

Burning rubber turns heads

Nearly 30 racers compete in NWT Motorsports Club first ever auto-slalom

by Candace Thomson
Northern News Services

Tires were screeching, rubber was burning and fans were cheering outside the Multiplex on Saturday during the NWT Motorsports Club's first ever auto-slalom.

The first official event for the club showcased 27 vehicles, including a Mercedes-Benz, a Toyota Yaris, an original Volkswagen Beetle and several Ford Mustangs.

Twenty-nine racers took part in the event and, by the end of the day, those who weren't already members of the club were signing memberships, according to club founder Ksenia Eic.

The race was divided into two groups depending on a first-come, first-placed basis.

The vehicles were judged in different classes according to make, model and modifications as governed by the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).

The course, mapped out in the empty parking lot between the Fieldhouse and the Multiplex, was made up of a series of loops, straight shots and a slalom course of red cones to navigate through.

fact FILE

TOP FIVE RAW TIMES FROM AUTO-SLALOM

1. 2007 Subaru STI, Robert Purcka, 29.3 seconds
2. 2005 Subaru STI, Kjell Hunter, 29.9 seconds
3. 2012 Ford Boss 302, Brad Ackerman, 30.1 seconds
4. 2008 Subaru WRX, Dylan Beliveau, 30.4 seconds
5. 1967 Ford Shelby 302, Ulrich Nolting, 30.4 seconds

Source: NWT Motorsports Club

Andy Budden, who raced his Mustang Supercharger, said it was great that there was space to have the slalom.

"In most of the southern cities I've been racing in, they'll open up abandoned airports, but up here there is limited space," Budden said. "It's nice the city lets us do it here."

"You're testing your car and your own abilities."

Nick Shopian

The winner of fastest raw time, which is the amount of time it takes a driver to go through the course, without counting penalties and handicaps, went to Robert Purcka with 29.3 seconds in his Subaru STI. He also had the best overall score once the vehicles were judged in their respective classes, with a final time of 26.4 seconds.

Arie Keppel showed up in his newly-bought 2013 Mercedes-Benz C 63 AMG. He said the race was an exhilarating experience but it took some skill.

"We do this all for the heck of it, but you do have to know your automobile," Keppel said.

Motorsports club organizer Ksenia Eic and Nick Shopian agreed with that statement. They said the race was put on so racing enthusiasts could have fun, but it also taught drivers how to better handle their vehicles.

"It makes you more aware of stuff, and you know when you're supposed to do what," said Eic. "I think that's nice that you can come out here, put your car to the test and your abilities to the test — you have to put more thought into it."

"You're testing your car



Candace Thomson/NWSL photo

Andy Budden races his Mustang GT Supercharger during one of the last loops for Group A. Budden's was one of many Mustangs at the race.

and your own abilities in ways you can't on the road. Your car will slide and then if you're ever in an emergency situation, you know how to react," said Shopian. "The race is a good way of accelerating and understanding what your car will do."

The club was the brainchild of Eic, who moved to Yellowknife in the fall of 2011 from Toronto, where she had raced before.

Eic said she wanted to start the club earlier, but only

really started working toward it and getting certification from the Western Canada Motorsport Association in March.

"We've had a lot of support and so many people interested in it," she said. "All kinds of people are coming to us asking how they can help get this going."

Eic planned the slalom and spent the last few months working with city hall to make it happen.

There were many challenges

involved with figuring out how the course could go, such as making sure none of the racers were at any point in the race accelerating toward one of the two buildings, but Eic said the city, particularly the municipal enforcement division, were very helpful.

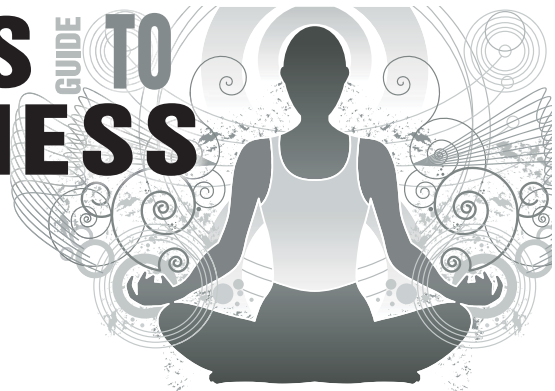
"We even invited (municipal enforcement and the RCMP) to come out in their cruisers and take a turn through the track but it was too short notice," Eic said, laughing.

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