

Nocturnal ½ Returns II

		Leg 1	Leg 2	Leg 3	Leg 4	Leg 5	Leg 6	Leg 7	Leg 8	Leg 9
NAVIGATIONAL (Nav.) Class										
1st Bob & Marianne DeMeritt		5/5	6/6	15/15	1/1	27/27	2/2	6/6	2/2	28/28
& 1st Overall	Cumulative Score	5/5	11/11	26/26	27/27	54/54	56/56	62/62	64/64	92/92
2nd & Gary Patrick /Trent Riden		5/5	25/25	30/42	30/42	30/100	4/4	30/100	30/43	30/45
& 3rd Overall	Cumulative Score	5/5	30/30	60/72	90/114	120/214	124/218	154/318	184/361	214/406
SEAT OF PANTS (SOP) Class										
1st & Jon Flora/John Li		90	46	16	27	58	18	76	58	10
& 2nd Overall	Cumulative Score	90	136	152	179	237	255	331	389	399
2nd & Jim Koltz /Kathy Brown		11	73	72	21	100	5	41	47	100
& 4th Overall	Cumulative Score	11	84	156	177	277	282	323	370	470
3rd Russ Bedford/Joe Siedenburgh		65	75	78	45	100	17	88	24	23
	Cumulative Score	65	140	218	263	363	380	468	492	515
4th Brian Grable/Sandy Grable		66	86	5	100	100	10	76	54	60
	Cumulative Score	66	152	157	257	357	367	443	497	557
5th Tony Grilo/ Holly Sims		23	100	58	54	78	12	100	83	100
	Cumulative Score	23	123	181	235	313	325	425	508	608
NOVICE Class										
1st Alex Larson/Nina Balcer		27	100	100	100	100	38	100	100	100
	Cumulative Score	27	127	227	327	427	465	565	665	765

Nocturnal ½ Returns II was originally scheduled for December 2008 but was postponed when the cold run team of Mike Blackwelder and Emanuel Martin found so much snow on the roads that it was impossible to maintain the prescribed average speeds. I subsequently had hopes of putting it on during the following February or March and then doing a Nocturnal ½ Returns III rally on November 7, 2009. The date choices made by other rallymasters interfered with that plan however so Nocturnal ½ Returns II finally ended up being rescheduled for the November 7th weekend.

That saved me from having to come up with an additional 150 miles of rally. It even allowed me to postpone making the route instruction updates suggested by the December 2008 cold run team until Saturday, October 31, 2009. After making the updates I went out the next day to recheck the entire rally. In the process of doing that I also lengthened several legs and moved three checkpoints. These changes helped make the rally route easier to follow by eliminating several tricky instructions. They also improved the checkpoint spacing for both the ralliests and the checkpoint crews.

The down side was that much of the rally would need to be re-measured. Since it had originally been measured with a hundredths reading odometer and snow on the ground during the 2008 cold run this was something I had planned to do anyway. Mike Blackwelder and his thousandths reading rally computer were available on the Wednesday before the rally for this re-measuring and re-cold-running operation. We set out at 9:30 in the morning and returned around 4:30 in the afternoon. In the process we came across a temporary road closed sign on a road that was to be used twice on the rally.

We went ahead down the road and found that it was really open again even though it had obviously been closed for a short time to replace a large culvert where the road crossed a small stream. A large digging machine was still being used to modify the banks of the stream near the culvert. The road essentially follows this small stream as it meanders down a very steep sided valley. Ralliests first trip down this road would be at 24 miles per hour and would come just after the odometer comparison zone (OCZ) of the rally. Their second trip would be at 35 MPH a couple hours later as they were heading toward the rest stop.

I had hoped to be able to double check that this road and the ford in Kickapoo State Park were open before the start of the rally but didn't end up with enough time to get that done. As a result the eight teams that showed up for the rally were told at the start that I would be at the odometer comparison point to guide them around that road if it was still "officially" closed. They were also told that if a checkpoint sign was at the base of the

“Campground Entrance” sign in Kickapoo park they were to skip the loop that went to the ford and immediately turn left to enter the first checkpoint.

