

Welsh team take narrow win in Ireland

The Welsh Sports & Saloon Car Championship team took a narrow win in the 1999 Celtic Team Challenge handicap race which was held at Mondello Park in Ireland on Bank Holiday Monday 5/4/99. The 12 Welsh drivers faced strong opposition from 2 Irish teams and with over 30 cars on the track the action was fast & furious as the quicker Welsh cars fought to overcome the advantage the handicapper had given to the slower Irish cars. Nigel Bowen featured strongly in the early stages, but with the race featuring a novel pit stop at half distance; it was Alvin Powell who was making the moves later on and he set a new outright saloon car lap record on the 7th lap with a time of 1 minute 27.74 seconds; 70.98 mph! However Powell was black flagged for passing another car under a yellow flag, and it was the Darrian trio of Terry Brown, Gareth Davies & Graham Cole who were upholding Welsh honours in the final laps. However despite setting their fastest lap times on the last lap, they were unable to catch the leading Irish drivers. However with several Irish drivers ruled out by the handicapper for exceeding their bogy times, and with Welsh drivers Sean Jones, Clive Hayes, Nigel James, Martin Davies & Mike Shaw finishing well inside the top 20 places the Welsh team won the Team section by just 9 points (The margin could have been bigger but Granville Williams ran out of petrol whilst in a good position & Peter Dark who blew a turbo and did not start). Afterwards the drivers were enthusiastic about the new Mondello track layout and the new format of the race with pitstops a new feature, and all expressed a desire to do it again next year.