



MEDIA RELEASE 7 AUGUST 2018

GOSLING BRINGS FAVOURITE ERA TO CATLINS

Most fans of rallying have a favourite era where the cars and drivers of that time really caught the imagination. For Tony Gosling of Christchurch, who will compete in the Catlins Coast Rally on Saturday 11 August, that time was the early 1990's when Group A cars such as Subaru Legacy's and Mazda 323's driven by aces such as Possum Bourne and Rod Millen were state of the art.

For most of us those great times are merely memories but in the case of Tony he is reviving his favourite era. He will drive his replica Group A Subaru Legacy RS at Catlins and through his company Stadium Finance also sponsors the Group A Rally Challenge in the Brian Green Property Group New Zealand Rally Championship. "People my age loved those Legacy's and the Mazda's etc. and growing up in Britain the livery reflects the cars used in the British Rally Championship.

Gosling has a strong rally background and last season took out the 2-wheel-drive New Zealand Classic Championship in his Ford Escort BDA, a car which was driven by Hayden Paddon to win the Classic Rally Of Otago in 2015.

"After that we decided to go with something different and more modern and we went with the one that made the best noises and was the best to watch," says Tony of the Subaru. "The car was built by Leigh Marston for the first of the more recent Silver Fern Rally's and was built to be a bit more basic in order to handle endurance rallies. It was sold to Wayne Leach in the North Island and when I bumped into Wayne I made an offer to buy it but he didn't want to sell. Then one day Paul Burborough, who works for Wayne, phoned and asked if I would like to buy it. I didn't hesitate!"

The team made it lighter and faster with some "carbon fibre and shiny bits," says Tony. The Subaru debuted in Gosling's hands at this year's Otago Rally and he laughs when he says, "we were a bit scared of it. It was slippery and I was not used to that much power. We had a wee issue when it dropped a cylinder at the start of Stage 4." Since then he has recorded a good result at the Rally Of South Canterbury, winning his class in an event that he sponsored. "We are just trying to learn the car at the moment," he says. Next up is Catlins, another event that Gosling supports including the Stadium Finance Southern Challenge with six trophies available for drivers and co-drivers who have crossed the water to compete which involves eight North Island crews plus one from Australia.

Gosling has put a tremendous amount into rallying in this country. In addition to supporting the Group A Challenge, Catlins and the Rally Of South Canterbury he has also sponsored the Mainland Rally Series and assisted World Rally Championship competitors Hayden Paddon and Dave Holder and given many others a leg up over the years.

Having put so much into the sport the passion is obvious. "I like rallying. It's a hobby of mine and I have found it quite good as a vehicle to promote our business. It's a good community of people and really pretty good for us."

The Catlins Coast Rally will begin adjacent to Owaka Motors in Campbell Street, Owaka, at 10am on Saturday 11 August with competitors facing six high speed Special Stages over a total of 150 kilometres before the event concludes in Owaka at 3.44pm. The rally is Round 6 of the MRF Tyres Mainland Rally Championship and part of the Eastern Southland Car Club Rally Championship.

Major support for the 2018 Catlins Coast Rally comes from Rosebank Lodge Balclutha, Southroads, Owaka Motors, Yuasa Batteries and Stadium Finance.



Photograph: Tony Gosling attacks a corner in his Subaru Legacy RS earlier in the season – Photographer Terry Marshall / Euan Cameron Photography

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