

Los Angeles – Saturday May 4 marks the start of the 2019 California Rally Series (CRS) Rally Championship with the High Desert Trails Performance Rally. Based out of Ridgecrest, CA, the event offers some of the most diverse stage roads in the championship. The competitors will tackle flat out top speed sections across a wide desert valley, hairpin switchbacks that climb to a high elevation forest, and everything in between (and a little tarmac thrown in for good measure). This year's schedule features eight stages that combine for over 80 stage miles in a compact format that is competitor friendly, with reconnaissance available on Friday for teams that want to preview the course. A parc expose will take place at the Springhill Suites in Ridgecrest, CA on Friday at 6pm allowing fans to get up close and check out all the cars.

Last year Santiago Caballero was leading Open Four-Wheel Drive class, and the rally overall, when a busted tie-rod caused him to retire from the event. He is teamed up with co-driver Richard Dickson this event, and they will be looking to put their Subaru Impreza at the top of the leaderboard. However, there are two drivers that are moving up into Open Four-Wheel Drive class that will be putting up a fight. Last season's Performance Stock champion Travis Fienhage has swapped his Dodge Neon for a Subaru Impreza and is teamed up with journeyman co-driver Ryan Dunham for his Open class debut. Expect them to set some fast times as he gets used to the increased power and traction. Also moving into Open class is Ernie Manansala, who competed in Open Lite the last two seasons. Sitting next to him will be veteran co-driver Alix Hakala, who has experience running at the top end at this rally.

Returning once again in the normally-aspirated four-wheel drive Open Lite class are two-time class champions Kurt Northrup and co-driver Will Smith in their Subaru Impreza. They will be focused on extending their class victory streak into 2019. Expect Michael Seidman and co-driver Tommy Luhrs, also competing in a Subaru Impreza, to keep them honest.

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