

# COOK FIGHTS FIFTH GRAVEL RALLY

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## COOKIE HOLDS TOP 10

Kent's female rally driver, Louise Cook, contested her fifth ever gravel rally this weekend, The Pirelli International Rally, based in Carlisle. The event was the third round of the Dulux Trade MSA British Rally Championship. Louise was looking forward to the rally with her car engine management faults behind her.

The rally kicked off Friday night with a ceremonial start at Carlisle Racecourse and then straight off into the 1<sup>st</sup> stage. With only one pass of the stage in reconnaissance, some dodgy pace notes and what appeared to be a lot of wheel spin due to the extra power, Louise took no chances and got off to a steady start bedding herself in with the car. Then it was off to the rally party, where teams signed autographs and mingled with the fans before heading back into the forest in darkness. With no night driving experience, except the odd late night shopping trips to Bluewater, Louise knew it was going to be a difficult stage. Despite the lack of experience in the dark, Louise held her position in the Fiesta Sporting Trophy for the overnight halt.

It was an early start on Saturday with the crew setting off at 7am for the first loop of stages.

"The morning went okay, it took me a while to get into it as I struggled believing in my own pace notes. Nearly every corner in Kielder is over a blind crest, so you really have to have a lot of confidence in your notes. Unfortunately, I just didn't have that level of trust in my note writing yet, not after just 3 gravel rallies. So, I suffered."

On the second run through the morning stages, Louise set some creditable times amongst the modern faster Fiesta R2's, leaving 3 R2's in her wake.

"Once I had been through the stages once, I knew that my notes weren't massively off, and I started to trust them more and more. Once I'd had a few over excited moments and got the car back from various ditches, the Killer Kielder forest did not seem as bad as all its hype. It was pretty amazing to realise how far I have come after only 2 gravel rallies since Pirelli last year. There was one section where I was absolutely flat on the rev limiter and having 4 wheels off the ground over crests at over 100 mph, I would never have done that last year! It was a nice benchmark."

With Louise's confidence on the up, the car was on the down. The forever hard working service crew found a gearbox leak in a 10 minute service

and it became evident on the road section that what was thought to be wheel spin, had been the clutch slipping from the start and Louise's stage times suffered as a result "I have no idea how much time it cost me, I lost a lot of confidence. The diff was unlocking and I would start to under steer off the road, when I needed the front wheels to pull me round, the clutch was giving way and the car had no drive. It was a shame, but at least I wasn't out of the rally, I kept it going, even though it was scary at times. I managed to keep her on though after about five or six moments where it could have all been all over. I will keep positive and take what I have learnt from this rally and use it on the next one."

Louise came home still holding her 5<sup>th</sup> place in the Fiesta Sporting Trophy, top 10 in the F2 Championship and still leading the BRC Ladies Cup. It's onto tarmac for the fourth round of the Championship, the Jim Clark Rally up in the Scottish Borders, a rally that Louise competed in last year. "I am really looking forward to the next one, I have more tarmac miles under my belt, so I hope to close the gap on the next round."

For more details, please check out Louise's website [www.cutecookie.co.uk](http://www.cutecookie.co.uk) or email Louise at [louise\\_brc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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 first three rounds happen. Congratulations to Raceparts UK who won the Promotion 50 top prize this round of the rear quarter and bonnet."

