



2011 Safari Rally Wrap

Mud, dust and close trees were just some of the aspects that rally teams faced on the last round of the WA State Championship on a sunny Saturday in mid October. The Carringtons Safari Rally, run in Mundaring to the east of Perth was set to be the decider of the 2011 outright and 2wd championships.

The early Saturday morning start for pace noting gave teams a chance to look over the roads and chose their tactics. It was soon obvious that the 25mm of rain in the area just 2 days before the rally had helped in some areas and made other places very slippery.

By the time the rally started in mid afternoon, the roads were becoming dusty and with only a slight breeze, it was thought that the first car on the road would have a distinct advantage.

The whole state field got through the first two stages and returned to the Chidlow for service. Battle wounds on some cars were showing whilst others were having problems under their skins. Not able to leave service were the teams of Josh & Ben Gardiner (WRX) with a broken strut and Garth McGuire/Ross Burton (Hyundai Lantra) with a broken driveshaft.

SS3 and its repeat SS6 was cancelled when organisers couldn't quite fill all of the key officials' roles on other stages. This left the remaining 5 stages to decide the rally.

SS4 (and SS8) was one of the longest and roughest stages of the rally. The stage wound through both pine plantation and native forest. Geoff Leatt-Hayter/Tammy Adams found a small stump close to the road in the stage and were forced to retire their Ford Escort after a heavy shunt. Both driver and navigator walked away unharmed.

Another Escort team with Dylan King/Justin Smith onboard retired in SS5 with a blown engine.

During the second service, more cars were showing signs of brushes with the scenery as the pace increased and the roads deteriorated. In SS7 Graham Harper/Kori Mez retired their WRX with radiator troubles and John Macara/Lee Tierney (Lancer Evo 2) retired in SS8 with a blown engine.

As the darkness approached and the slight breeze dropped, the dust became more of a problem. The organisers increased the gap between cars to 3 minutes, however many were now struggling with visibility. The Safari was maintaining its reputation as a tough event for crews and machine, although the temperature was much cooler than previous years.

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Many had kept a close eye on the results during the rally a great deal relied on the outcome. After a drama filled day, the top ten were in.

John Clinton/Richard Humphries brought their WRX home safely in 10th place. Kiel Douglas/Ashley Burton finished 9th in their fire breathing V8 Commodore. Although the duo had finished as second 2WD on the Safari, they had amassed enough points during the year to take the State 2WD Championship. Father & Son Mike and Jack Civil (Lancer Evo 6) were next in 8th place. Jack also won the Rookie navigator's championship a fitting end to his first year in the silly seat. John O'Dowd/Ben Searcy brought their Spec C WRX to a tidy 7th outright and 4th in the state championship. Julian Wright/Ian De Boer had a good event in their Datsun 1200 finishing in 6th place and 1st 2WD for the rally. Travis White ably navigated by Greg Flood brought their Lancer Evo 9 to 5th place behind 4th placed Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe in their WRX. Alex Stone/Hanna Drury had started as car 1 on this years Safari. The pair set fastest times on the last 2 stages of the rally in the dust and dark, capitalising on their road position. The late stage wins were not enough however to take the lead and the pair finished 3rd in their WRX. Nic Box/Ash Ridden had started the Safari with an early lead and kept up a rapid pace throughout the rally. The pair had pushed hard in their Lancer Evo 8 and drove to a well deserved 2nd place. Leigh Hynes/Stuart Percival (WRX) pulled out all stops at this years Safari and had to fight very hard. With just a handful of points and a title hinging on the Safari, Hynes/Percival took the rally win and indeed the 2011 state championship by 22 seconds.