

2016 FIA World Rally Championship

Rally Guanajuato Mexico

***The MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S4 rise successfully to
Rally Mexico challenge,***

WRC2 honours for the brand new MICHELIN LTX Force H91

The usual challenge of high altitudes (up to more than 2,700 metres) and big fluctuations in temperature, plus the prospect of an 80km stage on the final day (the longest to be organised at WRC level since 1986, not including the Safari Rally) made sure that this year's Rally Guanajuato Mexico lived up to its reputation as one of the calendar's most challenging rounds. The drivers, however, were able to count on the performance and strength of their Michelin tyres as they provided the thousands of spectators who lined the stages and visited the service park with a highly entertaining show.

Rally Mexico was the first gravel round of the 2016 FIA World Rally Championship and much of its action took place near the UNESCO-listed former mining town Guanajuato and Leon, Mexico's sixth biggest city (population: 1.2 million). Situated about 400km north of Mexico City, it sits at an altitude of 1,800 metres.

The event's hallmark high altitudes influenced engine performance (the engines suffer a 10% fall in engine power every 1,000 metres they climb) and temperatures, with chilly mornings and hot days.

This cocktail forced the drivers to plan their respective tyre strategies with great care. The WRC runners were able to choose between the H4 (hard compound) and S4 (soft) versions of the MICHELIN LTX Force, the S4 being more suited to cool weather and/or low-grip stages, while the H4 variant is perfect for higher temperatures. Wear management was another crucial factor during the event. This was consequently monitored closely by the Michelin Motorsport technical team advisors who work with the French firm's partner teams, since some stages - like El Chocolate (SS4/SS7, 54.21km) and Guanajuato (SS20, 80km) - were particularly harsh. In the end, however, Michelin's tyres delivered the necessary combination of durability and performance to last the distance and triumph on Sunday afternoon ...

"We were confident that our tyres had the strength, grip and traction performance required for the week's long stages," says **Jacques Morelli**, manager of MICHELIN's FIA WRC programme.



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"Like last year, we saw that wear rates for the MICHELIN LTX Force were less than 70 percent on stages like 'El Chocolate', so we knew that the 80km 'Guanajuato' test wouldn't be a major problem. Not only did the MICHELIN LTX Force prove versatile but its performance was of a very high level and this combination helped the drivers to optimise their tyre strategies."

The 2016 Rally Mexico was won by Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila in their Volkswagen Polo R WRC, ahead of team-mates Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC). Mads Ostberg and Ola Floene (Ford Fiesta WRC) were third.

The MICHELIN LTX Force H91 on top in WRC2

The fight between tyre manufacturers is particularly fierce in WRC2 but the brand new MICHELIN LTX Force S81 and H91 celebrated their debut with a resounding class win in association with Teemu Suninen / Mikko Markkula (Skoda Fabia R5) who dominated throughout. The new MICHELIN LTX Force H91 and S81 tyres featured a symmetrical tread pattern in order to drop the notion of a specific right- and left-hand tyre, which is an advantage in WRC2 because the drivers have smaller tyre quotas per event than their WRC colleagues.

Teemu Suninen felt confident in the new tyres from start to finish and was even faster than certain WRC drivers on some stages. *"Given the gaps, there was little point in pushing too hard because I needed to manage my lead,"* noted the Finn after SS15. *"But I can tell you that the grip delivered by these new tyres is extremely high and I could have gone much more quickly."*

Suninen used the H91 version of the LTX Force throughout to provide the new tyre with the perfect debut in the world championship's WRC2 category, a fitting reward for the work of Michelin Motorsport's engineers.

Also on the WRC2 podium were Poland's Hubert Ptaszek/Maciek Szczepaniak in a Michelin-equipped Peugeot 208 T16 and Italians Max Rendina/Emanuele Inglesi (Ford Fiesta R5).

The next round of the 2016 FIA World Rally Championship will take crews to Argentina on April 21-24.



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