



At Last, we are under way! And what a way to kick off the series. After a false start with the postponement of Trigg road it was great to finally get the action underway with the Pukekohe car club rallysprint at the Wiakorea valley road event. Before we get into it I'll start back to front and congratulate the PCC for a superb event, brilliantly run by Chris Kitzen and his crew, with a special thank you to Clerk of the Course Grant Parkin, who made the huge trip from Whangarei, and MSNZ Steward Don Brunt who came over from the Thames Valley. The Marshall's, who sat there all day in the blazing sun and let the competitors shower them with dust and hurl stones at them, and with no complaints! All the above contributed to a fantastic day of motorsport. This was helped, of course by the weather which was glorious, especially once a breeze got up, the hanging dust clouds did seem to concern a few drivers but generally I don't think it was too much of a problem...unless of course you were a marshall or photographer. Talking of photographers quite a few showed up, just shows you people do read newsletters, as everyone headed for the jump, so I'm sure you will be seeing plenty of spectacular shots in the next few days.

Then there was the road, Wiakorea Valley, it was without doubt superb. We are very fortunate here in NZ that we are able to use such roads. That was smoother than the drive way to Buckingham palace. For an entry fee of \$185.00 it represents great value, especially when comparing it to our equivalent competitors overseas. I noticed several competitors had five runs, at approximately 6.5k's each run that's 32.5 ks, and that in the UK is almost a national rally, which converting back to dollars would give Wiakorea Valley road an entry fee of around \$750.00...and you would be running on a goat track!

I guess the point I'm making is that we really are lucky to have clubs, volunteers and conditions here in NZ to allow us to have days like Saturday.

One other stat that I'd like to add is the registrations, in my last newsletter I wrote that they seemed to be down a little compared to previous seasons, fear not as plenty came in at the last moment prior to the start of Saturdays event, we received another 10, making the total at the moment to 34, it is still down a little, but it seems to be the trend these days and time will tell. The most pleasing registrations being that of the two Davies boys. These are the future of our sport and to have young fellas of 14 & 15 years of age sign up really is great, it's also added more to the class A, which helps to make it a competitive class and give the old buggars in there a bit of a hurry up.

So, let's get to what we came here for....some action! Being the first round of the series I'm always looking forward to seeing who's built what, who's bought a new car and who's modified their car from last year. One guy who never fails to amaze is Andrew Hawkeswood, although not registered for the series he's a welcome attraction to any event, especially in his new Mazda, his driving style is nothing less than spectacular. Although today he had some competition, Graham Featherstone, Carl Davies, Warwick Redfern, Lance Williams and reigning champion Alex Kelsey were all within a nats whisker of each other on the first run. The second run saw Featherstone put in a stormer and set the fastest time, I must take this moment to praise "feathers".

We all love to see wheels lifting, arse end hanging out and cars generally on the limit, we automatically think they are going faster than anyone else, but not in this case, "Feathers" is very neat, Carl Davies is in the same mode. Maybe it's having a season of rallying at national level that has taught them to keep it neat and tidy, who knows? But "Neat N Tidy" seems to work. Lance Williams then also joined the party on the third run, Feathers was again fastest with Williams second, However Lance did not have the Neat & Tidy approach on the next run. Pushing just a little too hard he decided to jump a fence, landing in a paddock from where he could not get back onto the road, a detour through a few paddocks found yours truly, who opened the gate and away Lance and co driver Phil Broadbent went, setting a time of around 12 mins, which when you see Feathers set a time of 4mins 38secs totally ruined Lance's chance of progressing any further. Meantime Davies had just piped Hawkeswood into the top two run off. So now we have a run off between the two "Neat n Tidy" drivers...but who could hold their nerve?

Other class E runners showed moments of speed, serving notice not to write them off, but on this particular day they could not add the consistency needed to push the top two runners. Redfern was close all day and trying extremely hard until he was attacked by a "can opener" or at least that's what the car looked like at the finish, Warwick actually getting a little too close to a few fence posts. Jono Walker was spectacular over the jump but just could not quite match the pace of the front runners, Brian Chadwick was also a little off the pace, but not by much. Spare a thought for Wayne Pittams, who made the trip from Tauranga only to record a DNF on the first run due to a blown turbo. But, as it's your best 4 scores from 5 rounds I'm sure all the above will be back for more, knowing they still have a chance of keeping in touch with today's winners. To which we'll get to in a moment.

