

The 2009 Metalman Possum Bourne Memorial Rally was held on Saturday 22 August on some of the best roads in New Zealand. Apparently the Whaanga Coast stage is the only stage in the world that WRC drivers actually stop and take photos during reconnaissance!

We did 200km of special stages in one day so it was a very physically and mentally testing rally with the longest stage, Waitomo, being 46km long.

As you may recall, Jeff Cress, my regular co-driver was over in Australia watching the All Blacks beat the Wallabies. So I had Rocky Hudson in the co-driver's seat for the rally, which went very well and I certainly had no problems trusting the notes. And most importantly, he was fun to have in the car.

One of the most noticeable things about my driving on this event was that, throughout the whole rally, I was 100% committed to every note that Rocky called which meant I kept a lot more pace up. This is something that has been improving throughout the whole season, but everything seemed to click into place this time.

Some unfortunate things happened in the Patrick Malley camp (one of our biggest rivals in the Ford Fiesta class) and that left Rocky and myself in a close battle with the "Bens" (Ben Jagger and Ben Hawkins, the other leading Fiesta crew) right to the finish. Going into the last stage, Waitomo, there was a 9 second deficit between us until the "Bens" were unlucky to get a puncture 6km from the finish. It wasn't the best way to end the day for them but we both really enjoyed the close battle.

I know Kayne Barrie (our car's owner) was very proud to have his car home as the first-placed Fiesta. First two-wheel-drive car home and 13th overall was an awesome result for us, and especially in a Fiesta. They are such incredible handling cars and the whole package that comes with them makes them a grouse car to drive.

I extend a huge thanks to Rally New Zealand and everyone involved with them. You have put together an awesome package with this Rising Stars Scholarship and next year's winner has lots to look forward to.

Kayne, cheers for an amazing car to drive and all the knowledge and hard work you put in. Neil, thanks for your mentoring and encouragement during the weekend. Also thanks heaps to Gavin, Paul and Dad for servicing for me; you guys are legends. And thanks to Ben Jagger's team for all their help with servicing.

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 for coming along for the ride.

Also huge thanks to my sponsors that are part of the Scholarship: NAC Insurance, Apparel by Design, Castrol, Network Visuals, Genuine Vehicle Imports, Rally Drive New Zealand, Dunlop and KBM (Kayne Barrie Motorsport) - cheers for all your support.

Well, until next time, take it easy and you will be hearing from me before my home rally the 0800 Boxman Rally of Nelson.

Thanks
Ben Hunt
Hunt Motorsport Team

