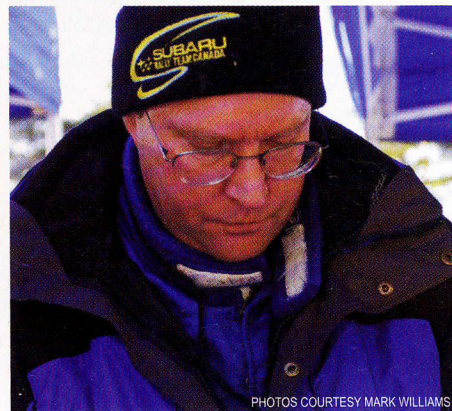
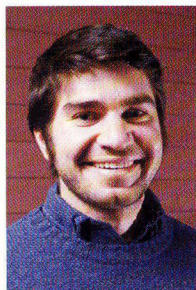


# PACE NOTES

BY DEAN CAMPBELL

## THE FINE ART OF CO-DRIVING



Mark Williams (above, right), who has co-driven for both Pat Richard (above, left) and Antoine L'Estage has a new book out called "A Guide to Rally Co-driving in North America."

Co-driving and the people who do it has been the subject of this column on more than a few occasions. And yet, it's hard to truly understand all of the skills that contribute to becoming the best competitors in the sport.

Canadian rallying has developed much like it has everywhere else in the world. Starting as a grassroots sport, eager teams had to learn as they raced, in a sort of 'school of hard knocks.' Unlike the rest of the world, rallying came later to North America, and hasn't grown as quickly.

That slower growth is in part attributed to the large geography of North American rallying. A Briton competing in the UK can rally almost every weekend without having to cross water. In Canada, you may not have to cross ocean channels to rally, but you do need to cross continents to compete internationally.

Consequently, there are fewer events in which teams can practice their craft, and more time between each event to forget lessons learned. So what are new rallyists to do if they want to get better? In the past, drivers could attend special training schools such as Team O'Neil's in New Hampshire. Co-driver education has until recently largely been a casual affair where competitors try to share ideas and skills without giving up ground to rivals. It's been a slow learning process that leaves Canada with a shallow talent pool.

Alan Ockwell has been delivering weekend seminars to less experienced co-drivers. It's most certainly a help for those that can attend but there are only a few clinics scheduled each year, and they are only conducted in person.

A new option now exists, thanks to American Mark Williams. "A Guide to Rally Co-driving in North America" is a new book written by

Williams that promises "No penalties, increased confidence and lower stage times."

Much like the title itself, the book is clear in presenting the knowledge bound inside. Practically any possible situation that can arise in competition is described in detail, with guidance on how best to respond.

The book is broken down into four sections, designed to help clarify the most basic skills right up to tactics that will aid the most experienced competitor. The basics are laid out in 'The Capable Co-driver,' while refinement comes in 'The Competent Co-driver.' By the time the reader reaches 'The Contributing Co-driver,' concepts such as pace noting and stage recce are covered.

The final section of the book, titled 'The Comfortable Co-driver,' details what you might call a co-driver's office.

Advice is given on personal safety, key pieces of co-driver equipment and even tips on avoiding motion sickness.

The preface – a section I admittedly skip when reading some books – is packed full of excellent anecdotes from Williams' co-driving career that illustrate how valuable skill development can be to a rally team.

"It's been difficult for the many new people coming into the sport to get clear and constructive information," writes North American rally legend John Buffum in the book's forward. "Mark has clearly defined and explained the role of a co-driver in modern rallying...It's a book well worth studying by any newcomer and worth reading by any enthusiast."

Aside from clear instruction on every aspect of a co-driver's role, Williams also provides "Pro Tips" throughout the book. Sometimes only a couple of sentences, they

disclose ideas that truly fine tune a basic understanding of the rules and role into a polished set of co-driving skills.

Clear diagrams and samples of route books, pace notes and timecards help information become easily relatable to anyone who has co-driven before, and previews what future competitors can expect to see.

There's a saying that a link exists between a co-driver's mouth and a driver's feet. Obvious jokes aside – driven by clips of heated moments between teammates – this is absolutely true. Once a driver has committed to the notes from a co-driver, it is incredible how much the co-driver can control the pace of the car simply by slowing down or speeding up their delivery. The subtleties of note delivery, that could never be documented or understood simply by reading a rulebook, are offered up by Williams, including an appreciation of just how well winning driver and co-driver working relationships function.

Throughout the book, there are short examples of the concepts described, drawn from Williams' experience competing with a variety of rally champions including Buffum, Pat Richard and Antoine L'Estage. He even teases out examples from in-car footage of other competitors, including a conversation between L'Estage and then-co-driver Nathalie Richard. But you'll have to buy the book to read that. Ultimately, anyone can learn to co-drive by competing and making mistakes on the way to success, but Williams' book offers a clear route to the podium.

Best read through completely and then kept close at hand, "A Guide to Rally Driving in North America" is an ideal reference for both drivers and co-drivers alike. •