

Wink nudges up standing with best performance yet

By Wendy Clarihew

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THE Snowman Rally lived up to its name with wintry weather conditions making things difficult for drivers and spectators alike.

The rally is one of the biggest sporting events in the Highlands and the first round of the ARR Craib MSA Scottish Rally Championship.

The drivers who came out on top did well to cope with the conditions. Among them was John Wink, (below) racing in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9, with co-driver John Forrest, from Rothienorman and the pair could be proud after recording their best-ever result.

The Snowman saw the return of the SRC Challengers Championship. This is a hotly contested series and has been won by some of the biggest names in Scottish rallying over the years as they made their way up the rankings.

The series was won by Banchory's Scott McCombie with Workington co-driver Mark Fisher in their Evo IX.

Wink and Forrest finished second in class and twelfth overall, just

20 seconds off the leaders. Wink said: "Competition is tough up at the top, with more experienced drivers managing to close the gaps.

"We finished 12th from a field of 125 entries, our best result so far.

"We had a few problems along the way. The changeable conditions meant that we could not predict how things were going to go.

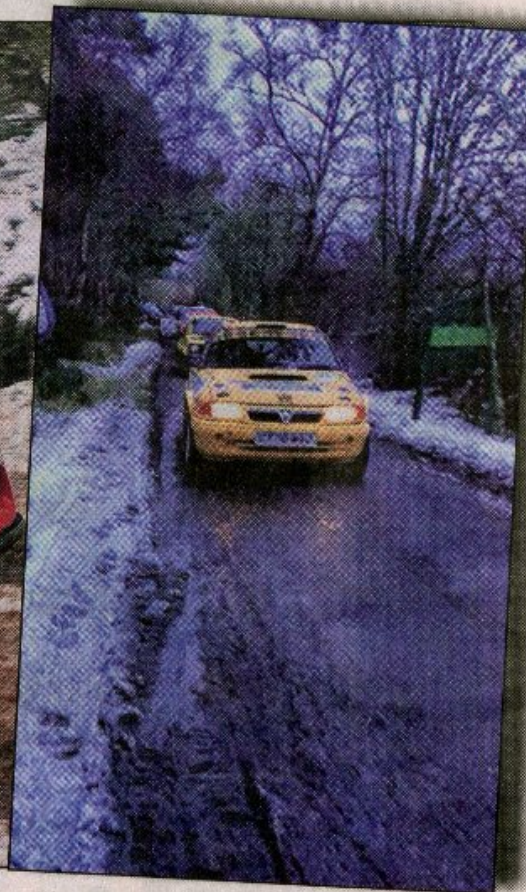
"We ran on road tyres when we should have changed to winter tyres, it was a gamble but everyone else faced the same problem.

"In stage four we landed in a ditch and lost about a minute of time. It was disappointing but we did manage to carry on and finish the stage.

"Our next outing is the Border Counties competition, in Jedburgh on March 19. There are a few repair jobs to do to the car before then."

Another local fairing well was co-driver Daniel Christie, Inch, with Kevin Gray, from Invergordon, who finished 57th in their Vauxhall Astra.

In stage three, the pair finished third in



(Above left) Conditions made driving tricky for John Wink in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 and (right) Kevin Gray and Daniel Christie make their way to a stage start.

class. On a day where other classes were won by big margins, it was a very closely contested battle.

Christie said: "The conditions on the

day were extremely difficult and this was Kevin's first-ever rally.

"He did really well and we were both chuffed with our performance. The next

competition for Kevin is the Speyside Stages, however I will not be taking part. My brother Darren, who helped out in services at the Snowman, will be driving."

