

Kerr is Snowman star as rally championship starts

By George Topp

THE young Lanarkshire driver's grin at the finish of the aptly-named Snowman Rally in Inverness said it all.

After a day in which many leading competitors fell victim to the treacherous conditions, Bothwell rally star Alick Kerr had just earned his best result to date – 11th overall, first in class and first two-wheel drive car – on the Arnold Clark/Thistle Hotels Snowman Rally.

The 20-year-old's superb driving display included a fastest stage time at the wheel of his Ford Fiesta ST.

Competitors on Saturday's opening round of the 2009 Hankook MSA Scottish Rally Championship faced a daunting challenge as they headed out to the forests around the Highland capital.

Rally organisers had battled all week to clear as much snow as possible from the four remaining stages – the fifth was cancelled – but conditions were still hazardous and the leading cars took on the role of high-speed snowploughs.

Tyre choice was critical and Kerr opted to go with a specially-adapted snow tread, which proved to be the right decision.

On the opening 7.5-mile Meall Mor test, Kerr and co-driver Drew Sturrock were 16 seconds clear of the field, setting a fastest time.

But on the 8.95 mile second stage,



SNOWTIME: Alick Kerr was one of the stars of Saturday's Snowman Rally in Inverness.

Millbuie, Kerr got stuck behind a slower car, losing around two minutes, only to roar back into contention on the penultimate stage, Torrachilty, setting the third-fastest time over the 13 miles.

Trouble reared its head on the final 8.65-mile Corrimony test, when a drive-shaft broke and it was touch-and-go as to whether they would make it back to Rally

HQ in Inverness. In the event, Kerr managed to nurse the car back with one-wheel drive.

At the finish, an elated Kerr said: "I couldn't have hoped for a better start to the season."

The Escort Mk2 competitors – including Motherwell's John Crawford – did not fare well in the atrocious con-

ditions. Crawford and navigator Dick Wardle only managed to finish 28th overall.

Carlisle's Graeme Schoneville and co-driver Luke McLaren endured a difficult day negotiating the snow and ice in their Tunnock's Peugeot 205 Gti. After collecting a two-minute time penalty, they finished 78th.