

Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by Sterling Doc - 05 Sep 2012 17:58

NASA announced tonight at the National Championships that 944 Spec, along with Spec Miata and Spec E30, will be moving to a new Spec tire for 2013, the Toyo RR. Being painfully aware of the last attempt at a tire change, I have gathered as much information as I can tonight (I did not have advance knowledge of this). I talked personally with Jeremy Croiset and Ryan Flaherty from NASA, the Toyo engineers, and Tyler Palmer, who was involved in some of the testing for this tire (and was under a non-disclosure agreement until today).

Here's what I know so far.

1. The tire is a 2 line near-slick DOT tire - looks much like a Hoosier R6, or BFG R1. No shaving.
2. The rain tire will remain the RA-1, which will remain legal in the class.
3. Price is reported to be "the same" as a shaved RA-1. I take this to be about \$15-\$20 more per tire than a full tread RA-1, but was not given specific pricing info for our size. I was told the SM tire will retail for about \$168 (per the Toyo Engineer), which is \$16 more than the Tire Rack lists for a full tread RA-1. Extrapolating that to our size would be \$188 (Tire Rack RA-1 price of \$172 + \$16). Don't quote me on this, I'm just trying to get a ballpark figure on this with the information I can gather.
4. The tire was built by Toyo specifically for NASA's requirement as a Spec tire, based on what we know and love from the RA-1, and what learned from the R-888 debacle. Primary goals were consistency over its life cycle, and longevity, and replicating the forgiving nature of the RA-1 at a higher performance point. Making the new tire work, as a bolt on upgrade was also important - i.e not requiring a substantially different setup as the R-888 did.
5. Using the same suspension settings, and starting tire pressures, Tyler Palmer was substantially faster at Buttonwillow in his *first* session, and felt that the transition was an easy one. I'll let him fill in the details, and asked him to chime in when he can.
6. The tire has been tested through 18+ heat cycles, and reported to be consistent through that, as well as two consecutive 3 hour enduros. I can't yet verify this on our cars.
6. Toyo Bucks from this date forward will remain valid for a "longer time" so as to not require you to buy more RA-1's before they expire. I don't have details on what that means, yet.

I hear the collective "not again" already, and I certainly understand it. I lived through the R-888 era, and was quite happy to have the RA-1 back, as I'm sure most of you were. After expressing my concerns, I will say that both NASA and Toyo are very aware of the stakes involved in getting this right this time. The Toyo engineer used the phrase "after the R-888 debacle", which was good to hear him own up to. While I am encouraged that the process of this change have been carefully thought out, and more thoroughly tested (on our platform specifically), change is painful, and our class wasn't asking for it. I have asked as many questions as I can think of tonight, and will have access to the

major players involved in the for a few days still, so post up your questions here, and I'll work to get them answered.

A week from Friday, I will run the RR in a 3 hour enduro, and will be able to give you more personal feedback on them.

Re: Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by Sterling Doc - 07 Sep 2012 18:53

I anticipate the new tires will go into the 2013 rules. No personal feedback I can give on them yet.

Jerry, if you currently maintain 4 sets of tires having drys and rains shouldn't change things a great deal long term. You are still only wear on set at a time. Half worn rains could pose a problem , but would be great to sell for a DE tire?

Re: Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by JerryW - 07 Sep 2012 19:13

I have one set of full tread (Rains) currently. I have 4 used sets of RA1's that I've either run after shaving or that I've picked up used. 2 Sets have around 12 HC's 1 set is unknown cycles but very high, and one set around 20 HC.

I normally buy the RA1's in a Non shaved configuration as we go into winter. If I haven't used them and they can still be shaved then they get shaved and go into the tire rotation around April when the potential wet season around here is over. This year I also picked up 2 sets of shaved RA1 that had been run for a couple of weekends by a Honda Challenge racer so didn't shave the Full treads.

Just explaining the current stock. I know of others that have been stockpileing RA1s with their ToyoBucks.

Re: Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by Sterling Doc - 08 Sep 2012 08:57

I hear you Jerry. I will push for both tires to be legal, driver's choice, to use up existing tires.

Re: Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by rd7839 - 08 Sep 2012 09:01

Enough about tires, what's going on in Ohio?!

Re: Breaking News from Mid-Ohio: New Spec Tire for '13

Posted by cbuzzetti - 08 Sep 2012 17:38

Thanks to Greg and Tyler I was fortunate enough to have been invited to the test day at Buttonwillow when these tires were tested.

The testing went like this. 1st session was with brand new RA-1 shaved. We got about 10 laps. Second session was with brand new RR tires unshaved and again about 10 laps.

We did not get any additional laps on the new tires.

The car I was driving was a borrowed car that was pushing badly with the new RA-1. We were not allowed to make any set up changes between sessions.

The second sessions was about 30 minutes later with the new RR tire. The car I was driving was 4 seconds faster. The new tire masked all the handling problems the car had with the RA-1. It was very predictable and easy to drive fast.

There were a couple of cars in the 3 hr. enduro that night that ran the RR tire. This car was hit on the opening lap of the race and ended up with about a 1/2" of toe in after contact. The drivers did not know this until the next morning. They were running pace with cars in class on Hoosiers.

The wear pattern on the tires did not indicate a toe problem even after 3 hours. Even though the car had a push situation from the toe problem.

This same car has run multiple enduros on this set of tires with great results.

I think we have a winner here guys!!!

As far as Nats go I believe Erik is on pole, Niel off pole, Tyler 3rd.
