

Review: Rallye Perce Neige

A Fresh Start.

Story by Budd Stanley.

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Rallye Perce Neige once again signalled a new season of rallying in Canada. The start of the 2005 Canadian Rally Championship saw the noticeable disappearance of the factory Subaru Rally Team, but Subarus were still there in force even if it wasn't Pat Richard or Tom McGeer. Fifteen Subarus in total led the 34 car field, as the privateer drivers now have the honour of fighting for an overall victory. And fight they did.



Early leader Antoine L'Estage

Photo by Andrew Harvey

While Antoine L'Estage was winning the opening stages and starting to pull away from the field in his Hyundai Tiburon, Jean-Paul Perusse was putting in an eye-opening performance in a Mitsubishi Evo VI. Just behind them, Peter Thompson, Joel Levac and Matt Iorio, all Subaru drivers, were locked in a very close daylong battle with no more than 30 seconds separating the trio up until Stage 7.

In the end, the transmission let go on L'Estage's Hyundai, and the Perusse challenge faded as the battling Subarus of Thompson and Levac were able to slip by to take the top two podium places in that order. These performances were career best finishes for both drivers with Thompson getting his first victory and Levac a well-deserved runner-up.

One of the most inspiring performances was once again by Suzuki team driver Bill Bacon. Driving his production two-wheel-drive Swift (front cover), he

outperformed several Group N and Open class AWD cars on his way to a fifth place finish. The success of the Suzukis comes as no surprise, as the team has consistently shown its dominance over much more powerful machinery since its first event in May of last year. Bacon has made a name for himself as a giant slayer, muscling the little Swift past purebred rally cars with incredible consistency. Since May, the team has remained undefeated and recorded a class championship in their first year, with more likely to come.

Not only was this the first rally of the 2005 season, but it also saw the debut of several teams making their first stab at competitive rallying. One of those teams was the Planet Motorsport crew of John Vanos and co-driver Alan Ockwell. Having bought a used rally car prepped for Perce Neige, the team kept a cool head and drove a smart rally,

steadily moving up the leader throughout the day as their confidence grew. Despite an untimely scrap with a snowbank, the team finished second in class, eighth overall in the Ontario Regional portion. To finish your first rally is a victory, but to finish as high as they did is a feat unto itself.



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