

Totem Rally 2005

November 19 & 20, 2005. Cache Creek to Clearwater, British Columbia. The West Coast Rally Association presented **The 2005 Totem Rally**. Totem was Round 7 of the 2005 BC TSD Championship and Round 4 of the Pacific Coast Challenge, both very, very close in points and Totem may be the deciding factor.

Tech Inspection and Registration went smoothly in the dark parking lot, and in the lodge, at the Bear's Claw Inn in Cache Creek. It seemed as though a greater percentage of the entries arrived Friday night rather than early Saturday, thus giving more time for rest, camaraderie, and good natured ribbing of old friends. Co-Organizers Paul Westwick and Tony Latham assembled five checkpoint crews and one sweep vehicle to take care of the twenty-six entries.

Saturday morning seemed colder, but there was no sign of frost, and still no snow in town. This would change.

Battle Creek Regularity covered 20.48km, beginning at Battle Creek FSR at 55km/h – significantly higher than for '04 T-Bird when snow depth brought a 20% reduction in rally speeds (still too brisk for some). Battle Creek began with an uphill start from the CG, exposure right, crested the back side of a ridge and dropped into a small valley, then narrowed with a couple of twists, before the crossroads. Turning onto Cache Creek-Deadman Road, roughly twice as wide, the speeds increase to 65, including the switchbacks down hill, affectionately dubbed the "Yawning Pit of Death", complete with a CP at the entrance, and photo ops through the big sweeping corners. Back Valley Road took the route out to pavement.

A short transit east on Highway 1 replaced the Barnes Lake/Indian Gardens/Guichon Creek Forest Service Road section, dropping 40km and 30 minutes from the rally. When you wish for snow, sometimes you get more than you want.

Red Lake Regularity covered 49.03km and began with sharp lefts and rights on an easy climb up Sabiston Creek Road, becoming hairpin after hairpin on a very steep ascent into the clouds. Visibility, fresh snow, sharp corners and speed 53km/h challenged all teams, including the workers. Our first

checkpoint was at 10.97km. At as early as 5km, entering a hairpin, my right-seat for this event, Steve Brown (another Subie driver) and I both declared we were more comfortable working than competing in the whiteout. The 10.97 CP was downhill, easy left, into a long hard right. Visibility was so poor the camera wouldn't pull the cars out of the snow and fog. The snow was just at freezing, and a bit slushy. The "line" through our corner was "different" for just about every one of the all-wheel-drive cars, except the BMW 325ix of Eric Horst and Steve Willey. At only 3-late they had the best time, and best line of all cars. Eric's smooth driving, with Steve tweaking the computer, would lead to a First Place finish for Day One.

Sabiston Creek Road dropped steadily to meet Copper Creek Road and another CP. Following 3.5km of gently rising pastureland, a long hairpin right marked the narrow twisting steep hillclimb to Red Lake. **"Caution: Exp R for 1.6km, 1.0mi."** warned the drivers of the danger. Car 1's HAM radio call warned Car 2 **NOT** to follow his tracks. Lee and Rod Sorenson had gone off the outside of a corner and down an embankment, completely hidden from traffic. The excursion would require "professional help", meaning a longer cable than on Sweep's CJ5, manned by Phil Scyner and Tony Latham. While the rest of the rally passed this point, last year's winning crew spent time moving their gear back to the road, where our CP car would take the crew and luggage to the nearest motel – only 88km away. Shaken and stirred, but with nary a bruise or scratch, they would return Sunday to recover the car and drive it home!!

Our taxi duties precluded running the remainder of Red Lake and also 67.22km Watching Creek Regularity (longest of the rally), through Tranquille Plateau's snowmobile trails, or twisting along Watching Creek, O'Conner Lake, one BIG hairpin on Rushton Creek followed in 5km by a tricky little hard right over bridge, then a mile later a nearly identical hard right without the bridge. Right at T onto Jamieson mainline and the Westside Transit 23km into Kamloops. This year the section was divided into two sections, but has been run both directions as a nearly 120km TSD.

HAM communications kept us up to the minute on late and missing rally cars. One mechanical retirement – Car 18 fuel pump electrical – and several snow bank "penalties" were logged and double-checked before Sweep left for their next assignment and we rejoined the game for more checkpoints.

The rally went north, then east toward Sun Peaks, and north again for 28.21km Louis Creek Regularity. Beginning with a CAS (the average speed to be maintained) of 65km/h, increasing to 70 at 7km into the regularity, then down to 55 at 17km for houses then 70 again for 8km, ending at 65 over the last 2km.

At this point it was dark, foggy, snow on the road, with "limited" visibility. It would get worse.

The transit along Agate Bay Road led east to 38.60km Johnson Lake Regularity. **"Hairpin L" "Hairpin R" "Hairpin L" "Hairpin R"** climbed into the clouds at 50km/h. Just over 19km later on the long easterly loop, teams encountered **"Hairpin R, Caution! Blind entrance"**, starting the descent through **"Hairpin L" "Hairpin R" "Hairpin L" "Hairpin R"** dropping to Adams Lake. This downhill is scenic in daylight, "interesting" on a clear night with lights from cabins and the mill reflecting off the lake. Perhaps the foggy whiteout was best, with no view of the major exposures.

Another 40km transit along Agate Bay Road led west to Barriere and Dunn Lake Road.

Dunn Lake Regularity ran 58.47km, north, parallel to the Thompson River, and was smooth and relatively straight at 70km/h, dropping to 60, interrupted by a twisty little section through an avalanche zone, then briskly up to speed toward Clearwater. But wait! Dropping to 50. These hairpins were not in the route book – surprise!! Then 60km/h and 72km/h before reaching the Wells Gray Inn and a welcomed finish of Day One, showing First as Horst / Willey, Second as RJ and Ren Carrol (son/father), and Third as Jason Webster / Brandon Harer.

Day Two began climbing west on Camp 2 Regularity, 40.41km in the snow. The first cars were overdue at our CP – then all at once – Car 2 at 62-late, Car 3 at 4-late, and Car 4 at 7-early? Five more cars,