

2017 World Rally Championship (WRC)

Round 5: Rally Argentina

The MICHELIN LTX Force S5 and H4 showcase their strength in Argentina

This year's Rally Argentina produced a dramatic, atypical scenario in the hills and mountains that surround Cordoba and Villa Carlos Paz, some 700km northwest of the country's capital, Buenos Aires. It was effectively the drivers' first opportunity on dirt to take full advantage of the power delivered by the latest-generation World Rally Cars', even though the conditions suffered due to persistent rain in the days that preceded the start.

After the wintry Rallye Monte-Carlo, snowy Sweden, Mexico's high-altitude tracks and the year's first pure asphalt skirmishes in Corsica, round five of the 2017 World Rally Championship saw crews join battle on the South American fixture's infamous sandy-coated, hard-packed roads which are viewed by many as some of the roughest of the season.

Despite cold starts to the day, the thermometer climbed to as high as 26°C during the day, yet the predominant tyre choice was the soft-compound option for maximum performance over the hard-packed ground exposed once the loose top-coating of sand had been swept aside by the first cars on the road. This was ideal territory for the soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5 which made its competitive debut as recently as early-March's Rally Mexico. The tread of this new tyre has effectively been modified compared with its predecessor – the LTX Force S4 – in order to cope with the higher power outputs and greater efficiency of the new cars.

The latest version of the soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force features even better consistency and, above all, improved longevity, while wear rates are 20 percent down compared with last season. At the same time, the newcomer reaches its ideal temperature just as quickly, and its stronger, reinforced construction provided an eloquent illustration of its benefits at the weekend: "On Friday, we lost air from one of our Michelin tyres after hitting a rock about 10 kilometres into a stage," reported M-Sport's **Ott Tanak** (Ford Fiesta WRC), "yet we still succeeded in reaching the finish without a problem."


"Before the start of each world championship, tyre manufacturers have to provide the FIA with the specification of the tyres they intend to supply to their partners during the season," observed **Jacques Morelli**, manager of Michelin's FIA WRC programme. "Given the wide spectrum of different types of gravel the championship takes in, the different tyre firms adapt their development work as a function of their respective view of the stakes, and the challenge is to develop a solution that is just as at ease on the sun-scorched stages of Rally Australia as it is over the chilly forest tracks of Wales Rally GB.

"For 2017, our engineers designed a tyre that covers a wide range of situations [the MICHELIN LTX Force] but it is possible that some firms might prefer to optimise their solutions for a given type of terrain, to the detriment of other criteria such as strength and longevity which are key considerations that help our partners to reach the end of stages, even after an air-loss. We believe this is why we faced a bigger threat from our competitors in places in Argentina".



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“It’s a situation we accept, though, as we continue to target victory over the full championship rather than produce particularly strong performances on given rallies. It is thanks to this approach that Michelin has scored 307 wins and claimed 50 world titles at WRC level.”

The 2017 Rally Argentina was won by Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC), ahead of Elfyn Evans/Daniel Barritt (Team M-Sport, Ford Fiesta WRC) and Ott Tänak/Martin Järveoja (Team M-Sport, Ford Fiesta WRC). The cars of Neuville and Tänak were equipped with Michelin tyres.

The WRC2 battle was won by Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Anderson (Skoda Fabia R5), clear of Juan Carlos Alonso/Matias Mercadal and Benito Guerra/Daniel Cué. Michelin crews came first and third in the class thanks to the performance of their MICHELIN Latitude Cross S80 and H90 tyres.



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