

# **Mountain Trials Rally 2008**

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**Merritt, British Columbia.** June 13/14, 2008. West Coast Rally Association presented a CARS sanctioned regional stage rally, **Mountain Trials**, in Central BC. Clerk of the Course, Paul Westwick, put together an experienced crew of organizers for a great event.

Competitors and workers arrived Friday for registration, inspections, and to "recce" the route. The process of writing fresh course notes or amplifying the detailed routebook kept crews in the woods until well after dark.

18 teams took the start in Parc Expose at Canadian Tire in Merritt.

Two runs of the **Active Mountain** spectator stage kicked off the Saturday schedule. Spectators were allowed to walk into the closed course with views overlooking the twisting downhill, the regraded and smooth valley section, the big hairpin and the hill-climb to the finish. The 1.86-km route goes a little like this: Start downhill, easy left, into easy left tightens, kinks, then sharp right downhill with exposure, into hairpin left. Stay straight on the main road for almost 600 meters, then hairpin left uphill, steep, into very sharp right with exposure (and a wooden stair and platform), then easy left, possible air at the 100-meter warning, brake!, 90-right through cattle guard and climb to Flying Finish! Go to the end of the line and have at it again!

All was well with the first run. Norm LeBlanc and Keith Morison did an inaugural run in a bright red 2006 Impreza (which arrived **very late** Saturday night) in 1:42, just over 65 km/h, about 3-seconds faster than Scott Trinder and Bill Westhead in the '95 Impreza WRX-RA. Second run was a 2-second improvement for both cars but no change in position.

Albertans Eric Grochowski and Leanne Junnila in the Group 2 Golf lost an axle at the final cattle guard on **AMR Two** and withdrew from the rally much earlier than expected. (They would repair the car and join the workers as Car 000 later in the day)

Next up for the rally was **Nicola North**, a 7-km turn-around stage overlooking Nicola Lake, east of Merritt. All cars would run the stage north, regroup and wait at the dead-end, then re-start southbound. Nicola is usually smooth until beyond the second residence lake access, then rough to the end... This year the rough was very rough! The Open class Eagle Talon of Johnny Summers and Kodi Hutchison retired on Nicola North, causing a bit of delay. LeBlanc /Morison posted a 4:31 at nearly 97 km/h, followed closely by the 1993 Impreza of Mark Jennings-Bates and Jennifer Daly with 4:37, and Trinder/Westhead with 4:38.

**Nicola South** runs just 5-meters longer, is slightly downhill, and usually faster. Four seconds faster for Norm and Keith; eight seconds for Scott and Bill; but about 25 minutes slower for MJB and Jenn -- Car 3 would retire in Service with a "cracked frame".

All cars were routed into Merritt for fuel, repairs as needed, and a re-group depending on their stage times from the first four stages.

Comstock Road, 15-km south of Merritt was the venue for **Comstock North**, a series of three runs over 5.83-km of road varying from rutted clay to freshly graded main-line gravel, to a newly configured uphill approach acute-left -- now with a deep ditch on the outside -- continuing downhill onto pavement, near top speed, dip and jog through the tunnel (no paint on exit please), back to as-fast-as-you-dare pavement, then brake to gravel again, dropping into the woods and clinging to a narrow twisting ledge with exposure and crests, followed by more downhill into the easy-right-cattleguard Flying Finish. New logging activity in the Comstock area provided the fresh mainline, a new access, and now a Spectator Area (albeit a bit small) where onlookers could be somewhat controlled and kept at a safe viewing distance as cars accelerated from the Start, through a medium left then uphill passed, Spectator and away in the dust.

**Comstock One** belonged to Norm and Keith at over 94 km/h, with Scott and Bill closing to only a two-second gap. A new third place, back another ten seconds was Bryan Maplethorpe and John Hall in their 2002 WRX at 3:54.69 -- barely ahead of Martin Chung and Christa Monasch in the 95 Impreza at 3:54.91, who in turn led Warren Currie and Robin Chapelsky in a 2004 WRX with 3:55.25. In contrast, the slowest car was a 1988 Subaru RX, struggling, but still posting just under 80 km/h average -- well done John Geelen and Graham Lee.

