



Media Information

Subaru Of America, Inc.
One Subaru Drive
Camden, NJ 08103
Main Number: 856-488-8500

CONTACT: Dominick Infante
(856) 488-8615
dinfante@subaru.com

Subaru Driver David Higgins Defends Title With Dominating Win At The 2012 Sno*Drift Rally

Cherry Hill, N.J., Jan 29, 2012 - Subaru of America, Inc. Defending 2011 Rally America National Champion David Higgins launched his 2012 title defense with Subaru Rally Team USA by achieving a decisive victory this past weekend at the Sno*Drift Rally. Higgins, driving a 5-door 2012 Subaru WRX STI rally car, dominated the rally leading from the start and winning 15 of the event's 24 competitive stages. Higgins finished nearly two minutes clear of his closest rival. The Sno*Drift was not easy by any respect; David's biggest challenge was keeping his STI on the event's treacherously icy roads. Higgins proclaimed the variable and slick road conditions as the toughest rallying he has ever encountered.

The Sno*Drift Rally, round one of the six-event 2012 Rally America National Championship, challenged nearly 70 top rally teams with over 130 miles of snow and ice-covered roads in northern Michigan. Constant changes in weather and road conditions coupled with several stages run in total darkness make this rally notoriously challenging. Drivers will attest that the biggest challenge of the rally is that spiked or studded tires are not allowed, making traction extremely elusive when conditions are icy. Drivers this year were greeted with exactly that; a recent thaw and subsequent freeze turned many of the stage roads into sheets of smooth ice.

Higgins and his co-driver Craig Drew were up for the challenge from the onset and all but sealed their victory with a commanding performance on the first loop of stages where Higgins posted several blisteringly fast stage times while his rivals struggled with the icy conditions. After winning the opening four stages, Higgins had amassed a nearly two-minute lead on his rivals before the first service halt. However, maintaining that lead on the treacherously ice-covered roads was one of the biggest challenges the veteran rally pro Higgins has ever tackled.

"The icy roads combined with lack of spiked tires makes this one of the toughest rallies and a challenge I think that is unique in rallying anywhere in the world," explained Higgins. "Mentally it's very draining, as you are constantly on the edge all weekend with the knowledge that any small mistake could just end the rally. The grip levels would go from variable to non-existent in a flash."

The lead Higgins had amassed on the opening day of competition was only briefly under threat for the first loop of stages on the morning of day-two. Higgins, running on ice tires, encountered fresh snow on the stages allowing his chief rival Antoine L'Estage, who had chosen a snow tire, to claw back some time. After switching to snow tires at the first service, Higgins responded to the threat and won five straight stages to regain nearly all of the time lost in the morning while sealing his victory.

"This was a great victory and a strong result to start our title defense," explained Higgins. "Our Subaru was perfect all weekend and allowed Craig [Drew] and I to just concentrate on the job under these wild conditions."

Added James Han, motorsports marketing manager for Subaru of America, Inc., "David and Craig drove prudently to a tremendous result, and Subaru Rally Team USA prepared a car in our 2012 Subaru WRX STI that has proven to be the class of the field this weekend. Having to constantly assess traction levels under such difficult road conditions within the context of competition driving rapidly takes a mental toll, and our #75 driver pairing truly rose to the occasion and ultimately prevailed."

Higgins and Subaru Rally Team USA head next to the high-speed gravel roads of The Rally in the 100 Acre Wood, Feb 24-25, in central Missouri.

Video recap of the weekend's events: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVFkGp0e35Q>

About Subaru Rally Team USA

Subaru Rally Team USA is proudly supported by Subaru of America, Inc., Subaru Tecnica International (STI), Subaru Performance Tuning (SPT), BFGoodrich Tires, RECARO, PIAA, Motul, VP Fuels, and Vermont SportsCar. 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: twitter.com/srtusa.

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