



MEDIA RELEASE

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ICONIC CATLINS COAST RALLY FIELD A BEAUTY

Saturday's Catlins Coast Rally has attracted a superb field as more and more competitors make it a bucket list event. The top two drivers from last year's New Zealand Rally Championship, several past winners of the Catlins event, a strong contingent from the North Island and an Australian crew make the sixty-seven strong field an impressive one and one in which it is difficult to predict a winner.

Defending champion and three-time winner Andrew Graves of Gore will lead the field away from the start in Owaka in his Mitsubishi EVO 3 with current New Zealand Rally Champion Andrew Hawkeswood of Auckland seeded at two in his Mazda 2 AP4. At three is Matt Summerfield of Christchurch in his Subaru Impreza WRX. Summerfield was the runner-up in last year's NZ Rally Championship and is currently fifth in this year's standings and second in the MRF Tyres Mainland Rally Series. Balclutha's Dean Bond, another three-time winner of this event, having taken victory in 2009, 2011 and 2015, is seeded fourth in his Mitsubishi EVO 6.5. Last year's runner-up, Jeff Judd of Christchurch, is at five in his Subaru Impreza WRX followed by last year's fifth place getter Carter Strang of Wallacetown (EVO 6). Next up are Cantabrian's Garet Thomas (WRX) and David Quantock (EVO 8). The top ten is rounded out by two more former winners – 2005 victor Derek Ayson of Gore (Ford Escort MK 2) and Deane Buist of Christchurch in a VW Golf GTI MK2.

Just outside the top ten lurk some very competitive entries – Marcus Van Klink of Christchurch in his Mazda RX7 Group B, John Giltrap of Lincoln in an EVO 9, Barry Mills of Balclutha in his stunningly quick Hillman Avenger, plus 2016 winner Vaughan Edie in an EVO 8.

In addition to a mouth-watering battle for overall honours the classes also offer intriguing competition while the Stadium Finance Southern Challenge will be contested by drivers and co-drivers who have crossed the water to compete.

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 rally will begin adjacent to Owaka Motors in Campbell Street, Owaka, at 10am 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.

The 2018 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.

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

Special thanks to Rayonier NZ Ltd and the Clutha District Council for their assistance with the event.



Defending champion Andrew Graves on his way to victory in last year's event - please credit Euan Cameron



Current NZ Rally Champion Andrew Hawkeswood of Auckland in his Mazda 2 AP4, the second seed for Saturday's Catlins Coast Rally - Photographer Euan Cameron

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