

# THE Hidden Persuader

A Game On Wheels Helps Fuel SCCA Growth



Checkpoints or "controls" (above) are sprinkled throughout a road rally. Penalty points are assessed for arriving early or late, and the lowest overall score wins. In advanced rallying specialized odometers are often used (right) but pencil, paper and a watch do fine for beginners—and are all that's allowed in many rallies. Attendance at the end-of-rally party (below) isn't mandatory, but most people manage to make it. (John Stenmark)



For the first four years of its existence the SCCA never held a race, yet membership grew rapidly. What was the attraction?

Forbes magazine last year ran a feature article on a popular recreational diversion enjoyed by business executives. Do you know what it is?

Membership for the SCCA is at an all-time high. Do you know a sure-fire way to attract even more eager participants? The answer to all three questions is the same—road rallying.

In the excitement and glamor of road racing and intense head-to-head competition of Solo, it's easy to overlook the fundamental attraction of joining friends for an afternoon of fun going for a drive in the country. It doesn't cost more than a tank of gas, it usually winds up with a party and you don't have to have the reflexes of a Willy T. Ribbs or the banzai determination of a Formula Ford driver. A great many SCCA members find even more attractions once they start rallying. Let's face it, competition is the yardstick of life. In its advanced classes, road rally is a complicated, mind-bending game to play—which is why it attracts high-powered executives who relish challenges.

SCCA has developed detailed guidelines for setting up a road rally (see sidebar), but to whet your appetite here's a brief overview to put you in the picture—and maybe your next door neighbor too. —Ed.

## by Janice & John Stenmark

A road rally is a game on wheels. If you are a game player who enjoys making spur-of-the-moment decisions, if you like challenges, if you like competition—then you will find rallying highly stimulating. It is also one of the few automotive sports in which a person can participate successfully with a minimum of skill and equipment. It is possible to win a trophy on your very first rally. And have a good time while you're at it.

There are many types of road rallies. The most popular is the time-speed-distance (TSD) rally in which all cars follow the same set of instructions throughout the rally course on public roads. Contestants are given specific average speeds to maintain and are usually separated from other cars by about a minute. Along the route, checkpoints are encountered and penalties are assessed for earliness or lateness. The lowest score wins.

### A Good Poker Hand

Although most rallies are of the TSD variety, there are also gimmick events in



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some of the most commonly used:

**CAST.** This is an abbreviation which stands for Change (or Commence) Average Speed To. If you are instructed to CAST 30 at "STOP," you are to change your average speed to 30 when your car is even with a sign that has the word "STOP" on it.

**CONTROL.** This is usually a timing station or checkpoint along the rally route. Generally you are required to stop at controls, where you will be timed in and then given a new time out.

**T.** This is an intersection in the general shape of the letter "T" as approached from the base.

**ODOMETER CALIBRATION.** At the beginning of a rally, you will be given the opportunity to compare the mileage on your car with the car that measured the course. This lets you know how to compensate for the difference in mileage measurements. If, for example, you have an instruction that tells you to turn left at 18.50 miles and your mileage is low compared to the car that measured the course, the left turn might come up at 18.20 miles. If you did not have a chance to check your mileage, you could get lost.

**MAIN ROAD.** This is perhaps the most confusing concept for beginning rallyists. There is a main road through every intersection; it is the way you would go if you did not have any route instructions. Every rallymaster will give you guidelines for following the main road. For example, if you are told that the main road goes RIGHT AT T, when you encounter a T intersection, the main road will go to the right. Often you are given a list of main road determinants and your main road is the highest applicable on the list.

For some rallies, such as SCCA Divisionals and Nationals, there is a general set of rules which govern the event. These rules are published each year and are available to contestants. Rallymasters issue the General Instructions to supplement or modify the published rules. Always be sure to check to see if the rally you are entering uses any of these special regulations.

### Next: Route Instructions

At last you are ready to get out on the course. Generally you will be issued two sets of Route Instructions 30 minutes before the start of the rally. The General Instructions will tell you where and when to obtain the Route Instructions (RIs). Take advantage of this information and get your RIs on time. Once you have them in your hands, check to make sure that they are complete, that you have the right pages, numbered in order. There is nothing worse than getting halfway through the event and discovering that you are missing Page 4. This seldom happens, but it can.

Many rallyists mark the Route Instruction with colored pens for easy reference, using different colors for different actions. They

may highlight all speed changes and instructions that have to do with time in yellow. Landmarks that have special definitions might be marked in green. Instructions that might cause you to follow a road by name or number could be blue.

Once you have looked over the route instructions, you will be ready to begin following the route. Many rallies have a "free start," which means that you can begin your odometer calibration as soon as you wish after receiving your instructions. Usually you are given a definite amount of time for this part of the rally, such as 40 minutes. Just be sure to leave the end of the odometer calibration period at the time you're supposed to.

### Stay On Course

For your first few events, you will undoubtedly want to concentrate on course following, and this will probably take the efforts of both the driver and the navigator. All the calculations in the world will not help you if you are off course. There will be intersections where it will take both of you to decide which way to go and there will be times when you disagree. When this happens, try to choose the route that seems to be most consistent with the rules given in the General Instructions. If you are wrong, do not despair. Careful rallymasters loop their rallies so that contestants who take the wrong route will eventually arrive at the checkpoints.

The best strategy for beginning rallyists is to travel about three to five miles per hour above the CAST, to allow for the times when you slow down at intersections. Leave all time of day starts and restarts on time and observe all pauses in the instructions. Try not to worry too much about elaborate time-keeping until you feel comfortable with course following. (I came in first overall on my first rally 17 years ago using this strategy and I knew almost nothing about rallying.—Janice)

Along the route, you will encounter controls (checkpoints). Usually, you will stop at the control's timing station, which is set up shortly past a checkpoint sign. At each control, you will be timed in. Also, you will probably be given information about the leg of the rally you have completed, such as official time and official mileage. You may be advised of adjustments to make so you can get a fresh start on the next leg. You will then proceed to an "out" marker and start the next leg at your assigned "out" time.

### Brain Fade At Controls

Be very careful at controls. Sometimes you will be assigned a new CAST or given special instructions. Probably more penalty points are acquired on rallies by brain failure at checkpoints than anywhere else.

Do not under any circumstances leave a control "out" marker until you know what instruction you should be trying to execute. It is better to leave a little late knowing what you are doing than to flounder around. □

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