



**2015 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
Wales Rally GB (Round 13/13)**

Michelin rounds off the 2015 FIA World Rally Championship in style

True to form, the 2015 Wales Rally GB – the last clash of the 13-round FIA World Rally Championship – took place in cold, wet conditions to round off a season that saw Michelin introduce two major new tyres at the sport's highest level.

The familiar cocktail of rain, mud and fog – one of the traditional ingredients of Wales Rally GB which is one of the rounds that tends to feature the most extreme weather – was a key parameter once again in North Wales where Britain's round of the WRC was based for the third year running.

In addition to the tiring schedule, which included a 5am start and a 9pm finish on Saturday, for example, the drivers had to cope with extremely treacherous conditions on the high-speed stages which produced their usual share of surprises. Some tests started before daybreak, while others took place at night and the challenge included water-filled ruts. This year's Wales Rally GB was also one of the longest events of the year in terms of its overall distance which totalled 1,469.29km, including 312.16km of competitive action.

Once again, Michelin's partners were able to count on the performance and strength of their tyres, and two major new solutions were introduced in the course of the championship.

The **MICHELIN Latitude Cross H90 (hard compound) and S80 (soft)** were first made available to the firm's WRC2 partners at July's Lotos Rally Poland. "At the start of the season, given the time it takes to stop and change a wheel on a stage, we placed the emphasis on ensuring our WRC2 tyres were strong," observes **Jacques Morelli**, manager of Michelin's World Rally Championship programme. "Our rivals, who are very active in this class, forced us to review our priorities and upgrade the performance of our tyres without detracting from their strength which is obviously a key factor on gravel events."

It was this thinking that steered the development of the MICHELIN Latitude Cross H90 and S80 which, apart from their tread pattern, were all-new tyres that featured a revised casing, more flexible sidewalls and a more flexible crown. This allowed softer compounds to be used compared with the tyres developed for the World Rally Cars, as well as a bigger contact patch to help combat wear. The new tyre harvested top results out of the box, including a one-two finish in WRC2 in Poland, a one-two-three finish just weeks later in Finland and another class victory in Australia in September.

The **MICHELIN Pilot Sport H5 (hard compound) and S5 (soft)** are the new asphalt tyres that Michelin introduced at Rallye Deutschland on August 18. Their development was influenced by the reactions of the drivers concerning the handling of the Pilot Sport H4/S4. The previous-generation tyres were considered to 'move' a great deal in dry conditions because of the pattern's deep grooves, while the inclusion in the 2015 calendar of the Rallye de France-Tour de Corse, a highly abrasive asphalt event, called for changes to the compounds and tread pattern.

"The psychology of professional drivers who have a competition tyre that resembles a road tyre, including a tread pattern and an interior diameter of 18 inches, is something that needs to be taken into account," adds Jacques Morelli.



“The MICHELIN Pilot Sport H4/S4 sought to strike a balance between its performance in wet and dry conditions in order to comply with the FIA regulations which state that the construction and tread pattern of the two versions of the tyre must be identical whatever the weather conditions. The MICHELIN Pilot Sport H5/S5 is the fruit of the work we carried out to that end and the result is a fantastically versatile tyre. Visually, and also in terms of its performance, it recalls the MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup 2 road tyre. The MICHELIN Pilot Sport H5/S5 differs from its predecessor through its more harmonious tread pattern, with more evenly sized and shaped blocks and shallower grooves. In addition to providing the drivers with enhanced feedback, the performance gain it delivers amounts to 0.3 and 0.8s/km in dry and wet conditions respectively.”

These new WRC tyres have seen Michelin Motorsport’s engineers set the bar very high after successfully rising to the challenge of improving performance in several areas at the same time. “The development of a new tyre calls for a fine balance between the construction, the tread pattern, the materials used and the profile,” notes Michelin Motorsport Director **Pascal Couasnon**. “These four factors are interconnected and the slightest change to one has an incidence on the others. Our philosophy, which we call MICHELIN Total Performance, consists in taking all these criteria forward at the same time. That’s a big challenge for our engineers who need to work hard to produce ever better solutions.”

The 2015 FIA World Rally Championship saw Michelin’s tyres harvest a high number of satisfying successes, not only with the LTX Force S4, which was the choice for rounds like the final event in Wales, but also with the Pilot Sport H5/S5 and the Latitude Cross H90/S80 which arrived in the course of the season.

The 2015 Wales Rally GB was won by Sébastien Ogier / Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC), ahead of Kris Meeke / Paul Nagle (Citroën DS3 WRC) and Andreas Mikkelsen / Ola Floene (Volkswagen Polo R WRC).

This year’s Manufacturers’ championship was won by Volkswagen Motorsport, ahead of Citroën Racing and Hyundai Motorsport.

The 2016 FIA World Rally Championship will start with the Rallye Monte-Carlo on January 22. The 14-round calendar will include a newcomer to the series in China.