

# Team M45 debuts at PFR

By Martin Chung



Pacific Forest Rally 2004 in Merritt, BC, was our first stage rally event. Christa and I first teamed up over the Internet, sight unseen, in June, 2003. We came in first in our class in our first TSD rally together, a great start to a very successful rally partnership, resulting in the formation of Team M45 Rallysport and our recent showing at PFR.

Having similar goals, we had intended to move to stage rally together on some vague future date. I had purchased my 1.8L Subaru Impreza with the intention that someday it would be prepared for stage, but little did I know that it would be less than a year later that I would be ripping out all the interior trim in preparation for the roll cage work.

We decided in July to ready the car and team for PFR 2004 in October. The hard deadline would help keep our efforts focused. What followed was a flurry of activity trying to get the car completed. The most insignificant decisions involved huge amounts of thought, research, time, and of course, money. From how to fabricate the seat brackets, to the cage design, to the location of the first aid kit, which suits and helmets to buy, everything took much more effort than imagined, especially when you have to do much of the work yourself.

Many times I wondered if I should have bought a prepared car as is the usual advice, to save myself the mental anguish someone else had already gone through. On the other hand, I felt good knowing that I had been involved in every detail of the car's construction and that I hadn't compromised on safety. I had also learned an immense amount.

Several days before we had to leave the car's competition logbook hadn't been issued, the required rollcage padding hadn't arrived from the U.S., and our competition licenses hadn't arrived in the mail. As I was fully engrossed in completing the car, I was lucky that Christa and the rest of the crew took care of logistics such the trailer, crew, tools, spares, and tow vehicle. The car was completed the night before we left for Merritt and we had our licenses in hand, but the car still did not have a logbook.

On Friday we ran recce over the route. Having never done pace notes, we based our technique from my countless hours playing Colin McRae Rally on the Xbox, and it improved steadily through the day. That evening was scrutineering, my most nervous time of the entire event. I wondered if I'd overlooked something major in the preparation that would disqualify us from competing the next day after all the trouble getting to this point. We passed, the logbook was issued, and a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. We'd be competing the next day!

We had no butterflies or jitters on the day of the rally. The numerous gravel TSD rallies we'd competed in had been invaluable for preparing us for this day, allowing us to settle into our regular competition mode. From our first-ever start to the final finish, we kept things light, punctuated with fun and laughter, and drove a quick, but conservative pace. There was a sense of freedom and safety in knowing that there would be no surprise vehicles coming over the next crest and we were wearing harnesses, helmets, and suits while encased in a steel safety cage.

The rally route ran through narrow, twisty, tree-lined meadows or wound down the sides of the mountains bordered by drop-offs to one side and rock walls on the other. It rained the morning of the rally, which, combined with loose gravel and thin layers of mud on top of a harder surface made for very slick forest roads. This kept the speeds and times down through the twistier and more technical morning stages. The afternoon stages were longer and faster, and the speeds rose as the course dried out. Our notes for the later stages were better, so I began to trust the notes more and we got into a good rhythm.

We finished the rally, which was our primary objective. Considering that 11 of the 33 teams that entered did not finish the rally at all due to various issues like mechanical problems and going off-road, this was a huge achievement for our very first stage rally. We also achieved our second objective, which was not to finish in last place. To our delight, we came in second in our class and 13th overall out of 23 in the regional competition. We had been seeded in 33rd (last) place because it was our first rally, and we steadily moved up the leaderboard. It was an amazing experience to be running in the same events with notables like Richard, McGeer, and Olsen. We were also thrilled to be recognized at the awards ceremony for having finished our very first rally.

Without our sponsors we would not have been able to compete at PFR, and we would like to thank them for partnering with us on this event. Our service crew of three (Matt, Rich, and Scott) was very well prepared and took great care of the vehicle during the service breaks. Having now experienced working and competing at a rally I now realize more than ever the immense contributions from all the organizers and volunteers who make the day go smoothly for the competitors and I would like to offer them my deepest thanks as well.



Martin Chung and Christa Monasch are the driver and co-driver of Team M45 Rallysport, a BC-based TSD and stage rally team. Their website can be found at [www.m45rallysport.com](http://www.m45rallysport.com).