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HUDSON FAMILY CONTINUES CATLINS COAST RALLY TRADITION

When 14-year-old Jared Hudson crosses the start line for the 2016 Catlins Coast Rally on Saturday it will carry on an impressive tradition for the Hudson family of Christchurch.

Jared will make his first full rally appearance in the co-driver seat alongside Michelle Harris of Gore at an event in which his father Rocky, mother Lisa and sister Amy have all co-driven previously.

Rocky was the co-driver for Deane Buist when they won the event in 2004 while Lisa has made several appearances in the rally. Daughter Amy made her first co-driving appearance in this rally alongside Les Summerfield two years ago and now Jared follows in their wheel tracks.

"I've been waiting my whole life for this," says Jared while Harris is looking forward to having Jared alongside. It will be her first rally also. She has long enjoyed motorsport but being involved in farming and with five children the opportunity has only just presented itself. "I did some autocross events and now it is my first rally," she says. Harris has recently returned from the Australian Masters Boxing Competition with a gold and silver medal. Boxing is an activity she has used to get back to full fitness after a cancer scare and with no Masters Boxing in New Zealand she has to travel to compete.

It is little wonder that the entire Hudson family has made their way into motorsport. Rocky and Lisa met through the sport. "We were motorsport groupies," says Rocky. The couple rallied together for around five years, Rocky driving with Lisa in the co-driver seat until they started their family. At that stage Rocky started became a co-driver, racking up seat time beside drivers such as Mark Tapper in China, Andrew Hawkeswood, Deane Buist, Josh Marston, Darren Galbraith and John Silcock and even Marcus Van Klink in Taranaki this year. "I have co-driven for four drivers alone this year," he says. A highlight was winning the National Rally Challenge title with Galbraith last year. "I finally won a title," laughs Rocky. "I was Deane's co-driver in one successful championship campaign where they didn't have a co-driver award and missed one round when Josh (Marston) won a title in his Ford Fiesta so missed out because of that."

Lisa returned to co-driving after the children were born and has also built up a great CV, sitting alongside drivers such as Tony Foster in the NZ Rally Championship, Australian Stewart Reid on both sides of the Tasman, Derek Ayson in the Rally Of Otago and Max Bayley, the duo currently leading Category 2 of the FIA 2-wheel-drive Championship. Speaking about her kids moving into the sport Lisa says, "you can't stop them. My main hope is that they enjoy it. There is such a supportive family environment in the sport."

Two years ago Amy debuted at Catlins at the age of thirteen and this year she has been co-driving for Dylan Thomson in the NZ Rally Championship. Now Jared completes the Hudson family's co-driving appearances at Catlins.

The contribution of the family to the Catlins Coast Rally does not end there. When not competing they have also have been part of the volunteer base of the event many times. Rocky, Lisa, Amy,

Jared plus a nephew who was studying at Otago University formed a crew dealing with Special Stage starts and performed that role for many years as well.

It is a phenomenal achievement of volunteering and competing and one that all in the sport would love to see continue for many years to come.

The 2016 Catlins Coast Rally is Round 4 of the Clearwater Painting Mainland Rally Championship and also part of the Eastern Southland Car Club's Rally Championship.

The event is scheduled to depart from Owaka Motors in Campbell Street, Owaka at 10am on 6 August. The rally will be based in Owaka this year with servicing of the rally cars taking place in the township between stages. Six Special Stages await competitors before the rally finishes in Owaka at approximately 3.30pm.

Major support for the 2016 Catlins Coast Rally comes from Rosebank Lodge Balclutha, Fulton Hogan, Owaka Motors, Yuasa Batteries, AG & Auto Direct and Monit Rally Computers.

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PHOTOGRAPH - AMY HUDSON ONE OF FOUR MEMBERS OF THE HUDSON FAMILY TO CO-DRIVE IN THE CATLINS COAST RALLY. YOUNGER BROTHER JARED WILL DEBUT AT THE EVENT THIS SATURDAY TWO YEARS AFTER AMY CO-DROVE IN HER FIRST EVENT THERE - PLEASE CREDIT EUAN CAMERON