

*2017 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)*

*Round 7: Rally Italia Sardegna*

***The MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 stand up to arid Sardinia dirt tracks***

Despite the deceptive holiday feel of the 2017 Rally Italia Sardegna's harbourside service park in Alghero, which enjoyed a backdrop of sandy white beaches, sailing boats and blue sea, Italy's round of the 2017 FIA World Rally Championship proved to be one of the hardest of the year due to its complex cocktail of rough, hard-wearing stages.

The challenge was made even tougher by high air and ground temperatures, as well as by the roads which cut up dramatically once the loose top-coating of gravel had been swept aside by the first cars on the road. The three-day fixture was consequently extremely harsh on the crews, their cars and, of course, their tyres.

The total length of this year's Rally Italia Sardegna was 1,495.36km divided into 19 stages totalling 321.46km, essentially in the north of the island which competitors crossed from east to west.

To cover the hallmark difficulties of the Sardinian dirt roads, Michelin's WRC partners were able to choose between the nominated MICHELIN LTX Force H4 (hard compound) and the softer MICHELIN LTX Force S5 (softer than the former S4, but just as versatile) which was launched in Mexico last March. This week, the latter option was chosen by numerous drivers who wanted additional grip performance on the morning's loops before the conditions became too aggressive and dictated a switch to the H4 in the afternoon. Michelin's WRC2 runners faced a similar choice between the soft MICHELIN Latitude Cross S80 and the harder H90.

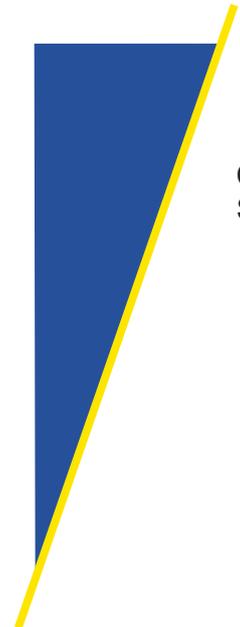
"This is the first time we have come across such tough conditions on a gravel rally since the beginning of the season," noted **Jacques Morelli**, manager of Michelin's WRC programme. "The crews, their cars and their tyres faced a huge challenge in Sardinia which they were tackling for the first time in the latest-generation World Rally Cars that are not only more powerful but also benefit from higher aerodynamic downforce. Despite these new parameters, our tyres stood up amply to the punishment, not only in terms of their outright performance but also their durability. They also coped with the harder ground exposed for the afternoon loops when the air and ground temperatures reached as high as 33°C and 45°C respectively on occasions. This allowed the drivers to focus on their job without having to worry about managing their tyres which proved perfectly capable of reaching the stage finishes safely. I would add that Michelin is very proud to have played a part in Ott Tanak's first WRC win. We would also like to underline the run of Andreas Mikkelsen who was making his comeback to the WRC with Citroën after Volkswagen's withdrawal and who made good progress over the three days, aided by the confidence he was able to have in his tyres."

The 2017 Rally Italia Sardegna was won by M-Sport's Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveioa (Ford Fiesta WRC), ahead of Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC) and Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC) who made it an all-Michelin top three.



**Didier Laurent** – [didier@autopressclub.com](mailto:didier@autopressclub.com) – Phone: +33.6.75.60.50.62

**Alessandro Barlozzi** – [alessandro.barlozzi@fr.michelin.com](mailto:alessandro.barlozzi@fr.michelin.com) – Phone: +33.6.42.23.55.93



The WRC2 victory went to Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Skoda Fabia R5), ahead of Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Skoda Fabia R5) and Takamoto Katsuka/Marko Salminen (Ford Fiesta R5) to notch up another all-Michelin podium in the class.



**Didier Laurent** – [didier@autopressclub.com](mailto:didier@autopressclub.com) – Phone: +33.6.75.60.50.62

**Alessandro Barlozzi** – [alessandro.barlozzi@fr.michelin.com](mailto:alessandro.barlozzi@fr.michelin.com) – Phone: +33.6.42.23.55.93