

Big White Rally Weekend

December 4-6, 2009

Introduction to Rally Volunteering

Performance stage rallies are *exclusively* organized and operated by enthusiastic and dedicated *volunteers* who use their time, resources and energy to make rallies happen. This commitment often goes beyond simply donating time; rally volunteers are willing to travel from afar and to spend their money on food, gas, and lodging just to support an event and participate in the excitement. Others donate their time, community knowledge, and specialized equipment to ensure a safe, fun and competitive rally event.

Stage rallies are a unique form of motorsport with a high profile internationally, although the sport is still in its infancy in North America. Teams use detailed *pacenotes*, created during a prerun called *reconnaissance*, which the codriver delivers to the driver as they are racing, so that they can drive further than he can see, and faster. Production based cars with full cages and tough suspensions compete for the fastest times on closed forestry or back country roads, called *special stages*. Each special stage has a name, and sometimes a bearing, if the stage is run in two directions (ex: Black Forest West). Rally cars race the special stages one at a time, generally with one minute intervals in between each car. The special stages are connected by *transits*, which are regular roads that teams navigate at posted speeds. Each special stage is defined by a timing area called a *control zone*, where teams must check in and out at assigned intervals. In between groups of special stages, called *sections*, the rally cars return to a main service area, also marked by control zones, to change tires, perform preventative maintenance and repair any damage incurred on stage.

Rally volunteers are involved in diverse elements leading up to, during and after a rally. This work generally falls into several major categories:

Course cars: experienced crews with radios in course opening and closing vehicles

Event staff: organizers, steward, competitor relations officer, technical inspectors, registration staff and others

Net control: rally master, scoring staff and radio operator

Service teams: service captain, control crews, refueling attendants and radio operator

Stage teams: stage captains, control crews, marshals, timing staff and radio operators

NOTE FOR FIRST TIME VOLUNTEERS

Control crew, marshal, or assistant positions at registration and technical inspection are usually the best spots for first time rally volunteers. It can be more fun to volunteer with friends, and effort will be made to keep groups of volunteers together during the event. The organizers sincerely appreciate the hard work enthusiasm of both new and experienced volunteers, and are available to answer any questions regarding volunteering at rally events.

Course Opening

A special stage becomes active and ready for competition when the course opening cars pass. There are usually two or three opening cars, called 0, 00, and 000, driven by experienced rally competitors who have radio communication abilities. The first course car is usually car 00 or 000, which travels each stage approximately 15-20 minutes before the first rally car begins the stage. These cars check that all control teams and marshals are in place, and that the stage is clear and safe for rally traffic. They also function as an early warning that the rally cars are getting ready to run the stage. *As soon as the first course car passes the stage is considered 'hot' and open to competition cars at rally speed, and is therefore totally restricted to volunteer or pedestrian traffic until car 99 has passed.*

Car 0 is usually a fully prepared rally car that travels each stage at about 8/10 rally speed, and passes approximately 5-10 minutes before the first rally car. It confirms that the stage volunteers are prepared, and that the stage is safe and ready for rally. *Car 0 is closely followed by competition cars at full rally speed.*

Course Closing

The rally cars are preceded on each stage by a set of cars known as course closing or sweep teams. All sweep teams carry radio equipment so they can be in constant touch with rally operations. They are typically experienced occupational safety volunteers with skill in vehicle extraction. They travel as two person teams in two separate vehicles. *Special stages are considered 'hot' and absolutely not open to any worker or pedestrian traffic until after 98 has passed, although 99 is usually close behind, and the stage is not officially 'cold' until after both closing cars have passed.*

Occasionally 99 may be delayed by extractions; therefore, if 99 does not appear soon after 98, confirmation that 99 is not traveling the stage by net control is required before allowing non rally traffic onto the stage road.

Car 98 ('fast' sweep) is the first vehicle to follow the last competing rally car on a stage. They proceed briskly but at a safe speed to check on the status of any rally team that has broken down on stage or that has an 'off'. Car 98 is an essential link

in the safety plan of a rally, as they are often first on the scene of an incident. They are instrumental first responders tasked with assessment, rendering aid, and timely communication of information to net control. If teams are stuck on the stage and the rally will be repeating the same stage again, 98 will help move the car so that it does not impede the next pass, after which the car can be extracted from the stage.

