

Toyota Rally RAV4 Wins at Prescott Rally

October 17, 2017

Plano, Texas, October 18, 2017 — The Toyota Rally RAV4 continued its dominating 2017 season performance this weekend with an overall win at the Prescott Rally in Prescott, Arizona. Driver Ryan Millen and co-driver Rhianon Gelsomino took the Rally RAV4 to victory in the NASA Rally Sport National Championship for the third straight year.

To date, the Rally RAV4 has won 7 out of 8 races in 2017, clinching the American Rally Association (ARA) championship after winning the 2WD Class in all six ARA races. The team now adds another NASA Rally Sport National Championship to its list of accomplishments. To make matters even more impressive, the Rally RAV4 won the Overall as well as the 2WD at Prescott ... two years in a row now.

The 2017 Prescott Rally covered nearly 118 miles of some of the most challenging and scenic terrain Arizona has to offer. The course is very fast overall, with numerous elevation changes, sweeping turns and unpredictable surfaces.

“We got lucky because we were the first on the road,” Millen said. “They had graded all the roads recently and there had been no recent rainfall, so the dust just sort of hangs in the air.”

Gelsomino echoed the sentiment. “We were fortunate we didn’t have to deal with the dust,” she said. “Being first on the road, you’re sweeping the line with a much looser surface. It’s really good practice and great experience for us because you have no one else’s line to follow.”

Prescott’s sand, gravel and exposed sections of bedrock make for a punishing racing environment, but the team was able to muscle through on the back of the RAV4’s peerless durability. Extra ground clearance and suspension travel once again gave the Rally RAV4 an advantage over many other cars in the field.

“It’s a really sandy course and it’s pretty hard on cars,” Millen said. “There weren’t a lot of mechanical failures in the field but there were plenty of rolls, cars flying off the road, and so on. The RAV4 has lots of wheel travel and it was absolutely solid. We were never searching for grip and we could really carry our momentum, which is key.”

The RAV4’s automatic transmission again proved to be an asset, allowing the team to focus on driving the stages.

“It’s one less thing to worry about,” Millen said. “You’re never looking down or worrying about whether you’re in the right gear. You can just read the road. It definitely makes the job easier.”

Gelsomino noted that a big part of the team’s focus was compiling new course notes. Despite Millen having run the rally the last two years, the stage configurations this year had changed quite a bit.

“We decided to write new notes because Ryan has progressed so much since 2015,” she said. “The fast stages were the key—if we could keep our momentum, no one could touch us.”

One of the team's goals going into Prescott was to relax a bit and have fun, but the main focus was keeping their skills sharp and continuing their considerable momentum this season in preparation for next year.

"I don't think we left anything on the table," Millen said. "Prescott is very much local grassroots racing, and that's what's so fun about NASA."

"But at the end of the day, it's one more NASA Rally Sport National Championship win," he added. "That's three years in a row."

The Rally RAV4 team's final stop on the 2017 circuit is the Lake Superior Performance Rally, sanctioned by Rally America, October 21-22 in Houghton, Michigan.

More information on the Rally RAV4 program can be found at www.RallyRAV4.com.

Information on the Prescott Rally and NASA Rally Sport can be found at www.prescottrally.com and www.NASARallySport.com.