

## Oberon Rally 2017 – Event Report

The week leading up to Saturday 18 March 2017 saw heavy rainfall in most of NSW, however Black Springs escaped most of it. As competing teams arrived on the Friday, set-up crews were reporting that the stages were unexpectedly dusty, with the exception of some of the roads around the Vulcan Fire Tower. This was always going to get interesting! With the formalities complete, including a warning at the drivers briefing of slippery and changeable conditions, 45 excited crews started the 1<sup>st</sup> Round of the 2017 PipeKing Southern Cross Rally Series.

Leading the field from position 1 on the road were new members Adrian and Kristy Turnbull from Newcastle. The husband and wife pair are experienced rally people, and as such understood that losing the ballot was not to their advantage. Top seed Tim Joass had his father Peter co-driver and was expected to figure in the results after a string of podiums in recent times in this area.

### C1 – Vulcan

Joass set the pace in this 14km stage recording a time 23 secs faster than Turnbull in 2nd. Riverina driver Jody Mill had the experienced Tommi Flegl co-driving and set the 3rd fastest time. In the classics, Doug and Luke Grimes (Celica) had grabbed the same 23 sec advantage over the Ford Escort of Dave Hills/Paul Bennett. Grimes was the fastest 2wd vehicle in 6<sup>th</sup> outright, with 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Classics claimed by Irishman O'Keeffe in another Escort.



*Tim and Peter Joass – Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 2*

Many crews had an adventurous start to the rally at the 7km mark. A right bend on red clay was proving to be impossible to negotiate at speed, with crews sliding through and up an escape clearing. Adam Casmiri was one of those drivers, and lost around 1 minute at this point. Casmiri has been circuit racing of late, and commented that he had forgotten how difficult blind rallying was. Tim Valentine also slid the ex-Goldberg Silvia in here and lost time, with eventually Michael Barry and Treise Carey remaining put.

Another to strike issue was Brett Kuhner/Paul Taylor losing over 6 minutes when the 'lights went out' and the turbo-charged Datsun lost all power. Andy Crane/Dave Anderson were expected to revel in the tricky conditions, however the Peugeot was the events first retirement when a newly replaced suspension arm failed leaving Andy quite bemused. The all-girl team of Amanda Williams and Rae Waterhouse had the Mazda GTX midfield after a strong opening stage.

### C2 – Skinnners

Tim Joass landed the 1-2 punch with a 10 sec stage win. This had the Pirelli shod Evo 2 34sec clear of 2<sup>nd</sup> placed Jody Mill in another Evo 2. Unfortunately for Mill, this was the last stage he would contest with alternator failure retiring him from 2<sup>nd</sup> outright. Ian Plenderleith and Mel McMinn were 3<sup>rd</sup> on stage, with the MRF tyred Evo 11 secs behind Joass. Fastest 2wd on the stage was Kuhner with 4<sup>th</sup> outright 1 sec

clear of Adam Casmiri/Paul Bailey in the Honda. Doug Grimes wrong slotted a junction, yet still managed fastest Classic from Dave Hills and PJ O'Keefe.

After a top ten time in the previous stage, Paul Brennan/Paul Fitzpatrick left the road and damaged the their Subaru Legacy. John and Ann Fraser lost boost on the Evo 4 and also joined the retirement list. The Fraser's were in 11<sup>th</sup> Outright at the time.



Ian Plenderleith / Mel McMinn – Lancer Evo 3

Results at Service 1

Joass/Joass	Mitsubishi Evo 2	O4WD	14.54	1
Mill/Flegl	Mitsubishi Evo 2	O4WD	15.28	2
Plenderleith/McMinn	Mitsubishi Evo 3	O4WD	15.37	3
Turnbull/Turnbull	Subaru WRX	O4WD	15.42	4
Moore/Moore	Mitsubishi Evo 6	O4WD	15.55	5
Neal/Whyburn	Subaru WRX	O4WD	16.16	6
Grimes/Grimes	Toyota Celica	ClassC	16.16	6
Player/Dean	Subaru WRX	O4WD	16.20	8
Jaques/Taylor	Mitsubishi Evo 9	O4WD	16.45	9
Pluck /Yates	Subaru WRX	O4WD	16.47	10



Phil Pluck/Ellie Yates – Subaru Impreza WRX

C3 – Wombat

A pattern was forming with Tim and Peter Joass again heading the stage times, this time taking an 11 sec victory from the fast-improving Phil Pluck in the ex-Windus Subaru. Pluck, with Ellie Yates, had struggled to find rhythm in the first 2 stages but took a liking to the fast Vulcan and Wombat roads. Plenderleith/McMinn and the Turnbull's were equal 3<sup>rd</sup> with Doug Grimes heading the classics yet again and fastest 2wd from Kevin Ashby/Logan Waterhouse in the Silvia. Ashby was finding the Silvia a much more competitive car now that it had boost, and

joined the 3 'comeback kids' Casmiri, Kuhner and Valentine in an epic fastest 2wd battle. All 4 crews were storming back up the leaderboard.

