

Roskirk Stages 2013
Peter Jackson/ Steve Coombes
Car 1 - Ford Escort Mk II – 2nd O/All



Apart from a discussion with the scrutineer about mechanical handbrakes, it was a relaxed build up until about 09:45 when it was time to warm the car up. Yes you guessed it. It wouldn't start. What now? Bonnet up, check everything and nothing found. Luckily I noticed a connector that had come apart and hey presto the car purred into life. Panic over.

SS1 was a 'sighter' stage for me as I got re accustomed to the extra speed that the Escort has over the Mighty Micra and of course Peter's driving style. We set fastest time on the stage despite a serious lack of grip. Every time Peter hit the power the rear tyres lit up and he spent most of the time trying to keep it in a straight line. Great for the species I'm sure, but not going to get you a particularly quick time. A tyre change for SS2 saw us go 3 seconds quicker even though the car still struggled for grip. However we were now tied for the lead as car 2 went even quicker.



The start of SS3 was rushed. I got approx 15 seconds warning of us starting the stage after waiting for the juniors to finish. By the time I'd finished checking the time card Peter was off. Some new tyres had helped with our handling problems, but not cured it and the car felt hesitant when under power. One disadvantage with 3 Sisters is that the stages aren't that long for you to understand the problem when in the car so SS4 was run with the same problems as SS3. Now 3 seconds off the lead.

We didn't have much time at service. Neil, Will and Luke checked various things, but everything was ok. No solution found this time so into SS5 we went. Despite the car not running well and a half spin approaching the hammer head we maintained the gap, but lost another second on SS6 to see the deficit at 4 seconds at halfway.

Neil and Will felt that the problem was with the fuel pump so they decided to change it. In doing this they noticed that the fuel filter was blocked. Further examination confirmed this so the filter was changed instead. Now for the test. The fuel pressure seemed better and the slight misfire that the car had was gone.

With new hope we went into SS7. The stages were running in the opposite direction in the afternoon and stage 7 seemed to be our first decent run of the day. We could now start to concentrate on closing the gap on the leader. SS8 was a quicker run right up to the end when the car in front split wrong and virtually stopped on the stage causing us to slow. Probably cost us a second as we set the same time as car 2 instead of closing the gap. 4 seconds down with 4 stages to go. Every second was needed.

SS9 was a great stage for us. Flat out and on the limit. Keeping an eye on my stop watch I thought we'd taken a second or 2 out of the lead only to find out we'd set the same time. What to try next? Changing suspension settings might help with the handling. Something we hadn't cured due to the fuel problem. SS10 was 2 seconds slower as Martin and Jaqueline increased their lead to 5 seconds. The suspension changed hadn't helped as a slight moment flat in 4th over the top made me take breath for a moment. It doesn't happen often, but we were definitely trying.

So, 5 seconds adrift and 2 stages left. Of course we were still going for it. SS11. Flat & sideways over the hill, on the limit around the hammer head, and through the finish backwards as Pete tried everything to close the gap. Now down to 4. For SS12 Peter switched on the traction control and wow. Our best stage by far. Especially as it was a controlled drift through the finish. We were quicker, but was it enough? No. We'd closed the gap to 2 seconds by the end, but Martin and Jaqueline had done just enough to pip us to a repeat victory.

Thanks to everyone for a great day. Neil, Will, Luke and the Myerscough College team did an excellent job in keeping us running and Peter did a great job in the "Easy Seat". Well done to Alex and Karen, who were 3rd in class & John and Alex Stone who finished 2nd in Class on Alex's first event.

Until next time

Steve

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