



## 2026 Sno\*Drift Rally Car 769 Protest Decision

Date:	16 February 2026	Time:	8:00EST
Subject:	Car 769 Protest Decision		
From:	The Panel of Stewards for the Protest	# of pages:	4
To:	Car 769 Cowan/Vinti	Attachments:	5

A Protest being 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
- ARA Steward Mark Everett
- ARA Steward Curt Faigle

This Protest Decision documents the findings and the decision of the Panel of Stewards following an online Protest Hearing held on Thursday 12 February 2026 at 13:00EST in compliance with GCR 9.5.

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

- The Panel of Stewards listed above
- The Sno\*Drift Clerk of the Course Bob Martin
- The Protesters Andrew Cowen and John Vinti (the crew of car 769)
- Witness Lynn Wolf (Marshal)
- Observers J.B. Niday (Competition Director), Preston Osborn (Series Manager)

### **The Basis of the Organizers Assessment of the Penalty**

- According to the Clerk of the Course, Bob Martin, an inquiry was filed by a Safety Sweep volunteer, Lynn Wolf, regarding car 769 servicing in the control zone of TC9 in violation of RCR 4.1.4.a. Ms. Wolf provided a written report of her personal observations at that control (attached). She said that she was given a battery “jump box” that she in turn gave to the crew of car 769 who used it to restart their car while in the control zone. The the Event Steward, Michel Hoche-Mong, was also present at this control and witnessed the exchange.
- The Senior Steward of the event, Alan Perry, after consultation with Competition Director J. B. Niday, directed the Clerk of the Course to refer this inquiry to the Stewards for adjudication instead of applying the penalty of exclusion stipulated for breach of RCR 4.1.4.a and 4.12.3. The Stewards applied a penalty of five minutes for breach of RCR 6.4.6 improper procedure service violation.

- This assessed penalty of five-minutes was documented in Stewards Decision #5 (attached) and posted on the official event Noticeboard. It is this decision that the crew of car 769 is protesting.

### **The Arguments by the Crew Against the Assessed Penalty**

- The crew claims that the assessed five-minute penalty should be rescinded because not all of the facts were considered by the Stewards of the event. The totality of the facts is laid out in their Protest document (attached) and reviewed during this Protest Hearing.
  - **Compliance with Marshal Instructions.** The crew does not deny that they were in breach of RCR 4.1.4a. But they assert that their actions complied with explicit instructions given to them by a vested marshal — Lynn Wolf — who was present in the control. Per RCR 4.1.7 competitors are required to obey marshal instructions. Penalizing them for doing so is not only inconsistent with the governing rules but that RCR 4.1.7 should take precedence over RCR 4.1.4.a.
  - **Extraordinary Circumstances / Improper Control Placement.** They argue that TC9's placement violated RCR 4.1.2(a) because controls may not be placed on a "main thoroughfare." Because the road was open to public and pedestrian traffic, congestion was created by the improper control location. This created an extraordinary circumstance that necessitated clearing the road quickly.
  - **No Intent to Violate Repair Prohibition.** They were aware of RCR 4.1.4.a (no repairs/maintenance in a control). They initially sought to push the vehicle rather than repair it, but it became clear that pushing was impossible due to icy conditions and other issues. They asked officials whether jump-starting would be considered "repair."
  - **Safety and Public Access Considerations.** They argue that their stalled car blocked both rally and public access. Clearing the intersection was necessary for safety and public flow. Their actions prioritized safety and public access, aligning with the spirit of event management and sportsmanship.

### **The Findings of the Panel of Stewards**

- **On Compliance with Marshal Instructions.** The Panel of Stewards found that (a) marshal Lynn Wolf did in fact instruct (not merely offer) the crew to use the jump pack that she handed them to quickly re-start and move their stalled vehicle, and that (b) she had the authority to do so. The crew was right in following these marshal instructions. Their failure to do so would have constituted a breach of RCR 4.1.7 potentially subjecting them to harsher penalties. Therefore, penalizing them while complying with marshal direction is inconsistent with the regulations.
- **On Extraordinary Circumstances / Improper Control Placement.** Per Bob Martin the road in question on which the control was located is actually not a "major thoroughfare". While it was not an ideal setup, the road was open only to local fishermen for access to three fishing spots.

- ***On No Intent to Violate Repair Prohibition.*** While the crew was in fact in breach of RCR 4.1.4 they demonstrated good faith, rule awareness, and sought clarification before acting.
- ***On Safety and Public Access Considerations.*** The road was not completely blocked by stalled car 769 ; at least three other competitors got by them while they were stopped inside the control. The event Steward Michel Hoche-Mong and Lynn Wolf both confirmed that the road was not blocked but the configuration in the icy conditions prevented bump starting the car.
- ***On Loitering in a Control Zone.*** In the course of its investigation, the Panel of Stewards determined that while car 769 remained stationary within the control zone, three subsequent competitors who checked into the ATC after them started Stage 9 ahead them. This sequence is substantiated by the attached RallySafe log, which records the relevant ATC and Stage Start times. The Panel finds that by remaining within the control zone to perform work necessary to restart the vehicle, car 769 exceeded the time strictly required to complete timing formalities and therefore breached RCR 4.1.5, which limits presence within a control zone to the time necessary to complete timing operations.

