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# Airtime

Fall/Winter 2002 Vol. 5 No. 4

**Richard & McCurdy are 2002 Canadian Rally Champions!**



**US Rally Legend John Buffum Wins Rallye International Charlevoix**



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**Cover photos:** Top by Vincent Fortin - Pat Richard & Ian McCurdy win 2002 Voyageurs Rally and become national champs. Bottom by Pierre Labrie - John Buffum & Steven McCauley win 2002 Rallye International Charlevoix.

Airtime is published several times per year by the West Coast Rally Association (WCRA). Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of WCRA, its directors or members. Send submissions to: bud@rallybc.com or ken@rallybc.com Photos will be returned and credit given for all submissions. 📧



## Pace Notes: Message from the Editor



Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2002 edition of Airtime. Another busy year is winding down, with no less than six different performance rallies covered in this issue.

WCRA can be proud of itself in 2002: from a record-breaking turnout at the Thunderbird Rally, to the launch of our first ever Rally Cross events and the return of the rallyequipment.com Novice TSD Workshop series.

This was also the third straight year that performance rallying returned to the BC region. Both the Pacific Forest Rally and the Mountain Trials Rally delivered high calibre organization and entry lists, surely establishing BC back on the map in the world of North American rallying - this time for good.

And finally, WCRA members Patrick Richard and Ian McCurdy became the 2002 Canadian Rally Champions in only their third full season of competition. Way to go guys!

*Bill Westhead, Guest Editor/Publisher bill@rallybc.com*

### The 2002 WCRA Executive Council

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## 2003 WCRA Calendar of Events

### Performance Rallies

Pacific Forest National Rally	Merritt, BC	June 13-14
Mountain Trials Regional Rally	Merritt, BC	Sept. 26-27

### Rallycross

Merritt Rally Cross Challenge #1	March 8
Merritt Rally Cross Challenge #2	May 10
Merritt Rally Cross Challenge #3	August 9
Merritt Rally Cross Challenge #4	September 13

### TSD Rallies

Thunderbird TSD Rally	Merritt, BC	Feb. 15-16
Heart of Darkness TSD Rally	Hope, BC	April 26-27
Gold Digger TSD Rally	Pemberton, BC	July 19-20
Totem TSD Rally	Cache Creek, BC	Nov. 15-16

### Novice TSD Workshop Rallies

Novice Workshop #1	Chilliwack, BC	April 5
Novice Workshop #2	Kelowna, BC	July 6
Novice Workshop #3	Merritt, BC	Oct. 18-19 (2-day)

### WCRA Club Meetings

Location: Boston Pizza Restaurant

1045 Columbia St. New Westminster, BC Ph: (604) 525-3340  
(first Wednesday of the month)

February 5, 2003  
March 5, 2003  
April 2, 2003  
May 7, 2003  
June 4, 2003  
July 2, 2003  
August 6, 2003  
September 3, 2003  
October 1, 2003  
November 5, 2003  
December 3, 2003



## BC Regional TSD: Thunderbird Rally



Merritt - Kamloops - Merritt  
February 15th-16th  
Hosted by the West Coast Rally Association  
Paul Westwick, Rally Master

Join over 70 teams for Canada's ultimate winter Time-speed-distance rally. Come experience the adventure that is Thunderbird! See [www.rallybc.com](http://www.rallybc.com) for details.

### Thunderbird Rally Flashback: January 1962

(from Canadian Track & Traffic March 1962)

On January 27th, 1962, fifteen cars left the University of B.C. campus on the Forth Annual Thunderbird Rally put on by the U.B.C.S.C.C., and this year sponsored by Players' cigarettes.

The cars covered approximately 700 miles of snow covered back roads of B.C.'S rugged interior. The rally was a two day affair and a real challenge to both driver and navigator. The night-stop was at Kelowna, B.C. from where the cars left at 8 a.m. for the second day of rallying. Aside from the occasional car winding off the road most competitors fared comparatively well.

Everyone felt that this rally was one of the finest Thunderbirds ever run and that the small U.B.C. club should be congratulated on a job well done.

