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The 2012 Rally America Championship Ends In A Cloud Of Dust At Olympus Rally

Cherry Hill, N.J., Sep 26, 2012 - With the 2012 Rally America Driver's Championship mathematically in his favor for a second year in a row, Subaru Rally Team USA (SRT USA) driver David Higgins entered the Olympus Rally season finale with an aim to put on a show for the fans and go for the win. Unfortunately, neither goal would materialize due to extreme drought conditions in the area, placing the rally's forest stages off-limits to fans due to fire danger and creating blinding dust for Higgins and the bulk of the field. Higgins, piloted his BFGoodrich Tires-shod 2012 Subaru WRX STI rally car decked-out in a unique white livery and the victorious number one featured on the door, was simply happy to have finished the event after hitting a rock and heavily damaging the front right wheel of his Subaru early into the event. Higgins was able to limp his WRX STI nearly seven miles out of the stage but lost a large amount of time to the rally leader. Higgins was unable to mount a challenge for victory due to the heavy dust generated on the later stages by the leader who ahead did not have the same constraint. Higgins was still able to finish comfortably second overall.

The Olympus Rally, based around Washington's capital city of Olympia, featured over 70 teams battling on some of the same gravel logging roads once used in the 1980's when the Olympus Rally hosted a round of the World Rally Championship. Extremely dry conditions in the area have created a forest fire risk and an altered event schedule was implemented to keep the rally cars out of the forests during hot afternoon hours. The fire dangers also unfortunately cancelled most spectator viewing locations.

Higgins and his co-driver Craig Drew began the event running fifth on the road and encountered dust from the onset, slowing him at times. The battle for victory was completely upended on stage four when both Higgins and his rival Antoine L'Estage impacted the same large rock in the road. L'Estage stopped within the stage and changed his punctured tire, losing nearly four minutes, while Higgins aimed to limp out of the stage. The front right corner of Higgins' Subaru was damaged by the rock, which then caused even more problems by dragging the disintegrating wheel on the gravel roads for nearly seven miles. Higgins completed the stage and after some road-side repairs was able to make it back to service, where his Subaru WRX STI was overhauled by the skilled SRTUSA mechanics. Higgins lost nearly two minutes in the process, which put him out of reach of the leader, but secure in second-place overall.

"The dust was some of the worst I've ever seen, especially during the night stages when the car's lights reflect back and are of no help. We actually went off the road while going just six mph in blinding dust, as we couldn't see where the road went. I think it was the slowest crash of my career," explained Higgins. "The event was turned on its head after Antoine [L'Estage] and I hit the same rock while Ken [Block] was able to run first on the road with no dust for the remainder of the event. We would love to have won but it has been a great season. We have not finished below second

place on any event and that's a testament to how fast yet rugged the Subaru WRX STI is in all conditions."

Added James Han, motorsports marketing manager for Subaru of America, Inc., "Though the entire team shares David and Craig's disappointment that road conditions effectively stymied our effort to challenge for the win at Olympus, there's much to look forward to moving into the 2013 season." "SRT USA will be motivated to defend the Rally America title and earn it for a third consecutive year from rivals like Antoine and Ken. I'm confident that the team's performance and our ongoing development of the #75 SRT USA WRX STI will place us in a great position moving into and through next year.

About Subaru Rally Team USA

Subaru Rally Team USA is managed by Vermont SportsCar and proudly supported by Subaru of America, Inc., Subaru Tecnica International (STI), Subaru Performance Tuning (SPT), PUMA, BFGoodrich Tires, RECARO, PIAA, Exedy, Motul, and VP Racing Fuels. For more information on Subaru Rally Team USA, as well as exclusive photo and video galleries, visit subaru.com/rally and for the latest news follow the team on [Twitter: @srtusa](https://twitter.com/srtusa).

About Subaru of America, Inc.

Subaru of America, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd. of Japan. Headquartered in Cherry Hill, N.J., the company markets and distributes Subaru Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive vehicles, parts and accessories through a network of more than 600 dealers across the United States. All Subaru products are manufactured in zero-landfill production plants and Subaru of Indiana Automotive Inc. is the only U.S. automobile production plant to be designated a backyard wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. For additional information visit www.subaru.com.

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