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Friday, August 3, 1990

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Milton's Ross Wood . . .

. . . and Acton's Andy Browning

Rally team running wild in major series

By BRAD REAUME

MILTON'S ROSS WOOD and Acton's Andy Browning are running wild in the rally race season. They managed a win last weekend in their production class 1986 Toyota Corolla GTS at New Richmond, Quebec in the Rallye Baie Des Chaleurs.

The race functioned as an event in three rally series: The North American Rally Championship, The Canadian Rally Championship and The Quebec Rally Championship. Results can count in each series, depending upon what each team is qualified to race and what entry fees they pay.

Racers from Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Manitoba as well as Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maine made up the 41 teams which competed in three categories.

The three categories are defined by the car. There is an open class, the production class where engine and drive train modifications are outlawed, and the production GT which allows for larger engines, turbos and four wheel drives.

Provide an edge

Wood and Browning use a car with a 1600 cc, four cylinder engine, but the production class allows cars with engines up to 2350 cc so the team has to rely on their combined experience. Wood, the co-driver has 25 years of rally experience while Browning, only 24, has 33 rallies to his credit.

The service team of Wood's son Christopher, and Steve Buck of Toronto also provide an edge. "Everyone has very specific, clear cut jobs to do. We are very well organized," said Wood. "Buck has 15 years of experience servicing rally cars."

In Quebec the team had nothing to do the day before race day. According to Wood that is very unusual in rally racing. "We were polishing the car," he laughed.

The car, which is sponsored by General Tire, Attrell Toyota in Brampton, Castrol, and Minute Muffler here in Milton is torn apart between races, Wood says. Extensive modifications have been done to the car in order for it to withstand the abuse of flying down single lane logging roads at 90 mph.

Springs and shock absorbers have been upgraded to the point where the numerous YUMPS (rally terminology for flying through the air) do not do any damage to the car. Body and frame modifications have



Wood/Browning rally team (above) consists of co-driver Ross Wood of Milton, driver Andy Browning of Acton, Wood's son Christopher and Steve Buck of Toronto who are on the service team. Their car the General Tire Toyota Corolla GTS has heavy duty suspension and other modifications for racing on narrow logging roads.

also helped the car withstand pressure. All the body seams have been welded.

Safety equipment has also been installed. A complete roll cage protects the occupants in case of a mishap and four point racing harnesses have been installed. A skid plate under the engine and transmission offers further protection.

Won both

Seven rallies count for the Canadian Production Championship. Wood and Browning have won both the races they entered. The first win in the Perce Neige in Maniwaki, Quebec was followed by a race in Alberta that they could not attend for financial reasons. The second win, in New Richmond, also found them finishing eighth overall including the turbo, four wheel drives and modified cars.

The Voyageurs Rally in North Bay in mid-September and the Tall Pines Rally in

Bancroft next month are triple series events with rankings counting toward North American, Canadian and Ontario championships.

"Our closest competitors had problems on the weekend," Wood said. "One crashed and the other had mechanical problems." Wood says he figures only three or four teams are able to offer any real competition to the Milton car. The team that won the Alberta rally that Wood and Browning were unable to attend were themselves unable to attend the two Quebec rallies and are far behind in the points.

