

Rally On! TTC Rally Team Finishes 2nd in Final Stage Rally Event of 2014

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Ann Arbor, Mich., Oct. 31, 2014 – For the second time this season, the Toyota Technical Center Rally Team (TTCRT) hit the stage rally circuit, this time in Houghton, Mich. for the 2014 Lake Superior Performance Rally.

After a confidence building performance in July's New England Forest Rally, the team, comprised entirely of Toyota engineering team members, headed to Michigan's Upper Peninsula with hopes of continued improvement and gained experience. What they accomplished, however, was a 2nd place finish — besting the only other OEM rally team and 14 other teams in the process.

The TTCRT Crew Chief for LSPR, Kyle Steinkamp, attributed their success to three factors: the support provided by their employer, Toyota, the team's technical capabilities and the abilities of the driving team of Brian Thurgate and Colin Ravenscroft.

“The Matrix is a very reliable and capable vehicle that we've carefully improved for rally with a couple of component upgrades. Essentially, the standard Matrix is a great platform. Our team is full of talented and passionate engineers who can get the best out of it...”

Much of the team's capabilities come from their daily work at Toyota, but the work they do on the rally team also improves their abilities as engineers.

Steinkamp said, “It's a very hands-on experience every week that keeps us grounded to our customer's perspective. We can feel how the parts fit together and watch them work, first hand. This practical experience helps to build highly capable engineers.

“There is also the teamwork element that helps TTC operate more efficiently. By attracting engineers, technicians, and other TMs from across the company, we build connections and respect for people that directly improve our day-to-day jobs,” he added

When it comes to the rally team, resource management is the name of the game. While the team does receive a lot of support from the Toyota Technical Center and Toyota Motor Sales, it's not without limits. Travel costs, part costs, and other maintenance expenses all add up. (Entry fees for major events like the Rally America National Championship series can easily go over \$1000.) Finding the balance is one of the hardest parts of managing the team.

Moving Forward

LSPR was the final event of the stage rally season, but the team is already looking ahead. Following their success in Michigan, the team is hoping to be able to increase sponsorship to be able to compete in more events. And while they're fond of their 2004 Toyota Matrix XRS, they're hoping to run a current production model from the Toyota stable in the near future (Matrix sales stopped in the US in 2012) both for better performance and marketing exposure. With or without a vehicle upgrade, the team plans to make four appearances on the stage rally circuit in 2015 starting with February's *Rally in the 100 Acre Wood* in Missouri.