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MITCHELL EXTENDS STRING OF SUCCESS

The 2016 Catlins Coast Rally is looming on Saturday 6 August and the recently crowned Eastern Southland Car Club Champion, Brendon Mitchell of Winton, will be among the entries once again.

A regular in the rally, Mitchell has fashioned an outstanding record of success in many forms of motorsport over many years.

The recently completed season was just Mitchell's second full tilt at the Eastern Southland Car Club's Championship. In his first attempt, in the 2014/2015 season, he came up just two points short of the title and now in just his second attempt he is the Club Champion.

However, he has a long history in the sport and before taking aim at the Eastern Club's title he had already been the Club Champion at the neighbouring Southland Sports Car Club six times.

Mitchell has been active in motorsport for 23 years now, having started out contesting small events back in 1993. He started rallying in 1996 and has competed in three different cars over the time he has been competing, a Datsun 1600, a Mazda 323, and a Toyota Levin. He used the Datsun and the Toyota in the various events that constitute the Club Championship this season, taking good overall results in the Mt Misery and Tokanui Hillclimbs, the Catlins Coast Rally and the Kaitangata Hillclimb in the Datsun while winning the Forbes Autocross in the Toyota as well as achieving other good results at the Irwins Autocross, Mills Autocross and the Conical Hills Motorkhana. There were other good results throughout the championship as well, with Mitchell always being well placed and always one of the best in Class B. At the end of the season as well as Club Champion he was also second equal in the Autocross Championship and third in the Clubsport Championship.

"The championship had its ups and downs," said Mitchell as he reflected on his year recently. "The win in the Forbes Autocross was the first win by a 2-wheel-drive over a 4-wheel-drive in the championship. I really enjoyed the season. I had a good year battling against everybody. In every event it was someone different. I went so close last year and I was keen to have another crack. It was a long season with a lot of events - autocross, tarmac and gravel. I had a motor fail on one event. To be on top you need to do every event as quite a few do them all so you have to do as well if you want to guarantee it. It was great to win it in the Club's 60th year."

Mitchell says he went from the Southland Sports Car Club Championship to the Eastern Southland one as he enjoys the three different surfaces used by the Eastern Club - gravel, grass and tarmac. "I've always done Eastern Southland events but it has only been the last two years that I have had a crack. Success came sooner than I thought."

Mitchell is quick to thank his sponsors. "Placemakers Invercargill, Window Tint South, Flash Clad, Invercargill Oil Shop, Choppa's Tyres, and Winton's Middle Pub all give me great support."

Mitchell has never missed a Catlins Coast Rally since his first and he will be back this year. "I entered straight away." He will be in the faithful Datsun 1600. "I will never sell it," he says. "I've been doing this for 23 years and I would like to do another 23 years!"

Lindsay Beer
Catlins Coast Rally
021 351 499

For further information - Roger Laird - 03 208
5247/0274 368 876



Photograph – Brendon Mitchell of Winton in action during the 2014 Catlins Coast Rally – please credit Ben Wilson