

Subaru Rally Team USA Encouraged by Improved Pace at Global Rallycross Championship Season Opener in Memphis

Cherry Hill, N.J., May 2, 2017: After completing their first round of the 2017 Red Bull GRC season in Memphis, TN, Subaru Rally Team USA left the event in good spirits despite a tough result in the final.

After spending 2016 focusing on testing and development, the team debuted recently signed factory drivers Chris Atkinson and Patrik Sandell along with two completely new 2018 Subaru WRX STI Supercars at the Red Bull GRC season opener. The team showed improved pace with a commanding heat victory for Chris Atkinson and a pair of 2nd place heat finishes for Patrik Sandell before the duo were stymied from a good result in the Final.

Chris Atkinson, a former Subaru World Rally Team driver with over 70 WRC starts in his career including 41 WRC stage wins and six podiums, had a challenging start to the event. In Heat 1A Atkinson was bumped while taking the GRC's signature dirt jump, causing damage to his Subaru and slowing him to a 3rd place finish. He bounced back in the next race however, and dominated Heat2-A, leading from the start after an impressive launch and pulling away unchallenged to win by nearly 3 seconds.

Atkinson was hit with bad luck in the Final after an electrical fault slowed his pace, although he closed in on fifth place he was later forced to retire from the Final, but was classified eighth overall.

"The team has moved a good step forward; we won that heat early on and we've shown some good pace," explained Atkinson. "It's an all new car so we are still improving all the time on the handling setup, but the nice thing is we have barely reached its potential yet and we are already winning Heat races, so that gives us a lot of confidence. I'm really looking forward to the next round."

GRC veteran Patrik Sandell made his official race debut with the Subaru with a pair of 2nd place heat finishes early in the event. In the Final however Sandell's car was damaged due to heavy contact while jostling for position in the first turn. "Overall we've made some really good steps forward and it's been good all the time through the weekend so I'm really happy with the progress and feel really sorry for the team because we deserve better (in the Final)," commented Sandell. "Good things will come in the future."

After a very busy off-season where the team was busy testing and preparing new cars Team Principal Lance Smith was buoyed by the progress and pace he saw. "Although we showed progress through the weekend, our result in the Final was less than it could have been. So, we just have to toughen up and go back out there for another time. The best things I've heard the drivers say is that we can definitely win races with this car, and I'll take that home."

Subaru Rally Team USA's GRC team heads to Round 2 in Louisville, KY May 21. [Click here for event details.](#)

Full coverage of Subaru Rally Team USA is available on the Subaru Motorsports App. To download from the iTunes App store, [click here](#), for Android App on Google Play store, [click here](#). Follow the team on Instagram [@srtusa](#), on Twitter [@srtusa](#), and on [facebook](#).

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