

2020 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 3/14: Rally Guanajuato Mexico

MICHELIN's gravel WRC tyres showcase their potential before Rally Mexico is interrupted ahead of schedule

This year's Rally Mexico was eagerly awaited by the WRC fraternity since, as the first loose-surface fixture of the season, it tends to serve as a form-guide for the championship which predominantly comprises gravel rallies. Unlike other series which have suffered cancellations recently, the decision was taken to run the event as planned given that no cases of Covid-19 had been detected in Mexico's León region, a city with a population of two million situated some 400 kilometres northwest of Mexico City. However, the speed at which the virus is spreading globally and increasing international travel restrictions prompted the organisers to bring their competition to a halt on Saturday evening instead of Sunday lunchtime, with three of the initially-planned stages still to contest.

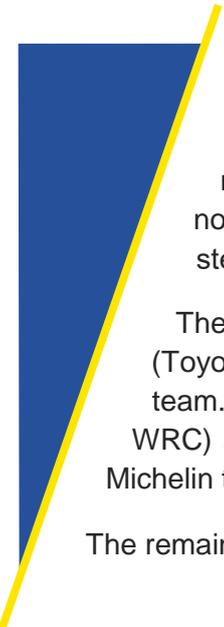
Indeed, the 2020 Rally Mexico was originally scheduled to cover 325.28 competitive kilometres, but this distance was finally shortened to 269.20km.

In keeping with tradition, Thursday evening's start ceremony was held in the colourful, UNESCO-listed town of Guanajuato, while Friday's menu of six long and four short stages included classics like El Chocolate, Ortega and Las Minas. The second leg, on Saturday, was the longest of the week, with a competitive distance of 133.78km. As it turned out, however, it was also the last. Spectators were nonetheless treated to a fierce fight despite the cancellation of Sunday's Otates, El Brinco and San Diego which the organisers will no doubt make a point of running in 2021...

Michelin's WRC partners were able to choose between the hard- (H4) and medium-compound (M6) versions of the MICHELIN LTX Force H4, while their WRC2 colleagues were able to count on either the MICHELIN Latitude Cross S80 (soft) or H90 (hard) to compensate for the estimated 20-percent fall in the cars' engine power as they climbed to altitudes of almost 3,000 metres above sea level. As a consequence, the lateral grip, traction performance, resilience and resistance to wear of the top crews' tyres played a key role in enabling them to keep up a fast pace in spite of the occasionally rough conditions.

"Rally Mexico is an event we know well, but it's always a special occasion for us because it gives us a chance to evaluate our work ahead of the season's other gravel rounds," notes **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes. "The main lesson we take away from this year's rally is the very low number of pressure losses we noted, despite the many sharp stones on the stages, as well as the ruts which put sidewalls to a punishing test. At the same time, though, wear rates were quite low. This led the WRC drivers to choose the softer and therefore grippier MICHELIN LTX Force M6 even for the longer stages like El Chocolate which exceeds 30 kilometres in length."





“The 21 tests that were actually run delivered an exciting show but it became necessary to face up to reality and bring the rally to a stop earlier than planned. It is now time to head home to our families in the hope that the current health crisis will be stemmed as soon as possible.”

The slightly-shortened 2020 Rally Mexico was won by Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Toyota Yaris WRC) who scored their maiden victory with the Michelin-equipped Japanese team. The other podium finishers were Ott Tänak/Martin Järveoja (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) and Teemu Suninen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Fiesta WRC/M-Sport) who made it an all-Michelin top three.

The remainder of the FIA-WRC 2020 will follow the development of the world health situation.

