

From: The Redding Pilot



Bridwell finishes strong in rallying

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Hampton Bridwell of Redding, right, and co-driver Josh Katinger of Brookfield have competed in a range of rally events in the east coast over the last few years, placing highly in several of them.— Pedro Faria photo

Hampton Bridwell and Josh Katinger are relative newcomers to the sport of rally racing, having participated in the sport for just four full seasons, but the team has made a name for itself. Starting with a Toyota Celica All-Trac from Jason Priestly in 2003 and the rest is history.

Bridwell, of Redding and co-driver Katinger of Brookfield competed in a range of rally events sanctioned by Rally America and CARS (Canadian Association of Rallysport), as well as NASA Rally sport events on the east coast over the last few years. Their team, known as Black Rock Rally Sport have competed at Rally New York, Maine Forest Rally, Rallye Defi, Sandblast Rally and Rally West Virginia, placing very well in the standings for their car class in 2008, taking third place overall for the Atlantic Rally Championship and first place in the Spec Focus Championship.

Rally car racing is considered the extreme sport of automobile racing and is often described simply as "real cars, real roads, real fast." This all-season motor sport sees drivers and their co-drivers taking modified road cars to the limit as they achieve blistering speeds over courses that cover more than 100 miles of gravel, dirt or snow-covered roads known as stages.

The team competed in the Group 2 Class with their 2002 Ford Focus SVT during the Rally America New England Forest Rally (NEFR) July 18-18 in Newry, Maine.

"I love the tough, fast roads that require a good event strategy at the NEFR," said Bridwell. They came in fifth in their car class and 15th overall during the "Drive Your Future" Rally in Mexico, Maine, during the event.

This was the sixth of nine rally events in the 2009 Rally America National Championship with over 40 top-level regional and national rally teams from across the United States and Canada converging in the tiny resort village home of Sunday River Resort.

Although the NEFR was contested over two days and 125-plus miles of gravel and forest stages for the national competitors, the regional rally teams competed on the very same roads as the national teams, but in two separate one-day regional rally events run simultaneously with the national rally.

When not rallying, Bridwell is married with two children and when he's not enjoying spending time with his family, or consumed by his rally passion, he is a partner in a brand consulting firm as president of BrandLogic Corp. in Wilton.