



2026 Sno*Drift Rally Car 367 Protest Decision

Date:	18 February 2026	Time: 17:00EST
Subject:	Car 367 Protest Decision	
<hr/>		
From:	The Panel of Stewards for the Protest	# of pages: 5
To:	Car 367 Castro/Garcia	Attachments: 4
<hr/>		

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:

- ARA Senior Steward and Protest Hearing Chair Mark A. Williams
- Sno*Drift Senior Steward Alan Perry
- Sno*Drift Event Steward Michel Hoche-Mong

This Protest Decision documents the findings and the decision of the Panel of Stewards following an online Protest Hearing held on Friday 13 February 2026 at 15:00EST 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 Sno*Drift Clerk of the Course Bob Martin
- The Protesters Javier Castro, Ezequiel Garcia (the crew of car 367)
- Crew Witness Santiago Alban (RC Competition)
- Observers J.B. Niday (Competition Director), Preston Osborn (Series Manager)

The hearing was conducted primarily in English. As the Protestors, who are from Argentina, were not sufficiently fluent in English to fully express their positions or comprehend the proceedings, Steward Mark Williams provided translation assistance throughout the hearing. Although this required periodic pauses to facilitate accurate translation of substantive exchanges, the process ensured that all parties were able to present their arguments, respond to questions, and fully understand the matters under consideration. The Panel is satisfied that the language accommodation afforded did not prejudice any party and that procedural fairness was maintained.

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 367. He stated that the penalty was applied pursuant to RCR 4.12.3.a (prohibited

assistance under Parc Fermé conditions) and RCR 4.12.7 (unauthorized pushing), both of which prescribe exclusion as the mandatory sanction.

Mr. Martin testified that he personally observed Car 367 being pushed into the TC15B RGC Out control. While the crew was stopped at the control, he encouraged a left turn into one of the Service Park areas (albeit not that of the crew and prior to the end-of-control signboard) to shorten the push out of the control. The crew either did not understand this suggestion or did not want to do this. Then, when the crew was due to depart, Mr. Martin initially attempted to assist in pushing the vehicle beyond the end-of-control signboard. However, he was waved off by the driver and co-driver. Shortly thereafter, he observed a third individual—unidentified at that time—assisting in pushing the vehicle while it remained within the control zone.

In a subsequent discussion with a member of Car 367's service crew, that individual acknowledged having pushed the vehicle. The service crew member stated that, having observed Mr. Martin initially attempting to assist, he assumed permission had been granted for such assistance. Mr. Martin testified that no such permission had been given and that the assumption was incorrect.

Mr. Martin further acknowledged that the end-of-control signboard had been positioned incorrectly. The intended placement, as reflected in the Saturday competitor routebook (page 24, line 4 highlighted in the attached routebook page), was immediately after the red time control signboard and prior to the sideroad indicated on the left. Instead, the signboard was positioned beyond that sideroad.

Additionally, formal inquiries were submitted by Cars 126 and 191, accompanied by video evidence. Mr. Martin testified that this evidence confirmed that three individuals were pushing Car 367 before it had exited the control zone by passing the end-of-control signboard.

The Arguments by the Crew Against the Exclusion Penalty

In their submitted written Protest Document (attached) and their presentations at the Protest Hearing, the crew challenges both the substantive basis for the exclusion (arguing confusion and regulatory misinterpretation) and the procedural handling of the matter (arguing lack of immediate correction and reliance on the Clerk's apparent approval). They raise the following grounds in support of their Protest:

- ***Alleged Ambiguity in the Official Roadbook.*** The crew contends that page 24, instruction 4 of the official roadbook created ambiguity regarding the proper entry procedure into the Service Park. They submit that their interpretation required them to proceed under their own power to the end-of-control signboard before accepting any assistance, and that turning earlier at the sideroad depicted in the corresponding tulip diagram (as suggested by Mr. Martin) would have constituted a deviation from the prescribed route. They maintain that the resulting incident stemmed from this perceived ambiguity rather than from any intentional disregard

of the regulations.

- **Reliance on On-Scene Authority (Clerk of the Course).** The protest contends that the Clerk of the Course was physically present, observed the situation, discussed it with the crew, and appeared to validate or approve their actions at the time. The crew implies they relied on this perceived approval in proceeding as they did.
- **Failure of Immediate Intervention or Correction.** The crew submits that if their maneuver was improper, it should have been corrected or penalized immediately while the Clerk was present. They contend that allowing them to continue competing and only later imposing disqualification constituted procedural unfairness.
- **Sporting Prejudice.** They maintain that the delayed disqualification caused significant sporting prejudice, as they continued to compete and assume competitive risk under the belief that their actions were acceptable.

