

## The Chequered Flag



By Stephen  
**English.....**

### Holiday season is over as F1 gets back to work with weekend's Belgium Grand Prix

The summer break is over for Formula 1 with the Belgian Grand Prix taking place this weekend at the fast and flowing Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

Spa is one of the most historic circuits in Formula 1 and was one of the sports original hosts in 1950. Despite undergoing numerous redevelopments during the past 60 years, most notably shortening the track from 14km to the current length of just less than 7km, the challenge remains the same for teams and drivers. With long straights and fast corners Spa requires that a car is run in low downforce configuration, thus reducing drag and increasing top speed, yet that can still give the driver confidence to push hard through the corners.

Indeed while the top speeds reached this weekend will be in excess of 205 mph the greatest challenge at Spa is to give the driver the confidence through Eau Rouge, Pouhon and the flat out left hander Blanchimont.

At any historic circuit it is easy to become lost in its history, but Spa holds a special place in any Irish fan's heart. It was here in 1998 that Eddie Jordan's team won its first Grand Prix during a chaotic race. The start of that race was marked by one of the biggest crashes in the history of the sport with almost every car damaged in some way. As it was, Damon Hill and Ralf Schumacher both luckily avoided contact with other cars and took the restart. During the race Michael Schumacher led comfortably before crashing into the back of David Coulthard and retiring, leaving Jordan to score a famous one-two finish.

### Title rivals will find speed in different ways

This season's edition promises to be exceptionally exciting with the contrast between cars set to allow for a thrilling battle at the front. McLaren will have the fastest car down the straights once more this weekend and should be able to overtake the Red Bulls if they can get close enough out of Eau Rouge. Red Bull will have an exceptional car in the middle sector of the lap. The RB6 has consistently shown itself to have vastly superior grip than the cars of its title rivals and through corners such as Pouhon Mark Webber and Sebastian Vettel should be incredibly fast.

Even with the advantage enjoyed by Red Bull the overall lap times should be very closely matched with McLaren. Ferrari are the potential joker in the pack this weekend. They have excelled at certain circuits this season and have become progressively stronger as the season has progressed, and have a superb recent record in Belgium.

It has been clear to see the change in Fernando Alonso during recent races, as the double world champion has finally realised that he is a title contender. The Spaniard actually came to the attention of Formula 1 team managers during a 1999 F3000 race here when he pulled off a series of daring moves to win the Formula 1 support race. He may need to do something similar this weekend if he is to maintain his title charge.

Tyre supplier Bridgestone made a statement during the summer break saying that they feel that they are "frustrated and feel that some people are changing tyres too early" This weekend could potentially see the possibility of multiple tyre strategies playing out in the battle for the win. Spa has a very short pitlane and the expected pit stop times are in the region of 18 seconds, so the time penalty of changing tyres is not too excessive. It will not be inconceivable to see some variety in terms of strategy at the front of the field.

Weather has traditionally played a part in creating excitement at this race and this year looks set to offer wet weather once more, with local forecasts expecting showers on Sunday. In the wet, Spa is one of the ultimate tests for a driver. The rain and mist hang amongst the trees making visibility so bad that drivers can hardly see their own steering wheel! They are therefore forced to drive with nothing but their instincts. Having a clear track is obviously an advantage but having confidence is crucial, and in the wet no one is more confident than McLarens' Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton. The team know that they need to capitalise on races that play into their hands. Red Bull may have a faster car but McLaren have shown they are much more adaptable. **To keep up to date on the Belgium Grand Prix visit [www.stephenenglish.ie](http://www.stephenenglish.ie)**

## MOTORSPORT TODDS LEAP.COM RALLY NI

# 'Surprised' Cumiskey wins sixth round of Challenge

BRENDAN Cumiskey and co-driver Conor Foley ended the Todds Leap.com Rally NI as winners of the sixth round of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland last weekend.

After a difficult first leg, they inherited first place half-way through the second day when Neil McCance/Jonny Hart left the road whilst comfortably in the lead.

Based in Antrim, the Todds Leap.com Rally NI (or Ulster Rally as it was previously known) featured six stages on Friday evening followed by a further eight on Saturday, the combination of which provided competitors with a total of 127 miles of timed special stages on closed roads to the north and south of the town.

