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and flashing onto windshields at the most inopportune places like right over crest, or hairpin downhill (at VIP spectator area), challenging concentration. Also “game over” at Brook Creek 1 was Car 27, novice Chad LaPoudre and Heath Hrapstead whose Golf left the road just long enough to damage the suspension.

Thynne and Brook ran a second time, with faster times by most teams, and three DNFs — one motor, one transmission, one soft roll.

Service in Merritt, then out to Active Mountain Raceway and Resort. This enclosed area is a venue for music festivals and spectator stages. The best viewing locations had been picked out by the time course opening cars ran the stage. A large crowd then watched the show of speed and skill of the top cars, pendulum turns, flying gravel (boulders) and the roar of motors climbing the steep grade to the flying finish.

Helmer Stage is fast becoming a favorite BC Stage, and was by all reports in its best condition in recent memory — read very fast! The first running was uneventful. Then a second running of

AMR, followed by Service in town and back-to-back runnings of Helmer.

Crowd control began to worry the organizers. Popular spectator locations were filling rapidly and individuals refused to stay off the stage road. Delays were likely. Helmer 2 ran without incident. Helmer 3 saw more spectators arriving from AMR, although the most troublesome ones shouldn't have been allowed to drive at all, let alone walk.

We delayed as long as possible to allow spectators into the area, but many refused to get off the roadway. Car 0 was sent through slowly, competitors were already arriving at the start, and more spectators were found deep into the stage on quad-runners. Helmer 3 was running late! Whether the delays affected the results will never be known, but Car 9 lost a tire and dropped from third to seventh. Car 25 dropped out with mechanical problems in the '73 Toyota. Car 26 pushed a strut into the hood and on the Transit out, the shredded tire dismantled the wiring harness — the Focus DNF'd only 4 km from the finish.

L'Estage held off Iorio on the day's stages, actually reducing the six minute gap to three minutes. Not quite enough to clinch the Championship outright,

however with a magic number of only one, merely starting Tall Pines, the final rally of the year, will secure the Open Championship.

Group 5 National Championship was sealed at Merritt with “Zebe” Szewczyk and Tomasz Karzynski piloting the 2004 Mitsubishi Lancer Ralliart to fifth overall at PFR. Norm LeBlanc captured the P4 Drivers Championship and Keith Morison captured the P4 Co-Drivers Championship.

LeBlanc-Morison took the honors for “Merritt by Night,” leading Gary Cavett and Alan Perry of Washington, who in turn led Paul Eklund and Jeff Price of Oregon. Less than two minutes covered the three Subaru.

In daylight, “Helmer by Day” saw Eklund-Price leading, with Aaron Neumann and Graham Coates in the Group 2 Civic leading LeBlanc and Morison. One minute, four seconds covered the first three cars over eight hours of rally.

Complete results, photos and links can be found at www.pacificforestrally.com.

More rally stories and a rally search at www.tsdroadrally.com.



Paul Eklund and Jeff Price tackle Helmer in daylight.