



Our mission to the 2008 Rally of Otago was accomplished. We had a great event, full of hardcore roads—unnerving flat out blind crests, seriously high speeds and with a technical twist to keep you on your toes. Our approach? Flat out attack in the good sections and calculated caution in the bad.

THE LEAD UP

Richard and our engineer/first time co-driver Dwight Scott (ScottSpeed Performance Engines) decided the best way to sort out our Wairarapa setup problems was to test in the Tauranga rally. So Dwight kicked me out of my seat and I set off to accompany Richard's parents (Tom and Alison), daughters (Dani and Jess (5yrs)), Andre Meier and Ed as service crew. The rally went well and everyone was happy with the progress made. We came away with an outright win and some valuable testing kilometres. Dwight was especially happy to win his first rally as a co-driver, something I remember Richard also did for me, back in the 2005 Gisborne rally.



Timaru BNT Branch



Richard and Pasi

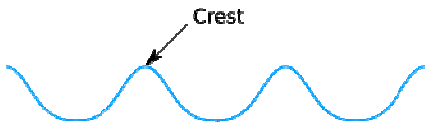
Tauranga Rally also had other benefits—we realised we had a blown engine due to the road fuel that we have to run being part of the NZRC... an expensive way to start the season. With only a short while to go until Otago we were concerned about being able to replace it in time. Luckily enough, we were kindly lent an engine by Mark Cole and Daryl Jinku... So a huge thanks must go to them!

With the engine finally in, Richard's parents Tom and Alison took the car and truck down to Otago a week early, calling in at the BNT branches along the way and stopping in Christchurch for the day on Tuesday so Richard and I could fly down and do a day's testing with Subaru WRC test driver Pasi Hagstrom. Pasi was great and was able to give Richard a few tips to fine tune his driving style and car handling.

RALLY OTAGO: DAY 1

Richard and I flew down to Dunedin on the Thursday and after renting a car off Mike Turfus at Dunedin Car Hire, we continued on to do half recce on Thursday which was great, enabling us to split the long day in two. We were happy with the roads, most of them being new and we knew that getting recce right was going to be a vital key in achieving a good result.

Stage one was 28km long and a 100% forestry road. We decided that it was important to get this one right and to try to take a lead from the start. Richard was happy with the car through there and felt comfortable. We were very surprised to come out of it 8.3sec in front of second place and 39.1sec in front of third. No complaining from us! Stage two was the 16.69km Taieri Beach and there were no problems to report. We cruised through to gain another 4.4sec on second place.



Ever wondered what a 'crest' actually is? It's a physics term used to describe waves. We use it to describe the same thing on a road.

RALLY OTAGO DAY 1 CONTINUED...

We won stage 3 which was the short and sweet Coal Gully, at 6.38km long and with an average speed of 123kph. In here we reached our maximum speed in the car—198kph... intense stuff!

Stage 4 was the 100% forestry road, Kai Forest. This one was shortened from the intended 30km down to 17km due to poor road condition on the last 13km. We won this stage by 2.5seconds and managed to extend our lead to 16.5seconds over Hayden Paddon. With 2 more gravel tests and a tarmac super special to go, things were looking good. We entered stage 5 with caution, this one was a repeat of the first of the day and we knew rocks and punctures were going to be a factor; however we were surprised to win again, by 1.9seconds. Stage 6 was a repeat of stage 2, which we also decided to be careful on and we took this one out by 2seconds. So then it was back to service now, where the boys put on our Dunlop tarmac tyres and Richard made some adjustments to the car for the tarmac super special. This stage has never been too kind to us, but this year with the experience we gained last year on tarmac, we were determined to turn this around. We were happy to get first equal with Chris West and that wrapped up day one.

We ended the day very happy... scoring maximum points for the championship with a car that was in great shape for day two, having completed a clean sweep of stage wins and a good 22.7sec lead on second place for the rally overall. So not surprisingly we couldn't wait for day two :)

RALLY OTAGO: DAY 2

Sunday's first stage was the 29km Ramrock, held to the North of Dunedin. This one was very unique, very fast, very cresty, coupled with big drops and massive rocks, it required very precise lines. It was an intense stage on the notes, with timing for every corner and every crest paramount—roaring through the stage reaching speeds over blind crests of up to 198kph and an average of 109kph... one of those in-car footages our parents are not allowed to see ;) However this stage did not quite go to plan, Rich-

ard had to make a big decision with about 19km to go when confronted by a big rock right on line with our right front tyre. In a split second Richard analyzed the situation and decided if we hit it with the wheel it would probably be our day over, if we hit it with the sump guard it could go either way.... So the sump guard it was! We hit it hard and limped through the rest of the stage with our noses out for any oily smells. The car was quite bent underneath - the radiator support panel was very twisted and in turn that pushed the bonnet up and we were down on power with a cooling duct closed off. Amazingly we were very happy to still win the stage by 11.6sec.

Stage 9 was held just up the road from Ramrock and so had similar characteristics, however there were no more dramas with rocks through here... it was a short stage and we won it by 1.1secs. We then headed back to service, where the boys were busy rubbing their hands together and waiting for the challenge that this service brought in order to have us running in top form again.



