

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOUR PAST WINNERS AMONG CATLINS ENTRIES

Two time winner Andrew Graves of Gore is the top seed for this Saturday's Catlins Coast Rally which features four former winners – Graves, Deane Buist, Derek Ayson and defending champion, Vaughan Edie.

Graves, winner of the event in 2010 and 2013 in his Mitsubishi EVO 3, was unlucky not to add a third victory last year when as the top seed he encountered the worst of the treacherous conditions in the icy stages. However he charged back into second place, 33.9 seconds behind the winner, Vaughan Edie of Invercargill by the end of the day.

Jeff Judd of Christchurch is seeded second in his Subaru WRX. Judd has an impressive pedigree as a driver, co-driver and circuit racer and only recently he and Graves had a huge battle at the Otago Sports Car Club's Circle Hill Rallysprint with Graves prevailing by just .3 of a second.

Michael Tall of Christchurch is the third seed in his Mitsubishi Mirage on his first visit to Catlins while Carter Strang of Wallacetown on the outskirts of Invercargill is fourth in his Mitsubishi EVO 6. 2004 winner and current Mainland Championship leader Deane Buist of Christchurch is seeded fifth in a Ford Escort MK2 while the 2005 winner Derek Ayson of Gore is next in his Nissan powered MK 2 Escort. Buist and Ayson are the first of the 2-wheel-drive cars in the seedings and look set to dispute 2-wheel-drive honours.

Garet Thomas of Darfield, is next up in his EVO 2 ahead of last year's winner Vaughan Edie of Invercargill. Edie has not done many miles since last year's victory but he will again be a strong contender.

Cantabrians David Quantock and David Clearwater will round out the top ten in an EVO 8 and EVO 4 respectively.

Outside the top ten are several who are more than capable of forcing their way into a top placing including Jason Keach of Mosgiel in a Subaru Impreza and Barry Mills of Balclutha in Hillman Avenger in which he has built an incredible record of top ten placings in this event over the years, having started and finished every one since the first in 1999.

The current leader of the Brian Green Property Group New Zealand Rally Championship, Matt Summerfield of Rangiora, is a late entry for the event in his Subaru Legacy rather than the Subaru Impreza he uses in the National Championship. "It has all happened thanks to Tony Gosling from Stadium Cars," said Summerfield after his entry was confirmed. "Tony was kind enough to offer to help us out."

Four North Islanders – Brian Green of Palmerston North, David Wright of Te Aroha, Neil Dodds of Gisborne and Chris Alexander of Karaka have made the journey south while two Australians will also feature. These are the thirteenth seed John Spencer in a Datsun 1600FJ and Ed Mulligan in a BMW M3.

The class battles are always tightly contested and this year will be no exception. Graves, Garet Thomas and Kaitangata driver Murray Marshall, seeded at fourteen in his Subaru Impreza, will be to the fore in Ritchies Class E for Pre 96 4-wheel-drive cars. Judd, Tall, Strang, Edie, Quantock and Clearwater will be the frontrunners in Valley Coachlines Class D for more modern 4-wheel-drive cars. The top three overall placegetters at Catlins do not qualify for class placings so the opportunity exists for others to clinch class honours.

Deane Buist and Derek Ayson are the top seeds in Window Tint South Class C (2-wheel-drive cars of 1601cc & over) and Derek Ayson Farmlands Real Estate Class G (1701cc & over classics) respectively. In Class C Buist's closest opposition will come from Paul Gouman of Balclutha, Neville Kidd of Richmond and Scott Paul of Cromwell while Barry Mills of Balclutha, Australian John Spencer, Bert Murray of Waimate and Brian Green of Palmerston North offer Ayson his toughest opposition.

Nigel Marshall of Wyndham is the leading light in Flashclad Class F (0-1700cc Classics) with Brendon Mitchell of Winton his biggest competition. Richie Chadwick will be tough to beat in the Alexandra Auto Electrical Class B for 2-wheel-drive cars of 1301-1600cc but it is one of the most competitive classes with Kevin Laird of Alexandra, Craig Cormack of Gore and Michael Sheehan of Queenstown all in the mix. Rhys Turner of Dunedin is currently the only entry in Balclutha Auto Electrics Class A (0-1300cc 2-wheel-drive).

Sixty-five entries will take the start at Owaka Motors from 10.00am on Saturday. 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 3.44pm.

Major support for the 2017 Catlins Coast Rally comes from Rosebank Lodge Balclutha, Fulton Hogan, Owaka Motors, Yuasa Batteries and Stadium Finance.

The 2017 Catlins Coast Rally is Round 5 of the Stadium Finance Mainland Rally Championship and also a points round for the ESCC Rally Championship Trophy.



Photograph: Andrew Graves in action in his Mitsubishi EVO 3 in last year's Catlins Coast Rally



Vaughan Edie on his way to victory in last year's event
Euan Cameron Photography



NZ Rally Championship leader Matt Summerfield in the Subaru Legacy he will use in the 2017 Catlins Coast Rally – Kevin Corin Photography

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