The Findings of the Panel of Stewards

- **On the Validity of the Infraction.** Video evidence, including the attached frame capture, clearly depicts three individuals — the driver, co-driver, and a third person — pushing Car 367 toward the beige end-of-control signboard visible in the recording. This is confirmed by witnesses. The Protester denies seeing that third person.
The Panel of Stewards finds that:
 - Regroup Out Control TC15B, at which the incident occurred, constituted a Parc Fermé pursuant to RCR 4.12.3.a and was therefore subject to the general provisions governing controls under RCR 4.8 and RCR 4.8.1.
 - Car 367 was in technical breach of RCR 4.12.3 and RCR 4.12.7, in that a third person provided outside assistance in pushing the car while still within the control zone, prior to passing the end-of-control signboard.
- **On Alleged Ambiguity in the Official Roadbook.** The Clerk of the Course admitted that the end-of-control signboard was placed in the wrong location. It was supposed to be placed BEFORE the left sideroad indicated in the routebook tulip so that competitors who either turned left or went straight to reach their respective service area would both have been outside of the control zone. Had the signboard not been misplaced the infraction that resulted in the exclusion of car 367 would likely not have occurred. This was an admitted organizer error.
- **On Reliance on On-Scene Authority (Clerk of the Course).** The Panel of Stewards considered the Protester's assertion that the Clerk of the Course was present, observed the situation, and appeared to validate or approve the crew's actions, and that the crew relied on such perceived approval. The evidence does not establish that any explicit authorization or instruction was given permitting assistance within the control area. The Panel of Stewards notes that the presence of an official, or the absence of immediate intervention, does not constitute regulatory approval or a waiver of the applicable

regulations. Competitors remain responsible for ensuring compliance with the Sporting Regulations at all times. Accordingly, the Panel of Stewards does not accept that the Clerk of the Course's presence or perceived acquiescence nullifies the breach.

- ***On Failure of Immediate Intervention or Correction.*** The Panel of Stewards also considered the Protestor's argument that, if the maneuver was improper, it should have been corrected or penalized immediately while the Clerk of the Course was present, and that the subsequent imposition of a penalty constituted procedural unfairness. The Stewards do not accept this contention. The absence of immediate intervention does not invalidate a regulatory breach, nor does it create a presumption of compliance. In rally competition, incidents are frequently reviewed and adjudicated after the fact based on official reports and evidence. Competitors remain responsible for ensuring compliance with the regulations regardless of whether an official intervenes contemporaneously. Accordingly, the timing of the penalty does not render the decision procedurally defective.
- ***On Sporting Prejudice.*** The Panel of Stewards considered the Protestor's claim of sporting prejudice arising from the timing of the penalty, namely that the crew continued to compete and assume competitive risk under the belief that their actions were acceptable. The Stewards do not accept that such circumstances constitute sporting prejudice within the meaning of the regulations. Participation in subsequent competitive sections does not create a vested right to a result nor immunize a prior breach from sanction. The determination of an infraction, once established, applies irrespective of whether the competitor has continued in the event. The timing of notification does not invalidate the underlying breach nor render the imposition of a penalty procedurally unfair.


Decision: The penalty of exclusion is replaced with a time penalty of three (3) minutes
This decision was unanimous.
The protest fee is to be returned.

Rationale: Having determined that a breach of RCR 4.12.3 and RCR 4.12.7 did occur, the Panel of Stewards considered the proportionality of the penalty. Assistance within a control area is ordinarily a serious infraction warranting exclusion. However, in this case, the "End of Control" signboard was incorrectly positioned, as acknowledged by the Clerk of the Course, thereby extending the marked control zone beyond its intended limits. Competitors are entitled to rely on the official signage as displayed and have no basis upon which to assess whether such signage has been incorrectly placed. The breach therefore arose within a control boundary that, while operative at the time, was not established in its intended location. The Stewards further note that the assistance consisted solely of pushing the vehicle, conferred no competitive advantage beyond restoring movement, and was not undertaken in bad faith. In these specific circumstances, the Stewards find that the penalty of exclusion would be disproportionate. Accordingly, the exclusion is replaced with a time penalty of

three (3) minutes in order to uphold the integrity of control area regulations while ensuring a proportionate outcome.

Modification by the Panel of Stewards of the originally applied penalty of exclusion is within the scope of their regulatory authority. Under RCR 6.4.6 and GCR 7.4 Stewards are expressly empowered to exercise discretion in the assessment of penalties where appropriate under the circumstances. In this instance, after considering the facts and the nature of the infraction, the Panel determined that a three-minute time penalty —rather than exclusion—was a proportionate sanction for the improper procedure violation.


