

Toyota RAV4 Rallies to Stunning Victory at STPR

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Plano, Texas, June 6, 2017—Ryan Millen came from behind to claim victory by seconds at the Susquehannock Trail Performance Rally (STPR), after a surprising last-second turn right before the finish line. The fourth consecutive win keeps Millen and the Rally RAV4's perfect season intact in the American Rally Association's

2WD Class.

Second place finisher Seamus Burke led by over a minute heading into the final stage before his highly modified Ford Escort became stuck on a berm after a driving error. While he lost time, the Toyota's inherent advantages in ride height and durability shined over the rough surface, allowing Millen to bring the RAV4 home in first place.

"To finish first, you must first finish, so today was a great day for us," said Ryan, invoking an age-old motorsport adage. "He lost it in the last mile, and we were there, ready to pick up the pieces."

The ending provided the drama, but the rest of the rally was fraught with challenges, too. While the event's rules allowed some vehicles a two-minute gap to the car in front, so that dust could settle, the Toyota was given just one minute. As a result, Millen spent most of the rally driving in conditions with very low visibility.

"Dust was a huge issue today," he said. "We must have lost 30 to 40 seconds because of that."

Regardless of the conditions, Millen needed to push to stay close to the lead throughout the event. The RAV4's excellent stability and traction over uneven surfaces were a real advantage. The team spent considerable time optimizing the crossover's suspension and brake setup to handle STPR's extremely challenging stages, where getting heat into the tires proved to be a challenge.

That fine tuning led to the Toyota's highlight moment, courtesy of a spectacular jump early on in the rally. Millen was able to keep his right foot firmly planted on the floor, and the RAV4 sailed through the air, several feet off the ground.

Co-driver Rhianon Gelsomino was impressed. "That was pretty insane. When we took off on that jump and we were flying, I was like, "We're flying in a RAV4!" It was awesome."

The value of Millen and Gelsomino's continued work on refining pace note communication and clean driving is becoming a bigger and bigger advantage to the team versus the competition.

"So much of rallying is the people and our own challenges," said Millen. "We know the RAV4 is always going to be reliable, always going to be there for us. It's a tool that's helping us win, so it's up to us to use every trick and every bit we can to be able to win this thing."

Millen and Rally RAV4 can now clinch the 2017 ARA 2WD championship at the New England Forest Rally on July 21st-22nd.

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

The Susquehannock Trail Performance Rally has been run every year since the 1970s. More information can be found at stpr.org

High-resolution photography can be downloaded at toyotanewsroom.com.