

Hi everyone,

The 2009 0800 Boxman Rally of Nelson was the fifth and final round of the Vantage Aluminium Joinery New Zealand Rally Championship and was also the last time that I competed in the Ford Fiesta as the inaugural Rally New Zealand Rising Stars Scholarship winner.

The rally was held over the weekend of 19 and 20 September in sensational Nelson weather and saw the likes of Ross Dunkerton competing in a classic BDA escort.

Eleven Nelson drivers competed in the event, but only two local teams finishing both days. The rally claimed a lot of cars and tyres over the weekend on the hard, sharp and fast roads. As it was my home rally, it was awesome to have all the support of sponsors, friends and family during the event. Even my 87 year old Grandma made an appearance on both days.

Saturday started off leisurely with the official start being held at the top of Trafalgar Street, the first car went over the ramp at 10.15am. By this time, at any other rally, we would have completed a few stages so this was a nice change of pace.

The first stage was a drag strip close to town so this was a good chance for local spectators to get out and see us blast through a man-made chicane. With this stage being only 5km long this wasn't a stage on which you could win the rally but you surely could lose it. The next two stages I told myself to push hard and set some good stage times to try and establish a reasonable lead while at the same time trying to conserve tyres. Stages 1, 2, 3 were repeated as the afternoon stages.

By the end of Saturday I had managed to win four of the six stages with another young Nelson driver Daniel Harris close behind. I was first Fiesta home on that day and 11th overall in the rally. Our whole team was stoked with the result but the guys had some work to do that night with the fuel pump and wiring playing up and causing the car not to leave Parc Ferme.

Day 2 we got off to a great start, increasing our lead every stage in the Fiesta Class and giving some of the 4WDs a run for their money. Sadly in the tenth stage our rally came to an abrupt halt as we snapped our right rear stub axle which caused the wheel and hub to depart from the car leaving us with only three wheels! We could have limped out but more damage would have been done so we had to retire which was a huge disappointment as we had a comfortable lead in our class, and were on target to be first Nelsonian home. This happens in motorsport and makes you more determined and excited for the season to come.



I have learnt so much throughout the season, not just for my driving but in all aspects of rallying. For example, how to run a team, approach sponsors and media skills. I would like to thank Rally New Zealand and everyone that has been involved with the Scholarship; it has been an amazing opportunity.

I have now qualified for the Rally New Zealand Rising Stars Development Award which has a shootout weekend in the Maramarua Forest in November (where Rally New Zealand will also be selecting next year's lucky Scholarship recipient). I will be putting everything I can into preparing for this opportunity over the next few months so I can achieve my goal of continuing in the New Zealand Rally Championship in 2010.

TV coverage for the 2009 0800 Boxman Rally of Nelson will screen on TV1 Powerbuilt Tools Motorsport from 5-6pm with Day 1 shown on 27 September and Day 2 shown on 4 October.

I would just like to say a huge thanks to Kayne Barrie and Rally New Zealand (Paul Mallard and Chris Carr) and also Neil Allport for everything you have done this year.

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 Romney - thanks. I hope to see you all onboard for an exciting season next year.

Also a huge thanks to my sponsors that are part of the Scholarship: NAC Insurance, Apparel by Design, Castrol, Network Visuals, Genuine Vehicle Imports, Dunlop and KBM (Kayne Barrie Motorsport).

Well this is my last blog this year so, until next season, take care and have a great summer. Over the next few months my team will be sorting out what car we are going to run next season, so there's no rest for us, but that's the way we like it!

Regards

Ben Hunt  
Hunt Motorsport