Car 99 ('slow' or 'heavy' sweep) follows fast sweep to provide assistance to rally teams that have broken down or had an 'off'. Depending on the size of the event, there may be several trucks in the slow sweep team. They can assist competitors with extractions, provide tows for cars with mechanical problems, and transport crews that need to arrange for heavier extraction back to service. Slow sweep teams can be first time volunteers who have trucks with towing capability, although this team will have a rally-experienced team leader. Slow sweep vehicles should carry tow straps and cables, and the people in these vehicles should have some prior experience in vehicle extraction. Whether or not a sweep team will attempt an extraction is dependent on each situation and the resources available; the decision is at the discretion of the team leader, as sweep is not obligated to extract every rally car. Each sweep team should carry the same 'out-in-the-forest-all-day' items as stage teams, and may carry other equipment issued by the rally organizers.

Emergency Response Personnel

The safety record for rally in Canada is very strong, but every event must have a well considered, dependable and seamless response to the rare occasion when the emergency plan will be activated. The primary sources of emergency personnel and equipment are local volunteer organizations such as fire departments and search and rescue teams. The generous donation of their time, equipment and expertise is very valuable to organizers, and to competitors who may rely on them for help. Anyone with first aid training is an asset to the event, no matter what volunteer role they are assigned.

Event Organizers

Stage rallies are dependent on dedicated volunteer organizers, as well as on the cooperation of local community organizations. Before the day of the rally, hundreds of hours are spent scouting and planning stages, obtaining road permissions, gaining support from local landowners and numerous other tasks. Organizers also handle event promotion, volunteer resources and the fun parts of rallies such as prizes and the awards party. They aim to develop long term, productive relationships with towns, government departments such as the Ministry of Forests, local tourism groups, and other relevant organizations. They work extremely hard to host successful events, and are grateful for the support of local volunteers and competitors, as well as those who travel from far away to participate.

Stage Captains

Stage captains are experienced rally volunteers who organize and lead control crews at the start and finish zones of the special stages. They are familiar with the stage rally format, timing equipment, and the mechanics of control crews. They are essential to setting up control zones, communicating information regarding the status of the special stage and the times of the rally cars, as well as instructing the rally competitors and filling out their time cards.

Stage Control Crews

Control teams are lead by stage captains, and work with the marshals on a given stage road to form a 'stage team'. The two control teams (start and finish controls) on each stage have three tasks. They secure each end of a road being used as a special stage. They perform the critical task of releasing the rally cars onto each stage at exact one minute intervals, and they precisely time the rally cars at the exact time that each car crosses the finish line of a stage.

Control teams consist of two or three people at the start and finish of every stage road. These people usually have rally experience, but often one or two new volunteers are part of control crews and receive training from the captain and other workers. Control crews often travel to different stages as part of a team, and each person must be prepared for a full day out in the forest. Because they travel as a team, control crew volunteers do not all need their own vehicles. The list of essentials for a winter day on the stages usually includes warm clothing, food and water, a camera, a folding chair, an FRS radio, a clipboard and some pencils.

Stage Marshals

A marshal is stationed at each road or trail intersection in order to insure that no non-rally traffic enters the road while in the event is in progress. In general, marshals have the best spots for viewing the rally cars in action. Being a rally marshal requires no prior rally experience, just an enthusiasm for rally, dedication to event safety and willingness spend the day out in the forest.

Marshals typically get up early in order to get secure the stages. They are positioned ahead of time to ensure stage safety, so occasionally there are periods of waiting in between arriving at an assignment and the start of the rally action. Marshals should have their own vehicles, preferably one that is not lowered, since they have to traverse forest roads to reach their marshalling locations. HAM radio operators are often assigned to marshal duty. Marshals should be prepared for a long day in their cars on stage. The list of essentials for a winter event stages usually includes warm clothing, food and water, a camera, a folding chair, a clipboard and pencils, an FRS radio, a book or friend for entertainment while waiting for the action, and a set of jumper cables.

Spectator Marshals

Spectator marshals are positioned at advertised spectator areas as part of the stage team, where they direct traffic and prevent spectators from wandering into unsafe areas. Directing and informing people who have come out to watch on the special stages is extremely important to maintaining the safety of spectators and of the rally competitors. Spectator marshals should be energetic, have good people skills, be dedicated to event safety and willing to manage crowds. Spectator areas are selected because they offer a great view of the rally, so spectator marshals often get to see some great racing. They travel into the stage with a team assigned to the spectator area, including a radio operator and often some media personnel, so they do not need their own vehicles. Spectator marshals should dress warmly and be prepared to be outside, monitoring spectators while the rally is passing by. The list of essentials for this position usually includes warm clothing, food and water, a camera, a folding chair, an FRS radio, a whistle, cowbell or bullhorn, and a cattle prod (just kidding).

