

8 April 2009

Hi all

The Tomoana Rally Hawke's Bay was the opening round of the Vantage Aluminium New Zealand Rally Championship held over the weekend in perfect sunny weather on public roads and forests around Napier.

On Friday morning co-driver Jeff Cress and I left for a very long day of recce which was a huge experience for me in itself. I found this very useful as not having used pace notes before it gave me a chance to learn to process the notes while driving and manage a better understanding for each type of note.

The Hawke's Bay Rally didn't go as planned and unfortunately we didn't achieve our goals of finishing our very first rally in the our Ford Fiesta ST150 Group N 2WD rally car.

On Saturday morning, day 1, we were the 25<sup>th</sup> car on the road., In special stage 1 things went very smoothly although we weren't the fastest. It gave me time to get a feel for the car and start to process the pace notes.

Special stage 2 was a different story; I had really started to get a feel for the car and was carrying a lot more speed into and out of corners until 2km from the finish we lost the power steering. From then on it was a 7km touring stage to the service park where the team were waiting. Worse news was to come ... I was told that I had broken an engine mount, and cracked the sump. As it isn't a five minute fix, we had to withdraw from the day.

The team was gutted but they all showed how much it meant to them to see the car back in running condition for day 2. With a huge effort from Gavin, Paul, Kayne and Dad and some extra help from Paul and Jeff of Napier Truck Specialists, we managed to have the car ready for day 2.

On Sunday we were back in the action to set several top-15 stage times and finish the day as the second-placed Ford Fiesta competitor and 11<sup>th</sup> overall for the day.

Day 2 gave me very good seat time and I have taken a lot away from the weekend. I now have a lot more confidence with pace notes and the car and am looking forward to out next round of the New Zealand Rally Championship, the Rally of Otago, on 15 and 16 May.

I would just like to say a special thanks to Rally New Zealand once again for helping this programme run so smoothly and a special thanks to Paul Mallard and Chris Carr for the support over the weekend. Jeff, thanks a lot for sitting next to me, you're a champion. Kayne Barrie, thanks for such an amazing car. And huge thanks to Gavin Peterson, Paul Curnow and my father for taking the time to service for me. Without you guys, we wouldn't have been able to race the second day.



To my sponsors, Nelson Fork Trucks Ltd, Allan Kirby at MS Nelson Ford, Body Talk Nelson, Colin at Alpine Stars and Highfield Romney; thanks for coming along for the ride.

To Eric and Gavin Peterson and the rest of your family, we are all thinking about you at this hard time and we are all there if there is anything we can do, much love to you guys.

Well, until next time, take it easy and you will be hearing from me before the Otago Rally.

Thanks

Ben Hunt  
Hunt Motorsport Team

