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Airtime

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S RALLY UPDATE

FREE
SPRING 2003

max power heads east
thunderbird tsd
cochrane rally

MANTIS MINI - "DRIVING TO FINISH"
ISLAND RALLY NEWS
HEART OF DARKNESS INFO



Pace Notes

Heart of Darkness - Yokohama BC TSD Rally Championship
Presented by Specialty Subaru and the West Coast Rally Association
April 26-27, 2003 - Hope to Merritt, BC

The Heart of Darkness is an all night time-speed-distance event. It is part of the BC Rally Championship and follows the 2003 BC Rally Regulations and the CARS General Competition Rules. Both are available from the BC Rally Director, Paul Westwick (604) 682 3296 paul@rallybc.com. The BC Rally Regulations are also on-line at www.rallybc.com. If you have not already read the BC Rally Regulations you should, there is additional information in them. The rally runs on straightforward instructions, and will be approximately 600 km in length with roads about 70% gravel and 30% paved. Maximum distance between gas stops is 250 km (150 miles). For more information on the Heart of Darkness rally, or you would like to help out, please see www.rallybc.com or contact the registrar.

Required equipment: 1 self-supporting reflective warning triangle (30cm per side), 5 BC fire extinguisher, basic first aid kit, open cars require a roll bar. If auxiliary lights are mounted, it must be possible to turn them off with one switch, leaving only the standard low beams operating. Recommended equipment: map light, driving lights (strongly recommended), clipboard, and pen.

Event Schedule

Saturday April 26th, 2003
5:00 pm Novice Driver's Meeting
6:00 pm Late registration and Tech Inspection opens
8:00 pm Registration closes and Tech Inspection closes
8:30 pm Driver's Meeting
9:00 pm First car out.

Sunday April 14, 2001
7:00 am ETA at Niki's Restaurant in Merritt

Directions to the start location:

Rolly's Restaurant
888 Fraser Ave, Hope, B.C. (604) 869-7448
Take Hwy# 1 East to exit #170 (Hope City Centre)
Bear left at first traffic light, Go straight through the 2nd set of lights,
Turn Right at Hudson Bay Street and the restaurant will be on the left side.

Registrar: Shelley Wiedemann (604) 533-9656, shelly@rallybc.com
6129 Greenside Dr. West, Surrey, BC V3S 5M8 fax (604) 533-9647

Entry fee:
\$75 for entries received before April 16, 2003
\$85 for late entries
\$10 discount for current members of either IRC or WCRA



TSD EVENTS

April 26/27 - Heart of Darkness (WCRA)
June 28/29 - Coast to Coast (IRC)
July 19/20 - Gold Digger (WCRA)
Aug 23/24 - Tsunami (IRC)
Oct 25/26 - Midnight (IRC)
Nov 15/16 - Totem (WCRA)

PERFORMANCE EVENTS

May 17/18 - Big Horn - Alberta
May 24/25 - Rocky Mountain - Alberta
June 13/14 - Pacific Forest - BC
Sept 27/28 - Mountain Trials - BC
Nov 08/09 - Kananaskis - Alberta

Event details and results are available at: www.rallybc.com

Additional Web Links:

www.carsrally.ca
(Canadian Assoc. of Rally Sport)
www.specialstage.com
(Discussions in the Canada-West Forum)



Be sure to check out the PFR website for the latest updates, volunteer information, and multimedia. Get close to the action June 14th, 2003!

www.pacificforestrally.com

MBCU

"Slippy Maybe"
Fred puts his patented pace-noting technique to work.



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fred@rallybc.com

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Airtime is Published 4 times per year by West Coast Rally Association (WCRA). Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of WCRA, its directors or members. Subscriptions are \$15/year or free with membership in WCRA.

We welcome editorial and photo submissions & ideas. Photos will be returned and credit given for all submissions.

