

Son of Sno*Drift X

Saturday, January 5th, 2008

Words and photos by Scott Harvey

The tenth running of the Detroit Region's winter rally was almost a true winter rally. About ten to twelve inches of snow had fallen in the area the previous week leading up to the day of the rally. High temperatures had also remained at or below the freezing mark for most of that week leaving the unpaved roads with a nice layer of packed snow, and even ice in some places. The forecast for the day of the rally called for light rain and gradually rising temperatures. The forecast turned out to be accurate, and the result was wet and slippery conditions for most of the rally and dense fog in many areas late in the event.

The rally drew 35 entrants and all but one team soldiered on to the finish. Unfortunately for Bruce Fisher, event chairman of the Press On Regardless rally, he was not able to press on, as the engine in his Jeep Cherokee was suffering from overheating problems. Rather than risk irreparable damage to the engine, Bruce and Rob Moran decided to call it a day after the first section of the rally. There were a few other teams that had incidents; though of a much less drastic nature. At least two competitors and one of the control crews found the going a little too slippery for their tires and "stuffed it". For the crew of Ryan and Gen Thompson, they were able to dig their way out and get to control #14 with a few minutes to spare before the first car was due. As for the competitors, some of them needed assistance from other competitors to continue. One of the bought-time slips matched two teams together in this way. Car #26 (Martynov/ Martynov) used a T/A after pulling out a "Kia Rio". Since there was only one Kia in the rally it had to be #21 (Blanc/ Arnold). A few other T/As revealed that the roads were indeed slippery and also that there was a "crazy old man" in the road at one point.

Ultimately, road conditions were just about the right mix of slippery and grippy. If there is too much grip due to a lack of snow or ice, the speeds set for the rally become rather slow and boring. With the expected slippery conditions, the set speeds become more of a challenge for the competitors to maintain. This also increases the fun factor for all involved. A new twist this year was the fog. Rarely do we get fog early in January. But with the rain that fell in the early part of the day, and the steadily rising temperatures at night, the fog became a factor.

As has been the case for nearly all editions of Son of Sno* - the route took the competitors quickly out of Oakland County (where it seems every dirt road has a 25 mph posted speed limit) and into Livingston County. A lot of the same control locations greeted the veterans of this rally. There was also a pair of closed controls intended to catch some of these veterans running a little bit ahead. In general, the closed controls had the expected results. Most teams were a little early there or a little late at the corresponding open control. One thing learned from last year's inclusion of a couple of closed controls was to better explain the method for correcting any "double jeopardy" situations that may occur. For example, one team used a T/A to fix their mistake of a missed pause. Rather than being penalized twice for the same mistake, the General Instructions described what action to take to have adjustments made. One team did try to weasel their way out of some extra points by filing a T/A for running ahead. They were early to the closed control and then wanted an adjustment to fix the 5 early at the open control. I spoke briefly with the driver about this and without thinking too much about it; I suggested that he submit a T/A at the first break for consideration. After getting back on the road and thinking more about his request, I remembered the philosophy behind the closed controls that I placed in the rally. The idea is to "run on time - all the time". If you are running ahead (or behind for that matter), this is your fault. It is a mistake, but not a mistake that warrants a correction. In this case, the request was denied.

The rally itself covered approximately 180 miles of some relatively interesting roads. There were 24 controls and all were scored. Two of these controls were of the closed variety. Most competitors I spoke with after the rally seemed to have had fun and enjoyed the roads and the conditions. There were a lot of Novices again this year (13) and the ones I spoke to were very enthusiastic about their experience. A few even wanted to know when the next winter rallies would be run.

As has been customary at Son of Sno*Drift, I pay out trophies through third place in the Novice class. This year we had a tie for second. Erik Koepfgen/ Alvan Allison tied with Eric Mozer/ Jay Efting with a score of 672. The former crew showed significant improvement as the rally went on. Their score for the third section was in the double digits. The latter crew ran consistently throughout the rally, piling up the majority of their points in the middle section. As a bonus for the class winners this year – Eric Mozer contributed passes to the **Race Rochester** indoor go-kart center. Rather than give him a prize to his own facility, I opted to make the “tie-breaker” for the trophies based on the kart passes. Hence Eric/ Jay got the third place Novice trophies, while Erik/ Alvan received the trophies for second place. The winning team in Novice was Kenneth Tsang and Sean Murphy, racking up just 600 points in their Mazda RX-8.

