



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS



**22-23  
SEPTEMBER 2023**

**150KM OF ICONIC GRAVEL SPECIAL STAGES**



## **PADDON PIPS VAN GISBERGEN FOR DAYBREAKER WIN**

Against the elements and position on the heavily gravelled roads of the Manawatu and Rangitikei districts, Cromwell's Hayden Paddon and co-driver John Kennard won Saturday's 2023 Daybreaker Rally, powered by Brian Green Properties.

Finishing in second was Gold Coast based Kiwi Shane van Gisbergen and co-driver Glen Weston, with Auckland's Raana Horan and co-driver Dave Neill climbing to claim the final podium position.

Departing Feilding 5:30am, just as day started to break, the 88-car field headed for the first of nine special stages that would determine the finishing order. The event was resurrected to include being a round of the Brian Green Property Group New Zealand Rally Championship (NZRC).

Leading the field into the first stage, Paddon set fastest time in his Hyundai i20N Rally 2 car with van Gisbergen second. The pair maintained the same positions for the entire day as the event travelled through sunny warm and dusty sections around Taihape and the northern part of the route. By early afternoon the forecast rain greeted the travelling event, dramatically changing the road conditions.

While the challenge of the event over-stretched the driving ability of some, mechanical issues plagued others. A total of 60 made it to the finish ramp - having completed the Central ITM Super Stage at Manfeild in atrocious wet conditions.

"It was awesome to experience these roads for the first time," said Paddon, who extended his lead in the five-round championship with the win. "They are very unique to the rest of the country - very twisty and a lot more technical than I expected. It was one of the twister rallies we've done for a while so having full trust in the pace notes we've never checked was interesting, but they worked and John did an awesome job.

"It was quite interesting in these conditions when it is so loose - you have to have to find that balance between pushing and not having the car sliding too much. It was a rally of two halves with the rain in the afternoon but very enjoyable."

[www.daybreakerrally.co.nz](http://www.daybreakerrally.co.nz)



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For van Gisbergen it was a reliable run in the loaned Audi S1 AP4 car – redemption for an electrical issue that halted his previous championship rally attempt.

Running second on the road behind Paddon, van Gisbergen set second fastest time on all nine stages.

“It was tough in the morning learning the roads and in the dust. Then with the rain in the afternoon it was slop in the end – it was difficult but so much fun.

“Hayden was really quick at the start and managed the lead well. I felt I got better throughout the day and hopefully I don’t feel as rusty when I next get into the car in a month’s time.

Horan’s third place finish in the Skoda Fabia R5 keeps the NZRC title chase alive. Now 14 points behind Paddon’s total of 118, Horan still has a mathematical chance of being champion.

Top Manawatu local Geof Argyle and co-driver Kester Oliviconora finished eighth in a Mitsubishi Lancer EVO 7 while fastest two-wheel drive competitor was Rangiora’s Marcus van Klink and co-driver Toby Marsh (Mazda RX8) 11th overall.

Taupo’s Mason Grimmer and co-driver Leighton Spurdle won the Don Locke Memorial Trophy for spirited competition. Grimmer’s dad Peter was one of the trophy contributors – celebrating the long-term family involvement in the sport.

Co-event organiser Tony McConachy awarded the inaugural Starlet Cup to Upper Hutt’s Brendon Cantwell and co-driver Lee Herd – in recognition for his result as a new competitor in a Toyota Starlet.

