



**BNT Mason Motorsport**

1st November

*What an eventful last few months! We had a great adventure-packed time at WRC Rally Australia and a mission accomplished result at NZRC Rally Nelson. Although the dust has barely settled from the fast and furious roads that are Nelson, we are well into developing our battle plan come the start of next year's season... we can't wait to unleash already!*

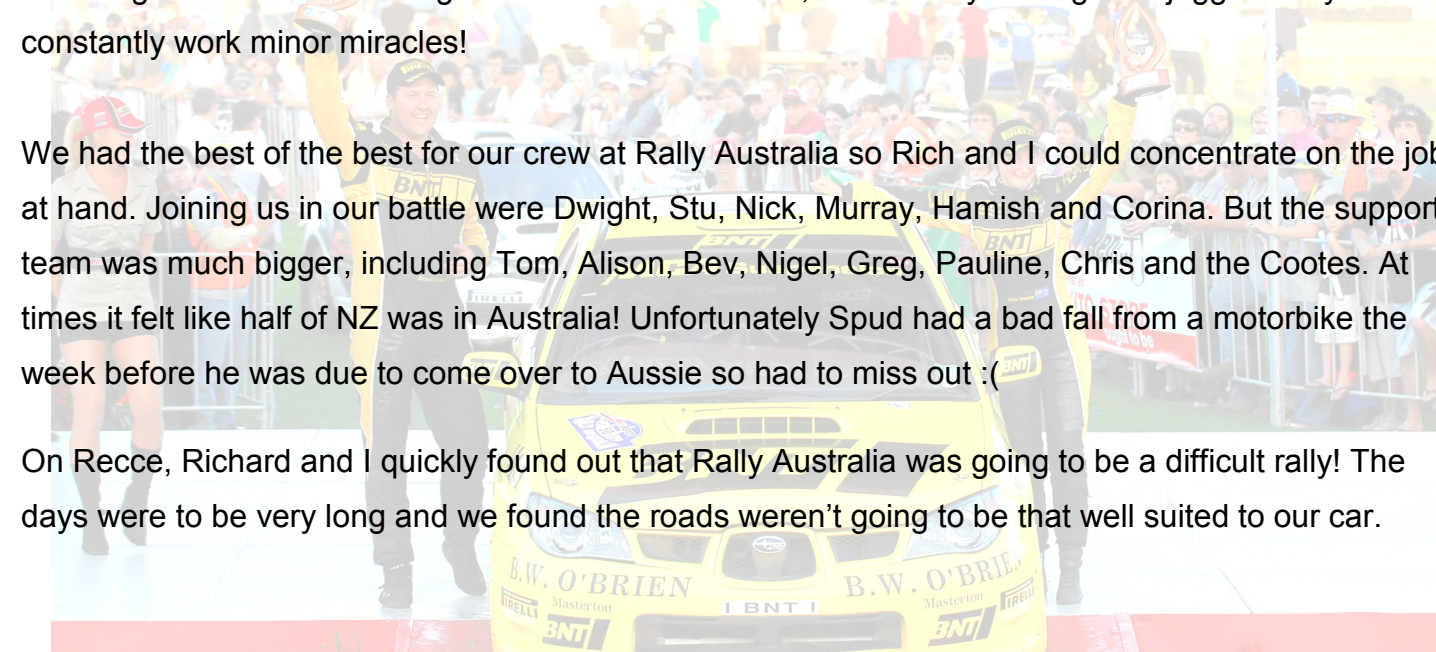
## WRC RALLY AUSTRALIA

We had an awesome trip to Rally Australia! It was great to be part of a World Rally Championship round again and it also gave us a chance to catch up with some of our international friends and competitors and race against them! We must really thank *BNT* for their continued support and helping us in our quest at Rally Australia of taking a third PWRC podium out of three attempts.

Richard and I, along with Richard's parents, Tom and Alison, arrived in Australia a week before the rally. Richard and Tom set about making sure the car was in the best possible shape for the event while Alison and I spent some time shopping and relaxing in the gorgeous sun! What a great lead up to the event... well for me anyway! Once that was all over the serious business started. We arrived in Kingscliff (the rally base) and checked into our house—it was fantastic with 4 bedrooms, a spa, a pool and a gourmet kitchen! Much nicer than our house back here :) It was also much cheaper than a motel or hotel option. Luckily, Dwight arrived nice and early and Richard gave him a list the size of a double sided A4 page of things that needed sorting. He was incredible though and calmly set out to complete it all. Dwight was a huge asset during our whole trip and really made us appreciate why he was Possum's right hand man. Although he isn't exclusive to us, he certainly manages to juggle everyone and constantly work minor miracles!

