

GRANITE CITY RALLY REPORT

Faulkner rides his luck

Bogie rues mistake as rival takes last gasp win. By John Fife

The third round of this year's Hankook Scottish Rally Championship provided another nail-biting finish. Going into the final stage of the Station Garage Mitsubishi Granite City Rally, it looked all but over; but then Lady Luck played her hand. Mike Faulkner and Peter Foy passed the rally leader stuck in a ditch. It prompted a question from Mike: "Was that who I think it was?" Peter was just as unbelieving: "I think so." Whatever, the duo had rightly earned their first rally victory – ever!

There was more. Showing a return to the form that once marked him out as a star in Group N circles, Barry Groundwater and Jude Wylie held off Jock Armstrong and Kirsty Riddick for second place. This wasn't rallying; this was drama acted out on a rather special stage.

Faulkner got the drop on his rivals on the first stage at Durriss. Even so, Jimmy Girvan and David Bogie were only a second slower while Euan Thorburn was a further two seconds adrift. After the early wake-up call, it was Bogie at the front on the second test at Petteresso by six seconds from Thorburn and seven seconds from Faulkner, but it would be nearly two minutes more before Girvan appeared.

The MacDonald Formwork Subaru developed a puncture and Girvan was now in 13th place. At least he was still in the chase; championship leader Willie Bonniwell was already out as his gearbox had broken. Andy Horne's Metro was similarly stricken. It was parked up with a blown engine.

It was Bogie once again in Glenfarquhar by three seconds from Thorburn and six seconds from Faulkner, which gave Bogie an 11-second lead as the rally pulled into service with Thorburn second and Faulkner third. First time out in a 4WD car, young Alick Kerr was just outside the top ten after two stages, until a bolt broke in the front hub in the third. At least he was able to reach service and he would eventually finish 16th.

With championship points at stake, Girvan showed his mettle for the fourth test at Drumtochty. The best he could manage was a tie with Faulkner who was just as



Faulkner took his first ever victory ahead of Groundwater

committed. However, their throes were only one second better than Bogie's with Thorburn still a threat a further second adrift.

But as the cars headed towards the fifth test at Petteresso, the Revolution Wheels Subaru of Thorburn started to pop, bang and misfire. Whether it was electrical or fuel-related, the car gave up the ghost and died mid-stage. Thorburn was gone.

Petteresso is a fearsome place. It's fast and flowing – ideal M2 country. It was also packed to the rafters with spectators. And in a sight rarely seen in Scottish forests, spectators were actually applauding the Escort Mk2 drivers. Calum Mackenzie was in reheat mode heading for a stunning top ten finish. With Mackenzie on this form, John Crawford, Steve Hannister and Frank Kelly were battling over the second place 2WD position, but what a pace they were setting. No wonder the spectators warmed to them. Mackenzie was sixth fastest in there!

The best that Bogie could muster here was third quickest. The Group N Lancer was on the absolute limit, but Faulkner was on a mission. He took four seconds out of Girvan and six out of Bogie with Groundwater matching Bogie's time. As for Donnie MacDonald, his run came to an abrupt end on the startline.

The transfer box broke and he had to be pushed out of the way while John Rintoul got halfway through the stage before the head gasket gave out.

Going into the final stage at Durriss, Faulkner had cut Bogie's lead back to five seconds. Ahead lay 5.75 miles of forest road, most of which had been used earlier in the first visit and which was pretty cut up in places. Tactics? There was no such luxury here. It was pedal to the metal from the outset.

And that was Bogie's undoing. "It was my own fault. I can't blame anyone but myself," said a rueful Bogie. "If I had been in a Group A car I might have gotten away with it, but the Group N car was on the limit. It had nothing more to give." Apparently the car had slid wide on one of the cut-up corners and Bogie just caught the outside edge of the bend with a front wheel. It cost him more than three minutes. Game over.

Girvan was similarly caught napping. "I didn't realise Barry [Groundwater] was so close," he admitted. "I was too busy watching Jock Armstrong's times." Girvan was third quickest behind Faulkner and Groundwater, with just three seconds covering the first three of them while six seconds further back was Armstrong: "I don't know what was wrong today. I didn't get a test in the car, and I was running old tyres but I'll need to get it sorted with the speed this lot are going at!"