AIRTIME

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Chi@rallybc.com

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CARS Region Rep**
Paul@rallybc.com

Welcome to the first edition of Airtime for 2003! This year, British Columbia has the most exciting rally season ever coming up! With the inclusion of PFR as the fifth round of the Canadian National Rally Championship, we now have our very own part of the fastest growing form of motorsport. Soon the sights and sounds of rally beasts roaring through the forest on the hunt for victory will be here! I myself can hardly wait to show the rest of Canada what they have been missing!

On a more serious note, we are under more scrutiny than ever with illegal street racing at it's worst. Any form of motorsport seems to have come under the gun, especially those of us who have rally cars that are driven on the street on a regular basis. Remember that it is up to us to set an example to the general public and show that we are not a bunch of yahoos going out to wreak havoc on the roads. Also, our sponsors trust us to do the right thing, after all they are the ones that help us make our sport what it is. We are merely trying to do what we enjoy and love in an environment that will minimize risk to others and enhance our own enjoyment of the sport.

I would like to take a minute and give a HUGE thank you to some people in the club. This goes to all the people who have taken the time to help checkpoint and organize rallies.

All of the events that we go to and enjoy (both performance and TSD) could not happen without volunteers. It is volunteers that give up their time so the rest of us may compete. Believe it or not, there is always a shortage of this precious resource. You don't need to have a radio license or have been a rally master to get involved. Only some time, a little effort, and the will to help is all you need. Rally is a volunteer based sport and can only survive through volunteers helping out and learning from those of us who have been doing it for a long time now. So, while you are out at an event, remember to take a minute and thank the people who are organizing the event and the volunteers that are helping out. They will have put a lot of time and effort in to make it happen.

If you would like to let some of these people come out and compete once in a while, or you would like to find out how an event works or is organized, please feel free to contact me and I will gladly point you in the right direction or put you in contact with the appropriate people. Not only are you helping the sport expand and grow, you are letting people who have organized for many years remember why they love the sport, and to compete with you!

Enough rambling already! Rally on!

Fred Wiedemann - Editor

Welcome to the 2003 rally season. WCRA's efforts over the last few years has seen the club grow exponentially in size and events. With the growing membership comes growing demand for events. This year, WCRA is pleased to host Round 5 of the Canadian Rally Championship in Merritt on June 14 with the Pacific Forest Rally. This event will be attracting factory teams and competitors from all over North America. This is one event that should not be missed - by spectators or competitors alike. WCRA is also expanding it's ever-popular Novice TSD workshops into BC's interior. Rallycross events, to-date, have been running into cattle issues, however, we are open to suggestions for alternative venues. Up-to-date information is available at www.rallybc.com.

As always, in order for WCRA to host events, we rely on the generous support from our club sponsors. We encourage you to support those who support us. Also, each event relies on volunteers. If you are interested in helping out as a checkpoint, marshal or assistant organizer, please do not hesitate to contact the club for more information.

As we all look forward to another year of slipping and sliding through blind corners - remember to keep it off the streets and drive safe.

Yours in rallying,

Ken Kwong
WCRA - President



Max Power takes on The East

Tilston learns the highs and lows of Rallying

As many of you know I've been spending time in the East running the beginning of the Canadian Rally Championship. My first full event was Sno*Drift in Michigan, an event where we were intent on trying out the car with all of the changes we had made since the Kananaskis Rally. With new suspension from KW and new AWD software from Haldex I was eager to see what kind of speeds we could achieve and get a base point to work from on both the car and my own driving skills. The car was great, and the roads were pretty slippery in spots, but it was damn fun... lots of spectators, and an amazing field of competitors made this event very exciting for me. Unfortunately we didn't finish this rally for various reasons and we had to get the car back to Toronto for some much needed TLC.