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



Mark A. Williams



Alan Perry



Michel Hoche-Mong

PROVISION FOR EXCLUSION

Car 367

I was visiting the RGC controls and happened to be standing at the RGC Out control when I noticed car 367 being pushed into the control. While they sat at the control awaiting their out time, I tried to talk them into pushing their car into Service Lot D, which was much closer than the end of control zone sign but they were insistent on pushing their car past the end of control zone sign and being towed by their crew into service. When their out time came, I attempted to help them by pushing their car but I noticed a third person also pushing their car. I immediately stopped pushing and started taking mental notes of what was happening. I noticed one of the competitors in a waiting car take out his cell phone and, presumably, start recording the pushing. Once clear of the end of control zone sign, the crew hooked up a tow rope and towed the car away.

As a Judge of Fact, I witnessed an unidentified third person pushing car 367 while it was in a control zone.

Both cars 126 and 191 filed inquiries regarding car 367 having the aid of their crew to push the car while still in a control zone.

I interviewed both car 126 and 191 and was shown a video, [Link to video of car 367 being pushed while in a control zone](#) (watch the Inquiry Video,mp4 file) which clearly showed three people pushing car 367 while in the control zone.

I interviewed the driver, co-driver and one crew member of car 367. They admitted that their car would not restart while trying to exit the RGC Out control area. The driver was adamant that he told the crew not to touch the car. The co-driver was adamant that he told the crew not to touch the car. The crew member admitted that he pushed the car because he saw me pushing and thought that I had given him permission to push.

Under RCR 4.12.3.a, a regrouping 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 367 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.




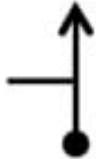
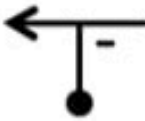



Bob Martin

Clerk of the Course

2026 Sno*Drift Rally

2026 Sno*Drift Rally, Saturday

Tech Zone. Regrouping and Service
Distance: 0.43 miles

INST	MILEAGE	INTERVAL	TULIP	COMMENT	DECR
1	0.00	0.00		RGC/MTC In Zero Odo	0.43
		15		44.99381 -84.15147	
2	0.02	0.02		U-turn at back of lot. Line up as directed.	0.41
		15			
3	0.07	0.05		RGC Out/Service In	0.36 26
		15		44.99342 -84.15167	
4	0.08	0.01		straight unless you are servicing in Lot D, then Left	0.34
		15			
5	0.10	0.01		Co Rd 489 East	0.33
		45		44.99294 -84.15162	
6	0.27	0.17		High School East Entrance	0.16
		15			
7	0.33	0.06		Straight ahead for Service Areas A, B and C Left to exit service	0.09
		15			
8	0.43	0.09		ATC Service Out Zero Odo	0.00
		15		44.99367 -84.15014	
		0.00			

PROTEST OF EXCLUSION

To: Mr. Mark A. Williams

Role: ARA Senior Steward – FIA Rally Steward

Date: 2026-02-11

Dear Mr. Williams,

I am writing to formally submit my statement and protest regarding the disqualification applied to Car #367 during the 2026 Sno*Drift Rally. This is in relation to the events that occurred at the exit of the Technical Zone for entry into Service Park #2.

The incident stemmed from confusion caused by the official roadbook, specifically Figure #4, regarding the correct entry point into the Service Park. It is important to note that the Clerk of the Course, Mr. Bob Martin, was present at the scene. He observed the situation directly, and after we discussed the matter with him on-site, he appeared to approve our procedure.

Our interpretation, based on the roadbook provided by the organization, was that entering the Service Park at that specific point was incorrect. We understood that we were required to proceed under our own power to the yellow time control board, following the race direction. It was our understanding that turning left before the yellow board would constitute a violation for failing to follow the designated race

course. Consequently, we proceeded to the indicated control point and, only after that point, hooked up the vehicle to be towed, understanding that assistance was permitted there in accordance with regulations.

Additionally, I formally protest the procedure adopted by Race Control regarding this matter. If the maneuver was considered incorrect, given that the Clerk of the Course was present, observing, and validating the situation, it should have been corrected or penalized immediately. The lack of immediate intervention allowed the team to continue competing—assuming the sporting and operational risks inherent in the race—only to receive a disqualification later. This constitutes significant sporting prejudice against our team.

I respectfully request that the disqualification of Car #367 be reconsidered and revoked. Furthermore, to avoid similar confusion in future races, I request a review of the procedure followed by Race Control, as this incident originated from an ambiguity in the official roadbook and the lack of immediate correction by the authority present at the scene.

I remain at your disposal to provide relevant evidence (Roadbook capture - Figure #4) and any other information required.

I also want to present as a witness who was in the place navigator and team leader Santiago Alban present in this place where we both knew the regulations

Sincerely,

Javier Castro

Car #367

Team: RC Competition

VIDEO FRAME CAPTURE