As for the winners... "The first three miles of the last stage was the fastest I had ever driven," claimed Faulkner later. "But after we saw Bogie, the last three miles seemed like the slowest! We were lucky, too. We nearly hit Bogie when we came round the corner. The spectators were still trying to get him out and we just missed his tail by inches. Peter and I weren't going to do the Jim Clark Rally, because of budget but we'll need to now!" ■

HANKOOK MSA SCOTTISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

RESULTS

Pos	Driver/co-driver	Car	Time/retirement
1	Mike Faulkner/Peter Foy	Mitsubishi Lancer E6	42m00s
2	Barry Groundwater/Jude Wylie	Mitsubishi Lancer E6	+44s
3	Jock Armstrong/Kirsty Riddick	Subaru Impreza N10	+53s
4	Jimmy Girvan/Mike Ramsay	Subaru Impreza	+56s
5	Jim Carty/Ian Fraser	Subaru Impreza WRC	+1m17s
6	Calum Mackenzie/Alan Clark	Ford Escort MK2	+1m18s
7	Rossy Mackay/Robert MacDonald	MG Metro 6RM	+1m39s
8	John Crawford/Ian Simpson	Ford Escort MK2	+2m23s
9	Steve Hannister/Louise Sutherland	Ford Escort MK2	+2m25s
10	Shaun Sinclair/Chris Hamill	Mitsubishi Lancer E6	+2m25s
11 Steve Campbell/David MacFadyen (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +2m26s; 12 Michael Mack/Rob Langer (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +2m26s; 13 Frank Kelly/Nolan Fife (Ford Escort MK2) +2m26s; 14 David Began/Kevin Lee (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +2m26s; 15 John McCallum/Martin Forrest (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +2m26s; 16 Mick Kay/Drew Strain (Subaru Impreza MK2) +2m26s; 17 Craig McMillan/Christine Sutherland (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +2m26s; 18 Malcolm Buchanan/Ian Scott (Ford Escort MK2) +2m26s; 19 Bruce MacCormack/Michael Corrie (Ford Fiesta ST) +4m13s; 20 Martin Craig/Steve Brown (Subaru Impreza) +4m14s; 21 Steve Brown/Karen Houghland (Ford Fiesta ST) +5m00s; 22 Alick Kerr/Andrew Fothergill (Ford Escort MK2) +5m00s; 23 John McCarty/David Neal (Honda Civic Type R) +5m30s; 24 Andrew Rankin/Gordon Rankin (Ford Escort MK2) +6m00s; 25 Charles Jervis/Caroline Chalmers (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +6m00s; 26 Mark McCulloch/Craig Walker (Subaru Impreza) +6m20s; 27 Douglas Gilbert/Brian Anderson (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +6m21s; 28 Ken Wood/Gordon Wood (Nissan Sentra) +6m21s; 29 Fraser MacLeod/Kevin Lee (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +6m21s; 30 Stephen Lockhart/Keen Lockhart (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +6m21s; 31 Barry Mac/Thomas Linn (Ford Fiesta) +6m21s; 32 Craig Rutherford/Dennis Forsyth (Mitsubishi Lancer E6) +6m21s; 33 Willie Grant/Laura Grant (Ford Fiesta) +6m21s; 34 McCulloch/Corrie; 35 Euan Donald/Laura Dalrymple (Ford Fiesta); 36 Wood/Wood; 37 Bruce MacCormack; 38 MacCormack/Corrie; 39 Stuart Bannister/Craig Reid (Ford Fiesta); 40 Armstrong/Riddick; 41 Faulkner/Foy; 42 Euan Brown/Wylie. Fastest stage times: Petteresso 1: Bogie 2: Girvan 3: Fastest stage times in 2005: Petteresso 5: Girvan 3; Bogie and Mackay 5; Drumtochty: Faulkner 1; Bogie 2; Glenfarquhar 1; Overall championship positions after 300 seconds: 1 Armstrong 2 Mackay 3 Faulkner 4 Bogie 5; 5 Bogie 6; etc. Next round: Jim Clark Rally, May 21.			



Kerr impressed on first 4WD run but suffered with hub issues