

Rebelle Rally: Meet the Teams Representing Toyota in the Ultimate Skills Test

October 07, 2021



The Rebelle Rally is a thrilling women's only, off-road navigational competition spanning 1,400 desert miles through California and Nevada. Kicking off today, October 7, at the Hoover Dam, the rally will test the driving prowess and sheer endurance of teams angling to get across a distant finish line. Among them? Two teams representing Toyota.

Research and Development

Representing Toyota's Research and Development is Jessica Buck, ride and handling engineer; Stacy Danhausen, senior engineer for advanced driving assistance systems (ADAS).

What inspired you to participate in the Rebelle Rally?

Buck: It sounded like an amazing opportunity to better understand the truck that I'm currently developing the ride and handling characteristics of, challenge myself to learn new orienteering skills. It's also a chance to continue developing my brand of being well-rounded, courageous, capable, and tough while getting to experience the adventure of the rally itself.

I thoroughly enjoy off-roading for my work projects and wanted to delve more deeply into it as a hobby.

Danhausen: It's a challenge and unique opportunity that provides a new level of driving skill for me. I am all about that. The Rebelle seemed to be a good fit for me. I have a love for working on vehicles, challenging myself, and driving made the Rebelle an easy decision.



Danhausen and Buck will make the journey in a 2019 Tacoma TRD Sport with a TRD Pro suspension.

What will you be driving?

Buck: Our vehicle is a 2019 Tacoma TRD Sport with a TRD Pro suspension. We put some awesome off-road tires (BFGoodrich All-Terrain KO2) on there to help us get through the rally without needing to change tires,

hopefully!

What's your driving background before this?

Danhausen: Driving has always been a great passion of mine – driving to the water to reflect on the day or the other end of the spectrum of sand dunes or canyon roads.

I have a Toyota driver's license that allows me to drive at high speeds on tracks, as well as a Toyota advanced off-road license. I've driven vehicles in sand dunes, motorcycles, boats, all-terrain vehicles, and so on. But this will be the first competition for me in this type of off-road environment.

Buck: Two days after turning 16, I enrolled in the Michigan State Police Defensive Driving Academy. I loved every second of it – slaloming through cones, evasive maneuvers and emergency braking, learning to counteract spins on the skid pad, and ripping around the track for some hot laps! It sparked my love for cars and being behind the wheel.

I'm licensed through Toyota's advanced driver training, advanced off-road, full-size pickups, and towing. Every course I've taken at the Toyota Arizona Proving Grounds has been an absolute blast and a great learning experience.

What are you most excited about?

Danhausen: The challenge and the female camaraderie in this community is for sure exciting.

The overall experience of driving and navigating a course and challenging our abilities to grow as off-roaders is very exciting. The females that we've already met during the journey to get to the Rebelle has been amazing. I cannot wait to spend more time in this community, where we all want to challenge ourselves to further greatness!

Buck: I'm most excited about meeting and getting to know all the other women competing in the rally. There seems to be a real sense of camaraderie and support among many of the competitors. I find that to be a great parallel to how I'd like to maneuver through my career —supporting my peers whenever possible, celebrating their success and performing my best to reach my own goals. Additionally, I am so excited to be completely offline and immersed in nature. I can't wait to see the stars from the remote places in which we make camp!

How does it feel to have Toyota's support?

Danhausen: I'm overwhelmingly grateful. Being part of the Toyota family has always brought great pride. Watching how team members are being uplifted for events, such as the Rebelle Rally, has only brought more joy and pride to be part of the great Toyota team.

Buck: I'm quite proud of Toyota for supporting not only a team for an all-female race, but a team of engineers who work hard to develop the products. I'm aware of other OEMs hiring more experienced and professional drivers, so it means a lot to have the support from my employer as a novice competitor. I'd love to be more active in our motorsports activities, so I'm happy they've provided me this opportunity to get 100+ hours of seat time!

