RALLY REPORTS

Photo: Derek Binstead

Darrian T9 man Jeremy Straker profited when rival John Indri retried to take his first overall rally victory in 15 seasons of trying

STRAKER STRUTS TO BRANDS WIN

TRS Brands Hatch Stages
By James Attwood

Organiser: Chelmsford MC **When:** January 22 **Where:** Brands Hatch, Kent **Championships:** AEMC, ACSMC, ASEMC **Stages:** 8 **Starters:** 77

Jeremy Straker started the penultimate stage of the TRS Brands Hatch Stages trailing fellow Darrian driver John Indri by 35 seconds. The cars were starting the stage at 30 seconds intervals, so when Straker caught an ailing Indri halfway round the test he quickly worked out what it meant.

"I started shaking when I saw John going slowly," said Straker. "I thought 'I've only got to get to the end and I can win this'. It's a bit of a shock."

You can excuse Straker for shaking a bit – Indri's problems handed the Fleet driver his first outright rally win in 15 years of trying. Straker, co-driven by his brother Mark, kept out of bother on a rally in which most of the frontrunners hit trouble.

Ford Focus WRC crew Nigel Mummery/Fiona Scarrett set the pace on the opening stage, going four seconds quicker than Indri, who roped in Keith Hounslow to navigate at the last minute when Dave Engwell fell ill. But Mummery's flying started ended on the next test when he slid wide on oil on a section of the stage that headed into the race circuit's pit exit. He smashed into a barrier, knocking his wheel off its rim. The car was otherwise undamaged and he rejoined, finishing down in 24th.

Indri went fastest on that stage to claim the lead, with Straker moving up into second. That was the pattern for the rest of the day, with Straker just unable to match Indri's recently upgraded machine. Even the need to change a suspension arm at lunchtime service didn't seem to slow Indri – but the surprisingly sunny weather ultimately did.

"We thought it would rain so we didn't bring many slicks," said Indri. "We used one set of slicks in the morning, then changed to a cut hard compound in the afternoon. We lowered the tyre pressure, and when we hit a bump on stage seven it pulled the tyre right off the rim."

That ended Indri's day, and the battle for the lead. There was plenty of attrition behind the two Darrians. Ford Escort Mk2 man Pete Rayner ended his victory bid when he accidentally did an extra lap on stage four – "my co-driver called it, so it was completely my mistake," he admitted. Peugeot 306 Maxi driver Guy Wigley was pushing Straker when he lost fuel pressure on stage six.

That meant that an entertaining three-way scrap between Paul King/Alicia Miles (Escort Mk2), Alan Thompson/Helen Straker (Ford Fiesta) and Tom Roberts/Nicky Marriott (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) became a fight for second. King entered the final stage with a small advantage, and set the fastest overall time to secure second, 1m 11s behind Straker.

Roberts had built his speed throughout the day, and saved his best for the gloom of the final stage. He was second quickest on the test to edge Thompson for third by four seconds.

Paul Diamond/Richard Upton completed the top five, ahead of fellow Escort crew and Class D winners Ian Hucklebridge/Gary Johnson.

Richard Davies/Gareth Wilcox (Escort) took eighth overall and won Class B. Ian and Will Barnard dominated Class A in their Nova.

RESULTS

1 Jeremy Straker/Mark Straker (Darrian T9) 45m 05s; 2 Paul King/Alicia Miles (Ford Escort Mk2) +1m 01s; 3 Tom Roberts/Nicky Marriott (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +1m 07s; 4 Alan Thompson/Helen Straker (Ford Fiesta) +1m 11s; 5 Paul Diamond/Richard Upton (Escort Mk2) +1m 22s; 6 Ian Hucklebridge/Gary Johnson (Escort) +1m 45s; 7 Alan Thistlethwaite/Mick Klein (Aston Martin Rally GT) +2m 17s; 8 Richard Davies/Gareth Wilcox (Escort Mk2) +2m 20s; 9 Gavin Rogers/Derek Rogers (Escort) +2m 22s; 10 James Slaughter/Geoff Dearing (Escort) +2m 28s. **Class winners, C:** Straker/Straker; **E:** Roberts/Marriott; **D:** Hucklebridge/Johnson; **B:** Davies Wilcox; **A:** Ian Barnard/Will Barnard (Vauxhall Nova).

