

2020 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 1/14: Rallye Monte-Carlo

***Michelin kicks off its 41st FIA WRC campaign with the
 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo***

In 2020, the FIA World Rally Championship is being organised for the 48th year, and Michelin is contesting it for the 41st time. The French tyre manufacturer has been involved in the sport's topflight competition from Season 1 which began with the 1973 Rallye Monte-Carlo. That event was won by Jean-Claude Andruet in an Alpine-Renault A110 equipped with Michelin tyres and, over the ensuing months, the performance of the team's four French stars – Bernard Darniche, Jean-Pierre Nicolas, Jean-Luc Thérier and Jean-Claude Andruet – clinched the inaugural world title for the French carmaker. Forty-seven years on, Michelin boasts an unrivalled record at WRC level, with 29 Manufacturers' titles and 27 Drivers' crowns to its name.

The Clermont-Ferrand firm was successful on the world's leading rallies well before that, too. The podium of the 1954 Rallye Monte-Carlo was an all-Michelin affair, for example, while Citroën chose the brand's tyres to equip the DSs it ran in in the 1960s.

The 2020 World Rally Championship – which promises to see Michelin notch up its 350th world-class victory after the summer – features several important changes compared with recent years. In addition to new-look driver line-ups for Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT, M-Sport WRT and Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT, and the absence of Citroën Racing, the calendar brings back three particularly popular venues from the past, namely Kenya, New Zealand and Japan, all of which will provide Michelin with stimulating new challenges.

In keeping with tradition, the campaign gets under way with January's Rallye Monte-Carlo, the most complex round of them all as far as tyre strategy is concerned. For this unique event, Michelin provides four different types of tyre (soft and super-soft asphalt tyres, plus a choice of studded and non-studded snow tyres), compared with just two for other rounds. Indeed, tyres count amongst the parameters that can and really do make a difference in the end result because the weather and the state of the roads have a habit of evolving all the time. For example, it is not uncommon to see crews leave service in bright sunshine, with the thermometer above 0°C, only for them to come across frost, snow and/or ice in the mountains where the stages take place. In the period of two hours or more that elapses between the moment safety crews cover the route and the official stage start, the conditions can shift significantly, making tyre strategy an extremely complex business. It is for this reason that the drivers almost always carry two spares in order to cover as many options as possible.

"In addition to being the first rally of the championship, the Monte Carlo is very different to all the other rounds. It is also the one that all the drivers want to win and where you see tyre permutations you simply don't get anywhere else," says **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes.



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

“Our partners frequently use every one of the four types of tyre that are available to them, and they may even leave service with three different types either on the car or in the boot as spares. To help them make the most judicious choices, Michelin works hand in hand with its partner teams who know they can count on the experience and advice of our Team Advisors who work with each one of them. The role they play on this highly complex rally is particularly crucial, and tyre choice and performance are very often the big talking points during the event.”

Michelin’s Team Advisors: a key part of the tyre strategy equation

On all events, Michelin Team Advisors are appointed to work closely with all of the French firm’s partner teams in order to assist with tyre choices for the different groups of stages. They dialogue with the crews in order to obtain their feedback and carefully analyse the tyres that come off the cars with a view to providing recommendations for the following loop. Although it is systematically the drivers who have the final word when it comes to tyre choice, Michelin’s Team Advisors are always on hand to make proposals with regard to tyre pressures and compounds as a function of the anticipated conditions and ground temperatures. Their contribution is especially vital on the Rallye Monte-Carlo which is notorious for the varied, contrasting conditions you can come across in the course of a single day, and sometimes even on a single stage!

More than on any other rally, and perhaps also because it is invariably the opening fixture of the season, the Monte Carlo calls for numerous test sessions in December and January which continue until several days before the start.

Once back at their base in Clermont-Ferrand, France, Michelin’s team advisors share the data and information they collected during tests and on events with their colleagues who use it not only to improve the firm’s competition tyres, but also to contribute to the development of new road tyres. Michelin effectively uses all the types of motorsport in which it is involved – including the FIA World Rally Championship – as full-scale proving grounds for its new technologies.

The 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo – What’s new?

Although teams are not compelled to use any one tyre brand in particular due to contractual, exclusivity or sponsorship-related agreements, all of the WRC runners in the 2020 FIA World Rally Championship have once again chosen to compete on Michelin rubber. This speaks highly of their confidence in the French firm’s solutions to tackle the modifications that have been made to the route of this year’s Rallye Monte-Carlo which features changes to both its format and stages.

