

*2018 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 7: Rally Italia Sardegna*

***MICHELIN LTX Force S5 plays cornerstone role
at the 2018 Rally Italia Sardegna***

This year's Rally Italia Sardegna delivered an exceptionally thrilling contest which saw Hyundai Motorsport's Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupé WRC) scoop the top prize after an enthralling scrap with Ford Fiesta WRC rivals Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (M-Sport Ford).

Hyundai Motorsport topped the order early on with Mikkelsen/Jaeger-Synnevaag but the five-time world champions – who had claimed Thursday evening's super-special – appeared in front on Friday afternoon after posting the fastest time on SS6.

Mikkelsen/Jaeger-Synnevaag then disappeared from the chase after SS7 due to technical trouble, but their team-mates Neuville/Gilsoul picked up the gauntlet to keep their French opponents under constant pressure.

The Italian spectators were subsequently treated to an exciting show as the two crews battled unrelentingly, pushing as hard as they dared to complete Saturday's action split by just 3.9 seconds in favour of the M-Sport Ford pair. When the contest resumed on Sunday morning, the Belgians successfully whittled down the gap on the final day's first three stages before winning the Power Stage (SS20) to clinch the victory by a mere seven-tenths of a second!

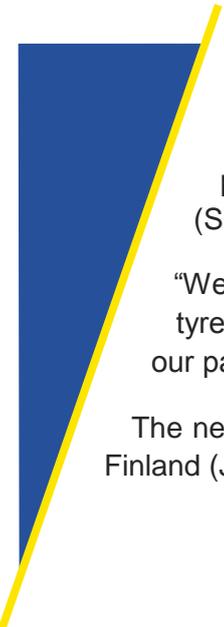
Italy's round is commonly viewed by the world championship's players as the most gruelling gravel event of the season due to its rough terrain and searing heat, but the 2018 Rally Italia Sardegna went against tradition – at least as far as the weather went. Indeed, overnight rain on Thursday and Friday produced uncustomary damp conditions which had an immediate knock-on effect on the teams' strategies, notably regarding tyres.

“Given the big demands Rally Italia Sardegna usually places on tyres, we expected the most commonly-used option this weekend to be the hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4,” says **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin Motorsport's rally programmes. “Because of the fickle weather, however, the majority of the crews preferred the MICHELIN LTX S5, but smaller numbers of this softer alternative were available. I would like to underline how much of a perfect match this tyre turned out to be for the conditions we ended up facing and, despite the punishment to which it was exposed, wear-rates were satisfyingly low. Even though the going proved damper than expected, the MICHELIN LTX Force S5's faultless performance on Sardinia's aggressive stages comforts us in our decision to introduce a third, even softer tyre from Rally Finland onwards. For the second half of the season, crews will effectively have an additional choice for soft, very damp or wet ground.”



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



In addition to its success in the overall standings, Michelin also monopolised the WRC2 podium thanks to winners Kopecky/Dresler (Skoda Fabia R5), Veiby/Skjaermoen (Skoda Fabia R5) and Ciamin/De La Haye (Hyundai i20 R5).

“We are delighted with the weekend’s WRC2 result which was helped by the reliability of the tyres we provide for this class,” added **Arnaud Rémy**. “They stood up to the beating and our partners reported very few punctures compared with their rivals.”

The next round of the 2018 World Rally Championship will take teams to Jyväskylä for Rally Finland (June 26-29).



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