

## INSIGHT: BTRDA DRIVE

# A dizzying six weeks for MN's prize driver

by Sean Moriarty  
Sporting Scene editor



It has been a hectic few weeks for Graeme Jones, the winner of the MN/BTRDA Drive competition for 2009.

Jones won a season of free club motorsport after entering a competition run by MN and the Motorsports Future arm of the British Trial and Rally Drivers' Association. His reward was the use of the BTRDA-prepared Nissan Micra and free entry into at least six events.

Cardiff-based Jones is a trained paramedic and his enthusiasm for club motorsport was one of the reasons he was selected in February. His passion was put to

the test during a rollercoaster ride he experienced in July and August.

The 32-year old took his first podium, beat 2008 Drive winner John Fox in a head-to-head battle and was hailed a hero after coming to the rescue of a stricken fellow competitor. It all happened in the space of six dizzying weeks—and prior to that he had never even been to a grassroots event.

"The first autosolo at Rugby was an eye-opener," he says. "There was the pressure of getting it all right. During the training day, if I made a mistake I would get a chance to improve. On the day of the event there are no second chances. There was a feeling of pressure and that a mistake would be put down to be the new boy, but I don't like excuses."

He finished third overall that day.

Beginner's luck? His second outing at Gamecock Barracks near Nuneaton on August 2 would be his day of reckoning, because he would go up against Fox for the first time.

Fox enjoyed his season at the wheel of the BTRDA Micra so much that he returned for 2009 in his own Citroën Saxo. He already won an autosolo at Bolton on June 28. Pitching the two Drive winners head-to-head was an interesting proposition, and Jones started well on the Loughborough Car Club-run event.

"The day at Gamecock Barracks felt different," he says. "There was a lot more competition and some serious-looking vehicles. At the break I was second in my class. I then marshalled a few tests [as required by event regulations] and

after watching the others and comparing lines and approaches with the ones I was taking, I felt sure I could be faster."

But an incident involving fellow competitor Alice Franklin meant Jones' skills as a paramedic were called upon. Franklin, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, hit a post in her Nissan Micra. Her medical condition meant she needed special care, so Jones sprang into action to help and got thanks from event organisers.

The delay meant he was the last competitor to tackle the final three tests and he didn't have much time between runs to take stock of his progress. He held on to record seventh overall, two places ahead of Fox.

"I was pleased and disappointed with the final result," says Jones.



Photo: Duncan Stephens

Jones smokes up the Nissan's tyres on his way to a podium

"I hope it proves my Rugby result wasn't a fluke. If I had a chance to get my breath after dealing with the accident, the final overall result could have been a class win."

September will be a busy month for Jones, because he'll be behind the wheel of the BTRDA Micra twice in four weeks and compete in two disciplines (albeit ones that have a

fair bit in common with each other).

On September 6 he will enter the Loughborough Autotest, which will be the only time he'll try his hand at the discipline this year.

Then on September 27 he'll be back on more familiar territory for the Ross Autosolo at Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. ■

