Los Angeles – The 2014 California Rally Series (CRS) Championship came to an exciting finish at the Prescott Rally on October 3-4. Based in Prescott, AZ the fast, flowing stages set amongst the red rock canyons of central Arizona create a perfect backdrop for what has become a traditional end to the CRS season. This year twenty teams competed over 110 stage miles for their last chance to earn valuable championship points.

Coming into the event, the teams of John Trucks / Christopher Fine and Todd McAllister / Trent Bateman were in a near dead heat for the Open Class driver / co-driver championships. Both teams were competing in turbocharged four-wheel drive Subarus and it was a toss-up on which one of them would win the event overall. By the end of Friday's event, it was McAllister / Bateman who secured the victory over Trucks / Fine by just one minute. The two teams continued to trade stage time Saturday morning, and were only seconds apart when bad luck dashed McAllister / Bateman's championship hopes. Coming out of a dip their left front wheel inexplicably detached itself from the car, leaving them stranded on stage and unable to continue. Trucks / Fine were able to drive to a clean finish, earning second place in class points and the 2014 Open Class championship.



The surprises of the weekend in Open Class, however, were newcomers Duncan Smith and co-driver Katherine Lindroth-Gendron. The team was completely new to rally, but by the end of the day Saturday you would thought they were seasoned veterans as they won a number of

stages in their Subaru WRX STi. In fact, they finished Saturday's event first in Open Class and overall! Hopefully we will see more of them fighting at the front of the pack in 2015.

Chuck Wilson and co-driver Brent Ellzey were able to drive a clean rally in their Subaru WRX STi, finishing in a respectable 4th place on Friday and 3rd place on Saturday in Open Class. The solid finish locked in 3rd place in the championship for both driver and co-driver.

Meanwhile, in the small-displacement two-wheel drive CRS-2 class competition was equally as exciting. Local driver Brian Scott and veteran co-driver John Dillon put the hammer down hard from the very beginning, setting the fastest time in CRS-2 on stage one (and beating all but one Open class car) in their classic Datsun 240Z. However, their momentum was short lived, as the alternator in the vintage Datsun failed and left them stranded on stage 2. They were able to rejoin the rally on Saturday, and despite winning some stages could only manage a fifth place in class finish due to continued mechanical difficulties.

By stage 2 Friday night, husband and wife team Markus and Alicia Saarinen had peddled their Mini Cooper to a slim lead over another husband and wife team Kris and Christine Marciniak. The Marciniaks had been absent all year while building a fresh motor for their Dodge Neon, but they didn't show any signs of rust as they consistently put down top pace stage times. Just seconds behind the Marciniaks were son and father team Bret and Doug Robinson in their VW Golf. Plagued by fuel issues all season, the Robinsons were happy to have the problem solved and their car running smoothly. The Saarinens ended up with the class win in Friday's event, followed closely by the Marciniaks and then the Robinsons, with just over a minute separating first from third.





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