



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **31 JULY 2008**

#### **BIZARRE SITUATION COULD SIDELINE REIGNING CHAMPION EARLY**

A bizarre turn of events may sideline one of the leading contenders, Jeff Judd of Christchurch, at the start line of this Saturday's Gore Rally.

Judd is seeded third in the event and is the defending champion in two of the country's major rally championships – the NZ Truth Rally Xtreme Series and the Palmside New Zealand Limited Mainland Rally Championship.

The rally is a round of both these championships in 2008 and Judd is tied on points with fellow Cantabrian Deane Buist at the top of the Mainland Series points and currently sixth in the South Island Qualifying Series for Rally Xtreme, needing to finish in the top ten to make the finals.

Unfortunately Judd and his team have discovered a major problem with the engine of their Subaru Impreza just days out from the event. "We were aiming to make improvements to the engine to give us a better power range," says Judd. "However when we put the engine on the dyno we discovered it was down on power. A compression test showed it was down in two cylinders and that is not an easy fix."

Judd has a Ford Escort BDA at his disposal but with the Silver Fern Rally approaching in just two months time he was reluctant to use that car.

While Judd can still challenge for the Mainland Series title in the remaining rounds of that championship he has an unusual problem in the Rally Xtreme Series. The qualifying series in each island for the national finals consist of three rounds and competitors must contest two of them. Judd competed in the first South Island round in South Canterbury but rather than contesting the second round of the series he instead chose to drive in the Classic Rally Of Otago. Therefore, to be in with any chance to qualify for the Rally Xtreme Finals and defend his title Judd must cross the start line in Gore this Saturday.

That means a round trip of 1026 kilometres from Christchurch just to cross the line in his Subaru Impreza before parking and withdrawing from the event.

"I have to enter and start the event because I didn't do the Otago round," Judd said from Christchurch today.

"The engine is very sick. Even if I start the rally I am a longshot for the top ten. I'm currently sixth in the championship and even by coming south to start I have to rely on others' misfortunes to qualify for the Rally Xtreme Finals. However you have to give yourself a chance," he says.

Meanwhile in the Mainland Series Judd says that with rounds still remaining in Nelson and Westland after this weekend he may still be in the hunt. However, should top seed Kieran Hall win the Gore Rally this weekend it will make it hard he says.

While he may cover little more than a few metres in his Gore Rally appearance Judd demonstrates real enthusiasm for the sport when he says he will be helping another competitor on Saturday now that his rally is virtually over before it starts. In addition he is looking forward to an opportunity to have a rare taste of rallying from the perspective of a spectator, planning to join the crowds at the best viewing spot on the event 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 after departing from the Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel at 8am 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.

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.

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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