

DIRT AND DESTRUCTION
SPORTS ZONE



RALLY CAR RACING

TEARING IT UP



Brian Howell

Lerner

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RALLY CAR RACING

TEARING IT UP

BY BRIAN HOWELL



Lerner Publications Company • Minneapolis



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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY AND BASICS

David Higgins gripped the steering wheel of his Subaru WRX STI. He looked ahead at a dirt road in the forest outside Portland, Oregon. He was about to start Stage 9. This was one of the 17 small races that made up the 2013 Oregon Trail Rally. The Oregon Trail Rally takes place each year. It is one of the biggest rally car races in the United States. Higgins and his codriver had won the event the past two years. And they had won three of the first eight stages in 2013.

An official counted down from 10. Then he signaled the start of the race. Higgins slammed on the gas pedal. The race began.



CODRIVERS

In many forms of auto racing, a single person drives each vehicle. In rally car racing there is a codriver. The codriver has the very important role of helping the driver navigate. The codriver makes notes about the course ahead of time. These notes help the driver prepare for road hazards or difficult turns. During the race, the codriver sits in the passenger seat. This person gives the driver instructions. This helps the driver keep the car out of danger and complete the course as fast as possible.



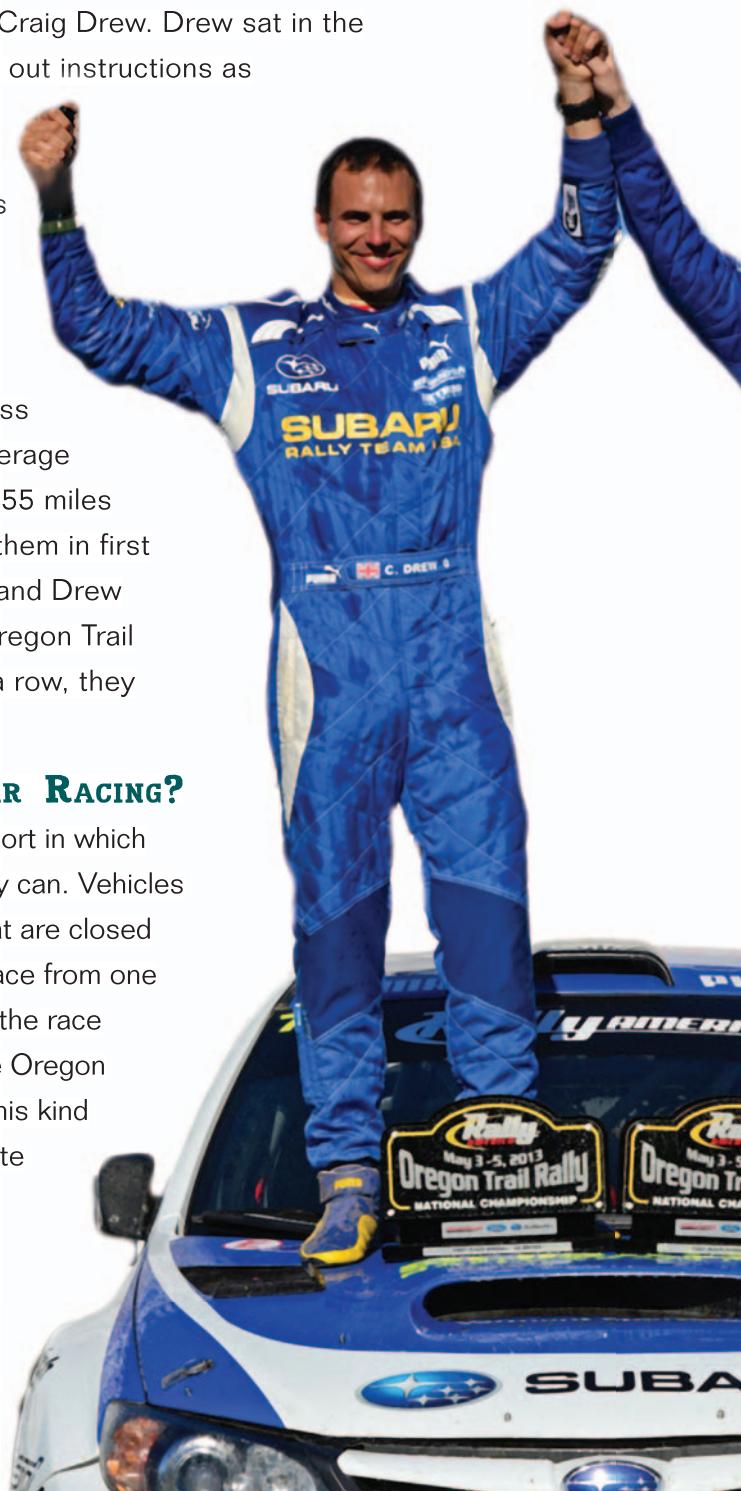
Rally car racing
is one of the
most popular
and exciting
motorsports in
the world.

