

DAY 3 REPORT

30-11-16

ESCORTS ON TOP AFTER SILVER FERN RALLY'S TOUGH THIRD DAY

Southern men Derek Ayson and Gavin McDermott helped make history in their Nissan FJ20-engined Mk 11 Ford Escort on the third day of the 2016 New Zealand Silver Fern in and around Dunedin and West Otago today.

On the first two days of this year's marathon seven-day revival event from Christchurch to Gore and return, the pair - from Gore - played second fiddle in the Challenge division (for later model or modified classic rally cars) to the contemporary Honda Civic Type R of Aucklanders Dave Strong and Rob Scott.

But today, on roads familiar to him, Ayson took the lead in the Challenge division, meaning - in a unique event twist - Mk 11 Ford Escorts now lead both the Historic AND Challenge divisions.

The day saw the 40-plus competitors in the biennial gravel event leave parc ferme at Dunedin's Forsyth Barr Stadium at 8.00am to contest another seven stages, including the marathon 50.97km Makkinen one from Manuka Creek near Milton to Lake Mahinerangi then Lawrence.

After a storming run through similar long, fast stages in Tuesday, Canterbury ace Brian Stokes and wife Anne took the overall event lead in their Historic category-spec Mk11 Ford Escort. But they had slipped back down the order to 19th at day's end after losing 18 minutes repairing a rear axle bent on the Makkinen stage.

In their place at the top of the overall event leader-board came the similar Historic-spec Ford-engined Ford Escort RS 1800s of Kiwi rally veteran Shane Murland and co-driver John Benton, highly-rated Welsh pair Meirion Evans and Lestyn Williams, and Australians Stewart Reid and Dave Neill.

Murland and Benton won the day from Reid and Neill, Evans and Williams and defending event title holder Vince Bristow and his co-driver Tim Sayer. But issues on the first and second days meant that Murland and Benton, and Bristow and Sayer are still not back in overall contention.

That left the quick and consistent Evans and Williams to take over the mantle of event leaders ahead of Yorkshiremen Matthew Robinson and Sam Collis in Robinson's newly built Fiat 131R with Reid and Neill third ahead of fellow Aussies Keith and Mary-Anne Callinan in their Ford Escort RS1800 and now Dunedin-based expat John Spencer (with Kiwi co-driver Dean McCrostie) in a Datsun 1600.

There is little in it at the front of the field though with just over three minutes separating Evans and Williams from Spencer and McCrostie with four more days of the event yet to run.

Day winner of the Challenge category was another modified historic car, the Mitsubishi Lancer EX Turbo of former National champion Bruce Herbert and Paul Hey from Palmerston North.

They topped the time sheets in four of the seven stages (against a win-apiece for Ayson, Strong and Toyota 86 pair Brent Taylor and Chris Ramsey) but having blown a diff earlier in the event and taken a time penalty to fix it the Mitsi pair are back in 11th place in the Challenge category event classification.

Tomorrow the Silver Fern Rally heads south from Forsyth Barr Stadium for stages in south and west Otago and Eastern Southland before an overnight stop in Gore.

Ends

2016 NZ Silver Fern Rally Christchurch-Gore-Christchurch Mon-Sun Nov 28-Dec 04 2016

Overall classification after Day 3

Historic

1. Meirion Evans/Lestyn Williams (Ford Escort Mk2) 4:36:31.3
2. Matthew Robinson/Sam Collis Fiat 131) 4:37:56.0 +1:24.7
3. Stewart Reid/Dave Neill (Ford Escort Mk2 RS1800) 4:38:54.0 +2:22.7
4. Keith & Mary-Anne Callinan (Ford Escort) 4:39:29.1 +2:57.8
5. John Spencer/Dean McCrostie (Datsun 1600) 4:40:05.6 +3:34.3
6. Vince Bristow/Tim Sayer (Ford Escort Mk2 RS1800) 4:40:46.3 +4:15.0
7. Jake Scannell/Chris Lancaster (Toyota AE86) 4:40:51.9 +4:20.6
8. Allan Dippie Paul Coghill (Porsche 911) 4:41:53.1 +5:21.8
9. Phil Squires/Nigel Hutchinson (Ford Escort) 4:42:27.0 +5:55.7
10. Shane Murland/John Benton (Ford Escort BDA) 4:43:22.8 +6:51.5

Challenge category

1. Derek Ayson/Gavin McDermott (Ford Escort) 4:31:53.2
2. Dave Strong/Rob Scott (Honda Civic Type R) 4:32:17.6 +0:24.4
3. Ally MacKay/Andrew Graves (Ford Escort Mk2) 4:39:50.2 +7:57.0
4. Brodie Anderson/Brad Lyons (Ford Escort Mk2) 4:40:40.1 +8:46.9
5. Charlie Evans/Sue O'Neill (Honda Civic 1800) 4:40:52.2 +8:59.0
6. Brent Taylor/Chris Ramsay (Toyota FT 86) 4:52:23.7 +20:30.5
7. Ed Mulligan/Tony Brandon (BMW E30 325i) 4:53:38.8 +21:45.6
8. Warren Briggs/Gery Bashford (Ford Mustang) 4:59:00.7 +27:07.5
9. Darryl Campbell/Phil Walker (Toyota Altezza) 4:59:52.0 +27:58.8
10. Mike Wheatley/Tudor Davies (Ford Escort Mk2) 5:13:29.7 +41:36.5
11. Bruce Herbert/Jim Hey (Mitsubishi Lancer EX Turbo) 5:28:27.2 +56:34.0
12. Tony Quinn/Cassidy Solomon (Toyota 86) 6:01:42.9 +1:29:49.7

CAPTION:

New leader of the 2016 NZ Silver Fern Rally at the end of the third day is three-time Welsh Rally champion Meirion Evans and co-driver Lestyn Williams (#10 Ford Escort Mk 11). Now leading the Challenge category is #30 Derek Ayson and Gavin McDermott from Gore in Ayson's Nissan-engined Ford Escort. The day winner of the Challenge category today, meanwhile, was former NZ Rally champion Bruce Herbert and co-driver Jim Hey in Herbert's #34 Mitsubishi Lancer EX Turbo. Photo credit: Fast Company/ProShotz Prepared by FAST COMPANY on behalf of the Ultimate Rally Group. To find out more about the 2016 NZ Silver Fern Rally go to the website at www.silverfernally.co.nz. To talk to Ultimate Rally Group CEO and event spokesperson Peter Martin tel 0-9-298 8322 or 0274 525 643. To get in touch with event media man Ross MacKay from Fast Company tel/txt 021 677 919 or e-mail on ross@fastcompany.co.nz

