

Plains Rally 2011
Ian Arden/ Steve Coombes
Nissan Micra RF1.0 - Car 222



I wasn't expecting another run in the forests until the Woodpecker in September, but a phone call from Ian saw us submit a late entry for the Plains Rally. I was competing on a Road Rally the week before so I was preparing for two events at once, and I had the extra pressure of preparing the notes. Not something I'm used to.

Noise, scrutineering, etc, were on Friday and once passed we sampled a few beers in a local establishment, just to pass the time of course. It was an early start on Saturday and after a long run out we were soon starting SS1. A clean run. No problems. SS2 was a 9 miler. Nothing spectacular. The problem with running first on the road in your class is you don't know what time the others are setting, so we decided to pick up the pace through SS3 & 4.

After SS4 it was service and with a quick glance at the results sheet we found ourselves 2nd in class 35 seconds down to the leader, Harry. Our runs through SS3 & 4 hadn't helped us as Harry had beaten us on every stage.

SS5 was 11 miles through Hafren. We decided to alter the notes to a more aggressive style in the hope of clawing back some time. By doing this of course I wasn't watching the road so we missed the slot right in Staylitttle and went on a 4 mile detour. Eventually we made it to the stage with some lateness taken. 5,4,3,2,1, GO. We were off and going for it. Cut every corner, flat over every crest. Awesome! I got worried on a 5R past junction when Ian took a big cut across the adjoining road, the car went very light and headed towards the huge drop on the left. I held my breath for sure. At the end of the stage we had taken 15 secs out of 1st. Even more required on SS6, which was a re-run of SS2.

On the first run, Harry, took almost 20 secs out of us. We went for it. 1L, 1R/C, 250/DIP, smC into HPR. Ian decided he was going to hit 100mph before he broke for the Hairpin. There was again another big drop if we got it wrong, not that I knew of Ian's intent. Harry bettered his SS2 time by 9 secs, but amazingly we came out of SS6 with a 2 sec lead. That showed how bad our first run through was.

SS7 was a tricky stage called 'Micks Woodyard' but with only a 2 sec lead we had to keep our pace. A flat out, on the limit run saw us emerge with a 10 sec lead and with a quick run back to Welshpool Ian had made it 4 wins out of 4 and me 2 out of 2. This one however, we did the hard way with one of the most amazing fight backs I've been involved in.

For me it was fantastic to go through some of the mid wales forests I have marshalled on many times. Big thanks again to all the marshals, radio crews and organisers for a great event. After a hectic few weeks I'm not sure what my next event is, but until then enjoy your sport.