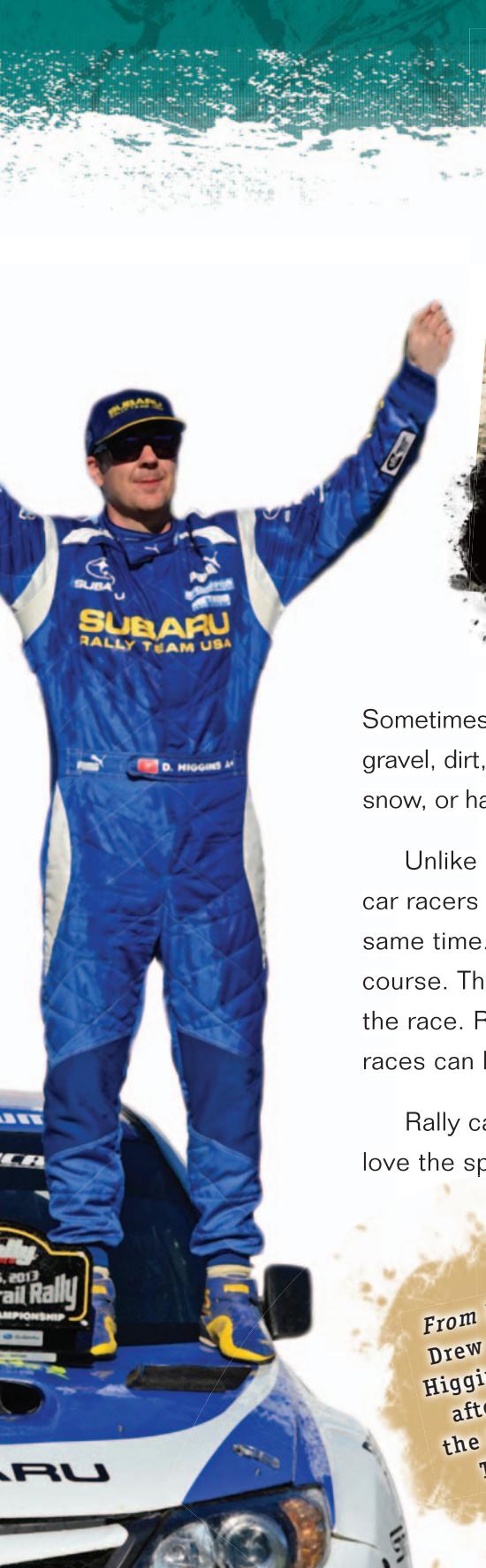
Higgins's codriver was Craig Drew. Drew sat in the passenger seat. He barked out instructions as Higgins drove. Higgins and Drew worked as a team to keep the car on the road as it sped through the forest.

Higgins and Drew finished the 3.5-mile (5.6-kilometer) course in less than four minutes. Their average speed was just faster than 55 miles (89 km) per hour. This put them in first place for Stage 9. Higgins and Drew went on to win the 2013 Oregon Trail Rally. For the third year in a row, they were champions.

WHAT IS RALLY CAR RACING?

Rally car racing is a motorsport in which vehicles drive as fast as they can. Vehicles compete on public roads that are closed for the race. Often drivers race from one city to another. Other times the race includes several stages. The Oregon Trail Rally is an example of this kind of race. Drivers must navigate through difficult terrain.





Rally car drivers navigate many different types of road surfaces at top speeds.

Sometimes the roads are unpredictable. They may be gravel, dirt, or asphalt. They may be wet, covered in snow, or have potholes.

Unlike many other kinds of car racing, rally car racers don't race against one another at the same time. One by one, each car speeds through a course. The driver with the fastest overall time wins the race. Rally car races can be very long. Some races can last for days.

Rally car racing drivers compete because they love the sport. Most rally car races don't offer much prize money.

Drivers compete for trophies and bragging rights.

From left: Craig Drew and David Higgins celebrate after winning the 2013 Oregon Trail Rally.

