

Rally car? More like a canoe!

The weekend of June 16th, saw the SM Rallying team head of the Nottingham to compete in the Dukeries Rally, based in the Sherwood Forestry Complex.

The week up to the event, saw the team keeping a close look on the weather, as the midlands were suffering from floods everywhere, so we knew that a wet rally was on the cards, but none of us knew quite how wet.

The run up was dry, but the threat of rain was there all of the time, and as we queued for scrutineering, the heavens opened. To say that we had a drop of water was an under statement! Myself and Leigh spent an hour sat in the back of the van watching the lightning storm and waiting for a break in the weather to get the car back on the trailer. There were service vans stuck everywhere, and the sight of a Subaru rally car pulling a van and trailer out of the trailer park was quite amusing. The roads back to the digs were an adventure in itself. Flooded everywhere.

Saturday morning came, and it was dry for now. We got to the start to find that the racecourse was completely flooded, and the start had to be moved. The weather also meant that one of the stages had to be cancelled, as the stage was impassable. Luckily it was the farthest away stage, which was good, as it seems a long way out of the min rally area anyway. At least we didn't have to bail the car out, unlike some of the crews that had left there cars at the start!

By the time that we got to stage 1, it was raining again. We were told that there were some very deep puddles in certain areas, so these were noted and off we went. To say that we had no grip was an under statement! We had a few straight on moments and just were unable to get out of the corners. We lost a lot of time on his stage, which meant that we spent the rest of the day trying to catch up.

Stage 2 went a lot better, and we felt the car had a lot more grip, as the surface was a lot more sandy than stage 1. We were both a lot happier with the car, and started to push through the next couple of stages. Stages 3 and 4 were back to back and the hairpins within the stage are quite open, meaning the stages were quick. Lots of long straights with square corners meant that the car spent more time in 5th gear than any other event that we have done so far this year.

At the main service we found that a rear suspension bolt had come out, that the radiator cooling fans manual override switch had stopped working, but more worrying, the bracket holding the coil pack had snapped. John and Leigh worked the magic, and the car went out with all of the problems sorted, so thanks to them both.

Stage 5 had been cancelled, so off to stage 6 which was basically stages 3 and 4 put into one stage. The car ran faultlessly and we stopped the clock in a reasonable time, so we were happy. We had climbed back up to 5th in class by this point, so a good run through the last stage meant a good finish.

The final stage was a rerun of stage 2, so we went in and all was going well until a series of 3 hairpins about halfway through. We had a spin on the first, which fouled up the others, and lost us some time overall. The stage time meant that we dropped from 5th to 7th in class, but only by 4 seconds! That's how tightly fought the class is....

The scores on the doors at the end of the day were 77th overall and 7th in class. If only stage 1 had gone better.....

Thanks go out the John and Leigh for standing around in the rain for most of the day, and the wives for letting go off..... Next event: Quinton stages rally based in Llandovery.

Mark and Steve

SM Rallying team