

2019 RallySport Ontario VP Performance Director's Report

The 2019 Ontario performance rally season had some excellent grassroots competition, with room for improvement in the Ontario Performance Rally Championship.

Overall participation in the OPRC was mixed. The total number of entries declined from 55 to 41 while the driver count rose from 31 to 37, indicating that more drivers were running fewer events. Some trends were comparable to 2018, with a good entry at the Lanark Highlands Forest Rally while the Black Bear Rally only drew five teams. Changes are being made to the Black Bear date (moving to mid-August) and stage roads to improve the numbers.

Some positive signs include great competition - there were no repeat winners - and strong entries from Quebec-based teams. The Eastern Canadian Rally Championship (ECRC) appears to be working well to encourage entries from other provinces.

Congratulations to our championship winners: Matt Ballinger and Bruce Leonard are the 2019 overall champions, Philippe Benoît and Eric Dubé claimed the 2WD crown, while Stéphane Hudon is the top novice.

Grassroots events continue to be a bright spot in Ontario. Our clubs have been very active with a full slate of rallycrosses across the province:

- KWRC held five rallycrosses throughout 2019, with entries usually in the mid-30s while their first round in February was so popular that it had to be run over two days.
- MLRC's rallycross series in Bancroft was successful again, and included a hugely successful event in September at Markham Fairgrounds.
- MCO's winter rallycross series continues to grow, with the 2019 events averaging ~20 drivers and the 2020 numbers trending upwards.
- PMSC's new rallycross championship at Burnt River also attracted approximately 20 entries each, with another full slate of events planned for 2020.

The new Ontario RallySprint Championship was undoubtedly the biggest success story of 2019. The jump from rallycross to OPRC has been a tough one for a lot of drivers, and this new series is becoming an important stepping stone. Paul Hartl provided the spark we needed, Darryl Malone coordinated the new series, and MLRC & PMSC organized some great events. The entry list filled up almost immediately, and has already sold out for 2020. The rallysprint championship received rave reviews from last year's participants, and I'm really excited to see how the coming season unfolds.

The 2020 OPRC season is starting on the front foot with the announcement of a \$10,000 prize fund. **Ontario Motor Sales, Clarington Hyundai and Martin Air Heating and Air Conditioning Services Limited** are our generous series sponsors. The prize fund is geared

towards newer drivers with a speed factor of 75.0 or less, and will pay out for the year-end championships plus the two standalone OPRC events. More information and eligibility requirements are published on the RSO website.

<https://www.rallysport.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020-OPRC-Prize-Fund-1.pdf>

The 2020 OPRC calendar is similar to 2019, with three rounds combined with national championship events (Perce-Neige, Défi and Tall Pines) with two standalone regionals (Lanark Highlands and a revamped Black Bear Rally). There has been quite a bit of chatter about new and refreshed rally cars coming out of the woodwork, so I'm hopeful for healthy entries at all rounds of the OPRC this year.

A lot of good things are happening in Ontario rallying, but we can always use a hand. RSO is looking for volunteers who can help us with our social media presence and sponsorship / marketing. Reach out to the board if you would like to get involved.

Many thanks to our clubs, organizers, marshals and competitors. Looking forward to 2020!

Alan Ockwell
VP Performance Rally