

DEFLATED COOKIE PUSHES FOR POINTS

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COOKIE HOLDS TOP 10

Kent's number one female rally driver, Louise Cook, contested in only her fourth ever gravel rally this weekend, The Bulldog International Rally of North Wales based in sunny Welshpool. The event was the second round of the Dulux Trade MSA British Rally Championship and Louise was looking to get her teeth into the 90 stage miles and a massive 16 mile stage on her first visit to Wales.

The first stage promise drifted away with the co driver becoming lost on the notes and the dreaded ECU problem that looked to have been fixed, reared its ugly head once again. "The ECU was fine when testing the car on the road pre rally and the new sensors seemed to have done the trick, but we always suffer from not being able to afford to test. If we had tested the car flat out for a decent period of time, we could have done something before the rally," said Louise.

"I must admit for the first couple of stages, the warning light was really distracting me and I was finding it hard to concentrate on the notes, you just start to worry of oil pressure and overheating problems and you know full well that your time will suffer, all sorts go through your head. I knew from Sunseeker that we were going to have the ECU

fault all day, so I just had to forget about it and concentrate on learning how to drive in the forest, which I managed to do on stage 3."

By stage 4, Louise had set a good time, beating three of the new Fiestas despite the ECU problem causing the lack of power. Cookie suffered some bad luck when a front to back tyre change in service led to tyre failure on stage 6.

"In service, I decided to use the front tyres on the back, but the back end of the Fiesta was just all over the place in stage 5, I thought my decision was a really bad one! I was really fighting the car. I put it down to the tyres being more worn than what I thought after being on the front, but on the next stage, the problem got worse and it became obvious that we had a slow puncture. I have never driven on a puncture before and I actually learnt a lot, I had to drive much slower into every corner and be careful not to drift too much Mk2 Escort style, no matter how fun. The discipline I learnt really helped me when we were back on four good tyres again. In the two stages, we had dropped a staggering 3 minutes and if there were any doubts that this was not going to be our rally, this secured them!"

With a full set of working tyres again, Cookie drove the last loop of the day, a repeat of stages

5, 6 and 7. With a massive time loss, and nothing to gain, Louise used the last three stages as a good test and set some really respectable times, including 4th fastest Fiesta on the final stage of the day. "The rally didn't go to plan, they never do! I was so pleased to finish again though especially as so many had mechanical problems and crashed out. The car felt amazing, the prep that went into the car before the rally was just incredible, the crew did a fantastic job, I can't thank them enough. It did cost so much in parts, but the car feels like it could go and do the rally all over again to be honest. We just need to get to bottom of the ECU problem."

The Pirelli International Rally is next in the calendar, which is the only gravel rally that Cookie has done once before in the British Rally Championship Challenge in 2010. "I'm looking forward to it, I just have a lot of money to find and the Bulldog cost so much to compete in, around £6,000, so it was really disappointing not to have had a clean rally, but at least I got to run on every stage. I'm working so hard to get sponsorship in, I just hope I can get enough for Pirelli and people can help make it happen".

For more details, please check out Louise's website www.cutecookie.co.uk or email Louise at louise_brc@hotmail.co.uk.



COOKIES CORNER

"A massive thank you to United Springs, Quazar International, The Marine Travel Company, Wolfrace, A4G Solutions, Medway Metals, my product sponsors and all of the Promotion50 sponsors for making the start of this season happen. Congratulations to Ciampco who won the Promotion 50 top prize this round of the rear quarter and bonnet."

