



2010 International Rally of Whangarei Pre-event press conference

2 July 2010

Present:

Katsu Taguchi and Chris Murphy, MRF Tyres Team
Gurav Gill and Glenn Macneall, MRF Tyres Team
Hayden Paddon and John Kennard, Team Green
Alister McRae, Proton R3 Malaysia
Chris Atkinson, Proton R3 Malaysia

Willard Martin, Chairman, International Rally of Whangarei

I'd firstly like to thank all of our media and welcome international media and local media to the International Rally of Whangarei. I'd also like to welcome both our national and international driving stars as well. We do hope you will all have a good rally.
We get very good support from both the Whangarei District Council and the residents of Kaipara for our event. The weather – we can't control that. It's been fine today and we hope to see a bit of sunshine tomorrow. I do hope that you will have a good event because obviously the media is very important to this event and the drivers are very important to this event.

Kate Gordon, Media Manager, International Rally of Whangarei

Katsu: Number one seed and leader of the APRC; you've had a very good start to this season, what is your plan for this event?

Katsu Taguchi

We've got to stay on the road – is my approach. If I stay on the road my results will hopefully follow me (like Malaysia and Japan).

KG

Who are you rating as your biggest competition this weekend?

KT

Of course there are many drivers. The Proton cars are much faster now, even my team-mate (Gaurav Gill) is very good and always the top New Zealanders are very, very fast also. o we tested a couple days ago so we have found a setup for New Zealand. So I am looking forward to driving.

KG

Chris Murphy, you have been here before on these Whangarei roads and what do you think of them?

Chris Murphy

Yes, I have. In 2008 with Dean Herridge and the Cusco team. They are quite a peculiar challenge; everybody I think talks about the camber to death, but even going on recce (reconnaissance), the opportunity to see the cars in front of you and the amount of lean makes it a real rollercoaster ride of a rally.

KG

Chris Atkinson, the Protons have been showing good pace this year. How do you think things are looking after the challenges you've been facing in earlier events and getting setup for this weekend?

Chris Atkinson

I think these roads will suit us the best out of the rallies we've done so far. Obviously there is a lot of loose gravel on the road, but with the weather the way it is, if it rains it will be good for us and our road position. So we will be going flat-out. We did our test about an hour ago and that was good. We're feeling on the ball and hopefully will have a good event.

KG

Hayden, you've won here twice before, you're out for your third win this weekend. What's the plan?

Hayden Paddon

I guess the plan is to drive 100%. We don't have any championships to worry about, so are really using this as a bit of a filler between our World Rally Championship events and getting some more seat mileage and just learning to drive 100% on every stage and every corner. I'm not having to consolidate for any points so that's the plan for this weekend.

KG

Does that make it quite a unique experience in that you're not thinking about a championship?

HP

Definitely. I don't have to hold anything back and especially in the World Rally Championship and some of our team-mates in the Pirelli Star Driver – they're going very fast, so we've got to find some more speed as well. So a good chance to do it and find speed is drive on roads I know.

KG

John: you and Hayden have been working on your pace-note system since Portugal. How's that re-processing going?

John Kennard

Quite good. We didn't do as much here as we thought we might, because there is enough time comparatively to read all the information Hayden wants, whereas in Portugal lots and lots of very short technical corners, with the amount of information we put in our notes here – was just too much. So in events like that we just have to take some out.

KG

Gaurav, you have also been going extremely well this season. Do you have a specific plan for this event?

Gaurav Gill

This is my second time to New Zealand so it's quite unique and quite different and the roads are very fast. The approach will definitely be going flat-out and just keeping in mind the rains that are forecast to come. Here, we can have sunshine then the next five kilometres it will be rain, so I think the right tyre choice is something we need good fortune with.

KG

Glenn, you have competed here a number of times. What are some of the key things you enjoy about this event.

Glenn Macneall

I think any of the roads here in New Zealand are the best in the world anyway. It's just unbelievable how fast some of the roads are – it's quite exceptional and good fun.

Brian Kelly, The Radio Network

Hayden, coming from Europe in the Pirelli Star Driver competition, what is the difference between that car and your New Zealand car?

HP

Probably the thing you get used to is the weight of the car. Our car here is about 200kg lighter and what we've found after doing Rally New Zealand straight after Turkey – all of a sudden our braking points had changed by 20-30 metres and to get yourself to brake later again just takes a bit of etching in to the mind to ensure you can stop. But by halfway through the first stage you're back in the groove again.

Chris Grant, The Radio Network

For the Proton guys, you've obviously had a poor weekend in Belgium, has the team found a logical explanation as to why you all succumbed on the fourth special stage?

Alister McRae

We've both just done the shakedown and both come through it okay. It's a very tight time schedule between being in Europe and coming to New Zealand so there's obviously not a lot of time to do a lot of changes. But they looked at it, changed a few bits internally with the tolerances, so hopefully here we can have a clean run.

CG

Have the cars you're using here been used before?

AM

These are the cars we used in Malaysia and Japan.

Lance Hastie, Assistant Media Manager, International Rally of Whangarei

Alister, you're fairly familiar with the roads up here from your Rally New Zealand days; as far as the pace of the car goes having looked at the results from this year's Rally New Zealand with the S2000 cars. Do you have a bit of a gauge on where you think the pace of your cars should be at?

AM

We think we should be a lot faster. I'll just take a bit from everybody. Hayden is going 100%, Katsu is not going to go off, John is working his pace notes and Chris is going flat-out. So if we can put it all together we should be okay.

CG

The two new stages, are they what you've come to expect as being Rally New Zealand/Northland roads?

AM

Very much so; I think here you've got the extremely fast sections and the twisty cambered sections, but all over very flowing. So you expect to find the rev-limiter in top-gear. But also, carry a lot of corner speed in the third-fourth gear turns, so it's exactly like you remember from here.

KG

Alister, are you looking forward to the rally and being back here?

AM

Very much so. I've always enjoyed driving here in the North and South Island. So it's a great to be here and as Chris said it's an event that'll well suit the Super 2000 cars – you can carry the speed through – so we're looking forward to it.

LH

Katsu, Sunday, when the start order is changed – where do you want to be?

KT

Maybe five seconds behind the leader, with five cars in front, so we start from sixth position – that would be okay.

BK

For any of you; is there a lot of gravel on those roads?

KT

I always enjoy gravelled roads and love New Zealand roads. So tomorrow I just drive for fun.

BK

You don't mind being number one (first car on the road)?

KT

I can not do anything (about my start position).