

Son of Sno*Drift XIV

Jan. 14, 2012 (S/F) Waterford, MI

Words by Scott Harvey, photos by Jeffery Lewis Bennett, unless otherwise credited.

In an old Marx Brothers movie, Groucho borrows a line from Charles D. Warner – “everybody talks about the weather – but nobody does anything about it.” This has become one of my favorite sayings of late. And since once again, nobody did anything about the weather, we had to rely on Mother Nature to bring the snow and cold. As has happened too frequently – it was right down to the wire. The day that I measured the route, in late December, the roads were slippery and sloppy after a 3-4 inch snow fall. After that, the weather turned warm and rainy. It was not until two days before the event that the weather again turned cold and we got a couple of inches worth of snow. There’s nothing quite like the last minute! And, as it has turned out, a full month after the fact, there has been hardly any snow or cold to speak of. We lucked out – and we’re still talking about it.

Turn-out for this year’s rally was about average. 29 competitors made it to the start at Mexico Lindo in Waterford. There were 12 Novice teams, 9 in E and 7 in L. Stock class turned out to have twice as many as had been expected. Bruce Fisher was navigating for his son Matt. Bruce has, in recent years, driven in E or L with Rob Moran. Another team ended up running S after their sending unit packed up before the start. Sellers and Ford normally run in E, but without their sender – there wasn’t much else to do. Another E class team almost suffered similar fate. Here’s Jack von Kaenel’s summary of their early adventure:

Incidentally, you may not be aware of just how close we came to being relegated to the ranks of a "fun" (sic) run.

After departing Mexico Lindo for the odo run, we found ourselves a TENTH of a MILE short in the less than half mile transit to the start of the tire warm up! Early in the tire warmup we confirmed that there was a mileage-measuring issue, so we returned to the start. While en route we changed to our back-up sending unit only to receive an "Input 2 Suspect" message! What a way to start! Now seriously late, we restarted and avoided further drama until the final stretch of the odo leg. Having made the final turn with a reasonable mileage, we were shocked to find that more than a quarter mile had "disappeared" when we arrived at the end point. With not time to dither, we loaded the factor generated through most of the odo run and launched. Fortunately, it was good enough for a one on Leg 1. Then, in the next leg, which ended in the hidden control/manned control double, we suffered a total odo FAILURE! After some serious troubleshooting and a major TA, we apparently solved the problem (although we never uncovered a specific cause) and, with fingers crossed, managed to avoid major mileage issues for the rest of the rally.

With our last minute hit of winter weather, the fun was about to begin. The roads were just about right for the set speeds. The snow that fell on the roads became packed to ice. These slippery conditions made for adventurous times for many of the competitors. One such moment is captured by Mary Shiloff:

You know, of course, that Sellers/Ford had to switch from equipped to stock when their odo packed it in on the way to the event, which, by the way was not the first year that happened. Checkpoint 7 is called the Cemetery and it is a regular assignment for Jerry and me. It ends in a downhill left turn followed by the timing line a couple hundred feet down the road. Where we sit in the car, we can see the cars through the trees coming down the hill. Dave comes down the hill pretty fast apparently looking to make up some time...but the roads are pretty slippy and he does a donut at the curve and ends up pointing the other direction. He pulls a perfect drift turn, gets headed back in the right direction and crosses the line. Jerry looked at me and said "Zero." The only person more amazed than us was Dave when he came up to the car to collect his critique slip.

Best entry into a checkpoint that I have seen in a long time.

There were, no doubt, many other heroic actions taking place out in the woods on this day. There were also some less than stellar moments. I heard of multiple cases of cars going off the intended course and finding ditches and cattail ponds. Our sweep crew, Rich and Linda Line, got to pull Bargman and Turner out at least twice. There is also evidence that another team had more than one “off”. I don’t normally get reports on the log sheets from our control crews – but this one from control #13 was interesting: “rally traffic in ditch just past control.” We’ve also got photographic proof of one team’s excursion into the brush.

As has been common the past few years, I rely heavily on the bought time slips to fill in a lot of what I miss. Being first on the road – making sure the controls are in-place, means I miss a lot of the action. And maybe that’s for the best anyway. Here are some interesting bits from some of the T/A slips:

From car #6 – “Missed inst. (not used to tulips)” and “Nav is getting tired or just stupid.”

Car #31 was right up front – “We suck and...missed turn,” “we suck and... miss turn” followed by, “we suck and ...miss turn.” Car #26 – “lost,” followed by – “lost.”

And there is evidence of slippery conditions or poor tire selection...

From #30 – “technical error” and “stuck.”

