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Los Angeles – The High Desert Trails Rally marked the second event of the California Rally Series (CRS) Championship calendar took place this past Saturday April 9th. The rally moved to new roads outside of Ridgecrest, CA which were hard packed dirt with short sections of tarmac.

The fast desert roads seemed to be custom made for Bill Holmes and Sean Gallagher in their Ford F-150. The team won every stage of the event on their way to the overall and CRS-5 class win. Runners up in CRS-5 were Jack Szanto and Jack Penley in their Dodge Neon SRT-4, who traded stage times with Brian Hamblin and Ray Hocker in their turbocharged Volvo 240. However, a high speed spin and stall late in the rally caused the Volvo team to fall down the leader board.

The competition amongst the top teams in the CRS-2 class can only be described as epic. Three extremely talented drivers were within seconds of each other throughout the event, and the leader board seemed to change with every stage. At the end of the day, Michel Hoche-Mong and Marie Boyd secured the top spot in their VW Golf (and second place overall), ahead of George Doganis and Tom Smith in a Honda Civic (who finished third overall). 2010 rookies of the year Gaylord Van Brocklin and Steve Secviar were on maximum attack from start to finish (and then some). They crossed the flying finish of the last stage fast enough to take first place, but perhaps too fast to negotiate the next corner. Immediately after the finish they lost control of their VW Golf going over a crest and went off in spectacular fashion, cartwheeling down the hill in full view of the finish control workers. The team emerged unscathed, but would end up officially scored as a “Did Not Finish” as they were unable to complete the final transit. Sliding into third place in CRS-2 were Eddie Fiorelli and Brent Ellzey in the rally debut of their VW Golf.

Hakan Okcuoglu took first place in Open 4WD (and fourth place overall) in his Mitsubishi Eclipse. Mitsubishi seemed to be the manufacturer of choice in this class, with Vartan Samuelian and Lawrence Babahekian scoring second place points in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution.

CRS-GT, the production-based four wheel drive class, was won by Paul Willemsen and Travis Bos in their Subaru Impreza WRX. The event marked Paul’s return to rally after a several year hiatus. He proved he did not lose much speed during the break as he finished over two minutes ahead of 2010 CRS-GT champions Kevin Welker and Nolan Sambrano in their Subaru Impreza.

Performance-Stock was also won by a driver coming off a multi-year hiatus. Tony Chavez and Raquel Salas drove their VW Golf to a P-Stock victory in a close battle with John Black and Lori Stone in their Ford Ranger. The second place finish is enough for Black/Stone to maintain their lead in the championship thanks to a strong finish at Desert Storm.

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.

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.