

Millen and Toyota RAV4 Win Oregon Trail Rally for Second Consecutive Year

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Torrance, Calif., (April 26, 2017)— Ryan Millen and his Toyota RAV4 SE repeated last year's 2WD Class victory at the Oregon Trail Rally in Portland, Oregon this past weekend, winning by nearly a minute. The victory was the result of a nearly perfect execution of an aggressive, multi-faceted, and detail-oriented plan of attack for what the team expected to be the most challenging event of the season. "We worked super hard and we earned this one. We did our homework," said Millen after claiming his second win in a row to kick off the 2017 American Rally Association season.

Over the course of the Oregon Trail Rally's 18 stages, drivers had to contend with everything from soggy and slick surfaces to dust clouds that hampered visibility. The adverse conditions placed a premium on being error-free, and Millen never cracked. The fight for the class lead was an intense back-and-forth battle that saw him and runner-up Cameron Steely trade blows throughout the rally. After Steely fought to pull within reach of the win with just the final stage remaining, Millen remained calm in the RAV4 and delivered a knockout punch, pulling away at the end for a final margin of 34.9 seconds.

Going into the weekend, Millen expected the Oregon Trail Rally to be a challenge. The relatively smooth, straight, and flat stages in the rally course provide less opportunity to capitalize on the RAV4's primary advantages in ride height, suspension travel, grip, and reliability. The team prepared meticulously, knowing that victory would likely come by creating and exploiting any small advantage.

"Every time we'd come in for fuel, we were empty. The light was on," Millen said, referring to a tactic employed to only put the bare minimum amount of fuel in the RAV4 each stage. Such was the effort to keep weight down. In fact, for the rally's first two Spectator Stages at Portland International Raceway, even the spare tire and jack were removed.

For the three purely tarmac stages, the RAV4 was fitted with barely DOT-legal Hoosier competition tires. To ensure that they had enough grip over the damp pavement, the crew "grooved" the tires, a technique involving making cuts across the surface of the tire.

Fine-tuning the RAV4's suspension also played a critical role. The Toyota was lowered by an inch and a half for the tarmac stages, then raised for the off-road sections, where the crossover's ride height was a natural advantage at the continuous high speeds of the Oregon Trail.

Ultimately, the Toyota's rock-solid durability and the team's relentless preparation were the foundation for success, but Millen's continued adaptation to driving with new-for-2017 co-driver Rhianon Gelsomino is what put them over the top.

The duo works together to add as much detail to pace notes as possible, which allows them to consistently gain time by carrying more speed out of turns. Millen is even studying video on his phone in-between stages to find those extra few seconds.

"We're becoming the team that people are watching out for," she said.

Millen now holds a 10 point lead in the American Rally Association's 2WD class, as the Toyota Rally RAV4 team turns its attention to the Olympus Rally, May 13-14.

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

Information on the American Rally Association and the Oregon Trail Rally can be found at AmericanRallyAssociation.org and OregonTrailRally.com.

High-resolution photography can be downloaded at ToyotaNewsroom.com