
Meeke grabs dramatic second in Azores

Britain's Kris Meeke took second place in dramatic circumstances in the weekend's Rally Azores, round seven of the Intercontinental Rally Challenge.

Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle had gone into the penultimate stage lying fourth in their Peugeot 207 following various problems and seemingly with no chance of a podium finish.



This though changed in the blink of an eye as leader Juho Hanninen suffered a puncture and suddenly dropped to fourth behind the British duo. Hanninen's Skoda team-mate Jan Kopecky now led but incredibly with just a couple of miles to go on the final stage he crashed out.

Therefore, it was Portuguese local Bruno Maghalaes who inherited the victory in his Peugeot 207 ahead of Meeke.

Northern Irishman Meeke stays fifth in the points table, still some 23 points behind leader Hanninen, and said: "We have to be realistic because we were gifted a second place. We'll take the points whenever we can get them but we can't be satisfied because we didn't have the pace to win. We were competitive on some stages but we need to do more."

The Azores event was the IRC's seventh round out of 12 this season. The series stays in Portugal for its next round as well before events in the Czech Republic and San Remo and then the RAC MSA Rally of Scotland (see www.ircseries.com for full calendar details).

Meeke's fellow Brit Guy Wilks, last year's winner in Scotland, is currently out of action with injury after a crash in Italy in June in his Skoda Fabia. However, he remains fourth in the standings and although he is not scheduled to return until the Czech round could yet still challenge for the drivers' title due to the series 'best seven out of 12' scores rule. Both he and Meeke are sure to be hot favourites for the win when the IRC comes to Scotland (15-17 October).

For a full Rally Azores report see separate story.

The Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Rally of Scotland