

L'Estage Wins New England Forest Rally

Saturday, July 17, 2010



The 2010 New England Forest Rally (NEFR), the sixth and final round of the 2010 Rally America National Championship, ended with spectacular drama that kept fans and competitors riveted. Once the champagne popped, it was Rockstar Energy Drink's Canadian duo, driver Antoine L'Estage and co-driver Nathalie Richard, celebrating a New England Forest Rally victory and their claim to the 2010 Rally America Championship title.

Heading into NEFR, L'Estage held a 13 point lead over Nashua, NH's hometown favorite, Bill Bacon. Both had a shot of winning the Championship at NEFR, but L'Estage just needed to finish 5th place or better to cement his place at the top. Bacon fell back after a changing a flat tire on Stage 9 and lost 5 minutes to the event leader.

L'Estage's weekend almost ended abruptly when his car experienced turbo failure, which dropped him from 2nd to 5th overall. On the verge of losing the Championship L'Estage dug deep and advanced back into 2nd place until NEFR rally leader, Subaru Rally Team USA's Travis Pastrana, lost oil on Stage 11 and failed to finish. L'Estage gained the lead and held on for the win.

Antoine L'Estage then became the newest Rally America Champion driver breaking Travis Pastrana's run of four consecutive Championships in a row!

"It has been a hard road getting here," said L'Estage, "we only planned to run four events in America this year, but when we found ourselves in contention for a title after the Olympus Rally we mustered up more funds. I am very thankful for my team and the incredible work they put in, especially our Team Manager John Buffum."

Winning the title gives L'Estage much needed momentum when he heads to ESPN's Summer X Games 16 on July 31st to compete for a gold medal in the "Rally Car Racing" event.

It was another difficult event for the Monster World Rally Team's Ken Block, who led the event during the first few stages in his 2010 Ford Fiesta, but Block's crash on SS4 knocked him out of the race and surrendered the lead to Travis Pastrana before he DNF'd near the end of the day. You can view Block's crash video here:

bit.ly/bm4uzW

NOS Energy Drink's Andrew Comrie-Picard suffered a tough setback this weekend as well, driving his Mitsubishi Evolution X for the first time on U.S. soil. Comrie-Picard was off his normal pace but within striking distance to land on the podium until an exhaust leak melted his shifter cables and wiring on SS10 putting him farther behind.



The Super Production battle was the highlight of the rally as crews encountered drama and fierce competition on Maine's unforgiving forest roads. Ramana Lagemann and Chrissie Beavis took the lead early in the rally and had a consistently smooth run to finish first in class by 1:58.8 minutes and placing second overall. Joseph Burke and Alex Kihurani had a remarkable performance despite losing time on Stage 9 after having alignment issues caused by landing on a rock. Nineteen-year-old Burke finished second in class and placed on his first-ever National podium taking third overall after Pastrana's DNF. Rounding out the SP podium was Roman Pakos and Maciej Sawicki. Pakos had an excursion on Day One that set the crew back by 45 seconds, but they managed to make up time on Day Two finishing third overall.

The fight for the 2010 Super Production title unfolded at NEFR as Pat Moro and Ole Holter drove to maintain a slight points lead against Travis and Terry Hanson. The Hansons were forced to retire on Day One of the rally after cutting a corner and breaking a wheel on Stage 6, giving Moro the advantage to secure the SP Championship bid on Day Two. Moro lost throttle at the start of Stage 10 and had to be towed 16 miles to the end of the stage by his teammate Tim Rooney, but was able to get started back up and finish the rally. Pat Moro and Ole Holter are now Rally America's 2010 Super Production Champions.

In the 2 Wheel-Drive, rally veteran and ex-Mitsubishi Factory Team driver Lauchlin O'Sullivan and co-driver Karen Wagner won with a dominating performance from the very beginning and ended with a 3:37.5 minute cushion over New England favorite, Chris Duplessis. O'Sullivan's finish also won the MaxAttack! 2 Wheel-Drive Series competition; a separate Series run at NEFR dedicated to promoting 2 Wheel-Drive rally cars.

Chris Duplessis from Bethel, ME had mathematically secured the Rally America National 2 Wheel-Drive Class Championship at last month's STPR® Rally in Wellsboro, PA. He did not need a win at NEFR, but a fierce competition brewed between him and last year's 2WD Champion, Dillon Van Way. Both traded times until Van

Way's Ford Focus experienced intermittent power failures and had to withdraw from the race.

Mitsubishi driver Tom Lawless won Day One's Mexico Regional Rally with co-driver Brian McNamara. Joey Kale and Scott Nickerson placed second and Matt Gottlieb and co-driver Austin Gager took third place. Lawless also won the Day Two regional, the LL Cote Rally, but this time he had Martin Brady in the right seat instead of Brian McNamara. Lawless finished 4 minutes ahead of Maciej Przybysz and Carrie Wilburn. Last Ditch Racing's John Cassidy and Dave Getchell claimed the third spot on the podium.

About Rally America, Inc.:



Based in Golden Valley, Minnesota, Rally America sanctions the premier rally racing series in the United States, the Rally America National Championship Series. In 2009, Rally America will conduct nine National Championship events at venues across the country, from Portland, Ore., to Newry, Maine. Rally America competitors reach speeds well over 100 mph in modified street-legal rally cars on natural-terrain courses consisting of gravel, dirt or snow.

Rally America is introducing "Rallycross" to America for the first time on August 27-28, October 9-10, and November 6-7 at the New Jersey Motorsports Park. Fans will be able to watch two-wheel-drive and all-wheel-drive rally cars compete wheel-to-wheel on a closed-loop 1.3 mile tarmac and gravel circuit in timed heats from the

comfort of grandstands and special viewing areas.

Rally America is proudly supported by Subaru of America, Inc., BFGoodrich Tires, the Team O'Neil Rally School, Able Planet, Hawk Performance Brakes, Rally-Tire.com, RaceWatches.com, Exedy Racing Clutches, RECARO, Mazda and the Danza del Sol Winery.

To watch RAM TV videos from NEFR go to:
rally-america.com/index.php

For Results from NEFR visit:
rally-america.com/events/2010/NEFR/results

Photo Credit: www.WorldRallySport.com | Mike Proulx and Mat Janiak