



2009 TARGA ROTORUA RACE REPORT

SATURDAY: It was drizzling as the 19 Narva Tour vehicles headed out to Special Stage 1 (SS1) south of Rotorua and then stop/started until all competitors had left Rotorua's Village Green out front of the Targa's base, the Novotel Rotorua. SS1 was just under 11 klms and SS2 almost 36klms. Both were very slippery with surface water about. By the time they did them again as SS3 and SS4 the rain had stopped.

Modern entrant Dean Sumner, a Rotorua resident, blitzed through SS1 some 11 seconds quicker than anyone else and that included Australian visitor Tony Quinn, who last month had won Targa Tasmania.

Car 553 was Adrian Dobbe and youngest brother David, in Adrian's 1989 Holden Commodore VN GTS. They had a great start but it only lasted 7 klms ! A cam-shaft bearing let go and the engine seized solid. It's a family affair and Adrian's twin brother John runs the Service Crew.

In the Classics Peter Johnson was fastest in SS1 by 3 seconds over Anton Tallot but that was the end of their contest. Anton's co-driver, son Daniel, became car-sick and they missed two stages taking maximum times. After SS4 Anton himself was not feeling that great either. Daniel was too sick to continue so Brad Cockerill replaced him from the 001 Safety Car and Anton was back three wheeling the RX7 over the final stages of the day.

Gordon Legge (Mr Leggework of television motorsport) was towed out of SS4 with a failed alternator and was able to rejoin the next stage.

It seems the car-sickness was, unusually, in at least half-a-dozen cars. At the lunch break Dr Nicholas Cooper (1971 Chrysler Valiant Charger) was called upon to write several prescriptions which were hastened to the nearest Chemist. Four were soo bad that the cars withdrew from Sunday. No favour goes unpunished and the good Dr Nick was caught speeding in a Targa imposed 50 kph zone, on a Special Stage. It's known as an HIS which is short for the sponsor Honda iScoot - as in scooters. Dr Nick was doing 80kph and was penalised 30 minutes - he was not the only one !

Peter Johnson's 1986 Ford RS200B (B meaning Group B - yes, a real one!) wasn't without his problems because over the last 3 stages he was well off the pace and we never saw him again.

I was out on SS3 and SS6 which was run again as SS7. The fast boys are real fast but there were lots of other highlights:

Richard Pierce and Willie Roach from the Taranaki, in the 1989 EB Falcon, got my vote for the 'hoon' award. The Falcon has big horse-power and from what I saw a handful to get off the line. Once away the noise and wheel-spin is great entertainment and Richard drives it hard as well.

Malcolm Clark's 1968 Rover 3500S V8 has a sound of it's own and Mal drives it like he stole it. Great to see it back in Targa after a break.

Stace Hopper's WRC kitted WRX certainly looks the part but the engine sound is not the familiar beat of a Subaru. It certainly has plenty of 'boogie' and he was driving it well.

Mike Sexton's 1996 BMW M3 EVO has a 6-speed sequential gearbox fitted and it's a joy to listen to up and down the gears with that fabulous BMW induction noise.

Still on the subject of noise the Integra Type R's. It's hard to describe, a muscular mechanical noise put to music - that's not bad ! There are three of them and you can hear them miles away. Honda 1800cc all pulling 8500 rpm plus.

Biggest noise has to go to Gavin Riches in the 2007 Porsche GT3 RS. Touring it's fine but on the gas it's shrill and off the gas it back-fires loud enough to bowl you over. There's another GT3 in the hands of Peter Millener, it's a 1999 and sounds pure GT3.

The opposite applies to Richard Scoular in the 1997 'Batmobile' Mazda RX7. The three rotor 20B idles so lumpily (if there is such a word ?) but on the gas it is soo much quieter. It's non turbo as well but would still hate to have him as a neighbour !



SS3. Tony Quinn / Sue O'Neill in the 2008 Nissan R35 GT-R. It's big and quiet and does not look that fast - but looks are deceiving.



SS5 and SS6 ran up-hill beside Lake Rotoma. This 400mm lens view is through the bush.



Brent Emerson / Sheryl Hanright in the 1984 Holden Commodore..

SS5 and 6 were repeats and very picturesque as cars attacked the climb from the banks of Lake Rotoma. You forget how beautiful the native bush is in this part of New Zealand. I walked well into the stage and was standing close to the road for that ultimate pic when a loud crashing through the bush near me had me move quickly downhill - seen too many movies ! I walked around a corner and there was a couple in a passionate embrace , naturally I coughed, much to their embarrassment. It started drizzling again halfway through the final run.

The final stage for the day (SS7) was just under 10ks and north of Lake Rotorua. Classics had finished and Modern just started when it absolutely poured down. It simply got heavier and drivers halfway through the Modern seeding order were saying their times were affected by zero visibility.

The timing had worked perfectly all day and we were up to date with stage times thanks to TVD Holdings. Start and finish crews out in those miserable conditions. The Stewards had their hands full, applying the HIS penalties. They did apply their 'discretion' but many penalties were handed out. Two cars were also penalised for exceeding the maximum speed of 200kph. Targa can track this with the use of GPS units carried in the car. The wonders of modern technology, the GPS only logs on at 175kph and then monitors speed.

Cars were then displayed in Central Rotorua for a couple of hours but the weather was miserable.

