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## Rally Legend The Driving Force Behind Quake Auction

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**Voxy News Engine**



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Rally legend Ari Vatanen will hit the track this week to raise money for a Christchurch earthquake victim in this week's [Rally of Otago](#).

A photo montage of Vatanen in action will go under the hammer during a charity auction to be held during a rally dinner at Dunedin's historic Dunedin Club on Wednesday night.

Proceeds from the auction will be donated to a Christchurch competitor in the rally who was deeply affected by the devastating February 22 quake.

Vatanen's photo montage will be a huge drawcard at the auction. He is an icon in the rallying world, having won the World Rally Championship in 1981 with a driving style that continues to thrill spectators wherever he races.

Vatanen's involvement in this year's rally also sees a partnership dating back more than three decades renewed.

The Finnish driver competed in Rally New Zealand in 1977 driving a Masport Escort, a rally that saw him record his first finish in world championship rallying.

Masport NZ Limited has rekindled its relationship with Vatanen again this year and will sponsor the driver for the Rally of Otago.

Masport General Manager Steve Hughes says when he heard Vatanen was heading south to compete in this year's rally he didn't hesitate to put the company's support behind the racing legend.

"Masport values the relationships we've built over the last 100 years, not only with our customers, but also those who we have had a proud association with," says Mr Hughes.

"We're thrilled to get behind Ari as we celebrate our centenary. Hopefully he'll have good reason to celebrate on Sunday too."

Vatanen, who honeymooned in New Zealand with his wife Rita in 1979, describes the country as a "total package" rally destination and is equally thrilled to be heading down under to compete again.

"New Zealand left a big mark in my life because of my honeymoon and because of the infamous rally of '77, so it's a special place for me. It's a trip I'm very much looking forward to, for sentimental and life reasons," he says.

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