



BNT Mason Motorsport

25th May 2009

The 2009 Rally of Otago was fast and furious! The speeds were some of the highest we've ever reached and our poor Subaru was screaming for mercy through the undulating roads. Our rally was going to plan, right up until the very last stage of the rally...

RALLY OTAGO

Before the rally, we thought weather was going to play a major role in this year's rally. Forecasts were for high winds and low temperatures and although I was secretly hoping for some snow (to add variety!) it never eventuated! Something I'm sure the service crew was happy about. This weekend we took a skeleton crew of Nick, Spud, Dwight and Murray. Along with supporters (aka parents and sponsors!) Tom and Alison, Bev and Nigel and Greg and Pauline. This year the rally comprised many traditional Otago rally roads—Kuri Bush, McIntosh Road, Waipori Gorge and the likes. However day two was to bring some new stages around the Middlemarch region - these were to be fast, very fast!

Our rally began with some last minute drama, taking the car to pre event scrutineering we discovered we had a crack in the fuel tank! Which we only found out having filled the car with petrol (we usually only put in what we need). Fuel leaking is not something to be taken lightly! Luckily we had already arranged to put on a display service at the pre event car show and so the boys kicked in to action to get the tank out and repaired. Thanks to the Pit Stop Guys for helping us find a man prepared to do the job. So once that was repaired, the stress was over and it was time for a good night's sleep before two big days of rallying.



DAY ONE

Day one started with the short blat through Whare Flat. We were a little off the pace through here by 3.2 seconds and finished the stage in fourth place, with Dean Sumner taking an early lead. Next up was the forestry stage of Akatore, we finished the stage in second place which moved us up the overall standings to be 3rd. Not our favourite spot to be but nevertheless an ok position to be in. Coal Gully was the third stage of the day, this stage although only 6km long, has the fastest average speed for the rally—127km/hr!!! This is very quick on gravel, especially considering it still has some tight corners in there.



DAY 1 CONTINUED

One of Richard's favourite stages was up next—Kuri Bush. We struggled through here, although we still got 2nd for the stage we were well down on the record we set last year (9 seconds). Needless to say, it was time to go back to the drawing board and come up with a plan and setup that would win the day. McIntosh road, with the massive jump near the end was to be our turning point. We had a great stage and had the best jump ever over the big dipper! Richard got the car all wound up for the jump which we hit at about 140km/h, the car sailed through the air as we seemingly flew into the abyss (the road dips way down under you and all you can see is sky!)! We landed beautifully about half way down the dip... its moments like this that remind us why we love the sport so much!

Next up was another favourite, Waipori Gorge. This stage is a bit better suited to our Subaru—more twisty than most other Otago stages. Richard and I approached the stage with big smiles, we were laying 2nd and 15.2seconds behind for the day with 2 gravel stages to go we knew we had to drive flat out to win the day... its such an exhilarating position to be in! We took 6.2seconds out of the leaders time through here, this meant we were left to find 9seconds but with a 42km stage to do it in (Glenburnie). This stage comprised medium speed forest roads, of mostly good base, but not really our favourite kind of road. We approached the stage with flat-out caution, not being able to commit much to the middle 20km due to the notes being fresh and only written on one pass recce—it only needs to have the note written one grade out and it's a big disaster! Richard drove well and the sight of Tom, Greg and Dad jumping for joy told us we had done enough to grab the lead! We took over 20seconds out of the leader to grab a thrilling victory for the day. Although before the day was over, we had to slap the tarmac tyres on for a quick skid around the city block of Dunedin for a super special stage. Richard enjoyed this and chucked the car around for some fun! We finished the day 14.8seconds in front and grabbed another full haul of points!

DAY 2

Day two was going to be our best bet for snow but to no avail. The roads around Middlemarch are crazy; very fast roads with a backdrop of moon like country with massive random rocks scattered through a vast desert like terrain. The day started well, we won the first stage—Ramrock, although more surprising was the fact that we were again a long way off our record we set in the same car in 2008—21.2seconds to be exact. This shows that although we were doing well, we were far from form. Next up was the aptly named Moonlight stage, this stage is really fast and although the average speed was 110km/hr for the winner, it had some very tight corners at the start and end which meant huge speeds were achieved in the middle! We've never seen our car go over 200km/hr but in here we just scraped it on a long downhill section through a slight corner. We continued to struggle through the next few stages, with our car just not achieving the same top range as the Mitsubishi's, nor it's normal performance.

