Olympus Rally Returns to Grays Harbor

Local News

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Ocean Shores, WA - The Rally America National Championship schedule resumes at the end of April with its two-event West Coast Swing in Washington and Oregon. The Olympus Rally April 30th-May 1st runs along the beautiful shorelines of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. More than 50 top teams representing the United States, Canada and Great Britain will travel to the seaside community of Ocean Shores, WA for the third round of six Rally America National Championship events.

The season has already delivered surprising results. Perhaps the biggest surprise comes from privateer New Hampshire driver Travis Hanson, a Super Production Class competitor, who currently leads the overall Championship over many quicker, factory supported Open Class teams. Hanson, a rally school instructor from Littleton, NH, and his father, Terry from Traverse City, Michigan drew a line in the snow by winning the season opening Sno*Drift Rally in Atlanta, Michigan last January 2011.

They scored enough points with a fifth at the second round, February's Rally in the 100 Acre Wood in Missouri, to stay atop the standings. All of this is history for the Rally America championship. The Sno*Drift victory marked the first time a Super Production driver won an event overall. And this is the first time a privateer, non-factory supported team, has led the championship this late in the season.

The Hansons will once again cross the country to test their fate at the Olympus Rally on the same roads that saw them crash out of the event on the first day last year. Travis and Terry will have another chance to defend their unprecedented challenged at the Oregon Trail Rally in Portland, Oregon just two weeks later, May 13-15th.

X Games BMX legend, Dave Mirra from North Carolina and multi-time British Rally Champion, David Higgins from Wales will be among those hoping to catch the Hansons and put their Subaru Rally Team USA back on the top step of the Podium. Mirra has been Subaru Rally Team USA's most consistent finisher so far in 2011. Mirra sits just three points behind Travis Hanson for second place in the overall point standings. Mirra has a long resume of experience at Olympus having run in the event since 2008. He'll need to draw on that experience to overtake the steadiness of Team Hanson. Mirra has sniffed at an overall event win. Last year he earned his first ever podium finish at Olympus. This year Mirra was second at Sno*Drift and third at 100 Acre Wood so he's close to a win that could put him in the overall Rally America championship lead after Olympus.

Isle of Man, Britain driver David Higgins is on familiar ground at Olympus as well. He was the SCCA ProRally Champion in 2002 and 2003 when the same roads were used during another Washington event, the Wild West Rally. However, Higgins hasn't driven on these roads since re-signing with Subaru Rally Team USA earlier this year. Higgins is anxious for points at Olympus.

Since returning to the American championship in January Higgins was scoreless at Sno*Drift and second at 100 Acre Wood. He's currently fourth in the Championship standings. He's eager to resume his fight with 2010 Rally America Champion Antoine L'Estage of Canada. It's a fight that could last the year along the Rally America National Chamionship.

L'Estage and co-driver Nathalie Richard of the Rockstar Energy Drink Rally Team, are also eager to resume their battle with Higgins out West. Last year the Quebec-based team made a gutsy decision to enter the West Coast Swing having never driven the events before. But a second at Olympus and a third in Oregon were significant points. Wins in the final two events of the year in Pennsylvania and Maine powered them to the 2010 Rally America National Championship. L'Estage is currently third overall in the 2011 Championship. He'll need a West Coast podium finish to give himself a chance at keeping his title.

It's the tendency to put the spotlight on the faster cars in a National Championship but the real fighting this season is in the Super Production category where Team Hanson is flexing its muscle overall and in class. Several other cars from all over the nation are in a battle to steal the Hanson's thunder.

Chasing the Hansons in the Super Production class at Olympus will be Lauchlin O'Sullivan from San Francisco, CA. His experience at Olympus comes from the years when he drove for the Mitsubishi factory team in America. O'Sullivan is contesting the entire 2011 Rally America National Championship Series in a Lucas Oil/Rallytire.com-backed Subaru WRX STI. He should net a good Super Production result in Washington that will improve his current third place class standing in the category.

Also in the battle is Northwest fan favorite, Carl Jardevall from Half Moon Bay, CA. His Nordic Motors Mitsubishi Evo 8 will prove to be a challenge to the Subaru contingent attacking the mountains in Washington. Jardevall may have another bit of business with Hanson. In 2008 Carl qualified for an invitation to compete in ESPN's Summer X Games 14. When Jardevall couldn't attend X Games, he opened the door for Travis Hanson to compete in arguably the world's largest Action Sports competition. Hanson has raised his rally game since X Games 14. Maybe Jardevall will have a little something extra for Hanson at Olympus as a way of extracting a "thank you!"

In the National Two-Wheel Drive Class, 19-year-old Dillon Van Way from Carencro, LA is leading his class in a new 2010 Ford Fiesta. It's believed Van Way will show up at Olympus with a new turbocharging system on his Fiesta. He may need the extra power to fend off a hard charging Wyatt Knox. Like Travis Hanson, Knox is a rally car instructor at the popular Team O'Neil Rally School in New Hampshire. Knox may need his teaching skills to make up the two points in the standings that separate him from Van Way on this West Coast rally swing. Van Way has made impressive improvements since winning 2009 Rally America Rookie of the Year honors as well as the 2009 Rally America National 2 Wheel Drive title, so he won't relinquish his lead easily.

The 2011 Olympus Rally event is based out of Ocean Shores, Washington - approximately 2.5 hours southwest of Seattle. Fans and media are welcome to attend the Parcs Expose Saturday and Sunday morning to meet the drivers & co-drivers and take pictures of the rally cars before they head to the competition stages.

A spectator guide complete with schedules and driving instructions is available for download at: http://rally-america.com/VenueFiles/2 ... 1%20Spectator%20Guide.pdf

In addition to the Rally America National Championship the Olympus Rally will host the season opener of the 2011 Max Attack! 2-Wheel Drive Championship. This long running 2-Wheel drive Series will support teams with a $15,000 purse distributed over three events. More information: http://www.max-attack.com

Olympus Rally Entry List: http://rally-america.com/events/2011/OLYMPUS/entries/
Rally America National Championship Twitter: http://twitter.com/RallyCar_Series

About RallyCar
Based in Golden Valley, Minn., RallyCar sanctions the premier performance rally series in the United States, the Rally America National Championship Series. In 2011, RallyCar is conducting six National Championship events at venues across the country, from Olympia, Washington to Newry, Maine. RallyCar competitors reach speeds of well over 100 mph in modified street cars on natural-terrain courses consisting of gravel, dirt or snow. Additionally, RallyCar sanctions the 2011 U.S. Rallycross Championship featuring rally cars racing door-to-door on tricky tarmac/dirt race tracks. More information about rally and rallycross can be found at http://www.rally-america.com, videos can viewed at http://www.youtube.com/rallyamericaseries

RallyCar's 2011 Rally America National Championship is proudly supported by Subaru of America, Inc., VP Racing Fuels, Best Buy, Grassroots Motorsports Magazine, Danza del Sol Winery, Ford Racing, Team O'Neil Rally School, RECARO USA, Hawk Performance Brakes, Exedy Racing Clutches, Racewatches.com and Rally-Tire.com.