

Wyedean Stages Rally 2007

The last few weeks working towards our local rally have been hectic to say the least. The car has had the steering rack rebuilt to get rid of a small knock which appeared, but the brakes turned out to be the biggest problem. We have ended up having to rebuild the braking system virtually completely to get over our lack of front brakes.

Just before the rally, we were invited to the press day at Chepstow Racecourse, which proved to us that we had overcome our braking problem, plus gave other people the chance to sample the Saxo first hand. The comments coming back from most people were very good to say the least, which put us all in a good frame of mind for the Dean.

The Saturday before, was to be the final going over of the car, but when under the rear suspension checking bits, we found that a rear bolt holding the shock absorber had sheared causing the shock to twist and put excess stress on one of the torsion bars. We fitted a pair of new torsion bars and decided to higher the rear a fraction at the same time. We fitted and adjusted the bars, and the difference was unbelievable. The original set must have been very weak, and these sorted that small problem straight away. The front was also taken up and we all felt happier with the car after a quick circuit of the local area.

Friday morning came and greeted us with snow, which was not really needed. After a set of worn gravel tyres were fitted to the management car, we went off to get the trailer and fuel, and this turned into an epic journey as the snow was getting quite deep. We received a call at lunch time to say that the tow van was stuck in a drift, and after a few phone calls, we decided to make the journey to Chepstow. We had to pick our way out of the forest passing a lot of stuck vehicles, and eventually getting to the racecourse.

We went through scrutineering with no problems and headed off home to find that one of our service crew was stuck in the middle of nowhere.

Saturday morning came and the snow was still all around. Leigh had dug the van out that morning, but it was still too unsafe to tow, so off we went in convoy.

Stage 1 proved just how bad the day was going to be, as you only had to be an inch off line and the car would shoot off at an angle. We struggled to get around the chicane, as you had to get on the grass, and we felt very disappointed at the stage finish.

Stage 2 saw us into the real snow, and we suffered straight away from no grip what so ever. Pressing of the brakes locked to wheels up instantly and the accelerator just span the front wheels. We passed a few cars in ditches on the way down to the river, but were greeted with a blocked road towards the bottom. Several minutes were lost pushing another car out of the way. The run back up was better, until we hit any snow, and we would loose all traction. The tyres were just not working. These are meant to be snow tyres, but no so sure now!

Stage 3 saw us slipping everywhere and off for around 30 seconds after the tarmac road, but both of us held our breath and Steve managed to keep out of a big ditch later in the stage.

Stage 4 was also bad with spins left, right and centre. Not enjoyable.

At service the guys did what they could, by narrowing the track of the car and lowering the front.

Stage 5 saw us spin and stay in a ditch for about 5 mins, Stage 6 was cancelled, stage 7 we tiptoed through, and stage 8 was the best run as there was no snow.

Not the best start to the year, and both were very downhearted at the end of the day. Not where we planned to be a few days earlier. We will put this event down as an unhappy experience.