We had the best of the best for our crew at Rally Australia so Rich and I could concentrate on the job at hand. Joining us in our battle were Dwight, Stu, Nick, Murray, Hamish and Corina. But the support team was much bigger, including Tom, Alison, Bev, Nigel, Greg, Pauline, Chris and the Cootes. At times it felt like half of NZ was in Australia! Unfortunately Spud had a bad fall from a motorbike the week before he was due to come over to Aussie so had to miss out :(

On Recce, Richard and I quickly found out that Rally Australia was going to be a difficult rally! The days were to be very long and we found the roads weren't going to be that well suited to our car.



Day one however, due to the mostly twisty nature of the roads, was going to suit us nicely. Day two was VERY VERY fast and as such we thought we'd try and be the best of our Make of Car through. Day three was also fast but not quite as bad as Day Two. The roads were not THAT different from home, other than the fact there wasn't the same camber and every corner was pretty much followed by a straight of some sort, where as in NZ we often have a corner flowing into another corner. This in itself created a new style of approach, affecting both driving and car set up. Rich and I couldn't wait to have a crack at the Super Special held in Murwillumbah. It was an awesome little undulating track around the streets and was to be held each evening... the only catch was that we had to run it on gravel tyres! The road/touring sections were set to be quite long, not that different to Rally Japan which we competed in a couple of years ago. Lucky I've got my best friend beside me to chat to the whole time. The touring section every morning was to take us out to the township of Kyogle. It was about 1.5 hours driving but quite twisty and through villages. With the threat of protesters holding us up and blocking our way, we had to always be on our toes. We were to drive this same road 8 times during the rally (not including recce, so more like 12 times!). On Saturday we were on that same one stretch of road for about 6 hours. Needless to say, we got to know it quite well! We were also amazed to see two snakes! Both on recce and during touring, we certainly didn't hang around to say hi to them but it was quite scary to know they were actually there and not far from the roadside!

Our days were to start very early in the morning and finish late at night and so were set to be quite demanding... meaning I hardly even got to use the spa! We were set to be driving and in the car for around 14 hours a day. I was fairly nervous of all the hype around protesters, with many threats against the rally and they turned into threats against our safety. Luckily it didn't really turn into much, other than mostly peaceful protesters. However I must wonder how they feel now as they tagged the roads and road signs with 'go away rally', 'no WRC' etc and now we have all left—those signs are probably still there. There was also thousands of supporters, including this little koala the boys found wandering around the service park. We also saw many other supporter signs like 'Koalas love antilag.'

Our aim for the weekend was to be first in the Production World Rally Championship class and top Subaru home. We knew it wouldn't be easy, competing against some of the very best in the world.



## DAY 1

We started off cautiously on Day 1, making sure we were in the groove with the tyres and conditions. The day also started off with quite fast stages! In the afternoon, we were happy to see some really twisty roads. They were quite narrow, with big trees lining the way and with so much grass and debris on the road, cutting corners was out of the question.



## DAY 1 CONTINUED

We went well in the afternoon and were very happy to go to bed that night as 1st Production World Rally Championship car and 10th overall. Although we did know that over the next two days, with very fast roads it would be really hard to stay in that position!

## DAY 2

Day two did prove as hard as we thought it would, although we found that we were much faster over the second pass of the stages. I think this is due to the recce system we run in New Zealand (with only one pass recce) we struggle to really trust our notes until we've had a good competitive run on them, either that or it's just experience and wisdom kicking in! We knew these stages would be fast but I was still surprised at just how fast that actually was... in one stage they had to put in a balage chicane to try and bring down the average speed. We still however finished day two as first Subaru and now 2nd in the PWRC class with newly crowned Junior World Rally Champion, Martin Prokop, the car in front.

## DAY 3

Day three was another fast day, although also included quite a bit of forest stages, unlike day two. About halfway through the day Richard and I decided that we couldn't chase Prokop on these fast roads without threatening our already great position. So we set about completing the longest day (special stage wise) and bringing the car home. And that's exactly what we did. Not quite achieving all of our goals, but as Richard said 'getting second to the current Junior World Rally Champion is not too bad'. We were first Subaru home and also as funny as it sounds, first right hand drive car home! During the whole rally, the Timing Crew's always came to the wrong side for my time card as all the cars in front were left hand drive.

Something quite funny was during the weekend the Australians had claimed us as their own. I don't know whether it was due to us having a yellow car or what! Even the radio station thought we were locals. I guess it's kind of an honour as over the years they have claimed the likes of Pavlova, Possum Bourne, Russell Crowe, Split Enz and Phar Lap so we're in good company.

## THANKS

Thanks to our parents and Greg and Pauline for support and taking another load off our shoulders during the week. Les Walkden must also get a special thanks for giving us a gearstick which was much required! Thanks to Eli Evans' crew for giving us a helping hand throughout the weekend. Lynda and Murray Coote have also been so good, helping organise everything from bedding to service vehicle and storage.



.Our boys were great and really did a perfect job in Australia—allowing Richard and I to concentrate on doing our jobs as well as we could.

Gary Upson from Rally Australia was also very helpful in many ways, including pointing us in the right direction to rent a house for the rally week. Thanks to Nasser Al-Attiyah and Ken Skidmore for passing on their Production World Rally Championship entry to us. It really makes the WRC experience so much better when you can run in a World Championship Class.



