

Coast to Coast Rally 2005

Ron Sorem © 5/16/2005

Courtney-Port Alberni-Duncan, British Columbia. May 14 & 15, 2005. The **Island Rallysport Club** presented **Coast to Coast 2005**, the First Round of the 2005 **Pacific Coast Challenge** (Vancouver Island-Washington-California-BC Mainland). **Coast to Coast** is also Round 3 of the **BC TSD Rally Championship**, and Round 1 of the **Island Rally Series**.

Friday was spent getting from Seattle to Vancouver Island. Seems like everyone had the same idea, and the border was backed-up well into the States. The Tsawwassen ferry was full, and fortunately as part of Navigator duties, Max had made reservations. Others weren't so lucky, as evidenced by their late Friday night arrival, missing Registration and Tech Inspection. Our Friday night inspection for Car 2 was smooth and quick. Registration was efficient, and we were ready to party. Well, not too much party, but great dinner with great friends, Lee Sorenson and Larry Richardson, in Car 1; Max Vaysburd and I, in Car 2; and father-son Peter and Timothy Ryce, as Car 3. The "south of the border" contingent included Car 7 Steve Perret and Kathryn Hansen; Car 9 Jeff McMillen and Marvin Crippen; Car 10 Gary Webb (up from Mohave Valley, Arizona) and John Kisela from Seattle; Car 11 Jason Webster and Brandon Harer from Portland; son-father team Kris and Ed Dahl in the stage-prepared Acura Integra GSR from Bellingham; and representing the States in Historic, William McRae and Dave Harms, in the 1969 Beetle.

Saturday morning saw 21 teams at the Driver's Meeting for the usual last-minute notes and corrections. One key piece of information, an omitted "15", was missed by a few, causing a missed speed change, later in the day. The weather was perfect, with a few sprinkles, and hopefully no dust. The Odo Check went 36km north on the freeway to just beyond Oyster River then left on Cranberry Lane.

Regularity One, "Duncan Bay Main", quickly moved to 72km/h, setting the pace for the weekend: Brisk. There was logging machinery in the first Acute Left at 14.58, a prelude to the rest of the rally... We were on their roads; they were all bigger than us. Some were "normal sized" loggers, and for day two, some "off-road loggers" nearly twice the size of the "big" trucks. We passed an impressive Bald Eagle feeding along side the route, three or four meters from the cars, and probably frustrated by the passage of the rally. He would fly away and return on roughly one-minute intervals, for 21 cars and the checkpoint crews. Reg One was nearly 27km with 25 of those at 72-average.

"Miller Creek" Transit was 3.39km to the start of Regularity Two.

"Sayward" began with 3km at 70-average, then 68km/h to the Strathcona Dam. Down to 25 for the dam crossing and checkpoint, then 63 through some twisty corners, and 45 for HPL, HPR, HPL, on the way to the Paterson Lake area. Then up to 50 and 58 through lots of single lane bridges and a few "Rough" callouts, but for the most part smooth, flat, and twisty at a brisk pace. At about 50km into the Reg, at 72, we met our first loaded logger, also at speed, in the middle (OK more like our side of the middle) of the freshly graded mainline, on a slight left bend. We had to ride wide right, on the soft shoulder (still at the average, of course) then ease back onto the road. No delay, no damage, no worries... OK, maybe a few. Further along, turning onto "Big Tree Main", our second logger was empty and friendly. A rain shower had recently turned the dust

to mud and the next "KL MBCU" was more "slippy" than expected. The freshly graded surface may have been either mud or marbles, with the same result. We turn northwest, now nearly straight to Sayward on the wide haul-road, changing to pavement for the end of the 87.78km Regularity.

A 2.6km Transit took the rally to the first fuel stop in Sayward, with super friendly folks, (coincidentally across the street from the RCMP office). Word came through that Car 13 was "off", and restarted by sweep. Car 14 was "missing" (poor placement of numbers, completely obscured by mud, both sides of car, and so unable to be identified, but they were just fine--reminder if you can't see the numbers, it will probably adversely effect your score). From Sayward Foods another 7km transit took the rally back to the woods.

