



### ***2011 Lewana Stages Rally***

One word to describe this year's Lewana Stages Rally- Fast!

Taking a different tack on an established event, the organisers made this year's Lewana Stages Rally fully pace noted instead of the "blind rally" format where the organisers supplied teams with a road book. Forming round 3 of the WA State Rally Championship (WARC) and Clubman Series, Lewana Stages was again held around the tree plantations of Balingup in the state's south west.

Competitors had an early start Saturday morning, writing their notes before competition started just after midday. Rain in the weeks leading up to the event had made some sections slippery, however dust was of no issue this year and the weather stayed dry on the day of the rally.

The first group of stages gave teams a true perspective of what Lewana was like on full pace notes. In previous years a driver would have lifted off the accelerator over crests, this year with the assistance of notes, drivers were showing impressive commitment to the roads and the stage times showed. Spectators too discovered that the speed of the rally produced some brilliant photo opportunities and great air over some of the crests.

For one team a run of bad luck continued at Lewana. Gavin Morgan & Chris Parish suffered an electrical gremlin in SS1 in their Spec C WRX and were forced out early for the second rally in a row.

Before the mid way point, Lee & Jo McIlroy were forced into retirement in SS3 in their WRX with a broken drive shaft.

Behind the front running 4WD cars, another great battle amongst the two wheel drives was raging. Again the competition looked to be between the V8 Commodore of Kiel Douglas/Ashley Burton and the Escorts of Blair Pugh/Paul Helm and Geoff Leatt-Hayter/Tammy Adams. By and the first of the night stages (SS4) it had come undone for both of the Escorts. Leatt-Hayter/Adams snapped an axle after a heavy landing at the spectator point and lost a wheel, whilst Pugh/Helm suffered gearbox troubles. The problems for both teams meant their rally was over. Douglas/Burton also suffered some problems with broken front suspension in SS4. The pair dropped a lot of time in SS4 & 5 until they could get into service and repair the problem.

For the organisers, a change of date to from May to July and full pace notes seemed to have paid off. Competitors provided much positive feed back and the dark stages had no dust to slow the pace of those behind the first car on the road.

New comer John Clinton and experienced navigator Toni Feaver brought their WRX to a respectable 10<sup>th</sup> place. Julian Wright/Ian De Boer were rewarded with 9<sup>th</sup> place in their Datsun 1200 after a hasty engine build from the Experts Cup rally a few weeks previous. The youngest competitor Dylan King with Andrew Hannigan alongside had a great rally. Despite a flat tyre in SS1, the pair drove well in their Escort to be 8<sup>th</sup> outright, 1<sup>st</sup> 2WD and 1<sup>st</sup> in class P3. If

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that wasn't enough, King who is still on his "L" plates, also took Rookie driver for both the Clubman and State sections of the rally as well. The swag of trophies he collected added a new meaning to the phrase "cleaned up". John O'Dowd/Ben Searcy brought their Spec C to a tidy 7<sup>th</sup> place behind father and son Mike and Jack Civil (Lancer Evo 6) in 6<sup>th</sup>. Garry Whittle/Ryan Doe found their limit with their WRX on the last rally. This time around the pair took a measured approach to the rally and were rewarded with 5<sup>th</sup> place. With moderate damage and retirement on the Experts Cup rally, Travis White/Greg Flood had a safe drive on this rally and took the 4<sup>th</sup> place points. After mechanical retirement at the Experts Cup, Alex Stone/Hanna Drury brought their WRX home in third, a position they had held for the entire event. The story for 2<sup>nd</sup> placed Nic Box/Ash Ridden (Lancer Evo 7) was almost the same as that of Stone/Drury. For Box/Ridden they had taken the fight down to the wire at Lewana and pushed the pace of all of the front runners for the entire rally. Leigh Hynes and Stuart Percival proved they had well and truly exorcised their demons at Lewana. Fresh from a win at the Experts Cup, the pair drove well and led the rally from start to finish. The duo hadn't put a wheel wrong all day, however admitted they had some scary moments due to the speed of the rally and the pressure from Box/Ridden.

The next round of the WARC and Clubman Cup is the Donnelly Rally on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September.

For information, results and seedings go to [www.rallywa.com](http://www.rallywa.com)

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