



Hi All

Welcome everyone to my first blog for the season, over the year I will be releasing a blog before and after each of the New Zealand Rally Championship rounds and the Possum Bourne Memorial Rally to keep you all in the loop with our progress and preparations.

Well only 8 days until my first round of the 2009 Vantage Aluminum Joinery New Zealand Rally Championship, the, the Tomoana Warehousing Rally Hawkes Bay on the 4th and 5th of April. I will be competing in a professionally prepared Ford Fiesta ST150, prepared by Kayne Barrie and representing Rally New Zealand as the winner of The Rally New Zealand Rising Stars Scholarship.

For those who don't know me I am relatively new to rallying, having only started late last year just in time to do my home rally, the 0800 Boxman Rally of Nelson and then I also competed in the Westland Rally later that year.

In March 2009, myself and 11 other young talented drivers from around New Zealand had the chance to compete in an intense weekend shootout in the Maramarua Forest south of Auckland, to determine who would win the 2009 Rally New Zealand inaugural Rising Star Scholarship.

We were vying for a \$50,000 prize package, which includes professional mentoring and the use of a professionally prepared car to contest the N3 category of the New Zealand Rally championship and the Possum Bourne Memorial Rally.

After the hugely physical and mentally draining weekend the time had come for the judges to announce the winner, that was when my name Ben Hunt was called out as the winner of the Rally New Zealand Rising Star Scholarship for 2009. I was shocked as I went to Auckland with the attitude of learning as much as I could and to win it would be a bonus.

"It was a dream come true and it is going to be one heck of a ride" were my words on the day.

So the Tomoana Warehousing Rally of Hawkes Bay will be my first Rally representing Rally New Zealand, my 3rd Rally ever and first time using pace notes and first rally in a front wheel drive.

The last couple of weeks in the build up to Hawkes Bay have been a juggling act between my job as a tennis coach and making sure everything is organised so that when it comes to Rally time everything runs smoothly.

I now have a Co-Driver for the season, the very experienced Jeff Cress. I have also arranged my team for the 2009 Championships, they are Kayne Barrie who will be running the Team, Gavin Peterson and Paul Curnow who are my mechanics and my father Richard Hunt, and I shouldn't forget everyone else that is helping the team, behind the scenes. Thanks Guys!!!!

I would just like to say a special thanks to Rally New Zealand for offering such an awesome scholarship to young New Zealand Rally Drivers, this is the best prize in New Zealand motorsport at present and it is a pleasure to be driving with your name alongside. Also thanks to Neil Allport and Dale Perry for all your help, mentoring and support, Bob Haldane for the help with notes and Kayne Barrie for your guidance and support and such an amazing car for the season.

To my sponsors, Nelson Fork Trucks LTD, Allan Kirby at M.S Nelson Ford, Body Talk Nelson, Colin at Alpine Stars and Highfield Romney, thanks for helping me make the 2009 season so much easier I couldn't have done it without you.

Anyway as you can imagine I still have loads to organise for Hawkes Bay so I will round this up now and you will hear from me after Hawkes Bay.

Thanks for taking the time to read this
Ben