While the ralliests started out on the odometer comparison zone I sent the checkpoint crew of Mike Blackwelder and Jim Hamilton to the first checkpoint and Emanuel Martin to check the ford then go to the checkpoint. Meanwhile I headed, by way of where the “Road Closed” sign might be, to the end of the OCZ to put up the club’s “ODO” sign. Since the road wasn’t closed and the ford was open the ralliest were able to run the first leg of the rally completely as planned, with a couple of notable exceptions.

The first one was that Jon Flora failed to get the tailgate of his truck securely latched and ended up strewing its contents on the road. Unfortunately this was unbeknownst to him until Tony Grilo pointed it out at the end of the OCZ. Jon headed out to rerun the OCZ and look for his stuff around 2:00 AM after the rally was over. Also on the OCZ the Patrick/Riden team missed a “Kickapoo” sign and ended up back at the beginning of the OCZ where they started over. This put them about three minutes late getting to the odometer comparison point. To compensate they asked for the first of the fifteen (15) delays that were claimed for the rally.

In spite of the delay they did get to checkpoint 1 in time to get an out time a minute after the DeMeritts. The rest of the cars left in order behind them except for the novice team. Alex and Nina had some confusion caused by not having a time of day watch but only a stop watch that was started exactly two minutes after 8:00 PM. Note to future TSD (time, speed, distance) ralliests: TSD rallies are timed events where at checkpoints you will be timed in based on the rally’s master time. This time is displayed at registration and is usually the time that is available at <http://www.time.gov>. Since you must start yourself out on each leg based on the master time you need to have a good watch that displays seconds. You should also know how to reset it.

There was some additional confusion getting out of checkpoint 1 since folks weren’t yet familiar with where to find the departure information on my “busy” checkpoint slips and since I didn’t make it clear that the official odometer restarted at 0.000 at each checkpoint’s out marker. I hope to address both items on my next checkpoint slips. The starting odometer concern was mostly a matter of “comfort” for ralliests equipped with correctable/resettable odometers since there were no mileage turns during the timed portions of the rally and since during all timed portions of a rally it is the distance covered that matters rather than the starting odometer reading.

In addition to the rough start for the second leg it turns out that there was also an error in my calculations for the leg. I accidentally did my calculations using a mileage of 8.158 for a speed change from 44 down to 33 when I should have used 9.158. The time difference over 1 mile amounts to .45 minutes and translated into better leg scores for both Nav. cars and worse scores for everyone else. The DeMeritts caught that there was something wrong with my calculations for this leg but they weren’t able to sort out what it was. At the end of the rally I didn’t have a final version of my detailed log sheets as I had forgotten to print them but when I looked at my calculations spreadsheet while working on this write-up the error stuck out like a sore thumb. No finish positions were affected and the correct scores are shown above.

Other than the Patrick/Riden team missing a sign for a speed change but still staying on course I don’t know of any other problems on leg 2. On leg 3 Jon and John took a 2.5 minute delay but I don’t know the story behind it although I suspect there was an off course excursion. There were also very few problems on leg 4 but the DeMeritts did take a 1.5 minute delay and Alex and Nina disappeared completely. Emanuel made a cell phone call to them from checkpoint 4 and got them on track to go to checkpoint 5 and get back in the rally at the rest break.

On leg 5 Jon and John and the DeMeritts each took half minute delays and the Patrick/Riden team missed a sign-marked side road. This put Gary and Trent into checkpoint 5 almost 3 minutes early. They knew they were off course at the time so they turned around and headed back toward where they missed the side road then ended up coming back by the checkpoint again a little over a minute late. This might not have been enough time for them to have followed the correct course to the checkpoint but it certainly was enough time for them to have decide to go ahead and take their maxes for the leg and to get started on their rest break.