↑ From left; Murray, Hamish, Dwight, Nick and Stu. Corina? Last seen chasing Sebastien Loeb... Also, I love the ankle bracelets boys.

## NZRC RALLY NELSON

Two weeks after Rally Australia came Rally Nelson. Unfortunately we were unable to get our car back in time, so how lucky were we that we've got such great friends, because Murray Huband offered us his car! Murray has meticulously built up his version 9 over the last couple of years and seemed keen for Richard to give it its second ever rally outing and at National Championship level. Murray has done well building it up and it looked just the part come Rally Start on the Saturday morning. I did feel like I was losing my colour vision though as the car had the same black stickers as our yellow one except it was white!



Photo credit: Euan Cameron ↑

Richard had brother-in-law Hamish Fenemor join him for this rally as co-driver. He was very keen to jump back in the car after about 4 years out of it! The expectations on this weekend were not too high but the aim was to get ahead of Emma for the NZRC (and so get 2nd in the championship). After only getting 9th in the first stage, a good result didn't look TOO possible. However Rich, Hamish and the car soon all gelled and they were off. By stage 3 they were tied with Hayden for first overall. Hayden however bolted on some special tyres for the last stage of the day and with Rich and Hamish running on the canvas of theirs they had to settle for second. I think Murray was the most surprised by the day's end result, that his car was more than capable of mixing it with the best rally cars in New Zealand.

Day Two also started well with a stage win. However as it progressed so did brake problems. At the end of the stages, I was keeping Dani and Jessie well back from the road as Richard was struggling to even stop by the Time Controls. Quite a scary feeling when travelling at 170km/h not knowing if the brakes are going to work! They got through the day though and achieved their goal, gaining 2nd overall in the NZRC and also giving Murray's car a baptism of fire at the NZRC level.



## THANKS

HUGE thanks to Murray and Toni Huband for letting us use their 'baby'! Thanks to the boys that came along—Reuben, Dwight, Murray, Nick and Jemma (obviously not a boy but Thanks!). Reuben put in a whole pile of work just before the rally which was great. Thanks Chris & Hamish F for being there and ready to lend a hand. Thanks Nana & Grandad for having us stay again. Thanks Dani & Jessie for being wonderful team girls. Thanks Greg and Pauline for tripping the girls and I around the place... it certainly gave me a new appreciation for the navigational expertise needed to get to and from stages for you all.

## WHAT ARE WE UP TO?

I know everyone in the rally world has probably guessed by now so Yes the reason that I didn't co-drive at Nelson IS because I'm pregnant. It was planned around the rally season so the '2010 model Mason' is due in March! We're obviously very happy about it, as are our families. We thought it was too early to tell everyone at Nelson, because we wanted to make sure all was well. So, I don't think I can fit my overalls at the moment but I'm really looking forward to getting back into them and also having a new team member on the way—I already think he/she is going to be a fast peddler like daddy as there has been some serious kicking going on from morning to night!

We've also got some more great news to let you all know about in December of things that will be happening next year. Watch this space :) I know it's mean keeping you all in suspense, but we will just wait until all is finalised before we 'tell the world'.

So what a season we have had this year! Unfortunately, it's probably been one of the most difficult for us which has all been rather frustrating, however it also brings with it all the more excitement over the beginning of a new year coupled with new challenges.

*BNT*, you have continued to be a truly fantastic sponsor and we hope you have enjoyed our partnership in 2009. Huge thanks also to our other great sponsors; B.W O'Brien, Fram, Subaru NZ, The PC Factory, Dunlop, Toms Auto Services, UCD Quality Foods, Murray Coote Suspension, ScottSpeed Performance Engines, Pagid, Health Kix Osteopathy and Andersons Meats. We hope to bring you even more success in 2010. Thanks to our families; Tom & Alison, Bev & Nigel, our gorgeous girls Danielle & Jessica and Chris for a never-ending supply of unconditional support. HUGE thanks to our great service crew who have worked hard to ensure our car is in the best shape—Stu, Nick, Murray, Dwight, Reuben, Hamish and Spud. You guys are great! Thanks also to their partners for helping out where possible and for letting us borrow your husbands/boyfriends for many long nights and weekends over the year.

Thanks to all our fans and supporters. We hope you have a great off season and look forward to entertaining you again real soon. We can guarantee you one thing, we want the championship back and will be out in full force come Rally Otago in April.

## CONTACTS

# RALLY AUSTRALIA PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF STU AND CORINA ANDREWS



Service. Nick on left, Dwight and Stu's bottoms.



After the ramp, Rich and Sara with BNT Boss Greg Horne.



Receiving the STI award from Subaru for being first Subaru home.



Signing Session, talking with Cody Crocker. And note: we even had our own model.



The BNT Subaru as car number 50 running for the Barwa Rally Team from Qatar.

