The opening three rounds of the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship were crackers. Each event had its own distinct personality. All were forestry. To Mitchelstown for the Tipperary Sean Conlon Forestry rally over the well tried and tested stages surrounding the Co-operative town.

The 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship is class based allowing competitors from any of the six classes to win the championship outright.

Three crews shared the top positions when stones settled. Overall winner and winner of class 6 were Corks Owen Murphy and James O'Brien in the Mitsubishi Lancer on 30 points. Ray Benskin (jnr) / Ollie Kierce, Escort MK2 won class 4. Frank Kelly / Liam Brennan, Escort MK2 won class 5. All on 30 points virtue of the bonus points system.

Next it was to the Willie Loughman forestry rally promoted by the Carrick-on-Suir Club. Novel for this event was the decision to have the rally on Saturday afternoon with the late stages in the dark. This was new challenge for many of the crews who experienced their first event with the dancing shadows and the hollow voids of the dark spaces. Old hands of night navigation events showed that "practice makes perfect" Murphy and O'Brien chalked up another win to nail first place in the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship with 45 points.

Second O/A was shared by Douglas Stewart / Billy Ryan, Peugeot, class 2 and Shay Power / Johnny Rafter, Escort MK2, class 5, both on 40 points.

Third O/A was also shared; Mick Cuddihy / James Dunphy, Starlet, class 3 and Ray Benskin (jnr) / Ollie Kierce, Escort MK2, class 4, both on 39 points.

Round three was the Munster Clubs Moonraker Rally in Lismore. It could just as easy have been Lisbon; to say it was sweltering would only be a slight exaggeration, because the sun shone from a cloudless sky and the stages were in fine condition. The 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship had a new leader with Douglas Stewart / Billy Ryan winning class 2 again amassing 55 points, to see leaders Murphy / O'Brien who ended their run with a blown head gasket. This is a fantastic achievement by a FWD car in the
usual playground of the Escort MK2 and 4X4’s.

Second O/A are Derek Butler / Diarmuid O’Shea, Honda Civic, class 2 on 48 points. Once again a FWD more than holding its own on the loose. I suppose it’s ok to finish second in class in the “works spec” Ford Fiesta of Craig Breen who is one of the leading lights in Irish rallying!

Third O/A are James Coleman / Michael Haley, Escort MK2, class 5 on 47 points. The Mk2 is undergoing some development work in the suspension department.

The class positions are equally competitive. The current state of play of rallying in Ireland is that the ‘clubman’ has held onto the Euros required for his hobby and didn’t lose the run of himself in the time of the tiger. There were healthy entries on the first three rounds of the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship and indeed the Valvoline National Forestry Rally Championship. Indeed the National Tarmac rally championship has so far early in the season been well supported.

As we eagerly look forward to the tarmac rounds of the 2011 TRITON SHOWERS South East Stages Rally Championship we wish the promoting clubs healthy entries. Far too many events are running at a loss and need support from outside of the competitors entry fees. Advertising and sales of programmes are just two other means of supporting the sport. To all who buy the programmes, thank you for your support.