While Wednesday afternoon’s shakedown will use the same stretch of road as 2019 near host town Gap, the organisers (Automobile Club de Monaco) have decided to return to the Principality for the official send-off of their 2020 event at 5pm on Thursday afternoon. Because of ongoing building work at the start’s traditional location (Casino Square), the ramp will be erected in the equally iconic harbour-side district (Port Hercule).



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

After a road section, in daylight, crews will tackle the week's first two stages after nightfall that evening. Stage 1 (Malijai-Puimichel / first car: 8:38pm) has not been visited by the rally since 1994 which means none of today's crews have pacenotes that cover it. Later, after completing SS2 (Bayon-Breiziers / first car: 10:26pm), competitors will drive on to the service park in Gap.

Friday's menu comprises a loop of three stages to be contested twice each, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. They are all between 20 and 21 kilometres in length and include Saint Clément sur Durance-Freissinières which was the first test of 2019, in darkness. This stage runs alongside the northern flank of a mountain and will almost certainly feature wintry conditions, while further rain or snow cannot be ruled out.

Saturday will see crews make two visits to two Monte Carlo classics, namely Saint Léger Les Mèlèzes-La Bâtie Neuve and La Bréole-Sélonnet, before they head south to Monaco for the third and last leg on Sunday when survivors face the famous Col de Turini loop.

The rally's total length of more than 1,500km includes 304.28 competitive kilometres divided into 16 special stages (compared with 323.83km in 2019). Some 25 percent of the itinerary has been changed compared with last January's Monte-Carlo, which in turn was 40 percent new in comparison with 2018.

Q&A – Arnaud Rémy, Manager of Michelin's Rally Programmes

- **What is your analysis of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship which marked the first full season with Michelin's new range of WRC gravel tyres, and which also saw the introduction of a new compound for WRC2 competitors?**

"Our range of WRC gravel tyres lived up to our expectations in terms of both their strength and versatility despite the extreme weather, heat and surface conditions they had to contend with. Our three compound options gave crews the scope they needed to select the most suitable tyre for the moment and compete safely while continuing to enjoy the same impressive high levels of performance. In WRC2, the addition of a third compound for our gravel tyre was a huge success and immediately paid dividends on the 2019 Rally GB. Feedback has since been very positive and we have decided to propose these soft tyres to all our partners for non-world championship events."

- **The Monte Carlo is always a tough rally due to the weather conditions which make tyre strategies exceptionally complex. What sort of advice do you give to your partner teams when it comes to choosing the most suitable tyres?**

"In the WRC, one of our technicians works within each of our partner teams. For the Rallye Monte-Carlo, we also run two weather crews made up of an experienced driver and a Michelin technician who complete each stage ahead of the competitors. Their job is to note any changes in grip levels and accordingly recommend the best tyre for that particular stage. This information is relayed to our Technical Advisors who pass it on to the teams with which they work."



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

- **There are three new events on the 2020 calendar. What sort of challenge do they represent for Michelin?**

“It is always nice to discover new venues and try to anticipate how to get the very best out of our tyres on them. We don’t have any details of the New Zealand stages yet, but we know the terrain very well because the country has often hosted a round of the world championship over the years. We are therefore able to refer to the reports from our most recent trips there to see how we can use our current range of tyres to the best effect. In the case of Japan, one of our technicians made the trip to attend to the candidate rally which held there at the end of 2019. He brought back lots of data which will help us to travel to this new asphalt round with useful basic information. Last but not least, things are less clear with regard to Kenya. It seems this year’s rally will have little in common with the former Safari and we intend to travel there shortly to see what new challenges it might throw up.”

Michelin’s tyres for the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo

Today’s cars deliver close to 400 horsepower and feature aerodynamics that produce even higher downforce, along with an active centre differential which permits higher cornering speeds. Year on year, their performance increases as the technology they use is finetuned and this in turn produces extra constraints as far as tyres are concerned. For the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo, Michelin’s partners will have the same range as in 2019.

Dry and damp ground

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 toughest asphalt rounds in mind. It features particularly fast warm-up performance at the beginning of stages, as well as enhanced grip on damp ground. As it demonstrated on the Rallye Monte-Carlo in both 2018 and 2019, it is perfectly capable of coping with the higher power outputs of the latest-generation WRC cars and the bigger demands they consequently make of their tyres.

The MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6 (SS = super soft) was also introduced at the beginning of 2018 and is back on the list for this year’s event. It is designed for mixed conditions, including damp asphalt, slush and icy patches at temperatures close to or lower than 0°C. It is also ideal for greasy or frost-covered roads. It features a softer compound than that of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6 but has the same casing. It was widely praised after both the 2018 and 2019 Monte Carlos and is expected to be a popular choice again this time around.

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



Snow and ice:

The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 resembles a conventional winter tyre due to its overall profile and siped tread blocks. Its development – which was carried out in parallel with that of the MICHELIN Pilot Alpin range of road tyres by a team of engineers from Michelin Motorsport and the Michelin Technology Centre in Ladoux, France – used data gleaned in motorsport and stands out as a prime example of Michelin's policy of carrying over the technologies it develops in different forms of competition to its road tyres. The WRC tyre features a reinforced casing and was designed to withstand the constraints generated by the world's top rally cars on snowy ground, while at the same time delivering outstanding traction, corner control and braking performance.

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

The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CL is a studded version of the above tyre. In Nordic countries, the use of studded tyres is commonplace in winter. That is not the case in France, however, where their fitment is forbidden. The FIA does authorise them during the Rallye Monte-Carlo, however, but with no more than 200 studs per tyre (compared with 384 for Rally Sweden tyres) and their metal tips may not emerge more than two millimetres from the tread blocks.. Each stud weighs less than two grams and they are inserted into the tread individually using a technique patented by Michelin.

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

Tyre allocations for the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo

The WRC rules specify a total overall allocation of tyres per event, as well as a maximum number that the drivers can actually run. The quota for the Rallye Monte-Carlo is higher than that enforced at other rounds because of the wider spectrum of possible conditions it can feature and also due to the availability of four different tyres, instead of two or three elsewhere.

The overall allocation per WRC driver for the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo is **80 tyres**:

- 20 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6s
- 24 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6s
- 12 x MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41s
- 24 x MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CLs (studded)

During the rally, WRC drivers may use no more **39 tyres from this overall allocation, shakedown included.**



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

WRC2 and WRC3, two exciting, fiercely-competitive classes that use specific tyres

The WRC2 and WRC3 classes both feature cars that are less powerful than their WRC counterparts. Just as they do at WRC level, crews can freely choose their tyre supplier. The standard is extremely high in both these classes which, in the past, have frequently revealed drivers who have gone on to compete at WRC level. Michelin runners have topped the second-tier series for the past six years in spite of the fierce competition that exists between tyre firms.

Michelin's WRC2 and WRC3 runners use tyres that are commercially available and distributed via the brand's competition tyre sales network.

For dry and damp ground, crews will be able to count on the performance and versatility of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport R S and MICHELIN Pilot Sport R SS (S = soft compound / SS = super soft). Their size is the same as that of the tyres used by the World Rally Cars (235/40R18, equivalent to 20/65-18). For more wintry conditions, drivers will be able to fit the MICHELIN NA00 (snow) or its studded equivalent, the MICHELIN NA00 CL (ice). Again like the tyres used by WRC competitors, the WRC2 snow/ice tyres are narrower than the clear asphalt tyres (215/45R18, equivalent to 18/65-18).

The allocation for each WRC2 and WRC3 driver on the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo is **72 tyres**:

- 16 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport R Ss
- 20 x MICHELIN Pilot Sport R SSs
- 12 x MICHELIN NA00s
- 24 x MICHELIN NA00 CLs

During the rally, WRC2 drivers may use no more **38 tyres from this overall allocation, shakedown included**.

Michelin will have 1,678 tyres available for the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo (WRC: 910 / WRC2 and WRC3: 768).

Michelin staff on the event:

- Arnaud Rémy (Rally Programmes Manager, Michelin),
- 3 Team Advisors,
- 1 coordinator,
- 9 fitters,
- 1 press officer.



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

The 2020 FIA World Rally Championship calendar

The 2020 FIA World Rally Championship calendar features 13 rounds. Kenya, New Zealand and Japan are back on the schedule, whereas the Tour de Corse, Rallye de Espana and Chile do not feature this time around.

DATE	EVENT
January 23-26	Rallye Monte-Carlo
February 13-16	Sweden
March 12-15	Mexico
April 23-26	Argentina
May 21-24	Portugal
June 4-7	Sardinia
July 16-19	Kenya
August 6-9	Finland
September 3-6	New Zealand
September 24-27	Turkey
October 15-18	Rallye Deutschland
October 29-November 1	Rally GB
November 19-22	Japan

