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## Bill Bacon – Bacon Motorsport



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Bacon Motorsport is running a tight ship. They have their eyes set on a national championship in their open class Lancer Evolution 6 RS. They're not beating the big money teams yet, but those guys all know Bill Bacon is hot on their tails. What's it like being a privateer up against the biggest names in North American rally? Here's an interview with Bill Bacon. **What's your name? Where are you located? What do you do for a living?**

My name is Bill Bacon. I am from Chelmsford MA and I am a full-time firefighter in Chelmsford. I also have a small business (small, as in, I'm the only employee) installing garage doors.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

### **What got you interested in rally?**

As a child I was always drawn to the rally car models at the hobby shops. I had no idea what they were or why they needed all those lights but they looked really cool. In the late 90s speed vision was showing all of the World Rally Championship. I remember watching these rallies with my brother like it was our job. Tommi Mäkinen was running an Evo and I've been hooked ever since.

**Tell us about your rally car/truck. How long have you had it?**

My current rally car is a 2006 Mitsubishi Evolution 9 RS. I bought the car new in Dec of 2006.

**Did you buy your rally car or build it?**

My father, brother and I built the car from new. The cage was welded in by Kenny Conway of [Conway Autoworks](#) in Scituate, MA. We did everything else ourselves. I mean everything. It took us 10 months of late nights and weekends to complete the car.

**What challenges did this cause?**

Building the car created many challenges for us. We had to learn as we went on a lot of things. Everything from upgrading differentials to opening up the transfer case and transmission: it all made me nervous. The biggest challenge was rewiring the car down to the bare essentials. There is not a wire in that car that is not doing something.

**What benefits did you realize as a result?**

Building the car has been good in the sense that we know every last bolt on the car. There is nothing on that car that we have not had our hands on. We can fix everything ourselves. The down side is we cannot make big repairs during the short services at the rallies. We do not have the means to get it done quickly. We try to make sure everything is like new when we leave the garage. After each rally the car is disassembled, cleaned and inspected for damage and wear. Every nut and bolt is checked for torque and marked so that it can be quickly inspected again while in service. Many people find this to be extreme but for a privateer team that is running at the level we are this is a necessary evil to ensure that the car is 100% going into each rally.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**Tell us about a time when you stuffed the rally car (or maybe had a nasty off).**

My first big off was in our first rally car that we built in maybe our 3rd rally ever. It was at the Quebec City winter rally. We got high centered on a snow bank and lost about 25 minutes on a long stage. I wanted to quit right there. I was done and regretted every ounce of energy and money I had put into the whole situation. At the end of the event we had moved back up through the field and there was a real sense of accomplishment when we finished. That sense of accomplishment is what keeps me going.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**What's the most rewarding part of being involved in rally?**

Getting home is the most rewarding part of rallying. It's getting home and knowing that we made it through the rally and accomplished all the challenges that there are just to complete the event.

**The most challenging?**

The most challenging part of rally is trying to drive fast enough to make an impression on the top runners and not destroy the car while doing it.

**How many events did you enter last year? Is that trending up or down? Why?**

We entered four national events last year. That is less than what we have done in the past, but we wanted to focus on the Rally America series and really bring our A game as far as preparation. In years past we've simply run whatever events were close by, be it a RA event, Canadian or regional. We are focusing on the RA events right now to try and get some exposure and create interest for sponsors.

**What kind of cash prize structure would entice you to enter more rallies or push the car harder?**

If there was enough payout to cover the entry fees and some tow money it would be nice. People simply do not believe me when I tell them what the entry fees are. If we were all becoming rich and famous then I might push harder and risk the car more. The guys that are taking the big risks and writing off car after car already are rich and famous.

**Should rallies be run as for-profit corporations?**

Everyone wants to make money. It's a hard thing to get that many people to donate that much time. There is so much that goes into a rally it's unreal. On that note I do not want to help someone get rich while I pay 1000-1300 for entries.

**How important are car classes? What class/region do you race in? How many competitors in your class at each event?**

It's very important to break the rallies down with classes. The guy showing up at the rally for the first time in a \$4500 VW would get discouraged if he was competing directly against the budget of Block/Pastrana. I started out in 2wd cars. I've run 3 times as many rallies in a 2wd as I have 4wd. I currently run in the open class against the big money teams. I'm not beating them but they all know my name!



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

#### **What do you think about recce vs pacenotes?**

(I think you mean to ask recce vs tulip rally) (RA uses Jemba notes, not really pacenotes) When I started rally there were only tulip route books. My co driver would call a note then tell me that there was no more info for the next 1.5 miles. The only info was intersections and really dangerous areas. It was crazy. You were driving totally blind. The guys that had run the event in previous years had a huge advantage. There were lots of small crashes at tricky spots. Running the rallies today with the Jemba notes and single pass recce helps to bring us up to speed with the rest of the world but still not quite the same level. Most world rallies have two pass recce so they can check their notes after they make changes the first time through. The crashes now are bigger but it seems that they're less frequent. People are driving more committed with the notes. There is extra cost with the recce but you do not have to do it to run the rally. You can enter and run "blind" with the tulip route book. Good option for first timers.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

#### **Spectators: Dream come true or worst nightmare? Why?**

We need more spectators obviously, the more the better. More people mean more sponsors. More sponsors mean more money. More money means cooler cars. Let's face it... rally cars are the coolest thing on the road. Cooler cars means more spectators. The rallies are different from other racing series in the sense that people are allowed to come right up and get close to the cars. At the service area the spectators can view the cars being worked on right at their feet. You have a chance to talk to the fans right in the middle of a service.

