

Kerr enjoys success in first round of 405 Rally Challenge



By George Topp

BOTHWELL teenager Alick Kerr converted his stunning pace into a victory in the first round of the Brick and Steel Ecosse 205 Challenge at Crail on Saturday.

The 17-year-old was able to take full advantage of his ever-improving technique — and a spectacular roll by 2005 Autumn Cup winner Robbie Pearson — to win by a huge margin.

Although the day did not start according to plan for Kerr, who spun twice on the first stage and dropped 20 seconds as a result, the youngster took full advantage of his ever-increasing pace to finish first Peugeot 205

home. Kerr, co-driven by Bothwell teenager, Ian Angell, went on to post four fastest-stage times, giving him a lead of over one minute going into the final round.

A steady run on the final tour saw Kerr winning the day by 1 min 18 secs ahead of the second-placed Challenge 205 rival.

Kerr now leads the Brick & Steel Ecosse 205 Challenge and is also top junior in the championship.

Kerr, a product of the Ford Rally Academy, later said: "After a poor first run, we completely changed the set-up of the car. This gave me a lot more confidence and allowed me to get in a set of good, clean runs."

Kerr's dad Donald, who's also team manager, was

equally delighted with the result, but admitted to a few nervous moments as the day drew to a close.

He said: "By lunchtime, we knew that all Alick really had to do was keep the car on the tarmac and bring home some respectable times.

"However, because the boys were held up in traffic after they finished the last stage, they didn't make it back to the service van when they should have. That was the longest five minutes of my life!"

"After the disappointment of crashing out of the lead at Otterburn last year, this was a great result and it's given us a major boost ahead of the County Saab Scottish Championship Snowman Rally in Inverness later this month."

Kerr wasn't the only Brick and Steel 205 Challenge driver from Lanarkshire out at Crail on Saturday.

Steven Smith (17), from East Kilbride was making his stage rallying debut and, despite a handful of off-track excursions, he made it to the finish on his first ever event.

"I had a good day and gained a lot of valuable experience," said Steven.

"It was extremely encouraging to see my times getting better and better as the day progressed, and I'm looking forward to getting back out in the car later in the year."

When the Brick and Steel Ecosse 205 Challenge circus rolls into Jedburgh on March 18 for the Border Counties Rally, the county contingent is set to get even stronger. Larkhall driver Colin Main (24), will be returning following a long lay-off due to injury and is tipped to be right on the pace.