



**Racetech RALLY WAIRARAPA**



**28-29 May 2011**

### **Mason Retains Title in Dramatic Fight Back.**

For the Trusthouse Racetech Rally Wairarapa the hot competition, and the dramas of the first day continued unabated on day two, set against a backdrop of blue skies and the green rolling hills around Ekektahuna.

Even before the first rock was thrown on Day 2, it was a stressful start for Chris West. His fuel issues of the first day re-appeared and he was 15 minutes late starting, meaning that he incurred a 2minute and 10 second penalty. This immediately dropped him from first to fifth, leaving Sloan Cox to lead a national championship rally for the first time in his short career.

It also left the way open for Dean Sumner to make his way towards the lead, and after the first 7.3km test he was only 0.4 seconds behind Cox. By the next stage he had done just that, and the teenager was now feeling the pressure from the chasing pack, as Mason, Gilmour and West were all on a mission and sharing fastest stage times on their respective comeback runs.

And the comeback of the rally continued, as Mason overtook Cox after stage 12 to be now just 17.5 seconds behind Sumner, who had been enjoying the lead for a number of stages. So, while Mason spent the next few stages slowly chipping away at Sumner's lead, the battle for the minor money was between Argyle and Cox. Especially as Gilmour and West were not able to make the significant in-roads on their time deficits needed to get podium positions.

As the rally miles counted down things were becoming more and more heated between Sumner and Mason. With only a few seconds being cribbed back by Mason on each stage, it was finally in the penultimate test that Mason flew through and smashed his stage record to overtake Sumner for the lead. That left 17kms to battle over an 8.8 second difference.

And it was Mason who blinked first. A spin and damage to the right front of Masons Subaru left the door open for Sumner. Despite Sumner making a clean run and beating Mason for the stage time, he could only claw back 4.4 seconds, meaning that Mason was able to retain his Rally Wairarapa title, this time by the skin of his teeth.

Behind these two, the teenager Cox was throwing everything onto the road in a bid to retain his podium position. In the process he also started to throw bits of his car at the scenery, but was unable to resist the older and wiser Argyle, even as Argyle worked around problems with his car's differentials.

By Stage 16 Argyle had overtaken Cox for third and in the end a fast fading Cox was over a minute behind, although the earlier indiscretions of Gilmour and West allowed Cox to keep fourth, as they finished 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively.





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In the Malcolm Stewart Classic Rally, the success of his first day's efforts saw Ron Davey with a significant lead. However a real battle was coming between Jason Timmins and Gary Smith, with Timmins starting the day on a charge.

It only took until the third stage of the day for Timmins to strike, with a slow time by Smith not helping his cause. As the day progressed, further top stage times by Timmins saw him start to pull away from Smith, and to some extent start to reel in Davey at the front.

On into the last handful of stages, and Davey was content to sit on the 2 minute lead he enjoyed over Timmins, however he shouldn't have been. Top 2 stage times by Timmins saw him start to claw back time in huge handfuls and that 2 minutes was cut in half in just three stages.

However Timmins was now running out of road and he had to settle for a very fine second place, after Ron Davey had shown a real turn of speed all event. For Davey it is an honour to take the Malcolm Stewart Trophy, having know and competed against Malcolm many times in the past.

Gary Smith also managed to pick up his pace in the afternoon and stabilise his third place, from Roger Brader. Brader himself being the beneficiary of 4<sup>th</sup> place after Rob Wylie suffered fuel problems in stage 11, and dropping him well back.

Rounding out the top 5 was Carl Rabbidge, who picked up that 5<sup>th</sup> placing after an all day battle with Keith Stewart.

In the Allcomers Class, Stewart Taylor followed on with his fine form from day one, and kept mixing it with the national championship contenders. He successfully defended 9<sup>th</sup> overall and well ahead of Steve Bond. For Bond it was an unusual rally, where his usual sideways style was missing and he drove a conservative rally by his standards, to record a good finish.

However his cause was also helped when a number of competitors opted not to contest both days, and when Tony McConachy suffered significant problems to drop him well back. Paul De Rose was third in his mighty Mirage, to also take Class B honours over Paul Black.

Certainly the rally was dominated by the impressive fight back of Richard Mason, who showed that he has made significant progress on his car's performance, and this result now sets him up for an intriguing battle in the remaining two rounds of the Brian Green Property Group New Zealand Rally Championship.



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Richard Mason Fighting His Way Back to Win at Rally Wairarapa  
Photo Credit: Euan Cameron

### Fast Facts

- Round 3 of NZ Rally Championship
- Round 1 of Geartech Central Region Rally Series, (points scoring based on Saturdays results only)
- Round 2 of the Classic Challenge Trophy
- 17 Special Stages, 8 on Saturday 28 May, and 9 on Sunday 29 May
- 284km of competitive Special Stages, 158km on Saturday, 126km on Sunday
- [www.rallywairarapa.co.nz](http://www.rallywairarapa.co.nz)

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