



RAC Rally Of The Tests 2018 - Day Three

Crews were afforded a 15 minute lie-in this morning as it was a 08:00 start time for the 175-mile final day of the event, comprising ten Tests and five Regularities. Getting things underway, there was an easy run along the motorway to Chepstow Racecourse for the two opening tests, familiar to regular 'Testers'. Best times here were shared by the crews of Koerner/Maeker and Bloxidge/Canavan.

We then crossed the old Severn Bridge for a quick 'round the cones' autotest at the Aust Services (run by Bristol Pegasus Motor Club), well known to Le Jog stalwarts. The tight nature of this test suited Willan/Taylor who were fastest. Another short motorway hop followed to bypass Bristol and cross the River Avon, before cutting across country to West Harptree for an early morning coffee halt at The Wellsway. This pub is owned by the Gibbons family who also kindly let us play in their yard on the next test, where Entwistle and Procter took the honours.

To add to the pressure on the navigators, the instructions for the first Regularity of the day were only issued at the Test Start and then it was straight into the section across the Mendip Hills. This was another 'Deeliarity' so no plotting was required. Navigation was largely straightforward apart from picking up a Timing Point in a small gravel layby near the end of the Regularity. Proving that they were most awake, Bill Cleyndert and Dan Harrison posted the lowest score of nine seconds.

The route descended from the hills for the second Regularity, which was a complete contrast to the first as it traversed the low-lying peatlands of the Somerset Levels. Defined by Jogularity instructions, this short 5-mile section included a concrete farm road and the incongruously twisty 'Lake Village' road. As predicted by the organisers, the penalties were generally low here.

We then turned east, bypassing Glastonbury, to head for Worthy Farm - home to the Glastonbury Festival where the Eavis family had once again kindly let us loose on their maze of tracks and roads. Arriving here, the time was approaching 11:00 and being Remembrance Sunday, all competitive motoring was stopped to allow crews to observe the two minute silence and reflect on the sacrifices made over the years that allow us to enjoy the freedom we all have today.

Once the action was underway, it was straight into a quick 'autotest' on a large gravel area, where the crew of Leurs/de Rijk topped the time sheets in their Opel Ascona. This was immediately followed by a frenetic Regularity around the festival site (run by Salisbury & Shaftesbury Car Club). Six pages of tulip diagrams defined the intricate route and there were seven Timing Points dotted around the site. Having 'escaped Worthy', the challenges were not yet over as accurate Tripmeter work was needed to find the final Timing Point located in a tricky farmyard. With all that going on, it was no surprise that the penalties were soon adding up and the best performance went to Dan Willan and Martyn Taylor on 52 seconds.

Next up was the ever slippery farm lane test at Wyke Farm, which suited Koerner/Maeker who powered their Porsche 911 to the best time. This was quickly followed by a short but sharp Regularity in the lanes over 'Seat



Hill'. The navigation by 'map features' needed careful plotting to take in two farm roads - the first was a slippery concrete lane at Henley Grove and the second, a more stately 'up and back' driveway at Colinsays. Again scores were generally high apart from the leading crews, headed by Neil Wilson and Matthew Vokes.

Keeping the pressure on, it was straight into the event's final Regularity (manned by Bath Motor Club members) for what was expected to be the 'Sting in the Tail'. This section had a bit of everything; more slippery farm lanes, a tricky section around Frome Showground and then some slightly devious navigation needed to find the final two Timing Points. The marked map provided used the 'Dutch Arrows' system and had a few 'modifications' to keep crews on their toes and to ensure they concentrated till the end. Rising to this challenge, the best performance went to Dermot Carnegie and Paul Bosdet who dropped just 19 seconds over the six Timing Points. Other crews further down the field were just relieved to have found all the controls...

After nearly three hours of concentrated action, crews were ready for lunch and this was held in the fine surroundings of the Orchardleigh Estate. Boasting a history dating back over 800 years, the current custodians - the Vincent family - have restored the estate's Orangery to its former glory and it was here that the by-now weary crews tucked in to the hearty fare on offer.

Lunchtime results showed Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton had extended their lead to 22 seconds and jumping up into second place were Dan Willan and Martyn Taylor. A tough morning of competition had seen large penalties for all.

The navigators could now relax as the afternoon section was an easy run north to Bristol by way of three tests at Castle Combe, using the main circuit itself and a number of the service roads, all overseen by Tavern Motor Club and the event's travelling marshal team. Each test had a slightly different style comprising a mixture of flowing slaloms combined with tighter and more intricate manoeuvres. Honours were shared by the crews of Koerner/Maeker, Cleyndert/Harrison and Lynch/Lynch.

From Castle Combe, the route joined the motorway to bypass the northern suburbs of Bristol to reach the final test of the event, fittingly held at the RAC Regional Control Centre at Bradley Stoke. With space at a premium, a short blast around the car park had been setup to entertain the spectators before the first photo opportunity of the afternoon as the cars passed under the Ceremonial Arch.

Having completed activities here, it was a short run up the M5 Motorway to Tortworth Court Hotel for the final Main Time Control. The Finish Arch was located in front of the hotel, where more photos were taken and crews received a well-deserved round of applause from their colleagues as they took the chequered flag.

While crews began the post event partying in the bar, the results crew were busy adding up the final scores and when posted they showed that the well-deserved winners of the RAC Rally of the Tests 2018 are Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton in their Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint. In runner-up spot we have Dan Willan and Martyn Taylor and the final podium place goes to Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter.



During the evening black tie awards ceremony, the organisers were thanked for a spectacular route, the trophies were gratefully received by all the winners and the night is sure to continue into the early hours as the competitors enjoy themselves after a challenging but enjoyable event.