

Dukeries Rally

This was our first attempt on this event and we were warned from the outset about the difference in surface from all of the other events we had competed on. The car felt a lot better after a few changes to the suspension on the rear.

The day started very warm, and we guessed that the day would get hotter. We were right. The both of us were overheating on the way from the start to stage 1. Dust was going to be the other problem. Stage one went well and the dust did cause us a problem as we were catching the car in front. A small overshoot on a downhill section to a 90 right caused a few deep intakes of breath, but other wise we found the car was great, apart from 'floating' on the rear end caused by the sandy soil on the tracks. Stage 2 had a very tight section at the end, which Steve didn't like, as even with the Saxo being narrow it was still in the bushes on both sides.

Stage 3 went better, and felt that the car was working well, apart from this loose rear end. Lots of long straights, but noticed on a few of the long ones, that the car was not quite pulling hard in 5th.

Stage 4 was straight after the finish of 3, so no chance to get out and check the car over. Again the car was going fine, apart from this problem of not pulling strongly. About 500 yards from the end of the stage, Steve shouted that the temperature gauge had shot through the roof. By the time we got to the stop boards, the car had cut out. We now know that at least the safety mode on the car ECU works.

Towed back to the main road was not what we had wanted at the start of the day.

A strip down of the head showed that the head gasket had failed and put all of the water out the exhaust. A head rebuild ensued, along with a fitting of a bigger radiator and twin cooling fans in the weeks up to the next event.

Quinton Stages Rally

The trip up to the Quinton was hoped to be the turning point for the team after all of the problems to date, and with the reworked head fitted, the car went a lot better. The car pulled a lot stronger than before, and just felt right. The cooling upgrade meant that the temperature gauge sat a lot lower, but the car sounded like a hovercraft when they cut in!

Stage 1 was held up when we got there after an incident, but the car felt and went great and no real problems were had on this stage.

OK, so I lied.

There were these three hairpins, and we got around the first two, but a bit too much handbrake on number 3 saw us nose into the bank on the right, the rear end came around and we shot off the stage into the undergrowth backwards. Of course there were people there with cameras, there always is, and the guy took 17 photos of us for his web site, but who's counting. Have to mark that one for next time.

Stage 2 was very good, apart from the moaning from the drivers seat regarding the lack of ground on his side if the car. Too many fresh air moments for Steve's liking!

Service between stages consisted of nothing more that fuel and a check of the tyres which is a good sign.

Stage 3 saw us up on Epynt, which I love, and using the track built for the Network Q at Dixie's crossroads. We timed the cars in front from the start until out of sight for comparison, and we were a lot quicker over that distance. The run down the other side of the hill was a bit careful, but up the other side was magic. Getting to grips with the ditch hooking qualities of this car. Coming out of the hairpin onto the tarmac, saw us unable to get into third gear. We managed to get it wedged in second and drive out of the stage. We limped into service and decided to call it a day, as we didn't want to cause any more damage to the car.

Dropping the gearbox out found the problem. The clutch plate had destroyed itself.

We ended up having to get the gearbox repaired along with a new clutch unit.

Will these problems ever end?

Next outing is the Woodpecker, so we are hoping for a good finish in a car that we know is there.

Mark and Steve

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