



Competition

Perusse edges Black in Sno*Drift Rally

Canadians sweep top four places in Northern Michigan event

By Tim Cline

GRAYLING, Mich.—Five-thirty Sunday morning in the Grayling Holiday Inn found four men in full driving gear poring over rows of numbers hastily scribbled on the back of the route book for the SCCA's Sno*Drift Rally. "I'll tell you this," said 1981 Canadian National Rally Champion Randy Black, "It is close, very close."

And so it was. But no matter how many times Black's co-driver, Fred Baker, added the scores and no matter how many ways he checked them, the results were the same. They were second by 0.04 minute—2½ seconds—after 10 grueling, hair-raising hours of rallying.

It was the other half of the intent foursome that had won. In one of the closest Pro Rallies ever run, another Canadian team, Jean-Paul Perusse and Louis Belanger, in a Peugeot 504 Coupe, claimed the Sno*Drift Rally. It was a spectacular display of ice-driving by Perusse, who had to overcome a tremendous offroad shunt only three stages from the end of the 17-stage rally.

For the Canadians, it was a clean sweep as Bjorn Anderson and Randy Weiser claimed third in their ex-works Toyota Celica while fourth went to Niall Leslie and Doug Martin, who also won the Production Class in their Datsun 200-SX.

When the original entry list was posted for the Sno*Drift in early December, it looked like there wasn't going to be much of a rally. There were barely 30 cars and none of the "big name" teams was on the list. Larry Schmidt (Dodge Colt) and Wayne Baldwin (V-6 Turbo Volvo) were the only SCCA Seed One drivers entered.

One could only conclude that the poor entry list was due to the Reno Internationally Rally, scheduled just five days after Sno*Drift. Reno already had more than 90 cars entered and all of the "names." Then apparently everyone got a look at the entry list, decided they could get a cheap win and began signing up. Before scrutineering closed, there were 10 FIA and Seed One drivers and a total of 55 entrants.

John Woolf brought his Mazda RX-7 in from California; Jon Woodner showed up with his Datsun 510; the Canadians showed up in force, and Guy Light (AMC Eagle), Jim Walker (AutoWeek Volvo), Gene Henderson (AMC Eagle) and Gary Eaton (Peugeot 505) guaranteed a donnybrook in the Production Class. Most noticeable by their absence were John Buffum's Audi and Rod Millen's Mazda; but Buffum sent a



Tim Cline

Jean-Paul Perusse took his first win of the season with a sensational drive in the latter stages of the Sno*Drift.



Phil Berg

Randy Black lost his bid for victory on the final stage.



Tim Cline

Canadian Niall Leslie had a superb drive to 4th overall, 1st Production.

SCCA PRO RALLY, SNO*DRIFT, GRAYLING, MICH., DEC. 5-6, 1981; 265 MILES, 17 STAGES, 49 STARTERS, 39 FINISHERS.

RESULTS

1—Jean Paul Perusse/Louis Belanger, Peugeot 504 Coupe, 118.16; 2—Randy Black/Fred Baker, Datsun 510, 118.20; 3—Bjorn Anderson/Randy Weiser, Toyota Celica, 121.40; 4—Niall Leslie/Doug Martin, Datsun 200SX, 123.20 (1st Production); 5—Jon Woodner/Clark Bond, Datsun 510, 123.95; 6—Gene Henderson, AMC Eagle SX/4, 124.52 (2nd Production); 7—Guy Light/Jim Brandt, AMC Eagle SX-4, 125.41 (3rd Production); 8—Doug Shepherd/Tom Grimshaw, Dodge Colt, 125.43; 9—Gary Eaton/Carolyn Eaton, Peugeot 505, 128.27 (4th Production); 10—Steve Nowicki/Jim Garton, Datsun 510, 129.29.

representative.

Doug Shepherd normally handles co-driving chores for J.B., but at Sno*Drift he climbed behind the wheel of his own Dodge Colt with Tom Grimshaw handling navigation.

Sno*Drift is your basic laid-back, low-key event. The SCCA Detroit Region goes out of its way to make people feel welcome, and a great number of the teams show up with families in tow. The pool and sauna get a heavy workout at the motel. In spite of this vacation atmosphere—or maybe because of it—Sno*Drift is always an excellent rally.

Weather is a key factor when one goes rallying 200 miles north of Detroit in December. Last year there was a foot of snow and a dense fog. This year there was only an inch or two of snow and the skies were clear. It was cold—so cold that all of the sandy stage roads had long patches of hard ice. Said Walker, "You'd go along on a good surface for quite a ways, then without warning, it would

turn to glare ice. Kinda spooky."

At 7 p.m. on Saturday, the field set off with Woolfy first on the road:

"It was terrible. We spun 150 yards from the start control on a straight. Then we spun on the first corner, then we overshot a corner completely."

All on Stage One.

