

Rally New York Rallysprints

Racing Accident on Rogues Harbor Road in Wawarsing, New York During Summer Rallysprint 2009

Author: Rally New York Media

Forestburgh, New York, June 21, 2009. The purpose of this press release is to inform on the medical condition of the competitors involved in this racing accident, correct the press release disseminated by Associated Press last night without giving Rally New York the opportunity to comment on it, which gave a wrong information on the condition of the codriver and was widely reprinted by local newspapers, and explain the circumstances of this racing accident.

The driver Mark Lawrence, an accomplished rally driver, suffered a fractured collar bone, was treated at the Ellenville Community Hospital and was released.

The codriver Eamonn Sweeney was unconscious after the accident and, as it is customary in these situations, was airlifted to Westchester Medical Center where he was kept in an induced coma. As of this writing, Eamonn is sitting in a chair, he is talking and is a little confused about what happened. The second CAT scan performed today 24 hours after the accident gave him a clear bill of health. The extent of his injuries is a sprained knee and he is sore. He may be discharged tomorrow.

This racing accident happened on a section of a closed race course: A portion of Rogues Harbor Road in Wawarsing, New York was closed to regular traffic for the purposes of Summer Rallysprint 2009, an event of New York Rally Championship, organized by Rally New York, Ltd. on Saturday, June 20, 2009. The road closure was authorized according to Section 1182 of New York Vehicle & Traffic Law. According to Section 1182, traffic laws are suspended during the authorized road closure.

In rally racing, small sedans modified for safety and performance compete against the clock on sections of public roads closed to civilian traffic. The cars start at one-minute intervals and there is no wheel-to-wheel racing. The crew of each competing car consists of a driver and a codriver, also called a navigator.

Racing accidents in rally racing are rare but can happen. The cars are extensively modified for safety with roll cages, six-point racing harnesses (racing seat belts) and fire suppressing equipment. The crews are required to wear protective fireproof clothing, automobile helmets, and head and neck restraints (generally HANS devices).

As it should be obvious from the relatively minor, non-life-threatening injuries of the driver and codriver, these safety measures worked very well and as intended. Both crew members are

expected to recover fully. It should be stressed that competitors, marshals and HAM radio operators followed the extensive safety and emergency procedures outlined in the event Safety Plan to the letter. A Forest Ranger from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation was assigned to the event and assisted at the site of the accident.

On Saturday, about two miles after the start, the crew of Lawrence and Sweeney in a Volkswagen Golf failed to negotiate a left turn and struck a tree on the outside of the turn by the codriver's side of the car. The car spun and stopped on the road facing the wrong direction. The codriver Sweeney was trapped in the car and was unconscious. Dr. Mark Galperin, the driver of the car that started three minutes behind Lawrence and Sweeney, expertly handled the situation and provided immediate emergency medical assistance together with the ambulance crew from Ellenville First Aid & Rescue Squad that was stationed at the start and reached the site of the accident within minutes.

Dr. Galperin and Ellenville First Aid & Ambulance Squad attended to the codriver until the Napanoch Fire Department & Rescue Squad arrived with "jaws of life" and could extricate the codriver by cutting off the door bars that are part of the safety roll cage.

Because of the delay caused by the accident and the subsequent investigation by the Ulster County Sheriff's Department, which lasted until after lunch, and also because of the uncertainty about the condition of the codriver at the time, the competitors and the organizer jointly decided to stop the event.

The property damage caused by this racing accident was limited to bark torn off the trunk of one tree. This damage was already repaired by Rally New York, Ltd. using a tree pruning sealant.

Rally New York, Ltd. wishes to thank the Ulster County Sheriff's Department, Dr. Galperin, Ellenville First aid & Rescue Squad and Napanoch Fire Department & Rescue Squad for assistance and for expertly handling this difficult situation. Rally New York, Ltd. wishes a speedy recovery to both competitors and hope to see them again soon in our midst.

Rally New York Rallysprints

Bulletin on the medical condition of the driver and the codriver –

Racing Accident on Rogues Harbor Road in Wawarsing, New York

Author: Rally New York Media

Forestburgh, New York, June 25, 2009. Rally New York, Ltd. is happy to report that Eamonn Sweeney was released from Westchester Medical Center yesterday, June 24, with no injuries. He is sore and will spend some time at home resting.

On Saturday, June 20, Eamon Sweeney was the codriver / navigator of the car involved in a racing accident during the New York Rally Championship, Summer Rallysprint 2009. This racing accident took place on a section of a closed race course: A portion of Rogues Harbor Road in Wawarsing, New York that was closed by permit to regular traffic for the purposes of Summer Rallysprint 2009.

We regret that law enforcement officials at the scene of the accident thought it necessary to issue a press release that stated wrongly that Eamonn Sweeney suffered severe internal head and chest injuries. This press release was in turn circulated by the Associated Press all over the world and reprinted by many newspapers worldwide. We are sorry about the unnecessary distress experienced by Eamonn's friends and family here and abroad.

Unlike in the case of a road accident involving a standard road car with standard seat belts and seats, it is very difficult to judge just by observation a condition of a competitor involved in a racing accident. Competition cars are equipped with mandatory safety equipment such as roll cages, competition seats, and six-point competition safety harnesses (seat belts). The competitors are required to wear safety equipment such as automobile helmets, head and neck restraints (generally HANS devices) and fire-proof clothing.

All safety equipment worked well and as intended: The codriver Eamonn Sweeney was unconscious after the accident. When he regained consciousness, he was disoriented and became combative. He was placed in an induced coma for his safety until his injuries could be evaluated and, as it is customary in these situations, was airlifted to Westchester Medical Center. After extensive testing and observation, it was determined that Eamon Sweeney has no injuries.

As previously reported, the driver Mark Lawrence, an accomplished rally driver, suffered a fractured collar bone in this racing accident. He was treated at the Ellenville Community Hospital, was released and returned to the event on Saturday. He is recovering at home.