Service Captain

The service captain is an experienced rally volunteer who manages the service control crews at the entrance and exit control zones, as well as the refueling area.

Service Control Crews

The main rally service park is marked by control zones at the exit and entrance. Rally cars will line up just outside the control zone into service, where they will check in during the minute calculated by the codriver. Each team has the same amount of time, at least twenty minutes, but up to forty, to work on their cars and check out of service. Late penalties are assessed for teams that do not check out on time. As cars leave service, they can be reassigned times based on reseeding results, which keep the faster cars near the beginning of the order. Volunteers check teams in and out of service, and fill out their timecards. They help direct traffic and keep the service area running smoothly.

An element that is unique to the service exit control is the refueling area, where rally teams put gas in the cars right after they exit the service park. As part of event safety measures, there are strict rules regarding refueling; for example, the driver and codriver must have their harnesses unfastened and doors open while at the refueling area. Volunteer refueling attendants are needed to keep the refueling area efficient, organized and safe.

Volunteers not interested in being or able to be out on the forest stages are often well suited for positions at the service area. It is generally closer to civilization and vehicles are not required.

Radio Operators

Each rally has a radio network for safety and for managing event operations. Usually a HAM radio network, it is staffed by experienced and licensed radio operators. The network has an experienced operator at rally HQ to serve as ‘net control’ and to manage the flow of communication. Individual operators are stationed at the start and finish controls of each stage road, and at other critical locations such as junctions or spectator areas. They report on the progress of a rally, sending and receiving messages and timing details for rally personnel. They relay any significant information regarding the safety of special stages.

No prior rally experience is needed, only familiarity with radio equipment and event operations. Ideally, radio volunteers should have their own vehicles, be equipped with 2 metre mobile transceivers, and be a licensed HAM operator. Often HAM operators are asked to provide basic road closure services as part of their duties, which entails monitoring a blocked intersection for unapproved traffic, and in this capacity they are known as *marshals*. Operators stationed at start and finish control zones act as part of the *control crews* by relaying the start and finish times of the rally cars to net control for real time scoring results.

Like the other stage volunteers, radio operators need to be prepared for a full day in the forest. The list of essentials for a winter day on the stages usually includes warm clothing, food and water, a camera, folding chair and a book or a friend, for something to entertain you during the times when the stages are not running. For those not interested or able to fulfill on stage duties, other positions are available at service, snowX or net control.

As part of rally communications, local HAM repeaters are used to make wide area communications possible. These repeaters are owned and maintained by HAM operator clubs, who generously allow the repeaters to be used as a backbone for the rally communication network.

Reconnaissance Staff

Rally teams drive the special stages the day before the competition to make detailed pacenotes, and volunteers are needed to monitor the recce for safety and fairness. As each rally team is only permitted two passes of each special stage, volunteers are positioned at the start and finish of each stage to fill out each team’s recce card, as well as on stage to ensure that teams adhere to the recce speed limits.

Scoring and Timing Staff

The stage times of top competitors are often separated by less than a second; therefore, the timing and scoring aspects of the rally must be conducted flawlessly. Experienced volunteers set up and monitor timing equipment, but throughout the day the gear is also used by control crews. Radio operators relay timing information from the start, finish and service controls to net control, where it is sorted and scored to determine reseeding results during the event, as well as the overall results.

Scrutineers

Technical inspection is a key element of stage rally event safety. Volunteers inspect stage cars and safety equipment to ensure that it conforms to the CARS rulebook. The chief scrutineer is an experienced volunteer, often a service crew member for a stage rally team, who is familiar with the CARS rules and the tech process. Other volunteers assist with directing traffic through technical inspection, checking paperwork, and other details. Assisting with tech is a good way to learn the competition rules and process for future events.

SnowX Workers

SnowX events are conducted as mini stage rallies, with similar volunteer needs, including course marshals who maintain security and replace fallen barriers, spectator marshals who inform and direct spectators, control crews who check cars in an out of the course, as well as timing and scoring personnel. The snowX setting is another option for volunteers who are not interested in or able to work out on the forest stages.

Sponsors

Sponsors are often not thought of as rally volunteers, but without them, a rally is often not possible. Sponsorship donation levels and participation can vary widely; the typical rally sponsor is a local business who wants to support a rally to promote the business, and for the benefit of the community in general. By supporting rally events, sponsors bolster the local tourism profile and the local economy.

Come out and be a part of stage rallying in BC!

Rallies are supported by a lot of enthusiastic and friendly people; come join the fun! Check on the event website for information on how to become a rally volunteer.