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SCCA PRO RALLY

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- 1 Patrick Richard 105
- 2 Peter Thomson 69
- 3 Andrew Comrie-Picard 68
- 4 Sylvain Erickson 62
- 5 Tom McGeer 52
- 6 Joel Levac 42
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- 8 Sylvain Vincent 28
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- 10 Antoine L'Estage 20

**Final Results, Charlevoix**

Author: Canadian Association of Rallysport

Eleven-time U.S. driving champion John Buffum won Canada's premier car rally on Sunday, taking victory on the Rallye International de Charlevoix in Quebec for the second time in four years.

The most successful American rally driver ever, Buffum dominated the three-day event in the Charlevoix-Saguenay region east of Quebec City. Driving a Hyundai Tiberon, he led all the way from the opening stage on Friday.

The 57-year-old veteran from Vermont was quickest on nine of the 14 special stages - the competitive portions of the event on roads temporarily closed to the public - and finished five minutes, 57 seconds, ahead of runner-up Andrew Comrie-Picard, an Edmonton native now living in New York.

With Irishman Steven McCauley as navigator, Buffum completed the 316.43 kilometres of special stages in three hours, 43 minutes, 32 seconds, for an average speed of 84.93 kph.

Charlevoix is the longest and most grueling round of the Canadian Subaru Rally Championship, presented by Yokohama, and is a candidate for future inclusion in the World Rally Championship. Official observers from the Paris-based Federation Internationale de l'Automobile were on hand to review the event.

Buffum, who started the final day of the rally with a solid lead of more than five minutes, said he paced himself as there was no need to push too hard.

"I'm 100 per cent for the year," joked Buffum, who is semi-retired as a driver, runs Hyundai's rally program in the U.S. and gets behind the wheel himself only occasionally. The U.S. rally championship wrapped up last week, allowing him to come to Charlevoix. It is his only rally of the season.

"It's okay to lose to John Buffum," said Comrie-Picard, 31, the top-ranked rookie in Canadian rallying this year. Second was his best-ever result, surpassing four third-place finishes earlier this season.



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The Mitsubishi Lancer driver said he too was trying to drive conservatively on the final day, although he still side-swiped a tree trunk at one point. "I bent the rear door. I thought the rally could have been over," he said.

Conditions were tricky throughout the event. Teams faced a mixture of snow, slush and mud on the forest gravel roads to the north of La Malbaie. The snow was so deep in places that two stages had to be cancelled on Saturday.

With Buffum and Comrie-Picard comfortably ahead of the rest, the main drama on the final leg of competition was a tight battle for third between Toronto-area drivers Peter Thomson and Tom McGeer, both in Subaru Impreza WRXs.

McGeer, who began the day trailing by just over a minute, caught and passed Thomson, who suffered a flat tire. But Thomson responded by setting fastest time on both of the last two stages. Meanwhile, McGeer's Subaru got stuck in second gear and he eventually fell a minute-and-a-quarter back.

"It was an incredible battle and a lot of pressure," said Thomson. "I think those last two stages were the best I have ever done in my life. I had to go as fast as I could to get the lead back again."

McGeer, a five-time Canadian champion, said he was "lucky to make it to the finish." He needed to finish here to keep alive his hopes for taking a second straight North American Rally Cup, which combines Canadian and U.S. results.

The hard-luck story of the day was that of two-time Quebec Cup champion Jon Nichols, of Lachine. He was comfortably in fifth place at the conclusion of the last special stage, but his Impreza WRX broke on the transit back to the official finish at La Malbaie, meaning he did not figure in the results.

Hyundai Elantra driver Antoine L'Estage, of L'Acadie, Que., inherited fifth place after Nichols' misfortune. Nichols was the most notable retirement of the final day. Fifteen cars, out of 30 that started, finished the event.

Thomson and Comrie-Picard are now locked in a tight battle for second place overall in the Canadian championship, already won by Vancouver's Pat Richard, sidelined early here by a broken suspension on his Subaru Impreza WRX.

With one event to go - the Tall Pines in Ontario on Nov. 23 - Richard has an insurmountable 105 points, while Thomson has 69 and Comrie-Picard has 68.

RESULTS of the RALLYE INTERNATIONALE DE CHARLEVOIX, La Malbaie, Que.

Round 8 of the Subaru Canadian Rally Championship,
presented by Yokohama

(driver, navigator, homes, car, time)

1. John Buffum, Vermont / Steven McAuley, Northern Ireland, Hyundai Tiberon, 3h43m32s; 2. Andrew Comrie-Picard, Edmonton / Brian Maxwell, Toronto, Mitsubishi Lancer, 3h49m29s; 3. Peter Thomson, Toronto / Rod Hendricksen, New Jersey, Subaru Impreza WRX, 3h52m21s; 4. Tom McGeer, Georgetown, Ont. / Mark Williams, Maryland, Subaru Impreza WRX, 3h53m37s; 5. Antoine L'Estage, L'Acadie, Que. / Yanick Napert, St-Jean-de-Richelieu, Que., Hyundai Elantra, 4h10m25s; 6. Joel Levac / Muriel Espic, Riviere Beaudette, Que., Subaru Impreza WRX, 4h12m33s; 7. Rejean Losier, St-Sauveur-des-Monts, Que. / Art Losier, Ste-Julie, Que., Mitsubishi Lancer, 4h16m23s; 8. Andrew Havas, North Carolina / Eric Tremblay, St-Jean-Chrysostome, Que., Mazda RX7, 4h22m37s; 9. Steve Walkington, Hudson, Que. / Malcolm Swann, Stratford, PEI, VW Scirocco, 4h36m44s; 10. Frederic Labrie / Robert Labrie, Montmagny, Que., Subaru Impreza WRX, 4h38m31s.

POINTS STANDINGS (after 8/9 rounds): 1. Pat Richard, Vancouver, 105 points; 2. Thomson, 69; 3. Comrie-Picard, 68; 4. McGeer & Sylvain Erickson, Gatineau, Que., 62; 6. Levac, 42; 7. Jean-Sebastien Besner, Montreal, 31; 8. Sylvain Vincent, La Plaine, Que., 28; 9. John Paynter, Dartmouth, N.S., 24; 10. L'Estage, 20.

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