

Toyota Takes Commanding Championship Lead After Olympus Win

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Torrance, Calif., May 17, 2017— The Rally RAV4 piloted by Ryan Millen won the 2WD class at the Olympus Rally for the second straight year, this time by a final margin of victory of well over seven minutes.

The win makes it three in as many races for the RAV4 this season, and gives Millen a commanding championship lead in the 2017 American Rally Association 2WD class standings.

The Toyota's durability was a crucial factor, as multiple competitors fell by the wayside with broken-down vehicles. Millen's chief competitor, driving a Ford Fiesta, completed just a single stage before a broken axle forced him out of the race. The retirement underscored the RAV4 team's faith in the Toyota's unbeatable reliability.

"It's something that we don't have to worry about, again speaking for our reliability," Millen, shortly after spraying the traditional celebratory champagne. "It's unfortunate for him, but for us, big picture championship-wise, this puts us in a great position."

There were challenges at Olympus that placed a premium on being technically proficient in both driver preparation and vehicle setup. Most of the routes were of a new configuration, which limited the ways in which Millen could study the course. Mother Nature even threw in the occasional downpour to increase the difficulty.

Speaking about the tricky conditions, Millen said, "You have to be mentally strong and remember that everyone else is dealing with them too. You don't know what mistakes they're making, and you have to keep the focus on your battle."

With one competitor already out, a local rally driver who is familiar with the terrain stepped up, posing an unexpected fight. Driving a highly modified Subaru BRZ, the surprise competition forced Millen to give his maximum effort the entire way, despite the unforgiving nature of the stages.

Millen and co-driver Rhianon Gelsomino's detailed pace notes, combined with the same aggressive tire strategy that contributed to victory at the Oregon Trail Rally earlier in the season, enabled the duo to take full advantage of the RAV4's inherent superiorities in ride height, suspension travel, and ultimate grip.

The race between the two was close until durability woes struck the new challenger with just two stages remaining. His retirement all but sealed the win for the perfectly dependable RAV4.

Team Millen and the Rally RAV4 can now clinch the season championship with a victory in any of the remaining three rallies, beginning with the Susquehannock Trail Performance Rally on June 2-3.

Despite a lack of pressure from rivals, Gelsomino is determined not to let complacency set in as Millen looks to secure the ARA championships title, and keep the chance of a perfect season alive.

"Nothing changes for us," she said. "We just keep working on things and getting better. At the end of the day our opposition is going to have to take a step up."

More information on the Rally RAV4 program can be found at rallyrav4.com.