Meanwhile Jim and Kathy missed the same sign/side road that Gary and Trent missed. The good news is that they figured out their error sooner and made an exuberant U turn to go back. The bad news is that an officer of the law saw them do that and pulled them over. Jim simply got warned about his exuberant driving but since the

whole point of the rally was to drive exuberantly I doubt that the officer's words had much effect. Two officers each also stopped at checkpoint 5 to inquire what was going on but went on their way as soon as Mike and Jim explained that they were running a checkpoint for a road rally. Had Jim and Kathy not been running 15 minutes late at that point Mike would probably already have closed the control and been at the rest break before either officer had come by.

Due to Jim and Kathy's unforeseen delay the out times from the rest break were all moved back from 11:00 PM plus car number to 11:15 plus car number. Leg 6 was then very uneventful except that it was only half the length of the other legs and the checkpoint crew had to sprint to get to the checkpoint ahead of the ralliests. There was only about a mile on the crookedest part of the Old State Road during which the ralliests weren't taking the most direct route toward the checkpoint. Toward the end of the sprint I was beginning to think that I had actually bypassed the turn to the control without noticing it but before I gave up and pulled over to double check the map we came upon the turn.

Fortunately we got Emanuel's car and the checkpoint sign set up in time for the first car but unfortunately he was busy in the back seat doing who knows what when it showed up. I was able to run across the road and grab a watch only to accidentally turn it off instead of hacking it when Gary and Trent came by. I of course then scrambled for another watch but was way late when hacking it. Fortunately Gary or Trent had hacked their time and it agreed with about what we thought it should be so we were able to keep the leg. Everyone ended up with excellent scores for the leg.

Leg 7 found Gary and Trent off course again but able to recover and get to the checkpoint over 6 minutes late. By this time I suspect that Gary was thinking about giving some serious consideration over the winter to returning to the navigator's seat next year so he can work with his timing spreadsheet rather than trying to follow the course instructions, especially for night rallies. Meanwhile the DeMeritts used their last delay slip and asked for more. Their delay was only for half a minute so I suspect it was just to make up for taking a few extra moments to sort out how to apply an instruction at one of Vermilion County's unusual intersections.

Leg 8 had the last 5 cars all get delayed by a train in sight of the checkpoint. It's odd that the only time a train caused any delays was there in sight of the checkpoint even though that same busy track had been crossed numerous other times by the rally route. In any case all five teams took similar length delays so that they could maintain their order and spacing. Everyone but Alex and Nina ended up with good scores for the leg. Alex thinks that a minutes long after midnight brain fade episode at the start of the leg caused them to start the leg without taking into consideration that their stopwatch was running two minutes later than the correct minute. Had that not happened they would have scored a 39.

On leg 9 Joe and Russ claimed their only delay of the rally and Gary and Trent claimed another one. Both were for half a minute. In addition the DeMeritts claimed 3.5 minutes which might have been for an off course excursion although I don't know that for sure. That last leg of the rally featured both Mudslide Hill and the Pollywog road. At Mudslide Hill the cast was 6 MPH for the tenth of a mile up the narrow switchback and then 15 MPH for the next 0.4 miles through the residential area. I hope that even the SOP ralliests figured out that 0.1 miles at 6 MPH is 1 minute and that 0.4 miles at 15 is 1.6 minutes. By figuring that out they could then check to be sure that they left the half mile mark exactly 2.6 minutes after they had started up the hill.

Checkpoint 9 was back at Oakwood and as we had been doing all night the checkpoint car was set back clear off the road. In this case it had been backed into a relatively flat ditch since there wasn't a field entrance available. Sure enough this posture caught the attention of yet another gendarme and Mike explained once again that he was running a checkpoint for a road rally. I headed on to the Oakwood Truck Plaza to order breakfast while Mike and Jim finished up the timing and scoring for leg 9. Shortly after they pulled in to the truck stop the results were announced and the "½ Nocturnal Returns II" trophies (oops) were handed out.

I heard lots of good comments after the rally so unless someone else comes forward to put another "Nocturnal" on I'll probably do it again sometime. Since we have 15 other rallies already set for next year it may have to wait until sometime in 2011 though. In the meantime come on out and get in lots of practice for it.

Jerry White, Rallymaster