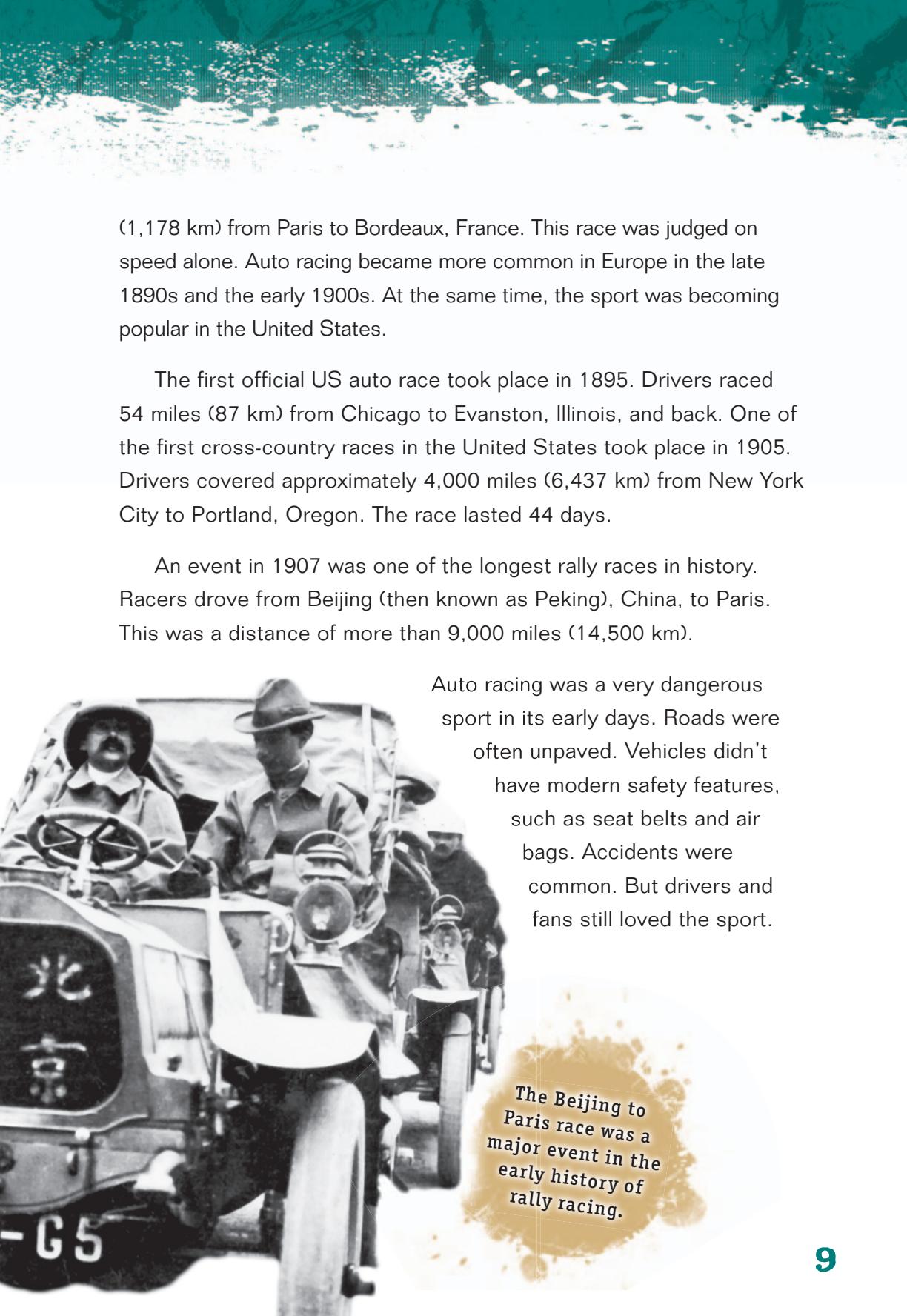


Most rally cars are stock cars. Stock cars are like the regular cars people buy at car dealerships. Rally cars often have minor changes from normal cars. They may have better tires or a special roof to make them safer for racing. Drivers can use rally cars on regular streets as well.