Perce-Neige, the first rally in the Canadian Rally Championship, takes place north of Ottawa in Manawaki, Quebec. Armed with more crew members and a new co-driver, Brian Maxwell, we tackled what is a notoriously difficult rally. With over 220 km of stage miles in one day, and the rally running from early morning until 11pm at night, Perce-Neige often becomes a rally of attrition. Stuffed it into banks, over banks, into trees...you name it, there were a hell of a lot of cars off the road! After my experiences in Sno*Drift, we set off looking for a clean rally from start to end. I was very happy to accomplish this and certainly a lot of credit goes to Brian for reading the notes so well. We had one 'moment' where one of the many 'bumps' turned out to be a monstrous jump and I hit it going probably 120 kph. All I can say is that it is very disconcerting to be flying down a forest road, with no sight of the road that you know is somewhere under you (hopefully!). We landed in the center of the road heavily and the car shot it's front grills out as a result, but beyond that the car was fine. Brian marked the 'bump' in the notes as being a killer and when we made our second pass I saw the grills on the road still, but I'm sure they had been mashed beyond use. We placed 16th overall, 6th in a hotly contested P4 class and 3rd in the Novice category. Brian's help in this rally was amazing and certainly the finish would have easily been lost without his experience in the car.

After the event, I spent time with both Dan Sprong and Haldex at an ice track in Minden, about 3 hours north of Toronto. One day was spent with Dan learning how to drive like a Frenchman, and a second day involved working with Haldex engineers to calibrate the vehicles AWD software. This second experience was certainly one of the coolest things I've done to date.



The car's AWD ECU was wired into the engineer's laptop, with him controlling and observing live all 4 wheel speeds, throttle position, brake position, and torque transfer through the center coupling. With the strike of a key, he was changing the torque transfer characteristics of the AWD based on the conditions and my own feedback. We ended up having two similar programs that felt fast and the resulting mapping was then stored in the ECU.

Rally International De Québec represented my chance to start shaving time off the baseline we got at Perce-Neige. With additional seat time on the ice with Dan, as well as more consistent AWD performance, things seemed to be leaning towards a better result. At the same time the event held three major differences over Perce-Neige. First, the event was a pace-noted rally, something I had no experience with before. Secondly, the field of competitors was bigger, meaning the competition would likely be a bit stronger. And thirdly, the event was being run over two whole days, giving all the competitors a chance to get some much-needed rest in the middle of the event. We also had some Audi dealer support at this event that was to prove very useful by the end. Que-Bourg Audi helped the team out in various ways, including the use of a new A4 as a secondary service vehicle!

With another new co-driver beside, Marc Goldfarb from the US joined the team to help us out with the pace-notes. His experience certainly showed as we completed recce on the Thursday, helping organize the service crew and rewriting some of his notes in preparation for an aggressive attack starting Saturday morning.



Our RIQ damage report is simple. We had some cosmetic damage to the bumper from a blast through a snow bank, and one of our insanely-priced headlights was broken by a wave of slush on a transit. Up until that point the car was working wonderfully - then SS11 happened. I didn't even see the rock that ended it all. It was hidden in the middle of the road and I bottomed out on it really hard. Unfortunately for us, it had mashed our skid plate and crumpled the cast aluminum oil pan, leaving two long cracks in the backside. About 1.2 km from the end of the stage an alarm sounded, and a huge red oil warning light had taken over the whole instrument cluster screen. I turned the car off and flipped the key back to the ignition position so I could steer, since we were still coasting along at 80 kph. The road was mostly downhill to the flying finish so we coasted all the way to the end of SS11, handed in our card, and posted an 18th fastest stage time.

Now we had a chance to review the damage and assess whether or not we could repair it and continue on to finish the last stage of the rally. After a quick look under the car, and a call to our service manager, Todd Hastings, we were pretty sure it was over. Marc went on to discuss some other possibilities when the phone suddenly rang - it was my mother in Toronto! She wanted to know what happened to us! Due to the RIQ's organization, the results were being posted almost live and due to a delay in a post from the last stage, she had assumed that we had a problem somewhere and coincidentally called us just before we announced to the radio control our retirement. My mom told us where we stood in the standings and it was heartbreaking. We had climbed to 11th overall and 2nd in P4 class. We were also in 1st in the Novice category. Talk about a big bumper!

