



### **RAC Rally Of The Tests 2018 - Day Two**

At 07:46, Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton, as first car on the road, lead the field away from the Belfry Hotel for second day of the RAC Rally of the Tests 2018. Although shorter than Day One at around 250 miles, the action would be more intense with ten Tests, seven regularities and two Time Control Sections to be completed before arriving at the Celtic Manor Resort, near Newport.

The action started today at Curborough Sprint Course - one of the finest sprinting venues in the country. A long test here, run by Owen Motor Club, used both the circuit itself and the service roads and saw Thomas Koerner and Manuel Maeker quickest out of the blocks in their Porsche 911. Then the route circumnavigated the northern fringes of Birmingham to the day's first Regularity. This 8-mile Jogularity including some private estate roads at Chillington but provided no great problems with Neil Wilson and Matthew Vokes topping the time sheets with just 5 seconds of penalty.

After this warm up, we continued west to Bridgnorth and morning coffee at Ye Olde Punchbowl Inn, which was first licenced as a pub in 1740. This refreshments stop preceded two challenging tests, marshalled by Telford Automobile Club, on the notoriously slippery and narrow tarmac roads of Ditton Priors (a former armaments depot). Fastest times here were posted by Tomas de Vargas Machuca and Nick Bloxham on both tests.

A long run then followed, across the border into Wales, to the next Regularities held on classic roads from rallies of the past and present. First up was a 15-mile section along the Clun Valley, navigated by map references. A couple of tricky junctions cost crews time here and there, but once again Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter were the best over the five Timing Points. This was quickly followed by a second section around Felindre, which included some private farm roads and a hard to find 'slot' to the final Timing Point. The laurels on this section went to Andy Lane and Richard Crozier.

After these enjoyable Regularities, we turned south to Llandrindod Wells for a welcome break at the iconic Metropole Hotel, which has probably hosted more rallies than any other so it is well used to feeding weary rally crews with suitable nourishment. This year's 'Testers' tucked into the fine spread on offer with gusto after a challenging morning on the road.

The top three crews at lunch were Steve Entwistle/ Ali Procter, Paul Wignall/ Mark Appleton and Dan Willan/ Martyn Taylor with just under a minute separating them from each other.

Having 'fuelled up', the 'meat of the event' then got underway with an action packed afternoon starting with three tests in and around Builth Wells (run by Epynt Motor Club) where honours were shared by Koerner / Maeker in the Porsche 911 taking the first two tests and Van der Goot / Wellink in the Datsun 240Z taking the third test victory. This was the prelude to no less than five sections on the infamous Epynt Military Ranges. First up was the Gwibedog Time Control Section, which started on Mabion Way and took crews over six miles of prime forestry gravel with some tricky map reading close to the finish. 14 crews impressively only 'dropped a minute.'



This was quickly followed by two tests around the unique German Village (manned by members of Brecon Motor Club) where the quickest times went to Koerner and Maeker in the 911. Then it was up Fourways Hill to the start of the Burma Road for the first afternoon Regularity. Navigated by Tulips, the route took in most of the roads on the western edges of the Ranges before a gravel loop through the top of Halfway Forest. With six Timing Points in quick succession on these private tracks, the time penalties soon added up and Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter emerged with the best performance taking a five second penalty.

With scarcely time to take breath, it was straight into the next Regularity titled 'Route 60'. The navigation for this section was by the notorious 'Deeliarity' instructions, designed to be navigated 'as you see it'. Initially heading east towards Llandeilo' r-Fan, the section then joined Route 60 itself to head south via the tricky farm complex at Carnau and a surprising finale with the last Timing Point located on a little used track after some intricate navigation. It was no surprise that some crews racked up high scores here but it proved no hassles for Daniel Willan and Martyn Taylor who topped the leaderboard.

It was no doubt a relief for some to drop down off the Ranges so that they could enjoy a breather on the run to Brecon for the afternoon tea stop at the Cattle Market, where the next 'autotest' took place and again gave the fastest time to the number 31 crew of Koerner and Maeker.

Darkness had fallen by the time we left here and began a long run along the Wye Valley to bypass Abergavenny and get down to the more interesting lanes of Monmouthshire. The first 'evening' Regularity was a simple affair in the lanes around Llanover. One slight complication was the need to add an additional minute to the average speed calculations to account for traffic lights. This proved no problem for Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton, who accumulated just two seconds penalty.

Moving on, the final regularity was slightly trickier with some involved driving needed and a very overgrown 'yellow' road used to approach the second Timing Point. Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter fell foul of the navigational challenges claiming 45 seconds of penalties which has brought the overall tussle for the lead ever closer. However, the other leading crews took all this in their stride with Daniel Willan and Martyn Taylor heading the field.

These two sections got crews into the groove for the Caerwent Time Control Section, arranged with the help of Forrester's Car Club. Caerwent is a notorious venue among regular rallyists, some crews love it and others, well... Before starting the section itself, the final Test of the day took place along the East Gate access roads and saw fastest time going to Thomas de Vargas Machuca and Nick Bloxham in the Arrive and Drive 911. From the end of the test, it was straight into the Time Control Section. Navigating from an enlarged venue map, crews had to find eight Passage Controls and be on time at six Time Controls, as well as avoiding Caerwent's notorious kerbs along the way. No clean sheets were expected here and so it proved with Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter emerging with least time dropped on three minutes after a stunning performance.



And that was it... Another day's action was over and it was but a short drive to the luxurious Celtic Manor Resort. Supper was waiting and the bar was open, soon to be abuzz with tales of derring-do from the day. Official results have now been posted and show that Paul Wignall and Mark Appleton have taken the lead over Steve Entwistle and Ali Procter by four seconds.

Join us tomorrow for the final day of the RAC Rally of the Tests 2018. It is only a short distance from Newport to Bristol but the rally route will be somewhat longer and there will be plenty of opportunities for leaderboard to change before crews reach the Chequered Flag.