

California Rally Series Championship Season Continues with the Gorman Ridge Rally

Written by Erik Christiansen
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Los Angeles – The summer break is over as the California Rally Series (CRS) Championship returns to the Hungry Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Park for the Gorman Ridge Rally on Saturday August 25th. Located just over an hour north of Los Angeles, the rally features a compact, spectator friendly format with twelve stages packed into a single day of racing. As in years past, the roads comprise a twisty and technical course, with big air expected over the famous jumps on Wheatfield Trail.



The favorite for the top of the podium this year is current Open class leader Flynn Baglin with co-driver Alix Hakala. Expect to see some fast times from this veteran crew in their Subaru Impreza STI. However, Santiago Caballero and co-driver Chris Fine will be there to keep them honest and ensure they can't cruise to a win. Caballero and Fine set some extremely fast times at the season opener High Desert Trails Rally before retiring with a mechanical failure in their Subaru. Now that they have some experience under their belt they could be fighting for the overall win.

Kurt Northrup and co-driver come into this event with the lead in the normally-aspirated four-wheel drive Open-Lite class. Having won the class last year with a clean sweep of wins, they are definitely the ones to watch this weekend. But don't count out Brent Blakely and co-driver Robert Maselli. Blakely has an impressive history of rallycross victories that could translate well to the tight and twisty roads of Gorman.

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In the large-displacement two-wheel drive CRS-5 class, Frederick Hatch and Charles Grabow come into Gorman with the class lead. They went faster and faster with each stage at the last event and could be pushing their Ford Fiesta for the two-wheel drive lead. Looking to challenge them are Corbin Beu and Riley Trout in their Mazda RX-7. The rear-wheel drive Mazda should put on some entertaining opposite-lock oversteer this weekend.



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Looking to capture top points in the smaller –displacement two-wheel drive CRS-2 class are Bret Robinson and Amanda Folland, competing in a VW Golf GTI. It should be an epic battle between them and Tony Chavez, who teams up with Andres Bautista in a similar VW Golf GTI. Both teams have extensive experience on these roads, and neither one will be holding back. They will be challenged by Eliza Coleman who is back with co-driver Alex Gelsomino of WRC fame. Coleman is in her second CRS season and keeps building on her speed with each event. She could put her Scion xD in front of the VWs if she pushes.

Rookie driver Travis Fienhage and veteran co-driver John Dillon are leading the production based two-wheel drive Performance Stock class. They will face competition from Jonathan Compton and Daniel Keyes who are looking to move up in the standings.

The Gorman Ridge Rally features the return of Side-by-Sides to the California Rally Series. The nimble handling of these lightweight vehicles make them extremely competitive on the narrow trails of this event. Last year they captured two of the top three positions. This year, Belgian David Sterckx makes his return to the CRS in a Yamaha YXZ 1000R. It would not be a surprise to see him battling for the overall win.

The Gorman Ridge Rally is based in Lebec, CA, located just one hour north of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The rally features 48 miles of hard-packed dirt stages located within the Hungry Valley Off-Road Vehicle park. For more information on the Gorman Ridge Rally visit <http://gormanridgerally.com/>.

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 40 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.