Peter Neal/Craig Wyburn were 5<sup>th</sup> on stage with the rally veteran well entrenched in the top 10 placings overall. As to were father and son pairing of Ron and Lachlan Moore. Lachlan's enthusiasm in preparing the Evo6 had rewarded the 15yo with a co-driving gig, whereas mum Jo, was guiding Ross Plunkett in the ex-Joass VR4. Ross and Jo were making a mockery of their 39<sup>th</sup> seed and were comfortably inside the top 20 outright.

## C4 – Arkstone

The dry Arkstone test includes some of the fastest roads in the State, so it was no surprise that 5 2wd cars recorded top 10 stage times. Grimes (3<sup>rd</sup>) Casmiri (4<sup>th</sup>) Kuhner (5<sup>th</sup>) Valentine (7<sup>th</sup>) and Ashby (10<sup>th</sup>) were heroes to the anti-4wd brigade but yet again, Joass and Plenderleith headed the field.

7<sup>th</sup> seed Mark Kent/ Anthony Wilcockson were struggling through the event managing a variety of mechanical issues, and were looking forward to reaching the major service. In another Evo 3, the father and daughter team of Dave and Sarah Roberts were suffering

brake issues. They were able to complete the event, albeit at a slower speed than they usually display. The Kent entry was forced to DNF with clutch slave cylinder failure. Another crew hampered in Arkstone was the leading lady driver Amanda Williams. The girls had a strut insert fail but were able to continue to the finish of the event.



*Amanda Williams/Rae Waterhouse – Mazda GTX*

## Results at the Main Service

Joass/Joass	Mitsubishi Evo 2	O4WD	31.08	1
Plenderleith/McMinn	Mitsubishi Evo 3	O4WD	32.25	2
Turnbull/Turnbull	Subaru WRX	O4WD	32.46	3
Moore/Moore	Mitsubishi Evo 6	O4WD	33.00	4
Grimes/Grimes	Toyota Celica	ClassC	33.10	5
Player/Dean	Subaru WRX	O4WD	33.44	6
Pluck /Yates	Subaru WRX	O4WD	33.56	7
Jacques/Taylor	Mitsubishi Evo 9	O4WD	34.01	8
Casmiri/Bailey	Honda Civic	OFWD	34.07	9
Neal/Whyburn	Subaru WRX	O4WD	34.08	10

## C5 – Vulcan 2

In deteriorating conditions the Subaru crews lined up to attack the Joass dominance of the event. Adrian Player/Peter Dean were flying under the radar in 6<sup>th</sup> Outright with a trouble free run on their return to the sport. Player posted 5<sup>th</sup> fastest on this stage. Adrian Turnbull hadn't set eyes on the forests around Oberon for 20 years, so a repeat stage was a confidence builder and he managed to get within a single second of the Joass Evo in 3<sup>rd</sup>, taking some time back from Ian Plenderleith in the process. The surprise came from Phillip Pluck and Ellie Yates however, with an equal fastest stage time over the 9km test.

Brett Kuhner's turbo-charged Datsun pipped Adam's Casmiri's Civic on the muddy stage by a second to be fastest 2wd, earning praise from the former Australian Junior Champion. "Just crazy," he laughed when interviewed "I'm seeing his lines, I'm not following them!" The turbo Datsun boys are unique, and



Kari Dirickx had left his version at home in preference of an RB26 engined Nissan Patrol. The biggest car in the field stormed through the stage in 12<sup>th</sup> outright position.



*Kari Dirickx/Brad Hall – Nissan Patrol*

The Classic Category lost its leader on this stage with the retirement of Doug and Luke Grimes in the Celica. Grimes had won all stages to this point, but differential failure send the enthusiastic team out spectating for the remainder of the day. Dave Hills/Paul Bennett held a commanding lead in the PipeKing Escort ahead of O'Hagan/Moynihan, O'Keeffe/Shaw and his father John Hills/Mick Tuckey all in Escorts.

### C6 Skinners 2

O'Hagan set about clawing back the deficit in the Classics with a category win over Hills, whilst at the front of the field the status quo remained,

with Joass, Plenderleith, Turnbull and Moore setting the pace. Casmiri was fastest 2wd entry from Kevin Ashby and Tim Valantine.

James and Tess Tracy had their Subaru firing and were getting faster. A 15<sup>th</sup> on stage saw them climb into the top 20 in Tess's first rally. They had been locked in a rally long battle with another family team, that of Mark and Harrison Hudson in a similar WRX. The Tracy's eventually come out on top by the end of the rally, with ever-improving times and consistency.

### C7 Wombat 2



*Dave Hills/Paul Bennett – Ford EscortRS1800*

A three-way tie for the stage win with Joass, Pluck and Kuhner all recording the same time on the fast, but slippery 9km stage. The Pluck/Yates Subaru seemed well suited to the damp Vulcan forest, and they had climbed into 5<sup>th</sup> position outright with a spirited drive. Kuhner/Taylor posted the first 2wd stage win for 2017. The competitiveness of the AMSAG Series was highlighted with the fact that the top 9 stage times were separated by only 5 secs. Michael Barry cracked the top 10 on the stage, recovering somewhat from his C1 off-road dramas.