Now as mentioned in a previous paragraph, the start of the season is always something I look forward to, for obvious reasons, but one other reason is to see who turns up, and in what. Class D has thrown up two hard chargers. Ian Wood, from Rotorua in his Turbo Charged DX Corolla and Steve Goodare in his freshly re built Datsun, albeit with a Nissan engine. Both drivers in the past have provided me with spectacular photographs, and now to see them both go head to head in this rallysprint series I think were in for a treat.



Steve Goodare, jumping his V6 Nissan.

Woody has a slight disadvantage as Goody (Woody & Goody...I like that!) is a past champion and has a significant knowledge of the roads we use in this series. A look at the stage times for these two guys just shows what kind of a battle we could be in for. First run, Goody by 15secs, second run, Goody by 4secs, third run Goody by 31/2 secs, fourth by 2secs and the final top two run off Goody by 8 tenths of a second. Absolutely incredible from both drivers, a credit to Goody for constantly improving his time but a stunning fight from Woody to keep the pressure on with some superb and committed driving....bring on the next round!

Class C. It's ironic that class winner Dave Strong sells Honda parts for a living, as two of his class competitors run Escorts with Honda engines, and one of them really gave him a run for his money. Not only did Jonesy's Escort have a Honda engine, but with a Welshman driving and an Irishman co driving it really was international effort to try and beat the Kiwi.

It worked for the first run, just! This pair were quite a way in front of other class competitors on the first run, and it was looking like a straight forward two way battle. But come the second run and Craig Stevens woke up and joined the party in his FORD engined escort, quite a rarity these days! Also running in this class was Craig & Suzi Tickle in there BMW 2002, a car he lovingly built from a wreck many years ago. Harvey Semmens has also an Escort with a Honda engine, although this one is of the mk1 version. Harvey normally runs a Datsun 1200, so his new mount is going to take some time to get used to, it will be interesting to see how he gets on but judging by the grin on his face at the finish he probably does not care...he certainly enjoyed himself.

So back to the battle up front, and on the third run both Strong and Jonesy pulled away again, being within one tenth of each other but putting five seconds between themselves and Stevens, by the forth run it was up to ten seconds and that one tenth between Jonesy and Strong was now upto two seconds. Unfortunately on my results the final top two times were missing, Dave was awarded the trophy for first in class and there were no complaints from Jonesy, Stevens taking third in class.

Now to what traditionally has been the most popular class in recent times, Class B, but this season its looking rather thin on the ground, although there are a few more registered but for one reason or other couldn't make today's event. But take nothing away from those who competed as it was still a hotly

contested class and turned out to be a “ Battle of the Civics”, but as only one was registered for the series the sole Mitsy pilot, Kieran Cornelius just had to sit tight, put in consistent times, keep the car on the track and make sure he finished. This he did which ended up giving a second in class for registered drivers. Kieran being only one of a handful of competitors who completed all of last seasons rounds, we all know it’s consistency that wins championships and Kierans got off to a great start. But, the man to beat at the moment in the series is Stephen Broadbent, who today was locking horns with Rowan Uhe, both in the older style Civics but both extremely and deceptively quick , often fighting way above their weight setting very quick stage times. McCrae Sloper, also a Civic was also involved in this scrap in the later runs but just could’nt manage that little bit extra when it mattered loosing out by two tenths of a second for that top two run off. Uhe got off to a slow start with Broadbent taking the first run by four seconds, this must have woken up Uhe as from now on he took control of the next three runs leading Broadbent by a couple of seconds on each of the three remaining stages.

Being stood on the sidelines all day watching the field come through it’s quite easy to spot when someone’s having a good go, and the top two run off’s certainly is a great example of this, especially when these two class B runners came by. It was evident that Broadbent was having a real go, being so close all day this was his final run to show Uhe he could match him. I find it incredible, even at this clubmans level of motorsport that things can be so close, we are often used to close finishes in the top level professional athletics, swimming and motorsport, but nine tenths of a second at a grassroots motorsport event, unbelievable.....that’s not even a gear change!

