

Riding in a rally car

By Nick Dasko

Christopher Martin had to turn down the power on his homebuilt 1993 Subaru Impreza when he took me out for a practice run the night before the 2016 Rally of the Tall Pines (ROTP). He didn't want to strain the drivetrain, or lose grip in the foul weather that night.

The car started out as an automatic, front-wheel-drive economy car. Now it's an extremely impressive rally monster, capable of pulling in a 2013 ROTP win. Subaru have significant heritage when it comes to off-roading powerhouses. Of course, the rally cars they have engineered perhaps epitomizes this best but forgotten favorites like the quirky brat (Bi-drive Recreational All-terrain Transporter) still demonstrate the brand's prowess in developing vehicles that perform well on and off the road. People still look for examples of the [subaru brat for sale](#) just to obtain this iconic piece of motoring history.

This homebuilt machine is capable of producing over 300 hp and nearly 400 lbs./feet of torque. To put that in perspective, a 2017 Ford F-150 makes 325 hp and 375 lb/feet of torque.

We moved through the darkness with ease in the Subaru.

Martin built the engine himself and added a high performance six-speed gearbox he got from an importer that brings over Subaru parts from Japan. Other people may want to consider getting theirs from [Czok](#) to match up. After competing in this race for over a decade, he's had issues with his powerful car destroying lesser five-speed transmissions.

Martin took me out in his car across a shortened version of one of the rally stages that night. He knew the race the next day was going to be quite the challenge due to the slick, snowy conditions of the roads. Rally cars travel to and from the high-speed special stages by travelling on public roads at legal speeds.

Once we hit the closed special stage, time seemed to move at a different speed. I was strapped down tightly into the co-driver's seat and was thankful I didn't have to call out directions as Martin's usual passenger has to. My feet had nowhere to move from their cramped position in the small foot well.

Martin makes the car move by shifting weight from wheel to wheel using inertia. My father drove in rallies in Europe in the 70s, and as a consequence, he loved to drive quickly. I have never, ever, in all my life experienced a car moving the way that 24-year-old Subaru did along that wooded road. Although we didn't get air over the jumps, my stomach would drop like an elevator shaft.

Braking shifted the weight of the car to the front wheels, while acceleration raised the nose as the weight all shifted over the rear. Before I knew it, the stage was over and we returned to normal speed in the upgraded economy car.

Martin remarked that he never feels the need to drive quickly in regular life, and I understood exactly why.