



## ***2010 State Rally Championship Review***

The dawning of a new decade would see the WA State Rally Championship (WARC) shift up a gear in 2010. Five rallies throughout WA's southwest would decide the series and by the end, new champions would be crowned. For 2010 new teams and cars appeared on rally entry lists this year as well as some familiar names who returned to the WARC.

### ***Donnelly***

Round 1 of this year's WARC & Clubman Cup, the Donnelly Rally was hosted around the tall timber forests of WA's southwest earlier than usual. A popular event on the rally calendar, in 2010, the rally ran in March rather than September. Normally known for damp roads and wet weather, the date change had given this year's Donnelly dry roads with dust. Donnelly was a fully pace noted event, with the last 2 stages of the rally run in the dark.

There were several contenders for the 2WD honours at this year's Donnelly Rally. Escorts had shown a strong presence with not less than six of the 30+ year old cars taking the start line. Breaking up the Ford Squad was the V8 brute of Kiel Douglas/Anthony Paynter's Holden Commodore.

For Donnelly, rookie navigator went to Katherine Smither who sat alongside Brent Dunlop in their new WRX. Dunlop had not competed in a rally for the best part of 10 years and a huge effort by their team allowed the pair to not only start the rally, but to finish in 11<sup>th</sup> place.

Beau Robinson/Anthony Chudleigh (Evo 7) won WARC rookie driver and took tenth place on Robinson's first outing. Nick Box/Mick Steele returned to the WARC after a considerable break and took ninth in their Evo 8. Seventh place and 1<sup>st</sup> 2WD went to Blair Pugh/Ross Burton (Ford Escort), behind Doug Tostevin/Jon Mortimer in their green WRX in sixth. Brother and sister, Tom & Nerralie Wilde (WRX) opened their WARC points account for 2010 with a secure fifth behind Chris Anderson/Ben Searcy (Spec C WRX) in fourth. Lee McLroy/Leigh Tierney took third place after a solid performance, just over 1 minute adrift from John Macara/Dianna Madlner (Evo 9) in second. Macara was out to defend his 2009 WARC title and had started on a good note. Dust had played its part for most of the day and the lead had see-sawed back and forth. By the last stage a steady rain shower reduced the dust enough for the leading drivers to increase their pace. At the finish line, Roman Watkins/Toni Feaver (Spec C WRX), had driven hard and snatched the win by just 14 seconds.

### ***Forest***

Round 2 was a big event. Unlike the normal one-day rallies that make up the rest of the championship, the Quit Forest Rally was run as two separate heats over 2 days in April.

The Quit Forest Rally had approximately 200km of competitive special stages



that started on both Friday and Saturday nights with short sprints around a tarmac super special stage on the Busselton foreshore, before heading to the forests of Nannup, 50km south of the coast.

On Friday night, the two stages around the Busselton tarmac gave crews one last chance to dial themselves in before the competition got underway in the forests the next day. Most crews had tidy runs around the short course. For the two V8 Commodore teams of Kiel Douglas/Anthony Paynter and John/David Bruinsma, it was a case of who could get the most smoke out of the rear tires at every corner to the delight of the large crowd. All the teams had more serious competition to contend with on Saturday in the forests. It was a dramatic day for many teams with mechanical woes sidelining contenders in both two and four wheel drive.

The top 10 for heat 1 read like this:

In tenth place was Graeme Miles/Luke Goodman (WRX). Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe had swapped a Datsun 1600 for a WRX and were rewarded with ninth place. Eighth went to Julian Wright/Jeff Huggins in their always-rapid Datsun 1200. Peter Flood/Mal Crockenberg brought their WRX to a tidy seventh place behind Beau Robinson/Anthony Chudleigh (Evo 7) in sixth. Doug Tostevin/Gill Smith made fifth place in their green WRX behind Watkins/Feaver in 4th. Leigh Hynes/Stuart Percival took their orange WRX to third place for the heat, 9 seconds adrift from Tom and Nerralie Wilde (WRX). First place for Heat 1 went to Chris Anderson/Ben Searcy (Spec C WRX).

Heat 2 started much the same way as heat 1 on Saturday evening. Again the Commodores were the crowd pleasers, sliding around with “Gay Abandon” as the commentators put it.

Back in the Nannup Forests on Sunday morning, the roads had dried very well after earlier rains and the lines were well swept of loose gravel. Many drivers commented on how most of the roads offered excellent grip. Some of the teams were again struggling with mechanical issues though.

Probably the luckiest escape was Anderson/Searcy. During the course of heat 2, the pair had managed to roll their WRX twice which lost them time and dropped them down the order, however they did manage to finish the rally.

After a dramatic weekend the final results were interesting.

Raz Vlad with young Daymon Nicoli alongside brought his Daihatsu Charade GTTi to tenth outright. Miles/Goodman made a tidy ninth behind Macara/Madlener and Hynes/Percival who were in equal seventh place. Whittle/Doe had a brilliant debut event in their new WRX to finish in equal fifth with Wright/Huggins who also took the 2nd honors for the rally. With the win in heat 1, Anderson/Searcy maintained enough points to take fourth for the weekend in their somewhat second hand looking WRX. Flood/Crockenberg maintained their speed and also had some good fortune to



take a well-deserved third place. Watkins/Feaver recovered from gearbox problems in heat 1 and drove to a fine second place outright behind the Wilde & Wilde combination.