Now to class A, and the big boys class! Matt and Cam Davies, aged only 15 & 14 and what incredible challenge these two guys have to face. Mark Bradly’s going to kill me here! Mark is the reigning class A champion...he was also the champion way back in 1986 when the series first started, he was even running the same car.....that’s 28 years ago.

His wealth of experience within the series, the expertise and car development that mark has done over the years certainly makes him incredibly hard to beat and Matt & Cam are really up against it here. But it’s this situation that makes this series special, this is what it’s all about. Youth against the “old buggars”, it’s the only way to learn, it’s an apprenticeship. I remember a few years ago when we had Reg Cook, alias the old bugger, and a 14year old Scott Rutherford. It did,nt take long for Scott to reach speeds that made him a class winner.

So lets not beat around the bush here, Mark took the class win in his flying Nissan 1200 by almost 30 seconds, he also finished 15<sup>th</sup> overall, beating many more powerful cars than his. So to the Cam & Matt battle. Cam actually took the three first runs and was looking good to make the top two run off, but on the forth run it was the little brother that stole his thunder, beating him by 3 seconds to qualify for the run off and thus give him a second in class, relegating big brother to third in class. Im sure that they know they have a lot of hard work to do if they are going to catch Mark, but im sure the will to beat each will push them onto doing so one day.....then they can go after dad.



Mark Bradly taking the class A win.

Now favourite class, but this season it's not looking to good for numbers, John Uffindell has also registered but has had engine troubles after a rebuild, he was present at today's event keeping an eye on fellow class contender Richard Harding. There was another competitor on the day but he was unregistered, and that was Andy Martin in his RX3.

So class H became a battle of the Rotaries, as Hardings Escort also runs a rotary. The lack of numbers in the class certainly didn't bother either driver as the lights went green. Less than a second separated the pair on the first run, but then Harding really put the pedal to the metal and started pulling away, putting almost ten seconds between them by time the fourth run was completed.

As many of you know I'm usually by the side of the stage taking photos, this particular event was a hard one to photograph due to the glorious weather, sunshine and dust are not a photographers best friend. I had set up on a couple of kinks just a few hundred metres before the finish line, it was nothing spectacular but the first right hander was after a long straight, several of the rwd cars had gone sideways but I missed them due to the dust. Then for some reason there was a slight delay in the approach of competitors, I put the camera down and went to get a drink from the ute. The dust had all settled, a cloud had slightly covered the sun and it was perfect, then whilst slurping my drink I heard that distinctive engine tone of a rotary approaching, it was Richard and he was flying, I couldn't get my drink down and jump the gate quick enough and missed him, he took the corner in a way that Vatenan would have been proud of...and I missed him, it would have been an awesome shot.. So Richard please slow down the next time you see me.

So, back to that class E, the top two run off and inevitably the race for 1<sup>st</sup> overall. After mentioning how "neat and tidy" these two TVCC members had been all day it looked like we were in for a real nail biter, but it's crazy how things turn out. Carl Davies went first, setting a time of 4:54:5, ironically not his quickest, nor the quickest of the day, that strangely enough was posted by feathers with a 4:40:3 back on the third run. However when it mattered feathers stumbled not far from the start line, clipping a bank,

lifting the car up on two wheels and then hitting a fence, enough to halt him in his tracks, Davies being first on the road was unaware of this and so carried on, thus setting a time faster than feathers and taking the victory for class E, and overall.



Event winner, Flame throwing Carl Davies.

I've left the above summary till last for a reason, just so I can point out a "possible situation" it has happened before, and although never happened today it quite easily could have if the running order had been reversed. Should Feathers had gone first and still had his mishap, what should Carl Davies have done? We are presuming Feathers and co driver are fine. Does Davies ease off ? Well he can if he wants, and would still beat feathers for the class E. BUT what if the next car, on this occasion it was Steve Goodare, he would have been concentrating on his own top two battle, but he's more than capable of beating a class E car had the class E car eased off, who then would be the overall winner? Simply Steve Goodare as he was the fastest. So I guess the moral of the story is, "If in doubt, go flat out"

Another news letter will follow shortly with results & points tables, and of course all the same info will be on facebook page and the website [www.nrss.co.nz](http://www.nrss.co.nz) Photos have already been loaded on the website. I'll also be in touch with details on RD2 in the near future.

Cheers,  
Steve Russell