellas that's a challenge for you!

### **Class 12 4WD sports Libre Cars**

Adrian Kielt was flying solo again in class 12 today and was having great craic all day in his Imprezza. It's a shame that class 12 has dwindled so much of late but with Ian Lancashire, Ryan Murray Oliver Cormican and so many other drivers having 4wd monsters in the shed hopefully we will see more of them next season.

### **Class 13 Formula Racing cars**

James Graham was the man to beat in class 13 today in his Van Dieman. James had a stumbled start to the day after believing some eejit who told him there was more grip than there was, but not to be perturbed James still pushed on and took the class win by a mere 0.07secs from ex Sprint Champion and very successful formula ford racer Adrian Pollock. Third on the day went to Henry Campbell with Jenny Pollock rounding out the top 4. There was only 1.5 secs between the top 3 in this class and all their fastest times were set on their first runs!! Its safe to say that Jenny Pollock is getting to grips more and more with each event in her Formula ford and Jenny is getting faster and more confident with each run. Go on Jenny!!

### **Class 14 small Capacity Racing Cars**

I still maintain that class 14 is our closest class and every competitor can win on the day. This was especially evident today when the top 3 were separated by only 1.2 secs!! Ethan Faulkner was the man to beat and boy was he trying. Ethan took top honours by 1 tenth of a second – 0.1 of a sec from Flying Ryan McGimpsey. Ryan actually led the class right up until the last minute despite having some earlier issues in the day. Ethan drove well and gradually chipped away until he snatched the win on

the last run. I actually watched the first timed runs from the infield and Ryans run which was his fastest was incredible. He was clearly the fastest driver round the top half of the circuit from the right hander before the dip to the old rallycross start line Ryan, to the eye, was the fastest man round there, even faster than the class 15 cars. Scott McMullen took third place a mere 1.2secs behind Ethan and 1.1 behind Ryan with a superb drive as he is now pushing harder than ever before in his Jedi. Fourth in class was the hard charging Alwyn Buchannon who set a clinker of a 118.77 secs run in his little Swift. Alwyn has been pushing hard this year and has finally got to grips with the Swift which is superb to see. Alwyn is never seen in the paddock without a huge smile on his face and he's always full of craic, until the visor drops!!

### **Class 15 Larger Capacity Racing Cars**

As usual I've given the bulk of the run down on this class in the main body of the report so by means of a recap Alan Cassells was in front after the first timed run and went faster in his second but Tim Woodside went even faster and set a 92.69sec run on his second timed run. This time was not beaten all day. Tim was fastest overall in his Pilbeam Mp82 and took a very popular and well-deserved win. Second went to Alan Cassells in his Force HRC with Dungiven's Gerard O'Connell third in his World Series Dalarra a mere 0.73secs behind Alan. Fourth went to 10-time NI Hillclimb champion Graham Thompson who made a rare trip out to a sprint in his home built GTR Turbo

### **Class 16a Historic Road Cars**

Once again there was a good variety of cars in the class and all of them, without exception looked fantastically well. With 11 entered today, and at least two of the regulars marshalling this class seems to be on a bit of a rise and let's hope we can keep the momentum up and keep the historic's (I'm referring to the cars) competing and having fun. Its great to see.

Rumour has it that we have lost one of our regular historic competitors due to family reasons. Sadly a member of his family saw him pushing his new grand child in their pram and saw how badly they drove a pram so deemed them too bad a driver to race again. Whilst we are all disappointed to hear this, I know a lot of his competitors are delighted as he was getting hard to beat, or so Mervyn Getty told me anyway. Lol

Right down to business Michael Johnston was on serious form in his Escort and took the class win by a mere 0.53secs from hard charging Mervyn Getty in his MG BGT Sebring. Bill Blair finished third in his mini a mere 1.02secs behind Mervyn. In terms of cars Mervyn's Sebring and Bill Blair's mini could not be any further apart. Mervyn's Sebring is a big heavy Loud V8 which goes like a train and won't stop whereas Bill's wee mini is super light, and tuns and stops on a six pence. The joys of historic racing and these 2 were only separated by just fractionally over 1 second. Ian Pagett took fourth in his mini despite only doing 1 run, Sadly Ian's car didn't sound healthy but hopefully its nothing more than a loose wire. Trevor McIlroy took fifth in his Sebring Sprite ahead of Arthur Ovans in his Midget, Richard Beattie in his Mini, David McReynolds in his Escort, Chris Nichol in someone else's mini and James Acheson in a mini. Sadly, Arnie Wishart had a bad day after a belt broke in his Corvette but he

was still there enjoying the craic round the paddock. I mention there about Chris in someone else's mini. Chris was offered a double drive in the mini owned by his friend James Acheson. Sadly, Chris broke the cardinal rule and subsequently beat the owner in it. Its safe to say Chris`s Historic Sprinting career is now over. Fair play to James for allowing Chris to drive his beautiful wee motor, He`s obviously never seen how Chris drives his own mini lol.

### **Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sport scars**

Despite what the entry list shows you don't have to be called Stephen to race in 16b, nor is it restricted to Escorts only. Stephen Nevin was the fastest in this class today and got down a 112.62 sec run which put him a whopping 15<sup>th</sup> overall!!! This is some going in an historic Escort!! Second on the day was Stephen Harvey who fish tailed his Mk2 Escort down to a 120.55 sec run which saw him finish 40<sup>th</sup> overall which again is no mean feat!!