

REACT Vlakovlei Night Rally

Cape Peninsula Motorcycle and Car Club

7-8 May 2010

Mike Nathan and Rikus Fourie (down from Port Elizabeth) put their CPMCC S5 / N4 Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9 Turbo 4x4 to good use on extremely tricky road conditions to dominate the REACT Marketing Vlakovlei Night Rally on 7/8 May 2010. Being the first night event in twelve years conditions tested everyone present, even those who had the luxury of previous night rallying experience.

Ashley Haigh-Smith and Hilton Auffray started the event with guns ablaze in the Andy Haigh-Smith class S3 / A6 CPMCC Toyota Corolla RXi 1600, winning the opening 13.57km special stage by four seconds. Something that really grabbed the attention of all present, but then the Corolla developed a misfire on special stage two before youthful exuberance got the better of this obviously talented youngster on special stage three. The Corolla getting out of shape into a flatout L4/cattlegrid – concrete grid 1 and Corolla 0.

Thorsten Pey and Mark Palmer put in the drive of the event with the heavy Winning Business Solutions / Forsdicks Tygervalley class S4 WBMK E36 BMW 325i. This much heavier rear wheel drive vehicle definitely not suited to the wet, muddy and deceptive nature of the stages but Thorsten thrives in survival mode and really revels at night rallying. Mark had only one night ralliesprint as experience going into this event and found the opening two stages something of a revelation. With the spotlights gradually getting less on the BMW they clearly found the yumps challenging.

Having only two events experience behind them as a team, Sebastiaan and Daniël Klaasen, again showed great promise by keeping the CPMCC S5 / N4 Subaru Impreza WRX 4x4 Turbo intact and on the road enroute to an impressive third overall on their night rallying debut. They certainly are starting to master the challenges presented by both the Subaru and rallying and turned in some very respectable times.

André Cleenwerck and Carl Peskin entered their CCMCC class S4 / A7 VW Polo 2.0 20v and as expected this car proved to be a real handful in the muddy conditions. Somehow they kept it pointing forward and achieved a commendable fourth overall. Another comeback drive saw Shaun Jones and Ian Thebus in fifth place with the Naartjie. The orange CPMCC class S5 VW Golf Synchron 4x4 Turbo 1.8 showing a good turn of speed and for once reliability, despite steaming like a river boat.

Father and son, Clinton and Keenan Sassman, deserve special mention as their sixth overall was truly well deserved after many disappointing retirements. Their CCMCC class S4 E30 BMW 325i never missed a beat and finally returned the result they so richly deserved. This hopefully the first of many good results.

As vice-chairman of CPMCC, title sponsor of the event and team manager for Ashley the yellow submarine was placed in command of Steven White and Patrick Vermaak and once again this little car did not disappoint. Seventh overall a very satisfactory result for a driver that had not sat in a rally car for almost a year and encouraging improvements saw them quicker on every stage. The REACT Marketing class S2 CPMCC Mitsubishi Lancer GT1600 developing a slight misfire on the final km of the event and then a puncture in Parc Fermé.

Team George returned eighth overall after another steady performance in the really neatly turned out class S Flying Fridge CCMCC Toyota Conquest RSi 1600. André George and George du Toit proving that they have shaken the effects of their roll and are back in the fray. Paul-Hendrik Franken and Uwe Pey enjoyed the reliability of their 1800 powerplant in the class S3 WBMK VW Golf CSL. Hitting a rock on the final stage Uwe actually bit through his tongue but the enthusiastic team were simply ecstatic to finish. Pierre Franken, father of Paul-Hendrik, setting the example by finishing a 900km mountain bike race the week before!

Stefanie and Willem Hugo had both an enjoyable and frustrating event in their recently acquired ex-Kosta Koumantarakis Wiel / Select Cars class S3 / N3 Toyota Run X RSi 1800. Enjoyable was the fact that they finished tenth overall and frustrating due to the fact that the computer had lost most of its performance data. Abduraghman Amlay sportingly tried to fix the problem but could do little under the circumstances. Stefanie really enjoying the luxury of decent suspension and more nimble handling.

West Coast newcomers, Divan de Goede and Henry Köhne, shared the view of almost every other competitor that night rallying rules. Making their night debut in the ex-Wessel Venter class S2 / N2 Toyota Corolla RSi 1600 the youngsters found the night event to be a real eye opening experience which they thoroughly enjoyed. Another sound finish adding to their experience level.

Winston Neethling and Garth Ritsch became a welcome late entry in their ex-Hannes Grobler class S5 Nissan Sentra 4x4, now with a standard 2.0 engine. A good looking car despite its age they managed a respectable twelfth spot after a long layoff. Floating the big CCMCC class S4 Nissan Skyline GTX 2.8 across the ponds of water in the early stages proved great fun for Gavin Grierson and Paul van Greunen, but then the water disappeared and the landings became uncomfortable. The team happy to finish 13th overall.

Warren Scholtz and Justin Gay made it to the finish in fourteenth – Just! The class S3 CPMCC VW Polo 1.8 lost its clutch coming into the final control and the duo had to push the car into Parc Fermé. No matter, another finish just what they need to stay motivated.

Derrick Benjamin and Adrie Stander stormed into the first 860m of SS4 and promptly put the S4 CCMCC VW polo 2.0 onto its side in the first slippery R7 corner. Though they recovered the car eventually expired with overheating. Harry Giliomee and Fritz Blom enjoyed the first four stages so much that one would have thought they won the event. The neat class S3 WBMK Toyota Breadvan 1800 finally showing some real potential before fuel starvation stopped them in SS5.

Rupert van Zyl and Marius Rudolph did not have an enjoyable event in their class S3 CPMCC VW Golf GTi 1800 with a misfire on SS1 just the beginning of their drama. Llewellyn Jones and Christopher Pichon broke a front shock absorber on their class S4 VW Golf IV TDi 1.9 whilst Brian Maunder and Brian Hoskins and the WPMC class S1 VW Golf Chico 1.4i disappeared from scoring after SS2.

Despite some 25mm rain leading up to the event the weather could not have been any better on the actual night of the event. Dark moon but with no wind, acceptable temperatures and marvellous atmosphere the event proved extremely popular with all involved. Clearly night rallying has not been part of the local scene for many years and even regular photographers, Eric Joseph and Frank Pey, found conditions tricky.

Jason Joseph improved his 100m dash time when Sebastiaan Klaasen nettered a L8 rather too hot in the Subaru and picked on the scenery whilst judging distances and lines for the variety of machines had both Eric and Frank scratching heads to achieve good results. As event sponsor Andy Haigh-Smith have to be complimented for the manner in which he supported crews and officials. Being a night event he provided some 75 miners lamps to make life easier.

On sheer spirit there is absolutely nothing wrong with Western Province rallying as the spirit during this event was incredible. Derek Jacobs tried his best to keep competitors informed as to conditions on the stages but watching a DVD recorded during a dry day and rallying in wet conditions at night proved challenging to say the least. When the last night event was run normal tulips were the order of the day and nobody really knew how to approach the new challenge as that big tree that was used as reference were nowhere to be seen in the dark of night!

The Cape Peninsula Motorcycle and Car Club could not have started their centenary year in a more spirited fashion. Sharing a 1910 birthday with Alfa Romeo there will still be much to celebrate later in the season. With soccer dominating the next two months round 5 of the Western Province Rally Championship will be the CCMCC All Tar on 13/14 August 2010 at the Killarney motorsport complex in Milnerton.

Patrick Vermaak

083 701 8116