BANTRY BECKONS FOR TRITON SHOWERS FASTNET FINALE

Preview courtesy of Triton Showers – proud sponsors of the National Rally Championship

The Triton Showers National Rally Championship concludes in Bantry with the Westlodge Hotel Fastnet Rally on Sunday next.  Although Donegal’s Donagh Kelly (Ford Focus WRC) has already clinched the series there are a number of issues still to be resolved on the nine-stage event.

The third and final overall placing, the Motorsport Safety Group N award, the [rally.ie](http://rally.ie/) title and the Triton Showers Junior National Rally Championship are amongst those down for decision in Bantry that will bring an end to a fine year on the Triton Trail.

Chairman of the organising committee, Richard Talbot put the season in context. “With our new sponsor, Triton Showers, we have managed to continue the very successful format of the series in a seamless fashion.  However, increased entries on the eight rounds is also a reflection of Kevin’s (Barrett) popularity within the sport.  It kicked off with a very successful launch last January and following the Westlodge Hotel Fastnet Rally, the awards ceremony in Athlone (November 21st.) is the perfect way to end a superb season.  Next year, eight different locations as opposed to this year, will continue the effective reign of the Triton Showers National Rally Championship.”

Kerry driver Alan Ring (Subaru WRC), who is seeded at number two has withdrawn his entry leaving Clonmel’s Roy White in his new Ford Fiesta WRC in a stronger position to secure third overall in the Triton series and continue his remarkable run of a top three finish since 2013.

Donegal’s Declan Gallagher (Toyota Starlet) is now the only driver that can deprive White of third place – if White was to fail to finish, Gallagher must claim 20 points to net the final overall place in the Triton series - including Bonus Points, there is a maximum of 23 points on offer in Bantry.

Meanwhile, former National rally champion Mel Evans, who will actually drive the same S12B Subaru WRC that Ring campaigned in the Triton series is a late .

Evans won the Fastnet Rally when it was based in Skibbereen in 2010, he will have Patrick Walsh on the pacenotes.

Meanwhile, in terms of outright victory Midleton’s Daragh O’Riordan (Ford Fiesta WRC), who is the top seed, is aiming to win the event for an unprecedented fourth time.  Since the rally moved its base to Bantry, O’Riordan has won on three occasions – in 2011 in a Subaru WRC and in 2012 and last year in his current Ford Fiesta WRC, in 2013 he was second to Denis Cronin (Subaru WRC).

Clonakilty’s Kevin Kelleher (Subaru WRC) could spring a surprise and give O’Riordan, Ring and White a tough challenge.  A former Group N National champion, Kelleher finished fourth in both the Abbeyleix Rally and the Circuit of Munster earlier in the season.

Meanwhile, Kevin Barrett (Subaru WRC), who finished just behind Kelleher in the Circuit of Munster where he took the final bonus point, will aim to finish the season on a positive note having retired from the last round in Galway with suspension damage.  Kevin will have Limerick’s Anthony Nestor on the pacenotes.

The next three seeds, Donegal’s Declan Gallagher (Toyota Starlet) and Cavan duo Jonathan Pringle (Ford Escort) and Chris Armstrong (Ford Escort) are in contention for the [rally.ie](http://rally.ie/) award.  Even though Armstrong leads with 67 points from Gallagher (65pts) and Pringle (64pts) it is Gallagher that is in the most advantageous position.  His score is from five events and he can add all the points from his Bantry expedition.

Armstrong and Pringle must drop their lowest scores - 10 and 6 respectively and then add the Bantry points - provided they are higher.

Meanwhile, Cavan’s Gary Kiernan (Ford Escort), the latest bi-monthly nominee for the Billy Coleman award and who finished second overall in the recent non-championship Donegal Harvest Rally, will occupy the number nine berth.  The top ten is completed by Monaghan’s Daniel McKenna - the British Rally champion will drive the Brendan Kelly Toyota GT86.

Tyrone’s Aidan Wray (Mitsubishi Evo X) is the top seeded Group N driver as he bids to win the Motorsport Safety Group N title, his retirement from the previous round in Galway was due to clutch failure.  Paul Barrett (Subaru) and former champion Neil Tohill (Mitsubishi) are his championship rivals.  In event terms, local driver David Guest (Mitsubishi) will be aiming to serve up a strong performance.  He actually led the category in the Raven’s Rock Rally in Waterford until driveshaft failure halted his progress.

Elsewhere, Ballylickey’s Daniel Cronin will campaign the Subaru WRC that won the event in 2009 in the hands of his uncle Denis.

Killarney’s Rob Duggan (Peugeot 208 R2) is returning to Bantry, last year he drove a Mitsubishi to fourth overall.

There should be a fascinating battle in Class 11F with Bandon’s Vincent McSweeney (Honda Civic) and a host of other very competitive drivers.  Amongst them, Clonakilty’s Cal McCarthy (Honda Civic), who won the class last year, Kerry’s David Fleming, Rosscarbery’s Jason O’Mahony and former National Junior champion Donoughmore’s Bernard Foley, all in Honda Civics.

Others on the 120 plus entry are Killarney’s Fergus O'Meara (Ford Escort),

Dunmanway’s Jason McSweeney (Mitsubishi), Triton Showers R5 champion Wexford’s Graham Scallan (Mitsubishi Evo X) and Baltimore’s Stephen Carey (Honda Civic).

An interesting entry is that of Castletownbere native Liam O'Sullivan (Honda Civic), who journeys home from Australia to compete in the rally.

In the Triton Showers Junior Rally Championship the title will be decided in favour of either Wexford’s James Bradley (Honda Civic) and Roscommon’s Cormac Phelan (Citroen C2R2), Bradley has withdrawn his entry, should Phelan take maximum points, he will retain his Junior crown.

Ahead of the season finale, Kevin Barrett, M.D. Triton Showers remarked, “Our involvement, aside from our very strong links with rallying, was to promote the Triton brand to a wide audience.  I think we have achieved that through television, print and social media in a very spectacular way. The championship committee led by Richard Talbot along with the organising clubs have done a marvellous job and they deserve great credit.”

The rally will also determine the outcome of the [PlasticBags.ie](http://plasticbags.ie/) Southern 4 Rally Championship with Killarney’s Tadgh O’Sullivan (Escort) and Bandon’s Vincent McSweeney (Honda Civic) vying for the title.

EVENT DETAILS:

Organising Club: Skibbereen & District Car Club.

Clerk of the Course: Ger Hayes.

Rally Headquarters: Westlodge Hotel, Bantry.  [027 50360](tel:027%2050360).

First Car Away, Westlodge Hotel, Bantry. 08.00.

Finish Ramp: Westlodge Hotel 16.04.

TOP 10 STARTERS:

1. Daragh O’Riordan/Tony McDaid (Ford Fiesta WRC)

3. Roy White/James O’Brien (Ford Fiesta WRC)

4. Kevin Kelleher/Brian Duggan (Subaru WRC)

5. Kevin Barrett/Sean Mullally (Subaru WRC)

6. D. Gallagher/Ryan Moore (Toyota Starlet).

7. Jonathan Pringle/Martin Byrne (Ford Escort)

8. Chris Armstrong/James Fulton (Ford Escort)

9. Gary Kiernan/Niall Tierney (Ford Escort)

10. Daniel McKenna/Arthur Kierans (Toyota GT86)

11.   Aidan Wray/Kieran McGrath (Mitsubishi Evo IX)