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SUBARU AND BRANDON SEMENUK WIN 100 ACRE WOOD RALLY

Salem, MO, Mar 21, 2022 - Subaru Motorsports USA driver Brandon Semenuk and co-driver Keaton Williams took their first win of the year at this weekend's Rally in the 100 Acre Wood, vaulting them into first place among the 2022 American Rally Association (ARA) Open Class championship contenders. The victory for the #180 crew came after a dramatic late reshuffle when leaders Ken Block and Alex Gelsomino struck a deer on the final stage. Defending ARA Overall National Champions Travis Pastrana and Rhianon Gelsomino won two early stages but were hampered by a pair of tire punctures and finished fourth overall.

"Not the way you usually want to win a rally, but we're excited to take the victory and the championship points," said Semenuk after the event. "Keaton and I kept it pretty clean this weekend and just tried to stay within shouting distance of the lead most of Saturday. Obviously, we feel bad that Ken caught such an unlucky break and the whole team is glad he and Alex are okay! Rally is always an adventure, and you just have to take the opportunities as they come."

With most of the top Open Class competitors sitting out the season-opening Sno*Drift Rally, Missouri's ultra-fast and notoriously rough 100 Acre Wood represented the true kickoff of an ARA National Championship title fight expected to be among the most exciting in recent memory. Pastrana was back from injury to try to repeat his 2021 100 Acre Wood win in the #1 WRX STI, while Semenuk returned looking to rebuild momentum after a retirement at Sno*Drift. Seven-time 100 Acre Wood winner Ken Block debuted a WRC-spec Hoonigan Racing Division Hyundai for the season and 2020 champion Barry McKenna was back in his WRC-derived Ford.

The wide-open first loop of stages on Friday saw extremely tight competition in rainy and slick conditions, with Pastrana taking two stage wins and holding a slight edge over Block through SS3. The latter struck back on the second loop, showing off the pace of his new machine and taking advantage as both Pastrana and McKenna lost time to tire punctures on SS5. When the day wrapped after six competition stages Block held a 30-second lead over a tidy Semenuk in second, with McKenna and Pastrana over a minute back of the lead in third and fourth.

The smooth, fast Friday roads gave way on Saturday to the rough and rutted surfaces that give 100 Acre Wood its car-breaking reputation. With significant gaps between all four of the top cars, drivers took to managing risk. Block continued to rack up stage wins, showing the advantages of his WRC equipment, while Semenuk focused on staying within striking distance and defending his margin over McKenna. Pastrana had hoped to mount a pursuit of the Ford driver but suffered another puncture early in the day, dropping him out of reach of the overall podium. As the event took its toll on the privateer field and car recovery operations slowed the event schedule, organizers made the decision to

cancel SS13 and conclude the event with SS12, designated as the Power Stage and worth up to 5 additional championship points for the top 5 stage finishers.

The critical moment of the rally came near the end of the Power Stage as a group of deer began crossing the road just as the top cars came through. Block and Gelsomino, first on the road, struck one in a flat-out top speed section and dropped more than a minute to a hard-charging Semenuk, who had to narrowly avoid striking more of the animals as he came through two minutes later. When the dust settled, Semenuk moved into first by 16 seconds over Block, with McKenna third and Pastrana fourth. The Canadian earned 22 points for the victory plus three more for third on the Power Stage, taking an early lead over his rivals with seven rounds remaining in the season.

Subaru Motorsports USA will return to the stages at DirtFish Olympus Rally, April 23-24.

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