Production Engineering

Representing Toyota's Production Engineering is Samantha Barber, senior manager of Production Engineering and Becky Brophy, senior engineer in Production Engineering.



Samantha Barber, senior manager of Production Engineering (left) and Becky Brophy, senior engineer in Production Engineering

What inspired you to participate in the Rebelle Rally?

Brophy: I've had a passion for motorsports since joining the Toyota Production Engineering (PE) Motorsports team as a co-op in 2015. I couldn't pass up the chance to promote women in engineering, manufacturing, and motorsports. I'm also very thankful for the opportunity for personal development. From learning off road driving techniques and recovery skills, using a compass and map with precision, to communication, hard work, and being a good teammate. I'm so excited to put myself to the test.

Barber: I have always been interested in motorsports. That interest grew into passion during college, when I was getting my motorsports engineering degree. Fast forward to 2014, I was able to be a member of the Toyota team that raced in the Baja 1000, which was my entry into off-road events.

In early 2020, a friend told me about the Rebelle Rally. I followed the rally through 2020 to learn what it was all about. As I learned more and got more excited about it, I knew I had to make the ask to enter a Toyota team. The development of women, learning about Toyota vehicles in that environment, the opportunity to share learnings with others and form a community with the other teams – it was too grand to not go after it.



Brophy and Barber will drive a 2018 Sequoia outfitted with parts from a 2020 TRD Pro Sequoia. They call it “SHEquoia,” and it features a beautiful custom wrap.

What kind of vehicle will you be driving?

Brophy: The “SHEquoia,” as we call her. It’s a 2018 Sequoia that was outfitted with parts to introduce the 2020 TRD Pro Sequoia. We’ve had a lot of support to help get her ready for the rally. The TILT lab and the PE Motorsports team helped us with things like the beautiful wrap, custom brackets to hold the spare tires, wiring

for light bars, etc.

What was your driving experience before this?

Barber: I have advanced driver training provided by Toyota, off-road driver training from BBW4A, and offroad and sand dune training from Rebelle U. I was a riding mechanic for the Baja 1000.

Brophy: My first experience driving in motorsports competitions was with the Toyota PE Motorsports team. I was the team's first female driver. I've driven in several 24 Hours of Lemons races, a ChampCar race, and I competed in One Lap of America in 2019.

I drove the Camry for the wet skid pad event and tied for first in that event (another first for the team). It was pretty cool performing on par with a McLaren with a well-prepared Camry. I also have some personal on-track experience and have started to dabble in off-road adventures since buying a 1997 4Runner.

What are you most excited about?

Brophy: I'm most excited about the amazing group of women that I will be bonding with through this competition. I think this is such an interesting challenge and it speaks volumes about any of us crazy enough to sign up for it.

Barber: I am excited about learning new skills. There are technical skills I have been learning through the summer like using a compass effectively, plotting locations on a map, and route planning. There are also soft skills that I will be developing like communication, quick decision making, reading the environment, non-verbal communications (hand signals when outside of the vehicle), and time management.

How does it feel to have Toyota's support?

Brophy: We have gotten such great support from Toyota. Our executive management team has given us the freedom to own this project from the beginning and they have supported us in getting to resources we needed to achieve our goals. In addition to that, Vehicle Marketing and Communications was able to provide us with the vehicle, the TILT lab and the PE Motorsports team have helped us with preparations and modifications to the vehicle, and TRD sent us some really cool swag to wear for the event.

Barber: Working at a company that supports women in engineering and manufacturing, supports their members' passions and can see the benefit of the development that comes along with this type of event is empowering.

We have support from many parts of the company. Toyota PE executives are sponsoring the team. Toyota TILT Lab and Toyota PE Motorsports helped with the modifications. Toyota Vehicle Communication and Marketing supplied the Sequoia, TRD has given us TRD swag, and Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's sponsored our camping gear.

You can track both teams and their progress through the 10-day race, [here](#).

To see what the Lexus team is up to at this year's rally, click [here](#).