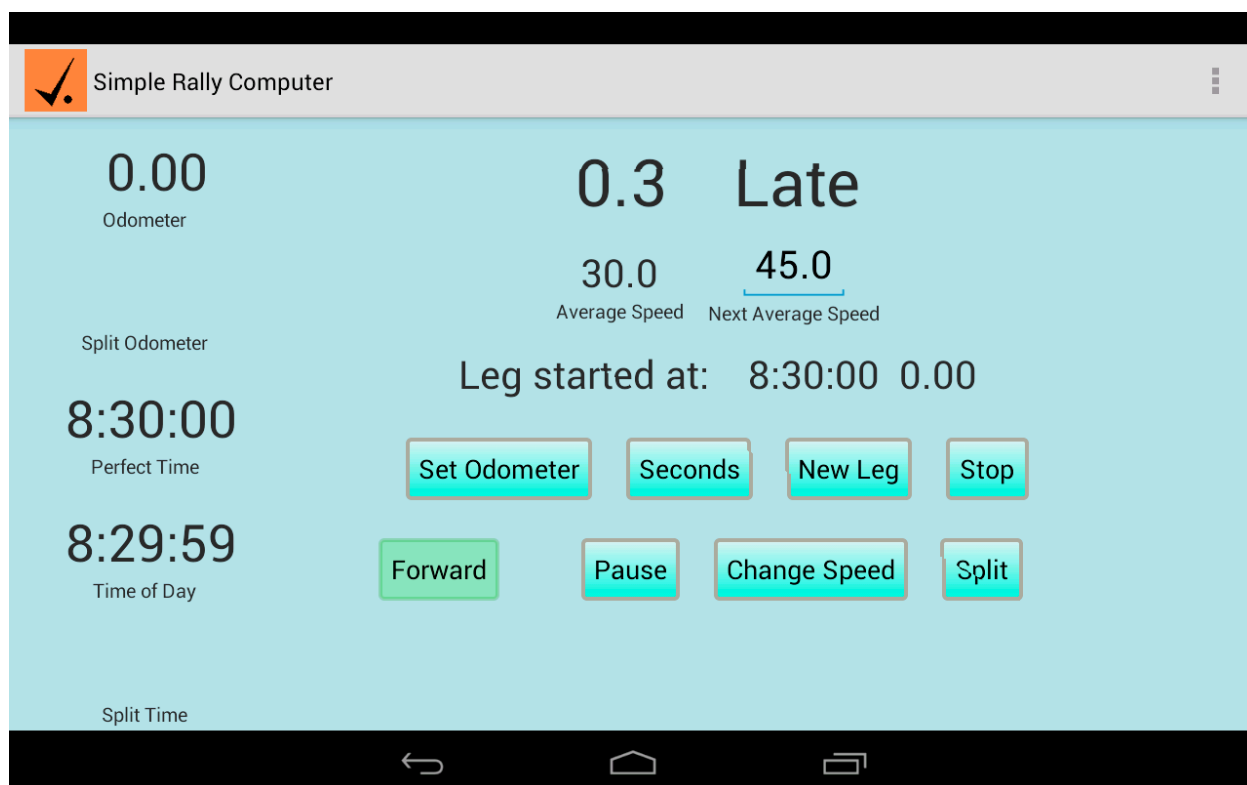


RReNews There's an App for That! — February 2017

Simple Rally Computer



In January, a new road rally computer app for smartphone and tablet devices was released. We caught up with the author, **Rich Bireta**, and sat down for a Q&A session.

RReNews: I was under the impression that you already offer the **Richta Rally Computer**. Why did you release this new app?

Rich Bireta: I wrote the Richta Rally Computer for the style of navigation I use. While it is good enough for me, it was not easy to explain to a new user how to use it. It was anything but simple. It was time for a new design based on a clean sheet of paper.

(RReN): Where did the idea for the Simple Rally Computer come from?

(RB): This started as an idea from **Clarence Westberg**. About a year ago, Clarence suggested that we needed a new app for his control zone rallies. In these events, the competitors are given an ideal time just a few miles from a checkpoint. They then have a single speed to CAST for just a few miles. After the checkpoint, there is a transit to the start of the next control zone. This method is a good

way to introduce beginners to time keeping and rally calculations. Clarence wanted his new competitors to have an inexpensive app for these events: one speed, limited function, easy to use.

