

Rally Isle of Man National 2014  
Dan Boardman/Steve Coombes  
Honda Civic Type R  
22<sup>nd</sup> O/All, 6<sup>th</sup> Class C



Build up to the rally was nice and peaceful, for me anyway. Whilst I was spending 10 days in Ibiza relaxing, Dan was busy getting the car ready and securing some sponsorship.

Wednesday - We were at Recce signing on for 08:00 and with 24 stages (160+ miles) to traverse, twice, it promised to be a very long and intense day. I did recognise some of the roads used from the Manx National event in May, but a lot of them were run in the opposite direction. It was non-stop all day with our final stage recce'd at 21:50. Then it was time to write up the notes. Sometime around 02:30 I decided to call it a night and went to bed.

Thursday - Luckily I got a lie in, until 9 o'clock anyway. The final checks on the car were completed whilst I finished off the notes and then it was off to Scrutineering and signing on. With both completed relatively easily there was a long wait until the pre rally line up on Douglas prom. This allowed us to show off the car and view the opposition. Being car 81 also gave us a chance to watch the top lads through the super special stage. It is amazing how many of them had problems hand braking at the hairpin. (No problems for Jacko though). Eventually our time came. Honda Civic Type R verses Ford Escort RS. 3, 2, 1, Go. With Dan's new HID spots lighting up most of Douglas we blasted around the tight and tricky sea front stage setting 8<sup>th</sup> fastest time and winning our duel. A great start!



Whilst it is great fun legally racing around the town streets the rally started proper in the hills on SS2. Unfortunately any chance of us challenging for class honours effectively ended on SS2. The long wait at the start unfortunately turned into a cancellation, as the rescue unit needed to treat a crew that had been injured in an accident. This meant we got given a notional time that was well over a minute slower than our class rivals. SS3 was our first chance to attack the stages and we had some great fun. Dan's new spotlights made a huge difference as we blasted up to Brandywell Cottage and down to Sartfell hairpin. At the finish we were told SS4 had also been cancelled so it was back to service. The first night hadn't been kind to us, but this is definitely a long rally and there was still a lot to go for on Saturday.

Friday Morning – With nothing to loose we were out to get some respectability to our position. The first stage went really well. Everything flowed, but we had a big slide on a 4R into 2L which Dan held onto superbly. The second stage was very bumpy and we began to wonder about the suitability of the cars suspension. It was bouncing all over the place. The third stage of the morning was one of our best. Fast, flowing and smooth. We took a minute out of the car in front of us as we caught them on stage. The last stage before service was also a great stage for us as we set 10<sup>th</sup> fastest time meaning we were just outside the top 20. The conversation on the road section was about the car on its side in the stage. As normal I missed it so it was a short conversation.

Friday afternoon – Again delays and stage cancellations disrupted our progress as the first stage after service was cancelled, So it was on to our first run of SS10 'Snuff the Wind' (great stage name). This was a really good stage as our progress up the leaderboard continued. We were now in the top 20. That progress however came to an abrupt halt on SS11 as disaster struck. One thing as a navigator that is very worrying is that sound of crunching metal, especially when your head is down reading notes. And that is exactly what happened at the hairpin Left on our first



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lap of the stage. Dan set the car up and went for the handbrake. Perfect it seemed, but as we accelerated out of the corner we hit the kerb on the exit. A bent wheel and bottom arm was the damage to the car which cost

us over 10 minutes in time and ended any hopes of a good finish.

We limped back to service hoping to continue under the Super Rally rules, but by the time we got back we only had about 20 minutes to get the car ready to re-scrutineer. Our service crew worked their magic, got the old, bent bottom arm off and managed to get a new one fitted with about 2 minutes remaining. We made it. Now we had to finish the repairs so we could compete on the night stages. It was frantic with hammers and sledge hammers bending bits of suspension in order to get the wheels pointing in the right direction. Again with minutes to spare we climbed into the car and went straight into the service out control to get our time.

Friday Night – Despite taking it easy on the first stage of the night we caught and passed the car that had started in front of us. Then it was off to the famous Castletown Stages. From the recce I didn't think I would like these stages, but how wrong was I? Flat out around the harbour! Handbrake around the monument! The suspension again struggled as it



bottomed out on the streets. Dan got out of the car at the end of the stage and unknowingly left his gloves on the roof of the car. They obviously fell off, but were kindly returned at service by the car that was following us. SS15 after service was a re-run of SS2 that had been cancelled the previous night. It was nearly Déjà vu on the exit of a downhill HpL as we ended up facing a bank. Luckily we didn't hit anything this time and carried on. Our second run through Ravensdale was just over 2 seconds a mile quicker as we headed back to service. Despite the problems in the afternoon, we'd made it to the end of the day and done credit to the teams' efforts in keeping us going.

Saturday – The 6 stages on Saturday were all about us trying to get as high up the leaderboard as we could. Our second run through Marine drive was again flatout. A full sideways drift on a 2R got the adrenaline going, especially as we were heading towards the sea wall, but we survived and closed the gap on the cars in front. We moved up a place or two on the next 2 stages and then it was onto the stage that had caught us out on the Friday. Whilst the hairpin left wasn't a problem on our second run, the ditch next to the chicane at the merge was. It was really fast up to the "5L slowing into Chicane, enter Left" As Dan hit the brakes the wheels locked and, well, we slid straight past the chicane and into the ditch on the left. The marshals spent around 2 minutes pushing us out. This might not have been a lucky stage for us, but we were lucky with the marshals and were able to laugh about it back in service with the service crew. The last stage of the event was the one that I'd been looking forward to. It was 13+ miles, with the last mile or so being along the famous TT course and finishing at the grandstand. I won't describe it as you can see the in car footage on YouTube.

Thanks to John, Chris and Oli in the service area for their expert work in keeping us running. This time we made them work. Massive thanks to the marshals on SS21 merge for getting us out of the ditch. I didn't think the car was going to come out. Thanks also to our partners, Hydroklear Services and C B Horne for supporting us in what was a real team effort. We definitely have some work to do developing the car if we are to close the gap on the crews that won our class.



**Steve**

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