

ON RALLYING

ROADRALLY BY JAMES HEINE

ALMOST PERFECT

By the time you read the words that follow, spring will be in full bloom throughout much of the country. Yet at this moment (late January), the snow is falling here in St. Louis, and the 10th edition of the Detroit Region's Son of Sno*Drift Rally, which took place Jan. 5, is recent history.

The RoadRally "was almost a true winter rally," reports organizer **Scott Harvey Jr.** "About 10 to 12 inches of snow had fallen the week leading up to the day of the rally. Temperatures had also remained at or below the freezing mark for most of the week, leaving the unpaved roads with a nice layer of packed snow – and even ice in some places."

The rally drew a field of 35, and all but one team soldiered on to the finish, Harvey reports. "Unfortunately, **Bruce Fisher**, event chair for Press On Regardless, was not able to press on, as the engine in his Jeep Cherokee suffered 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."

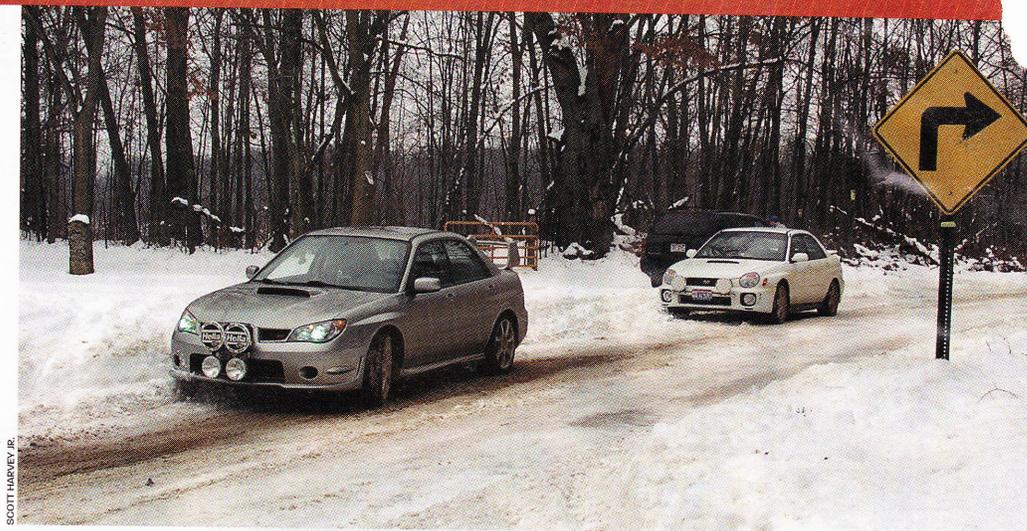
Ultimately, road conditions for the 180-mile, 24-control RoadRally were the right mix of slippery and grippy, Harvey says. "If there is too much grip due to a lack of snow or ice, the speeds set for the rally become rather slow and boring. With the expected slippery conditions, the speeds we set become more of a challenge for the competitors. This also increases the fun factor."

Harvey said a new twist this year was fog. "Rarely do we get fog early in January. But with the rain that fell early in the day, and the steadily rising temperatures at night, the fog became a factor."

The results? "Winning overall and winning Equipped were **Ron Johnstonbaugh** and **Greg Lester**," Harvey reports. "Their score of 24 equates to exactly one point per control. Nine points back were **Tom Bell** and **David Stone**."

In Limited, the battle was equally tight, Harvey says: "**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."

In Stock, the contest turned into a three-way battle among **Jeff** and **Mike Bennett**, **Doug** and **Katie Shepherd**, and **Richard Worden** and **Richard Robinette**,



Tom Bell and **David Stone** (silver Subaru) and **Ron Johnstonbaugh** and **Greg Lester** pause at **Control 8** on the Detroit Region's Son of Sno*Drift Rally on Jan. 5. In a tight contest with **Bell** and **Stone**, **Johnstonbaugh** and **Lester** won the rally by just nine points. In the background is the control crew of **Jerry** and **Mary Shiloff**. **Johnstonbaugh** is at their car's side window.

Harvey says. "The class winners were **Richard Worden** and **Richard Robinette**, who have come out of hiding for the second year in a row to run Son of Sno*Drift."

Finishing behind **Worden/Robinette** (102 points) were **Team Bennett** (153) and **Team Shepherd**, a father/daughter duo (188).

In Stock, the Shepherds are a team to keep an eye on, Harvey says. "Had it not been for a 120-early at one leg in the middle section of the rally, they would have won Stock handily."

As in past years, Son of Sno*Drift also drew a strong Novice contingent. **Kenneth Tsang** and **Sean Murphy** won the class in their Mazda RX-8 (600 points), and **Erik Koepfgen** and **Alvan Allison** tied for second with **Eric Mozer** and **Jay Efting** (672 points).

Koepfgen and **Allison** "showed significant improvement as the rally went on. Their score for the third section was in double digits," Harvey says.

The Novice teams he spoke with after the event were enthusiastic about the experience, Harvey notes. "A few even wanted to know when the next winter rallies would be run."

KEYSTONE REDUX

After a successful United States RoadRally Challenge last October in Pittsburgh, Pa., the Steel Cities Region will present two National rallies at the end of this month.

The weekend will open April 26 with **Chuck Larouere's** Steel Haul National Course Rally and continue April 27 with the intriguingly titled Punxsutawney Dog Run National Touring Rally.

Both rallies are headquartered in Delmont, Pa., near Pittsburgh.

Naturally, the "Dog Run" will include

ROAD CONDITIONS... WERE THE RIGHT MIX OF SLIPPERY AND GRIPPY

a visit to Punxsutawney (Delaware for "town of the ponkies"), Pa., says rallymaster **Bruce Gezon**.

"The course was chosen for its rural beauty and challenging checkpoint locations. There will be minimal speed changes and no automatics of any kind; thus just a leisurely ride in the country for the navigator while waiting for the next checkpoint to find the driver off dead zero."

Saturday's Steel Haul will offer teams a contest with four concepts, **Larouere** says.

"The first six legs will feature a 'no quotes' portion. Contestants will not know if they are looking for a sign or a landmark until they get there. The next six legs will feature traps based on doing the next numbered instruction or repeating the numbered instruction that was just completed."

After a break for lunch, six legs of Steel Haul will feature "Absence of the Sign" traps "with only one sign to consider at any time," **Larouere** says.

The final six legs will feature an Aristotle rule. "I expect several cars to run clean," **Larouere** notes.

For more information about the Steel Cities weekend, check the Calendar section in this magazine or visit www.scca.com and click on RoadRally.

And, finally, what are "ponkies"? "Sand flies, of course," explains **Gezon**.

CONTACT JAMES HEINE
editorialsolutions@sbcglobal.net