Stock was a three way battle with Jeff and Mike Bennett coming in second with a score of 153. The class winners were Richard Worden and Richard Robinette, who have come out of hiding again for the second year in a row to run the Son of Sno* rally (102 points). The team to keep an eye on in Stock seems to be Doug (veteran stage rally competitor) and his daughter, Katie Shepherd. Had it not been for a 120-early at one leg in the middle section this team would have won the Stock class handily. Their total score for the rally was 188.

In Limited the battle was very tight for the class win. Jim Fekete and Jim Shaffer edged out Brian and Kevin Line 46 to 54. Not far behind in third were Ken and Dennis Wiedbusch with 72 points.

Winning overall and winning Equipped were Ron Johnstonbaugh and Greg Lester. Their score of 24 equates to exactly one point per control. Nine points back were Tom Bell and David Stone who probably had the second worst hard-luck story of the rally. After the last control of the rally there was a huge pothole on the stretch of asphalt leading to the main highway. Many competitors reported hitting this crater (myself included). The bad news for Tom Bell is that it damaged a tire and it went flat. This by itself was not the worst part. That was left for the fact that the key needed to remove the wheel locks was left at home in Traverse City! A bit of planning and scheming was called for and eventually Tom’s car was towed all the way to Milan. With a good nights rest behind them, Ryan Thompson welded a bolt to the wheel lock and after that it was easily removed. Last I heard from Tom, the wheel locks have gone out with the trash.

So the tenth edition of the Son of Sno*Drift rally is history. In my mind, it was one of the best. We had a good turnout of competitors, the weather and road conditions were just about right and there was a great influx of worker support. It is never possible to put on a rally without workers. This year I had help from the following great workers: **Jack von Kaenel** served as the Safety Checker and Co-chairman. **Mary and Jerry Shiloff** celebrated their tenth SoS* by working registration and one control. They were both feeling under the weather and since we had such a strong contingent of workers, opted to head home to better care for their illness and get some much needed rest. Sweep was handled by **Rich Line and #3 son David**. Working one of the closed controls and handling the scoring were **Bob Martin** and **John Gingrich**. Scoring was also aided by **Rob Moran** as he dropped out as a competitor when the vehicle he was navigating in experienced the overheating problem. Working early controls were **Sue Wiedbusch, Jennifer Glass and John Kytasty**. Later John was treated to a “white knuckle” ride with the course opening car through section three. Also working early controls were **Doug Harvey, Ted Hou and Les Francisco**. Middle controls were handled by the crews of **Steve Ray/ Andrew Wrobel** and **Ryan/ Gen Thompson**. A couple of “roving” and fill-in crews were manned by **Phil Smith/ Ray Foulkrod** and **Dave Harkcom/ Mike Burns**. Two control crews worked together by swapping duties for three controls. Each was new to working controls but they all did a great job. These later crews included **Ray/ Karen Davis** and **Matt Straney/ Bruce Matthews**. More of the later controls were handled by veterans **Mark Henderson and Dan Lyons**.

Special thanks must go to Kasper and George and their staff at the Mexico Lindo restaurant in Waterford. This marks the eighth or ninth year they have allowed us to headquarter the rally in a friendly and comfortable atmosphere. To all the fine workers and to all of the competitors, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for helping to make Son of Sno*Drift X a fun and memorable event. I am looking forward to bringing back Son of Sno* XI in 2009.

Thank you,
Scott...chief cook and bottleneck for Son of Sno*Drift



Mary and Jerry Shiloff working their tenth Son of Sno*Drift. Great workers such as the Shiloffs make things seem smooth and seamless, even if there are issues behind the scenes. This year there were few.



A little sideways into control #8 are Matt McGlinch and Jeff Hudnut.