



Studebaker Lark takes first two places

Avalanche of protests prevents all but first five overall positions from becoming official.

By Track & Traffic staff reporter

ALL DAY SATURDAY, April 29, the big Pepsi Cola garage on Montreal's Jean Talon Street West, hummed with activity as the cars were quickly processed through the scrutineering which was in the hands of the Sports Motor Car Club of Montreal. The quiet, capable efficiency of the club drew

applause from many drivers, notably those from Europe.

Outside it was raining and grey. Inside there was colour and activity.



Lark team, Pepsi Cola Garage, Montreal



Biggest car in the rally, the '37 Rolls

As the unspectacular business of documentation and mechanical inspection

went on there were momentary bursts of excitement as the team cars arrived. Larks, gleaming pale yellow, rolled in three abreast. The Corvairs, once again in the capable hands of Dave Davis Jr, from Detroit arrived dressed in red with their U.S. colours (white with blue stripes) seeking more laurels in Canadian rallying. First cars at scrutineering were the Ford teams with leading Canadian rallyist Bill Silvera of Toronto being the first crewman through documentation.

The Mercedes Benz and Volvo factory cars caused a minor sensation by arriving late in the final hour of scrutineering but all cars were processed and locked away for the night in various points



Silvera/Sunner Anglia, Autocross at Mosport Park

about the city of Montreal.

Sunday morning was overcast and chilly but there was colour and excitement at the Jean Talon Street Shell service station where



Fergusson/Fields "short" Citroen which made a wonderful showing

banners were flying and a "Monte Carlo" ramp had been built.

First car away at 7 am. EST was the factory team Hillman of C. S. Ellison and W. Ripley of Vancouver. The unusual sight of the cars lent the start an large red numbers on white backgrounds ornamenting the doors of atmosphere of important rally and it was finally anticipation and the realization came that here was truly a very large and very under way. At 7.02 a.m. the followed at 7.04 am, by the Low/Chambers Corvair from Victoria, B.C. slid off the ramp Wells/Berry Jaguar. The other 103 West Coast cars in the front of cars followed at 2 minute intervals. The preponderance of the rally bore testimony to the West's support for this rally for car positions were allotted on a first-come first-served basis according to the entry postmark.

As the departures went on there was plenty of interest in the starters. Car #37, a stately black 1937 Rolls Royce Phantom II, driven by Hollway and Katila from port Alberni, B.C., was an eye catcher. This V-12 monster weighed in at 7000 lbs and drew power from a 7-litre motor. It is one of several cars owned by Ivan Hollway. His stable includes a Rolls-Bently and two 3.8 Jaguars. Asked if Rolls Royce objected to one of their princely products running with the rallying proletariat, Hollway replied, "Gracious, no. They even asked us to attend a board meeting and invited us to dinner. They are very pleased we entered."



Well-known TV personality Gil Christie and Fred Thorne just before leaving Montreal

From the extreme east was car #47, a Comet driven by MacDonald and Cutts of St. Johns', Newfoundland. Lloyd Tweedle of Hamilton entered his diesel-powered Plymouth, a familiar car at Ontario hill



Parc Ferme CNE grounds, Toronto first night stop

climbs, and thereby caused a minor upheaval among the rally sponsors, the Shell Oil Company of Canada, who had to rush supplies of diesel fuel to their main garages along the 4,100 mile route. This ready supply of oil was later to cause at least one entrant to wish he was not such a practical joker.

From Montreal the 400-route lay along the Ottawa Valley to Ottawa and then a little south of west through Perth to Peterborough and Mosport Park, near Newcastle, where the first driving skill test, an autocross, took place. Public interest was evident by the many people who lined the roads along the way, but the crush of spectators at Mosport caused a certain amount of delay. The route then lay to Toronto and the first light stop which was reached by all cars without too much trouble.

