

2020 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 2/14: Rally Sweden

The MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 faces shortened but demanding Rally Sweden

While tyres played a cornerstone role at Rallye Monte-Carlo three weeks ago, the challenge posed by the season's second clash, in Sweden, is very different. Instead of being able to choose from four different types of tyre as they were in the French Alps, crews are restricted to a single type of studded tyre for the coldest round of the World Rally Championship and, normally, the only one that takes place entirely on snow and ice.

The problem is that the winter has proved less harsh than usual in the Värmland and the thick icy crust that the drivers are accustomed to competing on there hasn't really formed. As a result, in contrast with last year's Rally Sweden, which featured 19 special stages totalling 319.17 kilometres, and an overall distance of 1,466.63km, the 2020 event has been shortened to just 11 stages, 171.64 competitive kilometres and a total distance of 815.47km.

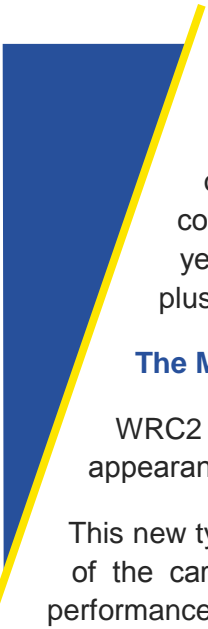
Following Thursday evening's official start ceremony in Karlstad and the traditional super-special at the town's horse-trotting track, serious business will get under way with four stages on Friday morning which includes a foray into Norway. The run includes 'Finnskogen', which returns after an eight-year absence, as well as a new test – 'Nyckelvattnet' – on the Swedish side of the border. Saturday's menu will be identical, along with a short super-special close to the service park in Torsby, around 100km north of Karlstad. Sunday's finale will feature a single stage to be tackled twice, the second time as the week's Power Stage.

*"Rally Sweden is a unique event," says **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes. "Unfortunately, due to this year's mild winter, it promises to be a complex event as far as tyres are concerned. The MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 is designed to compete on ice, so it might suffer if the conditions are predominantly loose, stony dirt. The drivers will need to take care of the 384 studs that are inserted into the tread blocks of each tyre, but our experienced technicians will be on-hand to provide advice, notably regarding the number of 'spares' to carry and the most effective tyre pressures for each competitive loop."*

A bespoke studding technique

The X-Ice North 3 and X-Ice North NA01 tyres which star in Sweden are not equipped with studs when they leave the factory in Clermont-Ferrand, France. The task of inserting the studs into the covers is performed by Michelin's longstanding partner Däckproffsen in Växjö, Sweden. This entirely manual operation is divided into three phases: drilling of the tread blocks, placing glue in the resulting holes and inserting the studs.





The 384 steel and tungsten tips fitted to each tyre are 20 millimetres in length but only 6.5 millimetres protrude from the tread, and it takes around 45 minutes to complete each tyre. Michelin's WRC partners have a total allocation of 28 tyres for this year's Rally Sweden. The same figure for the brand's WRC2 and WRC3 runners is 26, plus four additional tyres for shakedown in both cases.

The MICHELIN X-Ice North NA01 for WRC2/WRC3

WRC2 and WRC3 crews will fit the MICHELIN X-Ice North NA01 which made its debut appearance on last season's Rally Sweden.

This new tyre was developed over a period of several months to meet the specific characteristics of the cars that feature in these two classes and provide Michelin's partners with superior performance on ice and snow. Compared with the WRC tyre, the MICHELIN X-Ice North NA01 features a different construction and a bespoke studding pattern, although the number of studs per cover is still 384.

Michelin's staff for the 2020 Rally Sweden

Michelin will have a staff of 14 in Sweden:

- Arnaud Rémy (manager of Michelin's rally programmes)
- 1 developer
- 2 coordinators
- 3 team advisors
- 6 fitters
- 1 Press Officer

