

Teen drivers off to excellent start in Ecosse Challenge

By George Topp

LANARKSHIRE teenagers Alick Kerr and Jonathan Smith got their 2007 Brick and Steel 205 Ecosse Challenge campaigns off to a terrific start in the recent Arnold Clark-Thistle Hotels Snowman Rally, taking first and second places respectively in their classes.

In the more powerful section, Kerr demonstrated the awesome potential of the new 1.9 Ecosse Challenge cars, finishing just off the event's overall two-wheel drive podium in spite of a difficult day as he got to grips with his new car.

On the other hand, there were no such troubles for Crossford's Jonathan Smith as he kept his 1.6-litre 205 on the road to finish a fine second in class.

In total, five newly-built 1.9 205s left the start, with their drivers eager to prove they were capable of making the step up from the 1600 car.

Early signs were good for the 1.9 pilots, with all recording highly respectable times over the first few runs of the day.

But only 18-year-old Kerr from Bothwell was to make it back to the finish, showing the blend of consistency and car sympathy that has been the hallmark of his career so far.

"It took me a long time to get used to the new car," admitted Alick. "Over the first few stages I kept missing gearchanges and spinning but I started to get the hang of it towards the end of the day."

Co-driver Tom Hynd commented: "I was very impressed with our times, particularly given the problems we had today.

"On one stage, we overshot at least five junctions and had a couple of spins, so I can only imagine what our times would have been like with a clean run!"

The Advertiser, Thursday, 1st March, 2007 101

Sport