DAY 2 CONTINUED

So having done our best through the fast stages of the rally, we were left to repeat the 42km stage Glenburnie from the previous day. All day long we had been waiting for this! Heading back to Subaru country we were set to repeat the rally snatching effort of day one, however this time with more confidence as the notes had been checked on the run through yesterday. Rich and I couldn't wait!!! We were 1.3 seconds behind for the rally and 16.1seconds down for the day. Driving to the stage Richard said to me it was exciting because he was going into the stage with the same mentality he had when he started the sport 10 years ago... to just drive flat out! I think sometimes its easy to get caught up in all the fuss and forget that rallying is about pushing the car, the driver and the roads to the knives edge.

So there we were, the 42km was all that separated us and home, it was the Trophy or the Trailer! Richard drove fantastically, he was so committed to what I was saying and we were both so in tune. The car was hopping crests, the engine was humming and we were driving Rally New Zealand style. However, when driving with commitment there are risks... in our case we somehow/somewhere collected a rock which punctured the sidewall of our right rear tyre with 12km to go. It was with extreme disappointment in Richards voice that he told me what he was fighting with. Richard never gives up though, he wrestled with the car through the last section—trying not to ease up. Stopping to change the tyre would have cost us between 1-2minutes and so it wasn't even an option! We were amazed at how much our top end dropped off due to the puncture, where we would normally be going around 180km/h we were limited to about 140km/h. The last 5kilometers was a particular struggle, running on the rim. It was uplifting to see the finish board and even better to see we still finish the stage in 3rd! In turn we ended up 2nd for the day and 2nd overall for the rally.

Having now gone back and analysed our in car camera, we found we lost 36seconds during the last 10km compared to Saturday's run. We lost the day by 34.5 seconds so at the pace we were going prior to the puncture I'm sure we would have taken another thrilling victory. However motorsport is full of these 'what if' moments and the team is still ecstatic to come away with 1 win and 1 second from an action packed, high speed and awesome fun weekend.

JUNIOR DRIVER

Kieran and Peter had a great weekend down south. They scored their best ever result at Otago, finishing 8th overall and 1st Rookie for the NZRC round. They also won the Mainland series round and finished 2nd in the Rally NZ Raising Stars international award. Awesome effort guys!



THANKS

Huge thanks to Dwight, Nick, Spud and Murray for an excellent weekend, not only for keeping our car going strong but also for the good company. Thanks Chris, Mum and Dad Mason, Mum and Dad Randall and Greg and Pauline Horne for support and times. Thanks to the timing crews, marshals and event organisers for a well run and great fun event!

Thanks BNT, Subaru NZ, Fram, Dunlop, The PC Factory, B.W. O'Brien, Randall and Associates, Toms Auto Services, UCD Quality Foods, Murray Coote Suspension, ScottSpeed Performance Engines, Pagid, Health Kix Osteopathy and Andersons Meats for your continued support.

WHAT ARE WE UP TO?

Rally Whangarei! On the 6-7th of June. We have not sat still between rounds however; we have completed a testing session the day after the truck and car arrived back home and have already found some issues that confirmed our suspicions that all was not perfect with the car at Otago. Richard and I have discussed it at lengths and we have decided to approach Whangarei as we do Rally NZ. We have not had a good run at Whangarei for the last few years and so we are going to set the car up in full Rally NZ specs including WRC fuel, where in the past it has been hard to beat. At Whangarei we have good road position (8th), having to run behind all Asia Pacific Rally Championship entries, but in turn having nicely swept roads.

We are ready to get rid of our Whangarei gremlins. Anyone that knows Richard, knows that he has determination second to none so I really can't wait to get to that first stage and strap myself in for a great ride through some of New Zealand's most flowing roads.

NZRC GOLD STAR POINTS

1	Richard Mason	141
2	Hayden Paddon	131
3	Emma Gilmour	104
4	Matt Jansen	68
5	Dean Sumner	65
6	Chris West	60

Check out www.chrissport.co.nz for more detailed results and points

For some great photos from Otago check out;
<http://www.richardmason.co.nz/cpm/index.php>
www.gridder.co.nz
www.lmsportphotography.com

TV COVERAGE

Coverage of The Otago Rally will screen on TV one **5-6pm** on Sunday the **7th** and **14th June**.



OTAGO PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF EUAN CAMERON



← TV Interviewing at Service
Fully committed on Saturdays Glenburnie ↓



← Nick (in car) and Dwight at Service
Rich →



Sara, Rich, Alastair (Dunlop) and Greg (BNT) at Middlemarch service. →

Sideways in Glenburine ↓



Alastair and Richard Fraser handing out prizes ↑