

2019 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 7/14: VODAFONE Rally de Portugal

Tyre strategies play key role at Rally de Portugal

The 2019 Rally de Portugal saw victory go to Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT's Ott Tänak and Martin Järveoja in the N°8 Toyota Yaris WRC after an assertive run from the Estonians who led from the third to the last of the three-day event's 20 stages.

Their talent naturally played a big part in their success, but so did the quality of their car and tyres. In addition to the speed and reliability of their Toyota Yaris WRC on the challenging Portuguese stages, Tänak and Järveoja were able to exploit their car's potential to the full thanks to some judicious tyre choices, aided by the recommendations of Michelin's tyre technicians, although the final choice is always down to the crew.

The 2019 Rally de Portugal lived up every bit to its reputation as a uniquely challenging, exacting fixture because of the wide variety of surface types it delivers, with stages that tend to be sandy and covered in loose stones first time through, before cutting up to expose embedded rocks on the repeat runs.

It was this cocktail that crews effectively faced on each of this week's 80-kilometre competitive loops, while their task was made more challenging still by the week's hot weather. As temperatures soared to more than 30°C at times, calling tyre choices correctly was therefore vital and Michelin's WRC partners were able to choose between the hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and the medium-compound MICHELIN LTX Force M6, with some crews occasionally preferring to run a combination of the two.

In addition to covering all the possible scenarios, these two options allowed the drivers to take the difference in grip levels between the morning and afternoon runs in their stride. Despite the variety of combinations that were chosen, however, the crews tended to favour carrying a single spare with a view to saving weight.

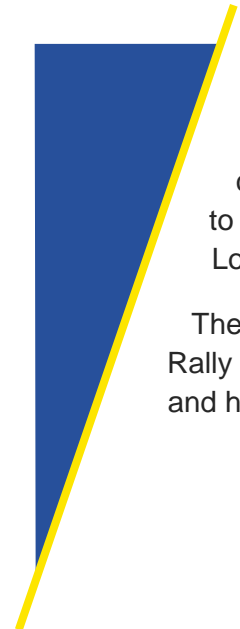
"This year's Rally de Portugal was extremely spectacular and the Michelin technicians who work in liaison with our partner teams had a busy, complex week," reports **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin Motorsport's rally programmes. "Given the wide range of conditions that the event threw up, and given how close the rally was from start to finish, it was important for us to work closely with the crews when it came to making tyre choices by carefully evaluating all of the different parameters. On a single loop, it was effectively possible for the drivers to come across both sandy tracks and harder ground which meant there was never really an ideal solution. And given that wear-rates can reach as high as 95 percent here, it was vital to weigh up all the possible options in order to maximise both the efficiency and longevity of our tyres. It was a tough mission, but we rose to it successfully and our tyres ended up playing a central role in Portugal."

Second and third places went to Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (N°11 Hyundai i20 Coupé WRC) and Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (N°1 Citroën C3 WRC) who made it an all-Michelin podium.



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The 2019 Rally de Portugal produced close battles in the WRC2 Pro and WRC2 classes, too, but Michelin's partner Skoda ended up monopolising the top-three thanks to winners Rovaniemi/Halttunen (Skoda Fabia R5), Kopecky/Dresler and Loubet/Landais.

The next round of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship will take teams to Italy for the Rally Italia Sardegna (June 13-16) which is another event that features aggressive stages and hot weather.



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