The car will undergo some preparations for gravel and certainly our underbody protection and our suspension will get a big review and we'll be doing some testing with suspension engineers before Bighorn.

See you all soon!

Andrew Tilston
Max Power Rallysport
www.rallytt.com

Patrick Richard forced to retire at Mexico Rally

Mexico, March 16, 2003 - Reigning Canadian and North American Rally Champion, Pat Richard was forced into retirement from 4th place on the second to last stage of the Mexico rally when the transmission broke on his Subaru Impreza WRX.

It was a disappointing ending to a very gutsy and competitive performance against several more experienced World Rally Championship drivers on very demanding roads. Only 16 of the 45 cars entered were able to finish the event.

Earlier in the event Pat had experienced a loss of engine pressure in the higher altitude stages and was unable to close the gap later on the three front-runners. In the first stage for example, where the race moved from 1960 to 2500 meters in only 10 kilometers, Pat lost 19 seconds to Argentina's Marcos Ligato, the eventual rally winner. Holding fourth place became the challenge for the final day.

"We didn't push too hard because we wanted absolutely to finish the rally. But the transmission broke completely. I didn't have any gear. I tried to repair it because our gap from the other Subaru in 5th was big, but it was not possible", said Richard.

"The Subaru Rally Team Canada was the dominant North American crew throughout the weekend."

"But I've learned a lot here and improved my notes system, and the Subaru Rally Team Canada was the dominant North American crew throughout the weekend. For the next World Rally Championship event, its very good experience", concluded the Vancouver, BC driver.

The unofficial rally results are: Marcos Ligato the winner 28 seconds clear of Peruvian Ramon Ferreyos in second, followed by Polish Janosz Kulig in third. The 2003 Corona Rally of Mexico was a very well organized and popular event, which now may gain inclusion on the FIA World Rally Championship calendar in 2004.

For Patrick Richard, his co-driver, Mikael Johansson and the Subaru Rally Team Canada, the next event is the Rally of New Zealand (April 6-9), round two of the World Rally Championship for Production Group N cars. ■



Pat Richard Wins the Rallye de Québec

Quebec City, March 2, 2003 - Pat Richard, of Whistler, B.C., took the lead following Sunday's first stage and did not look back, winning the 10th edition of the Rallye International de Québec by more than three minutes over six-time U.S. champion Paul Choiniere, of Shelburne, Vermont.

Driving an Impreza WRX for Subaru Rally Team Canada, Richard and his co-driver, Sweden's Mikael Johansson, emerged victorious among the 53 entries in the first event in the newly announced "FIA Rally Series North America", despite running a good portion of the last stage at Lac des Neiges with a flat tire.

"This is probably the most satisfying win of my career," said Richard, who last month became the first Canadian driver to score a point in the World Rally Championship (WRC) after finishing 8th overall in the Production Cup in the Swedish Rally. "It was an extremely challenging event and we drove very aggressively, although I was quite concerned about damage to the rear differential when running with the flat tire, but the car held together and I am just thrilled about this victory!"

After two events in the Canadian Rally Championship, Antoine L'Estage sits atop the drivers' standings with 21 points, while three drivers (Richard, Erickson and Jean-Paul Pérusse) are tied for second with 20 points. ■



DCRally to the Bitter End

Cochrane Rally Report By Blake Startup

"Giddy up!" Those were the first words to come out of my mouth at the Cochrane rallycross. I then continued the rest of the day with a stupid, kid-in-a-candy-store grin upon my face. No, I'm not the biggest dork in the world, I'm just a newbie co-driver for Chad Manley. I say newbie because my only experience before jumping into a regional performance rally were two rallycrosses, and crashing into countless snow banks with Chad.