Chris Jaques and Hugh Taylor had entered a newly purchased Lancer Evo9 and were starting to come to grips with the new car, posting a time only 4 secs off outright on stage. Jaques has rallied Evo's for many years, but this is the first car he has driven with active differentials. In a measured drive, they finished 8<sup>th</sup> outright posting top 5 stage times towards the end of the rally

### C8 Arkstone Reverse

Another 2wd stage win, but this time it was the Honda of Casmiri/Bailey relegating Plenderleith to another 2<sup>nd</sup> on stage. In-car footage posted here (<https://youtu.be/8TPTRaS47jw>) shows the commitment and teamwork required to win a stage in a blind rally. For 2<sup>nd</sup> outright Plenderleith/McMinn an opportunity was beginning to open as the Joass Evo began to slow will brake issues.

Wade and Michael Ryan were leading the Datsun charge in the 180B, running 5<sup>th</sup> in the Classics behind a plethora of Escorts.

The Wagga Wagga team are the driving force behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of the Series and were flying the flag in the absence of Mick Valentine, Matt Byron and Leigh Manning.



*Adam Casmiri/Paul Bailey – Honda Civic*

### C9 Tower

The final stage of the event was ran in extreme mud, and it had Adrian and Kristy Turnbull smiling from ear to ear. “That was so much fun!” commented Adrian booking into the final control as 1<sup>st</sup> on road “It’s so slippery, I just hope everyone gets in safe” he went on to comment. Tim Joass was next to arrive, “That got a bit outta control with no brakes but I wasn’t giving it up” he recounted obviously relieved that the event was over. Ian Plenderleith fittingly won the stage to highlight a stellar drive to 2<sup>nd</sup> outright with Mel McMinn on the book. “They can’t cancel that stage on me - can they?” he laughed, obviously proud of his achievements.

Player/Dean were locked in battle for 6<sup>th</sup> O/R with the fast finishing Casmiri/Bailey looking for 3 seconds to jump them. The Subaru of Player posted the 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest time, but you guessed it... Casmiri went to 2<sup>nd</sup> on stage 4 secs faster. The turn of speed of both crews jumped the Pluck/Yates entry with Player holding position and Casmiri grabbing 5<sup>th</sup>.

The treacherous conditions didn’t dampen the enthusiasm of the 3 lady drivers in the field. Amanda Williams/Rae Waterhouse held on to win the lady class. Michelle and Emma Travis piloted the big Triumph to a Class D victory and Gaye Joyner/Dean Batt once again finished 100% of the course and made the final control in ‘Bluey’ the Datsun 1600. The Joyners are amongst AMSAG’s most popular and loyal competitors with husband John “JJ” Joyner regularly competing in an Evo6 with Chris ‘Pickles’ Warwick.



*Adrian and Kristy Turnbull – Subaru Impreza WRX*

Another family team, Lyndsey and Matt Byron had the Hyundai Excel locked in a FWD battle with the Schmitz's from Canberra in their Toyota Levin. Roland and Sally-Anne Schmitz took 2<sup>nd</sup> Fwd with the Byron's 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Rally rookies Caines/Morrison brought the big Commodore Ute home 6<sup>th</sup> in the Classics and 24<sup>th</sup> Outright whilst on a steep learning curve. "We will be back!", they promised at the presentation. They headed similar rookie entries of Hills/McLaughlan (Subaru) and Williams/Retton-Howe (Peugeot)

Rally stalwarts Dennis Stevens and Frank Brookhouse achieved 4<sup>th</sup> in the Open Rear Wheel Drive class behind much more powerful cars. They were locked in a rally long tussle with Thompson/Hind (Celica) and McIlroy/Houston (BMW). Charlie Gardner and Barry Green piloted the Rx7 to Class E victory from the similar car of Laurie Williams.

#### Final Results

Joass/Joass	Mitsubishi Evo 2	O4WD	72.22	1
Plenderleith/McMinn	Mitsubishi Evo 3	O4WD	73.21	2
Turnbull/Turnbull	Subaru WRX	O4WD	74.52	3
Moore/Moore	Mitsubishi Evo 6	O4WD	75.04	4
Casmiri/Bailey	Honda Civic	OFWD	75.33	5
Player/Dean	Subaru WRX	O4WD	75.34	6
Pluck /Yates	Subaru WRX	O4WD	75.46	7
Jaques/Taylor	Mitsubishi Evo 9	O4WD	76.25	8
Neal/Whyburn	Subaru WRX	O4WD	76.45	9
Hills/Bennett	Ford Escort RS	ClassC	77.26	10

#### Open

Joass/Joass	Mitsubishi Evo 2	O4WD	72.22	1
Plenderleith/McMinn	Mitsubishi Evo 3	O4WD	73.21	2
Turnbull/Turnbull	Subaru WRX	O4WD	74.52	3

#### Classic

Hills/Bennett	Ford Escort RS	ClassC	77.26	10
O'Hagan /Moynihan	Ford MK2 Escort	ClassC	79.14	13
O'Keeffe/Shaw	Ford Escort	ClassC	80.36	16