Results were:

- 1st Overall Titmuss/Nielson VW 13 pts
- 2nd Overall Jellett/Alexander Volvo 16 pts.
- 3rd Overall Bayne/Bell Austin Healey Sprite 18 pts.

## Specialty Subaru Mountain Trials Rally



### Trinder Wins and Takes Championship Lead

MERRITT, BC (Oct. 6/2002) – Vancouver-based rally driver Scott Trinder won the Specialty Subaru Mountain Trials Rally held in and around the Nicola Valley near Merritt, B.C. Driving a Production class R Sport Rally Subaru Impreza 2.5RS, Trinder finished 12 seconds ahead of his nearest rival, Janusz Komorowski of Calgary, AB who piloted a much more powerful turbocharged Open class Eagle Talon to second place.

The win sends Trinder to the head of the pack in the tight race for the 2002 Western Canadian Rally Championship presented by Yokohama. After five of six rounds, he has a slim lead of four points, 44 to 40, over Gord Olsen of Brooks, AB. In fact, going into the final race of the season in Bragg Creek, AB on November 10<sup>th</sup>, there are still five drivers with a mathematical chance of claiming the 2002 title.

The championship leader before the event was Gord Olsen and he did make an appearance here in his powerful Group 2 Volkswagen Golf to try and extend his lead. However Olsen's rally came to an end on special stage four when he encountered a grouse crossing the rally route. "There was a loud thud and a shower of feathers across the windshield," said Kathy Olsen, Gord's wife and co-driver. Unfortunately, the pair were forced to retire with a hole in their oil cooler while running second overall.

The rally drew entries from across Western Canada, Washington and Oregon, helping to ensure a broad field of competitors. At the finish, the podium even held a representative from three regions with a driver from B.C. in first place, followed by others from Alberta and Washington. *continued on next page*

## Mountain Trials Rally...continued

The Active Mountain Park south of Merritt hosted a series of special stages on a network of roads used by campers at the famous Merritt Music Mountain Festival. At the Mountain Trials Rally, competitors raced one minute apart along a 6.46 kilometer section in front of several hundred thrilled spectators.

The winner of the last event held in Merritt, the Pacific Forest Rally, Mehran Arefi of North Vancouver and Dan Mclean of Victoria, rolled their Subaru Impreza WRX heavily on the second special stage. The pair had started the day well, posting the fourth fastest time on the first special stage, but got it all wrong while traveling too fast through a series of tight corners. Despite crashing out of the race, Mclean was later seen helping out another team at the Lordco Auto Parts service point, and showing that rally isn't necessarily about winning.

Meanwhile, another promising young team earned their first Canadian podium spot after trying hard all year. The Washington based novice team of Ross Foster and Alan Perry finished third overall in their Production class Mazda 323GTX after pushing hard all day. They ran consistently near the top throughout the day and even posted fastest time on special stage eight.

One of the tightest battles of the race emerged as a tie in the Group 2 class for modified 2WD vehicles. Noah Third of Portland, OR, along with co-driver Jason Lane of Burnaby, BC, drove their immaculately prepared Volkswagen Golf to tie for the class win with Carey Wright and Dave Kean, both of Seattle, WA, in their Mazda RX7. The final few stages were incredibly tense for these crews as the slippery conditions of the roads favoured the all wheel drive vehicles, yet there they were locked in a fierce competition right to the end.

And, finally, in the Production under class for vehicles with smaller capacity engines, the ALS Rally Team of Martin Wilson from Vancouver and Dennis Wende of Coquitlam brought their "trusty" Subaru Justy home in 10<sup>th</sup> place. In doing so the pair have now clinched the 2002 Western Canadian Championship for the Production under class. Congratulations to this determined crew for their efforts in raising awareness of ALS while "rallying for the cure".

Many thanks go out to the people of Merritt for their warm welcome, especially the ranchers and business owners who supported this event. Thanks also to event sponsors Specialty Subaru, Yokohama Tires, Merritt Lordco, Polaris Water, Merritt Tirecraft and OMP – Driver's Edge Autosport.