Needless to say, I was a little nervous at the start of the Cochrane 100 Years Rally, but a weird thing happened the moment Chad spun those bald gravel tires. Maybe the helmet cut off the circulation to my brain, but for the rest of the day nothing could shake me. I just kept firing off directions and yelling at Chad to go faster. The first stage went by very quickly and the side of the road was littered with spectators who chose some sketchy places to watch from. I completely missed the first finish line and we were well past the stop point when Chad locked it up and spat gravel at the finish volunteers. One of the officials decided he better move his car after we went through!

Stage 5 was a tight technical stage with lots of exposures, and I thought for sure this would shake me up a little, especially with all the warning about 'beaver dam'. The first exposure was a double caution, so I made sure Chad was aware of that. As soon as I saw the exposure I laughed and said, "That's not an exposure!" From there on in, I was yelling at Chad to go even faster. This kind of pissed him off because the car isn't that fast, but we made up a lot of time on this stage, and it was definitely my favourite.

Unfortunately, we didn't finish the event because on one of the final stages the head gasket blew up in a huge plume of smoke that burned our eyes and forced us to shut off the car while doing sixty on a transit. We rolled to a stop and scrambled out - fire extinguishers in hand - to find that it was just coolant spraying everywhere and all down Chad's side of the car. I ran up and checked us into time control, while Chad tried it again. The smoked continued to pump out again and forced us to drop out. Chad, who is used to mechanical disappointments with his car said "frick" a few times and was done with it. Hopefully the car will be up and running, or that we will have a new one in time for Big Horn.

Check out DCRally at www.dcrally.ca

photos: warwickpatterson.com



RSport wins P4, 2nd OA at Cochrane

RSport Rally got off to a running start in the 2003 Western Canadian Rally Championship with a top result in class at the Cochrane Rally. The team's goal for 2003 is to retain the Western Canadian Rally Championship for a second consecutive year in the Production 4 class. "I am totally ecstatic, the competition at this weekends event made for some exciting battles in the forest," says Scott. RSport Rally driver Scott Trinder and new navigator Bill Westhead completed the 2003 Cochrane Rally 1st in Class and 2nd Overall! The team's finish has put them in the lead of the 2003 Western Canadian Rally Championship in P4 (Production4). "I am pleased with our result. Bill did an incredible job in the navigators seat", says Scott.

The Cochrane Rally was held on March 23, 2003 in Cochrane, Alberta 45 miles west of Calgary. As predicted the road conditions were anything but consistent. The first five stages were mostly gravel with some icy sections; therefore the team decided to use the gravel tires. The remainder of the event was a mix of ice, snow, and very slippery mud. On these stages the team ran on Hakka Q's for icy conditions with light snow cover. "The conditions made for a tactical event. We made the right tire choices. As my first event with the RSport Rally team and as navigator for Scott I had a great time, and look forward to Bighorn," says Bill.



Check out RSport at: www.rmtcontracting.com/rsport



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Event details & dates are available at:
www.rallybc.com

Island Rallysport Club

Well is it that time again? Yup, its rally season! YIIIPPEEEEE! Although that also means a lot more work for all of us. This year us going to be a banner year for us over here on the Island, as we have a bunch of events and a great group of organizers. So what's all in store for you here on the rock for 2003?

To start with we have three big TSD events, all part of the BC Championship and one a round of PCC. They are; Coast to Coast, followed by a new event Tsunami, and rounded out by Midnight in the fall. Each event has its own flavour, and its own following of die-hard rallyists. Once again local island teams will be contesting our three event Island Championship series to take home the hardware, wrestling it away from last year's winner, Roy Lima. Tsunami will prove to be an interesting event, being our first all paved night rally in a long time.