Otago rally; photo by Euan Cameron

RALLY OTAGO DAY 2 CONTINUED...

Stage 10 was an old favourite of ours, Waipori Gorge, but run in the opposite direction to the last 2 years. Early on we made the mistake of cutting in a bit too close to a bank and took a huge chunk out of the right front rim, it was only due to our Dunlop tyres that we didn't puncture. We did however bend a suspension arm which meant we had to drive through not only this stage with it but also the monster 51km stage 11.

This didn't prove to be too much of a hindrance, winning Waipori by 7.5sec and then the longest stage in the championship by 27.6sec, a stage we knew would be a turning point for the day.

It was at this point that we had almost a minute lead for the day and so needed a new aim to keep us motivated... that target was to take a clean sweep of stage wins for the entire rally, with only two more stages to go.

Stage 12 Kuri Bush is one of Richard's favourites... this is 15km of seriously flatout crests, where the placement of the car over a blind crest is absolutely vital, the car either jumps or is light over them but has to be pointing at the correct angle to get around the often hidden corner on or right after it. It's very hard to change direction otherwise! It is quite a skill and an amazing feeling going 170kph and pointing 90deg to the road as you're fully committed over a crest you can't see beyond. With an average speed of 116kph this stage is one that certainly tests the relationship between driver and co-driver! We got to the end of the stage and Richard told me 'I want to go to Finland!' We flew through this stage, winning it by 6.6sec. Our in-car footage was shown at the after-rally prizegiving after seeing it I went back and counted that I called the note 'Crest' 64 times for that 15km!

The famous Whare Flat stage was next and last for the rally—13km long, it's a tricky little stage and was run in the opposite direction to that of the last two years. We were very happy to win this one by 4.1seconds... We were both ecstatic! We had achieved all our goals of winning every stage of the rally (with Chris West equalling us on the Super Special) and in doing so we took maximum points for the weekend and more than doubled our lead in the championship. We also won the rally overall by 1min 34.9seconds.



Richard with Luka Homersham (5) winner of the 0-5y and overall colouring competition at the Otago Rally.

THANKS

Thanks must also go to our hardworking team; Chris, Spud, Reuben, Stu, Dwight, Nick and Murray. Thanks to Mark Cole and Daryl Jinku who let us use their engine for the rally, we couldn't have achieved the result with out you! Thanks to Mum & Dad (Randall) and Mum & Dad (Mason) for timekeeping. Also a big thanks to the Organisers, Sponsors, Marshals and Timing Crews of the Otago Rally for a well run and good fun event... see you all next year.

Check out www.autotrader.co.nz for all the news and reviews on the NZRC rounds. There's great coverage and photos from the Otago Rally.

TV One Coverage for Rally

Otago:
Sunday 25th May (Day 2) from
4.50pm

New Zealand Rally Championship Dates

- Rally Whangarei 7-8th June
- Rally Hawkes Bay 26-27th July
- Rally NZ 28-31st August
- Rally Nelson 20-21st September



POINTS AFTER OTAGO

Drivers

1)	R. Mason	129
2)	H. Paddon	100
3)	S. Taylor	95
4)	C. West	76
5)	B. Martin	67
6)	C. McInnes	57
7)	S. Cox	51
8)	A. Meier	47
9)	G. Barber	45
10)	M. Tapper	41
11)	K. Nelson	41
12)	E. Gilmour	38
13)	D. Sumner	34
14)	B. Jagger	23
15)	P. Malley	17
16)	C. Lange	16

Co-Drivers

1)	S. Mason	129
2)	J. Kennard	100
3)	W. Searle	95
4)	G. Cowan	76
5)	G. Marra	67
6)	D. Calder	57
7)	T. Cox	51
8)	J. Farmer	47
9)	B. O'Connor	45
10)	J. Cress	41
11)	M. Brunt	41
12)	P. Fallon	34
13)	G. MacNeall	25
14)	B. Hawkins	23
15)	R. Bennett	17
16)	M. Peden	16

Junior Drivers

1)	H. Paddon	134
2)	S. Cox	108
3)	A. Meier	98
4)	K. Nelson	80
5)	B. Jagger	52
6)	P. Malley	36

Manufacturers Trophy

1)	Mitsubishi	173
2)	Subaru	161
3)	Ford	33

Rookie Drivers

1)	A. Meier	134
2)	B. Jagger	84
3)	G. Poole	48
4)	B. Ayling	27

For live rally results & points
check out:

www.chrissport.co.nz

JUNIOR DRIVERS

Kirsty/Michele and Andre/Jason had a great little battle between themselves during the rally—swapping positions almost stage by stage. Andre ended up just pipping Kirsty for the overall results, with them placing 11th and 12th respectively out of the 68 finishers—awesome work. Andre matched us by taking a clean sweep of stage wins in the NZRC Rookie category - great stuff! Kirsty also finished up first female driver home again.

NEXT ON THE AGENDA...

Fully prepare Andre, Kirsty and our cars for the Whangarei Rally (7-8th June). Richard loves the roads up there, they're fast but technical; in turn it's great territory for our nimble Subaru. Our goal for this event is going to be exactly the same as for the last two rallies... to Win.

CONTACTS

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Check out:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clqh_e1U1z4

For some Otago rally footage.