And with that the 2002 Western Canadian Rally Championship has come down to the final event: the Kananaskis Rally, November 10<sup>th</sup> in Bragg Creek, Alberta. For more details about this event and other rallies, check out the BC rally website: [www.rallybc.com](http://www.rallybc.com)

## Subaru Canadian Rally Championship: Tall Pines Rally



Tom McGeer and Mark Williams at Tall Pines Rally. *photo by Vincent Fortin*

Comrie-Picard's fourth place clinched the position for him. Comrie-Picard, a native of Edmonton now living in New York, went off the road early in the day, but a team-mate stopped to pull his car out of the ditch. He climbed back from 14<sup>th</sup> place, despite a lack of turbo boost on his Mitsubishi. "It was tough going. The whole day was tricky," said Comrie-Picard, who had already clinched the national rookie-of-the-year title and also picked up the Ontario provincial championship crown with his result here.

Subaru Impreza driver Peter Thomson, of Toronto, who had started the day in second place in the points standings, failed to add to his score as he lost about 14 minutes in an off-road excursion and finished just 18<sup>th</sup>. He fell to fifth in the championship, behind Richard, Comrie-Picard, Erickson and McGeer.

McGeer and Richard were each quickest on four of the 12 special stages, while Erickson and Comrie-Picard were each fastest on two.

John Paynter, of Dartmouth, N.S., finished fifth in his Subaru Impreza and took top honors in the production class for showroom stock cars. Sixth place went to Gord Olsen, of Brooks, Alta., who won the Group 2 division for modified two-wheel drive cars in a VW Golf. He also took the championship in that category, beating out season-long rival Peter Reilly, of Brampton, Ont., who was eighth overall, second in class, in his Ford Focus.



## Subaru Canadian Rally Championship: Tall Pines Rally

### McGeer Wins 2nd Straight North American Title

BANCROFT, ONT. (Nov. 24/2002) - Five-time Canadian driving champion Tom McGeer dominated the season-ending Rally of the Tall Pines in central Ontario to earn his second straight North American Rally Cup. The 42-year-old driver from Georgetown, Ont., led the event from start to finish and ended up one minute, 44 seconds, ahead of Subaru Canada team-mate Pat Richard, of Vancouver, who had already clinched the 2002 Subaru Canadian Rally Championship, presented by Yokohama. Both drove Subaru Impreza WRXs.

McGeer, the Canadian champion in 2000 and 2001, has run a limited schedule of rallies this season, handpicking events here and in the U.S. to maximize his points in the North American Rally Cup (NARC), which combines results from both sides of the border. This was his third win from four starts in Canada.

“To win the NARC championship was our goal for this year and we accomplished it,” said McGeer, who needed only to finish in the top three to clinch the title. “But we also wanted to win this rally.” This was McGeer’s third straight win at the Tall Pines, run out of Bancroft, Ont.

McGeer had expected to be challenged by Frank Sprongl, a six-time Canadian champion making a comeback after running only a handful of rallies the past three seasons. But Sprongl’s much-anticipated return lasted less than a minute as he launched his Mitsubishi Lancer into a ditch on the opening stage. “Once the threat from Frank was neutralized, I just drove as fast as I had to,” said McGeer, who had American Mark Williams as his navigator. “I was on cruise control most of the day, although I turned it up on a couple of stages when Pat [Richard] got a little too close. It was a good day at the office.”

McGeer’s only problem all day was a flat tire, but it happened near the end of a stage and he was able to drive to the finish without losing much time. Flat tires were a common complaint. Richard also got a puncture and his flat came in the middle of a stage, costing him about a minute.

Third-placed Sylvain Erickson, of Gatineau, Que., also lost time as a result of a flat on his Mitsubishi Lancer. But Erickson, who was in a tight battle with Richard for the championship until mid-season, said he was happy just to finish after mechanical failures at the past three events. “This lifts our spirits,” said Erickson, who ended up three-and-a-half minutes behind Richard, but comfortably ahead of fourth-placed Andrew Comrie-Ricard, also driving a Mitsubishi Lancer.