**Comstock Two** was just a bit quicker, again led by LeBlanc, with Trinder trailing by under a second, then Maplethorpe, and Chung also trailing by under a second. Fifth on stage, back by another second, was Novice Dwane Jackman, and Michaela Guscott in their Group 2 Golf.

**Comstock Three** saw LeBlanc and Trinder both taking another five seconds off their times, with Scott only .69 seconds behind Norm. Average speed now 94.8 km/h!

After another Service Break in Merritt -- and another re-seed -- teams (and workers) moved to **Helmer Lake South**, a 22.79-km woodland stage with surfaces changing from packed gravel, to loose gravel, to rutted dirt, and a few water splashes for the early cars. Helmer has large Spectator Areas at .87-km and 1.21-km although neither were overcrowded this year. The "impromptu spectators" were less present too, for some unknown reason, but welcomed relief to Marshals.

(A brief aside here: Before their new car arrived, Keith Morison predicted "close to 13:30 on Helmer" -- in prior runs we've seen high 13's in ideal conditions)

**Helmer One** saw Norm putting down a "cautious" 13:45 in the new car, average 99.4 km/h -- 20 seconds faster than Trinder/Westhead. As usual for Helmer, cattleguards mean cattle. BC (Bovine Chicanes) were present and plentiful, with concentrations at 21.58- and 21.74-km, that would require some wranglers, recruited from Pace Car and Timing crews. (For future reference, the bright orange vests seemed to be the most distracting -- I can attest they don't care about cars or car horns). Car 18 Onur Tezcan (BC) and Tracy Manspeaker (WA) found "Warren's Tree" with their '91 Legacy Turbo, at the exit of a medium right medium left, and managed to stick to it for a stage time of thirty four minutes, but with lots of tape and makeshift window nets they pressed-on. Car 9, Novice Hardy Schmidtke and Adam Vokes, WRX, was off, then extracted by Sweep, continued on for a 37-minute run, but would retire. Car 11 took a soft roll, lost only a few seconds, and continued. Car 16, Dueck/Dueck, WRX, stuffed deeply, couldn't be extracted by Sweep, and was forced to retire.

The Transit dropped down through the gravel hairpins and out to the freeway, then a long climb back to Helmer Exit 315.

**Helmer Two** saw only 13 starters, with LeBlanc/Morison breaking the triple digits average at 13:33. Clean runs for everyone, including a fourth place finish for the 1987 Toyota Corolla GTS of Kris and Jaclyn Schofield, in Group 2, posting 91.88 km/h.

Yet a third trip to Service in Merritt, then the final stage.

**Helmer Lake South SS10** -- in dust, requiring two-minute windows -- saw LeBlanc and Trinder still the hot shoes. Norm's average 100.33 versus Scott's 97.61 km/h... The Schofield's Corolla was now third. Most of the cattle had settled into the trees. John Breen and Josh Keatley from Alberta lost a Focus tie-rod and did a masterful job of keeping the Ford upright in front of Marshals at 12.40 km into the stage. As the rest of the field passed, the crew valiantly strapped the steering back together, recovered their triangle and while parked in front of Sweep, found the gearbox full of nothing but rocks - - Game Over.

Twelve cars were scored as finishers.

<b>First Overall</b>	-- Norm LeBlanc and Keith Morison.
<b>First P4</b>	-- Warren Currie and Robin Chapelsky.
<b>First Gr2</b>	-- Kris Schofield and Jaclyn Schofield.
<b>First Novice</b>	-- Dwanye Jackmann and Michaela Guscott (lost motor on transit to Final MTC).
<b>First P3</b>	-- Breen/Keatly (made the MTC).

Complete results and photos at

[http://www.rallybc.com/MtTrials/2008/2008mountain\\_trials.htm](http://www.rallybc.com/MtTrials/2008/2008mountain_trials.htm)