

Solid fourth for Dowel in Heat 1 of Forest Rally

Justin Dowel and Matt Lee have taken the Activ RallySport Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX to a solid fourth place in Heat 1 of the QUIT Forest Rally in Western Australia.

Currently fourth in the 2009 Australian Rally Championship, Dowel and Lee started the third round of the championship in a confident mood after a successful pre-event test session, and quickly slipped into the groove.

The event, based at Busselton, three hours south of Perth, started last night with two tarmac stages on the foreshore of the coastal city. After finishing the first 2.2 kilometre stage in seventh place, the duo upped their speed on the second passing, finishing second and moving up to sixth place overall.

Once the event moved into the forests south east of Busselton on Saturday morning, Dowel increased his speed on the treacherously slippery Western Australian gravel roads.

By the end of the day's third stage they had moved into fourth place, a position they maintained until the end of the first Heat's 10 stages.

"The Activ RallySport Lancer Evo IX ran perfectly all day," driver Justin Dowel said after a tough Heat 1.

"Our pre-event testing really paid dividends on this event, and the car ran superbly. The crew spent many long hours on the car leading into the event, and it's great to repay them with a good result in Heat 1.

"We still have one day to go, however, so we need to make sure we consolidate today's fourth place, and ensure we finish well again tomorrow."

Co-driver Matt Lee said that Dowel's driving and a new set of pacenotes really worked well.

"We spent a lot of time before the event making a completely new set of pacenotes, and fine tuning those before the event started," Lee said. "They worked effectively, and Justin was able to drive confidently on them. And I think that shows in the result today."

Heat 2 of the QUIT Forest Rally begins tonight with a further two runs around the short tarmac stage in Busselton. Tomorrow morning the action resumes in the forests, with a further eight stages totalling 112 competitive kilometres.

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Australian Championship leader, Simon Evans, held an eight second lead after four stages of the event, but retired his rented Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX on the fifth stage.

His team-mate of last year, Neal Bates, had led the event after the two tarmac stages last night, but a broken steering rack on his Toyota Corolla ended his chances of victory today. Also suffering mechanical problems was local hero Dean Herridge, whose Subaru Impreza WRX retired on stage six.

The Heat was won by young Victorian brothers, Glenn and Matt Raymond, driving a Toyota Corolla. It was their first victory at national level, after a tough battle with Eli Evans (Subaru) and Darren Windus (S2000 Corolla) who finished second and third respectively.

QUIT Forest Rally

Australian Rally Championship – Round 3

Heat 1 Results

1. Glen Raymond / Matt Raymond, Toyota Corolla Sportivo, 1h05m35.4s
2. Eli Evans / Chris Murphy, Subaru Impreza WRX, +24.4s
3. Darren Windus / John Allen, Toyota Corolla S2000, +1m7.5s
4. Justin Dowel / Matt Lee, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, +1m16.0s
5. Ryan Smart / Rebecca Smart, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, +3m24.7s
6. Brett Kipling / Darren Masters, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, +3m38.3s

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