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Team Primitive Arctic Challengers members reach the Arctic Circle, above. At right, blowing snow created an eerie landscape on the Dempster Highway.



Coopers Carry Winning Teams to Top of World

Teams riding on Cooper tires won two first-place awards and a second place overall as they raced to the Arctic Circle and back in the 24th annual Alcan Winter Rally.

The 10-day, 4,850-mile event featured 24 vehicles and 55 contestants in an extreme driving

adventure that started Feb. 16 in Kirkland, Wash., and ended Feb. 26 in Jasper, Alberta, Canada. Mid-way through, contestants reached the Arctic Circle.

This year's Cooper-sponsored three-vehicle team, Team Primitive Arctic Challengers, consisted of Glenn Wallace and R. Dale Kraushaar in a Subaru Forester XT in Class II, Paul Eklund and Kala Rounds in a Subaru forester XT in Class III, and Steve Perret and Kathryn Hansen in a Subaru Impreza RS in Class III as the rookie team. Teams are required to have a rookie entry.

To participate in the adventure, contestants must prepare their vehicles and themselves to withstand some of the harshest winter conditions in North America. Each day, contestants drive an average of 500 miles to make it to their next time-speed-distance checkpoint or ice racing challenge. Tires are a critical component when preparing the vehicles for the rally and ice racing stages.

This year's team used Cooper Weather-Master S/T 2 tires. "The tires performed beautifully on the ice racing stages and out in the middle of the frozen MacKenzie River and Arctic Ocean," said Paul Eklund of Primitive Racing. Paul set the fastest time on one of the ice race segments.

Because of the extreme weather conditions, vehicles use a buddy system and stay in radio contact, just to make sure no one gets stranded. "Timing fuel stops is a bit of an art and contestants are encouraged to carry two gallons of gasoline for each vehicle. Alcan ralliers have a saying, 'never pass gas,' and for good reason. This year we wouldn't have made it through the Cassiar without splashing fuel to make it the last 10 miles," said R. Dale Kraushaar.

The 2008 Alcan Winter rally entrants traveled the beautiful Cassiar Highway, raced on the Yukon River, drove the dangerous Dempster Highway crossing the Arctic Circle, drove 80 miles down the MacKenzie ice highway and then 20 miles on the Beaufort Sea, part of the Arctic Ocean, to the little village of Tuktoyaktuk, some 250 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Then heading south through Dawson City and Whitehorse, they took a night dip under the stars in sub-zero temperatures at Liard Hot Springs, took photos at Milepost One of the Alaska (Alcan) Highway in Dawson Creek, and finished by driving the Bighorn Highway into Jasper National Park.

"The Arctic tests your endurance, but also reveals some of the most breathtakingly beautifully desolate landscapes in the world," said Glenn Wallace.

Glenn Wallace and R.Dale Kraushaar finished first in Class II and second overall; Paul Eklund and Kala Rounds finished first in Class III and in sixth overall; and Steve Perret and Kathryn Hansen finished second in Class III and 10th overall. In addition, Team Primitive Arctic Challengers won the first-place Team Award.

Travel the adventure at www.challengedriving.com.



R. Dale Kraushaar and Glenn Wallace celebrate a milestone at the Arctic Circle.



At left, the Blackwater Road offered stunning mountain scenery.

On the Cassiar Highway, drivers traveled through dense forests.



On the MacKenzie River Ice Highway, drivers found little traction through a desolate landscape.

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