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Photo: Anton Skrigitil (askr@shaw.ca)

**Prescribed Burn Season Ends with Rally Teams and Volunteers  
Competing at Big White**

Local rally driver Mark Jennings-Bates ended the rally season by winning the Big White Rally Weekend, a two day snow event organized by his co-driver Jennifer Daly and the rest of their Prescribed Burn Rally Team. Instead of traveling to Alberta to accept their 2008 Western Canadian Open Class Title, the team spent the weekend rally driving in the snow and ice at the Big White Ski Resort.

Saturday morning, four stage rally teams began a rally test day, initially making pace-notes, then practicing winter rally driving, on a closed local Forest Service



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Road. Two teams 'finished' early because of mechanical issues; however, both cars were sent off to see Wade Latimer at the local Subaru dealership, and both returned to compete in the rally-X. The other two teams drove until dark, while volunteers began to prepare the Gem Lake lot for Sunday's rally-X.

The next morning, the stage rally drivers tested their rally cars against the daily drivers of over twenty volunteers, service crew and local motor enthusiasts in rally-X competition. The drivers faced constantly changing weather conditions including sleet and heavy snow as they slid sideways through a course of tight corners and variable traction. Mark Jennings-Bates finished slightly ahead of second place Chris Maydaniuk, co-driver for the Alliance Rally Team from Kamloops, with local Logan Noel rounding out the podium. Jackie Jennings-Bates was the top female competitor, in tenth overall, behind the wheel of her son's Subaru Legacy.

Barbara Garry spent Sunday guarding the rally-X lot entrance and explaining the event to numerous locals who stopped to watch and take photos. According to the outgoing volunteer, most people were interested and entertained, and one remarked that she was surprised such events hadn't happened more often. The rally-X also drew weekend visitors from Vancouver, who came to spectate but ended up taking a course lap alongside Peter Kopic, one of the rally drivers from the coast.

"The Big White Rally Weekend was about making rally more accessible and mixing all levels of rallysport, from newcomers and spectators to drivers and mechanics." said organizer Jennifer Daly, who also co-drives the local rally team. "This has been an eventful year for the Prescribed Burn Team, and we wanted to have one last rally weekend where everyone, especially our service crew, could relax and drive sideways in the snow. Mark and I are lucky to have solid and hardworking guys as teammates; they've pulled us through some tricky spots, and it's hard to overestimate how much we rely on them." The Prescribed Burn Service crew members competing this weekend included Ian Barrett, Dave Steeper, Eric Bauld and Reagan Ritchie.

Also competing was Dave Hood, crew chief and course designer, who said that the local website kelownacarlife.com has also become a significant resource for the rally team: "We've gained a lot of support from the forum, especially the assistance of Logan Noel, one of the KCL administrators, who helped set the



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course. The weekend has been a blast," said Hood, who appeared on the local news with his beard and toque caked with snow, grinning. "For sure we're all waiting for the ski season to start, but until the lifts open, rally is a great pre-season substitution for fun times at Big White."

Alex Schubel, organizer and service crew member, agrees: "We nearly had to cap the entries for the rally-X, and there was an excellent volunteer turnout for the test day on Saturday. People drove from Vancouver, Squamish and Calgary; to name a few, and it's likely that the snow practice we've enjoyed this weekend would entice rally teams from Alberta and the US in the future."

Jennifer Daly is also optimistic regarding future plans: "For the first event of its kind, we were very fortunate to have the cooperation of Big White, Forestry and numerous other interested parties, and we're getting great feedback from locals and competitors. Ultimately it will depend on the response to this event from the resort administration, but at present we are hopeful that we'll be able to hold another Big White Rally Weekend."

The Canadian National Rally Series is currently being broadcast weekends on TSN; check local listings.

***The Prescribed Burn Rally Team is an Okanagan based performance rally team that is supported by BCResortHomes.com, Sun FM, Agar Paint & Autobody, BigO Tire in Westbank, Wyatt Auto Parts, OkanaganVisitor.ca. Provision Data, Stacy Screen Print, The Great Canadian Oil Change, Wishbone Industries, BELL Racing and Kelowna Moving Centre.***

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