

The Real Cannonball Run: Toyota Production Engineers Get Gritty in One Lap of America

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Becky Brophy skidded around the circle of orange cones, maneuvering the [2018 Toyota Camry V6](#) around the wet track in South Bend, Indiana. As she slid across the slippery road, Brophy focused on speed, control and fun. She managed all three.

By the end, she held off a McLaren 720S supercar to tie for the blue ribbon in the One Lap of America Wet Skid Pad Challenge (“OLoA”) — a measure of vehicle traction, suspension, braking and handling.

“It was an incredible experience,” said Brophy, Toyota’s first female production engineer to participate in the race. “It was intimidating, but so rewarding.”

Even more so, since Brophy helped build the car.



A Legendary Rally

Every year during the first week of May, gearheads from across the country gather for the 3,500-mile, eight-day marathon, a grueling event where drivers compete in time trials at some of America's toughest venues with long transit drives in between. If the race sounds familiar, that's because OLoA is the successor to the Cannonball Sea to Shining Sea Memorial Trophy Run, a cross-country road race that inspired the film "Cannonball Run," starring Burt Reynolds and Roger Moore.

Participants in OLoA aren't just professional race car drivers — they range from enthusiast car owners to engineers. For years, teams of Toyota production engineers and technicians have competed in both OLoA and the 24 Hours of Lemons.

Brophy's win marks the first time the Toyota PE Team from Georgetown, Kentucky, has taken first place overall in an OLoA event. Toyota engineer Andrew Brownfield, representing the PE Team behind the wheel of a [2013 Toyota 86](#), scored a single event win in the drag competition on day four at Brainerd International Raceway in Brainerd, Minnesota, and in time trials on day six at Blackhawk Farms Raceway in South Beloit, Illinois. The PE Team and their colleagues from West Virginia's White Buffalo Racing Team, which ran a 2018 Camry 4-cylinder, were jointly awarded the Mike Hedin Sportsmanship Award.

"The teams ran strong all week with no mechanical failures and no safety incidents," said Toyota engineer Justin LaChausse, attributing team prep and collaboration to their winning performances.



Better Engineers Make Better Cars

But it's not all just fun and games. Toyota's teams work together as support crews, and they troubleshoot issues on the fly. The engineers come from a variety of departments, each bringing their own unique skill set to the competition.

"You get to work with people that you wouldn't normally work with day to day," said Brophy, who works in Final Assembly to help introduce new models. "So, we all have our own area of expertise. Everybody brings

something different to the table, and everybody can learn a lot from one another.”

But Brophy points out that OLoA is much more than a team-building exercise. The race also teaches the production engineers crucial lessons in vehicle safety and performance, often giving them instant feedback that directly impacts how to improve Toyota’s vehicles.

Despite the eight days of early morning wake-up calls, three hours of sleep and convenience-store dinners, the drivers are already looking forward to next year.

“Everyone has a lot of fun together because we’re all doing what we love,” said Brophy. “Motorsports are our passion, and you get to share that. That’s camaraderie.”

