



Asia Pacific Rally Championship

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Large international field heads to Rally of Rotorua
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Rally of Rotorua the third round of the 2006 Asia Pacific Rally Championship has its biggest list of international entries for many years. Drivers from Australia, China, New Caledonia, Japan and Indonesia will compete against the best local drivers in the two-day event, round 3 of the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship.



Cody Crocker

Leading the international field is three times Australian Rally Champion Cody Crocker driving a Les Walkden Motorsport prepared Subaru Impreza. The Australian rally ace has been a regular visitor to New Zealand in the past, competing in the World Championship Rally of New Zealand and winning the Group N production class last year. But it's Crocker's first appearance on the Rotorua roads, "It's going to be a fantastic event, I've been there before to help out Possum (Bourne) but haven't driven the stages, so it's all new". Crocker's co-driver will be fellow Australian Ben Atkinson, brother of World Rally competitor Chris Atkinson. Crocker and Atkinson began their partnership with a win in Round 1 of the APRC - Rally of Canberra and are currently equal 2nd in the driver points.

Joining Crocker in the LWR Subaru team, is rising Australian rally star, Eli Evans. A past winner of the Australian Subaru RS Rally Challenge, Evans is contesting the Asia Pacific Rally Championship as teammate to Crocker and will be looking to gain further experience of international rallying on his first event outside Australia. "It's a huge learning curve this year, I've only ever been outside Australia once and that was a holiday to Fiji, so this championship is a totally new experience" said Evans.



Further strengthening the Subaru presence will be Japanese driver Hiroshi Yanigisawa, in a Cusco Racing Impreza, who is also contesting the APRC series in 2006. A spectator favourite with his hard charging style, Yanigisawa competed at Rotorua in 2004 and 2005, finishing in the top ten both times.

Hiroshi Yanigisawa

With 2005 championship winning MRF Mitsubishi team opting to drop this round, APRC Mitsubishi honours are left to the Indonesia Rally Team and the Chinese based Wan Yu Rally team. Indonesian APRC competitors Rifat Sungkar and Subhan Aska will contest the event in a two-car team of Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution 8's. Of the two drivers Sungkar has the most international experience and after two good results in the first two rounds is 2nd equal on points with Cody Crocker. Also driving Mitsubishi Evo 8's will be Chinese competitor Fan Fan, joined in the team by kiwi Brian Green. Dermott Malley and wife Linzi will be expecting a good result on home ground after finishing 3rd in APRC in New Caledonia.

The surprise package in the APRC entrants is Mark Tapper entered in Ford! The young kiwi will debut a brand new Ford Feista in the N3 class and while the midget Ford may not have the power of Tapper's usual Mitsubishi 4WD early testing has been encouraging, "We did about 30km of testing and while it doesn't have a huge amount of power, the handling and grip is fantastic. The car is an M-Sport kit, fitted with Rieger suspension and the gearbox one of the best I've ever used - I just wish all the stages were downhill!" commented Tapper.

While not entered in the APRC other international drivers include New Caledonian rallying legend Jean Louis Leyraud who first competed in New Zealand in 1972!! A multiple national champion in his homeland Leyraud will contest the event in a Subaru Impreza with Kiwi Rob Scott as co-driver. Also from New Caledonian are Daniel Palau and Patrick Christian both in Mitsubishi and fresh from good results in their home event.

The international entrants will face strong competition from the best local drivers competing in round 2 of the New Zealand National Rally Championship with the leading entrants being current National Champion Richard Mason of Masterton and Subaru NZ Rally Team driver Chris West.



Rifat Sungkar

The Rotorua event will have no shortage of international television and media coverage. In addition to the APRC's own official global TV coverage, a production team from Guangdong-TV one of China's biggest TV networks will ensure that a potential 200 million viewers in southern China will see the event. Metro TV Indonesia will have a crew shooting for their sports channel, plus other programming will air in Indonesia on TV 7 and Kabelvision - adding a further 45 million potential viewers.

The Hella International Rally of Rotorua, round three of the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship, starts from City Focus in the heart of Rotorua with a ceremonial start on the evening of Friday 26th May, and comprises two legs of competition in the Rotorua and Eastern Bay of Plenty Region followed by the ceremonial finish back at the new location of the Village Green on the afternoon of Sunday 28th May.

ESPN STAR Sports to screen WRC and APRC in Asia
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ISC Ltd, the global media and commercial rights holders for the FIA World Rally Championship has announced a new television agreement with ESPN STAR Sports, which will see them televise the sport in Asia. "With a four-season commitment to WRC, up to and including 2008/09, fans of the sport [in Asia] will be able to enjoy more action, news, thrills and spills than ever before," read a statement from ISC Ltd. "ESPN STAR Sports will deliver extensive WRC coverage featuring the most spectacular footage and arguably the world's greatest drivers. Broadcasting daily news and highlights from each of the 16 rounds of the WRC, ESPN STAR Sports will also deliver the best action from the two support series', the Junior and Production car World Rally Championships, as well as mid and end of season reviews.

"From 2007, viewers of ESPN STAR Sports will also be able to watch the Rally Magazine show, featuring highlights of the best footage from the world of rally including national and regional championships, such as the

FIA ASIA PACIFIC RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP. In addition to the daily programmes, WRC fans will also be able to watch a 52-minute highlights show for each rally."

"Our successful acquisition of the FIA World Rally Championship sees us continue our winning streak of securing top flight motorsports programming to satisfy the growing passion for the sport across Asia," said ESPN Star Sports managing director, Jamie Davis. "Together with Formula One, A1 as well as MotoGP, there is no sports broadcaster in the region that delivers as much motorsport coverage as we do."

All WRC programming will be aired on the network's STAR Sports channel which is broadcast to over 63 million homes across Asia.

"Asia is the fastest growing region in the world for WRC as well as a crucial market for car manufacturers and advertisers," added ISC managing director, Simon Long. "We are very excited to be entering into this pivotal agreement with ESPN STAR Sports which will allow more fans than ever to watch the adrenaline-fuelled action of WRC."

The agreement was jointly put together by ISC and International Sports Media which represented WRC TV rights in the region until the end of 2005.

Further Information:

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