While Richard had wrapped up the 2002 Canadian title in September, with two events still to go, there was an intense battle for the overall runner up spot and

## Subaru Canadian Rally Championship: Rally of the Voyageurs

### Richard Clinches Championship with Fourth Win!

PARRY SOUND, ONT. (Sept. 29/2002) - Pat Richard became Canada’s new rally driving champion when he took his fourth win of the year at the Rally of the Voyageurs in the Georgian Bay area of Ontario. With two events remaining, the 28-year-old driver from Vancouver now has an insurmountable lead of 43 points, 105-62, over second-placed Sylvain Erickson in the Subaru Canadian Rally Championship, presented by Yokohama.

Driving a factory Subaru Impreza WRX, Richard won Saturday’s Parry Sound, Ont.-based event comfortably after his main competition ran into trouble. Erickson, of Gatineau, Que., was sidelined early when the transmission broke on his Mitsubishi Lancer after just four of 14 special stages, the competitive portions of the rally on gravel and dirt roads temporarily closed to the public. He was running third at the time. Even with Erickson out, Richard still had to win to wrap up the title and Andrew Comrie-Picard, the year’s top-ranked rookie, did his best to stop him.

Comrie-Picard, an Albertan now living in New York, had his strongest showing yet in his Mitsubishi Lancer. He took the lead from Richard at the mid-point of the rally and then put together a string of seven straight fastest stage times to extend his advantage to 24 seconds. But with just two stages to go, the Lancer suffered an engine failure, handing Richard a lead of four-and-a-half minutes over Toronto’s Peter Thomson, in another Subaru Impreza WRX.

Richard, with Ian McCurdy, of Whistler, B.C., as navigator, stretched the gap to six minutes, 34 seconds, by the end. He completed 158.36 kms. of special stages in one hour, 27 minutes, 32 seconds, at an average speed of 108.55 kph. This is Richard’s first overall championship title, although in 2000 he took both the Canadian and North American crowns in the production class for showroom stock cars without modifications.

Subaru Imprezas filled the top four positions. Thomson matched his best-ever finish by taking second. Sylvain Vincent, of La Plaine, Que., was third, his best result of the year. John Paynter, of Dartmouth, N.S., took fourth place and top production honors.

Rejean Losier, of St-Sauveur-des-Monts, Que., was the top non-Subaru driver at the finish, taking fifth place in just his second outing in a newly-acquired Mitsubishi Lancer. Peter Reilly, of Brampton, Ont., was sixth in a Ford Focus and took the class win in Group 2 for modified two-wheel-drive cars.

## Subaru Canadian Rally Championship: Rallye Defi Ste-Agathe

### Richard Takes 3rd Win of the Year & Extends Lead

DUHAMEL, QUE. (Sept. 7/2002) - Vancouver rally driver Pat Richard raced to his third victory of the season at the Defi Ste-Agathe/Duhamel in the Laurentian mountains north of Montreal early in September. Driving a factory Subaru Impreza WRX, Richard finished 42 seconds ahead of Jon Nichols, of Lachine, Que., in a privately-entered WRX.

Richard's win extended his lead in the championship and, after six of nine rounds, he has a 23-point advantage, 85-62, over Sylvain Erickson. The 28-year-old from Vancouver is seeking his first overall Canadian title (although he won the production class in 2000). Erickson, of Gatineau, Que., finished third in a Mitsubishi Lancer - a minute and 13 seconds behind Nichols - while Sylvain Vincent, of La Plaine, Que., was fourth in another Impreza WRX, a further 27 seconds back.

With Ian McCurdy as navigator, Richard covered 156.81 kilometres of special stages - the competitive portions of the rally on gravel roads temporarily closed to the public - in one hour, 38 minutes, 11 seconds, for an average speed of 95.83 km/h.

This was the first time the Defi Ste-Agathe/Duhamel, previously a regional event, had counted for the Canadian championship. "It's a wonderful rally, but really tough. This is my finest victory," said Richard, who enjoyed his fight with Nichols, the early leader on Saturday. "The battle with Jon to the end was incredible because we were doing the same times. I pushed hard. I did not really think about the championship. I wanted to win this rally."

