

Trials and tribulations for GwynneSpeed Rallying on Round 1!

Round 1 of the 2008 Richard Egger Insurance MSA National Asphalt Rally Championship brought a mixture of emotions for Gloucestershire rally team Andy Gwynne and Holly Robinson.

The Tour of Epynt, based in Llandovery, uses some notoriously difficult roads across the military ranges surrounding Sennybridge. Stage 1 started well for the team with the recent suspension and steering modifications which Gwynne had made working well. However several miles into the stage, the car hit a pothole hard and caused the nearside front tyre to puncture and disintegrate. The crew were therefore forced to stop and change the wheel in order to prevent the flailing tyre from doing any damage to the suspension. Robinson estimates that they lost approximately 3.5 minutes on stage 1 putting them to the back of the class.

Stage 2 again started well but too much rear brake bias resulted in the car spinning spectacularly at a chicaned junction and the crew lost yet more time. However stage 3 was a complete contrast. The car ran without fault and the pacenotes which Gwynne and Robinson had spent making and preparing on Saturday worked perfectly. Stage 3 was 18 miles in length and they set 2nd fastest time in their class. Things were finally starting to look positive. The team continued their faultless runs into stage 6, having set fastest class stage times on stages 4 and 6 and 2nd fastest on stage 5. However, stage 7 brought an abrupt end to the event.

The stage started as planned with all aspects of the car working perfectly. The first part of the stage was uphill with very little need to use the brakes hard and this caused the front brake pads to cool down considerably. After the uphill section of the stage, there was a flat out 6th gear straight into a flat out crest and then a flat out approach into a very tight chicane which was made with 1 tonne, round bales of silage. As soon as Gwynne hit the brakes hard in anticipation for the chicane, the cool front brakes didn't bite hard enough and caused the rear brakes to tie on and put the car into a massive spin at a speed close to 115mph. Gwynne had no option other than to let the car spin into the chicane. This caused a big impact onto the front and rear of the car as it bounced into the 1 tonne barricades. Driver Andy Gwynne comments on the accident:

"Firstly and most importantly, both Holly and I walked away from the crash without injury. The car however did not! We damaged the offside front suspension and will need to replace the bonnet, front bumper, offside wing and tailgate. Everything is repairable. I've never spun on a straight before but I know what changes to the braking system I need to make in order to prevent this type of accident from happening again! Fortunately, our non-finish on this round will not affect our championship standings as our main class competitor did not finish either."

The next round of the 2008 Richard Egger Insurance MSA National Asphalt Rally Championship is in the Isle of Man on 9th and 10th May and the team are currently seeking sponsors for this rally. For more information, please visit www.asphaltrallying.com and www.manxrrally.org

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