

TOP PART PREVIEW OF ROUND 3 LYONS OF LIMERICK CIRCUIT OF MUNSTER .

Top Part West Coast Preview of Round 3 Lyons of Limerick Circuit of Munster Stages Rally

The West Coast Championship Hot's up as we reach the mid way point of the 2019 Top Part Series with just one point separating two top Limerick drivers as we head into their home event here in Limerick for this weekend's Circuit of Munster. Event Sponsor Keith Lyons leads the Championship in his Fiesta R5 by just one point from fellow Limerick driver Ian Roche (Subaru Impreza S10). Donegal's Stuart Darcy (Ford Escort) is further point behind in third. Limerick co-driver Anthony Nestor also moves to the head of the navigator's standings.

After two Rounds its Limerick driver and Event Sponsor Keith Lyons who tops the series after finishing fourth overall in Kerry securing his best finish to date in his Ford Fiesta R5.

The Six Round 2019 Series got under way back in February with the opening round The Abbeyleix Manor Hotel Stages Rally. The organisers of the event The Birr and District Motor Club laid down three very challenging stages near Borris in Ossory which were repeated three times. Clerk of the course Bill Ryan and his team secured a quality entry with a total of 126 competitors starting the event.

Cold, damp, foggy and slippery conditions greeted the drivers on the opening Stage at Castleflemming Bridge and this trend continued throughout the event with the final mountain stage at Glendine having to be cancelled due to fog.

Leading from the start Monaghan's Josh Moffett (Ford Fiesta WRC) with Wexford navigator Andy Hayes were the overall winners of the event finishing 24.8 seconds ahead of Donegal cousins Declan and Brian Boyle also driving a Ford Fiesta WRC. 2017 Birr Rally winners Clonmel's Roy White and his Cork co-driver James O'Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC) finished third, one minute and 18.9 seconds further behind.

Josh Moffett led Boyle by 2.6 seconds on the opening stage with Peadar Hurson (Ford Fiesta WRC) slotting into third 11.1 seconds further behind. Moffett held his advantage through the second and very foggy third stage 27.2 seconds ahead of Boyle who was struggling with his suspension settings which he felt were too soft for the terrain. Hurson was losing time with a wrong tyre choice and was a further 28.5 seconds behind in third. Roy White was also struggling with a wrong tyre choice on his Fiesta 8.3 seconds behind in fourth claiming that the tyres were too hard.

On the second loop of the stages Moffett held his pace while the Boyle cousins were slightly quicker through stages four and five as they had more confidence with the car after softening the suspension. Roy White moved into third after changing to a softer compound tyre 1.4 seconds ahead of Hurson.

On the final loop of only two stages ss.7 and 8 as ss.9 was cancelled due to safety issues with heavy fog Josh Moffett went on to take the victory ahead of Declan Boyle with Roy White finishing third.

As Moffett did not register for the Top Part West Coast Championship Declan and Brian Boyle took the early lead in the series ahead of The 2016 National Rally Champions Clonmel's Roy White Cork's James O'Brien. Two time West Coast Champion and three time National Rally Champion Monaghan's Niall Maguire with Limerick's Anthony Nestor moved into third overall in their Subaru Impreza WRC after finishing 7th. Overall in Abbeyleix. Michael Boyle, son of Declan moved to 4th. Overall with co- driver Dermot McCafferty in their Mitsubishi EVO 9. They also lead Group N. 5th. Overall in the Top Part series after Round 1 were Declan McCrory / Stephen O'Hanlon in their Subaru Impreza S12 followed by five times West Coast Champion Shane Maguire and Donal Balfe (Mitsubishi EVO 9) in 6th. Limerick's Ian Roche moved to 7th. Overall followed by fellow Limerick man Keith Lyons in 8th.

Leading the two wheel drive section of the Top Part series were Stuart Darcy (Ford Escort) who slotted into 9th. while his navigator Emmet Sherry slotted into 8th. Completing the top 10 was Jason Black (Toyota Starlet) while his navigator Karl Egan moved to 9th Overall. The Toyota Starlet crew also won the "Top Part Championship Drive of the Day"

Clare Motor Club's Michael Hamilton, one of the 2018 Billy Coleman Award nominees won the Top Part Junior Section with Shane Byrnes calling the notes in their Honda Civic.

Moving to Tralee for Round 2 of the Top Part Series, The Rose Hotel Circuit of Kerry Stages Rally, it's Limerick's Keith Lyons (Fiesta R5) who takes over the Championship Lead. The Limerick Motor Dealer finished fourth overall with co-driver Niall Burns securing his best finish to date. Early Championship leaders Declan and Brian Boyle, Roy White or Niall Maguire did not make the trip to Kerry. Another Limerick crew Ian Roche / Anthony Nestor finished sixth overall after a trouble free run in their Subaru Impreza S10. Ian moves from seventh to second overall just one point behind Lyons. Co-Driver Anthony Nestor who also secured points with Monaghan driver Niall Maguire on Round one moves into the overall lead in the Co-Driver section after Kerry.

A lot was expected of local heroes and 2018 Top Part Champions Mike Quinn and Tony Healy who made their World Rally Car debut in a Subaru Impreza WRC. Their event was fraught with problems, a timing glitch and a clutch issue on the start line of stage one meant they did not get off the line until the third attempt. Nevertheless, they were fourth fastest on the first run over Mount Eagle and slotted into third overall after the opening Headley's Bridge stage. However, an engine problem on the road section between stage two and three, Knight's Mountain, ended their challenge. Donegal's Michael Boyle (Mitsubishi Evo 9) did not compete in Kerry but retains his Group N lead while Stuart Darcy (Ford Escort) retains his lead in the two wheel drive section jumping from ninth place on Round one to third overall. Clare's Michael Hamilton / Stephen Joyce retain their lead in the Junior Section but entered the main field in Kerry, securing eight overall in their very quick Honda Civic. The Clare driver moves up to fourth overall in the series while his co-driver Stephen moves to fifth Overall. Early series leader Donegal's Declan Boyle drops to 5th Overall with Clonmel's Roy White in 6th. Darren Young moves into 7th. Overall while the remainder of the top 10 consists of Monaghan's Niall Maguire in 8th, Donegal's Michael Boyle in 9th. and Limerick's Hazel O'Callaghan in 10th.

Two time West Coast Rally Champion and runner up in the 2018 series Limerick's Ed Synan with Tom Collins calling the notes led the event on the opening stage by just six 10ths of a second in their hired Subaru Impreza S12B from Clare's Padraig Egan, also in a hired Subaru Impreza S14 with rally winner O'Riordan 1.9 seconds behind. Egan was fastest on ss3 and led Synan by 3.8 seconds but the stage times were eventually scrapped. At the Service Halt back in Tralee the revised times gave Synan a 2.4 second lead over Egan with O'Riordan five seconds behind. A cruel blow on special stage four saw an end to Synan's fantastic drive when he had to retire the Subaru with transmission problems, leaving O'Riordan to take the lead for the first time. Egan moved to second just two 10ths of a second behind. The pair traded times on stages five and six and at the final service halt Egan was the new rally leader four seconds ahead of O'Riordan. Egan with Brian Hassett calling the notes lead was short lived as they dropped the McKinstry Hired Subaru into a drain towards the end of special stage seven. With no hope of extracting the S14 Cork's O'Riordan went on to take overall victory in what was a very exciting Circuit of Kerry Rally.

The Top Part Drive of the Day winners were Limerick's Frankie Sweeney (Ford Escort MK2) with Clare co-driver Jane Cogan

Dermot Kelleher

Top Part West Coast Rally Championship PRO