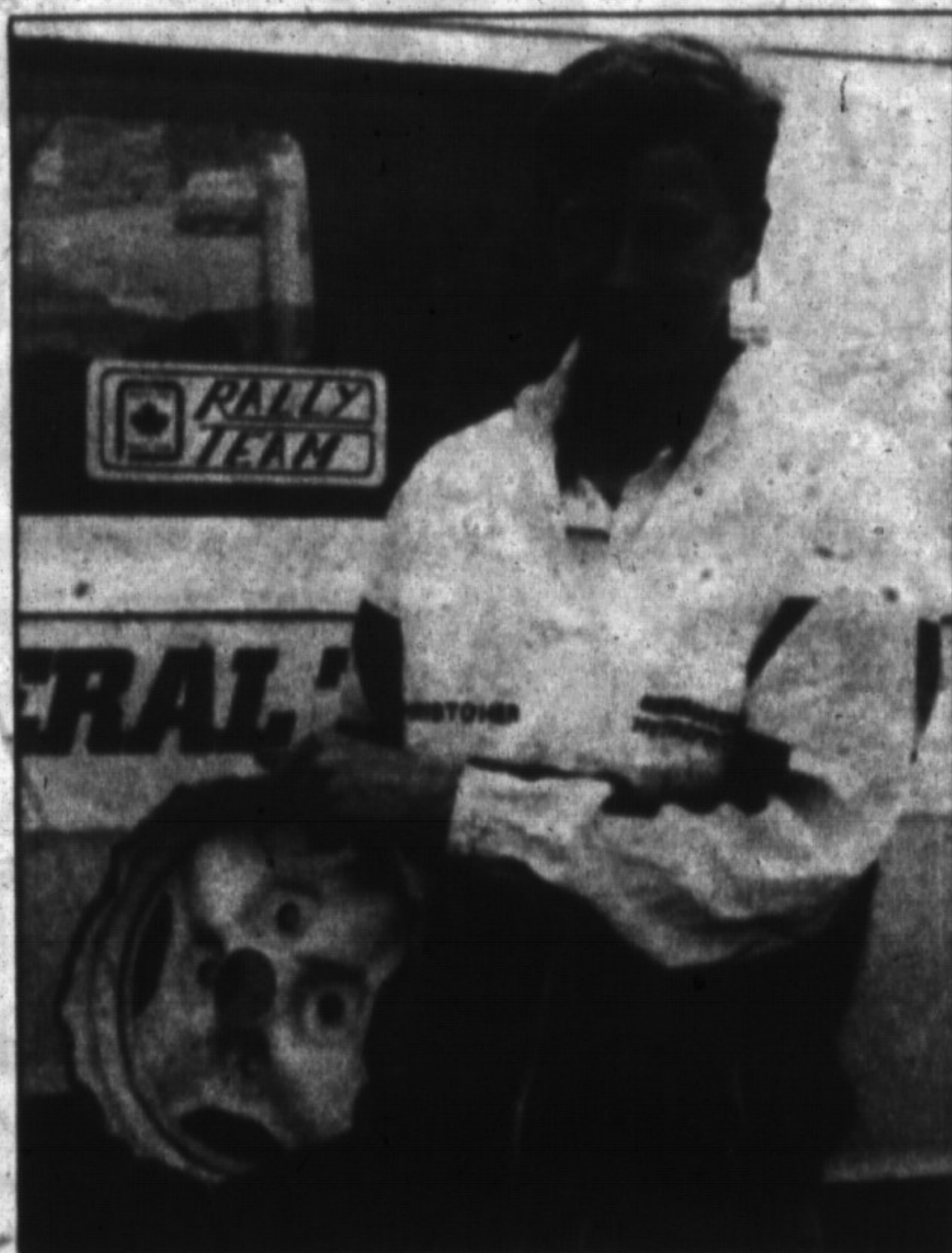
Wojtek Grabowski and Jerry Dabrowski of Toronto hold the Ontario lead with 32 points in the overall category. They drive a four wheel drive, turbo, Toyota Celica with a 200 horsepower engine. Wood and Browning are second in the overall and first in their class, despite driving a production class car with only 112 horsepower. The third place car in the overall has 22 points.

The Ontario series is five rallies, three of which are doubles with the Canadian title. The next rally is the Georgian Trails at Britt, between Parry Sound and North Bay. The rally wasn't in the local team's plans due to cost considerations but with a shot at the overall Ontario title Wood says they are likely to go.

Shot at the title

"We've got a shot at the title and it would really be something if we managed to win," he said.

In Quebec local sponsors put up prize money for 12 of the 16 stages of the rally, much the same as European cycling events. The winner of each stage would take the money but Wood/Browning put an end to that as they won all 12 stages. The rally is run over two days with six hours of racing Friday night and a further nine hours Saturday.



Christopher Wood holds what was left of the wheel rim that the team raced on for four kilometers rather than stop.

Best laid plans of mice and rally teams don't often work perfectly

By BRAD REAUME

When you're rallying you've got to think on the run. Despite all the precautions in navigation, equipment, spare parts and breakdowns the unexpected can and does happen.

Ross Wood and Andy Browning went to New Richmond, Quebec for a race off the weekend and encountered not one, or two, but three unexpected problems. They are, as a rule, extremely well prepared and often perform major repairs during the course of a race.

A flat tire, an electrical failure and a differential problem cropped up during the course of the race. The causes and solutions were the difference between winning teams and losers.

The left rear tire blew out with about four kilometers to go in the stage. They decided to make a run for the finish line.

"You could hear the bang as the tire went and then a loud flapping as it smashed around the wheel well," Wood said.

"It started to shred off and was completely gone after less than a minute. We were making a run for the finish on just the rim. We managed 80-90 mph on the straights so the rim took a pretty good beating."

Wood said he figures the car lost 30 seconds of time over a perfect run.

About 11 p.m. Friday night they were travelling down a one lane wide, forest road at about 130 km/h.

Racers were sent off at two minute intervals but because of their speed Wood/Browning were catching up to the racers

in front of them.

Dust kicked up by the racers was making it difficult for the pair to see so Browning decided to switch off one of the sets of headlights. Accidentally he hit the kill switch for the whole electrical system and the car went completely dark. The switch is required on all rally cars as a safety precaution.

Wood said that four or five seconds of hurtling down a dirt road in the pitch dark at 130 km/h with trees brushing both sides of the car, was quite enough.

"I was just about to announce a 90 degree left turn to a road which crossed a bridge when the lights went out," Wood said. "Andy got the car going again and I guessed right on the position of the turn. Once we got to the bridge we were okay because it was a map reference point."

The team also learned a lesson in preparation. Wood said that some rallies are introducing short stages on ovals so they can attempt to get spectators. Rally cars aren't set up for the strain of constantly turning in one direction. The Milton car experienced a problem with the differential when oil drained out of it on the turns.

The team managed to keep the car running but they had to contend with another four lap stage on the oval.

Browning merely zig-zagged the car down the straight ways and into the turns to keep the oil from flowing out. Wood says that the car will have to be equipped with baffles in the differential to prevent oil from flowing out on sustained turns.