Nichols lost time because of a faulty intercom connection with navigator Dave Shindle, leaving him to drive some sections without any instructions. He also had some brake problems and, on the day's third stage, he went off the road when, he said, he got "lost in the dust" from the car in front. Nichols was able to continue, but lost about a minute in the incident. "We're happy to finish second," said Nichols, still seeking his first overall national victory. "This is one of our stronger finishes, even though we had our fair share of problems."

Joel Levac, of Riviere-Beaudette, Que., surprised the usual frontrunners by setting the early pace on Friday night, even though his Impreza WRX was a production-class model without any modifications. Levac could not match the speed of the faster open-class and Group N cars on Saturday, but still finished sixth overall and took the production win.

## Subaru Canadian Championship: Rallye International Charlevoix

McGeer, who began the day trailing by just over a minute, caught and passed Thomson, who suffered a flat tire. But Thomson responded by setting fastest time on both of the last two stages. Meanwhile, McGeer's Subaru got stuck in second gear and he eventually fell a minute-and-a-quarter back. "It was an incredible battle and a lot of pressure," said Thomson. "I think those last two stages were the best I have ever done in my life. I had to go as fast as I could to get the lead back again." McGeer, a five-time Canadian champion, said he was "lucky to make it to the finish." He needed to finish here to keep alive his hopes for taking a second straight North American Rally Cup, which combines Canadian and U.S. results.

The hard-luck story of the day was that of two-time Quebec Cup champion Jon Nichols, of Lachine. He was comfortably in fifth place at the conclusion of the last special stage, but his Impreza WRX broke on the transit back to the official finish at La Malbaie, meaning he did not figure in the results. Hyundai Elantra driver Antoine L'Estage, of L'Acadie, Que., inherited fifth place after Nichols' misfortune. Nichols was the most notable retirement of the final day. Fifteen cars, out of 30 that started, finished the event.

Thomson and Comrie-Picard are now locked in a tight battle for second place overall in the Canadian championship, already won by Vancouver's Pat Richard, sidelined early here by a broken suspension on his Subaru Impreza WRX. With one event to go - the Tall Pines in Ontario on Nov. 23 - Richard has an insurmountable 105 points, while Thomson has 69 and Comrie-Picard has 68.

### Driver / Co-driver / Overall Time

1. John Buffum / Steven McAuley / Hyundai Tiburon 3h43m32s
2. Andrew Comrie-Picard / Brian Maxwell / Mitsubishi Lancer 3h49m29
3. Peter Thomson / Rod Hendricksen / Subaru Impreza WRX 3h52m21s
4. Tom McGeer / Mark Williams / Subaru Impreza WRX 3h53m37s
5. Antoine L'Estage / Yanick Napert / Hyundai Elantra 4h10m25s
6. Joel Levac / Muriel Espic / Subaru Impreza WRX 4h12m33s
7. Rejean Losier / Art Losier / Mitsubishi Lancer 4h16m23s
8. Andrew Havas / Eric Tremblay / Mazda RX7 4h22m37s
9. Steve Walkington / Malcolm Swann / VW Scirocco 4h36m44s
10. Frederic Labrie / Robert Labrie / Subaru Impreza WRX 4h38m31s





## Subaru Canadian Championship: Rallye International Charlevoix



October 25-27, 2002

### Driving Legend John Buffum Wins Canada's Premier Rally

LA MALBAIE, QUE. (Oct. 27/2002) - Eleven-time U.S. driving champion John Buffum won Canada's premier car rally on October 27th, taking victory on the Rallye International de Charlevoix in Quebec for the second time in four years. The most successful American rally driver ever, Buffum dominated the three-day event in the Charlevoix-Saguenay region east of Quebec City. Driving a Hyundai Tiburon, he led all the way from the opening stage on Friday.

The 57-year-old veteran from Vermont was quickest on nine of the 14 special stages and finished five minutes, 57 seconds, ahead of runner-up Andrew Comrie-Picard, an Edmonton native now living in New York. With Irishman Steven McCauley as navigator, Buffum completed the 316.43 kilometres of special stages in three hours, 43 minutes, 32 seconds, for an average speed of 84.93 kph.

