

NEW HAWKE'S BAY EVENT IS NEXT ON TARGA SCHEDULE

An all-new two-day event, Targa Hawke's Bay over the May 20-21 weekend, is next on New Zealand's 2017 tarmac motor rally schedule.

Hawke's Bay has proved a popular staging post or end point for Targa New Zealand events for several years. So when Event Director Peter Martin (of Targa events' owner and organiser the Ultimate Rally Group) was casting around for a second two-day event to slot in between Targa Rotorua in March and Targa New Zealand in October his first preference was the 'Bay

"For a start there are the roads," Martin said this week. "The roads in the 'Bay are fantastic. You couldn't ask for better for an event like ours. There's also a strong and very active motorsport fraternity and some very supportive councils with which we have an excellent working relationship with."



The two-day (Sat/Sun) event starts and finishes in Havelock North (at the Village Green) and incorporates 15 closed special stages covering 378.5 km and a total of 585.2km of touring stages across Hawke's Bay.

A single-day event-within-an-event on the Saturday, the Rally of Hawke's Bay, has also been organised in conjunction with the Hawke's Bay Car Club and will run as part of the larger event.

Saturday's seven stages are centred on Havelock North with a morning service at the Pettigrew-Green Arena in Napier and an afternoon one at Otane before a return to the Village Green for an overnight parc ferme.

Sunday's eight stages start with a short publicity stage on the Tuki Tuki Road east of Havelock North before heading south-west with morning services at both Waipukerau and Dannevirke and afternoon ones at Mangatainoka and Dannevirke before a ceremonial finish at Treachers Lane back in Havelock North.

The event has attracted over 90 entries spread over the main competition field (50), concurrent but non-competitive Targa Tour (30) and HB Car Club Rally of Hawke's Bay (10).

Sharing joint favourite status after impressing at the Targa Rotorua event in May are Leigh Hopper and co-driver Michael Goudie from Orewa, north of Auckland, and Jason Gill and Mark Robinson from Auckland.

Hopper and Goudie led the field on the first day of the Rotorua event in Hopper's newly-built Subaru WRX Impreza only to crash out of the event on the first stage on Sunday morning.

Gill and Robinson (Mitsubishi Evo 9) were never far behind on the first day (the gap overnight was just 36 seconds) and took over a lead they would never lose when Hopper went off the road.

With work rebuilding the Subaru still going on Hopper and Goudie will contest the Hawke's Bay event in a leased Mitsubishi Evo 10.

The Rotorua event also saw the Targa debut of a second new Porsche GT3 RS in the hands of five-time Targa NZ winner Tony Quinn and co-driver Naomi Tillet.

Quinn and Tillet spent most of that event in a pitched battles for third then second place with former Targa NZ winners, Martin Dippie and co-driver Jona Grant from Dunedin, in Dippie's own new Porsche GT3 RS.

Circuit-owning entrepreneur Quinn won a stage on Sunday but Dippie and Grant were ultimately quicker over the two days, setting the scene for a return match in the Hawke's Bay this month.

Hopper and Goudie, and Gill and Robinson are also, obviously, joint favourites to also take class honours in the AndrewSimms.c.o.nz Allcomers 4WD class, while Aucklanders Joe Kouwenhoven and Carl Hannaford have the car - in Nissan's hi-tech GT-R35 - to make the new AndrewSimms.co.nz Production 4WD class their own.

Tony Quinn and Naomi Tillet, and Martin Dippie and Jona Grant, are expected to set the pace in the Global Security Production 2WD class, and the new Global Securities Allcomers 2WD class is set to be a battle between the BMW M3 of Perth-based expat Robert Darrington and co-driver Dave Abetz, the Holden Torana A9X V8 of New Plymouth husband and wife Ross and Carmel Graham, and the giant-killing Toyota Starlet of Auckland brothers Tom and Ben Grooten.

The Metalman Classic 2WD class remains a cornerstone of any Targa event and the Hawke's Bay one is no exception. Pairings to look out for here include Mark and father Chris Kirk-Burnnand from Wellington in a BMW M3, Bevan Claridge and Campbell Tannock from the Horowhenua in a Holden Commodore V8, and Nelson duos, Bruce Farley and Glen Warner in a BMW 325i, and Peter Jones and Mike Lea in a Ford Escort.

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.

CAPTIONS

Targa Rotorua winners Jason Gill and Mark Robinson (Mitsubishi Evo 9) share favourite status for this month's new Targa Hawke's Bay event. Expected to battle for overall and top 2WD class honours are five-time former Targa NZ winner Tony Quinn and co-driver Naomi Tillet in Quin's new Porsche GT3 RS. Mark and his father Chris Kirk-Burnnand (BMW M3) will again be favourites to claim top honours in the Metalman Classic 2WD class. 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