

Toyota and Rally RAV4 Poised for New Challenges in 2017

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Torrance, Calif., January 27, 2017 — In 2016, Team Ryan Millen and the Rally RAV4 proved that a stock powertrain, front-wheel-drive RAV4 can be quite potent. This season, the Toyota Rally RAV4 and Millen are gearing up for more competition in 2017. Armed with new navigator and co-driver, Rhianon Gelsomino, the team will compete in the newly formed American Rally Association (ARA) series. In addition, the team will compete in select Rally America and NASA Rally Sport races.

After competing in 12 races and two series during the 2016 season, the team walked away with multiple class wins, a rookie of the year title and 2nd place in the Rally America 2WD Championship. In addition, the Rally RAV4 and Millen captured the NASA Rally Sport National Championship for the second year in a row.

“The Toyota racing family is incredibly proud of the achievements of the Rally RAV4 team, and can’t wait to see what they do with the 2017 season in the new ARA circuit,” said Keith Dahl, general manager, motorsports. “This program allows us to continue to reach fans across the country and demonstrate first-hand how truly capable our RAV4 is for any type of adventure.”

Starting the season with a new co-driver and navigator can be challenging, but Millen and Gelsomino had a chance to gel last year after running together in select events. Gelsomino comes with over a decade of experience working with teams and drivers around the world, and will make a valuable addition to the Rally RAV4 program.

“I’m looking forward to building on the pace notes from last year, and hope it will give us even more of a competitive advantage,” said Millen. “Last year was amazing, but you have to look forward, and I think we’re in a great position to show once again what the Rally RAV4 is made of.”

“I am really looking forward to working with Ryan and Toyota USA this season. Ryan and I competed together last season in a one off test event in NASA which I am happy to say we won,” said Gelsomino. “We worked really well as a team and it was great to see his abilities behind the wheel of the RAV4. I can’t wait to get the season started and see what’s possible this season.”

The first event will take place February 4, 2017 in Maniwaki, Canada. The Rally Perce Neige consists of 143 stage miles of gravel roads covered in snow and ice.

Gelsomino stepping into the role of navigator will allow Christina Fate to focus solely on team management. Both roles are critical to the performance of any rally team, so dividing and conquering should yield great results.

Driver and co-driver chemistry is essential, but this year the team will have an advantage they didn’t have last year. They’ll be running for the second time at many of the rallies on the schedule. This familiarity could yield a real competitive advantage. As potent as Team Millen and the Rally RAV4 were the first time out, there’s no replacement for seat time.

The RAV4, as in previous years, will continue to take on the brutal rally world with a stock engine and automatic transmission. Fans across the country were continually shocked and impressed at the potency of the Rally RAV4, which spins only the front wheels through a conventional six-speed automatic gear box.

The Rally RAV4 this year will debut new livery with title sponsor JBL, and the continued support of Toyota Certified Used Vehicles, Yakima, TEIN, and Method Race Wheels.

As one of Toyota’s best-selling vehicles, the RAV4 achieved another record year in 2016, selling more than 352,000 vehicles. That’s nearly 40,000 more than the year prior.

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

More information on American Rally Association can be found at www.americanrallyassociation.org.