

Team Members Learn to Make Better Cars in Legendary Road Race

May 03, 2019

Image not found or type unknown



It's after midnight at a gas station somewhere between Denver and Fort Worth, a bleary-eyed driver pours the dregs from a Bunn-O-Matic and samples the roller grill fare. There's still a hundred miles to go before he sleeps and a couple more days just like this before another One Lap of America is under his belt.

Successor to the infamous Cannonball Run of film and legend, the Tire Rack One Lap of America is a 3,500-mile, eight-day test of man and machine consisting of daily time trials on some of America's most legendary race tracks with 500- to 700-mile transit drives between cities.

Two teams of engineers and technicians from Toyota Production Engineering and Toyota Motor Manufacturing West Virginia are poised to do it all again May 4-11. This will be the fifth year for PE and the second for West Virginia.

PE will race a 2013 Toyota 86 in the SGT Small Bore class and a 2018 Camry in Mid-Priced Sedan. TMMWV will be running their own 2018 Camry (4cyl) in the Economy Class.

Why would otherwise stable automotive professionals endure this rigor year after year? "When you step back and think, it does sound a little crazy," said Stephen Byington, Toyota engineer and veteran One-Lapper. "But, we share a love of cars and a passion for driving. It's probably why we got into the auto manufacturing business in the first place."

The teams understand that the lessons they learn on the track in vehicle safety, performance, problem-solving and teamwork hone their auto making skills and result in better products for their customers.

Starting and ending at Tire Rack's South Bend, Indiana, headquarters, the One Lap of America, will visit the following tracks in 2019:

- Nelson Ledges, Garrettsville, OH
- Road America, Plymouth, WI
- Brainerd International Raceway, Brainerd, MN
- Motorsports Park Hastings, Hastings, NE
- Blackhawk Farms Raceway, South Beloit, IL
- National Corvette Museum Motorsports Park, Bowling Green, KY

Toyota team drivers

Toyota PE: Andrew Brownfield and Justin LaChausse in the Toyota 86; Kirk Barber, Chris Mahonski, Joe Bell and Becky Brophy aboard a 2018 Camry;

West Virginia: Dale Henry, Chris Furby, Mark Wageman and Brian Jacobs also piloting a 2018 Camry.

The Toyota teams have had some success in the event, winning first and second place in the alternate fuel class; third place in the economy class; and third place in the mid-priced sedan class in 2018 and a second-place finish in 2017 in the SGT Small Bore class.