

Rally America sees a changing of the guard

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By Rusty Jarrett, Getty Images for True Speed Comm

Travis Pastrana, who missed the fourth and fifth races this year, will race in the New England Forest Rally even though he likely won't win the Rally America Series.

By James Sullivan, BNQT.com

Team [Subaru's Travis Pastrana](#) has dominated the Rally America Championship Series for the last four years. This year, two challengers lead Pastrana heading into his weekend's final event, the New England Forest Rally (NEFR) in Bethel, Maine.

Drivers Antoine L'Estage and Bill Bacon have risen to Nos. 1 and 2 ahead of No. 3 Pastrana. L'Estage and Bacon have been consistent, finishing in the top three in all five Rally America Series races in 2010.

Pastrana started the season strong, leading after the first three rounds, but missed the fourth and fifth stops while filming his *Nitro Circus* TV show in Australia, effectively costing him the championship. This year's Rally America series has six races — vs. nine in previous years — making points accumulation at each stop more critical.

For L'Estage and Bacon, this year's success occurred in the face of tough logistical challenges. "I don't think people understand how difficult it was to work on a car on the West Coast when you are from the East," said Bacon. "It was a quick turnaround between events."

Despite being out of title contention, the New England Rally is a can't-miss race for Pastrana.

"NEFR is one of my favorite events because the course is fast but technical," he said. "It's really easy to crash because you are in the air as much as you are on the ground."

Rallyfix.com editor Bill Lockwood agrees: "New England Forest Rally is the most prestigious (U.S.) rally of the year, with unruly fans and spectator-lined stages."

Also competing this weekend is action sports icon Ken Block, who will join 65 competitors racing over two days across 130 miles of gravel and forest stages.