



Bluebird Care Galway Summer Rally Final Report

Gareth MacHale & Brian Murphy (VW Polo) rolled back the years to win the Bluebird Care Galway Summer Rally in fine fashion when they had 15.2 seconds to spare over the Skoda Fabia of Andrew Purcell & Andy Hayes. David Guest had led for the first three stages but slid off the road on the fourth to hand MacHale a lead he was never to lose. It was MacHale's first rally win in almost twelve years, having taken a break from the sport until this year. Robert Barrable & Paddy Robinson took third place in a Ford Fiesta just seven seconds behind Purcell after an event long battle. Gary Kiernan & Paul Sheridan won the Group 4 Fabrications King of the Mk2 while Andrew Burke & Martin Brady took home the Conroy Cup for best Galway crew.

The newly crowned National & Tarmac Champion Josh Moffett gave the Galway Summer Rally a miss, but the assembled field had a number of potential winners in its ranks. Top seeds were Robert Barrable & Paddy Robinson in a Fiesta but lined up behind them were a number of accomplished drivers, with Peadar Hurson, David Guest, Gareth MacHale, Joe McGonigle, and Tim McNulty making up the top six starters. 150 crews took to the start and nine stages were on the agenda, with the locations being Tiaquin, Greenhills and Knockroe.

David Guest was quickest out of the blocks taking fastest time on the opening stage, but only five seconds separated the top six after the Tiaquin test. All the drivers remarked on the tricky, bumpy section of road near the start but negotiated it safely. However, several crews further back were not so lucky, their rally ending less than two kilometres in, including two local drivers Dylan Donoghue and David Quigley, both of whom went off the road.

The second test was cancelled but the third on Knockroe saw Guest extend his lead with MacHale holding second place, five seconds behind. The dry conditions meant high speeds and very tight competition. Brendan Cumiskey was having a strong drive in his Polo and was up to third place by the first service, followed by Hurson, Purcell and Barrable with only ten seconds separating the top six places. Richard Moffett was the top two-wheel exponent, bringing his Toyota Starlet into seventh with some excellent driving, while Dessie Keenan in ninth place was the leading Escort in the King of the Mk2 challenge.

Following service, the fourth stage (a repeat of Tiaquin) saw MacHale put a big push on to take the lead by just one second from Guest with Purcell setting a stunning time to move into third place. The pace was getting hotter, and it was one of the most open national rallies in a long time. The fifth stage at Greenhills saw Guest slide off the road on a right hander, and although the car was undamaged, he was unable to get back on the road and was forced to retire. MacHale's time was

sensation on the stage and suddenly, the lead was out to thirteen seconds with Cumiskey inheriting second place, closely followed by Purcell and Barrable. The sixth stage saw MacHale manage his lead with no further change near the top, but mechanical problems forced Dessie Keenan out, leaving Gary Kiernan in seventh place as the top Escort driver.

The final loop of stages saw drama on the seventh test with Hurson retiring with mechanical problems, and Cumiskey rolling out of second place towards the end of the stage. MacHale kept his lead with no further problems to take a well-deserved victory. Purcell took second place after an impressive performance despite being pushed all the way by Barrable. Richard Moffett took a superb third place after a brilliant drive in the little Starlet. Gary Kiernan finished in fifth place to win the Group 4 Fabrications King of the Mk2 for the fourth time.

Gareth Sayers finished sixth in a Fiesta, with Tim McNulty pleased with his first outing in the VW Polo and finishing seventh. Joe McGonigle, Patrick McHugh, and Conor Murphy rounded off the top ten places. The Conroy Cup for best Galway crew went to Andrew Burke and Martin Brady in a Skoda Fabia R5 after a good battle with Des Lyons & Aisling McArdle's Honda Civic. The Historic Section was won by Galway crew Ross & Arron Forde in a Ford Escort with Monaghan's Mark Fox & Conor Maguire winning the Junior category in a Honda Civic.

Top 10 Overall

1 – Gareth MacHale & Brian Murphy	VW Polo R5	0:51:49.6
2 – Andrew Purcell & Andy Hayes	Skoda Fabia R5	0:52:04.8
3 – Robert Barrable & Paddy Robinson	Ford Fiesta R5	0:52:12.5
4 – Richard Moffett & Darragh Kelly	Toyota Starlet	0:52:55.0
5 – Gary Kiernan & Paul Sheridan	Ford Escort Mk2	0:53:06.4
6 – Gareth Sayers & Gareth Gilchrist	Ford Fiesta R5	0:53:22.0
7 – Tim McNulty & Paul Kiely	VW Polo R5	0:53:32.6
8 – Joe McGonigle & Ciaran Geaney	Ford Fiesta R5	0:53:34.0
9 – Conor Murphy & Sean Collins	Ford Escort Mk2	0:53:40.5
10 – Patrick McHugh & Pauric O'Donnell	Ford Escort Mk2	0:53:48.8

Conroy Cup (Best Galway Crew)

Andrew Burke & Martin Brady	Skoda Fabia R5
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Group 4 Fabrications King of the Mk2

Gary Kiernan & Paul Sheridan	Ford Escort Mk2
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Historic Category

Ross & Arron Forde	Ford Escort Mk2
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Junior Category

Mark Fox & Conor Maguire	Honda Civic
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Kevin O'Driscoll
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