

Toyota and Millen Head to Michigan and the Lake Superior Performance Rally

The Rally RAV4 Team Gears Up for Their Final Event in 2017

PLANO, Texas, October 19, 2017 — After a grueling but stunningly successful American Rally Association championship-winning season, the Rally RAV4 and team now prepare for the final race of the season, the Lake Superior Performance Rally (LSPR) on October 21-22 in Houghton, Michigan.

To date, RAV4 driver Ryan Millen and co-driver Rhianon Gelsomino have won 7 of 8 races this year, including an undefeated sweep of the American Rally Association six-race schedule to clinch the ARA Championship. The team is also coming in hot off a decisive victory at the Prescott Rally in Arizona on October 8, which netted them the NASA Rally Sport National Championship for the third year in a row.

The Michigan event holds special significance for Millen in particular. “It’s one of the 8 classics,” he said. “My dad won here a bunch of times. I love the town, I love the scenery there at this time of year. The leaves will be changing, and it’s just so stunning.”

The chance to run at LSPR will also offer a chance at redemption of sorts after last year’s DNF for the Rally RAV4, where a mishap at the close of the first day cut Millen’s contention short.

“Last year we only ran the stages on Friday,” Millen said. “We were in the thick of the fight, a couple of seconds behind, and we pushed just a little too hard. We were going for the win—we were willing to risk it all.”

After Millen’s partial run at LSPR in 2016, and considering that this is the first time Millen and Gelsomino will drive together at this venue, the team will be hard at work on their stage recce, studying videos, and compiling and reviewing pace notes.

“We continue to push ourselves at the highest level,” Gelsomino said. “It’s still important to study the stages, write good pace notes, review those notes, and put good times on the board.”

The Lake Superior Performance Rally offers a mixture of tight, technical roads and long, high-speed stretches to which the team will need to adapt. Along with gorgeous autumn scenery, the October climate in Northern Michigan will also present its own set of challenges.

“It can be unpredictable,” Millen said. “Sometimes you get snow and ice. There’s bound to be mud, and the falling leaves can make things slippery. You just never really know. But that’s a big part of rallying—the adventure, dealing with the weather, the changing conditions.”

Both driver and co-driver acknowledged that winning the race would mean a lot to the pair personally, as the last race of the season is still a special thing. Even with two 2017 championships already in the bag, the team will continue to focus on honing their skills, strengthening their communication, and enjoying themselves. The final rally of the season also offers the team a chance to stay sharp and prepare mentally for next year.

“You still want to win,” Gelsomino said. “We still want to make the strongest possible showing. It’s important that we never forget that the ultimate goal is winning and showing the world what the RAV4 can do.”

“You’re only as good as your last rally,” Millen added. “So of course we want to do well.”