



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **31 JULY 2008**

#### **QUALITY FIELD FOR GORE RALLY**

Nelson driver Kieran Hall in his Mitsubishi Lancer EVO 5 is the top seed in a quality field for this Saturday's Gore Rally. Hall won the Eastern Southland Car Club's Catlins Coast Rally last year and returns this year to contest the Gore event that alternates every second year with Catlins.

Competitors are competing in three separate championships within the rally. The event is the third and final South Island round of the NZ Truth Rally Xtreme Qualifying Series, Round 3 of the Palmside New Zealand Limited Mainland Rally Championship and the third and final round of the Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series.

Hall will lead away a line-up of eighty cars, one of the biggest fields in any New Zealand rally this season, from the Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel at 8.00am on Saturday. Hall, a recent graduate of the Elite Motorsport Academy in Dunedin, is determined to finish and take maximum points in both the Rally Xtreme and Mainland Series.

Regan Ross of Kaikoura will be the second seed in his Mitsubishi EVO 9. Ross appeared destined to win the Mainland Rally Series last year only to suffer a huge accident during the Westland Rally that robbed him of any chance of the title.

Next up should be the driver who did claim last year's Mainland Series, Jeff Judd of Christchurch in his Subaru Impreza. However Judd has discovered an engine problem in his Subaru Impreza just days before the rally and although he will cross the startline to give himself a chance to qualify for the Rally Xtreme Finals he will most likely withdraw from the event almost immediately.

Co-leader of the Mainland Series with Judd, fourth seed Deane Buist, is another keen to get some Mainland Championship points in Gore. "I need to get to the end and get a good amount of points to get ahead of Juddy," he says. Between them Judd and Buist have several Mainland Series titles. Buist was champion in 2003 while Judd achieved the honour in 2001 as well as last year. Buist has also won the NZ Rally Xtreme 2-wheel-drive Championship twice and has also taken victory at both the Catlins and Wyndham Rallies while Judd is the reigning NZ Truth Rally Xtreme Championship.

Paul Nicoll of Nelson leads the South Island 4-wheel-drive Rally Xtreme Championship as they approach the final qualifying round. Nicoll, the inaugural NZ Rally Xtreme Champion in 2005, is looking forward to the event. "It's good country down there. The roads are brilliant, as good as anywhere." Nicoll wants to win the Xtreme Qualifying Series this weekend and also needs a good finish for Mainland points after he blew a turbo in Canterbury."

Another Nelson driver, Greg Teece, is the sixth seed while the first Southlander, Gore driver Andrew Graves is next up in his Mitsubishi EVO 3

Yet another former Mainland Series Champion and Catlins Rally winner, Les Summerfield of Rangiora, is next in his Subaru WRX ahead of John Giltrap of Lincoln in a similar car.

Another Gore driver, Paul Cross, rounds out the top ten in his recently acquired Mitsubishi EVO 4. Cross leads the Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series and his battle with Graves, the reigning champion, will be a good one with Graves just 5 points behind.

Other drivers to watch this weekend will be seventeen-year-old Daniel Harris of Nelson, Paul Dickson of Timaru and Invercargill driver Shaun McMillan.

2006 Gore Rally winner Derek Ayson of Clinton will compete but not in the Mitsubishi in which he took victory last time. Instead he will campaign his Ford Escort fitted with a standard engine after suffering problems with his normal powerplant. "I will have to make up for the lack of power with enthusiasm," says Ayson.

Some of the best viewing of the entire rally can be found at the spectator area in the Tapanui 1 and Tapanui 2 stage. The cars will make their first run through the stage at 1.15pm as they tackle the 8.34 kilometre MLT/Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel Stage. After completing their first run the cars return soon after for the Michael Kelly Auto Electrical/Century Batteries Tapanui 2 Stage at 2.40pm.

The spectator area will provide a superb view as the cars splash through a ford and then attack two quick corners. This spot will provide non-stop action as the entire field passes by twice. The area also features commentary plus a hot food outlet, making it the perfect position to enjoy the action. The spectator area can be reached by turning onto Black Gully Rd East from State Highway 90.

Competitors will face nine Special Stages on Saturday 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.

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