



MEDIA RELEASE

28 JULY 2008

LOCAL DRIVERS POISED FOR WINNER-TAKE-ALL BATTLE IN GORE RALLY

Two local drivers, Andrew Graves and Paul Cross, are poised for a winner-take-all battle in the Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series when the 2008 Gore Rally takes place this Saturday.

The Gore Rally was resurrected with great success in 2008 and it has now been placed on the southern motorsport calendar on a bi-annual basis as it alternates with the Eastern Southland Car Club's other major event – the Catlins Coast Rally.

Graves and Cross are the two highest seeded Southland drivers in the rally with Graves and co-driver Jared Leebody due to start at seven in their Mitsubishi Lancer EVO 3 followed by Cross and Wade Horrell three places behind.

Graves is the defending Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series Champion but this season as the competitors prepare for the final round of the 2008 series he is 5 points behind Cross. However 5 points is the exactly the difference between the points the first and second placegetters in the series will receive this weekend so things could not be more intense.

Graves has experienced tremendous success since he ceased co-driving with two-time Mainland Rally Champion and former NZ Rally Xtreme Champion, Derek Ayson two year's ago to concentrate on his own rally campaign. In his first season behind the wheel Graves finished a fine seventh in the 2006 Gore Rally and then clinched the Southern Series the following year.

The rally can't come quick enough for Graves. "I'll try and do my best to take out the series again but there is some stiff competition," he said recently. However a good finish is the main thing for the current champion who thoroughly enjoys his home event.

Paul Cross arrives at his home event leading the series and happy that everything is going to plan so far. Cross finished 4th in the Allcomers Section and 21st overall in the first round at Otago to leave that round second in the championship behind Kaitangata driver Duncan McCrostie. Meanwhile Graves had a tough start to his title defence as he went down the wrong road early in the event and lost 5 minutes.

The second round of the series was the Pebbly Hills Rallysprint and Cross upgraded from his Mitsubishi EVO 3 to the ex-Vaughan Edie EVO 4. He quickly got to grips with the new car however and the two main protagonists for the title shared the honours as Graves won the morning stage of the event and Cross the afternoon one.

Consequently they arrive at Gore with little between them in the championship battle. In addition to the series victory there is the extra distinction of being the first Southlander home on the event.

In addition to the Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series the rally is also the third and final South Island round of the NZ Truth Rally Xtreme Qualifying Series and Round 3 of the Palmside New Zealand Limited Mainland Rally Championship.

The first car will depart from the Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel at 8am on Saturday 2 August and competitors will face nine Special Stages before the first car returns to the hotel at 4.17pm that afternoon. The event comprises 137 kilometres of Special Stage competition along with another 199 kilometres of touring. The Special Stages take competitors into areas such as Pukerau, Conical Hills, Rankleburn, Tapanui and Dusky Forests and back to a stage not used for fourteen years in the Beaumont Forest.

Major sponsors for this year's Gore Rally include the Matura Licensing Trust, Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel, SouthRoads, MWH, McNeill Drilling, Century Batteries and Ernslaw 1 Limited whose support allows the use of the forestry where much of the rally is held.

Lindsay Beer
Publicity Officer
ESCC Gore Rally
021 351 499

For further comment: Roger Laird - phone 03 208 5247/0274 368 876

LAIIRD
MOTORSPORT

Southern Rally Series 08

RALLY XTREME
CHALLENGE



WWW.PALMSIDE.CO.NZ
Motorsport Parts & Accessories