

# Olympus Rally: It's as fast as it is popular

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**ABERDEEN** — The Pacific Rally Group presented the 2009 edition of the Olympus International Rally April 17-19, sanctioned by Rally America. The event was bathed in sunshine in an area just south of Washington's Rain Forest.

Day One of the National included the John Nagel Regional Rally. The 33 teams transited 33 miles northwest of Aberdeen, with the first glimpse of the ocean at Moclips, and again along the beach before turning into the woods at Wreck Creek.

Wreck Creek Stage climbed quickly from the beach to 150 feet for the start. Through the spectator area, the stage peaks out above 420 feet with amazing views of the rock spires and breaking surf around Glenville Arch. Wreck Creek was named for shipping disasters, but could have been named for the "offs" of rally cars. Car 93, Bob Olson and Conrad Ketelsen's 1999 Open Class Subaru RS, found a stump (Caution! Crest, Off Camber), then a berm, then rolled into fresh-cut timber, landing four wheels up — well off the road and both OK, but quite a sight with just the four rally tires visible to following teams at less than a mile into the stage.

Less than a mile from flying finish, Car 56, Zbigniew Szewczyk and Tomasz Karzynski's 2004 Group 5 Mitsubishi Lancer, went off, breaking the suspension. Unable to tow out, their car stayed parked for the day.

The last .72 miles was mainline, top speed, to flying finish at 4.09 miles. Car 223, Malcolm Davies and Bruce Parker's 1990 Open Class Eagle Talon, retired after the first stage with a blown turbo. They would return to win their class on day two.

A 20-minute service break in the fishing town of Taholah divided Wreck Creek 1 and 2. The soft spots were softer, the loose rock rutted deeper, but uneventful on the second run.

Taholah service was 30 minutes on this pass, including a fuel stop. Just outside of town was start for Taholah East 1, a flowing but narrow, rise and fall, broken by two barricade chicanes to slow the cars. At about 3 miles, a square-left passed "spectator" and led to another narrow twisting rise and fall for 4.6 miles to another "spectator area." It should be noted that "spectator area" is the defined and contained location where a good view has been provided to watch the event. These two areas were packed early, then overwhelmed and overflowed by stage time. Nearly every available tree along the first 3 miles, then the middle 2 miles or so, had groups of eager fans. Fan attendance on Taholah, in the middle of nowhere, has been estimated at 1,000 to 2,000.

The Taholah stages run 10.34 miles. For the first run, first car on the road, Car 34, Tanner Foust and Christine Beavis' 2009 Open Class Mitsubishi EVO X, reported an average speed of 79.03 mph, just shy of the Rally America limit of 80 mph. Car 176, Andi Mancin and Grzegorz Dorman's 2007 Super Production Class Subaru STi, parked at the end of Taholah East with no oil pressure.

An 11-mile transit led north to 9400 Road. This mainline stage would be incredibly fast if not for five barricade chicanes. Although placed very tight, speeds for the National level cars were still VERY fast, but not near the early Internet reported 135 mph!

A very short but exciting two-way transit for course cars led to Taholah West 1 with another run past all the fans, perhaps a bit more dense (or densely spaced) toward flying finish. First cars on the road, with speeds not seen on this stage finish, overran the shutdown area, although "Finish" and "Stop" are well marked on the notes, and the route book calls out: "Caution! Flying Finish, Narrow, Short Shutdown." For safety considerations, the stage was stopped, then cleared at transit speeds, with the re-

maining cars all receiving identical times.

Following another service break in Taholah, the second runs of Taholah East and 9400 were smooth. Ken Block and Alessandro Gelsomino's 2008 Subaru STi set top times.

Taholah West 2 closed out the day with a shortened stage and secure finish area. Spectators were still enthusiastic and a bit more educated after three passes. The Matthew Johnson and Jeremy Whimpey Subaru WRX retired with brake and suspension issues. Brothers Dave and Rick Hintz's Subaru suffered a blown turbo hose on 9400 — repaired on road — and then a broken axle on Taholah. Prior to this they had fastest regional times on all stages. Fast time of 7:40.5 was set by Andrew Comrie-Picard and Robbie Durant's Open Class 2007 Mitsubishi EVO.

On Day One, 17 National and 10 Regional teams finished.

**Day Two of the National** included the Gene Nielsen Regional Rally, and moved from the Quinault Nation to Grays Harbor and Pacific counties, and the town of South Bend.

A 24-mile transit led to Smith Creek West stage. Westbound, this stage starts uphill, climbs rapidly to a tight right at near the highest point on the stage, then the twisting roller-coaster ride for five miles to a high-speed sweeping right at flying finish. The near top-speed crest, five miles into the stage westbound, didn't appreciably slow the top cars. Travis Pastrana and Christian Edstrom's 2008 Subaru STi's fast time of 4:57.0 was the calculated 80-mph limit. Chicanes will be in order for the next National here.

South to South Bend, teams moved to the 5.72-mile Palix Road stages. The two runs were divided by a service break and regroup. Pastrana set top time on Palix 1 at 5:09.5. Block set fastest time on Palix 2 at 5:06.6. Twisting hairpins climb from the