Regularity Three, "Tlatlos", was a big loop on logging company owned roads. 87.05km with a couple of meetings of oncoming log trucks. They stayed in the middle of the road, we were forced to the soft shoulder (when there was a shoulder, or to stopping in any available wide spot when the road was only a single lane). 83km into the Reg we are sliding through a checkpoint in an acute right... where was he timing? That was the question for those who did it right. However, taking a dotted-line shortcut shown on the alpine, thus missing the acute, caught out about two-thirds of the cars. The shortcut offered a quick way through the corner, but the island of trees in the triangle hid the CP, so those who took the dotted line weren't scored at the control, resulting in a max-late. It may not be a wise decision to simply follow the fresh tracks! (More on following tracks later).

A 27km Transit led to the second fuel stop, at Sayward Junction, where a discussion arose between several competitors and a logging company supervisor... He'd had complaints from their log truck drivers... The experienced rally drivers, and the Island Rallysport Club's Rally Director, assured the supervisor that the rally would stay out of their way, pointed out that speeds were 10% below posted limits, and in fact some of the logging personnel were faster than the rally. All this seemed to satisfy the supervisor and we heard of no further complaints. Speaking from the front of the rally, the truckers, and pickups, generally waved for the rest of the day. It is in fact their road. We are just lucky to get permission to use it, and nearly every rallyist realizes the impact (pun firmly intended) of an encounter with a log truck.

Also discussed at the fuel stop was a check-pointer's review of his encounters on the road: Bear left, then Bear right, then straight, then jump into the bushes. Real Bear. Car 3 reported pacing another bear later in the day.

Reg Four, 65km "Upper Adam Main", ran southward, then west, climbing over the ridge to remote and spectacularly beautiful scenery with a brief run in the Provincial Park. These are more primitive roads now, some very narrow with big exposures and several "Cautions" in the route book for cross ditches, rough areas, blind crests, and increasingly, "rocks in the road".

"Mohun Lake" Transit runs roughly 11km back to Sayward Junction again, then another 17km, reversing our earlier course, to Big Tree.

Reg Five, also "Mohun Lake", begins with more loaded log truck encounters, exiting the woods, and with timber crews headed for home in a hurry. We are again in areas of active logging. There are big log stacks and slash debris piles along and in the road. Speeds cut to 15km/h IF you got the corrections at the drivers meeting... If not,

59km/h was almost do-able, a little rough, but as Car 3 driver Peter Ryce dryly pointed out: “It’s only wood...”

A short distance later, the first mind games began... three instructions, three speed changes, 300m, including a very Acute Left. Car 1 took 7-early, Car 2 8-early, ... too much info to process into the computers and to communicate between the crews. And, it is easy to be early at “roughly double the average speed”. In the heat of the moment, the self-imposed pressure for all zeroes, most of us forgot our Seat-of-the-Pants roots. IF your navvie says “speed change down to 27”, the driver should at least try to stay under “54”, wouldn’t you think? The drivers were busy deciding on whether this is a “handbrake” acute or a “three-point” acute... important stuff! Then downhill to the BR and the checkpoint, at about the same time everything gets put into the box and the display shows EARLY. The Rallymaster had this checkpoint and undoubtedly laughed the whole time. Thank you Christa.

A 15km Transit took the rally into Campbell River for fuel and snacks, then south on the highway for 60km, returning to Courtney.

Reg Six, “Port Alberni”, began smooth and brisk interrupted by tight double-90 turns over bridges, or “Caution! Blind Crest into KL”. At 35km we saw the first “Potholes” instruction, followed by “Potholes for 500m”, a HPL for a change of pace, then 7km later, “Potholes”, followed by “Potholes”, and more “Potholes”—all at precisely the correct odo readings. Then, a reconstructed bridge that we’d been warned of in the driver’s meeting. Rough, big drop in and bump out. The triple-caution instruction was proper, but many, including me, could have gone a wee bit slower still. Further on, we were slow, and quiet, through the campground, then back up to speed for more twists and turns. Great fun. We completed the 68km section commenting on which potholes were worse, the noted, or not-noted.