EARLY AUTO RACES

Rally car racing first started in the early 1900s. But the sport's roots go back even further. Auto racing can be traced to France in the late 1800s. In 1894 drivers raced 78 miles (126 km) from Paris to Rouen, France. Racers were judged on their driving skills and safety behind the wheel. They were also ranked by speed. In 1895 drivers raced 732 miles

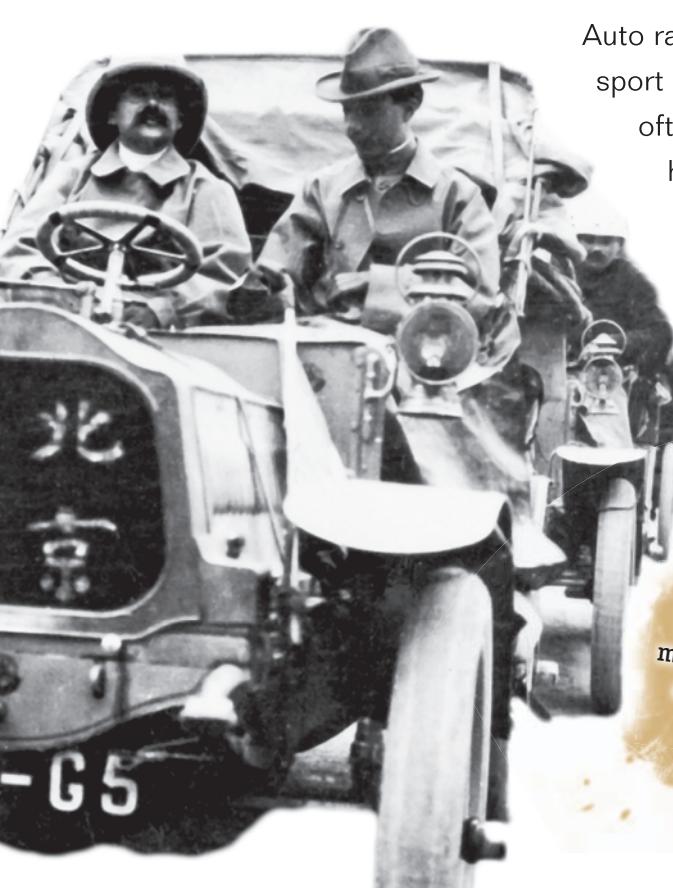




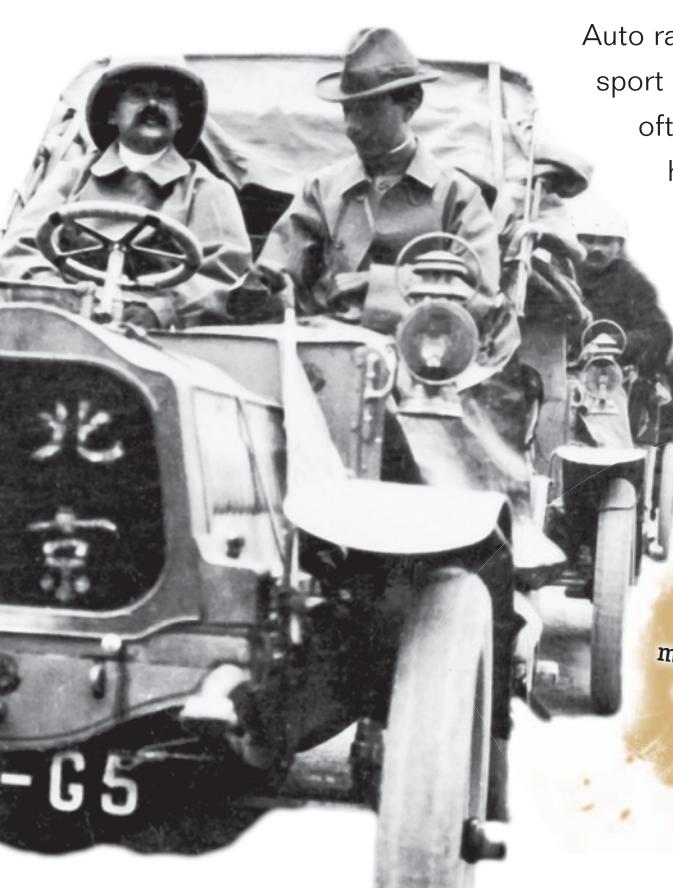
(1,178 km) from Paris to Bordeaux, France. This race was judged on speed alone. Auto racing became more common in Europe in the late 1890s and the early 1900s. At the same time, the sport was becoming popular in the United States.

The first official US auto race took place in 1895. Drivers raced 54 miles (87 km) from Chicago to Evanston, Illinois, and back. One of the first cross-country races in the United States took place in 1905. Drivers covered approximately 4,000 miles (6,437 km) from New York City to Portland, Oregon. The race lasted 44 days.

An event in 1907 was one of the longest rally races in history. Racers drove from Beijing (then known as Peking), China, to Paris. This was a distance of more than 9,000 miles (14,500 km).



