

The CRS Idaho Recap

Written by Michel Hoche-Mong
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Boise – Celebrating the Summer Solstice, the California Rally Series (CRS) headed to Boise, ID on June 21st and 22nd to compete in the Idaho Rally. This marks the seventh year of the event, and once again it returns to the mountains northeast of Boise to run on some of the most beautiful roads in the US. Sponsored by Larry H. Miller Subaru, the event is known for its twisty roads that sweep through trees and alongside burbling creeks.

Chris O'Driscoll has placed in the top five at Idaho every year since 2010, and this year was no exception. Chris and codriver Rebecca Greek lead the CRS from the start and held onto it to clinch the top spot in CRS Open in their Subaru STI. Turning in a solid run for second, also in a Subaru STI, were Todd McAllister and Trent Bateman. After rolling here last year, Kris Psara returned in his STI, determined to charge to the finish. Alas, the fates were not with him – on the very first stage, both his rear brake calipers failed. He was able to limp to the finish, borrow calipers from another team, replace them at service, and continue, but lost time. Undaunted, he worked his way back up in the standings and clinched third place. Battling it out for fourth, fifth, and sixth places were Dave Easter/Jeff Andrews in a WRX, Chuck Wilson/Brent Ellzey in an STI, and Roger Matthews/Alix Hakala in a VR6-powered 2WD Jetta. Although all three were swapping stage times, Dave Easter prevailed to take fourth, with Chuck Wilson right behind in fifth. Roger Matthew's lighter Jetta carried the team to a sixth-place finish on Saturday, but on Sunday they broke a halfshaft on Stage 5 and had to retire.

By far the most popular class, the small-displacement two-wheel driver CRS-2 class had nine competitors. Taking top honors both days were the husband-and-wife team of Markus and Alicia Saarinen in their beautifully prepared MINI. On Saturday, veteran Garth Ankeny took second place in his classic Saab 96. A scant 20 seconds back were the brother-and-sister team of Andrew and Robin Lockhart, driving a Mk2 Golf. Sunday, the situation was reversed, with the Lockharts taking second and Ankeny 21 seconds back in third. This marked the Lockharts' return to rallying after a two-year hiatus but the road was not entirely smooth. They almost didn't make it to the event when they discovered shortly before that their gearbox wouldn't stay in gear. With no time to overhaul it, they ended up borrowing the transmission from Michel Hoche-Mong's P-Stock car. Some late night wrenching on the Monday before the event got the transmissions swapped and off they went.

On Saturday Fast Eddie Fiorelli and codriver Christine Marciniak put in some fast times to take fourth. Unfortunately, they developed transmission problems on Sunday and had to withdraw. Regulars Erik Christiansen and Amy Floyd returned to Idaho for the first time since 2009; they put in a consistent drive to finish fifth on Saturday but dropped to seventh on Sunday. Jason Lightner's Porsche 912 was quick enough to capture sixth on Saturday, but developed electrical problems and wouldn't start for Stage 6 on Sunday so they had to drop out. Rookies Chris

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Franklin-Conrad and codriver Charles Thompson put in a fine drive in their classic Volvo 122 Amazon to capture seventh on Saturday and sixth on Sunday. Brooks Freehill, who's used to driving a front-wheel drive Jetta, ran the event in a rear-wheel drive BMW 325i. He captured eighth on Saturday and moved up to fifth on Sunday. The son/father team of Bret and Doug Robinson had problems with the VW Golf on Saturday, finishing ninth, but managed to solve things overnight and moved all the way up to fourth on Sunday.

In Open Lite, Joseph Chiarelli's Subaru Impreza beat out the Legacy of rookies Evan Davis and Nick Roder by over three minutes to take the win on Saturday. However, Evan proved that they was just taking their time getting used to rallying and got faster and faster. On Sunday, they came out charging and took the day's win by three seconds over Chiarelli.

In Performance-Stock, the husband-and-wife team of Tony Chavez and Raquel Salas took an uncontested win both days, beating out several of the CRS-2 cars in the process.

Next, the CRS heads to the coastal mountains of northern California for the Mendocino Rally, based in Ukiah, CA on July 26-27.

The California Rally Series is the premier performance rally championship in the southwestern United States. The Series incorporates events from various sanctioning bodies in order to create a meaningful regional championship for its members. The Series celebrates more than 35 continuous years of performance rally, making it the longest running rally series in the United States. To learn more about the California Rally Series visit www.californiarallyseries.com and follow @crspress on twitter.