

Night on Bald Mountain 2006

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TUMWATER — Olympic Rally Competition Association and Rallymaster Dave Treen presented a 150-mile gravel TSD through the woods of the Department of Natural Resources' Capital Forest. Any Night on Bald Mountain can be scary or exhilarating and challenging — this year's run would be no exception.

This year's running would be Round Three of the Pacific Coast Challenge Rally Championship combining events in Washington, California, Mainland British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

The rally featured smooth roads (with the exception of areas of fresh logging and road rebuilding) at moderate speeds with very little local traffic. Speeds near campgrounds were dropped to as low as 10 mph, and quiet zones were utilized to keep all of the forest users happy.

Twenty-four cars took the start and headed west to the Straddleline ORV Park near McCleary where a big Jeep 4x4 Jamboree was scheduled for the weekend and the associated motorcycles and ATVs would be a constant presence on the first part of the rally.

Max Vaysburd was back in the right seat of Car 6, massaging the Alfa rally computer, and we were looking forward to tight competition with old friends from Washington and Oregon. The rally brought one Canadian entry as well, in a black Subaru Impreza. Night on Bald Mountain has been around for many years and has gained a reputation around the Pacific Northwest for finding scenic areas and great rally roads.

The first TSD set the "mood" for the night, uphill start, hairpin right climbing, loose surface, and all the best estimates at an odo factor from the freeway were gone. The rally topped the ridge, turning into the sunset, which fortunately carried a few clouds, or the sun-on-windshield visibility would have been very difficult. Bear left over Blind Crest. This would have been treacherous with a blinding sunset.

NoBM uses "passage controls" with competitors simply passing the checkpoint without stopping. The controls may be hidden — some very well hidden. We didn't see the first CP but it was probably near the blind crest. We were scored 2-late. This first regularity was named

"West Fork 1," as we dropped into the drainage of the West Fork of Porter Creek.

A brief transit crawled slowly and quietly past a campground that on NoBM's previous run through this forest, had been filled with horses and hunters. Bear Left, up the hill, to the start of "Buck Ridge Regularity." This would be 7 miles of very twisty gravel, clinging at times to the side of steep exposures and dealing with active logging sites filled with stacked logs and the big yellow machinery that move them around. Passing Porter Pass and the Rock Candy Mountain access road, the route comes to the end of the regularity.

"Capitol Peak Monte Carlo" snaked 9 miles south and west, between Larch Mountain and Capitol Peak, where the observant would take notes for a later retracing of the road as part of "Larch Mountain Regularity."

"Capitol Peak Regularity" carried three checkpoints over its nearly 7-miles of twists, climbs and drops with CASTs of 31, 29 and 32, before slowing to 20 for the campground. We scored 2L, 0 and 2E, with no accounting as to why — our computer showed zero.

"Bordeaux Monte Carlo" was nearly nine miles due south overlooking Waddell Creek and Lost Valley. A brief stretch of pavement was followed by the roughest section of the night. New construction presented big chunky gravel and rutted tracks. The recommended speed was 15, and in some places that might have been high. Rallymaster Treen apologized profusely about the conditions (all of which were beyond his control).

Skirting the southern edge of the Black Hills, "Citadel Regularity" runs west with two CPs late in the section, followed by a short section of pavement turning north and east for the "Short Paved Transit."

"Catamount Regularity" was the second longest TSD of the night, covering 11.48 miles, clinging to the ridge above Shelton Creek, passing one of the highest points on the event, and dropping westerly into Porter Creek drainage, above Iron Creek and Hell Creek, with long hairpins, and exposures both sides, before the 5-mile "Hell Creek Monte Carlo" out to Highway 12, for a break in Elma if needed, or just hanging out above Porter Creek to wait for an out-time.

"Larch Mountain Regularity," at 15

miles, was the longest TSD. It followed the North Fork of Porter Creek right up to Larch Mountain, then cut southwest over previously traveled roads west of Capitol Peak. This was the only local traffic difficulty of the night for us. We met two pickups on a narrow section, and had to find enough real estate to get all the vehicles on their way without swapping paint. Our time-dec skills proved excellent as the next two controls scored zeros, cleaning the section!

"Dusty Way Monte Carlo" traveled north along the ridge before dropping into Porter Creek and the start of "West Fork Regularity 2," covering 9.52 miles out to the ORV park and pavement. Along the way we encountered brisk speeds into darkened treed triangles for "Bear Right and Keep Right" (or left and left, as needed) leading to the downhill Left at T, at 31 mph, sideways — "0" — and no more checkpoints, although a perfect opportunity presented at the downhill hairpin. Maybe next time...

Transit to the finish was uneventful, and all the scores, with exception of the last three controls, were projected on the wall in the dining area as we arrived. Speculation was high, as the scores were very close — the last three CPs could make a difference.

Holding on to their preliminary lead were Eric Horst and Stephan Willey with only 12 points over 16 controls and 152.76 miles. Second, moving up one position from prelims, were Jason Webster and Brandon Harer with only 14. Third, also moving up one notch were Ron Sorem and Max Vaysburd with 16.

Unfortunately moving down, into a tie, were Satch Carlson and Russ Kraushaar, with more zeros than Jeff McMillen and Marvin Crippen, sharing 19 points. Coming out of "retirement" were Jim and Cristy Breazeale, shaking off the rust at 20 points. First Equipped, seventh overall, were Don Gibson and Mike Workman with 34. And in a spectacular showing for Seat of the Pants, with no calculators except in the driver's head, Mike Daily and Tom Palidar were first SOP, eighth overall, with only 56.

Complete results at
www.teamhightower.com/orca/nobm/results06.htm.

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