Finally, after a long absence we're bringing back a rally school. We haven't offered a school here for many years - not since the eighties when, like today, rallying saw a massive upswing. We are going to teach you everything you need to know about TSD rallying, and we'll also give you an overview of the club and show you a little about pro rally. The whole course will take about six hours with four hours of classroom theory followed by two short rallies. The format of the course will be laid back and entertaining, and there will be plenty of time for discussion and questions. Some topics we will be covering include car prep, crew prep, navigation, driving techniques, paperwork, plus how to run an event. If you're a new team, this course should be mandatory!

What else, you may ask, is on the horizon? Well, we are still seriously looking for a venue for our rallycross series, both on the north and south of the Island. A special thanks goes to Colin Graham, who has been instrumental in attempting to secure a rallycross lot up-island. Colin lives in Cumberland and has been diligently pursuing pit operators north of Nanaimo for both the club and me.

As far as Edge goes, the fire still burns and we are still actively scouting out a usable venue for another performance event. Not a week goes by that I am not talking to somebody about Edge. Although our time frame for this year is getting tight, we haven't given up hope. Besides, any work we do now will help us down the road.

Now, usually at the end of my articles I wax on about how we are fortunate to have a great bunch of seasoned organizers, as well as some promising newcomers in our organizing pool, right Keith and Christa? I also go on about how, if we set up an event and competitors come over, we can't run it without a dedicated few who give up their weekends to eat dust, letting other people play in our woods. I also go on how this is one heck of a great club with a fun bunch of people I can call friends. As well I might say that this is shaping up to be one of our great years, and it's also heartening to see more people step up and take on more responsibility as over time we lose the occasional member or two. I don't think I'll say all that this time. What I do want to say is rallying is in my blood. People ask me how I can still be so enthusiastic after all these years. Well it's easy. You make me feel that way! If it wasn't for my friends in the sport - and that includes the newbie on the phone asking me why we press flowers (someone told him there were tulips in the route book) - I couldn't stay nearly as motivated as I am. So, I want to personally thank each and every club member who allowed me to be your Rally Director again for 2003. That is ten years I have been happy to give all I can, not only to you, but also back to rallying.

Yours in Rallysport
Glyn Trafford

A Big Thanks to the Duncan Mall!

For the last 2 years the Duncan Mall and Merchant's Association has supported our cause and given us the use of their parking lot to hold our Solo II events. For a third year, we will be using their mall for our events! Thank you Linda, Ray and Dave for supporting us and allowing us to use your space,.

All events are on Thursday nights, Registration begins at 5pm.
May 29, June 19, July 10, July 31

www.formulaphoto.com

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32nd Thunderbird TSD Rally

**1st Round - Yokohama BC TSD Rally Championship
Merritt - Kamloops, BC - February 15-16, 2003**

Thanks again to everyone who was involved in putting on this year's Thunderbird Rally. It may sometimes look like a one-man show, but many other people put in a lot of hard work, and we really do appreciate it.

Rally Master: Paul Westwick
Co-organizers: Fred Wiedemann, Shelley Wiedemann
Registrar: Shelley Wiedemann
Steward: Adrienne Lang
Sweep: Linda & John Mawhinney
Volunteer Coordinator: Betty Third

Check Point Crews:
Ken MacAlpine & Adrienne Lang (secondary sweep)
Mike Wiebe & Shelley Wiedemann
Kevin Holter & Ryan Matthews
Chad Manley & Travis Streb
Rob Bassett & Fred Wiedemann
Malcom Muir & Dean Little
Johnny Young & Paul Jordon
Tim Roddick & Jeff Bachman
Shawn Roberts & John Girardi
Ashton Sheppard & Eric Hennessey
Aaron Neumann & Peter Volcz
Paul Westwick and Tony Latham (course opening)

Thanks also to all of our sponsors, in particular: Yokohama Tires, Specialty Subaru, OMP Drivers Edge and TOTAL Autosport. We would also like to give particular thanks to William McRae and Savoia Aero SA (a division of D.E.R International LLC) for creating the team prize. This added a certain extra colour and camaraderie to the event, and I was happy to see that almost every car ended up on one team or another.



