

Regroup. Rebuild. Return.

October 06, 2015



SALINE, Mich., Oct. 6, 2015 – After an incident-free 2014 Rally America season, the 2015 season has been a bit more challenging for the Toyota Technical Center Rally Team (TTCRT). A blown engine in the first miles of the first stage at the Susquehannock Trail Performance Rally (STPR) in June sidelined the team for the remainder of the event. It also kept them out of the biggest event of the season, the New England Forrest Rally (NEFR).

“To say missing NEFR was a disappointment is a huge, huge understatement,” says Kyle Steinkamp, Toyota chassis engineer and driver / co-driver for TTCRT. “However, foregoing New England allowed us to dig deeper into what went wrong and build a stronger engine.”

Alex Ribner, Toyota powertrain engineer, oversaw the rebuild of the ill-fated rally car engine. “Of course, we fixed the issue that caused the failure at STPR,” Ribner says, “but we also looked back at all the issues we could find that other racers had experienced with the same model engine (2ZZ) and we counter-measured those as well.”

With the upgraded engine installed, the team is heading to Houghton, Mich., for next week’s Lake Superior Performance Rally (LSPR).

While Steinkamp has spent time on the throttle at several Rally America events, this will be driver / co-driver Spencer Wasilewski's first go at stage rally.

"I'm nervous but really excited to race with TTCRT at LSPR," says Wasilewski, a Toyota powertrain engineer. "This was the first event I crewed, so it's great that it's also the first event I'll be driving."

The drivers and crew, who all work full-time at Toyota's North American R&D headquarters in Southeast Michigan, hope to improve on last year's LSPR showing – but that might not be easy. In 2014, TTCRT placed second in Group 2 and 11th overall.