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Commanding win for Gill at Maharashtra rally

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Sunday 5th June, 2011 (IANS)

Expectedly, Gaurav Gill (co-driver Musa Sherif), driving a modified 2000cc Mitsubishi Cedia, led a 1-2 finish for Team MRF along with Lohitt V. Urs (PVS Murthy) in the Rally of Maharashtra that concluded here Sunday.

The 29-year old Gill from Delhi, despite enjoying a six-minute overnight lead over Urs, still maintained a searing pace to extend his advantage by another two minutes to start his campaign in the 2011 Speed-Indian National Rally championship on a strong note.

'Although I had a two-minute plus lead, I did not ease off and drove at my normal pace today because you tend to lose concentration and make mistakes at slow speeds.

'I didn't want to take any chances and of course, it is a great feeling to start the new domestic season with a win,' said Gill who is in the midst of a purple patch this year, having finished on the podium in Australia and Malaysia in the Asia Pacific Rally Championship.

The only problem that Gill encountered was an electrical malfunction on the transport run back to the parc ferme on conclusion of the Stages, but he managed to nurse his car to the finish.

Sirish Chandran (Nikhil Pai), participating in the Group N (unmodified) 2000cc class, and in only his second INRC season, delivered his maiden success in the championship by finishing first in his category and third overall, ahead of the more experienced Shailender Hegde (Prajval Pai) and Rahul Kanthraj (Vivek Bhatt).

'I attribute my success here to Red Rooster Performance (RRP) who prepared my car. Also, after last year's experience, I was more confident, quicker and aggressive.

'Of course, the car was just brilliant, no problems absolutely. We rebuilt the engine ahead of this season and RRP did a great job in preparing it to perfection.

'Since I led by over two minutes overnight, I was content to ease off a bit today as I didn't want to take any risks since I was ahead and also running third overall,' said an obviously overjoyed Chandran who edits an automotive magazine.

Overnight leaders in the respective classes, Anirudha Ranganekar (Anjay Kapadia) in the 1600cc, Raghu Nandan (Sujay Prasad) in the 1400cc Star Cup and Sachin Singh (Ramesh Venu) in the Gypsy Cup (T2 - unmodified) claimed the honours.

Bangalore's Sanjay Agarwal (Jeeva Rathinam), however, topped in the Gypsy class, but was driving a modified vehicle, the only entry in the T1 category.

The results (provisional):

Overall / 2000cc Group N+: Gaurav Gill / Musa Sherif (Team MRF) 1 (1hr, 20mins, 34secs); Lohitt V Urs / PSV Murthy (MRF) 2 (1:28:17.0).

2000cc (Group N): Sirish Chandran / Nikhil Pai 1 (1:31:17.0); Shailender Hegde / Prajval Pai 2 (1:34:18.0); Rahul Kanthraj / Vivek Bhatt 3 (1:34:41.0).

1600cc: Anirudha Ranganekar / Anjay Kapadia 1 (1:43:34.0); Vignesh Devarajan / Mukesh Raja 2 (2:10:16.0).

Star Cup (1400cc): Raghu Nandan B / Sujay Prasad 1 (1:37:-7.0); Deepak Chetty / Uday Kumar D 2 (1:40:20.0); Hrishikesh Thakersey / Kaushik H Shinde 3 (1:46:57.0).

Gypsy Class (T2 - Modified): Sanjay Agarwal / Jeeva Rathinam 1 (1:39:33.0). T1 (unmodified): Sachin Singh / Ramesh Venu 1 (1:40:34.0); Ranjiv Sally / Faruk Patel 2 (1:41:38.0); Shafeeq-ur Rehman / Ajith KP 3 (1:44.19.0).

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