Charlevoix is the longest and most grueling round of the Canadian Subaru Rally Championship, presented by Yokohama, and is a candidate for future inclusion in the World Rally Championship. Official observers from the Paris-based Federation Internationale de l'Automobile were on hand to review the event. Buffum, who started the final day of the rally with a solid lead of more than five minutes, said he paced himself as there was no need to push too hard. "I'm 100 per cent for the year," joked Buffum, who is semi-retired as a driver, and now runs Hyundai's rally program in the U.S.

"It's okay to lose to John Buffum," said Comrie-Picard, 31, the top-ranked rookie in Canadian rallying this year. Second was his best-ever result, surpassing four third-place finishes earlier this season. The Mitsubishi Lancer driver said he too was trying to drive conservatively on the final day, although he still side-swiped a tree trunk at one point. "I bent the rear door. I thought the rally could have been over," he said.

Conditions were tricky throughout the event. Teams faced a mixture of snow, slush and mud on the forest gravel roads to the north of La Malbaie. The snow was so deep in places that two stages had to be cancelled on Saturday. With Buffum and Comrie-Picard comfortably ahead of the rest, the main drama on the final leg of competition was a tight battle for third between Toronto-area drivers Peter Thomson and Tom McGeer, both in Subaru Impreza WRXs.

## SCCA National ProRally: Wild West International Rally

September 7-8, 2002

### Day One: Millen Leads, David Higgins Steady in 2nd

OLYMPIA, Washington - The first day of competition at the penultimate round of the 2002 SCCA ProRally Championship season would have driven any betting man crazy, with several key players either taking themselves out or suffering setbacks early in the going. One team however, stayed the course just as they have all season, avoiding trouble, but remaining competitively at the top of the competition.

After day one, David Higgins, was just 12 hours away from securing his place in SCCA ProRally history. But he would have to outwit, outplay and outlast his challengers to do it. So far, he did pretty well in the "outlast" category, as Wild West roads gobbled up the competition.

Vancouver-based Scott Trinder and Paul Westrick got the most (perhaps ever) out of the unique Knight Racing automatic-transmissioned Subaru Imprezas, gaining 13 positions on day one to end up 6th overall at the overnight stop.

### Day Two: Millen Wins, "Diggins" Gets Championship

Day two was cold and rainy, which suited the Higgins brothers well – and while neither was able to outlast the competition on this particular weekend, one of the brothers – David – was able nonetheless to capture the overall SCCA Drivers Championship with one event to spare. Rhys Millen, after a particularly frustrating year, drove the rally he had to drive, placing his well-used Lancer Evo 6.5 at the head of the class for the first time this year.

David Higgins' steady season of well calculated rallying proved to all that a properly funded and staffed, completely independent team operation (in this case AV Sport of Tempe AZ) can find significant success rallying alongside the manufacturer supported teams. Suffering an uncharacteristic engine problem that cropped up early in the day, David Higgins and co-driver Daniel Barritt were forced to retire at the end of SS11.

However, Rhys Millen drove what may be the best day of rallying in his career, winning two of the days six stages outright. In the cool weather, the overheating problems that have plagued his team were kept at bay, and the comfort level of being at a familiar rally, in a familiar, if older car, paid off handsomely.

Entering the final competitive stage, Vancouver, BC locals Scott Trinder and Paul Westrick were laying 4th overall in the Knight Racing Subaru Impreza Turbo. Unfortunately an ignition wire worked its way loose mid-way through the stage dropping them six minutes back to 8th place overall.

Canadian Teams at 2002 Wild West International Rally



Mehran Arefi & Ken Kwong at the Wild West International Rally. *photo by Dennis Wende*

Canadian Teams at 2002 Wild West International Rally



Bob Trinder & Bill Westhead at the Wild West International Rally. *photo by Chris Scurti*



Scott Trinder & Paul Westwick at the Wild West International Rally. *photo by Chris Scurti*



Janusz Komorowski at the Wild West International Rally. *photo by Chris Scurti*