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Aled Humphreys/Dave Barnes won a closely fought **Winter Challenge Road Rally** which gave the driver his first rally win. Fourteen crews were still clean at Petrol but all dropped time on the eighth section where the result was decided.

Humphreys/Barnes finished seven seconds ahead of Geoff Hall/Martyn Taylor, who'd made the journey from Cumbria in their Mini. Jim Brown/Guy Woodcock rounded off the top three and were five seconds further back.

Welsh champion Meirion Evans, who had Iwan Jones on the maps, was one of those who was clean at the halfway point but ended his rally in a hedge in the second half.

The Semi-Expert crew of Mike Jones/Rob Lloyd could have pulled off a surprise win as they were quickest over the decisive eighth section. However they had missed a code board earlier on and incurred a fail. This left Wil Evans/Ian Jones to take Class 2 honours and they finished just three second ahead of challengers Gareth Williams/Llion Williams.

There was a clear winner of the Novice division as Andy Stewart/Luke Burton were two minutes ahead of their nearest rivals.

Huw Jones/Darren Williams took a clear victory on the **Pinged Hill Trophy**. The pair dropped time at just one control all night and ended the rally a minute clear of the field. Howard Howells/Alan Jones took the runner-up spot on the novice-oriented event. They enjoyed a consistent run, moving up from fifth after the first section.

Dorian James/Elgan Davies took third position, which was a notable result on the driver's first rally.

Nicholas Stepney/Alun Ginn looked to be on for a top three result when their Peugeot 205 suffered gearbox failure in the second half. Christopher Williams/Dean Willshire held second place at the halfway point but early arrivals at several controls meant they fell down the order.

The top two crews in the **Cork Navigation Trial** were split by a single mark at the finish. Father-and-son crew Pakie and Colin Duffy took their first National Navigation Championship win ahead of Chris Kelly and Sam Johnston.

Ian Mills and Paul Phelan

Results

Winter Challenge Road Rally
Organiser: North Wales Car Club **When:** January 21/22 **Where:** North Wales **Championships:** ANWCC **Route:** 142 miles **Starters:** 40.
1 Aled Humphreys/Dave Barnes (VW Golf GTi) 00m 35s; 2 Geoff Hall/Martyn Taylor (Mini Cooper S) 00m 42s; 3 Jim Brown/Guy Woodcock (Proton Coupe) 00m 47s; 4 Bryn Jones/Rob Leeman (Ford Escort) 00m 48s; 5= Roger Powley/Max Freeman (Proton Coupe) 00m 51s; 5= Martin Allwood/Tim Powley (BMW 318iS) 00m 51s; 7 Kev Parry/Roger Evans (Ford Focus) 00m 53s; 8 Pete Tyson/Neil Harrison (Cooper S) 00m 54s; 9 Nick Dixon/Callum Dixon (Peugeot 205 XS) 1m 01s; 10 David Jones/Heath Griffiths (BMW 318 iS) 1m 30s. **Class Winners, Semi-Experts:** Wil Evans/Ian Jones (BMW Compact); **Novices:** Andy Stewart/Luke Burton (Vauxhall Nova SRi).