Keith Morison / Morison Communications

As I mentioned at the start, this was a late addition to the programme, and I know that several people have ideas on other ways to score it. In addition, one of the senior competitors made an anonymous donation towards novice class prizes, so cheques went out to 5 novice teams.

CLASS WINNERS (Full results at www.rallybc.com):

Unlimited

1st - Lee Sorenson / Rod Sorenson - Subaru Impreza, 23pts.

Calculator

6th - Roy Lima / John Rapson - Subaru Legacy, 69pts.

Paper

12th - Dan Fealk / Stuart Fealk - Subaru XT6, 132pts.

Novice

22nd - Clint Hay / Justin Maillet - Nissan Sentra, 231pts.

Historic

27th - Mike Welland / Gordon Passmore - BMW 2002, 336pts.

Winning Team

"Team Fugawi"

Drive to Finish

From teardown to shakedown with the Mantis Works Mini Team



Article: Tony Reynolds - Mantis Works Driver

"Drive to finish!" Those were the words of advice given to me by Ken Kwong of Total Motors Group. It's funny how they never really sank in until I found myself in a less than ideal situation, pitched sideways, rapidly approaching a post, in the snow, on gravel tires. Now they cycled in my mind...smarten up kid. Such was my introduction to rally racing.

The Cochrane 100 Years Rally set to start on March 23, 2003 actually began for the young Mantis Works crew two months previously when they set their minds to building and racing the first rally-prepped Mini Cooper in Canada. The silk-green demonstrator car - aptly named Wasabi - was purchased through Mini Yaletown in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. It came fully loaded, complete with leather seats, full function audio-control steering wheel, and automatic climate control. Some Rally car, eh? The search began for someone willing to cage such a small car. Lucky for us, the first rally-prep shop in western Canada was just getting ready to open its doors, and Total Autosport were more than happy to oblige.

Words fail to convey the sadistic enjoyment one experiences from ripping apart a brand new car. "Snap." Off comes some plastic pieces. Oops, that sounds expensive. A word to the wise, don't pull until you are sure you no longer need that part! A few replacement clips later and it was off to Byron Meston for a cage. Meanwhile, co-driver Sean McPhee and myself took off to Merritt, BC for the Thunderbird TSD rally in my Jeep TJ. Out of it we expected to gain some experience as neither of us had done any performance rallying before hand. What resulted was a poor finish, some heated "debates" (the other left please), and a realization that we really didn't know what we were in for. Enter again, Ken. A few wise words, and a bit of coaching was all it took to re-ground the team. With the cage done, Josh Smith and myself painted the car in what was later realized as an Ikea-esque blue and yellow colour scheme.

Now came the "simple" task of putting this cute little thing back together. This "simple" task did not prove itself to be such, as among other things we found that the horn had disappeared in the wiring. Also, the combination of a very small car, and a rather stocky driver meant that finding a seat to fit both was somewhat of a challenge.

This all brings us to the morning of Saturday March 22. We showed up an hour late for the rally-cross, our first testing of the vehicle, after driving all night with the MINI in tow behind the TJ. The organizers kindly let us in and at first probably regretted it. It was a complete gong show on our part. The car ran great, I just couldn't follow the course. It was suggested that perhaps I should consult a map before continuing. Ken reassured me that everyone else had the advantage of a half hour walk through before hand. Spirits lifted, we came back out to battle for fastest time, narrowly missing out to Sean Bishop in his AWD Mazda 323 GTX. At least we ended up with a first place novice, first place two wheel drive, and some great seat time.

Waiting in nervous anticipation, there was to be a long night ahead. At one point, I swear I heard the last brain cell flicker out as it tried to conjure every situation the following day would present.