Day 1 Results were confirmed:

Classics

- 1st Brent Emerson, 1984 Holden Commodore 1:33:30
- 2nd Barry Kirk-Burnnand, 1988 BMW M3 1:35:03
- 3rd Anthony Butler, 1973 Holden Cheetah 1:34:17
- 4th Rex Alder, 1986 BMW M3 3 1:35:26
- 5th Mark Kirk-Burnnand, 1987 BMW M3 1:36:39

Modern

- 1st Tony Quinn, 2008 Nissan R35 GT-R 1:27:07
- 2nd Dean Sumner, 2007 Mitsubishi Evo9 1:27:38
- 3rd Stace Hopper, 2003 Subaru Impreza 1:28:01
- 4th Jason Gill, 2005 Mitsubishi EVO9 GT 1:28:32
- 5th Gavin Riches, 2007 Porsche 911 GT3 RS 1:28:43

SUNDAY: First car was away at 7am and the rains had gone. It was a lengthy touring stage over the Mamaku Ranges into the fog south of Putaruru. Tony Quinn was in disbelief that they were going to race in these conditions. No real surprises over the first three Special Stages and once the fog had burned off it was a reasonably pleasant day hovering around 14C.

There was a Service Break before drivers attacked SS9 and 10 again as SS11 and 12. It was then Touring to south east of Cambridge for SS13's short 13 klms. A 75 minute lunch break on the Village Green in an Autumn 'influenced' Cambridge. It was then north again for SS14. I was about to walk into SS15 when a 'local' suggested that I hasten to the end of SS14 as there was a blind 'yump' that should see some action.

I got there just in time. Having been in and around Targa for many year's this was indeed the best action I have ever witnessed. Cars would come over a slight brow and accelerate towards the flying finish as the 200 metre board was visible a long way off. What they didn't see was a blind brow that launched them into the air and I just happened to have my camera.

The first few had gone through sedately but I knew the action was coming mid field. I could see Keith Yeates coming in his 1977 BMW535 E12. Now he and co-driver Shirley Faull are, with respect, no spring chickens. They go surprisingly quick and were up to 7th in the Classic Class on Day 1. Keith had the pedal to the metal and would have to be doing about 160kph. They launched off the brow and the 32 year old BMW just flew - I got such a surprise I almost missed getting this pic !



Keith Yeates / Shirley Faull - 1977 BMW 535 E12.

No need for descriptions with these pics. All photos: Alan Henderson.



Mal Clark / Rod Peat - 1968 Rover 3500S



Bob Boniface / Simon Butler - 1987 Ford Sierra with EVO power.





Anthony Butler / Joanne Butler - 1973 Holden Cheetah.





Gavin Riches / Steve Wilcock - 2007 Porsche 911 GT3 RS.



Jason Gill / Simon Johnson - 2005 Mitsubishi EVO9 GT.



Stace Hopper/Simon Kirkpatrick - 2003 Subaru Impreza. Looks great with the WRC slab sides.



Dean Sumner / Paul Fallon - 2007 Mitsubishi EX09. You can see from the angle of it's wheels, it gave quite a 'twitch' on landing.



Stace's dad Leigh Hopper / Michele Bain - 2002 Subaru Impreza WRX STI Spec C.



Reg Cook/Peter Merrie - 1991 Nissan Pulsar



Richard Scoular/Kerry Gleeson - 1997 Mazda RX7. These boys were going very quick and it landed right where I was standing. The noise from the under-body protection was horrendous. When I showed Richard the images still in the camera, he said they were doing about 180kph !!



Graeme Wong/George Paterson- 2001 Subaru WRX STI Spec C



The Rustic Waikato

It was then two more longer stages running down between Cambridge and Matamata. Back over the Mamaku's to the final stage on Paradise Valley Road on the outskirts of Rotorua. I did not make it but was told spectators were out in force and many of the drivers had plenty of fun off the start-line much to the appreciation of the spectators.

The on-time performance of 17 Special Stages was excellent with few accidents. In Day 2 Terry Riding managed to take out 40 metres of fencing and Graham Yan lost a wheel but the rest of the problems were mechanical.

Event Director Peter Martin, was well pleased with the driver's feedback to the changes. Despite the weather there was also great public support.

Dinner and prizegiving was at the Novotel. Dinner was soon over but the Final Results delayed as the Stewards had to handle yet more penalties. Placings would be affected, there was 16 in the Modern Class. MC Mike Baird did his best with the apologies. It wasn't until he got some 'lip' from the audience that he came into his own - he's a funny man and gives as good as he gets. He made the two hour delay go reasonably quickly.

Classics

- 1st Brent Emerson, 1984 Holden Commodore 2:55:27
- 2nd Anthony Butler, 1973 Holden Cheetah 2:58:20
- 3rd Mark Kirk-Burnnand, 1987 BMW M3 3:02:02
- 4th Rex Alder, 1986 BMW M3 3 3:03:37
- 5th Malcolm Clark, 1968 Rover 3500S 3:04:12

Barry Kirk-Burnnand lost his 2nd place due to penalty and finished 9th. The bottle of Baileys goes to nephew Mark.

Modern

- 1st Tony Quinn, 2008 Nissan R35 GT-R 2:44:02
- 2nd Dean Sumner, 2007 Mitsubishi Evo9 2:44.26
- 3rd Stace Hopper, 2003 Subaru Impreza 2:45:01
- 4th Peter Millener Porsche GT3 2:48:38
- 5th Malcolm Smith, Mitsubishi Lancer EVO IV 2:51:13

Obviously the Top 3 in the Modern take the Overall placings as well. Modern's Top 5, Day 2 results, were greatly affected by penalties. Jason Gill missed out on 4th and finished 16th. Gavin Riches missed out on his 5th and finished 13th. Leigh Hopper had a 5 minute penalty from Day 1 but because Gill and Riches were moved down the order on Day 2 he still remained in 6th.

Category, Index and Special Prize winners will be placed on the website soon.

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