

**RALLY
FIRST**

Bennett and McNeil were fastest on every stage in their Corsa

Grist inspires Bennett win

With chief title rival Jason Hopkins out of action nursing a rib injury, David Bennett and Alastair McNeil cruised to another Rally First victory in their Vauxhall Corsa.

Buoyed by advice from Nicky Grist in a pre-event seminar to the Rally First crews, Bennett was 16s faster than his nearest rival on the opening stage. He never let up, going fastest on every stage to build their victory margin to 1m32s by the finish. Notably, Bennett was the fifth 1400cc car home.

"Nicky's advice was great," he said. "We got to one part of the stage that he said was flat so we tried it without lifting. It was flat - but only just!"

Nissan Micra crew Chris Jones and Chris Spilsted pulled clear of Matt Griffin and Joe Cruttenden's VW Lupo in the latter part of the event to secure second. Their cause was helped when Griffin lost time when he caught the dust trail of the

car ahead of him on several stages. MG ZR crew Chris Hellings and Nick Farmer had been running third for much of the event, but were overhauled by Griffin after the latter had a storming run through the final test. Joe Evett and Lorraine Chappell were fifth in their Nova ahead of Paul Knapp and Carl Williamson's Micra.

Mick Smith and Paul Osmond had a faultless run to finish as the top Rally First 1.0 crew home, edging fellow Micra crew Lewis Roper and Ben Thomas by 24s. But with Smith not registered for the series, Roper gladly took maximum class points.

On his second outing of the year, Alastair Sutherland took third place in his Micra with Gill Cotton navigating. After three straight retirements, Martha Aitken and Alastair Dodd were on a mission to finish, and they were rewarded with fourth, ahead of Stephen Brown/Paul Stringer's similar Micra.

Matt Griffin and Joe Cruttenden, who finished third in RF1.4 in their VW Lupo, showed admirable technical sympathy when an oil warning light came on in their car. "We covered it up with some tape so it didn't put me off," said Griffin. "If we can't see it, it can't be a problem."