

Son of Sno*Drift XI – January 10th, 2009

Also known as be careful what you wish for...

We have always advertised Son of Sno*Drift as a “Winter rally – we hope”. Well, this time around, we got it. We got it big time! At least six inches of fresh snow fell during the running of this one. 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 T/As at control #12 attest.

This is the first time safety speeds have ever been invoked in the 11 years we have run this event. At the first break we thought 2 mph off CAST would be a nice compromise from the 4 mph drop as stated in the General Instructions. By the time I got to control #12, I knew the 4 mph drop would be more appropriate.

26 teams pre-registered for the event. Two sent their regrets before the start (one team from Chicago and one from Toledo). Five more teams registered at the event for a total of 29 cars. The split among the classes was fairly well balanced with 10 running in Stock, 7 in E and N, and 5 running in L.

While opening the course, I slid quite wide at the very first turn of the timed section. This was an obvious omen of things to come. It turns out car #22 attempted the same maneuver with less satisfactory results. The reason stated on their T/A: ”stuffed it on first corner”. Let the games begin.

A great deal can be gleaned from the T/As. Some are rather obvious: “snowing heavily can’t keep speeds”, “snowy roads/slippery”, “snow” (who would have guessed?), “ice on wipers”, “slippery conditions”, “it’s snowy”. Yep – who would have guessed? Then there were the more bizarre: “missed turn because he wouldn’t listen to me” (typical of those drivers who think they know what they are doing), “turkeys crossing road” (I wasn’t there – but I’m guessing they aren’t referring to soloists), “equipment failure”, “computer malfunction – had to rebuild” (I assume this required sending the motherboard back to the manufacturer). Then there is the classic: “brain fart”.

Then there were the off-road excursions. #22 again: “stuffed it (x2) 100 yds from control”. There were several incidents with connections to one another as well. From car #10: “off road”. From car #11: “pushed car #10 out of snow bank”. The navigators in #23 and #24 may have developed writer’s cramp by the end of the night. From the Honda of Dan Hudson and 13 year old daughter Jennifer are such gems as: “Broom” (later “ath” was added between the B and room), “couldn’t climb hill”, “stuck”, and the one everyone hates, “stuck and could not get up”. From the car #24 collection: “struck behind slow car staying in middle of road”, “stopped for car in ditch”, (and naming names) “pulled K. Tsang out of ditch” (see car #10 above). Car #29 reports: “white RX-7 stuck” (see car #10 above (RX-8 actually)).

The most common T/As were for slow local traffic but there were also ones for a salt truck on the main highway and several snow plows. And there was even one for “hunters & dog”. In all, there were 189 T/As applied for. One hundred and eighty nine! As one might imagine – this became a scoring nightmare. Fortunately we have the best guy in the business, in Bob Martin. Scores were posted by about 11:30 and awards went out shortly afterward. Many navigators got called to the “principal’s office” to explain their T/As. This process took time but it all got sorted out. The control workers did a great job of dealing with the unusual conditions and all were setup and ready in time for the arrival of

the first car. The early controls were operated by Ed Purdy/Al Bosonetto, Mark Henderson/Dan Lyons, Jen Glass/Brian Thorpe. Middle controls were run by John Kytasty/Sue Wiedbusch, Ted Hou/Les Francisco, and Doug Harvey/Donna Tompkin. The late controls were crewed by Jerry and Mary Shiloff (11 years and counting); finally Jim Fekete had the dubious distinction of operating the last control on each of the three sections. Sweep was handled by Rich Line and son David. They had plenty of action as they pulled out the Saturn of McIntosh/ Doescher at least twice and the Cobalt of Stepke/Kraska at least once. These latter two teams decided to cut their losses and exit the event early. Both came into the event with “all-season” tires on their FWD platforms. Enough said.

As mentioned, Bob Martin performed the scoring magic (and if you check out this video, shot by Brian Thorpe at control #4, you’ll see Bob magically disappear:

<http://s522.photobucket.com/albums/w345/eastanglian/Son%20of%20SnoDrift%202009/?action=view¤t=SowDriftctrl4Part1.flv>)

Bob also worked the closed control at #3. Once the scoring was sorted out, the top three finishers in Novice were: #24 Usher/Usher (381), #27 Dimmick/King (533), and #28 Lombs/Porcek (1168). Stock was won by Bennett/Bennett (#21 – 266) with Bell/Hyde second (#13 – 448). Limited showed a large separation from first to second. Line/Line dominated with 91 points (#14) over Wiedbusch/Wiedbusch with 438 points (#12). E class was taken by Fisher/Moran (#6 – 37 points) followed by Harkcom/Harkcom (#5 – 52 points). This marks the third time (at least) that Bruce Fisher and Rob Moran have won Son of Sno*Drift. They will need a couple more wins to catch Ron Johnstonbaugh and Jack von Kaenel on the all-time list.

Speaking of “the General” – Jack did a long distance check of the route instructions and leg slips. In addition to helping to improve the consistency of the instructions – Jack flew out from Maryland to perform the safety check for the second year in a row. The safety check was a bit of an event as well. I had to use my Porsche 944 for that run as the Partial Eclipse was temporarily out of service with an unexplained oil leak. Fortunately, I was able to locate and repair that in time for the main event. I shudder to think how far I would have gotten as course opening in a RWD sports car with 4” of ground clearance!

So the mother of all Son of Sno*Drifts is history. It was more than we could have asked for in so many ways - some good and some not so. 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. I want to thank all the workers for making it possible and also thank the competitors who came out for a pleasant little drive in the country. Hopefully we will have less extreme conditions next time (not too much less) and at future events. Please join us for other rallies in the Detroit Region and Great Lakes divisional series and also our RallyCross series.

Scott Harvey

Chief cook and bottle neck – Son of Sno*Drift





Photos by: Dan Lyons