Los Angeles – The 2012 California Rally Series (CRS) started off with a packed field of twenty-four teams competing at the High Desert Trails Rally. Based in Ridgecrest, CA, the rally featured high-speed hard packed dirt stages with sections of tarmac.

Keith Jackson and Marra Estep returned to the CRS in their Subaru WRX STI after taking a hiatus from the stages last year. The team showed no sign of being rusty, as they dominated the event right from the start. They won all eight stages outright, to cement not only their win in the Open four-wheel drive class but also a cash prize of $100 for fastest four-wheel drive on the new for 2012 Dirftish Power Stage. Finishing second in class were Cem Akdeniz and Mustafa Samli in another Subaru Impreza. 2011 class champion Jon Burke and co-driver Zachery Dickinson were running in a solid second place for the first half of the event before breaking down on stage five.

Last year's event winners Bill Holmes and Sean Gallagher were once again blisteringly fast in their Ford F-150. The team took the CRS-5 (large displacement, two-wheel drive) class win, as well as the $100 cash prize for fastest two-wheel drive on the Dirftish Power Stage, and finished an impressive second overall.

The small-displacement, two-wheel drive class (CRS-2) was dominated by the team of Eddie Fiorelli and Tom Smith in their Volkswagen Golf GTI. They finished a full three and a half minutes ahead of second place finishers Sean Lane and Christian Coulter in their Dodge Neon, who narrowly edged out the Mitsubishi Galant of Javier Olivarez by less than a minute.

The production-based, four-wheel drive CRS-GT saw the closest battle of the event, with 2011 champions Alex Rademacher and Jeana Yi taking the win in their Subaru Impreza by less than a minute over fellow Subaru drivers Leelyn Pritchard and Logan Mineer. The two teams traded stage times all day long, pushing each other to finish third and fourth overall.

For the second year in a row, the production-based two-wheel drive class win went to CRS veteran Tony Chavez and his navigator Raquel Salas. Chavez & Salas were so fast they managed to beat even the CRS-2 teams on the last few stages, including setting a shockingly fast time on the Dirftish Power Stage. The team pedaled their VW Golf to an over seven minute lead ahead of the second place team Sarkis Mazmanian and Arin Hovsepian in their Acura Integra.

The CRS championship moves from the deserts of southern California to the mountains of Idaho for the next event on the calendar, the Idaho Rally International, June 9 & 10. The two day event features over 100 miles of twisty, hard packed stages that attracts teams from all over the Western United States.

The High Desert Trails Rally was first run in 1973 on roads to the southeast and west of Ridgecrest, CA. After running for the past two years at a motorsports facility on the edge of town, the rally moved to some never before run roads for 2011. For more information on the High Desert Trails Rally, visit http://highdeserttrails.com and follow @crspress on twitter.

Download the press release here.