



Racetech RALLY WAIRARAPA



28-29 May 2011

West Leads Rally Wairarapa at Half Time.

The first day of competition at the Trusthouse Racetech Rally Wairarapa features roads to the south of Masterton and to the east, with servicing centred around the township of Pongaroa. The 158km of special stages provides a real test for the competing crews, making for a challenging day.

However the drama of the day started early for some. Richard Mason was expected by many to lead his home event, but a broken turbo in the very first stage put pay to that idea. The subsequent lack of power was made worse when Mason had to suffer through 2 more stages and 45km of competition before he could replace the offending turbo. That set Mason back to 18th and 3 minutes behind the leaders. The other big name to strike problems was Emma Gilmour when she broke an axle on the start of the third stage, dropping her back to 11th and 2 minutes 25 seconds down.

At the front the battle was between Dean Sumner and Chris West as these two traded stage times and started to pull away from the chasing pack of Sloan Cox, Geoff Argyle and Glenn Inkster. As the afternoon stages started both Gilmour and Mason were back with repaired cars and both surged back to record fastest stage times as they mounted their recovery efforts.

As the battles continued in stages 5 and 6, it was then the longest stage of the day that proved to be the turning point for the overall results. At almost 30km long and featuring a constantly changing variety of road surfaces, it was Mason who showed his mastery of the road. Completing the test in a record half a minute faster than he did last year, he was a massive 50 seconds faster than the next best, of Gilmour, and Cox. This time Sumner and West were well down the rankings, with the result being that Sumner dropped to third, while Cox jumped to second.

With only 13km of competition left in the day Mason managed to claw back some more time on the leaders, meaning that he had made up a massive 2 minutes in stage time, over just 5 stages, to be sitting 5th overall at days end.

While Chris West now leads the rally the biggest smile in the service park was reserved for Sloan Cox. Sitting in second place, this is his best placing in a national championship rally. However he will have to watch out on day two, with Dean Sumner only 2.7 seconds behind. Geoff Argyle was another to make hay in stage 7 and he closed to be within 16 seconds of Sumner.

Certainly the ones to watch tomorrow will be Gilmour and Mason as they continue their recovery operation. Plus it will be interesting to see if the teenage Cox can keep his nerve and retain his place amongst the far more experienced competitors around him.





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In the Malcolm Stewart Classic Rally, the early running was as predicted, with Marcus van Klink running away from the pack at the get go. After only 5 stages he held an impressive 3 minute lead over Ron Davey. That is until stage 6, where a broken axle on the start line put pay to his aspirations, not only for the Malcolm Stewart Trophy, but also for the Classic Challenge Trophy.

However it was an inspired drive by Ron Davey that has him leading the classic pack. After a third at this event last year, Davey has shown a turn of speed this year and consistently was the best of the rest all day. This shows with his half time lead now out to 1 minute 38 seconds over second placed Gary Smith. For Smith, this is his first time in this classic event, and it is many many years since he last competed in the region. His consistent run on un-familiar territory has so far been well rewarded.

Third of the classics is Jason Timmins who has taken his improved form from local sprint events into the rally. Another to take advantage of stage 7 and make a move, he is now just 15 seconds off Smith.

Rounding out the top five are Rob Wylie, and Masterton local Roger Brader. For Wylie his day was progressing well until he hit a bridge in the middle of stage 4. That effort lost him over 40 seconds on Smith and Davey and his expected challenge for the Malcolm Stewart Trophy will be an uphill battle from here on. Brader on the other hand was enjoying his home town roads and keeping the spectators happy with his sideways style.

In the Allcomers field it is former national championship competitor Stewart Taylor who is mixing it with the current championship contenders. Lying 9th overall, his consistent stage times sees him well positioned for a top 10 finish. One of the stand out drives so far is that of Tony McConachy in his 1300cc Hayabusa powered Toyota Starlet. At 14th overall this giant killing machine is second of the Allcomers and faster than all of the 4wd challengers, bar Taylor in his Evo 10 Lancer.

Third in the field is Daniel Feck in a Mitsubishi FTO, who is another to be showing form and class above his previous results, making these the group to watch out for on day two.

Now with an overnight rest to refresh the cars and drivers, the teams will tackle 126km of special stages tomorrow, on roads centred around Eketahuna. The rally finishes back at the Copthorne Hotel and Resort Solway Park at 4:15pm





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Rally Wairarapa leader Chris West
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

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