

Autocross event brings out Volvos, support for PAL

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Photo by Bill Hicks

It may look like just another suped-up Volvo, but on Saturday it was one of many such cars that suddenly became racers during a Rancho Cordova Volvo autocross event to benefit PAL.

Say what you will about Volvos being the safe and secure car for the stodgy, upwardly mobile nerd—just don't say it in front of a Volvo car club member. And especially keep quiet if that car club member happens to be into autocross.

In fact, Rancho Cordova was the site this week a Volvo autocross challenge. The event was the brainchild of RCPD officer Mark Baldwin, a Volvo owner and autocross enthusiast, as a fund raising activity for the Rancho Cordova Police Activities League.

"All the gate fees and entry fees are being donated to the PAL program," Baldwin said. "It lets us have our fun and funds a great charity at the same time."

Drivers involved in the autocross event—which was held at the CHP's Emergency Vehicle Operations Course—raced through a course marked by scores of orange cones.

"Autocross is a solo car event," Baldwin explained. "You run the course at the speed you feel competent to drive and your timed. The goal is to improve your time."

More than two-dozen competitors driving everything from 1960s-era P1800s to 940 station wagons and sporty C30s took part in the event. Some drivers were admittedly new to the sport, while others came with cars customized to include roll bars, engine upgrades, racing tires and even video cameras.

"I'm just here to have fun and try to go as fast as I can...which might not be all that fast," said Marianne Donnelly who came to Saturday's autocross from her home in Santa Cruz.

The Rancho Cordova race was her first time driving her beloved P1800 at an autocross event.

Southern Californian Steve Ledfors owns a 1990 Volvo 745, but wasn't there to race.

"I just like to see what everyone is doing with their cars," Ledfors said. "Basically, I'm not racing today because I'm not ready to spend the money to fix my car. But someday I will."

Several people came to the event to observe, but most simply wanted to drive fast, legally.

"Some of the folks here are just doing this for fun and for skill building, others are full-on racers, weekend warriors," Baldwin said.

Drivers had an opportunity to take several runs at the course, trying to best their own time with each turn. Impressive runs were greeted with cheers from other drivers, while beginning drivers were continually encouraged by their more experienced peers.

After several hours, the event drew to a close, with many drivers heading to Davis for the Volvo car show scheduled for the next day.

"It's just a lot of fun," said Baldwin. "We had a lot of help and virtually no out of pocket expenses, so everything we make will go directly to PAL."

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