



The 2023 Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship

After a break of nearly three months, excitement is reaching fever pitch once more as the Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship kicks into gear once more with the return after a break of this weekend's Sean Conlon Memorial Tipperary Forest Rally, the second round of the 2023 season.

Following the postponement of the Moonraker Forest Rally in April, a bumper entry for the Tipperary Forest Rally, returning to the Championship after an absence of nine years, shows the incredible buzz surrounding loose surface rallying in Ireland this year, and an exciting 6-stage event lies in store in the vicinity of Cahir this Sunday.

Starting off with the 10.1km Goatenbridge test, the longest of the Rally, the road will be opened by another staggering entry of Junior 1000 crews, with nineteen youngsters between the ages of 14-17 set to tackle the Tipperary Light Car and Motorcycle Club event.

Killarney victors Jack Kennedy & Colin O'Toole are top seeds in their VW Up!, but buoyed by skills learned on the recent J1000 Tuition day in Tynagh expect to see some incredibly tight battles with the likes of Tommy Moffett & Domhnall Lennon, Jack Harris & Aaron O'Regan, Ross Ryan & Peter Keohane and Tommy Cronin & Karl Egan all chasing Kennedy's Championship lead.

Following the J1000's, an impressive field of 2WD Crews will tackle the 53.2km route punctuated by a service halt in Cahir Mart at mid-day. The changing face of the sport is clear to see with the familiar rear-wheel-drive crews like the Ford Escort MK2 pairings of Hugh McQuaid & Declan Casey and Steven Corey & Ella Ryan, as well as the unique Lada VFTS of Shane McGirr & Denver Rafferty sharing the top seedings with a host of young guns in impressive front-wheel-drive machinery.

The cohort of Rally4 Cars are led away by Casey Jay Coleman who swaps to a Peugeot 208 for the latest round of the Sligo Pallets backed Championship, but he knows it's set to be an incredible battle once more with both Dylan Eves & Ryan Farrell and Cian Caldwell & Liam Egan in Ford Fiesta's that have been incredibly quick on both surfaces this year so far.

At the head of the field though the number one spot is reserved for Mark Donnelly & Sean Ferris, with their Ford Fiesta Rally2 in fine form having claimed victory on the opening round of the championship in Killarney, as well as the non-championship Fivemiletown rally in Northern Ireland.

Chasing Donnelly though is a field absolutely bursting with talent, with Vivian Hamill & Andrew Grennan in a VW Polo at number 2, 2022 Forest Championship Runners up Jordan Hone & Paul Hone seeded third, and Stephen McCann & Tommy Hayes in a similar Ford Fiesta to the Hone's.

Mixed into the top 6 though are two entries of note, with double champion Owen Murphy returning to the woods alongside Anthony Nestor in a Citroen C3 Rally2, while the breakthrough star of Round 1 was surely Ryan Caldwell & Arthur Kierans who finished in a remarkable 3rd Place on his 4WD debut and their Skoda Fabia R5 starts at number 6.

With six challenging stages in store, this Sunday is set to be an incredible day of loose surface action as the Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship returns to the Sean Conlon Tipperary Forest Rally, and all eyes will be on the high-speed forestry tests once the first cars leave Cahir Mart at 10am.



The 2023 Sligo Pallets Forest Rally Championship
The 2023 Sligo Pallets Irish Forest Rally Championship Calendar:

Round 1 - 19th Feb – Killarney Forest Rally

Round 2 - 14th May – Tipperary Sean Conlon Forest Rally

Round 3 – Date TBC – Moonraker Forest Rally (Awaiting New Date following Postponement)

Round 4 - 20th Aug – Jim Walsh Cork Forest Rally

Round 5 - 2nd Sep – Lakelands Forest Rally

Round 6 - 16th Sep – The Bushwhacker Rally

Round 7 - 8th Oct – Willie Loughman Carrick-on-Suir Forest Rally

Cian Donnellan,
Championship PRO