

*2018 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 6: Vodafone Rally de Portugal*

The MICHELIN LTX Force strikes gold in Portugal

Aided by the reliability of their Michelin-equipped Hyundai i20 WRC, Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul produced an assertive run in Portugal to win round six of the 2018 World Rally Championship. Although the Vodafone Rally de Portugal took place in perfect weather, it ended up producing a high number of surprises for the teams and drivers, with many of the top-flight crews suffering mechanical failures. The difference in the conditions between the first and second passes caught out even the most experienced pairings, including the five-time world champions Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC, M-Sport Ford/Michelin) who crashed on Friday.

Neuville and Gilsoul survived the challenge unscathed, however, as did youngsters Elfyn Evans/Daniel Barritt and Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (both Ford Fiesta WRC, M-Sport Ford/Michelin) whose efforts were rewarded with second and third places at the finish.

The Toyota Yaris WRC runners were delayed during the early part of the rally with a variety of mechanical woes, but Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm confirmed the car's potential by pocketing the five Power Stage bonus points on hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4s thanks to a stunning time of 6m33.2s, despite the badly cut-up surface that greeted competitors for the second attempt at the classic Fafe test (SS20).

"This year's Rally de Portugal turned out to be even tougher than we had been expecting, but our tyres stood up to the ordeal extremely well," said **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin Motorsport's rally programmes. "Some of the stages had been resurfaced prior to the start and this led the teams and crews to believe that the event would be gentler on their cars than had been the case in recent years. However, it soon transpired that once the top-coating of loose ground had been swept aside by the first passes, the exposed base was even more aggressive than we have witnessed in the past. The most suitable tyre for these conditions was clearly the MICHELIN LTX Force H4, although the softer S5 was a realistic alternative for the morning's loops when the stages were cleaner and the temperature cooler."

Michelin-equipped Skoda Fabia R5s claimed the top two places in WRC2 in the hands of Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson and Lukasz Pieniazek/Przemyslaw Mazur, while Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroën C3 R5/Michelin) made it an all-Michelin podium in the class.

The next round of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship will take crews to Sardinia for Rally Italia Sardegna where they and their MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 tyres will face another challenging combination of rocky conditions and hot weather.



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