### ***Lewana***

For the third time in as many months, rally teams headed back to the state's southwest for round 3 of the WARC.

The Lewana Stages rally was the first taste of "blind" or "secret" rallying for 2010 where competitors had to rely on the organiser's road book rather than their own pace notes. Similar to Donnelly, Lewana would also run forest stages into the dark.

With the rallies close together, some teams had put in huge efforts to be ready for round three. In other cases, mechanical or damage repairs after the Forest were just not possible in time and competitors had to sit out the event.

Nic Box/Todd Payne drove their Lancer Evo 8 to tenth place. Kiel Douglas/Anthony Paynter got their 5L V8 Commodore into ninth behind Graeme Miles/Luke Goodman (WRX) who finished strongly in eighth. Travis White/Paul Vandermey finished first two wheel drive in their Daihatsu Charade and collected seventh outright in the process. Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe had another strong finish in their WRX, taking sixth with Gavin Morgan/Chris Parish bringing their Spec C WRX to fifth. Returning to the WARC, Dave Gould, co driven by his wife Tina had a great event finishing fourth in their new WRX. Brother and sister Tom & Nerralie Wilde aren't such great fans of blind rallies, however continued a strong points haul with third place at Lewana. Defending state champion John Macara with Ashley Burton alongside drove their Evo 9 to second place behind Chris Anderson/Ben Searcy. With the damage from the Forest, Anderson/Searcy was not able to repair their normal Spec C WRX in time for Lewana. In a late deal, Chris borrowed his brother James' Spec C and was rewarded with an outright win.

### ***Experts***

Despite the packed calendar in the first half of the year, the Experts Cup Rally attracted 40+ state entries to the coal mining town of Collie in June for round 4 of the WARC.

Competitors wrote their pace notes on the Saturday morning before competing on 8 special stages around Wellington Dam in the afternoon and evening.

Kiel Douglas/Anthony Paynter put on another good showing at the Experts with a tenth place in the big Commodore. As with Lewana, Travis White/Paul Vandermey managed to take the 2WD trophy, this time making ninth place by the final control. Brent Dunlop/Katherine Smither brought their WRX to eighth place, their first top ten finish for the season. Darren Windus/Ash Ridden brought their 4WD Turbo Toyota Corolla Sportivo to seventh behind Dave & Tina Gould (WRX) in sixth. Improving on the results from the last



rally, Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe moved up a placing to take their red WRX to fifth place. Doug Tostevin/Gillian Smith (WRX) finished strongly in fourth place behind the returning pair of Toby Heyring/Peter Turner (Spec C WRX) in third. Chris Anderson/Ben Searcy (Spec C WRX) this time finished second to brother and sister Tom and Nerralie Wilde (WRX).

After the fourth round of the WARC, the points were tight in both the outright and two wheel drive categories and the last round would be the decider of both.

### **Safari**

The WARC had a four month long break between round four and round five. This year the LCC Western Safari Rally attracted 35 teams to the forests of Mundaring in October, just east of the Perth metro area.

Running in a similar format to previous years, 9 special stages were set on the loose, ball bearing gravel roads. The non pace note format was also retained where competitors used the organiser's road book to navigate their way through the natural bush and pine plantations around Mundaring Weir.

Within the first few stages it was apparent that the event was going to be hard on cars and tires. By the first service, some teams had already changed tires in the stages from punctures. Mechanical problems were also surfacing for some on the slippery roads with suspension and transmission problems topping the list. The loose, dry and warm conditions also accelerated tire wear. Many cars returned to service with little tread left after each group of stages.

As the rally progressed, more cars showed signs of brushes with the scenery with a few dented panels and the odd bent rear bumper. The dust too was providing a challenge for some teams and became more of an issue as darkness fell.

After 9 special stages, just 16 cars completed the state section of the event. Despite suspension problems and a mid rally steering rack replacement, Geoff Leatt-Hayter/Tammy Adams nursed their Ford Escort to tenth outright. In their new Ford Fiesta ST, Raz Vlad and Damon Nicoli took ninth place and with it the 2WD championship for the year. Kiel Douglas/Anthony Paynter were leading 2WD in their V8 Commodore heading into the last round, however several problems during the day dropped them just enough time for Vlad/Nicoli to slip past and claim the 2WD trophy. Graeme Miles/Luke Goodman made eighth place in their WRX behind Gavin Morgan/Chris Parish in their Spec C WRX in seventh. Parish/Morgan counted themselves lucky to have finished, having mounted a massive charge after a puncture and jammed wheel early in SS1. Father and son Mike and Jack Civil (Lancer Evo 6) drove well to finish the Safari in sixth and Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe (WRX) stayed out of the trees long enough to collect fifth. Returning to the WA Rally Championship, Alex Stone, with Hanna Drury alongside took their WRX to fourth place. Travis White and Greg Flood upgraded their Daihatsu Charade for a PWRC spec Lancer Evo 9 and bagged a good result in third on the tough



roads. Nic Box with new navigator Matt James-Wallace (Lancer Evo 7) did well and finished second behind Tom Wilde/Lee Tierney who won the rally.

For Wilde, he was happy to have won the Safari and sealed his first state championship title. Chris Anderson was the only possible challenger for the title this year, and with other commitments he and navigator Ben Searcy were not able to enter the Safari.

Nonetheless a new name is now inscribed in the book of prestigious WA State Championship rally winners and the first name of the new decade.

Karl Drummond