

DODGE WINS

PRO RALLY TITLE

Nineteen-ninety-six was a year to remember. A time when hard work, careful car preparation and skillful driving combined to net that most elusive of prizes, an SCCA National Class Championship. Cindy and Henry Krowlikowski drove their Mopar Performance equipped 1987 Dodge Shadow to overall victory in the 1996 SCCA Michelin National PRO-RALLY Series Group 5 class battle, beating Saabs, Toyotas, BMWs, Mazdas, and Porsches in the process, many with substantial sponsorship. Winning six out of six events entered, the team proved that reliability and a virtually error-free drive at each event was what it took to defeat this formidable field.



The Krowlikowskis have been running Dodge products since they began rallying together in 1983. Their first car was a Production Class 1979 Dodge Colt, replaced in 1986 with a new Production GT Class Dodge Omni GLH Turbo II, running Open Class and most recently the Group 5 Class in this vehicle. The 1987 Dodge Shadow comes equipped with a 2.2 liter inter-cooled Turbo II engine that puts out over 200 HP.

A new two-door body shell was used to construct the car, which involved seam-welding for extra strength. A full 16-point roll cage was installed for occupant protection and also serves to reinforce suspension pickup points.

There is an on-board fire extinguisher system. An ATL fuel cell replaced the standard gas tank. The engine is a 2.2L Turbo II inter-cooled unit with Mopar Performance head, crank, rods, turbo, oil cooler, oil pan, fuel injectors and inter-cooler, anchored down with Mopar Performance motor mounts. The gearbox is a modified A555 unit with customized close ratio gears. The car weighs 2,650 pounds rally ready, with Lexan® windows, stripped interior and lightened body panels.

Suspension is a combination of custom rally coil-over front struts and rear Mopar Performance springs and shocks. Special Michelin rally tires for racing on gravel and dirt

are used. With selected Mopar Performance parts backing up standard, high quality dealer provided Mopar parts, the car has experienced excellent reliability.

PRO-Rally is a form of motorsport that involves driver and co-driver in the car at the same time. Most races are run on gravelled forest roads without the benefit of practice. Evening events mean the addition of auxiliary lighting to the front of the car. The co-driver manipulates a computerized odometer that breaks down mileage into hundredths of miles. He or she uses a routebook to match mileage at written route instructions to those on the computer. Arriving at the racing part of the course "sight unseen," the team maneuvers the rally road, called a "special stage," by performing the course instruction called out by the co-driver at a certain mileage.

PRO-Rallies make use of two different types of roads. The team is given a stated amount of time at the start of the rally and between the special stages to traverse public roads, obeying all traffic laws. These are called transits. The racing actually occurs on closed roads, or special stages, where the object is to go as fast as one can between point A and point B. The rally team with the lowest overall special stage times and no early or late arrival times during the transits is declared the winner.

There are currently five classes in the SCCA Michelin National PRO-Rally Series that award

championship points. These classes are based on a number of factors including engine size and the number of drive wheels. The group 5 Class was established in 1996 to accommodate two-wheel drive vehicles with engine displacements of over two liters. The Krolikowskis saw this as a perfect chance to showcase their Dodge and their talents, never dreaming that they could dominate the class so completely.

PRO-Rally in the United States is divided into two categories, the National Series and the more regional Divisional Series. Many competitors, including the Krolikowskis, run in both. They decided to pursue the 1996 SCCA Michelin National PRO-Rally Group 5 Championship as well as the Central Division Super Divisional Championship, winning Central Division for two-wheel drive vehicles with engines over two liters. As they only intended to compete in six of the eleven National events, their task was made more difficult by the need to win class at all or at most of all the rallies they entered.

The year was off to a good start when they won the Northwoods Winter Divisional Rally in January, which took place in Michigan. They traveled in March to South Carolina to enter a Divisional that also offered 60% National points, being the first team ever to win Group 5 honors. The rally series continued on to the West Coast without the Krolikowskis, putting them two events behind in the point's race. The next four rallies were spent playing

"catch-up." Even though the Krolikowskis won all four, the points leader was still one point ahead of them. The big showdown occurred at the October running of the D&N Bank Lake Superior PRO-Rally out of Houghton, Michigan. The Krolikowskis needed to finish ahead of the points leader in either first or second place in class to win the overall 1996 Group 5 Championship. After a fiercely contested battle that saw both the Krowlikowskis and the Toyota Supra of Ralph Kosmides/ Joe Noyes swapping positions, the Dodge Shadow of the Krolikowskis prevailed, beating the Toyota by 27 seconds to clinch first place and the Group 5 Championship. Henry also won the 1996 Jon Woodner trophy, awarded each year to the fastest two-wheel drive vehicle overall regardless of class.

In retrospect, the phenomenal results obtained this year by the Krolikowskis were due to several factors. Good reliable parts and careful car preparation went a long way to keep Dodge Shadow on the road. Help from the fine parts people at Crestwood Dodge in Garden City, Michigan, and especially the parts manager Jim Hutchings, made the maintenance on the car that much easier. Red's Frame Shop in Farmington Hills, Michigan, kept the car balanced. Friends and family lent a hand whenever necessary at home or acted as service during the event. The car stayed on the road, it was reliable and it was fast—the winning combination! 