Car #23 – “car stuck,” car #24 – “stuck,” car #17 – “stuck in snow” but it was witnessed by “Gray Omni”

Car #14 – “push out Celica car #14,” I’m not sure how this works. Car #14 pushed itself out? But car #14 was not a Celica. I’m confused. Maybe car 14 was too.

There must have been a police incident on the way out to the start of the third section. There are four accounts that share a similar theme. Car #21 – “police show up 7:24, go 7:27,” car #24 – “cop giving information,” car #26 – “police jam” and finally #28 – “cops.”

There were a couple of equipment issues too: Car #1 – “flat tire” and car #5 – “car banging – had to remove wheel drive.”

This one is a little odd. I don’t know exactly how to take this one: Car #11 – “house break in call.” Is this an off-duty cop taking calls? Is it a call from home? Maybe it’s an on-duty cop perpetrating a break-in?

Finally there are two that really stand out. The first is the excellent penmanship exhibited by Liz Bourquin, navigator in car #12 (the previously mentioned Gray Omni, by the way). Not only is everything clearly written, but it also tells a great story: “Driver ate too many chips at Mexico Lindo, got late start (supposed to start 1:22, started as 1:31.5).” That’s beautiful.

Now the other end of the spectrum comes from car #10. What can only be described as coming from the abstract expressionism school of T/A writing – Terry Palmer (I assume) scribbled three totally illegible words(?) on two slips. I sure hope this information was not important.

Speaking of Terry Palmer, he and driver Jim Walker decided to come and join us after being away from the sport for quite some time. Terry has worked many rallies with his wife Carolyn (including POR) in recent years. Jim has been away for a bit longer, but the two of them, together, were one of the top Pro Rally teams of the 70s and 80s. I’m not sure when they last competed in a rally – but they both go back to events from the 60s! It was great to have them back. My understanding is that they will make it to more of our rallies in the future. Welcome back, guys!



Not your typical choice for a winter rally - Gupta/ Meade in a Mustang

Another rear drive car – Bargman/ Turner in a Conquest

As seems to happen each year, there were a couple of mistakes on the legs slips. One was easily overcome by taking the sum of the segment times and determining the correct leg time for legs 5 and 6. There was another mistake that left competitors with (at least) two possible interpretations. And since it would have been too much trouble to figure out which interpretation was used (particularly among the novice class) it was decided it would be best to throw leg 11. But other than those minor glitches, the rally went well. Most competitors found their way through. There were some that had a little more trouble than others. It’s all part of the adventure. If it were easy – what would be the point?

I have been really swamped at work and with my activities on my own time (part of the reason this summary is so late in coming). My time available for putting the rally together and finding enough control workers to cover my normal target had to be scaled back a little. It also kept me from changing the route significantly from the previous year(s). I’m sure the regular competitors found a lot of the roads and controls familiar (not that this is any different from recent years). Daniel Harkcom mentioned at the finish that he knew of many control locations (at least assumed) and still could not get the zeros that all teams are shooting for. I think this means it’s still challenging. At least that’s the way I’m going to take it.



First place in Novice Schilke/ Lane



Stock class winners Fisher/ Fisher

When it came time to round up workers, I felt a little behind. I was fortunate to get **Mike Bennett** to assist with the safety check. He likes to compete at this event normally, but I think he still had a good time working. The safety run always takes place in advance of the event, but it needs to happen after the rally is nearly fully developed. Since our window of opportunity was so small – I needed to pack several days straight with course layout and measurement. It came together – but it was difficult and exhausting.

On the day of the rally I was blessed with the help of some of the best workers anyone could ask for. **Mary and Jerry Shiloff** performed registration and worked three controls. **Bob Martin** worked one hidden control and did the scoring before he had to leave for work on the “midnight shift”. **Ken Wiedbusch** cared for and delivered the region’s rally equipment (and competed in the rally). Sweep was busy this year – and that’s the way **Rich Line** likes it. **John Kytasty** started the rally working alone at the second hidden control. I was able to match him up with **Jon Jereo** after control #8. Jon started out with Mike and **Jeff Bennett** for control #8. Mike Bennett and his son, Jeff competed together last year. Since Mike had intimate knowledge of the route, he was precluded from entering this year. It was great to have him and Jeff, a professional photographer support as workers. With the three workers at control #8, Jeff was able to concentrate on photographing each car as it arrived, leaving Mike and Jon to handle the normal checkpoint duties. This turned out to be an excellent bonus. Hopefully all have received the nice photos that were taken by Jeff. I thought this was a great addition to the event (and to this document). Hopefully we can do this again in the future.

