

Off-road truck rally on empty stomach

Although last Saturday's off-road truck rally in Markham was open to anyone including Stouffville motor enthusiasts, few showed up to try their expertise on a tricky route that meandered through Stouffville, Uxbridge and Clarendon. Markham Sports Editor Francis King survived the experience to recount a rather stomach-churning ordeal.

BY FRANCIS KING

Well, my lips have stopped tingling, there's no more hyperventilating and I can walk again. So I must have finally recovered from Saturday's first annual Markville Toyota 4x4 Truck Rally.

This is a truly frightening sport, people. Especially if you've never done it before and don't know what's coming.

Despite publicizing the event, the turnout was quite underwhelming — only 10 people showed up to ride five trucks (one driver, one navigator each). But organizer Gary McArthur decided to go ahead with it anyway, so off we all went shortly after 11 a.m.

For the uninitiated like myself, rallies involve deciphering a sometimes-complicated map with the aid of a corresponding mileage list, then driving through the route and hitting all half-dozen checkpoints.

In this event, there were also a few riddles to figure out in the mileage list, and skill-testing competitions to do at each checkpoint.

But this wasn't the tough part. The off-road sections were. The words "truly frightening" come to mind when describing what Markham's Gord Hooper and I drove through.

It actually wasn't that long. Of the complete course (85 miles through Markham, Stouffville, Clarendon and Uxbridge), there were only two off-road sections. But in those six miles, the Toyota we had went through more god-awful terrain than what seems possible.

Actually, it came out better than I did. With Gord at the wheel (thank goodness), we bounced and banged our way through water-filled mud holes that make your average pot hole look and feel non-existent by comparison.

We didn't stop either; Gord said we'd never get moving again if we did. I started worrying after that.

Gord also had the good sense to bring along a pair of helmets. Lord, were they needed. In one four-mile stretch of this lunar landscape, my head and the ceiling "interfaced" about four times.

There I was, strapped in the passenger's seat, white-knuckled hands gripping the door handle and storage area cover, feet frantically pushed against the wall under the dash, heart beating like a bloody rabbit, and bouncing up and down like there was no tomorrow.

A checkpoint in the midst of all this gave us a chance for a break. But I found even walking was of some difficulty. That elicited only grins from Gord and the others, who must be used to this sort of thing.

But what can I say? Waiting for the vehicle I'm in to hit a tree or flip right over does weird things to my metabolism.

Anyway, for all our trouble we still missed one of the checkpoints, finishing third behind the teams of Devin Gilbert & Ray Sheppard, and Howie Simson & Jeff Sheppard. Behind us were John Peck & partner, and Dale Campbell & Gary Hunt.

By the way, the rally was held under McArthur's York Region Off-Road Association, and he might hold another one later in the fall.

Anyone who wants to join up and take part in a rally like this...but don't say you haven't been warned in advance...should apply in writing to P.O. Box 75, Unionville Ontario, L3R 2L8.

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Equestrian centre to open this month

A new equestrian centre is opening in Stouffville on Sunday, Sept. 21.

Wilson's Equestrian Centre Inc., located on the town line between Uxbridge and Stouffville (south of Bloomington Rd.) will mark its grand opening with a wine and cheese open house and ribbon cutting ceremony.

The centre is located on the former Harvey Swaine property.

The ribbon cutting is at 12:30 p.m. Open house is 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

MARKVILLE TOYOTA'S ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

IAIN FORSTER
Iain Forster scored 14 of 18 points in a Markham Rugby club 18-0 win over the York Yeoman last weekend.

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