

Nicky Grist Stages
Robert Kennedy/ Steve Coombes
Car 247 - Nissan Micra RF1.0
76th O/All – 4th Class



I'd decided to make the notes more aggressive for this event in the hope of finding some much needed pace. Again we were using some of the RF1.0 drivers as a bench mark, but I secretly had an eye on a class position. On the Friday night there was an opportunity to fine tune the notes in a forum held with Nicky Grist. It was great to see how a professional looked at the notes and the things he picked out when driving the stages that day. These weren't obvious on the DVD and just about every crew had missed them. A must attend forum for this event.

SS1 – Monument 1 – Was flat over everything for the first 0.4 miles as the aggressive notes seemed to work. We set 4th (in Class) fastest time, but there was still more pace in the notes. Luckily everyone felt the same. We survived hitting a big hole on the inside of a 1L and were airborne over the jump.

SS2 – Crychan 1 – Whilst waiting to start it was great to see Graham Cookson wondering over to the car to say hello, but unfortunately there wasn't much time to chat. We were running this stage twice so as we went through I altered the notes for our second run. A big moment on a 100Ψ, Flat/Dip Jnct, 6L/Bmp unsettled us and cost us some pace. Taking a few miles to get back into it cost us all the time we gained on SS1, also not helped by an overshoot into a HpR. 7th Fastest.

SS3 – Halfway 1 – On the road section we spoke about really attacking the stages and winding the car up. This worked to a degree as we went 4th fastest. Some of the sections were being taken flat as Robert started to drive with confidence in the notes.

SS4 – Route 60 1 – Went well as we started to build a lead on the drivers we had set as a benchmark and compete for a class position. 3rd fastest stage time set and as we headed to service we had turned a 14 second deficit into a 6. With no problems to report service was a simple case of a quick check and a splash of fuel. Unfortunately the quick check revealed a small crack starting to develop on the FNS strut. Nothing major but it was leaking a little bit of fluid. There was nothing we could do so we set off for SS5.

SS5 – Crychan 2 – Was our best stage of the year so far. Robert really drove with confidence and the altered notes worked well. We went 21 seconds quicker (about 3 secs a mile) giving us 3rd fastest time and reducing the gap to 5 secs.

SS6 – Halfway 2 – Went really well despite a small overshoot on a SqR as we continued to turn up the pressure for the class positions. Unfortunately our rivals were doing the same as they extended the gap to 8 secs. This was disappointing, but our pace was becoming competitive with the front runners in our class.

SS7 – Route 60 2 – Saw us catch the car that had set off 1 minute in front of us costing us maybe a second or 2 and despite a half spin we drew level on time for 3rd in class as we headed into second service. Again we had no problems to report, but the quick check of the car saw that we had bent a rim somewhere on one of the last 3 stages. Our luck was in though as the tyre had stayed up.

SS8 – Monument 2 – Was a reversal of SS1 and we had it all to go for. We set off with good pace as we attacked the stage. We had a half spin on a HpR, hit a pothole down the straight and was airborne again over the jump. Despite our efforts we had been beaten by 6 seconds and had to settle for our third 4th in class finish.

Despite missing out on 3rd we had closed the gap on the people in front. Usually we are a few minutes off a class position, but this time we were only seconds. The gap to the class winner had also closed and some of our stage times were very competitive. The car needs some attention before our next outing with some front struts and a set of tyres a must.

Until next time, enjoy your sport.

Steve
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