Refreshed from our nap, we began race day in last place as lucky car #13. First stage, and second corner out of the gate we lost power steering after coming down hard over the bridge. At the end of the stage I restarted the car, and lo and behold the steering returned. I got the inkling that should we have an unfortunate encounter with the scenery, upon restart the body panels might re-mould. We decided that we would not test this theory. Lucky too, as yet again, power steering and the Mini parted ways come stage two. It was not to return. Just to add insult to injury, our rally computer froze at 11:36:58 and also never returned, taking blind rallying to the extreme. After the first service we were re-seeded as car number 7 - first two-wheel drive. Not too bad.

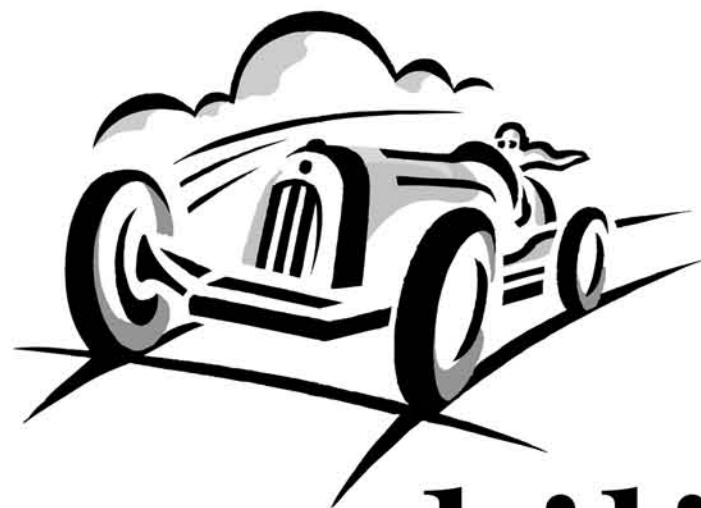
The highlight of the day had to be on stage 13, a stage we had run previously that day. "Straight ahead over crest into slight right" came the booming voice of my co-driver Sean McPhee. This time we are coming through the stage a lot faster than our previous attempt. "Medium left over crest into medium right" was what I heard. "This isn't a medium left anymore!!" I exclaimed as we slid wide towards some very ill placed trees. "GAS! Medium right over bridge into medium left!" I really couldn't ask for a better co-driver. We entered the bridge sideways, tweaked the tail around the last post, dropped the rear left wheel over the edge and then kept on the gas as - nostrils flared - Wasabi spun one wheel frantically in an effort to keep us on the straight and narrow. It seemed as though the car wanted to go in the ditch even less than I did.

Throughout the day, I had to be reminded a few times that we were only out to finish. And that we did. It turns out that although we had no power steering, no odo, and no experience, the go-cart like handling of the Mini allowed us to go along at quite a spirited pace. We came out of it with a fourth overall finish, first two-wheel drive, narrowly missing the podium by 6 seconds, as well as coming home with two plaques, one for "First Novice", and one for "First Production-Under". What a great day, we had loads of fun.

On behalf of the Mantis Works team, I'd like to thank all of the event organizers, marshals, and competitors for allowing us to come out and play, and Total Autosport for keeping us on the road. We look forward to seeing everyone again at our next event, the 2003 Makita Bighorn Rally, and wish a speedy recovery to Tomasz and Ania Karzynski.



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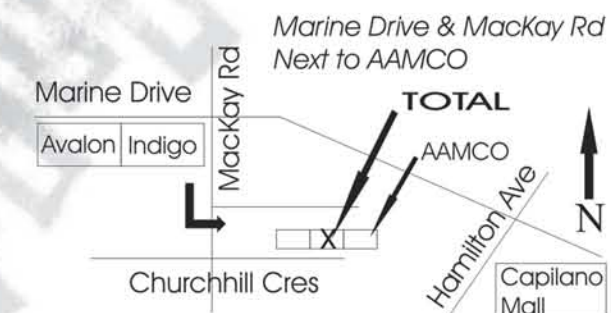
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