

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. Most importantly: competitors gave it rave reviews.

2020 was shaping up to be a very promising season, but COVID-19 has affected all aspects of life. A handful of rallies have already been postponed or cancelled, and we'll see how things unfold over the coming months to determine which events can run later in the year. RSO will post announcements on the website and social media channels as things develop.

Many thanks to our clubs, organizers, marshals and competitors. Stay safe in these turbulent times.

Alan Ockwell
VP Performance Rally