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## Perry County's Rally Race : Behind the Scenes

Track-side. It doesn't matter if you are talking about NASCAR, Formula 1, Indy, or Moto GP, the closest you can get to the action is track-side. You can get a nice view from way up in the stands, you can see the whole track, even have a direct line to the hot dog cart... but it's not track-side. To be right on the course, to feel the wind as the cars and bikes race by, to smell the fuel and feel the tiny specs of race rubber hitting you, that is what the true race fan wants!

But what about a rally? Rally Tennessee, coming up in just a couple weeks on Memorial Day weekend, May 29-30, 2010, is going to be racing on roads all over the county. From tip to tail, the racing area is about 20 miles high and 15 miles wide. So how do you get close to the action when the race fits into an area of 300 square miles? The answer is still the same: you want to be right on the track.

How about being the guy who's counting down the cars to start? It starts with the classic "5, 4, 3..." which is right when the drivers start to spool up the turbochargers. The car starts to growl. "2..." Now the engine is roaring! You're standing only a foot away, with your last finger counting down in front of the windshield. You finish the countdown shouting "1, GO!" and you can't even hear yourself as you pull your closed fist away and step back. The clutch engages and the car tears down the road. Just as the car gets to the top of first gear and the driver shifts, the high-tech anti-lag system engages, sending a bang of an explosion out the exhaust. Just as you see the car hurling around the first corner, you turn around and the next racer is pulling, getting ready to start.

On the other end of the stage, you could be one of the people at the finish. Once all the safety pace cars come through, you're waiting for the first race car to come through. Standing at the marked finish line, safely up on the berm, there are several minutes of just standing in the quiet woods, listening. Then you hear the first faint sound of the exhaust, over a mile away. It fades in and out as the car goes in and out of the valleys coming toward you, but always getting louder. Suddenly the noise booms as the car comes into view! The driver knows that he has to floor it till he gets to exactly where you are. You are on the radio to the timing crew, with "Ready.... MARK!" as the car crosses the line. You see the nose of the car dive as the driver hits the brakes to decelerate. Now the sound of the tires working against the road takes over, and if it's dark, you'll see the rotors start to glow as the car heads for the timing crew.

One or two tenths of a mile down the road is the timing crew. If you're on the timing crew, you hear the "Mark!" come in over the radio, and seconds later the car comes into view under braking around the last few curves. The race car pulls up and stop right next to you. If you look at the driver you'll see him breathing heavy against the five point race belts. The navigator slides open a hatch in their plastic side window and hands you their time card. You can feel the heat from the engine and the brakes. You write down the time for this run on their card and hand it back to the navigator. You can smell the hot race brakes as the navigator checks the time. He gives you a thumbs up and a big smile, then turns to his driver and they motor out to the next stage.

What about in between the start and the finish? That's where the folks called marshals have what amounts to their own private spectator areas. At each spot where the course intersects with another road, the rally needs to staff that intersection to make sure it stays closed. If you want to get pictures no one else gets, see the race in a way no one else sees it, marshaling gets you that backstage pass for the best viewing.

And finally, the nerve center that holds everything together is ham radio people. A full compliment of radio folks, with their two meter radio bouncing signals over the mountains, are the eyes and ears of the organizers and race teams. When a car crashes and needs their pit crew to come and get them, or when everything is ready to start the next racing section, the amateur radio operators report everything back to the pits.

Rally Tennessee is right around the corner, and is still looking for guys and gals to volunteer for all of these spots. So, if you want to get track-side and, at the same time, help out the community with this all-volunteer race, they need your help! More information, along with schedules and sign up, is on [RallyTennessee.com](http://RallyTennessee.com), as well as sign up for text message updates about and during the race. You can call Amy Feistel at 919-434-3267 with any question about volunteering.

Note to editors:

- Rally Tennessee takes place in the Town of Linden and the City of Lobelville, Perry County, Tennessee.
- Rally Tennessee will be held on May 29-30, 2010.
- For motorcycles, Rally Tennessee is part of the Atlantic RallyMoto™ Cup, the only rally format championship for motorcycles in America. The Atlantic RallyMoto™ Cup is part of NASA Rally Sport's trademarked RallyMoto™ program.
- For cars, Rally Tennessee is part of the Atlantic Rally Cup.
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