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THAMES VALLEY CAR CLUB

Well, were and how do you start a “match report” when everything was perfect? I know it sounds a little corny but basically that’s what the Thames Valley Car Club achieved. When reporting on an event that your passionate about you really don’t want to report on anything that’s negative, it’s only natural. You know perhaps that some things could have been better, perhaps done a different way but because you are so passionate and enthusiastic about your topic you won’t have a bar of it. It’s just like a footy fan, your team has won...brilliant, but did they play well? Who cares they won and everything else doesn’t matter. That’s how i feel about all of the events in the series, I know everything is done by volunteers who give up there spare time to make the events happen, I know the competitors spend thousands on their sport for a \$10.00 trophy...if their lucky, It’s a crazy sport and probably the only sport were the competitors pay to entertain the spectators, so how can we criticise? I guess what im trying to say is that we can always do better, but on this occasion I don’t think so.

The Thames Valley Car Club, headed on this occasion by Michele Brunt put on a real gem of an event. For a start we had 50 competitors, which in these cash stricken times is fantastic, any rally organiser would be proud of that. The Piakouni rd was superb, it was in great condition and provided a very technical run, surrounded by stunning countryside, it had great mileage with plenty of “ Bang for your Buck”, even the weather played its part, which for the Wiakato is a very pleasant surprise...it was sunshine all day.

Prior to the event I was bitching about the lack of sponsors stickers on cars, I think I had a fair point but actually on reflection I may have been a little harsh as you cant put them on if you don’t have them, and it was getting them to you that was the problem (something I’ll have to address in future). But, to be fair to you guys you pulled finger and actually chased me for the sponsors decals...a great start to the event for me, and we also ended up taking several more registrations.

So once the ABC PIPEFITTERS banners had been put out and stickers sorted, it was off to our favourite bend, passing several other great viewing spots on the way was hard, but we knew that once at our destination we would be in for some great action, to which we will get back to in a moment. One thing that became apparent whilst driving through the was the organisation on the stage, I have never seen an event in this series for the last eight or so years that I have been following it that had so many marshals, this obviously contributed to making this event as good as it was.

Now to our favourite bend, I have stood on this bend every time I've been to Piakouni road and it always gives you plenty of interesting action, it's a fast approach into basically a hairpin left, but as your into the exit, it then starts to turn into a long sweeping right hander. Im not sure how your co drivers would call it but im sure that not one person got it perfect on every run, It's not dangerous, just awkward and produces a vast selection of driving styles most of which are quite amusing and certainly very entertaining.



What a bend, always plenty of action.

So lets get to the action, and this time well head off with the classic class. Prior to this round we only had two registrations for this class, rather disappointing but how things can change! Russell Jenkins (Datsun 120y) registered the week before, Dennis Carson (Datsun 1200) entered on the day and Mike Robson (starion) switched classes prior to the event getting underway. Still not the largest of class's but enough to at least have a few battles and make it competitive for the drivers, giving the two previous registered drivers Richard Harding and John Uffindell a little more to think about. Richard led the class after rd1 as he was the only competitor, John suffering engine woes prior to that first round, at first things looked like carrying on in that way with Richard posting times to keep him well in front, some 15seconds ahead of his nearest opposition which was Mike Robson. The second run saw Harding shave more time of first run, but the big mover was Robson, although still quite a bit off Hardings time he actually improved his 2nd run by 13 seconds. It was a similar scenario on the 3rd run, but this time we had a gate crasher (although no real gate was involved), Russell Jenkins wanted a piece of the action, he could not quite match Hardings pace but did manage to beat Robson by a couple of seconds. So now were heading into the fourth run with only two being able to qualify for the top two run off, and if you were a betting man Harding would be a certainty, leaving Robson and Jenkins to scrap it out. But, once again, How things can change! And guess what? It happened on that bend , were there just happened to be a couple of photographers. Harding had been

