



## **Transmission failure ends Alastair's Brilliant Bulldog Start**

The Bulldog International Rally, round one of the British Rally Championship presented 100 miles of superb Welsh forest stages for the crews on Saturday. For Co. Tyrone's Alastair Fisher, who finished third in the British and Irish Rally Championship's last season, it presented the first chance in 2010 to measure his performance once more against the best in Britain, and Alastair once again proved he had great pace. On stage 6 however the Group N Mitsubishi Evo 9 succumbed to a rare mechanical failure in the rear differential, and for Alastair and Letterkenny co-driver Rory Kennedy it was the end of their Bulldog efforts.

However it was quite some effort early on for Alastair and Rory. *"Keith Cronin had a superb time on the first 17 mile stage, but we were happy enough with our pace in comparison with the other crews."* Indeed after two stages Alastair was lying in third place overall behind leader Cronin and second placed Craig Breen in his Super 2000 Fiesta, but Craig's rally ended on the road section after stage 2 with fuel pressure problems.

Stage 3 was a re-run of the opening Myherin test and Alastair blasted to his first fastest time, a full 6 seconds ahead of Dave Weston Jnr in his Subaru. *"We had fastest times on stages 3 and 4, we settled into a good rhythm and the braking zones were much cleaner. It seems to be at times the smoother you are with these Group N cars the better your time on the clock. We had also made a few minor tweaks to our pace-notes on the first run over the tests, and that helped us carry a wee bit more speed. Gerry McGarrity as ever had done a great job with the car, and it was handling very well, the balance felt good."* It was an impressive pair of stages for the Team UK MSA Elite driver, and it put Alastair a firm second just 30 seconds behind leader Cronin, and 30 seconds ahead of third placed Weston Jnr.

Fortunes were to change however by the end of the very next stage. *"After stage 5 on the road section I heard a knocking noise from the rear, and when I inspected the rear differential there was oil leaking. We had no option but to drive on into the next test, the car limped through in front wheel drive only, but when we stopped after the stage finish, we had lost all drive so that was it."*

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*It is disappointing on the first round not to finish as we were leading the UK Evo Challenge also, but I was happy with the car, I feel the car now has a lot more traction since upgrading to DMS suspension, coupled with the excellent grip from the Pirelli K6 tyres we are a good half a second a mile faster than last year."*

With only four days to get the car re-prepped and into tarmac specification prior to this weekend's Circuit of Ireland, its going to be all systems go back at McGarrity Motorsport workshop in Fermanagh in readiness for round two of the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship in which Alastair lies in equal third place overall.

Marshall Clarke will be stepping into the co-driver's seat this weekend, as Rory Kennedy is on holiday. Marshal has co-driven for World Production Champion Niall McShea in the past, and Alastair is very much looking forward to this Easter classic.

*"I know Marshall quite well and I am looking forward to having him on board for the first time for which is also my first attempt at the full Circuit. There is an 18 mile night stage on the Saturday evening so that should be quite challenging. Galway was a good start to the Irish Tarmac Championship for us, so let's hope we can keep that going."*



**TROA**