**Decision:** The penalty of five minutes expressed in Stewards Document #5 is rescinded and a 1-minute penalty is added for breach of RCR 4.1.5.  
This decision was unanimous.  
The protest fee is to be returned.

**Rationale:** The crew was right to follow marshal instructions. Critical factual points are:

- The marshal explicitly said: “Use this”
- The competitor asked for clarification
- The ARA Event Steward present did not prohibit it
- The crew initially intended to push the car (showing awareness of the rule)

But the crew’s actions resulted in a regulatory conflict when the marshal instructed an action that technically violated another rule. There is no explicit rule that addresses the precedence of application of these rules. But penalizing the crew for violating a regulation by complying with marshal direction is wrong. In most rally sanctioning frameworks

- Competitors are not expected to overrule an acting official
- If a marshal gives a clear directive, reliance on that directive is generally considered mitigating, sometimes fully exculpatory, and
- Administrative errors by officials are typically not imputed to the competitor absent bad faith.

Consequently no penalty for unauthorized service should be applied.

However, the crew remains responsible for the timely transit of the control zone and the mechanical readiness of the vehicle. The extended stay created a procedural irregularity and an interruption to the standard flow of the event. The Panel of Stewards determined that a 1-minute penalty is appropriate for failing to uphold the integrity of the control zone regulations. This penalty recognizes the technical breach of RCR 4.1.5 while accounting for the lack of sporting advantage gained and the mitigating factor of the Marshal's involvement.

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

 _____	 _____	 _____
Mark A. Williams	Mark Everett	Curt Faigle

## **WITNESS STATEMENT**

To the ARA Hearing Committee,

Car 796 was stopped in the Control without power due to the battery. As the Control was being utilized by both Competitor and Civilian traffic, when the battery jump box became available I directed car 796 to use it.

Note: Car 796 was not positioned to push start without leaving the Control.

Note: Car 796 was not completely obstructing civilian traffic from transiting through the Control or other competitors from approaching the Start line to meet their 'Ideal Minute' out.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Lynn K Wolf  
231-330-1376

## **PENALTY INQUIRY**

Car 769

An inquiry was filed by Lynn Wolf, the Safety Sweep volunteer, regarding car 796 servicing in a control zone.

I interviewed Ms. Wolf who said that at the direction of the Event Steward, Michel Hoche-Mong, she gave car 769 a “jump box” which they used to restart their car while in the control zone.

The Senior Steward of the event, Alan Perry, after consultation with J. B. Niday, directed me to refer this inquiry to the stewards for adjudication, which I did.

Bob Martin

Clerk of the Course

2026 Sno\*Drift Rally

# PENALTY ASSESSMENT



**Sno\*Drift Rally, 6-7 Feb 2026**

## **DECISION 5**

**posted at: 7 Feb 2026 19:40**

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**From:** The Stewards

**Date:** 7 Feb 2026

**To:** Scoring, The Crew of Car 769

**Time (decision):** 17:19

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The Stewards, having received a report of the Clerk of the Course, have considered the following matter and determined the following:

**Driver, Co-driver, and car No:** Andrew Cowan, Johnny Vinti, Car 769

**Time (fact):** 7 Feb 2026 11:38

**Session:** TC9

**Fact:** According to a report by a Judge of Fact, Car 769 was in TC9 when its crew was handed a device not in their competition vehicle at the time to assist with starting it and made use of that.

Under RCR 4.1.4.a, crew may not repair or perform maintenance on a competition vehicle in a control and doing so constitutes a violation under RCR 6.4.6.

**Offence:** RCR 6.4.6

**Decision:** The Stewards have decided to assess a 5 minute penalty. Scoring is directed to add this penalty to their score.

Competitors are reminded that they have the right to protest this decision of the Stewards, in accordance with Article 6.4 of the ARA Rally Competition Rules.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.P.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan Perry, Senior Steward

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Hoche-Mong', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michel Hoche-Mong, Event Steward

# PROTEST DOCUMENT

Protest to Stewards Decision 5 – Car 769 Sno\*Drift 2026

## Summary of Event

In accordance with the Rally Competition Rules (RCR) 6.4, this letter is intended to serve as a protest the Stewards Decision to assess a 5 minute penalty to Car 769 (Andy Cowan, Johnny Vinti). There are certain conditions of the incident that should be considered and communicated to officials.

