

MERRICK EARNS “BEST” RALLY AWARD

The Merrick Forest Stages Rally – based in Newton Stewart - has been named as “best event” in this year's County Saab Scottish Championship.

The announcement and presentation of the Chairman’s Cup was made at the Championship awards dinner held in Dundee on Saturday, 10th November.

Rally Manager Allan Marshall said he was “absolutely over the moon” at receiving the accolade, adding that it had been “a tremendous team effort in our first year with a new format”.

Mr Marshall went on: “The feedback we've had on the condition of the stages, the overall running of the event, and the new purpose-built service area at Glencaird has all been very encouraging”.

“It's given us a platform to build on for next year, and hopefully we can stay close to the top of the podium”, Mr Marshall said.

He paid tribute to the Newton Stewart Business Association, the local Community Council, and the Glentrool Residents' Association for the support they'd given to the rally.

There was praise too for the people of Newton Stewart who, Mr Marshall said, “open their doors to the event every September”.

One of the main criteria used by the Championship committee in judging “the best event” award is the feedback received from competitors.

When crews hand in their time-cards at the end of each rally, they are encouraged to add comments about the condition of the stages and the organisation of the event.

Comments included: “Stages great, paperwork excellent”; “stages in excellent condition, superb days rallying”; and “a great day out”.

Another competitor commented: “The best yet. We were running near the front and it was like a motorway”.

The Merrick succeeded the Park Systems Furniture Stages rally of recent years, following the ending of a long and successful partnership with the Glasgow company.

A new management team pressed ahead with organising the September event despite being unable to find a major sponsor to replace Park Systems.

With just weeks to go, Castle Douglas funeral director and rally competitor Ian Bendall stepped in to provide much needed financial support.

The Merrick was the seventh and penultimate round of this year's Championship and was won by former Scottish champion Jimmy Girvan in his Subaru.

He just pipped young Dumfries star David Bogie in his Mitsubishi Evo 9. The two finished the day in a dead heat, but under rally regulations, Girvan took the win, having beaten Bogie on the third stage.

However, second was good enough for Bogie to secure the Group N title for production standard cars, and he went on to take his maiden Scottish Championship win on the final round – the McRae Stages - in Perth.

For further information go to www.merrickstages.co.uk

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