Auto racing was a very dangerous sport in its early days. Roads were often unpaved. Vehicles didn't have modern safety features, such as seat belts and air bags. Accidents were common. But drivers and fans still loved the sport.



The Beijing to Paris race was a major event in the early history of rally racing.



Sébastien Loeb and
Daniel Elena race
at the Finland Rally
in 2012.

SÉBASTIEN LOEB

Sébastien Loeb is one of the most successful drivers in the history of rally car racing. The French driver won nine WRC titles in a row from 2004 to 2012. Before Loeb, the most successful drivers had only won four titles in their careers.

Daniel Elena was Loeb's codriver for all nine championship seasons. Elena is thought to be one of the best codrivers in WRC history. He has always driven a car built by the French auto company Citroën.

At the end of the 2012 season, Loeb said he would no longer drive full-time in the WRC. That put an end to the greatest run of success the sport has ever seen.

DAKAR RALLY

The Dakar Rally is one of the most famous rally car racing events in the world. The first race was held in December 1978. The course went from Paris to Dakar, Senegal. The distance was more than 7,000 miles (11,000 km). Fear of terrorist attacks in North Africa moved the event to South America in 2009. There the event covers more than 5,000 miles (8,000 km). As many as 745 racers from 53 countries participated in the event in 2013.

JUTTA KLEINSCHMIDT

German driver Jutta Kleinschmidt is known for driving long distances. Many people think she is the best female rally racer in the world. Kleinschmidt has been racing for more than 20 years.

Kleinschmidt got her start racing BMW motorcycles in 1985. She began competing in rallies in 1987. In 2001 Kleinschmidt became the first woman to win the Dakar Rally. This event ended in Dakar, Senegal, in North Africa. She drove a Mitsubishi and competed in the T2 class. This is one of Dakar Rally's Production vehicle classes. Kleinschmidt also helped Volkswagen develop a race car called the Race Touareg.

Rally car racing has seen many changes since its beginnings in the 1890s. Each year new courses are developed. These courses challenge some of the best drivers and codrivers on Earth. Rally car racing has become one of the most exciting forms of racing in the world.

German driver Jutta Kleinschmidt has taken on some of the most challenging rallies on Earth.



GLOSSARY

ASPHALT

a tar-like substance often used to pave roads

ENDURANCE

the ability to last a long time

FRiction

the rubbing of one object against another

GRUELING

exhausting, tiring, or difficult

HAZARD

an object that can cause danger or difficulty

MANUFACTURER

a company that makes and produces cars

NAVIGATE

to direct or help move a vehicle through its course

POTHOLE

a hole in a road's surface

STAGE

one of many parts in a rally car race



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Sandler, Michael. *Rally Car Dudes*. New York: Bearport, 2010.

Savage, Jeff. *Travis Pastrana*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2006.

WEBSITES

David Higgins

<http://www.subaru.com/enthusiasts/rally/drivers/david-higgins/index.html>

Visit the Subaru Rally Team USA website to learn about championship-winning driver David Higgins.

Rally America

<http://www.Rally-America.com>

Learn more about the drivers, the codrivers, and the races of the top rally series in the United States.

WRC: FIA World Rally Championship

<http://www.WRC.com>

The official website of the World Rally Championship features videos, results, and news about the top rally car racers around the world.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Howell is a freelance writer based in Denver, Colorado. He has been a sports journalist for nearly 20 years, writing about high school, college, and professional athletics. He has also written books about sports and history. A native of Colorado, Howell lives with his wife and four children in his home state.

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Have you seen a rally car race before? The vehicles may look like cars you see on the street, but rally cars have been modified for incredible endurance, strength, and speed. They race on courses made of dirt, sand, and even ice! Rallying brings together the best car manufacturers, drivers, and mechanics to put their cars to the test.

Enter the Dirt and Destruction Sports Zone to learn about the history, courses, competition rules, and the celebrity drivers connected to rally car racing. You'll learn:

- Who the most successful rally car racer in history is.
- How a rally car is built to last through a tough 1,000-mile (1,609-kilometer) race.
- What equipment and rules ensure the safety of the racers and fans.
- Why rally car races are the ultimate test of a driver's skill and stamina.

Are you into sports? Then get in the zone!

DIRT AND DESTRUCTION
SPORTS ZONE

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MONSTER TRUCKS
MUD TRUCK RACING
RALLY CAR RACING
ROCK CRAWLING
TRACTOR PULLING



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