

Drive to excel

EVENT Women drivers proved their mettle at a recent car rally

We've always heard that women are better at multitasking. We received conclusive proof last Sunday, when over 300 women deciphered a tulip chart, kept their eyes peeled for locations that had to be marked on a questionnaire and had an eye on the speedometer (the highest speed allowed was 42 km), all at the same time.

The Xtra Premium All-Woman Car Rally 2000, organised by The Duchess Club and the Madras Motor Sports Club and sponsored by Indian Oil, proved to be an unusual and exciting experience for these women as they travelled over 100 km. Run on the TSD (time, speed and distance) format, the rally was all about the right amount of exertion. For once, being an early bird was unrewarding. If a team (there could be four woman participants in a car) arrived a minute early at a control, they would be saddled with two penalty points. Under the circumstances, arriving late was not a bad idea at all — one minute late at a control, and the team incurred just one penalty point. There were 12 time con-

trols in the first leg and seven in the second leg of the rally that was flagged off at Saveria Hotel on Sunday morning by actors Sneha and Suhasini. The tulip 'doodled' a course that took in MRC Nagar, Besant Nagar, TTK Road, Beach Road, Monroe Statue, Spurtank Road, Harrington Road, Shanti Colony, Anna Nagar, Poonamallee High Road and Irungattukottai. After lunch organised by Saveria Hotels, directions and instructions pointed to Porur, Kathipara Junction, Kotturpuram, TTK Road and Saveria.

At 0.3 km, the questionnaire required the participants to inspect the menu at SAJ (the right answer: fish curry and chilli chicken). At 32.3 km, the participants had to note down the time on the Salzburg Square's Clock (which was standing still). There were altogether 39 questions. Every right answer just kept your chances alive, while every wrong one added a penalty point to your 'account'.

The teams were divided into four categories — expert, regular, novice and duchess — and prizes were given



READY FOR THE RACE Actress Sneha flagging off the all-woman rally. Actress Suhasini (extreme left) looks on PHOTO: S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

in each category. Experts are those who have won prizes in previous editions of this rally. Regulars have participated in these editions without success. Novices are first-time participants and the Duchess category constituted members belonging to the club.

Having incurred the least number of penalty points (ten), team number 5 (Lita Srinivasan, Beena Rao, Pramila Jacob and Pushpa Sathyanarayan) was placed first in the overall positions. A dash across a dirt track at Irungattukottai was a sidelight. Selvi won the event with a timing that

was a little over 56 seconds. Actor Vivek, who was the chief guest at the prize-giving ceremony, began impressively, "Hey duchesses, you are great drivers. Earlier, you wanted to be just homemakers. Now you want to be Michael Schumachers". He then came up with a line that was received with thundering applause — "Women are better drivers than men" — and went on to substantiate the statement — "driving needs concentration, timing, alertness and judgment."