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Raymo's Caves Exploration Rewarded with Victory

Glen Raymond has raced to the lead of the MTA NSW Rally Championship after scoring his second successive outright victory in a NSW round, winning the Singleton Automotive Centre Caves Classic Rally on 13 April by 42 sec. over Richard Shimmon and Jim Gleeson in an Evo 7 Lancer.

The rally was run by Sydney's North Shore Sporting Car Club over eight stages of mixed forestry and open conditions in the Hampton, Jenolan, Essington and Vulcan forests around Oberon, totalling just on 130km of competitive running attracting 43 starters.



Raymond, co-driven by Kate Catford, followed up his win in the first round in the shared NSW/Victorian state round, the Mitta Mountain Rally in March, with a measured and well driven win in the Caves Classic through the forests around Oberon in their Mitsubishi Evo 9.

Raymond trailed the Mitsubishi Evo of Tom Clarke through the first two stages in the day until Clarke's car blew a coil pack on SS3, which saw him lose several minutes and then cut and run on stage four, which meant he would finish the rally in 28th. This was despite Clarke storming back in the second half of the rally to capture maximum second heat points winning two of the last four stages.

Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bavFP2LDcsg>

Raymond led home the 29 finishers and did not put a foot wrong, embracing the unfamiliar NSW stages as the Victorian continues his bid to win the 2019 MTA NSW title.

"I loved the stages at Oberon and came up here with a very open mind," said Glen Raymond.

"The roads were great and the camaraderie with the NSW crews was fantastic," he added.

Raymond now leads the MTA NSW Rally title with 95 points, 13 clear of Tristan Kent who finished third in the Caves Classic. Richard Shimmon is just one point behind Kent in the title fight heading to round three in Canberra next month.

Raymond won just two stages during the rally but they were both important longer stages, taking fastest on the challenging Boggy Creek stage second time through and backing that up with fastest on the first pass through the quick and open Essington stage, a forest that has not been used much in NSW rallying in the past 20 years.

Tristan Kent and Robert Males finished third 52 sec. behind Shimmon and Gleeson after almost rolling his Evo on stage 3. Kent recovered from that near miss to run consistently all day and take the final step on the podium. Meantime defending MTA NSW champions Glenn Brinkman and Harvey Smith finished fourth, 1min23sec behind Kent, after losing almost a minute on the opening test with the handbrake in their Evo 9 locking on, causing them some anxious moments before the problem was solved.

Following the log jam of Lancer Evos in the first four spots, Jindabyne's Andrew Penny and Rhys Llewellyn brought their Subaru home in fifth ahead of Tom Dermody and Eoin Moynihan, who took East Coast Classic series honours and were the first 2WD home in their RS1800 Escort after another flawless performance.

Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7C7T7nihK0>

Dermody finished 4 mins 4 sec ahead of next best ECCRS runner Michael O'Hagan in ninth at the wheel of his similar Escort while 2017 Australian Rally Champ Nathan Quinn brought his Mazda RX2 home third in the classics and 12th outright. Dermody now leads the ECCRS on 75 points ahead of Robert Gorst's Datsun.

Stephen Duthie took honours in the Techworkz Clubman series in his Datsun 180B ahead of Tony Jordan's Triumph Stag and the Evo 3 of Damien Frizell.

Clerk of course for the Singleton Automotive Caves Classic Jon Thomson, said competitors and the locals embraced the rally as well with the mayor of Oberon flagging the cars away on Saturday morning.

"The drivers tell us they loved the rally and it was great to put the event on for them and find some great roads for them to battle on and Oberon welcomed us with open arms, so it was great to base the rally in this lovely town in the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range," said Thomson.

"There are estimated to be more than 437 million pine trees in the Oberon region and the size and extent of the forests mean we have a huge number of great and challenging roads to choose from so we are looking forward to returning 2020 for another great Caves Classic," he added.

Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKoix4RUPKA>

The MTA NSW Rally Championship moves on to the National Capital Rally in Canberra on 11 May before North Shore Sporting Car Club again host a round at the traditional Rally of the Bay on 28 June. Round five will be a shared NSW Queensland round in the Border Ranges region with the Bonalbo rally on 20 July while the final round will be the Monaro Stages on 19 October.

For hi-resolution images please visit:

<http://www.rallynsw.com.au/raymos-caves-exploration-rewarded-with-victory/>

Photo courtesy of Roy Meuronen Photography - <https://photography.meuronen.com/caves19>

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