

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

Michelin's 'Monte' tyres reap success on ice and in the French sunshine

The Rallye Monte-Carlo stands apart in the FIA World Rally Championship inasmuch as drivers get to choose between four different types of tyre to cover the unique variety of conditions competitors can encounter on the event, from clear, dry asphalt and temperatures in excess of 10°C to colder, damp roads with frequent portions of ice and snow.

This year's 'Monte' – the 88th in the classic fixture's history – saw crews come across all four seasons over the four days and, to address this mix, Michelin provided them with a range of two asphalt and two winter tyres:

The MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6 (soft compound): this latest-generation WRC tyre gets up to temperature exceptionally quickly and delivers excellent grip on damp roads. It has built up a successful record on the World Rally Championship's asphalt rounds.

The MICHELIN Pilot Sport SS6 ('super-soft'): this softer variant is engineered to perform in temperatures close to or below 0°C, as well as in damp or slushy conditions. It was one of the most widely used tyres on this year's Rallye Monte-Carlo.

The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41: this winter tyre features siped tread blocks and was designed to cope with the big demands made by the powerful, extremely-efficient latest-generation world rally cars. It delivers outstanding traction, road holding and braking performance on snowy roads.

The MICHELIN Pilot Alpin A41 CL: the 'CL' version of the Pilot Alpin is equipped with 200 studs (compared with 384 studs in the case of Rally Sweden tyres) which enable the drivers to push hard in icy conditions without the risk of damaging the road surface. This year, it notably showcased its qualities on Saturday morning's stages in the mountains of France's Alpes de Haute Provence region.

Sizes:

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

MICHELIN Pilot Alpin and Pilot Alpin A41 CL: 215/45R18 (equivalent 18/65-18)

While the complementarity of the above range provides Michelin's partners with the tools it needs to perform competitively, the crews still need to choose the right tyre – or combination of tyres – for each loop of stages. And, to this end, they benefit from expert input from Michelin's Technical Advisors.



The fundamental role played by Michelin's Technical Advisors

The Rallye Monte-Carlo is notorious for the varied, fast-changing conditions it can throw at competitors and which sometimes bely the forecasts of even the most experienced weather experts. The latter's predictions are effectively finetuned – and in some cases contradicted – by information reported back to the crews and teams by their respective Weather Crews who cover the stages some two hours before the competitors themselves. Michelin had its own two Weather Crews working on this year's rally, each one made up of an experienced driver and a Michelin technician. They were tasked with evaluating the state of the roads and their feedback was relayed to Michelin's staff in the Service Park, and more notably to its Team Advisors who work closely with each of the firm's partner teams. Thanks to the reports supplied by their colleagues, these specialists were able to recommend the most appropriate tyre tactics, along with optimal tyre pressures as a function of the temperature, conditions and individual driving styles. It is systematically the drivers who choose what goes on their respective cars, but they pay careful attention to Michelin's recommendations because they know only too well how costly for a poor tyre choice can be in terms of time.

"The four types of tyre we had for our partners at this year's Rallye Monte-Carlo were all used," reports **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes. "And our Team Advisors were on hand to provide sound advice to the teams who occasionally hesitated between two options. The key here is to be prepared for changes to the conditions and that's one of the strengths of our experts. They understand the temperature and operating windows of our tyres better than anyone and can consequently translate this into the ideal choice. Helping the drivers to make the very best of their Michelin tyres is the added value we provide not only on the Rallye Monte-Carlo but also on every round of the world championship."

Combining different types of tyre – a common occurrence in world-class rallying

For several seasons now, it has become quite commonplace to see drivers run different types of tyre on their car at the same time. It is not infrequent to see them pull out of the Service Park with six tyres (four on the car and two as 'spares') of perhaps three different types. "For this week's opening stages on Thursday, the three M-Sport Ford Fiesta WRCs left service with two MICHELIN Pilot Sport S6s, two Pilot Sport SS6s and two Pilot Alpin A41 CLs," notes **Arnaud Rémy**. "By doing this, the crews were able to change the tyre configuration of their respective cars between the evening's two stages in order to adapt to the different conditions. On such a varied event as the Rallye Monte-Carlo, confidence plays a big role and enabling the drivers to employ this sort of tactic is as positive for safety as it is for posting fast times."

The stages of the 2020 Rallye Monte-Carlo were 25 percent new compared with last season. This year's total distance of more than 1,500 kilometres included 304.28km divided into 16 tests, compared with 323.83km in 2019.





Fans were treated to another thrilling battle which saw the top three begin the final leg, on Sunday, blanketed by just 6.4 seconds. Victory finally went to Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul who scored their maiden Monte win in their Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC. Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia celebrated their transfer to Toyota with second place, while fellow Yaris WRC runners Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin made it another all-Michelin podium in the Principality.

The WRC2 and WRC3 classes (R5) proved equally entertaining, with the spoils ending up in the hands of Frenchmen Eric Camilli and François-Xavier Buresi who topped the WRC3 order in addition to coming eighth overall in their Citroën C3 R5. They finished one place clear of WRC2 victors Mads Ostberg and Torstein Eriksen from Norway, while France's Nicolas Ciamin and Yannick Roche (WRC3) made it an all-Citroën C3 R5, all-Michelin top three in the combined WRC2/WRC3 standings.

Michelin's WRC2 and WRC3 runners were able to choose between the MICHELIN Pilot Sport R S and Pilot Sport R SS asphalt tyres for dry or damp conditions, and between the MICHELIN NA00 (non-studded) and MICHELIN NA00 CL (studded) for more wintry ground.

The next round of the 2020 FIA World Rally Championship will take teams to Rally Sweden (February 13-16) where WRC runners will compete on MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 tyres, each one of which is equipped 384 studs.

