

Drivers and crews rally as thriller makes up for lost time

by Sports Reporter

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There was no shortage of drama when the Legend Fires North West Stages Rally hosted the opening round of the 2024 British Rally Championship, **writes PHIL JAMES.**

Following Friday's ceremonial start on Garstang's High Street, Saturday saw competitors embark on the closed-road special stages.

The rally didn't start well as accidents in the opening pair of stages, at Beacon Fell and Long Knotts, caused delays and stage cancellations – but all of those involved escaped unscathed.

Now running behind schedule, the third stage at Crossgill was stopped on safety grounds after a report requiring police attendance.

As always, rally organisers had to ensure there was no risk to competitors or spectators and a stage cancellation couldn't be avoided.

Given the closed-road time limitations, the planned Hawthornthwaite and Nicky Nook stages were cancelled.

Fortunately the afternoon's five stages all took place, albeit later than scheduled, and the VW Polo GTi R5 of Chris Ingram and



North West Stages rally winners Chris Ingram and Alex Kihurani in their VW Polo GTi R5 Picture: WWW.PRO-RALLY.CO.UK

Alex Kihurani was declared the winner.

They finished almost half a minute clear of William Creighton and Liam Regan's Ford Fiesta Rally2, with the Toyota Yaris GR Rally2 of Meirion Evans and Jonathan

Jackson completing the podium places.

There were some impressive performances from local drivers. Neil Roskell, from Preesall, co-driven by Welshman Dai Roberts, finished fifth in his Fiesta Rally2, while Hambleton's Simon Bowen and Bispham's Craig Simkiss brought their Ford Fiesta S2000T home in 13th place.

Quernmore's Darren Atkinson and Blackpool's

“Accidents in the opening pair of stages caused delays and stage cancellations.”

Matty Daniels took the Class D Award as the fastest two-wheel drive competitors in their Ford Escort Mk2, finishing 17th overall.

Garstang competitors also recorded notable results.

Danny Cowell finished second in Class H in his Talbot Samba, while the Gardner brothers, Andrew and John, completed the course in their 1966 Morris Mini, the rally's oldest car.

Seasiders' youngster will stay on loan at Dale

Blackpool youngster Dan Sassi has extended his loan spell with Rochdale until the end of the season.

The defender (below) made the move to Bloomfield Road last month for an undisclosed fee from Burnley.

Sassi signed a contract with the Seasiders until 2026, with an option for an additional 12 months beyond that.

A few weeks after that deadline day move, the 20-year-old was sent out on loan to Spotland, where he has made six appearances for Rochdale in the National League.

It has now been decided that the centre-back will remain with the Greater Manchester club for the rest of the campaign.

Discussing the plan for the defender last month, Blackpool boss Neil Critchley said: “We identified him as someone that will be a good footballer for this club in the future.”

“We wanted to get him in so he could acclimatise to us if you like, getting him used to the environment and the way we train, getting him around the main group for a few weeks.”



Lee leads in Fairhaven's men to win their Winter Trophy final

Carl Lee was the winner as Fairhaven Golf Club's men played their Winter Trophy final.

There were 101 taking part, though the wettest winter in 250 years meant some holes were closed as they had suffered more than others.

Only fourteen holes were played and Lee took top spot with 33 points.

Michael Withers (32) was second and Michael Cass (31) third.

■ This week Alastair Taylor, teaching professional at Herons' Reach GC, has some ad-

vice for those golfers seeking greater shot consistency...

For all of the positions in the golf swing, the most important is impact.

Although many golfers rehearse the way the club is at impact, they often get the body position wrong.

A great drill to help practice the impact position is to get into your posture and place your right hand on top of the grip, with the club upright in front of you.

Then place your left hand on top of your right and, from there, simply turn your hips out of the way.

It will help you feel how the hips open but the upper body feels slightly more closed and allows for the upper and lower body to separate as much as your body can.

Do this three times and then attempt to relate this position as you hit the shot.

The more you practice a great impact position for you, the better and more consistent your shots will be.

To contact Alastair at Herons' Reach, email info@alitaylorgolf.com or watch more free tips at his YouTube channel AliTaylorGolf.



Carl Lee and Fairhaven Golf Club captain Andy Moore Picture: FAIRHAVEN GOLF CLUB