An elaborate scoring system had been set up where the times of each day's score cards were telexed to a computer in Vancouver and then returned to the point of origin all arranged in the order of the overall standings. A scoring error that first night jolted all contestants wide awake the next morning for it showed the highest-placed car had lost at least 30 points. Later this was corrected leaving more than 40 cars free of penalties over the first comparatively easy stage.

The Second day

The first day with its early rain giving way to run-shine in eastern Ontario gave no hint of the weather to be expected on the second day. The first car left the Shell Tower at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition grounds at 5 am.

As they headed north along Highway 400 the day became greyer and greyer. Rain was falling. The route lay through Barrie and north and then west to Parry Sound, on to Sudbury before swinging west for the long haul through Sault Ste. Marie, White River to Port Arthur, a distance

of almost 1,000 miles, the longest single Leg on the rally. Besides being an endurance run the section also brought the worst weather, with sleet, ice and at times gusting snow which reduced visibility



Start control at Fort William



Rushbrook/Currie Corvair, Sault Ste. Marie control

to near zero around White River.

The competitors, who were given free credit cards for Shell gas and oil for the trip, largely used Shell stations. At White River the oil company even installed a special set of tanks and pumps which were taken out after the rally cars had gone through.

The long section claimed several competitors. The sole Edmonton entry, the James/Passmore Zephyr, rolled. There was sickness in the crew of the Wolkowich/Elkerton MG. The Polivka team Fiat 600 driven by Broadfield and Balint threw a ring and damaged the cylinder. The MG driven by I. Morgan of Calgary and F.C. Garrett of Saskatoon suffered mechanical trouble.

The real blow fell, however, when two Austin 850's collided 13 miles east of Port Arthur and Bill Roscoe of Montreal was fatally injured. His driver, Ken Withers of Montreal was seriously injured and the crew of the other car, Callon and Bovingdon of Sault Ste, Marie were bruised and cut.

Sleep was all important at Port Arthur and the news of the accident burst upon most crews as they awoke for the third day's run which was begun in a subdued atmosphere.

The Third Day

The third day's run brought respite both from the weather and the road conditions and the comparatively short 400-mile leg into Winnipeg was completed without incident. Crowds swarmed about the driving skill test in a city supermarket parking lot and there was evidence everywhere that the rally was causing much public interest.



Start at Winnipeg, Roome/Moffat from Victoria

At Winnipeg came the first meaningful results. The Montreal Volvo of Nordell and Wilson was leading, one of 14 cars still clean of penalty points and in the lead position because of



McCluggage/Hammen beyond Upsala, Hwy #17

good driving in the driving skill tests. In second place was the Trotter/Mollman Mercedes Benz and third was the Young/Hillary Studebaker Lark. Two teams in the top 3. The team leadership was claimed by the Mercedes lying second, fourth and sixth, with no points lost. Tied in second place were the Falcon and Lark teams with a private Montreal team also in the tie for second.

The first placed all-women's car as the Fergusson/Field Citroen from Toronto with no points lost. The Rolls had lost 122 points when a stone punctured the newly filled gas tank and 23 gallons of gas poured to the road.

The English Zephyrs driven by Eric Jackson, Ian Walker and Ken Chambers had picked up 5, 5 and 8 points respectively. The Volvo factory crews Ingier and Hagen of Oslo had collected 2 points: Bengsston and Smith, 201 points, and McMilland and Nendiksen, 16 points.

In all 96 cars reached Winnipeg

The Fourth Day

After an eventful arrival in Winnipeg where hundreds of spectators crowded the driving skill test area and followed by a ride down famous Main to Portage Street, most crews bedded down for a



Hambly/Polivka Fiat, Class 1 winners

comfortable night in the Fort Garry Hotel in the heart of the prairie city.

Wednesday morning the cars headed for the prairie plains with the Montreal Volvo



Gas-up on Hwy 22 north of Grenville, Sask.

of Sam Nordell and Tony Wilson still ahead on points. The run to Regina, a 458 mile hop, was fairly straight forward with shifting average speeds and one section which led cars across a common pasture where there were only rough dirt trails to follow. The dust rose in great clouds as the cars went sifting through and as the grit worked its way into every pore, under collars and eyelids, into dry mouths and every piece of clothing carried in the cars.

