

HOPPER STAKES EARLY CLAIM ON NEW TARGA HAWKE'S BAY EVENT

Orewa pair Leigh Hopper and co-driver Michael Goudie have staked an early claim on victory in the new Targa Hawke's Bay tarmac motor rally event after finishing a wind and rain-swept first day with a lead of just under a minute over fellow Mitsubishi Evo 10-mounted pair Chris West and Andrew Simms.



Recent Targa Rotorua two-day event winners Jason Gill and co-driver Mark Robinson made the initial running in their earlier model Mitsubishi Evo 9 only to crash early in the second run through the Crownthorpe stage west of Napier just before the midday service and lunch break in Havelock North.

Aucklanders Gill's Evo 9 was easily fixed and he and Robinson were able to re-join the event in the afternoon. Suitably fired up they won the three remaining stages too. However as the field returned to Havelock North for the overnight parc ferme they were still over three minutes down on Hopper and Goudie and the other pairings they had been swapping stage times with before their accident, West and Simms, and circuit-owning entrepreneur Tony Quinn and his new co-driver, Kieran Anstis, in Quinn's Porsche 911 GT3 RS.

Quinn and Anstis were the only other pairing to win a stage in today's wet, cold and very slippery road conditions and were first 2WD pair home behind the 4WD cars of Hopper and Goudie, and former NZ (gravel) rally champion Chris West and his co-driving boss, Andrew Simms.

As a wintry blast worked its way up the country the temperatures plummeted to single figures in the 'Bay, the treacherous road conditions also catching out - amongst others - the Subaru WRXs of Nic de Waal and co-driver Shane Reynolds, and Troy Twomey and Bevan Parker, in the first stage, and the Holden Commodore of Robert Gunn and Andrew Spier, and HQ Holden-based Cheetah sports coupe of Tony and Jo Butler, in the second.

Doing well by staying on the road, meanwhile, were Targa regulars David Rogers and Aidan Kelly from Auckland who ended up fifth overall in Rogers' Mitsubishi Evo 10 4WD and rally veteran Brian Green and co-driver Fleur Pedersen who finished the day seventh in Palmerston North driver Green's locally-built Mitsubishi Mirage Evo 4WD.

Also impressing in the challenging conditions in their 2WD Toyota Starlet were brothers Tom and Ben Grooten from Orewa who finished eighth, just eight seconds behind the Green/Pedersen Mirage.

Another giant-killing performance by the driver of a small, light 2WD car came from local driver Nathan Tough with Greg Browne from Feilding reading the notes. They spread-eagled the ten-strong field to easily win the one-day Rally of Hawke's Bay event-within-an-event, their total time over the seven stages good enough for 11th overall.

Finally, after leading the Metalman Classic 2WD class for most of the day Nelson pair Bruce Farley and Glen Warner speared off the road late in the final stage, gifting the end-of-day lead in their class to fellow BMW 3-series pair Nigel Patterson and Warren Glassford from Auckland.

The new, two-day, Targa Hawke's Bay event continues tomorrow (Sunday) with eight more stages which will take competitors and those in in the associated Targa Tour as far west as Mangatainoka before a return to the finish at Havelock North.

Targa New Zealand events are organised by the Ultimate Rally Group with the support of sponsors AndrewSimms.co.nz, Chicane Racewear, Ecolight, Global Security, Kids In Cars, Metalman.co.nz, NZ Classic Car magazine, Race Brakes, Racetech, TeamTalk, TrackIt and VTNZ.

For more information go to www.targa.co.nz.

RESULTS

2017 Targa Hawke's Bay Sat-Sun May 20-21

Overall top 10 after day 1 of 2

1. Leigh Hopper/Michael Goudie (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 10 RS) 1:25:31.7
2. Chris West/Andrew Simms (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 10) 1:26:20.8
3. Tony Quinn/Kieran Anstis (Porsche 911 GT3 RS) 1:26:25.0
4. Martin Dippie/Jona Grant (Porsche 911 GT3 RS) 1:27:35.2
5. David Rogers/Aidan Kelly (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X RS 10) 1:28:35.0
6. Jason Gill/Mark Robinson (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9) 1:29:06.3
7. Brian Green/Fleur Pedersen (Mitsubishi Mirage) 1:30:12.3
8. Tom & Ben Grooten (Toyota Starlet KP61) 1:30:20.5
9. Robert Darrington/David Abetz (BMW M3) 1:30:39.5
10. Terry & Frank May (BMW 330ci) 1:30:57.8

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CAPTIONS

Stage winners on the first day of the new two-day Targa Hawke's Bay tarmac motor rally were Leigh Hopper/Michael Goudie (#969 Mitsubishi Evo 10), Jason Gill/Mark Robinson (#972 Mitsubishi Evo 9) and Tony Quinn/Kieran Anstis (#966 Porsche 911 GT3 RS). The winner of the concurrent one-day Rally of Hawke's Bay was Nathan Tough and co-driver Greg Browne in Tough's #21 Honda CRX. Also enjoying the (closed) roads were entrants in the Targa Tour, and event guest Cam Vernon in his V8-powered Nissan S15 drift car. Photo credit: Fast Company/ProShotz.

Prepared by FAST COMPANY on behalf of the Ultimate Rally Group. To find out more about the various Targa events go to the Targa NZ website at www.targa.co.nz. To talk to Targa Event Director Peter Martin tel 0-9-298 8322 or 0274 525 643. To get in touch with event media man Ross MacKay from Fast Company tel 021 677 919 or e-mail on ross@fastcompany.co.nz