

**2018 FIA World Rally Championship**  
**Round 1/14: Rallye Monte-Carlo**

***Michelin tyres play key role in Monte Carlo thriller***

No other round of the FIA World Rally Championship presents teams with such a complex challenge in terms of tyre strategy as the Rallye Monte-Carlo. This year's shifting conditions and weather made getting tyre choices right a particularly tough exercise. Some calls may have seemed perplexing for those not directly involved in the sport, but they were all driven by the same quest for optimum performance in the mixed-bag conditions.

From Day 1, Michelin Motorsport's technical team noted some contrasting options. "The very first stage on Thursday evening was 60-percent snow, while the next test featured icy patches, so we expected all the crews to opt for the MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CL which is equipped with 200 metal studs," notes **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes. "The main exception was Thierry Neuville who chose four 'super-soft' MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6 asphalt tyres which were ideal for the clearer portions but which provide less grip on snow and ice. Although this aggressive option meant he was likely to lose ground on the snowy and icy sections, it gave him a chance of pulling back a lot of that handicap elsewhere. On SS1, he effectively dropped a handful of seconds but he declared that the Pilot Sport SS6 had given him more grip than he had been expecting, and he went on to post the fastest time on SS2. It was very satisfying for us to see that this was possible and it provided further evidence of the SS6's exceptional value on this sort of event."

**The practice of mixing tyre types**

Beyond the respective qualities of the four types of WRC tyre that Michelin took to the Rallye Monte-Carlo (see below), it is interesting to note the practice that has emerged in recent seasons of drivers combining two types of tyre on opposing corners of their car. The regulations effectively permit crews to leave service with six tyres, four on the car and two as 'spares' in the boot. They are also authorised to carry as many as three different types at any one time. "In addition to having to manage the overall quota of tyres they are allocated for individual rallies, teams sometimes need to find compromise solutions for loops of stages where the conditions can vary significantly from one stage to the next," adds **Arnaud Rémy**. "On rallies as complex as the Monte Carlo, driver confidence is another paramount parameter when it comes to targeting the fastest possible stage times. Fitting a combination of, say, a studded MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41, a Pilot Sport SS6 and two non-studded Pilot Alpin A41s may seem like an extreme example, but it allowed crews to cover a variety of scenarios on the Monte. This practice has become commonplace in the WRC and our evaluation tests always take it into account. It may seem unusual for the motoring public – and it is effectively not permitted in normal circumstances in France or, for that matter, many places elsewhere – but it can occasionally provide crews with a winning edge, as well as serving as an effective way to manage tyre stocks."



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

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



Forty percent of the Rallye Monte-Carlo's stages were new this year compared with the 2018 event and the total distance was 1,366.43 kilometres, including 323.83km divided into 16 stages which provided competitors with a mix of dry, damp, wet and wintry conditions. Every one of the four Michelin tyre types available to the WRC runners was used.

**The MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6** (S = soft) was introduced in 2018 to replace the former MICHELIN Pilot Sport S5 and was developed with the championship's tough asphalt rounds in mind, like the Rallye Monte-Carlo and the Tour de Corse. It features particularly fast warm-up performance at the beginning of stages. It showcased its ability to soak up the punishing conditions on the 2019 Monte, notably on Sunday morning when it was the chief choice.

**The MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6** (SS = super soft) was also introduced at the beginning of 2018 to supersede the former MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS5. Following its successful debut on the 2018 Rallye Monte-Carlo, it was back on the list for this year's event and is designed for mixed conditions, including damp asphalt, slush and icy patches at temperatures close to or lower than 0°C. It provided a further illustration of its value on the 2019 Monte.

Size (MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6 and SS6): 235/40R18 (equivalent to 20/65-18).

**The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41** resembles a conventional winter tyre due to its overall profile and siped tread blocks. Its development was carried out in parallel with that of the MICHELIN Pilot Alpin 5 road tyre by a team of engineers from Michelin Motorsport and the Michelin Technology Centre in Ladoux, France. Its casing has been strengthened compared with the road version.

Size: 215/45R18 (equivalent to 18/65-18).

**The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CL** is equipped with 200 studs to provide grip in icy and snowy conditions. It was the chief choice on the rally's first three days. Each stud is inserted into the tread individually using a technique patented by Michelin.

Size: 215/45R18 (equivalent to 18/65-18).

The quota per WRC driver on the 2019 Rallye Monte-Carlo was 39 tyres (not including shakedown) from a total allocation of 80 tyres:

- 20 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6
- 24 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6
- 12 x MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41
- 24 x MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CLs (studded)





The allocation for each WRC2 and WRC2 Pro driver on the 2019 Rallye Monte-Carlo was 72 tyres (different specification to the WRC tyres). During the rally, WRC2 drivers were authorised to use up to 37 tyres from this overall allocation.

A thrilling battle for supremacy saw the week's pace-setters Sébastien Ogier and Thierry Neuville split by just 0.4s at the start of the Power Stage, and there were some interesting fights further down the order, too. Victory ended up in the hands of Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia (Citroën C3 WRC) who notched up Citroën Total WRT's 100<sup>th</sup> world class win. The Frenchmen were joined on the podium by Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (2<sup>nd</sup>, Hyundai i20 WRC) and Ott Tänak/Martin Järveoja (3<sup>rd</sup>, Toyota Yaris WRC) who made it an all-Michelin top three.

There was exciting action in WRC2/WRC2 Pro, too, with victory going to Britons Greensmith/Edmonson (Ford Fiesta R5, WRC2 Pro), ahead of French privateers Bonato/Boulloud (Citroën C3 R5, WRC2) and French youngster Adrien Fourmaux (Ford Fiesta R5, WRC2, co-driven by Belgium's Renaud Jamoul) who was making his WRC debut with support from France's motorsport federation and Michelin.

The next round of the FIA World Rally Championship will take teams to Sweden (February 14-17) where the tyre for WRC crews will be the MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 fitted with 384 studs.



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

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