Pinged Hill Trophy
Organiser: Kidwelly Motor Club **When:** January 21/22 **Where:** South Wales **Championships:** None **Route:** 120 miles **Starters:** 54.
1 Huw Jones/Darren Williams (Peugeot 206) 0m 17s; 2 Howard Howells/Alan Jones (Citroën Xsara) 1m 14s; 3 Dorian James/Elgan Davies (Peugeot 306) 2m 06s; 4 Simon Summers/Leighton Williams (Ford Sierra) 2m 20s; 5 Hefyn Thomas/Mark Kehrein (VW Golf) 2m 41s; 6 Dalton Thomas/Iwan Davies (Citroën Saxo) 2m 48s; 7 James MacFarlane/Cieran Guest (Vauxhall Corsa) 3m 15s; 8 Jamie Thomas/Peter White (Peugeot 205 GTi) 3m 29s; 9 Owain Rees/Ceri Davies (Honda Civic) 3m 42s; 10 Rhodri Evans/Aled Jones (205) 3m 53s. **Class Winners, novices:** Thomas/Davies (Saxo); **Beginner:** Kristian Wright/Andrew Gallagher (Peugeot 205 GTi).

Cork 1000 Shakes Navigation Trial
Organiser: Cork MC **When:** January 21/22 **Where:** Macroom, County Cork. **Championships:** MI National Navigation **Starters:** 34.
1 Pakie Duffy/Colin Duffy (Subaru Impreza) 16 marks; 2 Chris Kelly/Sam Johnston (Impreza) 17m; 3 Darren Quinn/Nigel McCloughry (Subaru Legacy) 30m; 4 Brian O'Mahony/David Swanton (Vectra) 34m; 5 Colin Fitzgerald/Daire Hayes (Impreza) 36m; 6 Joseph Shinnors/Greg Shinnors (Impreza) 42m. **Semi-Experts:** Kelly/Johnston; **Novices:** Quinn/McCloughry; **Beginners:** Matt Shinnors/Catherine Levis (Opel Kadett).

Shakedown lands success for quick McGarrity

New Year Stages Rally
By William Neill

Organiser: 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland **When:** January 21 **Where:** Kirkistown Race Circuit, County Down **Championship:** none **Starters:** 60 **Stages:** 6

Although they were only using the event as a shakedown for the Galway International Rally in February, Derek McGarrity and James McKee stormed to a win on the New Year Stages.

Darren Gass/Nathan Gass (Impreza WRC) were quickest on the first test but McGarrity responded to take the lead by one second on stage two.

On stage four Gass dropped another two seconds to McGarrity when he caught a slower car and was unable to overtake it.

On stage five Gass overshot a junction, but still gained one second from McGarrity who later overshot the same junction on the final stage. "It was either that or hit [Derek McGeehan's] Mini WRC as he was let off the start just before my second lap," explained McGarrity.

Kenny McKinstry/Ben Taggart took third place. On his first run in his new John Cooper Works WRC, McGeehan claimed fourth overall. He was pleased with the result and now plans a test programme with the help of Prodrive and Kris Meeke. As McGeehan pointed out: "We were only three seconds off the bigger two-litre cars on our fastest time."

John McGaffin (Subaru Impreza) finished fifth ahead of George Robinson (Mitsubishi Lancer) despite McGaffin stalling the car on a stage five hairpin. Keith White was the fastest two-wheel-drive car in seventh.

Results
1 Derek McGarrity/ James McKee (Subaru Impreza WRC) 23m 28s; 2 Darren Gass/ Nathan Gass (Subaru Impreza WRC) +2s; 3 Kenny McKinstry/ Ben Teggart (Impreza WRC) +27s 4 Derek McGeehan/Laurie Smyth (Mini John Cooper Works WRC) +40s; 5 John McGaffin/ Norman Russell (Impreza WRC) +1m 06s; 6 George Robinson/Tommy Speers (Mitsubishi Lancer) +1m 21s; 7 Keith White/ David Lyness (Ford Escort Mk1) +1m 53s; 8 Sean Cassidy/ Damian McCann (Ford Fiesta 4x4) +2m 11s; 9 Eoin McErlain/ Raymond Henry (Lancer E6) +2m 21s; 10 Gerard McFall/ Conor O'Loan (Lancer E9) +2m 17s. **Class Winners, 1:** Michael McCarroll/Damian McAuey (Ford Fiesta), **2:** McFall/O'Loan; **3:** Rory Tougher/ Harry Armour (Mini Cooper S); **4:** Simon Hemphill/Ciaran McMenamin (Vauxhall Nova); **5:** Raymond Doyle/Marc Nugent (Escort G3); **6:** Andrew Bustard/ David Young (Escort Mk2); **7:** James Kennedy/Heather Kennedy (Escort Mk2); **8:** White/Lyness; **9:** McGarrity/McKee.