A 10km Transit to Port Alberni’s HQ hotel was a welcome close to over eleven hours and 583.92km of brisk, bumpy, beautiful roads.

Day two began with a surprise. Max and I arrived at breakfast to the news we were tied with Car 1, Lee Sorenson and Larry Richardson, and with Car 10, Gary Webb and John Kisela, with only 12-seconds penalty (including the three instructions fiasco) after 29 controls. The question remained, would we be able to wrest defeat from the jaws of victory? ...Sure, we could do that.

Sunday’s first Regularity, “Macktush Creek”, ran south along Alberni Inlet with great views of rock walls on the right, in a medium-right-downhill, with water on the left. The route turned west, climbing rapidly through another active logging site. Cresting a ridge, we were overlooking a beautiful lake on our left, with waterfalls all along the route on our right. “Macktush” was filled with spectacular views on the western slopes of the island. The ridge tops and peaks were still snow-capped, but the weather was warm. Broken overcast kept the bright sunlight at bay to reduce glare, and an occasional rain shower kept the roads nearly dust-free.

Running nearly two-thirds of Reg One with all zeroes, Car 1 missed an Acute Right, recovered “a little way down the road”, and took 37 at the hidden control, just past the acute. Car 2, with all zeroes, dutifully followed Car 1’s tracks, missed the acute, recovered earlier, but still took 19 penalty. Car 3 followed Car 2’s tracks, for 15 penalty—sound familiar? (In all our defense, the alpine at 53.29 and the alpine 60m later at

53.35 were actually the same intersection, but difficult to see at 65, slowing to 25, rough, over crest, with a photo op.

The radio crackled something about Car 10 not continuing the Reg, being out of spare tires. The TIE was broken! Then we apparently cut a tire making up time on the rough hillclimb. Max and I debated the handling characteristics of a flat left-rear whilst negotiating a hard right turn... gets sideways very easily! We ran 9km on a flat Silverstone at 64, then 72, before the inevitable tire departure (gotta love rally sidewalls). We ran another 500m on the rim, and finally elected to correct the "handling problem" only to find the last remaining checkpoint of the leg, after the repair, around the next corner from where we'd stopped. Max-late, Max Frustration. Without the Time-Allowance provisions we have in the States, we were now just sightseeing.

At this point the Day One front-runners were all well spaced to the rear of their class. Car 9, Jeff McMillen and Marvin Crippen, Fourth place with 28 on Saturday, were now firmly in First, pending two days of queries and protests to be dealt with at the Finish.

I've never been one to give up if the car is still running, so we ran the rest of the event hoping to salvage something. Our recovery was a matter of our own goals... We'd like to zero-out for the rest of the day just to make a point, to ourselves if to no one else.

Reg Two, "Bamfield", started just off the Island Highway and 2.67km later an Acute Right put us onto the logging highway. Nearly four lanes wide, smooth gravel. We had no trouble with the oncoming pickups, vans, and occasional loggers, including one exactly at the sign reading "Trucks Entering", on a blind corner. We could hear radio chatter from the Advance and CP cars, and Car 1, calling out oncoming traffic in the narrow corners, oncoming "heavy" traffic anywhere, and the road grader, grooming out the haul-road to nearly pavement smooth so the loggers could get to the sort yard just a bit faster. The grader operator waved happily as we passed. Apparently no complaints today.

