

The inaugural Rallyschool.com.au tarmac rally training day, held last week, was by all accounts a resounding success, with 26 participants attending the Broadford (Victoria) circuit for a day of intense instruction. Designed in conjunction with Octagon, the single day course was aimed primarily at those new or relatively inexperienced within the tarmac rally scene.

After an informal, interactive introduction by Rallyschool boss Mick Ryan, head instructors Steve Glenney (2008 1st outright Targa Tasmania, 2009 1st Classic Targa Wrest Point), Brendan Reeves and co-driver Rhianon Smyth (2010 Pacific Cup Rally Champions, 2010 1st 2WD Showroom Targa Tasmania) took over the laid-back vibe, whilst discussing the key points of difference between tarmac rallying and circuit racing, with attitude, safety and 'getting the car to the finish' being the main priorities.

The group was then split into drivers and co-drivers, the drivers taking practical instruction in their own vehicles on the challengingly narrow and undulating 2.16km Broadford circuit (chosen to simulate a tarmac stage) whilst the co-drivers gained further insights from Rhianon on all aspects of co-driving, focussing on preparing rally documentation, safety requirements, reconnaissance and pace noting.

This split format allowed the drivers a solid two hours of instructional track time, where they could call on the services of Steve and Brendan to hone their tarmac lines, which Steve said "should allow for a metre of road on either side of the car, to allow you room to re-adjust should something unexpected occur".

"It was an awesome experience," said Ryan, a rookie who is building an Escort for Targa High Country. "The old work ute (which he brought along) hasn't seen 5000rpm for a long time! The guys taught us to be alert, to look for where the surface is greasy or bumpy, and to drive with a safety margin...because anything could lie beyond that blind crest on a Targa stage."

Over a tasty lunch of scones and rolls the crews reconvened with the instructors to communicate their learning experiences. The importance of working as a team and preparing for consistent, sustainable pace was re-iterated, along with some driving tips that would contribute to finishing well- things like running one gear higher than you might on a circuit to ease tyre degradation and modulating braking over inconsistent surfaces.

Rhianon passed on some basic pace notes for Broadford, which the teams could take on-circuit to modify as they worked on developing their own rhythm.

For the afternoon session crews jumped in and out of the pits, speaking with Mick and the instructors, who answered an array of questions from setup ("Soften the suspension from a circuit spec, for traction and bump compliance") to numbering corners in the notes ("On a 1 to 10 system, a 3L should represent a 90 degree left turn...").

Andrea and Lyndal, who were "Co-Drivers A and B" in Scott's Evo 6, were amazed at the level of advice Rhianon provided. Lyndal, who was already looking to book further training with Rallyschool, confessed to "having the bug," but after seeing her climb weak-kneed out of the

Evo, we weren't sure which bug she was referring to!

Just as the crews were gaining confidence, Mick played his joker. The cars would now run the circuit in an anti-clockwise direction- a first, according to the Broadford officials.

All of a sudden the circuit became a Targa stage, full of unknowns. Though the instructors remained on-hand, the onus of developing notes now fell on to the crews.

Continuing to practice what they had learned on the day, confidence returned, and speeds rose in correlation to the smiling faces. Lapping continued well into the afternoon, the session ending after 4pm- a great deal of instructional and free lap track time for only \$375 (\$95 for co-drivers including food through the day).

As goodbyes were exchanged, Mick summarised the feedback he had received: "The groups that had some experience all said, 'We wish this training was available when we were rookies!' whilst the newcomers commented that the day has given them a far more solid grounding for the coming Targa events than they otherwise would have received."

Rallyschool's aim is to host more of these events in future, which is a great thing for the sport.

By Adam Davis