

2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)

Round 3: Rally Guanajuato México

***The complementary qualities of the
MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 rewarded in Mexico***

The 2018 Rally Mexico was won by Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC), while Dani Sordo/Carlos Del Barrio (2nd, Hyundai i20 WRC) and Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (3rd, Citroën C3 WRC) made it an all Michelin podium.

The compact format of this year's Rally Mexico featured 22 stages totalling 344.49km and a total distance of 1,055.88km from the start in the UNESCO-listed town of Guanajuato to the finish in León, 400km northwest of Mexico City. Competitive action in the region's high sierra peaked at an altitude of more than 2,700 metres and the rarefied air starved the WRC cars' engines of some 20 percent of their usual power.

Michelin's partners were able to choose between the hard-compound 'H4' and soft-compound 'S5' versions of its LTX Force gravel tyres. Following the performance of the soft option on its debut outing on this same event in 2017, the latter was nominated as the chief choice for Round 3 of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship due to its exceptional versatility.

This decision was greeted by the drivers, but some crews finally chose to fit the harder MICHELIN LTX Force H4 for the afternoon's tests which tended to be cleaner than they had been first time through, while the weather was much hotter, too, with temperatures at times in excess of 30°C.

This combination of heat and difficult conditions clearly put tyres to a tough test but, even after losing air, the strength of their construction enabled them to continue at speed, as **Nicolas Gilsoul** – the co-driver of Hyundai Motorsport's Thierry Neuville – remarked: "On Saturday morning, we thought we had punctured but it turned out to be a damaged rim. The construction of that Michelin tyre and the strength of its sidewall allowed us to complete the stage without losing too much ground."


"Strength is a key feature of our World Rally Championship tyres," noted Michelin Motorsport director **Pascal Couasnon**. "The performance of today's cars and the nature of the stages expose them to some pretty challenging conditions. Our response is technology that ensures their crowns and sidewalls are sufficiently rigid to soak up the loads and knocks they endure over long distances, but they also provide the drivers with the flexibility they need to stay in control and benefit from high grip whatever the circumstances. As Nicolas Gilsoul pointed out, Michelin's WRC tyres are engineered to be able to complete stages even if they lose air."

"The 2018 Rally Mexico showed how well our two gravel tyres complement each other," added **Jacques Morelli**, the manager of Michelin's WRC programme.



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“The soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5 is a versatile tyre which covers a wide spectrum of situations, but the harder H4 proved a valuable alternative for the hotter, more aggressive conditions. Our partners principally went for our soft option, notably for the morning’s stages. However, thanks to the information provided by our team advisers, they soon grasped how using the H4 minimised the risk of deterioration on the more abrasive and very hot afternoon loops. There were actually cases where we saw a combination of both compounds on the cars in order to cater for the extremely demanding and varying nature of the week’s stages. Ultimately, everyone was able to keep their respective fights going all the way to the finish without tyre damage, and that is our mission.”

The WRC2 battle saw victory go to Sweden’s Tidemand/Andersson (Skoda Fabia R5) who finished clear of Britons Greensmith/Parry (2nd, Ford Fiesta R5). South Americans Heller/Olmos (3rd, Ford Fiesta R5) secured a one-two-three finish for Michelin in this class which, like the WRC category, permits open competition between tyre companies.

With Mexico’s arid mountain stages now behind them, teams and crews will switch to asphalt when WRC action resumes with Round 4, the Tour de Corse-Rallye de France, on April 5-8.

