

ON RALLYING

ROADRALLY BY JAMES HEINE

SON OF SNO*DRIFT XI

Yes, the annual Detroit Region post-holiday RoadRally introduction to the New Year is named Son of Sno*Drift. But perhaps this year the rally's tagline should have been "Be careful what you wish for!"

"We have always advertised Son of Sno*Drift as a 'winter rally - we hope,'" explains rallymaster **Scott Harvey Jr.**

"Well, this time around, we got it."

In fact, the rally, run Jan. 10, "got it big time!" Harvey explains, including at least a half-foot of fresh snow that fell while the rally was in progress.

"There were several places where I was blazing the trail through virgin snow deeper than the 'Partial Eclipse's nostrils. One road in particular - Cassidy - was most difficult to get through, as the 20 TAs (time allowances) at Control 12 attest."

Harvey also notes this: 2009 was the first time safety speeds have been invoked in the 11-year history of the event. "At the first break, we thought 2mph off CAST would be a nice compromise from the 4mph drop listed in the General Instructions. By the time I got to Control 12, I knew the 4mph drop would be more appropriate."

While Son of Sno*Drift's entry was down a bit from previous years, the contest still drew a healthy field of 29 hardy teams, with the split among the Classes (Equipped, Limited, Stock and Novice) "fairly well balanced."

The snow required some balanced driving also. "I slid quite wide at the very first turn of the timed section," Harvey admits. "This was an obvious omen of things to come. It turns out that car 22 [Tim McIntosh and Matt Doescher] attempted the same maneuver with less satisfactory results. The reason stated on their TA: 'Stuffed it on first corner.'"

As the old bromide goes, "Let the games begin." McIntosh and Doescher soldiered on for many more legs until wisely deciding the supposed all-season tires on their Saturn were no match for an inspired Mother Nature.

As many rallymasters know, a great deal can be gleaned from a rally's TAs, not only about conditions, but also about team effort and coordination. Some Son of Sno*Drift TA requests, Harvey says, were rather obvious: "Snowing heavily, can't keep speeds"; "snowy roads/slippery"; or "ice on wipers." Others, however, were perhaps more indicative of non-weather-related

problems: "Missed turn because he wouldn't listen to me" or "turkeys crossing road."

The former is perhaps typical of working with drivers who think they know what they are doing, Harvey notes, while the latter - "I wasn't there, but I'm guessing they aren't referring to Soloists."

Then, Harvey adds, there is the classic: "Brain fart!"

Yet, the most common TAs were for slow local traffic, salt trucks and snow plows. "In all, there were 189 TAs applied for," Harvey says.

As one might imagine, this put a bit of pressure on the scoring committee. "Fortunately, we have the best guy in the business, **Bob Martin**," Harvey says. "Scores were posted by about 11:30 p.m. and awards went out shortly afterward."

Harvey adds that during the scoring process, many navigators got called to the "principal's office" to explain their TAs, which took time, "but it all got sorted out."

Not only did the snowy conditions affect teams and the scoring crew, the weather also placed extra stress on the checkpoint crews. "The control workers did a great job of dealing with the unusual conditions, and all were set up and ready in time for the arrival of the



(LEFT) The team of **Dave and Daniel Harkcom** finished Son of Sno*Drift with 52 penalty points, claiming second in Equipped. (BELOW) **Greg and Tom Woodside** brought their stage rally-prepared Dodge Shadow to the competition as a shakedown for an upcoming performance rally.



SCOTT HARVEY JR. PHOTOS

first car," Harvey says. "Jim Fekete had the dubious distinction of operating the last control on each of the three sections."

Once the scoring was sorted out, **Bruce Fisher** and **Rob Moran** emerged atop the leader board, winning the rally outright and finishing first in Equipped as well. Their total: 37 points for 24 slippery, snowy legs. **Team Harkcom (David and Daniel)** followed Fisher/Moran with 52 penalty points and **John Fishbeck** and **Kurt Dost** rounded out the top three overall and in Equipped with a score of 99.

In Limited, Stock and Novice, family teams dominated the classes: **Brian and Kevin Line** scored a convincing 3.5 minute Limited Class win over **Ken and Dennis Wiedbusch**, who in turn cruised past **Stephan and Lothar Kielmann** easily. In Stock, **Team Bennett (Jeff and Mike)** won top honors, with **Andy Bell** and **Andrew Hyde** comfortably second. In Novice, **Nathan and Aaron Usher** slipped past **James Dimmick** and **Scott King** for top honors while **Pat Combs** and **Krzyszko Porcek** finished third.

"This marks the third time - at least - that Bruce Fisher and Rob Moran have won Son of Sno*Drift," Harvey says. However, "They will need a couple more wins to catch **Ron Johnstonbaugh** and **Jack von Kaenel** on the all-time list."

Now that the mother of all Son of Sno*Drifts is history, Harvey says this: "It was more than we could have asked for in so many ways - some good and some not so good. Mostly, it was good, and a lot of the competitors and workers indicated they had a good time. Some actually said they wanted it to last longer. One thing is sure: It was quite an adventure."

CONTACT JAMES HEINE
editorialsolutions@sbcglobal.net