entertaining us all day with his Ari Vatanen driving style, but in typical Vatanen style he just over cooked it, gave the right pedal just a touch too much jandel and spun the Escort, unable to turn the car around at the first attempt he struggled for a moment, which was just enough of a time loss to relegate him to 3rd on this run, and therefore end his day. This obviously ended up with Robson and Jenkins in the run off for overall class win, Jenkins had tried hard all day to outpace Robson and had done so on run 3, however on this final run it was Robson by just over 4 seconds which does justify his decision to change class, he's now taken 10pts and lies 2nd in class after two rounds, with the "drop one round" he now lies in a strong position to add a little pressure to class leader Harding, who picked up 7pts to go with his 10pts from rd1. Jenkins lies in 3rd with John Uffindell 4th and Dennis Carson with his beautiful little Nissan 1200 coupe in 5th. Rumor has it we could also have another contender as John Whooley has finished a re-build on his Lancer EX and could well be a starter at Ruarangi road, now that could well spice things up very nicely!

With Mike Robson jumping class (from D to H) this left "Goody & Woody" their very own class to fight over (D). Steve Goodare took the honours at round 1, but with Rotorua's Ian Wood putting up a brave fight and getting closer to Goody's times with every run, today was promising to be another great tussle, and it did not disappoint! What an epic one. The first run saw Woody with an eight second advantage, that's a fantastic first run as I'm sure this was Woody's first event on this particular road, Goody having done it several times before, albeit a few years ago. Showing he was up for a scrap Goody hit back on the very next run, this was an incredible run for both men, Woody took almost 7 seconds off his first run time, but Goody actually put in the same time of 06:33.3 which meant he had taken 15 seconds off his first run. Goody kept this pace up on the 3rd run pushing ahead with a 5 second advantage, but two can play at that game, and although Goody took the fourth run it was only by a second, showing that Woody was not going to lie down. However, now into the top two run off and it was basically all or nothing for both drivers, their times have been close all day and so it was going to come down to who could handle the pressure...or maybe even a tyre choice! Being out on the stage all day I'm not privy to what's going on in the pits, but out on the stage visually you can't pick anything between them, although I'm only looking at a few second window and only on one bend. I was quite surprised to see the times on this run for the class win, it went to Goody by 9 seconds, so it's congratulations to Steve Goodare and commiserations to Ian Wood. Could it be 3rd time lucky for Woody at the next round? It's going to be a tough ask as Ruarangi rd is daunting, whatever happens, if Woody can make the long trip from Rotorua you know he'll be competitive and we'll be in for another great tussle

Class C, and a true rear wheel drive class today as Dave Strong was absent with his fwd Honda, as a replacement Shane Wright had ventured over the ranges from Tauranga with his Nissan skyline, although not registered to the series he was a welcome entrant for the organisers. It was Wiauku's Craig Stevens who through down the gauntlet and set the pace on the first run with a 06:37.5, this must have shocked Anthony Jones, who was closest to Stevens time although still some 5 seconds adrift. However, it seemed to do the opposite to Stevens, whether he had a scare on that first run or an incident on the second run, his time was 5 seconds slower on the 2nd run. Jonsey must have had a few extra wheatabix as he woke up and shaved almost 20

seconds off his first run time. If that wasn't enough to impress anyone then just look at Harvey Semmens time of 06:04.4, it was a blinder, Semmens admitting to still getting to grips with his new Honda powered Escort, but thoroughly enjoying the learning curve, I don't think he's got far to go with an effort like that. It was the 3rd run were this class started to take shape with Jonsey stamping his authority, and again taking the fourth run, Stevens was the closest on the 3rd run but was just pipped at the post by Shane Wright for the top two run off on the fourth run. For some unknown reason Wright elected not to start the run off, thus handing the class win to Jonsey, Wright took 2nd in class with Stevens 3rd. Harvey Semmens took 4th and a mention here for 5th place Craig Tickle in his BMW 2002, a little way off the pace of our class leaders but when you have a genuine classic, such as Craigs he really is up against it running in this class. Jonsey's Escort runs a Honda, with a sequential box plus all the "Toots N Whistles", Stevens Escort runs a Duretec and Semmens Escort is also a Honda engineed flying machine. But, one thing needed in championships is consistency, finishing every event, and I don't think I can ever remember an event were Craig has not finished, so don't be surprised if you see Craig picking up a trophy come the end of the season.