It was in this stretch between Winnipeg and Regina that Corvair hopes of a team victory evaporated when the Doyen/Gibbs car damaged its transmission and was removed from contention. Another car to suffer on this part of the route was the Scharer/Ambrozy Mercedes 190 SL whose gearbox was damaged by a broken "ATexas Gate" and was reduced to 1st and 3rd gears.

Near the end of this section there was a hill climb at Fairy hill, 25 miles north of Regina on highway 6. A large crowd, drawn out by an enthusiastic radio station converged on the hill which was not ideal for a combination of spectators and competitors and there were complaints of baulking. The biggest single complaint, however, was that the hill climb was so fitted into the

section that the last 30 cars had to make the run in the gathering dusk or after dark.

The timing system failed during a run by Homer Trotter, who was driving



Cooper/Waters at Regina hill climb



Chambers/Cooke Zephyr shortly before retiring

one of the team Mercedes with R. Mollman from Ohio, and he was allowed to make the run later with an official in the car. Homer was clocked at 55.2 for the fastest time up the 9/10-mile hill and this helped to establish him as the new leader at the end of the section, for the driving test points broke up an eight-place tie for first place, all the cars clean of penalty points. The Mercedes team cars were placed 1st, 3rd and 6th at this time and would have had the factory team prize almost sewn had it not been for a report by a marshall that one of the cars had left the Winnipeg Parc Ferme before its correct time out.

Out by this time was the diesel-powered Plymouth of Lloyd Tweedle of Hamilton with a blown bead gasket. Thus the special supplies of diesel fuel set up at the Shell stations across the country could now be returned to stock. Not before time for McKhiney/Bru, MG Magnette from Los Altos, California. McKinney had jokingly at one service station asked for diesel fuel and the attendant obliged causing McKinney to question his own sense of humour when the Magnette plugged to a halt a quarter mile from the gas station.

The Fifth day

The Regina-to-Calgary section took the cars on a circuitous route through Saskatoon, North Battleford and Edmonton, a total distance of 740 miles. Near Saskatoon a dog rushed into the roadway causing British driver Ken Chambers to swerve his team Zephyr and as there was no shoulder at this part of the road the car rolled down an incline. Chambers and Canadian navigator Paul Cooke were shaken up but were later seen on the road moving along toward Edmonton sans windshield.

In Edmonton the drivers met with increasing displays of western hospitality where they were



O'Hara/Honeyman Lark crossing the Borden Bridge, N. Sask.

greeted by free refreshments and honorary memberships in the Northern Alberta Sports Car Club. Some drivers by now also held honorary cards in the Saskatchewan Sports Car club also.



Danziger/Bick Volvo, driving skill test, Edmonton

A tricky check point on the trip south from Edmonton delighted those who caught on in time and disgusted drivers who fell for it. The day ended with only four cars out in front with zero penalty points and the section also established a new leader, the Studebaker Lark of Jack Young and Reg Hillary of Toronto. The three Mercedes dropped to eighth, ninth and tenth overall; the privately-entered Lark of Lalonde and Jones of Toronto moved into second place while the Austin 850 of Terry Summer and Peter van der Meyden moved into third slot. The top-placed all-girl crew of Alice Ferguson and Gillian Field of Toronto was placed seventh overall with one penalty point

The Seventh Day

Calgary to Penticton, the second longest single haul of the rally was fraught with danger for the rapidly tiring crews. This was the first of the mountain sections and there had been an avalanche near Trail just before the rally convoy was due to arrive but a path was cleaned for the cars in time to prevent detouring into the United States. Apart from the winding mountain road and the tortuous ascent of the Cascades there was also more rain, snow and sometimes mist to contend with on the 20-hour drive.