#### **How do you get local gearheads involved in rally?**

I try to make the car guys from the Fire Department and Police Department more aware of rally and how much we have accomplished. I have a core group of friends that have seen me progress and volunteer their time to help me at rallies and spread the word about my efforts and the sport. As far as more promotion than that, the car takes all my time and then some. I do not think anyone beyond that really understands what we're doing out there or who we are rubbing elbows with. I tell them though. Most recently we have started a social networking site and are trying to more proactive to share our experiences. [Facebook and blogging](#) has really helped us to share with our friends what our effort is all about and allows us to keep our friends involved.

**How do you go about building partnerships with your sponsors?**

Going after sponsors is pretty much the last thing I was designed to do. I am not good at selling myself and as a result I have had very little sponsor help over the year. All of my effort goes into have the best presentation possible for the car and team. I want potential sponsors to see us and feel like they would want us to represent them. I think we do a good job at that. People always complement us on how nice the car looks and how nice the build is. Our driving speaks for us as well. We are consistently the highest placing privateer in the events we enter.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**What do you see is the most critical issue needing addressed by the rally community today?**

Rallying needs more exposure in the US. It's a Catch 22. For more exposure you need more money etc. etc.

**How would you address that issue if you were in charge?**

I think the best way to create more exposure for RA would be to develop characters from the drivers. It could be pitched like all the reality shows on Discovery and TLC. Clearly I am biased towards myself but I think people would find it very interesting to see the behind the scenes of our team and then see us at the events trying to run against the big budget teams. The classic underdog story.

**How do you help out at rallies when you aren't racing?**

I keep telling myself that when I am done running a car that I am going to volunteer at rallies. Sort of to give back and stay involved. As for right now, being a privateer means exactly what it sounds like, I'm out there on my own doing it on my own with only the help of my family and close friends. In any down time I have, I am usually focused on our next rally.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**If you could enter any WRC event, which rally would that be? Why?**

Sweden. I would love to try the studs and be in the high snow banks with that much grip

**Your favorite Group B car?**

Lancia Delta S4, it has all the best of the Group B rules in one.

**We've all got a rally hero. Who's yours?**

Colin Mcrae, he was fully committed all the time.

**Do you have a local rally club? Tell us about it! (If not, why not?)**

My co-driver, Peter Watt, stays very involved, he brings good rally karma to our team. He is a member of the [Peterborough Motorsports Club](#) and stays very active in organizing his local regional rallies.

**How often do you get together with other rallyistas to talk shop?**

We've tried but none of us ever have time to meet up with each other.



Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**Tell us about some people who have made your rally dream a reality.**

My family has been unreal in making this all come true. My father has put more time and money into this Evo project than I have. It's really crazy. We do not come from money. My father is a heavy equipment operator and my mother is a teachers aid at the local elementary school. I do not think my father will ever be able to retire now. Really!! My father really got behind me after seeing what we did throughout the years in the slower cars. My longest supporter has been my brother, he goes to all the rallies to service and comes into help with the car when there's big jobs that need to be done at home. He helped a lot with the initial build of the car and has been going to the rallies with me since day one. I think I've done almost 50 rallies and he has only missed 3. My wife has been by my side since our first autocross and she never complains. As I type this we are trying to buy a smaller cheaper house closer to my parents (the "shop" is actually my father's garage). Not too many girls out there would stand for that.

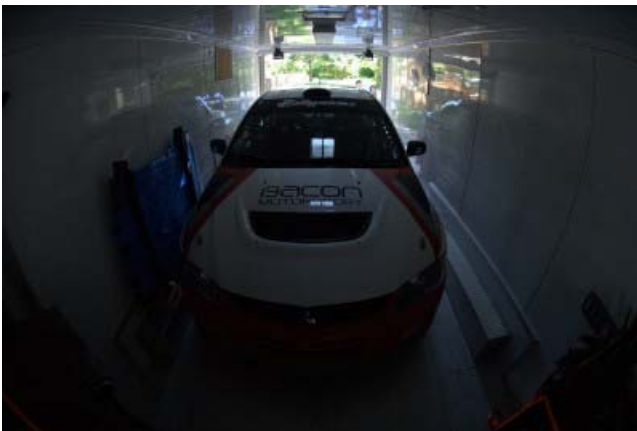


Photo Credit: Veloz Media & Timothy Hourihan Photography

**Thank a volunteer (or group of them) here.**

I would like to thank all the organizers that make all the rallies possible. If it were not for all the stage workers (most of which we never meet) the rallies would never happen.

**What's the most important lesson you've learned from your time in the rally community?**

Expect the unexpected. Be thorough. You better be ready for anything because it is going to happen. (Sorry but most of my life lessons were learned before we started rally. For that I can thank my father.)

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