

Kierans/McAdoo Seal 4th Straight National Title

The 2010/2011 National Night Navigation Championship was fought over eight rounds in counties Cavan, Cork, Monaghan and Longford. The defending champions Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo were aiming for their 4th successive National title. However, they would not have things their own way and indeed would only take the championship by two points in the end. They took victory on no fewer than four of the eight rounds and despite mechanical problems on the last two rounds, they had done enough earlier to hold on for their 4th National title. Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes proved to be their main contenders throughout. The Semi-Expert duo who were runners-up in the National two years previous, mounted a strong challenge taking a surprise lead in the championship by Christmas. The next rounds in Cork proved disastrous but they almost pulled it back over the final two rounds as Kierans/McAdoo suffered mechanical problems but it proved not to be enough to deny the reigning Champions. Chris Kelly/Sam Johnston teamed up this year with Sam having won the Novice class last year. They surprised many with a superb season right from the start which moved them up to 3rd overall in the championship by season end and were pushing more experienced crews for overall honours.

Round 1 Cavan:

Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo (5 pens) began the season with a superb win in Cavan. Damien McCabe was COC with the event based out of Maudabawn. They held off the early challenges of Declan Tynan/Andrew Grennan & Chris Kelly/Sam Johnston to take a convincing victory. 2nd placed went to two rarely seen navigation competitors Daniel McKenna/Stephen Hagan (9 pens) who made a one off appearance but showed they had lost none of their edge to take 2nd. Michael Tynan/Ciaran Tynan (9 pens) lost out on 2nd on a tie-break but finished just ahead of Chris Kelly/Sam Johnston (10 pens) who took 4th from class rivals Shane Maguire/Evin Hughes (11 pens), with Shane standing in for the absent Michael Carbin.

Round 2 Star-Trek:

Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes (1 pen) claimed a victory on round two hosted by Cork Motor Club with Martin Sheehan once again the COC. They finished just ahead of Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo (2 pens) with a single penalty dropped into TP9 on the summit of Ballyhoura Mountains the difference between them. They both pulled away from the opposition with Trevor Farrell/Noel Hall (9 pens) taking 3rd on a tie-break from Joe Shinnors/Greg Shinnors (9 pens). Ger O'Connell/Denis O'Donovan (34 pens) completed the top five.

Round 3 Drumlin:

Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo (20 pens) returned to winning ways as they took another well-earned victory on the Monaghan Drumlin Navigation Trial. COC Andrew Grennan laid out a demanding 140 mile route which was considered as one of the toughest events for many years. They were the only crew not to miss a timepoint or pick up a wrong approach/departure. Michael Tynan/Ciaran Tynan (35 pens) finished best of the rest ahead of Trevor Farrell/Noel Hall (45 pens). Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes (76 pens) and Andy Mackarel/Liam Higgins (83 pens) completed the top five.

Round 4 Midland:

An extremely tricky route laid out by top Semi-Expert navigator Sam Johnston and team was the next round on the agenda. But the weather had other ideas as a light snow shower just before the start left the roads in a treacherous state. The event was won and lost in picking which timepoints to skip, something which some crews haven't had to do for many years! Andy Mackarel/Liam Higgins (241 pens) led throughout to take the win and were well ahead of their rivals. An unsighted exit from a grass lane caught some crews out who became stuck and dropped out of contention. These included front running crews Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo & Michael Tynan/Ciaran Tynan.

Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes (317 pens) profited to take 2nd place ahead of Darren Babington/Francis Keenan (353 pens) and a fantastic run from Beginners Darren Quinn/Nigel McCloughry (392 pens). 5th went to Martin Tynan/Sean McCaffrey (408 pens)

Round 5 1000 Shakes:

Donal Healy acted as COC for Round 5 in Cork. 120 miles of competitive navigation was the order of the night. Victory for Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo (24 pens) put them back in the driving seat in the championship. Main rivals Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes had the event won but for a 50 penalty for a timing error which left them outside the top ten. 2nd place went to Joe Shinnors/Greg Shinnors (27 pens) with Alan Shinnors/George Shinnors (36 pens) making it four Shinnors' in top three overall. 4th place went to Johnny Kenneally/Ken Carmody (47 pens) with Richard Cassidy/Paul Phelan (49 pens) in 5th.

Round 6 100 Isles:

Another extremely demanding event was up next with Brian O'Mahony at the helm for the Skibbereen 100 Isles Navigation. A unexpected stop sign at a roundabout caught many crews out but this event certainly wasn't for the faint hearted as only two crews finished under 100 penalties and only four under 200. Not surprisingly one of these were Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo (32 pens) who claimed their 4th win from six starts. Runners-up Alan Shinnors/George Shinnors (46 pens) put in a determined performance but had to settle for 2nd in the end. 3rd place went to Richard Cassidy/Paul Phelan (118 pens) with Dermot Whelton/Barry O'Sullivan (166 pens) and Chris Kelly/Sam Johnston (224 pens) completing the top five.

Round 7 Monaghan:

Donal McArdle was COC for Round 7 in Monaghan. A short, sharp, straight-forward event proved to be a popular one for competitors from all classes. After retiring early on in Skibbereen, Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes (2 pens) took 1st place on a tie-break from Michael Tynan/Ciaran Tynan & Trevor Farrell/Noel Hall with all three crews on two penalties. Flying novice crew Pakie Duffy/Colin Duffy (3 pens) finished 4th overall with Andy Mackarel/Liam Higgins (3 pens) losing 4th on a tie-break. Arthur Kierans/Ashley McAdoo finished outside the points after late mechanical trouble.

Round 8 Cavan:

The Championship returned to Cavan for the final round with Dominic "Bart" McArdle the COC. A top ten finish would guarantee Kierans/McAdoo another championship but when the car jammed in gear at TP6 it looked like they were out of luck as they dropped six penalties before the problem was solved. Declan Tynan/Andrew Grennan (0 pens) put in a storming show to win from Michael Carbin/Evin Hughes (1 pen). 3rd place went to Andy Mackarel/Liam Higgins (1 pen) with Kevin Keenan/Barry Garvey (2 pens) taking 4th. James Greenan/Ciaran Coyle (2 pens) finished 5th after winning a tie-break with Ray O'Neill/Stephen O'Neill (2 pens). In the end Kierans/McAdoo finished 10th, the very result they needed to claim the National Championship once again with a two point winning margin.

The classes were claimed respectively by Michael Tynan/Ciaran Tynan (Expert class champions), Darren Babington/Francis Keenan (Semi-Expert class champions), Pakie Duffy/Colin Duffy (Novice class champions) and Darren Quinn/Nigel McCloughry (Beginner class champions).

It was another excellent season with close competition on high quality events with new crews competing on the series and making a big impression. It bodes well for the future of the sport but it's the dominant duo of Monaghan's Arthur Kierans and Ashley McAdoo who are setting the standard for everyone else.

Evin Hughes, Championship PRO