

Adam & Ray Ripper
Nissan Micra 1.4
Class A
Alan Healy Memorial Rally
Cadwell Park
2nd February 2020



Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)

Returning to Cadwell Park for round 5 of the MSN Circuit Rally Championship, we were hoping the expected overnight rain wasn't going to be as bad as forecast, but the water laying in the surrounding fields on the way to the venue dispelled such notions. It was going to be slippery on the circuit and the service park quickly resembled a slurry pit, in which we sloshed about all day.

There's a vista from Cadwell, looking south towards Horncastle, giving the illusion of looking out to sea. The imaginary horizon is created by a

and as the announcer at the awards presentation remarked that only eight of the 66 starters failed to finish, it was testament to the day's fluidity – it really does help if everyone keeps to time, completes each stage and finishes the day without mishap.

Ah yes. We had one of those. On lap two of SS1. We knew we had cold tyres, unbedded brakes, a surface with standing water and ageing, but still functional wet specification tyres. We agreed to 'feel our way' through this stage and I was almost pleased

didn't want – a full 360° in about a second – but hey, we were now pointing in the right direction and hadn't hit anything! Adam put the power down but this took us half a yard into the armco, luckily bouncing out and back on the circuit.

After spending the rest of the stage apologising to each other, it was a relief to finish the stage and take stock of the damage.

Back in service, our Micra looked like it had been socked in the eye by 'Enry's' 'Ammer. We were the suckers, not giving enough consideration to the surface conditions and probably re-living the brilliance of Brands Hatch, over-confident in our approach down the hill.

Harbouring dreams of a good finish here, (we dared to hope for a class win even), this feeling now seemed to sink as far into the mud as our trolley jack did. Feeling rocked and knocked, dazed and confused, we were down but not out. Nigel and Neal took to their task with a "you bend 'em, we mend 'em" attitude and our wing, headlight and bumper were soon looking as good with a repair that any ringside cut-man would be proud of.

Back in the ring, the shorter SS2 acted as a confidence builder. There were no issues with the car and no issues with the grip, at least at our now steadier pace, and by the end of



stretch of power line. It's uncanny how absorptive this view is and the wisftul daydreaming it allows – a welcome breather from a hectic and exciting Alan Healy Memorial Rally. The organising Border Motor Club couldn't have timed the rally better, with all stages running to perfection,

to run up behind some traffic to temper our eagerness to get going properly. This was all going well until we descended Coppice for the second time. The grip went and we were in a spin and a slide, very close to the armco. The spin offered us another view of Cadwell that we



it were leading the class, mostly by virtue of local team Matt Wood and Peter Kettle recording a SS1 maximum in their quick Vauxhall Corsa.

SS3 was a good stage, similarly SS4 where we had the bizarre experience of being passed by a Fiat 500 going down into Coppice and then passing it by the time we got to Barn; the Fiat must have had issues as we were to see it nose to the armco at Hairpin later in the rally. By now we were starting to find some grip and slowly consolidating our lead over the other competitors in our class.

Arrival at SS5 gave us the usual period of reflection and with the light improving as the sun started to seep through the blanket of cloud, we knew that this was to be the last stage for the wet tyres. The standing water on the circuit was being wicked away by the breeze and a change of tyres would surely allow us to pull clear from our opposition.

And so it proved, as SS6 brought an exclamation from Adam halfway round of "these tyres are just fantastic" as our Micra really showed its paces and manoeuvrability.

So it was time to drive within ourselves, to build slowly on our lead and not take any undue risks.

Our dream of winning the class was in sight, and despite the Corsa taking time out of us on every stage, it was surely too far behind to impact the final result.

SS7 and SS8 went pretty much according to plan, although Adam picked up on us being given the wrong start time – an undue 30 seconds on our time for SS8 could have made it nerve wracking! But all was well and we steered our path successfully right to the end for a Class A win, Championship class win and 34th overall.

We had progressed from a messy, meandering morning to a confident, composed conclusion. Sweet dreams indeed.

Ray Ripper, Co-Driver