Harvey Semmens chucking the Escort in as it should be.

Class B, and what a bumper class with 14 runners, sadly only 4 were actually registered for the series but at least the class winner was registered, that being Stephen Broadbent in his Civic. Infact out of the 14 runners, only one car was a rear wheel drive, Chris Alexander had purchased a starlet and was the sole rwd competitor. It was another Civic that actually led the way for the first couple of runs, that driven by McCrae Sloper, it wasn't until the 3rd run did Broadbent post a fastest time although it was short lived as Sloper again piped him in the fourth. The strange thing is it really did not matter as they were both going into a "winner takes all" run. The third placing was also a bit of a tussle with a "Dad & Lad combo" Murray Preston and son David

were dual driving their trusty corolla and on this occasion it was Lad, that showed Dad home, David taking 3rd in class.

Back to that “Winner takes all” run, the top two run off, and something that really intrigues me. Do drivers at this level of motorsport have “Game Plans”? These reports may not seem much too many people, they are hardly New Zealand Herald standard, and they take ages to put together, the main reason being is sifting through the results looking for those little battles and little stories that everyone else misses, but to be honest there really is some Hollywood stuff going on in our ralliesprints, far more interesting than the WRC stories. Take this class B battle, McCrae Sloper is pretty quick, he beat Broadbent on the first couple of runs, admittedly not by much, then on run 3 Broadbent took a fastest time, was this luck, was it good driving, did Sloper have an incident, or was Broadbent just teasing him and letting him know he was still around? Then on the very next run Sloper responds with another time to beat Broadbent, as if to show him who’s boss, only for Broadbent to pull out his fastest time of the day in the top two run off and claim top spot on the podium. I find it incredible that these little battles happen all the time through out the event and often wonder if the drivers do plan these things or is it just coincidence? Although we have just mentioned the class positions for the podium placings on the day both McCrae Sloper and David Preston are not registered so as far as points go the second in class points went to Chris Alexander, who had another one of those “little battles” with 3rd points gatherer Kieran Cornelius, hopefully all the above can make it to the next round to continue these battles.

Now, to the “little car class” the 1300cc cars and this is what I like to see, although only 6 cars running in this class they are all registered to the series, at this event we were missing Mark Bradly, the current leader and the series reigning champion. Bradly’s absence could well open the door for other competitors today, mainly the two young Davies boys who, after picking up good points at round 1 were now in a strong class position, especially if they could have trouble free runs at today’s event. However, we had a couple of new registrations since rd1, Glen Stewart, who was the previous owner of the Steve Goodare Nissan, although then it was a 1500cc powered car, not the beast it is today. Glen now running a Starlet. Brent Jackson also registered at the start of today’s proceedings, Brent running a Holden Barina. Now throw in two more vastly experienced 1300 pilots in the form of Tony Young, Datsun 1200sss and Wayne Sim, Suzuki Swift and this has developed into a very strong and competitive class. Who ever picks up the trophies at the seasons end would have thoroughly deserved them. But first we have to get there. I’ll not beat around the bush here, but this was all Tony Young, no disrespect to anyone else but his times were pretty quick and apart from a quick blast on the 3rd run from Simbo, who came within 6 seconds of Young’s time no one else got close. As it turned out Simbo had a very niggling and frustrating day, he missed the first run, then suffered fuel & electrical problems for the rest of the day. I’d like at this point to mention the two young Davies boys again, Matt & Cam. Their pace is defiantly increasing with every event they do, but not only are they competing against everyone else but their battles with each other is also a point worth raising, it must be nerve wrecking for each of the young fellas as your brother is out on the stage, and your in the pits with fingers crossed hoping he brings the car back in one piece. Today they did just that, but to back up my comments just look at their times on the fourth run, this was to qualify for the top two run off, Matt

produced a 06:58.5 and Cam 06:59.0, if that's not competition and pressure then I don't know what is! So it was Matt up against Tony Young, but as mentioned above Young was quickest all day in this class and he wasn't going to slow down in the final, a very dominant display by Young and a courageous one from both the Davies boys to give them 2nd & 3rd in the class, but more importantly they now sit at the top of the class A in 1st & 2nd spots. Glenn Stewart took 4th, Brent Jackson 5th and a 6th spot for Simbo, who im sure will bounce back with vengeance at Ruarangi rd.



