

HOT WHEELS

Two lawyers are spending seven days in a Mazda Miata, driving fast and raising cash for charity

BY TANIA L. HAAS

TWO LAWYERS DRESSED IN TIGHT, fire-retardant suits sounds like a lead-in to a bad joke. But Dean Novak and Rob Hansen, who met at Osgoode Hall Law School in the 1990s, are suited up for a car race. On September 11, the men will squeeze into a custom-racing 1999 Mazda MX-5 Miata to take turns driving in the Targa Newfoundland, a seven-day, 2,200-kilometre charity car rally. The Targa shares all the risks of professional racing: in 2008, five cars didn't finish, and last year a competitor was taken to the hospital on a stretcher after spinning out on a training run.

"The car is small so I feel like 10 pounds of potatoes in a five-pound sack," says Novak, 40, assistant general counsel at Siemens Canada in Burlington. "Still, when you're driving, only physics dictates the limits."

Before the race started, Hansen, 39, a partner in the Business Law Group at McCarthy Tétrault LLP in Toronto, carefully studied their homemade inch-thick route book, which outlines almost every turn in 100-metre increments. "The navigator is the thinker and the driver is just a brute who blindly follows instructions and tries not to put the car in a ditch," he says.

With speeds up to 130 km/h, good communication is key — especially on a route that can change from a picket-fenced dirt road through a fishing village to an open



highway along the Atlantic coast.

Thousands of Islanders crowd the course to see the cars whiz by. Sometimes the action gets a little too close: in 2006, a Targa competitor missed a turn and landed on the front porch of a house.

There's a philanthropic side to the adventure: the men are hoping to raise \$30,000 for charities in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador that support children's cancer research and care.

Bragging rights are also at stake. The lawyers challenged a pair of Toronto bankers to raise the most money and score the best time. Brent Layton, an investment banker, fuels the competition: "Let's be honest: between their annotated copies of the *Highway Traffic Act*, and their firm-mandated meals, they have an extra 250 pounds in the car." ■



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