

DELETION OF SPECIAL STAGES

Following the decisions of the Stewards, Appeal Tribunal and AMSAC on the 1980 Autosport Stages the following comments on the interpretation of Paragraph A14 of the Victorian Addendum are provided for the benefit of Directors, Competitors and Stewards. The regulation states that:

In addition to the National Rally Code Paragraph 53, the Director may delete a section from the results (of a VRC heat) if in his opinion, certain competitors were unduly disadvantaged by some situation or conditions which were not evident for all competitors.

The intention of this regulation is to allow a Director (or the Stewards in the case of a protest) to delete a special stage from the results if it is clearly apparent that conditions were not suitable for special stage rallying. The concept of a special stage event is to determine the winner as the fastest car/crew combination over a series of special stages where as nearly as practicable equal conditions can be-achieved for all competitors.

It is important to realise that regulation A14 does not allow a stage to be deleted just because the Director believes that it was not fair. For instance, if a route instruction causes confusion but is absolutely correct, then the stage cannot legally be deleted (this was the decision of the Stewards on the 1980 George Derrick Memorial Rally).

The regulation only provides for deletion of a stage where a competitor was **UNDULY** disadvantaged by some situation or conditions **NOT EVIDENT FOR ALL COMPETITORS**. Hence, something must have changed so that conditions were not equal. There is still room for interpretation as to what are **EQUAL** conditions and as to when a disadvantage becomes an **UNDUE** disadvantage. The following are suggested interpretations of these words in the context of current thinking among Special Stage event competition and directors.

As to what are unequal conditions, here are some possible examples:-

- (a) tree fallen mid-field blocking road.
- (b) passage control official asleep (refer to decision of Stewards, 1978 Akademos Rally).
- (c) member of public or police delays a competitor.
- (d) road conditions deteriorating substantially, e.g., road becomes boggy.
- (e) a competitor blocks the road with either his car or winch cable.
- (f) an accident is encountered where injury has occurred or is imminent if action is not taken so a following car stops to assist.

The next issue is the interpretation of the term "UNDULY DISADVANTAGED". It is impossible to provide firm guidelines here because every case is different. Clearly a competitor is unduly disadvantaged if the effect of the unequal conditions has resulted in him losing a placing in the outright results. Thus, a competitor who finishes well outside the awards or championship points irrespective of a stage on which he has been disadvantaged, cannot possibly be considered to have been unduly disadvantaged on that stage.

In some of the instances (a) to (f) above the case will be fairly clear-cut. If it can be proven that a competitor has had to stop competition on a stage for a sufficient period of time for it to affect his result (e.g. all except (d) above) then this clearly constitutes grounds for deletion of the section. If, however, a competitor becomes bogged then it must be evaluated whether he became bogged because the conditions had changed substantially from earlier cars (the Stewards on the Autosport Stages considered that Brown became bogged by an error, not that the conditions had changed).

However, if a competitor becomes bogged, he may well disadvantage (or advantage) following cars. In the case where he blocks the road completely the case is once again quite clear cut. If he only partially blocks the road and then another competitor also becomes bogged, it must be evaluated whether he became bogged partly or wholly because the other competitor was denying him full use of the road (this was the decision of the Stewards on the Autosport Stages where the stage was deleted because Waterhouse was unduly disadvantaged in that Brown was in the middle of the road and denied Waterhouse the use of that part of the road).

A couple of final remarks. Clearly it is necessary to avoid a competitor getting a stage deleted by blocking the road. National Rally Code Paragraphs 38.4 and 38.5 cover this situation adequately. However, bear in mind that a competitor who blocks the road unintentionally (e.g. rolls the car and it lands upside down in the middle of the road, or a competitor who becomes bogged on a narrow track) can hardly be charged with deliberate obstruction. Note also that stopping to assist at an accident is covered by NCR Paragraph 32.1 which allows a Director to "give back some time" to a crew who stops. However, in cases where the time stopped may be difficult to accurately determine and the results are very close, it may be necessary to delete the stage on the basis that the competitor was subject to unequal conditions and either he or his rival may be disadvantaged depending upon the allowable time which the Director determines.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that the deletion of a stage can often see a dramatic change in the results and (as was the case in the Autosport Stages) the competitor who actually "caused" a problem may end up winning an event. This is an unavoidable and totally acceptable situation within the concept of special stage rallying.

1980 VICTORIAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Following the conclusion of judicial procedures regarding the results of the 1980 Autosport Stages we are now able to publish the final pointscores for the 1980 Victorian Rally Championship and the Grade Two Award. Congratulations to the new champions, Chris Brown and Simon Brown.

DRIVERS

Chris Brown	37 points
Warwick Smith	29
Geoff Portman	18
Jim Uttleyneore	12
Shane Blandford	12
Hugh Bell	9
Rex Muldoon	7
Chris Wall	6
Bob Watson	5
Doug Thompson	5
David Officer	5
John Coleman	4

NAVIGATORS

Simon Brown	37 points
Paul Paterson	29
Phil Rainer	18
Ray Scott	12
Ron Harper	12
Tony Allen	9
Noel Kelly	7
Lloyd Minifie	6
Ron Lugg	5
Kate Hobson	5
Graham Foot	4
Chris Randall	4