



SIMON EVANS PIPPED IN QUIT FOREST RALLY AFTER MECHANICAL PROBLEMS

Reigning Australian Rally Champion Simon Evans was narrowly beaten to victory in Heat 2 of the QUIT Forest Rally in Western Australia after a dramatic final day.

Evans and his co-driver wife Sue finished second in Heat 1 after selecting to run the harder compound Kumho control tyres all day on Saturday.

Scott Pedder was victorious by 20.1s in Heat 1, however with both drivers on the medium tyre compound in Heat 2 the times were much closer.

The Evans combination again eked out a lead on Saturday night's tarmac Busselton Toyota Super Special Stages, with a 0.7s lead over Ryan Smart, and a 2.1s lead over Pedder as crews returned to Nannup for Sunday's forest stages.

With more grip from the medium compound tyres, Simon Evans won the first two stages of the day on the loose Western Australian gravel – establishing a 4.5s lead over Pedder after SS14 (the fourth stage of Heat 2).

Pedder cut that lead to 1.9s after SS15, before poking his nose in front by just 0.4s after SS16. While it did not appear to be the case on the timesheets, SS 16 proved to be a turning point for the Evans duo, as they lost fifth gear in their Subaru Impreza WRX near the end of the stage.

The next stage was disastrous for the reigning champion as Pedder built a lead of 15.7s in SS17 while Evans struggled with his broken gearbox.

Without a spare gearbox, the Evans Racing crew removed the damaged pieces of the gearbox and sent their driver out from the service park with no great confidence that the Subaru would make the end of the rally.

Pedder's comfortable lead was whittled away immediately after the event's final service break, as he suffered a puncture on SS18, handing the lead back to Evans by just 2.7s.

However, such a slender gap was always going to be difficult for Evans to protect with no fifth gear and fourth gear on the way out also.

Pedder snatched the lead back on SS19 by 2.3s, before Evans somehow won the final stage to narrow the final gap by 0.2s.

"I think it has been a good rally for us," said Evans.

"We made a mistake yesterday with our tyre selection, and today we were going strongly until we lost fifth gear.

“Most importantly, we are learning a lot about these control tyres, and about the Subaru.

“The best news for me is that we were quick this morning with the right tyres on and a healthy gearbox.

“It was very exciting at the end there – not just with Scott, but also because with every gearchange we were expecting the car to break.”

After his second consecutive second place finish, Evans currently sits second in the Australian Rally Championship.

Round 3 of the Australian Rally Championship is the Coffs Coast Rally on 15-16 May.

MORE INFORMATION:

Mark McCartney

P: 0457 009 066