

Mendocino Rally Kicks Off the Second Half of the California Rally Series Season

Written by Erik Christiansen
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Los Angeles – The Northern California City of Ukiah played host to the Mendocino Rally on August 4, 2012. Twelve teams descended on the scenic town to compete on the hard packed dirt roads of the South Cow Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle area. The stages have a distinct flavor, with flowing twists and turns that drivers raved about all weekend.

Michel Hoche-Mong kept his winning streak alive after taking top honors in the small-displacement two-wheel drive CRS-2 class at the Idaho Rally in June. He not only took the class win at Mendocino, but won the rally overall in his VW Golf. His win was not without drama, however, as an overheating fuel pump nearly left him stranded before the last stage. He let it cool off, and fortunately was able to get the car started with just seconds to spare before taking the start. The close call did not throw off his concentration as Hoche-Mong went on to win the final stage. Claiming second-place points in CRS-2 were the team of Brent Hercelinsky and Alex Orozco in their Suzuki Swift. Their strong finish moves them both into third place in the championship with just two rallies remaining.

Last year's overall winner Alex Rademacher returned with hopes to defend his title in his Subaru Impreza. However, he could not hold off Hoche-Mong's charge and had to settle for second overall and first in the production-based four-wheel drive CRS-GT class. Barely one-minute behind Rademacher were Aaron Ekinaka and Marra Estep, also competing in a Subaru Impreza. They put up a strong fight throughout the rally, but could not match Rademacher's pace.

The production-based two-wheel drive P-Stock class was shaping up to be yet another battle between John Black and Sarkis Mazmanian. By the halfway point, Mazmanian had a slim lead over Black and co-driver Lori Stone, but suspension damage to his Acura Integra ended Mazmanian's rally early. Black/Stone went on to claim the class win in their Ford Ranger. Chris and Victoria Rosner drove a smooth rally and took second place in their Geo Metro. Despite his DNF, Mazmanian holds on to a slim lead in the class going into the last two rallies of the season.

The California Rally Series heads south to Lebec, CA for the next event, the 2012 Gorman Ridge Rally. The rally features 60 miles of hard-packed dirt stages located within the Hungry Valley Off-Road Vehicle Park, just one hour north of Los Angeles.

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The California Rally Series is the premier performance rally championship in the southwestern United States. The Series incorporates events from various sanctioning bodies in order to create a meaningful regional championship for its members. The Series celebrates more than 35 continuous years of performance rally, making it the longest running rally series in the United States. To learn more about the California Rally Series visit www.californiarallyseries.com and follow @crspress on twitter.