Bird overcomes an early spin and tricky conditions to snap up Jack Frost Stages triumph

Autogas 2000 Jack Frost Stages
By Larry Carter

Organiser: Darlington and District Motor Club **When:** January 22 **Where:** Croft Circuit, Yorkshire **Championships:** AS Performance North of England Tarmacadam, Fuchs Titan ANCC Stage, SG Petch ANECCC Stage **Stages:** 8 **Starters:** 68

Cumbrian motorbike race team boss Paul Bird secured a record fourth Jack Frost Stages win in a row at a dry but blustery Croft.

Driving his Ford Focus WRC07, Bird and co driver Kirsty Riddick set fastest times on all eight stages to win by a comfortable two minutes and 12 seconds. Event sponsor Chris Wise, in his newly rebuilt MG Metro 6R4, chased Bird home but the double winner had no answer for the British Superbike and MotoGP team boss.

The Cumbrian did not have it all his own way though: a spin on the opening stage was followed by a brief rain shower on SS2 just as he was about the leave the line on slick tyres. But once he got into the swing of his first Tarmac event since Rally Barbados last summer, he never looked like being headed.

At the lunchtime halt after SS4, Bird led by 40 seconds over the impressive Martyn Tinker/Janice Moore (Lotus Exige) with Wise and co-driver Tracey Taylor-West just ahead of the Ford Escort of Paul Swift/David Cox. Pete Gibson/Josh Davison (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) and Michael Glendinning/Paul Hughes (Subaru Impreza) completed the top six at half-distance.

Bird charged on relentlessly, using the event for testing ahead of his MSA Asphalt Rally Championship campaign (see *Rally News*), as he continued to ram home his advantage in the afternoon. Tinker's gallant effort came to a halt when the Exige suffered clutch failure two stages from home, handing third to Swift. Glendinning also called it a day on the same stage.

Wise consolidated second ahead of Swift with Gibson an impressive fourth. Simon Bowen/Richard Robinson (Impereza) claimed fifth with local ace Andy Davison/Mike Curry (Lancer E5) completing the top six.

Mat Smith/Derek Cornforth won Class One by more than two-and-a-half minutes and took 13th overall in their Ford Ka. Joe Cunningham/Dan Kennedy (Peugeot 106) fought of David Taylor/Lynsey Brench (Escort) for Class Two glory, while Martin Elsdon/John Frew (Escort) won Class Four. David Conley/Mike Scrimgour (Hillman Avenger) won Class Six.

Results
1 Paul Bird/Kirsty Riddick (Ford Focus WRC) 51m 40s; 2 Chris Wise/Tracy Taylor West (MG Metro 6R4) +2m 12s; 3 Paul Swift/David Cox (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m 45s; 4 Pete Gibson/Josh Davison (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +3m 53s; 5 Simon Bowen/Richard Robinson (Subaru Impreza) +4m 19s; 6 Andy Davison/Mike Curry (Mitsubishi Lancer E5) +4m 20s; 7 Martin Eldson/John Frew (Escort Mk2) +4m 21s; 8 Steve Quigley/Terry Martin (Renault Clio 16V) +4m 41s; 9 Ed Todd/Andy Brown (GTM Coupe) +4m 57s; 10 Paul Alsop/Chris Alsop (Chrysler Sunbeam) +5m 29s. **Class winners, 1:** Mat Smith/Derek Cornforth (Ford Ka); **2:** Joe Cunningham/Dan Kennedy (Peugeot 106); **3:** Swift/Cox; **4:** Martin Elsdon/John Frew (Escort); **5:** Bird/Riddick; **6:** David Conley/Mike Scrimgour (Avenger).

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