I thought this was a great idea, but it could be expanded easily. Instead of having a single-speed rally computer, with a few additional functions it could be used in any TSD event. I also thought the price should be low.

I had this app coded a year ago, and I showed it to some competitors who liked the basic concept but found the app to be awkward on the road. It needed more work in the "ease of use" department, and it went on the back burner for a year.

(RReN): What happened this past winter?

(RB): A couple of things. There is a new Facebook Group called **Road Rally Tech Talk**. Clarence posted an observation there. His Timewise computer needed repair so he mounted up his old Zeron 880 and commented how easy and intuitive its user interface is and suggested it may be a good model for rally apps.

That inspired me to dust off the Winter 2015 project. I gave it a Timewise organization to the layout and controls, and I made it easier to use. I had three main goals:

- 1) Easy to use, suitable for those new to the sport
- 2) Functionally rich enough that I would use the app on an event, and
- 3) Inexpensive.

I completed the project over the holiday break.

(RReN): What kind of device will this run on?

(RB): It will run on a phone with 320 x 480 pixels on the screen, but it looks better on a seven-inch tablet.

(RReN): Aren't tablets expensive?

(RB): I don't think so. A Samsung Tab 3 can be had for \$70 or less on eBay. I like the quality of the Samsung devices, and the Tab 3 models have a micro USB power port that matches my phone.

(RReN): Price for the app?

(RB): I set the price at \$5.99.

(RReN): Per event?

(RB): No, there is no limit on the number of events. Upgrades are included.

(RReN): That's not what I would call an expensive app. Why is it priced so low? Is it worth it?

(RB): You're the third person to suggest that the app is underpriced, so my conclusion is that I priced it right. I set the price based on the scenario of a beginning rallyist who just registered for their first event. They just paid \$20 or \$30 to enter, and they learn they can get an accurate clock and a correctable 0.01 odometer that will do some calculations for under \$6 and it will run on the hardware they already have in their pocket. I wanted the decision to purchase the app to be a "no-brainer" at this point.

I'm not in the app business to make money. I'm in it to make it easier and more fun to run road rallies.

(RReN): What upgrades to the app are planned?

(RB): Upgrades will include fixes for any reported defects. I also plan to add the ability to log and review the actions that have been performed. I also have this wild idea that the app could also replace manned checkpoints. It would log the time at the checkpoints in a database and send the info to the organizers. Imagine a rally with no checkpoint workers and no scoring workers. Your score would be displayed on your device and reported to the organizers.

(RReN): (Looking at iPhone), I don't see this available in the Apple iTunes store...

(RB): My version is Android only at this point. I am hoping **Michael Young** or someone else will produce a similar product for Apple devices.

(RReN): Will this app work with the Dual 160 or Garmin Glo external GPS receivers?

(RB): Yes.

(RReN): One common complaint about apps is that there is no documentation. Is that true here?

(RB): No. There is a User's Guide available at www.richtarally.com.

(RReN): How is this app classified on SCCA events?

(RB): On National or Divisional events this app places the competitors in the Equipped Class because the mileage measurement is directly connected to the calculating component. That is not to

say it is competitive there. Apps with GPS odometers are not competitive with Timewise or Alfa E boxes. These apps are competitive with other methods in the SCCA Limited Class. I wrote this app without regard to how it fit within current SCCA classification rules.

Regional events are not bound to use the SCCA Championship classes. I've heard that the *SCCA South Jersey Region* is experimenting with a Tech class for apps such as this. The *Twin Cities Rally Club* (MN) is thinking about an App Class this year.

I am hopeful that we'll see other SCCA Regions experiment with different class structures. Perhaps a common model can emerge with enough widespread participation that adjusting the National classifications will be justified.

(RReN): Where can folks send questions and suggestions for improvements?

(RB): The best place for those comments is the Road Rally Tech Talk forum on Facebook, or an email direct to me would be fine (rbireta AT gmail.com).

(RReN): Thanks for your time.

(RB): No, thank you for the opportunity to discuss this obsession of mine.