

MEDIA RELEASE

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HUGE FIELD FOR 2019 CATLINS COAST RALLY

A massive entry of eighty-eight cars will start the 2019 Catlins Coast Rally on Saturday.

Defending champion and four-time winner Andrew Graves of Gore is once again the top seed in his venerable Mitsubishi EVO 3. Graves' wins have come in 2010, 2013, 2017 and again last year. He has twice been runner-up in 2012 and 2016 and was third in 2011. He also has one other Catlins win to his name when he was co-driver for Derek Ayson when the duo won the event in 2005.

This year Andrew's son Hayden will join him in the co-driver seat. Hayden has done the job before but never at Catlins and Graves admits he would love to win this year with Hayden alongside.

Matt Summerfield of Christchurch is at two in his Subaru Impreza WRX. Summerfield was the runner-up in 2017 NZ Rally Championship and fourth last year and currently sits fifth in this year's points. The runner-up at last year's Rankleburn Rally, Kaiapoi driver Job Quantock, is at three in a Lancer EVO 8 for this event while last year's third place getter at Catlins, Carter Strang of Wallacetown, is seeded fourth in his EVO 6.

Three-time winner Dean Bond of Balclutha won at Catlins in 2009, 2011 and 2015, and is seeded fifth in his Mitsubishi EVO 6.5. However he failed to finish after sliding off the road in Special Stage 3 last year and has since done very little mileage in his familiar Mitsubishi EVO 6.5.

Cantabrians, Mike Tall (EVO 6.5), John Giltrap (EVO 9), Gareth Thomas (Impreza WRX), Sean Haggerty (WRX) and Job Quantock's father, David, (Mitsubishi Mirage) round out the top ten. Scotsman Haggerty, now resident in Ohoka, had a huge crash at the recent South Canterbury Rally but has re-shelled the car and will take the start on Saturday.

Deane Buist of Christchurch leads the 2-wheel-drive cars at twelve in his unique VW Golf GTi MK2, just ahead of rivals Regan Ross of Kaikoura (Escort MKII) and Marcus Van Klink of Christchurch (Mazda RX7 Group B). Balclutha driver Barry Mills (Hillman Avenger) at eighteen is capable of giving the top ten a nudge.

The many class battles will be another feature of the event. The first three overall place getters are not eligible for class placings which opens the door for more to share in the class prizes.

As always Graves will be the top runner in Class E for Pre 1996 4-wheel-drive cars with eleventh seed Matt Wright of Christchurch (Subaru Impreza), Tom Bond of Dunedin (Legacy) and last year's class winner Mark Parsons and runner-up Garry Cliff the other major contenders.

Class D for more modern 4-wheel-drive cars is always competitive with all of the top ten seeds apart from Graves duking it out for class honours. Jeff Judd won it last year in his Impreza from David Quantock and Gareth Thomas.

The 2-wheel-drive 1601cc & over Class C should be the domain of Buist with Jason Keach of Mosgiel in a MKI Escort RS1800 also in the mix.

Class B (2-wheel-drive cars of 1301-1600cc) should see last year's winner Richie Chadwick of Dunedin to the fore again in his Toyota Corolla GT although Robbie Stokes of Waikuku (Ford Fiesta R2) and Nick Marston of Rolleston (Toyota Sprinter) along with Craig Cormack of Gore, Taylor Judd (Christchurch) and Graham McRae of Invercargill will be factors as well.

There is a fantastic number of entries in Class A (2-wheel-drive 0-1300cc) this year and the best on seedings are Tim Smith of Christchurch, Peter Murch of Rangiora, Rhys Turner of Dunedin and Richard Ford of Bannockburn. Each one of them will be at the wheel of Toyota Starlet's.

Nigel Marshall of Wyndham with the 2016 event winning driver Vaughan Edie in the co-driver seat in Marshall's Datsun 1200 is one favourite in Class F (0-1700 Classic's) while last year's class winner Brendon Mitchell of Winton in his Datsun 1600 will be right there also.

Regan Ross and Marcus Van Klink should be the frontrunners in Class G (1701cc & over Classics) along with Jeff Judd, Barry Mills and Graham Ferguson of Greymouth (Ford Escort).

This year's Catlins Coast Rally is also the fifth and final round of the Mainland Rally Series. Both the overall title and several of the classes are still wide open giving extra edge to the results this Saturday.

The Stadium Finance Southern & Novice Challenge will see a trophy awarded to the first crew in the event from across the water – from the North Island or Australia - while there are also first and second place trophies for the novice drivers and novice co-drivers in the event – in which crews who have done less than three rallies qualify.

The rally will begin adjacent to Owaka Motors in Campbell Street, Owaka, at 10am and will conclude in Campbell Street back in Owaka at 3.40pm.

Owaka will be the hub of the event with the Service Parks taking place in the town throughout the day.

This year the event begins with the 12.89km MRF Tyres/www.palmside.co.nz Cannibal Bay stage followed by AG & Auto Direct Romahapa (35.76km). The 16.50km Lister Helicopters Puaho stage which has not been used since 2003 is next followed by Michael Kelly Auto Electrical Ltd Catlins Valley (26.61km). The penultimate stage is a new one, the AON Insurance McNab's Farm Stage, over 31.84km with the Midland Rag Supplies Tawanui stage over 24.10km the final stage of the event.

The winner of the event will receive the Darryl Robinson Memorial Trophy while the leading South Otago crew home earns the Kerry O'Donohue Memorial Trophy and the top Otago Sports Car Club crew, the Glen Shirlaw Memorial Trophy.

The 2019 Catlins Coast Rally will be livestreamed on the Catlins Coast Rally Official facebook page with Blair Bartels of the NZ Rally Championship and past Catlins Coast Rally winner, Rhys Gardner. The livestreaming is made possible thanks to Stadium Finance and Yuasa Batteries.

The Eastern Southland Car Club is delighted to have the support of the Clutha Licensing Trust through their Rosebank Lodge Balclutha establishment, plus Southroads, Owaka Motors, Yuasa Batteries and Stadium Finance. The club is also especially grateful to Rayonier Matariki Forests, the Clutha District Council and the McNab Family for their assistance with the event.

Defending champions Andrew Graves/Jared Leebody on their way to another Catlins Coast Rally victory in their Mitsubishi EVO 3 last year



Photograph: **Terry Marshall/ Euan Cameron Photography**

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