Everyone was spinning. And spinning. And spinning. Steve Nowicki and his Datsun 510 ("I'm getting rid of this bucket after this rally . . .") took the boy-did-I-have-a-spin award.

"It was on the second stage," he said later. "We passed (Mark) Hardymon's Arrow and were pulling away. All of a sudden we were left and right and into a bank, wiping out our lights. And we were up in the air and down on our nose and over a signpost. When we landed, I jammed it in gear and kept going; but Hardymon never passed us."

Said Hardymon, "No way we were going to pass him. He was everywhere. We thought we would lay back and see where he was going to land. I didn't want him to land on top of us."

In spite of that, Nowicki went on to finish 10th.

Perusse in the Peugeot won the first two stages with the entire Canadian rally community hot on his heels. Woodner and Woolf were going "okay, but the T/A radials are not the tire for glare ice. We both switched to hand-grooved M & S's and could feel the difference instantly," said Woodner. "We went to 155's and would have gone narrower if we had them."

As soon as they switched tires, they ran off three straight stages with Woolf winning and Woodner second.

The Baldwins weren't so lucky. On the third stage, all of the gears except fourth in the Volvo's transmission went away. Said co-driver Debra, "We'll go ahead and run for the fun of it. That's fine because he (husband Wayne) can't go so fast. This glare ice scares me."

Grimshaw, meanwhile, was adjusting to the enthusiastic driving style of Doug Shepherd:

"We spun six times and went off twice. I told him I was going to keep count. I was out of the car once pushing. When I got out, I told him, 'I'll get your ass for this if it takes me five years.'" Grimshaw apparently believes that a co-driver's job is to ride, not push.

Perusse said he had to slow down a bit because he somehow managed to break the Peugeot's sump shield and it kept acting like a giant snowplow.

Black, meanwhile, said, "We're taking it easy and doing okay. There's too many places to make a mistake. I'm still trying to decide what tires to use."

Four-wheel drive was the hot ticket in the ice, and Henderson in the Eagle was running fourth (behind Perusse, Woolf and Black) and ahead of everyone else—just a super driving show in a 100-HP, 3,400-pound Production car by the former Pro Rally champion.

By the midnight break at Walker's Restaurant and Bowling alley in beautiful Mio, Perusse, Woolf and Black in that order were just seconds apart and two minutes ahead of Henderson, Anderson (Toyota), Leslie (Datsun), Woodner (Datsun) and Light (Eagle), who were within

a minute and a half of one another.

There was a lot of serious stuff going on behind Walker's in the parking lot in the 20-degree cold. But there was some fun, too. Niall (say it "Neil") Leslie, the current Canadian Production champ, taped a foot-high, lighted Santa Claus to the roof of his Datsun and ran the rest of the rally that way. Blink. Blink.

So on into the night. Woolf's rally came to an end on Stage 12 when the ice finally got him. The Mazda plowed into a mud bank and broke a lower control arm and some lights. It also completely blocked the stage. Henderson was the next one by and then Anderson. Everyone got out and pushed and pulled the Mazda aside as Woolf muttered, "I think I may give up these snow rallies."

Anderson's co-driver, Randy Weiser, said, "By the time we got Woolf out of the way, we were behind Henderson and Light. We took off after them. Bjorn was going like crazy. We caught Light and he pulled over clear out into the woods. He was bouncing all four wheels off the ground. We slowed down a little just to watch him.

"Henderson was amazing to watch, too. We couldn't catch him on the ice. Finally we got to a T, and the road turned sandy. We caught him before we got out of third gear. But on the ice, he was beautiful to watch—and quick."

Said Light of the whole thing, "It sure took him a long time to get by. I didn't realize that we were putting on a show."

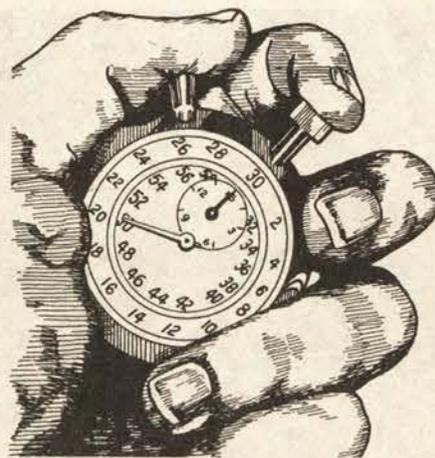
At the start of Stage 13, Shepherd and Grimshaw arrived early and pulled off the side of the road to take a bit of a nap. Said Grimshaw: "The next thing I know there's voices yelling at us and pounding on the car telling us to go. I yelled at Doug, 'Don't ask no questions, just go!' We got to the control with 3/100 to spare. If he had so much as said, 'What?' we would have been late."

Imagine the ignominy of two of America's top navigators being late for a start control. No ignominy with Shepherd's performance, which led to an eighth overall.