The section was broken up by a ferry crossing at Kootenay Bay, B.C. and this caused a considerable backlog of cars so that when the crews finally pulled into the Penticton sleep stop, departure time was near at hand. Faced with only a couple of hours sleep before plunging into the second mountain section the fatigued competitors made little effort to conceal their irritation at the delay. So close was the timing that the first cars were pulling out on the start of the final



The Volvo Amazon used as CT&T press car was later wrecked when hit by an impaired driver in Calgary

section as the tail end of the rally was still arriving in Penticton and this made for a busy night at the Okanagan Valley check point. Late arriving cars brought word that the Comet of



MacDuff/Daniel of Factory Falcons passing through the beautiful Frazer Valley

George MacDonald and Ken Cutts, both of St John's, Newfoundland, had gone off the road on a bend but the RCMP who reported that the rally cars were being handled well said that MacDonald had escaped serious injury and that Cutts was in the hospital with a wrenched back and head cuts.

Summary

Canada's first transcontinental rally which ended in Vancouver, May 6 after a 4,100 mile run from Montreal was like a lion but ended with a whimper.

Generating an enthusiasm far beyond the expectations of anyone connected with it, the rally became an overnight success, a smash hit as they say on Broadway. Crowds among whom there was none who knew what a rally was, turned to watch the cars go by and then jammed telephone switchboards for a week seeking information.

The public image of motorsport in Canada has gained immeasurably and even the sports car club themselves who played key roles across the country, marshalling, timing and generally carrying for the cars as they passed through their region, were surprised at the cooperation and cohesion they achieved.

If success is measurable by authoritative reaction then the BCITF-Shell rally was a resounding success, for two manufacturers had already applied to enter teams in next years event before this year's had finished and before any announcement had been made regarding a future Canadian rally.

"Its not whether I win or lose," said one happy team manager, "Our cars have taken part in the rally and we were very happy to have been a part of it".

The 93 cars remaining from the 105 starters in Montreal swept into Vancouver on a growing wave of protests which threatened to cloud over the shining success of the event. At times it appeared that there was a contest to see who could protest the most. The dignity of this international event was saved by the competent handling of the protests by rally manager Doug Wilson of Vancouver under the guidance of Canadian Automobile Sport Club president Jim Gunn who subscribes to the "no-nonsense" approach. CASC rally steward Don Stewart covered the route while the rally was in progress as an official observer.

One curious fact emerged in that the vast majority of the protest writers were also expressing eagerness to participate again and were handing out suggestions as to how the rally could be made tougher and therefore more enjoyable.

The day of the victory banquet in the hotel Vancouver an official finishers list was issued, based on the corrected provisional list amended to cope with the outcome of the protests. Before the ink was dry, however, the list was out-dated by fresh protest results.

First place overall was finally awarded to one of the consistent front runners, a factory-entered Studebaker Lark from Hamilton. Ontario, driven by Jack Young and Reg Hillary of Toronto who finished with four penalty points. In second place, another Lark, this time an independent entry driven by Lou Lalonde and John Jones also of Toronto.

Montreal drivers captured the next three overall places. Grant McLean and Bill Leathem in a Volvo placed third; John Charters and Ian Worth driving a Volkswagen were fourth; and Sam Nordell and Tony Wilson also in a Volvo stayed up among the leaders to finish fifth.

A typographical error in the points assessment was discovered in time to boost the McCluggage/Hammen Corvair up to first place in the women's section, although the winners had been thought to be Alice Fergusson and Gillian Field in their baby Citroen.

Apart from the first five cars, however, it was not possible to establish any other of the class and section winners at the time of the banquet.

One fact that did emerge from the banquet was the spontaneous reaction of the drivers and navigators to the Shell Oil Company of Canada representatives. A big hand was reserved for G.P. "Gerry" Marchesseau who flew over the entire route stopping at the night stops to welcome drivers on arrival and speed them on their way the next day.