

2017 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
Round 13 (Final): Kennards Hire Rally Australia

The Michelin LTX Force H4 and S5 conclude on a high note a challenging 2017 FIA WRC season

The final round of the 2017 FIA World Rally Championship was won by Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC), three weeks after Wales Rally GB where Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia made sure of the year's Drivers' and Co-drivers' crowns in their Michelin-equipped Ford Fiesta WRC run by the 2017 Manufacturers' champions M-Sport.

The season saw the introduction of a new-generation of more powerful (about 380hp), higher-tech, grunter-looking cars and Michelin succeeded in providing its partner teams with tyres to match, capable of withstanding the constraints resulting from their upgraded performance and higher aerodynamic downforce, while at the same delivering the necessary durability on even the longest stages and on all the types of terrain visited by the championship.

For Rally Australia, Michelin's WRC partners were able to choose between the soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5 and the harder H4, while their WRC2 colleagues had the choice between the soft MICHELIN Latitude Cross S80 and the hard H90. These were the same tyres they had available for all the year's other gravel rounds and which provided the necessary versatility to cover all the different types of surface and conditions the crews faced in 2017.

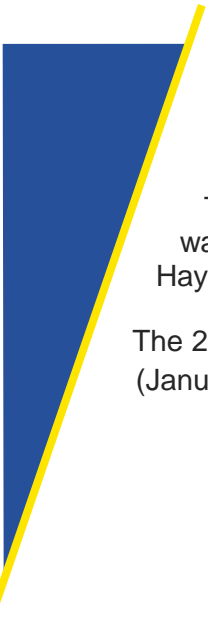
The three-day Rally Australia featured 21 stages totalling 318.16 kilometre and an overall distance of some 1,000km through bushland in the Coffs Harbour region, North South Wales. The weather proved as hot as expected, with air and ground temperatures of 30°C and 50°C respectively, but the occasional shower saw the thermometer dip to as low as 23°C at times and left the ground very damp in places. Thanks to the quality of their tyres, however, Michelin's partners were able to keep up their respective fights all the way to the finish.

"In 2017, we won 12 of the WRC's 13 round, plus all of the WRC2 qualifiers," notes **Jacques Morelli**, manager of Michelin's WRC programme. "I believe this record speaks volumes for the versatility of our tyres which were competitive throughout the year. The challenge we faced was to provide our teams with a choice of compounds that would enable them to be strong at every round, including dirt events as different as Argentina, Australia, Poland, Wales, Sardinia and Portugal. Each one of these rounds featured different types of surface and took place across a broad range of temperatures. The new soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5, which was introduced at the season's first gravel fixture in Mexico, provided a good indication of our expertise because it went on to be chosen for the vast majority of the year's dirt stages, even here in Australia where our partners have traditionally tended to favour our harder option. This required them to carefully managed their allocations, though, because they were only allowed to use up to 16 softs over the three days, which is where the importance of the strength and longevity of our tyres came into its own."



Didier Laurent – didier@autopressclub.com – Phone: +33.6.75.60.50.62

Alessandro Barlozzi – alessandro.barlozzi@michelin.com – Phone: +33.6.42.23.55.93



The weekend's win went to Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul, and the Belgian pair was joined on the podium by Ott Tänak/Martin Järveoja (M-Sport, Ford Fiesta WRC) and Hayden Paddon/Seb Marshall (Hyundai i20 WRC) who made it an all-Michelin top three.

The 2018 FIA World Rally Championship will kick off with the celebrated Rallye Monte-Carlo (January 22-28) which will start in Gap, France, and end in Monaco.



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