

2021 RALLYSPORT ONTARIO VP PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ontario performance rally season in 2021 still felt the challenges of the pandemic as provincial COVID protocols continued to impact events. Many of the planned events were able to go ahead with only a few events cancelled due to pandemic related measures, allowing for great grassroots competitions across the province, pointing us in a positive trajectory moving into the 2022 season.

The 2021 Ontario Performance Rally Championship was shortened to four events though it still attracted pre-pandemic participation levels. Comparing to 2019, the total number of entries rose from 41 to 62 while the driver count fell from 37 to 28, indicating that drivers were running more events throughout the year.

The increased trend of entries was fueled by the change made to move the Black Bear Rally to August 7th, along with Lincoln Electric's Rally of the Tall Pines being converted into a double regional. Black Bear's participation improved by over 200% from 5 entries in 2019 to 16 entries in 2021. Tall Pines increased from 10 entries in 2019 to 37 entries in 2021 across the two events.

The other leading factor in the trend of increased entries was that of our \$10,000 sponsored prize fund, aimed to boost new and up-and-coming competitors and participation at the standalone OPRC events. The increased participation at Black Bear and the trend of drivers running more events throughout the year suggests the fund's aim is being met.

Some positive signs include:

- great competition
- increased participation
- a tight novice championship battle
- continued strong entries from Quebec-based teams

One negative trend is the number of events on the OPRC calendar. Over the last decade we continued on a slow downward trend from 7 events (2013, 2014) down to 4 events in 2021. Current issues in the World have highlighted this trend and it should be monitored moving forward.

Congratulations to our championship winners; Jerome Mailloux & Philippe Poirier are the 2021 overall Champions, Gary Sutherland claimed the 2WD driver's crown and rookie John Gerryts received the 2WD co-driver crown, leaving the Novice title to be claimed by Trevor Pougent.

From a success story in 2019, the Ontario Rally Sprint Championship has taken shape as an integral stepping stone into the OPRC from the grassroots level. In 2021 the championship took on a change in organizers with Jacek Gielas taking the helm of a committee-based approach. In 2021 the series registration did not sell out as quickly but still garnered interest. It is reflected in the average number of entries decreasing slightly to 9 per event from 10.3 in 2019. The number of events decreased to 2 from the previous 3 in 2019 as the ORSC was also affected by

challenges brought on by the pandemic. 2022 will see the continuation of the championship but again from another organizational approach, with individual events to be organized by individual clubs.

At the grassroots level, rallycross continues to see a lot of interest from new competitors and strong completion from the regulars, with 4 clubs holding events across the province in 2021. Challenges throughout the year from track venues to weather made it impossible for most clubs to hold a full championship. Nonetheless, all 4 clubs did run at least one event throughout the year.

- KWRC - Found a new home at Eagles Nest Motorsport Park in Ohsweken late in the year and held 1 event there with 28 entries.
- MLRC - Also found a new home, at Free Flow MX Park in Bellville where they hosted 1 event in 2021 with 18 entries.
- MCO - Their winter series didn't get off to a great start due to lockdowns but managed to still host 2 events averaging a strong field of 30 entries.
- PMSC - Was already established at Free Flow MX Park and were able to run 4 championship events in 2021 with 30-35 entries per event, completing their 2020/2021 championship. Additionally PMSC held a winter event with 19 entries.

2022 has started a little behind schedule with Rallye Perce Neige being rescheduled from Feb. 4-5 to Apr. 1-2 and a warm February being the demise of a few winter rallycross events. With Rallye Perce Neige and Lincoln Electric's Rally of the Tall Pines both being comprised of two regional events each this year, the OPRC will have 6 events in total on the 2022 calendar, including Black Bear Rally and Rally Defi Petite Nation. Additionally, a full platter of rallycross events planned by clubs across the province and the continuation of the ORSC, performance rally is trending positively.

Many thanks to our clubs, organizers, marshals, competitors and sponsors. See you in 2022.

Brandon Pace

VP Performance Rally