



2026 Sno*Drift Rally Car 157 Protest Decision

Date: 21 February 2026 Time: 10:56EST
Subject: Car 157 Protest Decision

From: The Panel of Stewards for the Protest # of pages: 6
To: Car 157 Block/Gelsomino, Car 35 Piatkowski/Mantopoulos Attachments: 2

A Protest in compliance with GCR 9.2 was accepted by the Stewards (submitted in writing, signed by the competitor, within the required time frame, and with the stipulated protest fee).

The Chief Steward J.B. Niday formed a Panel of Stewards per GCR 9.10 comprised of:

- Sno*Drift Senior Steward and Protest Hearing Chair Alan Perry
- Sno*Drift Event Steward Michel Hoche-Mong
- ARA Steward Karen Jankowski

This Protest Decision documents the findings and the decision of the Panel of Stewards following an online Protest Hearing held on Tuesday 17 February 2026 at 19:00EST in compliance with GCR 9.5.

Present at this meeting prior to its closing for Steward-only deliberations were:

- The Panel of Stewards listed above
- The Protesters Lia Block, Alex Gelsomino (the crew of car 157) and Derek Dauncey (team manager for Car 157)
- The Sno*Drift Clerk of the Course Bob Martin
- Witnesses Mark Piatkowski, Aris Mantopoulos (the crew of Car 35)
- Observers J.B. Niday (Competition Director), Preston Osborn (Series Manager)

Due to a technical issue with the Protest Board's Chair's microphone, J.B. Niday lead the meeting under the direction of the Chair.

The Basis of the Organizers Assessment of the Penalty

The Clerk of the Course, Bob Martin, provided a written statement (attached) and oral testimony during the Hearing explaining the basis for the imposition of exclusion against Car 157. He stated that the penalty was applied pursuant to RCR 4.12.7 (unauthorized pushing), which prescribes exclusion as the mandatory sanction, in response to inquiries from Car 367 and Car 35.

Mr. Martin showed a video shot from the Flying Finish of the stage. It showed the last three corners before the Flying Finish and starts a few minutes before Car 157 enters the frame. In it, Car 157 stops near the first corner visible and the co-driver exits the car and gestures for nearby spectators to come to the car to assist. A group of approximately 8 spectators walked onto the hot stage road and pushed the car from

that corner to the corner before the Flying Finish. Their effort slowed there as the road started going uphill. Two more spectators from near the Flying Finish joined the effort. When the next car on the road (Car 35) neared, the spectators exited the road. Two were unable to climb the snowbank leading off of the road and stayed there, next to the road. When Car 35 reached the location of Car 157, there was insufficient room to pass and the spectators re-entered the stage road to move Car 157 further up the road. When Car 157 reached a small clearing, Car 35 was able to use that to get past and then continue on to the finish. After Car 157 is pushed out of frame, its co-driver can be heard calling for anyone available to push the car to the Stop Control. After a brief period, Car 367 arrived on the scene and crossed the Flying Finish but, responding to people giving gestures to slow down, slowed before the finish. After leaving the frame, the sounds of Car 367 having difficulty getting past Car 157 can be heard.

After the Protest Hearing, Mr. Martin sent the Panel of Stewards an in-car video of Car 0's pass through that stage, starting from approximately where Car 157 had stopped. It showed the locations of the various control boards to help approximate their location in the Flying Finish video. It also showed that the road ran downhill until near the final turn before the Flying Finish where it changed to uphill until it crested some distance after the Flying Finish.

In response to a request from the Panel of Stewards, Mr. Martin also queried event officials on whether Car 157 was towed through, or the vehicle was pushed through the final MTC and into the Impound. A Judge of Fact reported that the Crew pushed the competition vehicle, in accordance with the rules.

The Arguments by the Crew Against the Exclusion Penalty

In their submitted written Protest Document (attached) and their presentation at the Protest Hearing, the Crew admitted that they had violated the rules as indicated but believed that the penalty of exclusion was unnecessarily harsh.

The Findings of the Panel of Stewards

- ***On the Validity of the Infraction.*** The Team admits that they violated the rules as determined by the Clerk of the Course. Video evidence confirms this.
The Panel of Stewards finds that:
 - Car 157 was in breach of RCR 4.12.7, by way of being pushed by spectators into the Flying Finish-Stop control area, which is subject to Parc Fermé rules per RCR 4.12.3.b, and for which the penalty is exclusion.
- ***Car 157 Introduced Unnecessary Safety Risks.*** After their car failed on stage, the Crew of Car 157 called on nearby spectators to enter a hot stage road. They pushed Car 157 approximately 0.1 miles when their progress slowly as the road started going uphill. As noted above, when alerted that Car 35 was approaching, these spectators proceeded to get off of the road, but two attempted to do so by going up an embankment next to the road and were unable to by the time that Car 35 arrived. After Car 35 continued on, the Crew of Car 157 called on the spectators to push their car (uphill) through the stage shutdown to the Stop Control, including as Car 367 was finishing the stage.

