



## 2011 Darling 200 wrap

The final rally in WA for 2011 was round 6 of the WA Clubman Rally Series (Clubman Cup), the Darling 200.

The forests of Jarrahdale southwest of Perth, once known for logging and bauxite mining hosted the 6 special stages that made up the rally. The cooler temperatures in mid November helped both officials and the 20 teams that entered in what would normally be a warm event.

Being a 2 Wheel Drive only rally, iconic rear wheel drive cars were free to match it with more contemporary front wheel drive machinery. A quick glance of the entry list showed Ford Escorts and Datsuns in the mix with Honda Civics and Daihatsu Charades. A thundering V8 Holden Commodore also provided great spectacle during the day.

Late grading of the roads before the rally did little to improve the surface and many competitors found the event rough. Unlike all other rallies of 2011, the Darling 200 was run from the organisers' road book instead of pace notes. With the technical stages and the road book, some competitors found the event challenging.

New competitors Sean Keating/Caleb Ash ran into problems early. The pair damaged their rear drive Toyota Celica in SS1 and had to retire. In SS2 Belinda Kenney/Daniel Hampton found a tree close to the road and retired their Datsun 1600 with heavy frontal damage.

Another pair struggling on the Darling 200 was Dylan King/Andrew Hannigan. It seemed that when their Ford Escort was running well, the pair were flying. Unfortunately intermittent mechanical problems intervened and caused much lost time in the early stages of the rally.

After a mid way service, competitors headed out to repeat the previous 3 stages. Whist SS4 was run the same, SS5 & 6 were altered and/or reversed in direction.

On the Darling 200 Daniel Adams/Paul Helm debuted their rebuilt rear wheel drive Toyota Corolla. In SS5 the car suffered over heating troubles and the pair had to retire. In a later model front wheel drive Corolla Justin White/Kristin Paus were having a good run. For most of the rally the pair (who were relatively new to the sport) had set stage times well within the top ten and were as high as fourth. On SS6 it all came undone when the car overshot a corner and became stuck. The crew did recover the car, however they ran over the time limits and missed out on a finish.

After 6 stages, the top ten were in. Peter Bennison returned to rallying in his Toyota Corolla with Sharon Black alongside and finished the Darling 200 in 10<sup>th</sup> place. The next three places were all dominated by Daihatsu Charades. Lisa White and husband Alex finished 9<sup>th</sup>, Daniel Webb/Zi Chan finished 8<sup>th</sup> and the all girl team of Alex Sleep/Nadia Beedeison were 7<sup>th</sup>. Andy van

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Kann/James Marquet had a good drive in their rear drive Toyota Corolla Levin to finish 6<sup>th</sup> behind the only Ford in the top 10. Leo Iriks/Bruna Ruaro brought their Escort to a tidy 5<sup>th</sup> place and Anthony Chudleigh/Matthew Hare took 4<sup>th</sup> in their Hyundai Excel. Showing that ageing Datsun 1600's are still competitive, Steve Vass/Richard Meredith made a podium finish in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Trevor Chudleigh and Tammy Adams took their Toyota Sprinter to a well deserved 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Kevin Sleep/Anthony Paynter drove well all day in their Honda Civic and won the rally.

All other rounds of the WA Clubman Rally Series had been combined with state championship rallies. Despite a difficult season, Geoff Leatt-Hayter/Tammy Adams (Ford Escort) had won four of the six Clubman rounds and amassed enough points to win the cup for 2011. Steve Vass/Richard Meredith finished 2<sup>nd</sup> (Datsun 1600) and Dylan King/Andrew Hannigan (Ford Escort) finished 3<sup>rd</sup> after a troubled latter half of the season.

With the rally season now over for the year, attentions will no doubt turn to end of year celebrations and the holidays.

The 2012 season is due to kick off in late March with the Forest Rally in Busselton & Nannup.