On Stage 15, Perusse nearly had the Big One. The Peugeot was on a straight (red line, fifth gear) when it jumped out of the ruts and into the woods. The side of the car was caved in by the trees, both front tires were flattened and a large branch went through the radiator and stuck—so tightly that the radiator didn't leak. Oh, yes, there was a fire under the hood, too.

He drove two miles to the end of the stage—on glare ice with two front flats. They stopped, put out the fire, changed the tires and took off. Only now they were 25 seconds behind Black instead of a half-minute in front of him. Sensing a victory he has been denied all season, Perusse told his friend and co-driver Louis Belanger that they were either going to win or use up the car trying. On the next stage, they made up all but 2/100 of a minute of the time they had lost. And on the final stage, the margin over Black's Datsun was 6/100, giving them a not-very-comfortable 4/100 margin of victory.

Black's second assured Datsun of the combined North American Rally Championship.



Late Racing News

No progress on Williams team

With FISA's deadline for signing '82 drivers rapidly approaching, Frank Williams still has yet to sign any drivers for next year. Alan Jones reportedly hasn't made up his mind about a return and word is that Williams is now once again talking to Carlos Reutemann. Keke Rosberg, who tested for the team with good results about a month ago, is also reportedly being considered as well as Mario Andretti. In other Formula One news, Ricardo Patrese has been confirmed as Brabham's second driver behind Nelson Piquet. Earlier, there were reports that Hector Rebaque, who occupied the seat in '81, had simply outbid Patrese to keep his ride. Now it appears that money may not have been Bernie Ecclestone's only criteria in selecting a driver. Driving ability might still count for something. In other developments, it appears that Patrick Tambay has signed with Theodore Racing, the team with which he started the season before switching to Ligier. Also, the Toleman team has reportedly made considerable progress in testing and will likely sign Marc Surer to replace Brian Henton. Derek Warwick will remain as the second driver. It is also reported that Formula Three driver Ricardo Paletti has been testing with Osella and will likely join Jean Pierre Jarier as a second driver for the team next year.

NASCAR founder changes titles

In a move insiders consider more a juggling of titles than a real change of responsibilities, Bill France Sr., president of International Speedway Corp., will relinquish his top management position at the corporation to his son, Bill France Jr. The elder France will continue as chairman of the board and will chair a new personnel management committee for the corporation, which owns and operates the Daytona International Speedway and the Alabama International Motor Speedway at Talladega. France Sr., who stepped down as president of NASCAR in 1972, plans to devote more time to his position as U.S. delegate to FIA.

Bouchard is NASCAR's top rookie

NASCAR rookie Ron Bouchard, whose five top-five and 12 top-10 finishes this year made him a valuable asset for the Race Hill Farm team, edged out Morgan Shepherd and Tim Richmond to win the coveted Rookie-of-the-Year Award. Bouchard, a Massachusetts native, becomes only the second Northerner to win

the award (Pete Hamilton was the first, in 1968), for which he will receive \$10,000 in cash, plus \$1,000 for each 1982 race in which he competes. Winning the title places Bouchard alongside such names as Richard Petty, Donnie Allison, David Pearson and Dale Earnhardt. The highlight of Bouchard's first season came when he finished just ahead of Darrell Waltrip to win the Talladega 500.

Donnington to get F1 race

England's Donnington Park, which has long sought a Formula One race, will apparently get one in '82 although it will be a non-championship round. The date is likely to be in July, one week before the official British GP at Brands Hatch.

A March for Trueman?

Spied at the March works in Britain: Thierry Boutsen's Formula Two March 812 having its BMW motor yanked and replaced with a Hart for Can-Am two-liter champion Jim Trueman. Trueman reportedly plans to campaign the car in '82 in the place of his ex-Pete Lovely/Gary Gove Ralt. March is also at work on an updated five-liter car for the Newman team, consistent with the new '82 Can-Am rules.

F1 cars drag race an F104

It wasn't your classic grudge race, not when the Italian Air Force became involved. But then again, the Italians can be anything but rational at times. Anyway, for the benefit of some 100,000 spectators at a village called Istrana some 250 miles from Milan, the Italian Air Force staged a face-off between one of its Lockheed F104 Starfighter jets and five different Formula One cars. The object was to see who was the quickest in a one-kilometer distance from a standing start. Participating were Gilles Villeneuve in a Ferrari 126C Turbo, Nelson Piquet and Ricardo Patrese in Brabham BT49s and Bruno Giacomelli in an Alfa V-12. The winner? Nelson Piquet in 17.95 seconds. The F104 recorded a time of 18.5 but was rapidly gaining momentum at the finish line.

Morton set for '82

John Morton, for the first time in years, has a full 1982 racing program set. Phil Conte will continue to sponsor Morton's CGI Racing Frissbee Can-Am team, which will be helped by Daffy Swimwear and other sponsors. Conte will also run, in association with Harley Cluxton, a LeMans effort in which Morton will drive. Morton will also share one of the new Ford GTO IMSA Mustangs with Tom Klausler in major U.S. endurance races.