

1-21-23: Circuit de Trois-Rivieres (Rallycross)

When Nitro Rallycross announced a set of winter races in Canada it was very exciting to have Rallycross in the northeast again. It's been since GRC at Thompson Speedway in 2017 that there's been driving distance rallycross for me. I left around 7am for the nice 5 hour drive up north, a very pretty journey through the snow covered trees in Vermont. It would be my first ever race outside the US and my 168th countable track overall.

The track was built in an area that annually hosts a street course so I drove through some catch fenced areas into the parking lot. There was a good crowd, I think the indoor seating was sold out and there were quite a few people in the GA outdoor areas. Being in Canada, I had to get poutine for lunch which they sold at the concession stand.

I only bought a ticket yesterday but managed to get a top row indoor seat, one of the few left. The sightlines were pretty good overall, it was all glass out front overlooking the whole track and the only issue was the big NRX banner at the start/finish line obscuring one of the corners entirely. Sitting down I had a handrail in my sightline as well, but when standing up it wasn't an issue.



The track was entirely within the stadium area, with the start on the backstretch and three quarters of a lap around the outer track before cutting into the infield, with the joker being extra distance and a couple

small tabletop jumps as the only elevation. It was entirely snow and ice covered, though one of the infield corners got torn up enough to hit dirt.

There were 9 NRX Group E cars, 6 side by sides, and 7 “rally”, which seemed to be production cars converted for rally, split into 3 two wheel drives and 4 four wheel drives. The SxS heats started 20 minutes early and weren’t even on the schedule as the first event. The track was clearly very slick and there was a big disparity in speeds between the different cars. They were sliding around a lot and seemed to have trouble getting traction even with the spiked tires. They didn’t get much air on the small jump, only getting two wheels off the ground.

Plows came out onto the track between races to plow snow that got pushed up the track back into the racing groove on some of the high speed corners. There was a bit of adjusting barriers to keep the cars in the snow on the interior turns, but not much track prep otherwise.



The Group E cars were significantly faster than the side by sides, which isn’t surprising but was very noticeable. They could get a lot more grip with more tire and four wheel drive. In his heat, Travis Pastrana went from third to first before the first corner by getting a good launch, and led through a good battle with Eriksson. Pastrana eventually cut a tire and held onto the lead for another lap before falling back.



By the time the Group E semi finals came around the turn into the infield was getting pretty torn up and some of the European drivers like Meeke and Larsson were doing almost a full backward entry into that turn. The crowd was really into it and were cheering for the backward entries.



The rally semi had an exciting moment when the leader on the last lap lost it himself in the big sweeping turn, right as he was accelerating out, and still just about won.



The experience of being inside while watching races outside was very unusual. The Group E cars are almost silent to begin with, but I enjoyed hearing the suspension and tires in previous races that I couldn't hear here at all. I did feel like I was missing something without hearing the cars at all. The commentary was entirely in French, unsurprisingly, but the acoustics inside were so bad that I doubt I could have understood it even if it was in English. There also wasn't much commentary, sometimes races would be silent and sometimes someone would be commentating, and I couldn't really figure out what was going on with it. Same with the video board - sometimes it was announcing upcoming races and showing video, sometimes it was completely black during races, and it seemed unpredictable and out of sync with everything.

The show ran pretty smoothly though, and even though the order of events wasn't following the original schedule they started the LCQs and finals right on time. The Group E LCQ had the biggest crash of the day, with two going into the outer berm hard right off the initial start. It took a decent bit to get that cleaned up.



Only five side by sides started their feature after some attrition, including a rollover in the semi. They split the 2wd and 4wd rally finals into separate events, neither of which were particularly interesting with so few cars.

The Group E main had some pretty good racing, though the Eriksson's dominated. Pastrana spun exiting the big infield right hander and got into the berm, and when he tried to back out came right out in front of Bakkerud and crashed into him. Running the final under the lights was a neat effect too and it was a fun race, and a fun event overall.