At the first service halt after three stages, Cumiskey was pleased to be back in his own Mitsubishi, but not happy with his pace, the car not handling to his liking and not giving him the confidence to push.

Saturday's opening loop comprised two stages where the margin between the leaders and second place increased. However, the gap between second and third was decreasing, as Cumiskey started to feel more comfortable on the Saturday stages and he and Foley started catching Ballantine/O'Callaghan.

Two stages later, their new-found pace saw Cumiskey/Foley



Brendan Cumiskey on his way to winning the sixth round of the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Ireland last weekend.

### DRIVERS STANDINGS AFTER ROUND SIX

- 1 Brendan Cumiskey 52
- 2= Neil McCance 44
- 2= Sam Moffett 44
- 4 Geoff McMahon 22
- 5 John McGlaughlin 17
- 6 Stanley Ballantine 15

pass Ballantine/O'Callaghan to take the lead. However, their task to stay in front was made much easier on the next stage (SS12), when a worn rear-brake mounting bell came loose on Ballantine's car and damaged the rear brakes too badly to continue.

With just two stages to go, all the new leaders had to do was get to the finish, which they did and, in doing so, scored their second victory of the season and

claimed enough points for Cumiskey to take the lead in the championship.

"I wasn't happy with my pace this weekend, so of course I am delighted - if not surprised - to take my second Evo Challenge win of the season", said Cumiskey.

"With the team only able to finish the recent rebuild of the car in the early hours of Friday morning, I am delighted that it ran without a problem, which is a

credit to them and we're now in with a good change of the title."

The final round of the Irish Evolution Challenge takes place on September 11 and 12 in Wexford and, with a double-header format which sees round seven on Saturday and round eight on Sunday and a maximum of 24 points up for grabs, the scene is now set for a three-way battle between the series leaders: Cumiskey, McCance and Moffett.

## GREYHOUND RACING DUNDALK STADIUM

# Derby dogs and 100/1 winner good advert for Stadium

By Joe Carroll

DUNDALK Stadium form is proving a most reliable guide in each of the sports it caters for.

Prior to causing a 100/1 shock in last week's valuable and prestigious Nunthorpe Stakes at York, Sole Power (right) had won just two races, both of them on the Dowdallshill all-weather. And among the Eddie Lynam-trained sprinter's victims last week was Borderlescott, a two-time winner of the Nunthorpe who scored a number of seasons back on a visit to Dowdallshill.

Lynam, who has his base at Dunshaughlin in Co Meath, is a great supporter of Dowdallshill, and regularly gets among the winners.

The longtails are showing the place up in good light as well.



The Ladbrokes Irish Derby is at the quarter-final stage, and among the twenty-four going to traps this Saturday night are two who figured in this seasons Boylesports Dundalk International.

Definate Opinion, successful on July 12, goes in the final qualifier and will have among his opponents Tullymurry Act, one

of his International victims. Tullymurry Act, however, is faring better in the country's principal Classic, and is currently second-favourite to win it out. Definate Opinion is on 12/1.

Also in Saturday night's line-up is Kinda Ready, the 2009 English Derby winner who made little impact in the same year's International, won by Skywalker Queen - and Oran Jaguar, the only survivor kenneled around these parts.

Trained in Mornington by Davy Reynolds, Oran Jaguar, who has yet to win a heat, goes in the same race at definite Opinion and Tullymurry Act.

Monday night's card at Dowdallshill had Picabilly's win over the 525 as its highlight. This former Dublin-owned tracker is

now part of Irra Rogers' kennel in Dundalk's Hill Street, and the 78-pounder ran a blinder to register his ninth win, recording a night's fastest 28.82.

On the same card, Immaculate Heart was a winner for Darver's Paul McDonnell. The Brett Lee bitch led throughout, and finished three lengths clear in 29.12.

On Saturday night Cruppney Rebel scored for Geraldine Carroll, from Bellurgan, leading all the way in a 400 to record 21.77. And there was also a win for the Dromiskin-based Aintree Crew Syndicate, headed by Paul Murtagh and Gerry Kihinan.

Aintree Pete, also bred by the syndicate and trained in Oldcastle by Oliver Fitzpatrick, ran the race of his life to register a swift 28.89 for the 525.



8 Park St

Open 7 Days



WIN UP TO 1000 EURO IN OUR FREE

MULTIPLE DAILY DRAW