For some unexplained reason either Car 1 was running late or we were running early. Lee would call out an oncoming truck and I'd be expecting it in half a minute—it would arrive way too soon. After what our computer showed as four consecutive zeroes on Bamfield, we actually saw Car 1 and hacked the interval—50 seconds—should be 60, but "you run your own rally"... Debate ensued for several km and the interval was still "off". I couldn't take it any more; the curiosity was too much. Max recalcd the section using the abundant hard-points and we were wrong, exactly 10 seconds wrong, due to a clock set error at the start of the Reg. Now 34km in, we knew we'd just taken four consecutive tens, not zeroes! We recovered for the last CP and took a one, that is, 41, or we might have held on for the win. Ouch! But, we had no time to contemplate the mix-up; we had bigger problems.

We'd been following the progress of a couple of "off-road" logging trucks. From the radio reports it was soon to be our turn to find a way off the road. These rigs are at least 50% larger, if not 100% larger than "normal" big-rigs on the highway. We met "ours". He could have moved over a little, but not much, not enough. The prudent course of action was for me to get off his road. My choice was a pullout to the left. He gave a friendly wave from way up above us. I really wanted to get a photo of one of those, but the timing was all wrong: Staying out of his way was more important at the

time. The conversation with most of the rally cars, at the finish of Bamfield, was all about “off-road loggers”.

As back-to-back Regularities, next up is Reg Three, “Cowichan”, which included some of the most enjoyable “driver” roads of the weekend. Sweeping left and right. Tight corners, into and out of bridges at 70km/h. 40km into the Reg we turn onto a narrow steep hill climb and immediately meet an outbound logging crew. We stop for two pickups, then proceed a short way and stop for a large work truck and two more pickups. We can only watch the seconds tick away—now almost a minute late. Now! We can go, just in time for hairpins and exposures. Finally we top out over the ridge and have smooth flat running through a valley. Then the book calls for an average-speed change to 72. Recovery of the minute lateness is a bit more difficult, but it’s eventually done. Great fun! 400m at 27km/h then back to 56, then 69, then HPR, HPL, HPR, and HPR again, before the finish at 68.89km. We are both smiling; a very good sign.

“Skutz Falls” Transit skirts the southeast shore of Cowichan Lake then joins the Provincial Highway briefly, before bearing off to a slow 60km/h test of patience, for a very long 7km.

Reg Four, “Duncan”, returns us to the gravel we all want, although not as brisk as earlier rally roads. We travel along a popular scenic park, and the traffic is a little more crowded than in the wilderness, for the final three checkpoints in the 8.88km timed section.

The final Transit, to Duncan MTC is 23km, to Boston Pizza, and a well-deserved car wash after a two-day total of 867.77km (542 miles).

We recovered from the lost tire, we recovered from the clock error, we zeroed Reg 3 and Reg 4, but at the time we left for the ferry we had no visions of success for our 17-plus hours on the road.

The ferry trip home was great, with five crews replaying the rally for two hours over dinner and the view.

The border was uneventful and “Welcome to Washington”; with torrential rains most of the way to Seattle.

Things change. We found out via a Monday morning e-mail from Marvin that a calculation error on Macktush resulted in the last few controls not being scored, throwing out our max-late-tire-problem. This helps us immensely in PCC series points.

Congratulations to **Jeff McMillen** and **Marvin Crippen** who took **First Overall** and **First Unlimited** (moving up from Calculator last season, but continuing their string, as PCC Champions in 2003 and 2004). Second to **Lee Sorenson** and **Larry Richardson** up from California. Third to **Ron Sorem** and **Max Vaysburd** up from Seattle. Fourth Overall and **First Calculator** to BC’s own, **Doug Tewnion** and **Brian Carriere**, with a very competitive 90. **First Historic** went to BC’s **Gil Stuart** and **Arnie Lang**. **First Novice** to **Matthew Glade** and **Kevin Boothroyd**. And **First Paper** (SOP) to **Steve Perret** and **Kathryn Hansen**.

Complete results, links, schedules, and photos at www.rallybc.com

Next **Pacific Coast Challenge** event is **No Alibi** June 11 & 12, running from Ellensburg Washington to Lewiston Idaho and return. www.rainierautosports.com

Check www.tsdroadrally.com for more rally stories and a rally search.