



On the second day of the 2009 Classic Adelaide Mick Ryan and Brendon Reeves blew the engine of one their rally school cars. It was a MY04 STI Group N rally car. Mick and Brendon brought the car down to my Dads workshop that night to diagnose the problem. Dad rang me and told me to get ready to come to work to help out with repairing the car for Mick and Brendon, so that the crew could continue with the final three days of their course car duties. I stayed at the workshop helping out that night till about 11:30pm, when Mick offered to drop me off home. It was a great opportunity to meet Mick and Brendon. Dad and Simon stayed up until 3am in the morning to get the car running with the new engine. The next morning Mum and Dad dropped the car off to Mick and Brendon at the start of the first stage for the day. On the Friday night Mick and Dad were talking about me flying to Melbourne with Steve Glenney for the next Rally School event, which was scheduled in mid December. Fortunately for me this initial idea came to reality a few weeks later.

My Dad and my brother dropped me off at the Adelaide airport on the Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> of December. Steve and I flew with Tiger Airways which left Adelaide at 6:10pm and arrived in Melbourne at 7:55pm. After Steve and I found our luggage in the tin shed terminal we walked to Hertz to pick up our Toyota Yaris. We got some dinner at a Subway on route to our accommodation in Eynesbury, which was about a one hour drive from the airport. We met Mick and his 13 year old son Tom at the accommodation at about 9:00pm, then unpacked our things and turned in for the night.

The next morning we woke up at about 6:00am and got to the track, which was not far from the accommodation, at about 7:00am after brekkie. We helped unload the cars from the truck; they were an MY95 WRX, an EVO 8, and an MY01 STI. Tim, one of the Rally School instructors brought his own rally car as a backup car. The Rally School instructors were Steve Glenney, Brendon Reeves, Rod Browning, Nathan Reeves, and Tim Smythe. Mick let me set up the POV cam in-car camera in the EVO; because that was the car I was going to drive the most.

On my first few laps in the EVO with Steve instructing me, I found the driving and the whole experience very exciting and different to anything that I had done before. I have really only driven at this pace in turbo cars on tarmac up until now, so the car moved and felt totally different. We started off with doing the short slower track. Steve was teaching me the basics of gravel driving right from the start, I found the car a bit loose and hard to drive around the corners initially. After about ten laps of driving in the EVO, I got in the STI with Brendon instructing on the other short course. The Subaru felt different again, but still great. This track was a bit faster and had totally different types of corners. After getting used to the gravel I tried the faster and larger track. Throughout the day I became more and more confident. On my last run, after all of the paying customers had left, Steve and I had plenty of time in the EVO. I started off my first few laps at medium pace and built up the speed as Steve was teaching me the skando and left foot braking techniques. I found these driving styles work great together and I progressively increased my pace every lap. I did have a few spins, but I was finding my limits on the entry and exit of the corners. I did many continuous laps at a faster pace using the new techniques that Steve had taught me and I felt in control and confident with the car.

I spent the next day helping around the track with Tom, our duties were setting up the cones on the small tracks and the large tracks, standing up the cones that people hit, and moving cars around as well. The Evo had a problem on the second day, it was losing boost because one of the intercooler pipes had blown off, so we temporarily replaced the Evo with Tim's Subaru. Later on in the day 3<sup>rd</sup> gear broke in Tim's car, so we replaced the car with another one of Mick's Subaru's. Nathan Reeves had been fixing the Evo, so when he got that done we took the Subaru off the track and put the Evo back into service.

After we put all the cars away in the pits, ready for another day of Rally Schooling, it was time for Steve and I to pack our bags and head back to the Melbourne airport. We were flying with Virgin Blue this time, so we were relaxed about the check-in time and had McDonalds for dinner.

***People I want to thank:***

Mick for opening this great opportunity for me, and allowing me to drive his cars.

Steve for the excellent coaching at Rally School and Mallala.

Brendon for awesome coaching at Rally School too.

And also my family for supporting me with all of my Motorsport to date.

***Things to work on for future gravel driving:***

Practise skandos and left foot braking over and over.

Think and plan ahead as much as possible (aiming to act more than re-act)

Be really quick with my hands to catch the car around and after corners.

Raise my eyes and look for the next corner and also hazards such as trees, ditches and loose gravel.

Come up to corner fast, brake late then flick car around corner and have the front wheels pointing at the exit (all planned as much as possible from the approach to each corner).



Thanks mate, some great shots in there.

Daniel mentioned he would be writing a report about what he learnt last weekend at Rallyschool, which I'm sure will be quite comprehensive as we achieved a great deal. His driving skills and confidence really improved to quite an advanced level, it's now just a matter of practicing these skills over and over again so they become second nature. There are a couple of points I'd like to make sure he focuses going forward:

- Identifying the tricky or dangerous sections of the track , road or corner.
  - ie. Off Camber corners, Crowning in the road, Fast sections followed by a tight corner that will come up quick, Hazards on corners eg Tree's, stumps, rocks etc
  - These are the sections we talked about just driving through, still at speed but getting the car straight and in a safe position on the road, then attacking other sections or corners that are more straight forward.
  
- Quick hands when catching or correcting slides, and quickly back to centre again.
  - Quick and precise hand movements on the steering wheel to steer into the slide, and then quickly back to centre so as to not over correct. To achieve this consistently it requires you to be thinking ahead and predicting what will happen next, rather than reacting to what has just happened.

Hope this makes sense, if any of it doesn't don't hesitate to give me a call.

Cheers,  
Steve