Other control crews included: **Ray Foulkrod and Phil Smith, Mark Henderson/ Aaron Conner, Ryan Thompson/ Rob Moran, Aaron/ Nathan Usher and Jen Glass with Brian Thorpe**. This last crew got an unusual assignment. Having recently delivered her horses to our farm in South Lyon, she needed a break in her work duties to return to the farm and take care of her work duties feeding the horses. To make this work, I gave them an early control in section one and a late control in section three. Luckily, I had the luxury of one extra crew for most of the rally, so it allowed me to juggle assignments a little. From what I can tell - the workers all did a great job. It’s always a great relief for any rally organizer to have such competent workers on the job. Not having to worry about the controls being properly staffed and on-station really makes my job a lot easier. To all the workers – Thank you! We all need to thank the management and staff of the **Mexico Lindo** restaurant. We have started and finished here for over ten years. They have always treated us well. I will regret the day when we will run the rally closer to the South Lyon area, except for the fact that this will put us closer to the really good roads in Livingston, Washtenaw and Jackson counties.



Car #16 taking a rather creative approach to control #15



Allison and Bourquin (#12) entering control #15

After everyone finished sliding into the finish, there was a bit of time taken up by sorting out the double jeopardy questions. After we had this resolved, scores were posted and trophies were given out. Aside from the coveted “trash and trinket” awards that I give out to many of the teams that don’t place at the top of their class – there were also the little diorama trophies that I have been making for the past couple of years. This year I was able to locate Subaru (Hot Wheels) cars to use as the subject vehicle. Since Subaru is currently the more popular type of vehicle used by rallyists, this was a logical choice. Bob Martin and John Kytasty sorted out the scoring and we were able to hand out awards before everyone had fallen asleep.

Third place in Novice was taken by Duncan and Scott Banes with 976. Second in N (922) was taken by Shawn Alexander and Jason Kolk. Winning Novice were David Shilke and Janice Lane (646). David is active in the RallyCross series. Hopefully he had enough fun to come back and run more rallies as well.

Stock class was taken over by the two teams, mentioned earlier, that don’t normally run in this class. Second were David Sellers and Janice Ford (200) and the son/father team of Matt and Bruce Fisher took the class win with 171 points. I think this is Matt’s first rally as a driver. He’s off to a good start!

Limited class was also a family affair. Second in L were Brian and Kevin Line (50) and another father/son team took the win. Ken and Dennis Wiedbusch took the class honors with a total of only 31 points. In Equipped, another father/son team, David and Daniel Harkcom, came in with only 24 points. Their flat tire in the second section accounted for most of the difference to the eventual winners, Ron Johnstonbaugh and Jack von Kaenel (14).

Once again, I must thank all the workers and competitors that helped make this an enjoyable event. We have a strong schedule of events again this year in both the Detroit Region and the Great Lakes Division. There are enough rallies and RallyCrosses to keep most anyone occupied. Please join us again soon.

Scott Harvey – chief cook and bottleneck – Son of Sno*Drift

Stay tuned to the Detroit Region SCCA website for the latest stories (lies), results, gossip, photos and schedules.

www.detroit-scca.org



Ken and Dennis Wiedbusch on their way to the class win in Limited (On their new Hakkapeliitta Rs – from Team Harco)



Overall winners Ron Johnstonbaugh and Jack von Kaenel



Excellent lighting effects in the trees – Jeff Bennett photographing the competitors...and more



Jim Walker and Terry Palmer – on their way into control #8



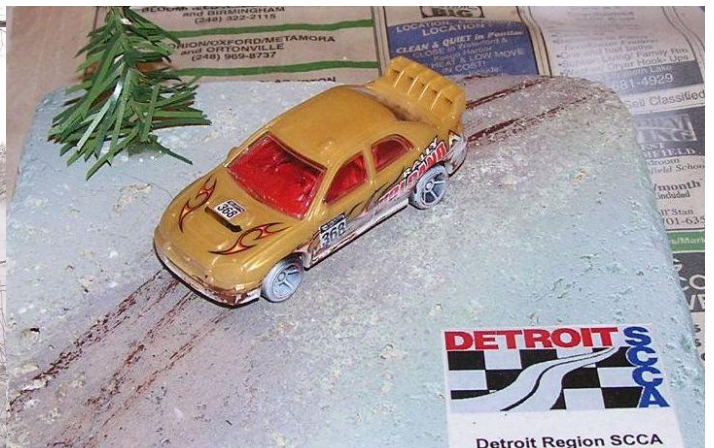
Control #7 – Mary and Jerry Shiloff and the “moose”



Control #8 – Jeff Bennett preparing his camera while Mike Bennett and Jon Jereo stay warm
Scott Harvey Photos



Mark Henderson on duty at Control #1 – Aaron Conner stays warm



An example of the “Subaru” trophies for Son of Sno*Drift XIV
Scott Harvey Photos