

The 2009 Trust House Racetech Rally Wairarapa is the fourth round of the Vantage Aluminium Joinery New Zealand Rally Championship. It uses the same roads as previous years, with only a couple of minor changes, and takes in 250km of competitive stages over the two days, 18-19 July.

The biggest change from last year's event is the time of year. The warmth and dust of April will be replaced by the mid-winter of July which could make it an interesting rally if the wet, muddy conditions expected occur. I have only limited experience in these conditions with the only time I've driven in serious mud and rain was a Christchurch rally when I was in the passenger seat.

Since the NAC Insurance International Rally of Whangarei in June, our car's owner and chief engineer Kayne Barrie has been checking over the Ford Fiesta and preparing it for next weekend's event. This has left me with being in charge of organising the logistics for my team's trip up North. Now that I'm working 10 hour days as a diesel mechanic, there's no doubt it's a lot more stressful and harder to run the team but, thankfully, family and friends have all helped a great deal and made my job a lot easier.

This year I don't have a car to compete in local hill climbs and rally sprints, so I'm anxious to get back behind the wheel of Kayne's Ford Fiesta once again and continue to find more pace, picking up from where Jeff Cress, my co-driver, and I were in Rally Whangarei.

During the last few weeks I have had to do a mid-season report for Rally New Zealand as part of the Rising Stars Scholarship requirements. One of the things was a breakdown of every stage that Jeff and I have completed in the Ford Fiesta. This has shown me where I have lacked pace in rallies and given me an understanding of when I need to push harder.

The TV coverage for the Trust House Racetech Rally Wairarapa screens on TV One's Powerbuilt Tools Motorsport between 5-6pm, with day 1 shown on 26 July and Day 2 shown on 2 August so if you want to catch up on some action be sure to be watching on these dates.

Again, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone that has helped me out so far this year. You have all been a huge help and I have enjoyed every minute of the season to date. To Rally New Zealand and all their associated partners, thanks for the wonderful opportunity. The Rally New Zealand Rising Stars driver development programme is going to help so many young aspiring rally drivers in the years to come. Kayne, thanks for preparing the car and Gavin, Paul and Dad for servicing, without you guys we wouldn't be racing.

To my personal sponsors, Nelson Fork Trucks Ltd, Allan Kirby at MS Nelson Ford, Body Talk Nelson, Colin at Alpine Stars, P C Systems and Highfield Romneys; thanks.

I will be putting out a post-event blog after Wairarapa so until then, take it easy.

With kind regards

Ben Hunt
Hunt Motor Sport