TC9 was located on the north side of Avery Lake Rd right before the intersection to Sage Lake Rd. The competitor route book instructed competition vehicles to approach heading westward. Avery Lake Rd was not closed to the public and regular pedestrian traffic was also traveling westward to points of interest. Race officials said that it was acceptable for pedestrian traffic to wait in the TC line with competition vehicles because of 2 conditions:

1. There was a fishing resort, campground, and business located farther down the road that the public needed access to
2. Spectator and event vehicles parked on the south side of the road prevented pedestrians from being routed around the rally traffic.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show a visual representation of the intersection and time control.



**Figure 1 – General View of Avery Lake Rd, Sage Lake Rd**



**Figure 2 – Detailed Map of Incident**

Car 769 entered the time control and proceeded to turn left onto Sage Lake Rd. The car stalled in the middle of the intersection and was unable to restart by its own due to low battery capacity caused by the excessive cold. Car 769 effectively blocked both competition and pedestrian vehicles from proceeding to the stage start and fishing resort respectively. The competitors of Car 769 explained the situation to a female Race Marshall and a male ARA Official and asked for guidance. The competitors and officials both understood that the RCR 4.1.4(a) prevented the crew from performing any repair or maintenance of a competition vehicle in a time control.

The male ARA Official recommended that the competitors push the vehicle as to not violate competition rules. The co-driver (Johnny Vinti) checked to see if the car would roll under physical force by pushing the car. The car rolled and Johnny asked both the female Race Marshall and male ARA Official for help to push the car onto Sage Lake Road in order to clear the time control.

The female Race Marshall instructed the competitors to wait and walked west on Avery Lake Rd to a parked truck. She removed a portable jump box from the truck and returned to the competitors. She handed the jump box to Johnny and said “Use this.” Johnny asked her to repeat her instructions in order to clarify her intentions. She repeated “You can use this.” Andy Cowan explained the situation to the male ARA Official and asked if this deviation from the rules would be allowed. The male ARA Official declined to either confirm or deny if

it was allowed under competition rules, but simply said “Looks like you have been saved,” as Johnny took the jump box from the female Race Marshall.

Johnny attached the supplied jump box to the battery located behind the driver’s front seat and Andy successfully started the vehicle with the help of the jump box. Johnny returned the jump box to the female Race Marshall and thanked her. Car 679 then cleared the public road to allow for both pedestrian traffic and competitor traffic to flow.

### **Conditional Observations**

The competitors of Car 769 demonstrated that they understood the rules of RCR 4.1.4 (a) by asking for help to push the non-running vehicle through the control.

#### *4.1.4 Limitations on Crews in a Control*

*a) Crews may not repair or perform maintenance on their competition vehicle in a control area, except under conditions described in RCR 4.12.5. Any breach of this limitation is subject to penalty under RCR 6.4.6.*

The competitors of Car 769 asked officials if jumping the car fell under either definition of “maintenance” or “repair.” The terms “maintenance” and “repair” are not defined in either the General Competition Rules (GCR’s) or RCR’s.

The placement of TC9 did not conform to RCR 4.1.2 (a) which caused an extraordinary circumstance.

#### *RCR 4.1.2 Control Location Prohibition*

*No controls, other than observation controls, may be placed in the following locations (meal, gas and service stops excepted):*

- a) On a main thoroughfare (this is intended to include most paved roads and most numbered highways).*

The competitors acted in accordance with RCR 4.1.7, GCR 7.1 (f), and GCR 5.14.

#### *RCR 4.1.7 Marshal Instructions*

*Crews are obliged to follow the instructions of the marshal in charge of any controls. Failure to do so will result in a penalty which may go as far as exclusion, at the discretion of the Steward(s).*

#### *GCR 7.1 (f) Breach of GCRs*

*Any of the following offenses, in addition to any other offenses specifically referred to previously or hereafter, shall be deemed to be a breach of these GCRs:*

- f) Failure to obey directions or orders of Event or ARA officials*

#### *5.14 Conduct of Entrants, Competitors and Crew*

*Every entrant, competitor or crew member at an ARA sanctioned event shall be bound by the ARA Code of Conduct and shall conduct himself/herself according to the highest standards of behavior and sportsmanship, particularly in relationship with other competitors and officials, and in a manner that shall not be prejudicial to the reputation of ARA or to motorsports. Failure to do so may be treated as a breach of these GCRs.*

### **Conclusion**

The competitors, male ARA Official, and female Race Marshall demonstrated their understanding of the both GCR's and RCR's during the incident by preparing to push the competition vehicle through the control zone. The female Race Marshall acted prudently by providing the jump box to the competitors considering the extraordinary circumstance caused by TC9's location not conforming to RCR 4.1.2 (a) and control zone congestion caused by pedestrian traffic. Competitors acted in accordance with RCR 4.1.7, GCR 7.1 (f), and GCR 5.14. Please reverse the penalty assessed to car 769.





















# RALLYSAFE LOG OF PASSAGE OF CARS THROUGH TC9





















## TC9

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## SS9

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