

2018 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 13/13: Kennards Hire Rally Australia

***The Michelin LTX Force H4 and M6 prepared for
cornerstone role at the 2018 WRC's final clash***

One of the first things many of us do in the morning is take a look at the weather to decide what shoes to put on for the day. Well, this week, what will come between the ground and the cars contesting the 2018 Rally Australia, i.e. their Michelin tyres, is turning out to be a major topic of conversation in New South Wales, too! The choice teams have for the forest tracks in the state's Coffs Harbour region is between the hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and the medium M6, and getting the call right over the weekend could well play a decisive role in the outcome, especially as the forecasters are predicting a change for the worse in the conditions. They put the risk of rain from Friday to Sunday at 80 percent, and that would clearly create delicate conditions for all the drivers, co-drivers and manufacturers who will be battling for their respective world titles. The clay soil found in this part of eastern Australia effectively tends to become very sticky when wet and could get caught in the tyres' grooves, turning them practically into slicks and making the importance of driver skill and their ability to read the conditions more primordial than ever.

The mud-clearance capacity of Michelin's WRC tyres could well hold the key to the way this year's Rally Australia unfolds, with Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC – M-Sport Ford WRT) and Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC – Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT) split by just three points in their scrap for the 2018 Drivers' crown. In the chase for the Manufacturers' title, meanwhile, Toyota Gazoo Racing goes into the season's finale with an advantage of 12 and 25 points over Hyundai Shell Mobis and M-Sport Ford WRT respectively.

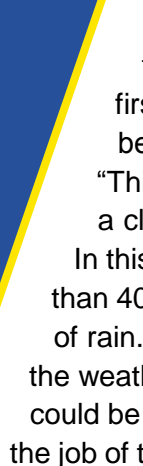
The 2018 Rally Australia comprises 24 special stages which total 318.64 kilometres. That's three more tests than in 2017. Even so, this year's competitive distance is only 20 metres longer, while the event's overall length – 1,017.07km – is practically 200km shorter. Two-thirds of the stages are either new or being run in the opposite direction to last year. The event and its service park are again based in Coffs Harbour and the start ceremony will be held on Thursday afternoon on the seafront close to the town's pier. The stages on Friday and Saturday will visit some spectacular roads which feature several watersplashes and some interesting jumps. The revised itinerary has led to the marathon Nambucca test (49km) being dropped from the programme, but the majority of the competitive action will provide competitors with the event's usual challenging and hazardous cocktail. Sunday's finish ceremony will take place at the Forests NSW Rally Village which boasts a splendid view of Rally Australia's Power Stage, Wedding Bells18.

Michelin's WRC partners will be able to choose between the hard- and medium-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and M6, while its WRC2 runners will be able to fit either the H90 (hard) or S80 (soft) versions of the Latitude Cross.



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“On gravel rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship, one of the chief concerns of the crews at the order’s sharp end is the phenomenon of ‘road sweeping”, whereby the first cars into the stages tend to brush aside the top-coating of loose gravel, and this can be a big handicap,” notes **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin’s rally programmes. “This week, in addition to this concern, Sébastien Ogier and Thierry Neuville will be keeping a close eye on the sky, because rain could make this event particularly complex for them. In this part of Australia, there is a real chance of the ground temperature switching from more than 40°C in bright sunshine to less than 20°C under cloud cover, not to mention the possibility of rain. On top of that, the compact, clay-based, reddish local tracks are littered with stones. If the weather stays dry, the choice between the H4 and M6 versions of the MICHELIN LTX Force could be decisive, while the ability of their tread to clear mud will be vital if it rains. In either case, the job of the drivers promises to be very delicate and their tyres are poised to play a leading role.”

MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and MICHELIN LTX Force M6 (WRC crews)

Number of tyres available in Australia: **628**

Allocation per WRC driver: 32 tyres (not including shakedown) from a total allocation of 32 hards (H4) and 16 mediums (M6).

MICHELIN LATITUDE Cross H90 and S80 (WRC2 crews)

Number of tyres available in Australia: **188**

Allocation per WRC2 driver: 28 tyres (not including shakedown) from a total allocation of 30 hards (H90) and 16 softs (S80).

Michelin staff for the 2018 Kennards Hire Rally Australia

Michelin’s partners at the 2018 Rally Australia will be backed by a total staff of 12:

- **Arnaud Rémy** (Rally Programme Manager, Michelin)
- 4 team advisors
- 2 coordinators
- 4 fitters
- 1 press officer



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