- ***Car 157's Additional Violations. After reviewing the statements made and evidence provided,*** the Panel of Stewards found that the Crew of Car 157 had violated a number of other rules.
 - After passing the Flying Finish warning board (the “yellow” board) and before arriving at the Stop Control, Car 157, being propelled by spectators at the time, stopped a number of times, as the spectators rested and repositioned themselves. Stopping the competition vehicle in that area is not permitted per RCR 5.12.9 and the penalty is exclusion.
 - At no time while the competition vehicle was stopped was a triangle displayed. This is a violation of RCR 6.4.4 and is subject to a penalty determined by the stewards of the event.
 - RCR 6.7.1 requires that the team complete the route under its own power (with exceptions listed in RCR 6.7.2). Spectators pushing the competition vehicle, which allowed the team to complete the route, is not one of those exceptions. The penalty for not meeting this requirement is exclusion.
- ***Car 35's Power Stage results were adversely impacted by unsafe behavior.*** As Car 35 neared the Flying Finish, Car 157 was blocking the road on the uphill just before the finish. The spectators who pushed Car 157 exited the stage road soon before Car 35 arrived and then re-entered the road when it became clear that Car 35 could not get around. Car 35 was eventually able to get around Car 157 to finish the stage. The Crew of Car 35 submitted an inquiry to get a time allowance for the delay, but their request was denied by reason of force majeure. The Panel of Stewards found that they should receive a time allowance.
- ***Car 367's Power Stage results were adversely impacted by unsafe behavior.*** While Car 157 had cleared the Flying Finish by the time that Car 367 arrived, Car 157 was in the shutdown area between Flying Finish and the Stop Control, surrounded by spectators pushing the car. Car 367 was forced to lift before the Flying Finish. However, the impact on their stage time was relatively small, and the Crew did not request a remedy, so no time allowance is given.

Decision: The penalty of exclusion for Car 157 is upheld
 Car 35 is given a time allowance of 45 seconds
 This decision was unanimous
 The protest fee is to be retained

Rationale: The Panel of Stewards wanted to grant Car 157 clemency however the team's actions put a large number of spectators at risk, including encouraging them to push a competition vehicle uphill around a partially blind corner after the Flying Finish, and that left us with little choice.

The specific exclusion selected by the Panel of Stewards is for failure to complete the route under their own power (while not making use of any of the exceptions) as per RCR 6.7.1. Spectators pushed their competition vehicle approximately 0.3 miles on a hot stage.

Car 35 was given a time allowance because they requested one and their delay was substantial. (The Panel of Stewards rejected the argument that force majeure applied in this case.) Car 367 was not given a time allowance because their situation was the opposite from Car 35 as far as whether it was requested and the length of the delay.

The right to appeal this decision is stipulated in General Competition Rules Article 10.



Alan Perry



Michel Hoche-Mong



Karen Jankowski

Car 157

Car 367 filed an inquiry against car 157 stating that they had received assistance in a control zone by being pushed by spectators.

I interviewed the driver of Car 367 who stated that car 157 had received assistance from spectators while in a control zone.

I interviewed the driver of car 35 who stated that car 157 was in a hazardous position and was being assisted by spectators.

The co-driver of car 35 filed an inquiry for time back stating that car 157 was blocking the road and was getting assistance from spectators.

I interviewed the co-driver of car 157 who admitted that he had spectators push the car.

Under RCR 4.12.3.a, a finish control is considered to be under Parc Ferme rules and under 4.12.3 "assistance" is forbidden, and under 4.12.7 Pushing, only the crews (meaning the driver and co-driver) and officials are allowed to push a vehicle out of a control area. Car 157 was found in violation of these two articles. Section 4.12.3 Assistance Forbidden prescribes exclusion for violations of Parc Ferme so that is what I applied.

After the fact, I interviewed Mr. Mark Gutenberger who was assigned as a flying finish volunteer for stage 12/16. He provided a video of the incident: [Link to FF video of SS 16](#)

After the fact, I also received this video from the 0 car which showed that the yellow flag, red flags, slow down signs and STOP were all in place clearly marking the control zone: [Car 0 video of SS 16 last few yards](#)

Bob Martin

Clerk of the Course

2026 Sno*Drift Rally

To: The Stewards of the event

From: Car 157 - Lia Block & Alex Gelsomino

Reference the exclusion of Car 157 from the 2026 Sno*Drift Rally for the violation of regulations 4.12.7

Dear Sir/Madam

We made the protest to the exclusion of Car 157 on the 2026 Sno*Drift Rally as I think you will appreciate with the loss of the rally win and the first place points, we wanted to make sure regulation 4.12.7 was indeed violated.

We have concluded Car 157 did commit the Parc Ferme violation (regulation 4.12.7) at the end of Stage 16 between the two stage finish control boards.

I would like to ask the Stewards to consider their rights under GDR regulation 6.2.3.a and 6.2.3.b to imposing a lesser penalty than exclusion. I would like to ask if consideration could be made to apply a time penalty instead.

I have always considered one of the most severe penalties that can be applied to a competitor is for illegal / forbidden service which normally receives a time penalty of 10 minutes.

I do not believe the violation of regulation 4.12.7 is as severe as illegal service but completely understand it does require a deterrent like a substantial penalty, so 10 minutes seems appropriate.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the penalty to apply.

Car 157 - Lia Block & Alex Gelsomino