



The 2024 Sligo Pallets Irish Forest Rally Championship

Round 1 Preview – Killarney Forest Rally

If you go down to the woods this weekend, you might just stumble upon one of the most exciting season openers in years as Castleisland plays host to the first round of the 2024 Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship with the highly anticipated Killarney Forestry Rally.

Opening Ireland's loose-surface season for a third straight year, the Kerry event has grown quickly into becoming a competitor favourite, and the organisers efforts have been rewarded with over 90 crews set to take on this year's event.

Contested over six technical stages amongst the brilliant Coillte Forestry complexes east of Castleisland, the rally stars have a 60km route in store punctuated halfway with a service halt in the Mart right in the heart of the town at mid-day.

The entry list published by Killarney & District Motor Club is absolutely jammed packed with quality right through the field, with Jordan & Paul Hone wearing the number one seed upon their door. After a disappointing last campaign by his high standards, Jordan is determined to make a strong start to the 2024 campaign and his aim to claim the Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship aboard the familiar Ford Fiesta R5.

As announced in January, Andrew Mullen from Sligo Pallets has renewed his Title Sponsorship of the series, with a two-year deal announced seeing the ever popular brand continue to grow alongside the Championship.

Behind the Hone's at number two is Andrew Purcell & Liam Brennan, their VW Polo GTi R5 fresh from success on the Boggeragh Sprint in December being followed by a similar machine in the hands of Vivian Hamill & Gary Nolan. Stephen McCann finished on the podium on this event last year, and he returns with John McCabe beside him at number four while Derek Mackarel & Eamonn Creedon start next in another Ford Fiesta R5.

The 2WD battle has evolved massively in recent years, but the first four cars on the road are all Ford Escort MK2's. 2023 Champion Mickey Conlon has a new navigator in James McEneaney alongside him, Sam Stewart & Alan Johnston move up from their giant killing Class 11R days to join Class 13, while Hugh McQuaid & Declan Casey and David Condell & Michael Coady are both hugely experienced crews that will be in the mix for the win.

Throughout 2023, the rise of the Rally4 Front-Wheel-Drive machines was remarkable, and the entry list in Killarney reflects this as 14 of these cutting-edge machines are set to tackle the Killarney Forestry Rally stages. Billy Coleman Award winner Jack Brennan & John McGrath lead the pack away in their Peugeot 208 Rally4, with Kyle McBride & Liam McIntyre, Casey-Jay Coleman & Lorcan Moore and Keelan Grogan & Ayrton Sherlock all in similar machines.

Of all the battles throughout the field, none on paper compare to what is set to be an incredible day on the stages for the J1000 competitors, with a remarkable twenty-four crews set to start the event, a record for the class. With many graduates of the series such as Tommy Moffett, Jack Kennedy, Jack Harris, Ciara Duggan and



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Kalum Graffin moving into new classes on the Killarney Forestry Rally, its Ross Ryan & Peter Keohane who will carry top seeding.

Behind the pair, Tommy Cronin & Derek Butler, Tommy Furlong & Niall Furlong as well as Danny Brady & Darren O'Brien have all got experience of competing right at the front of the J1000 battle and will be looking to put themselves in contention for a title bid right from the start.

The action kicks off bright and early Sunday morning, with the first of the J1000 field leaving Castleisland at 08.40 destined for the first of six special stages that will make up the opening of six rounds of the 2024 Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship.

Cian Donnellan

Championship PRO

The 2024 Sligo Pallets Irish Forest Rally Championship Calendar:

Round 1 - 18th Feb – Killarney Forest Rally

Round 2 - 14th Apr – Willie Loughman Carrick-on-Suir Forest Rally

Round 3 - 11th Aug – Jim Walsh Cork Forest Rally

Round 4 – 7th Sep – Lakelands Forest Rally

Round 5 – 21st Sep – The Bushwhacker Rally

Round 6 - 5th Oct – Clare Forest Rally