

Hi everybody,

The Rally New Zealand Rising Stars team are heading to the final round of the Vantage Aluminium New Zealand Rally Championship next week for what will be an exciting weekend. Everything is on the line at the Wairarapa Rally on 11-12 September.

After a very successful Nelson Rally where Rich and I won our class on both days, I think we have a psychological advantage. Beating Ben [Hunt] at his home event has given me great confidence in our partnership and speed. We have a 35 point lead as well, which piles the pressure on Ben to win.

Wairarapa is a rally I have contested in the past, achieving great results. I enjoy the roads around the Masterton area and I think they suit my driving style. As we have said all season, once again it is important to finish both days of the final rally to clench the Group N two-wheel-drive title. This means opting for the 'drive to survive' attitude and we will let Ben set the pace. Down there it's generally very easy on the cars and in reality only a driver error will prevent us from getting to the finish line.

Not only are we in the hunt for a 2WD class title but we have been slowly edging closer to the front of the National Junior championship. With the front running four-wheel-drive young guns such as Sloan Cox and Ben Jagger having some bad luck we have found ourselves just 11 points behind the leader, Cox. With plenty of points on offer at Wairarapa, success in this championship is very achievable for me if we have a trouble-free run and show the same speed as the previous few events.

What an amazing season it has been to date. The team has grown well together over the course of the year and it has really made my job easy.

Thank you, Rally New Zealand, for giving me this opportunity. Fingers crossed we can bring home the title!!

Keep up to date with the live results at www.chrissport.co.nz 11-12 September.

Kind regards,
Stephen Barker