It's not only Volvo drivers that give it some Jandel, Cam Davies can do it as well!

NOW, as we have just completed a few lines on the 'little car class' we can only follow this up with "The big car class", the 4 wheel drive class E competitors, and being the gentleman i am its "ladies first". It really was great to see a female competitor having a go, it's a long time since we have had a female driver, we used to have a ladies trophy, the current holder being Nicola Burley. So a big well done to Jenna Pitcon, who I presume is from the Tauranga area as she was a member of the MBOP car club, hope you enjoyed the day. 16 cars entered this class, with 10 registered for the series, Andrew Hawkeswood signing up on the day just to add a bit of spice to the series, Nigel Adams made the trip up from Taranaki and Matt Jensen also made this a pre rally test session, round 1 winner Carl Davies was here, as was 2nd place man Graham Featherstone, Lance Williams was missing as his car was off to Otago and with several past champions also on the entry cards this was going to be a hard one to predict. Blitzing the field on this first run was one of the above, three times past champion Warwick Redfern really did set the pace in his Evo7, followed by fellow SACC member Andrew Hawkeswood in his Mazda 2, spectacular as always. Graham Featherstone was the next albeit quite a few seconds adrift of the above, however this was only the first run and there were plenty of other drivers just doing enough to proceed through the eliminations but who were quite capable of turning the screw when they had to. The second run saw both Redfern and

Hawkeswood improve their times quite considerably, but so to did others, Nigel Adams, Evo 5 showed them all the way on the 2nd run, followed by Matt Jensen, Evo9. Lying 3rd on this run and keeping in touch was “feathers”. Come the 3rd run and we saw the first time to drop under the 6 minute barrier, Feathers had just set a 05:59.3 but by now two more challengers had seen enough of the road to push a little harder and start to turn that screw a little. Carl Davies and Wayne Pittams served notice to feathers that they were also in this game, along with Jensen and that man Hawkeswood who were all pretty close to each other on the time sheets, and lining up behind Feathers should he make a mistake, as he did at round 1. Unfortunately for everyone else Feathers had brought his A game today, he was not going to slip up and looked extremely tidy out on the stage, he posted another fastest time on run 4 to push him into the top two run off final, but against who? Carl Davies really pushed hard but it was Wayne Pittams who produced the goods to nudge Davies out of the way and take his place in the Grand Final. As mentioned above feathers had brought his “A” game today and was in mood to surrender, all credit to Pittams who produced quality times all day to keep him in contention, he deserved a good run after retiring from rd1, but today he was going to have to settle for second. Feathers ran a 05:58.6 and Pittams a 06:08.3, slightly strange times as both drivers had run faster times during the day. So, “that, as they say, is that! “



Feathers, sliding the Evo round nice & neat.

Another point id like to raise is the fact that this was Feathers first overall win in the ralliesprint series, a win thoroughly deserving, not only because he was the quickest driver on the day but because of all those previous years of trying. I remember him in the Starlet, running in the class B, then progressing to an early Evo before moving onto this present car. He's served his apprenticeship, learned his trade and now is a fully fledged tradesman. His exploits last season in the rallying scene was great to witness, and along with fellow TVCC member Carl Davies I really think there going to take some beating. Must be something in the water down in the Thames valley area,

they produced two podium placings and hold 1st & 2nd placings overall in the series. Matt & Cam Davies hold 1st & 2nd placings in the class A, Stephen Broadbent currently sits in 1st place in class B and Anthony Jones is 1st in class C.

All in all, a very successful day for the Thames Valley car Club, great results and a great event, cant wait for next year. For Full results see www.nrss.co.nz



1st Rallysprint victory for “Feathers”