

*2017 World Rally Championship (FIA WRC)
Round 5: Vodafone Rally de Portugal*

The MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 poised for a strategic role in Portugal

For the third year running, Portugal's round of the World Rally Championship will take teams to the country's northern city of Porto after being based for more than a decade in the Algarve region. It will be the first European gravel fixture of the 2017 championship and will feature a variety of landscapes and difficulties, with the stages near Ponte de Lima expected to be the roughest of the weekend.

The total length of this year's route is 1,529.01km, including 19 stages totalling 349.17km. Plenty will be new this time round, since only half the event is identical to last year's format, while more than 90 competitive kilometres will be run in the opposite direction and more than 110km will be totally new.

Thursday afternoon's start will take place in front of the majestic castle in Guimarães before a run-out to a stage around the rallycross track at Lousada. Friday's action will take crews north to Viano do Castelo, near the Spanish border, and will conclude with two tests in the streets of historic Braga.

The longest day will be Saturday's leg, with a programme of entirely new stages in the Cabreira Hills.

Sunday's programme includes the Fafe super-special which is always a magnet for spectators. The morning's four tests will all take place in the same region, with two runs over Fafe's famous jump which counts amongst the most spectacular of the season.

This is the cocktail that the MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 face, not to mention the fact that the Portuguese stages are notorious for cutting up between passes, evolving from dusty first time through before becoming gradually rougher.

"Technically, Rally de Portugal is a hard event where tyre strategy can be decisive," notes **Jacques Morelli**, manager of Michelin's FIA WRC programme. "To begin with, the sandy surface offers good grip, so the soft compound is theoretically the ideal choice. However, the drivers need to be aware how the conditions can change and be ready to switch to an alternative plan. The emergence of stones and ruts changes everything. That said, our tyres are particularly versatile and we don't foresee any problems, although the result might be influenced by start orders and the phenomenon of 'road sweeping' if the weather is dry. The strategy in WRC2 will differ slightly given the running orders, so our partners will need to think ahead when they choose between the MICHELIN S80 and the H90."



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THE MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5

The MICHELIN LTX Force H4 (hard compound) and MICHELIN LTX Force S5 (soft) were designed to cover the broad range of conditions encountered on the FIA World Rally Championship's gravel rounds and their specification was registered with the FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) prior to the start of the season. Because of the exceptional spectrum of temperatures, types of ground (soft, hard, rough, smooth, etc.) and weather (rain, dry, dust, mud) drivers can expect to face in the course of the year, the MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 have to be extremely versatile. They consequently combine strength, résistance to wear and the consistent delivery of performance over even the longest loops of stages on events that range from hot and sunny, such as Rally Australia, to muddy Wales Rally GB. Michelin Motorsport's engineers benefited from the company's long and successful association with the FIA World Rally Championship to design these latest-generation gravel tyres. The lessons learned on the stages provide invaluable data for the development of Michelin road tyres, in keeping with the brand's policy of using motorsport as a proving ground for new technologies.

The MICHELIN LTX Force S5/H4 (for WRC crews)

Number of tyres available for Rally de Portugal: 710

Number of tyres per driver: 28 (including 4 for shakedown) from an overall allocation of 28 S5s (soft compound) and 16 H4s (hard)

The MICHELIN LTX Force H90/S80 (for WRC2 crews)

Number of tyres available for Rally de Portugal: 1,050

Number of tyres per driver: 26 (including 4 for shakedown) from an overall allocation of 26 S80s (soft compound) and 16 H90s (hard)

Michelin's staff for the 2017 Rally de Portugal

Michelin has a staff of 17 in Portugal:

- **Jacques Morelli** (FIA WRC programme manager)
- **Olivier Vialle** (Marketing Director, Michelin Motorsport)
- 2 coordinators
- 4 team advisors
- 8 fitters
- 1 press officer



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