

Carlow Mayo Dacre Rally ?the best on record?



By Michael Riley

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Rally Connex's Dacre Overland Rally, also known as ?the longest day,? took place with the start and finish line in Carlow Mayo Township at the Mayo Community Centre from July 10 to July 14. This was not a race but a rally, testing riders' endurance throughout a 21-hour endeavor. It has been expanded this year to a five-day event, opened up to include Argo 6 by 6 and 8 by 8 machines, added a race prologue starting position event and a vehicle show and shine to spur community involvement and interest. Lee Martin, CEO of Rally Connex, thought this year's Dacre Rally was one of the best on record.

The Dacre Rally in Carlow Mayo has held for nearly 25 years, and is a GPS-guided event that runs up to 600 kilometres in a 21-hour time frame. There were 150 entries this year, comparable to previous years. The goal is to finish the rally, and complete the prescribed route as accurately as possible in the time allowed. Gold, silver and bronze classes in each category denote difficulty based on mileage and terrain covered and neither speed or time is factored into the results.

According to the Rally Connex website, ?the longest day? is not a day tour but is ?all about personal and machine preparation, machine reliability, self-sufficiency, team work, planning and navigation.? The entire rally route is overseen by Rally Connex's crew via checkpoints, sweepers and GPS tracking.

Martin says that the rally has been going for close to 25 years and has been through many changes. It expanded this year because he says it's the way of the time.

?There's more fanfare at big international events. We figured that having a race prologue for your starting time for Saturday would be more appropriate than drawing names out of a hat. Especially now that we have side by sides in the event that it's difficult for them to pass, where in the past we only did moto. We wanted to grow it into something much larger and get the public involved with the show and shine and spectators at the prologue to watch it and setting up a race that'll be very entertaining to watch,? he says.

Martin emphasizes that the rally is not based on speed or time, but is a GPS navigated challenge. He says riders are scored on the accuracy with which they navigate the course.

?We base it on a 25-kilometre speed average and we have safety checks and those safety checks have cutoff times. If they can

manage the 25-kilometre speed average, they'll reach the cutoff times four hours ahead of cutoff, so that's why there's no need to race. So, we give four hours of room for error in case there's machine breakdown, they get lost, technical issues, that sort of thing,? he says.

For more information about the rally, go to www.rallyconnex.com/dacreatvsxs.html.

Keith, one of the rally side by side drivers doing the event for the second year, thought the it was awesome. He was washing up his machine prior to the show and shine.

?It's going to be fun. Now that I know what to expect, I'm not going as hard as I did last year. I made it the furthest in my class but I didn't finish as I helped out some fellow competitors who were in trouble and had a busted tie rod and axle. I could have not helped but I'd rather show some humanity. A finish is more important than a win,? he says.

Mark, one of the side-by-side drivers doing this rally for the second year with his co-driver John, said they did the gold side by side last year but went with the silver level this year.

?We want to complete it. We're looking forward to it. It's a good time. The trails he picks are tough but it's a good ride. I like how everyone's out there trying to ride the same. You're in for the long haul. It's a marathon not a sprint. I like these kinds of drives anyway, long distance. We're excited,? he says.

Brent and Missy were there from Ohio while Adam and Alan came up to participate in the rally from New Jersey.

Brent said that as long as they finish, that's all that matters.

?It's been a lifelong dream. I'm always wanted to run a Baha but it's so astronomically expensive. And I saw this and I've been setting this all up for the past two years. To me it's a bucket list thing,? he says.

Adam said they saw a video about the rally on YouTube.

?And we thought, wow, how many miles are they doing? This place is like within 10 hours from us and we thought, we gotta go do this. Hopefully we see more of the countryside and less of the bugs!? he says with a laugh.

At the show and shine while he was conducting the technical inspections, Martin said the course was very wet.

?We've had guys out in the trail for the last 48 hours non-stop cutting trees and clearing. They're double checking that the track is open and ready to go and all that really fun stuff,? he says.

Martin said wanted to thank all the rally sponsors this year, including Red Bull, Yamaha Canada, Royal Distributing, the Dillabough family for their support and use of their farm, and Crystal Landis from Hidden Valley Catering, who provided all the meals for the drivers and crew. They also had a 50/50 draw at the event, with proceeds going to the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

Martin told Bancroft This Week on July 15 that there were multiple winners of the rally across multiple classifications and that they'll be publicizing that in the next couple of days at www.rallyconnex.com.

?What I do know is that the gentleman who won the gold class side by side won it with about 15 minutes left in his allocated time. So he took his time all day and really made sure he followed the line and paid attention. The guys that did the event really quickly and home before anyone else had the greatest number of mistakes. It worked out well. First place, they used all 21 hours and they got the best score of anybody,? he says.

Overall, Martin was ecstatic about how the rally went and the new format.

?The whole team reflected that way, saying wow, what an exciting new change. Everyone was really happy about it. It was exciting for us organizers as well. We loved it. We think it went off really well,? he says. ?We think it was one of the best Dacres on record, to be honest with you.?