



BP-Ford increases WRC lead after claiming 60th win in Greece

Athens, 3 June 2007 - Ford claimed its 60th event win in the FIA World Rally Championship in Athens today to extend its lead in both the drivers' and manufacturers' standings in the 2007 series. Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen won the four-day Acropolis Rally of Greece in a Ford Focus RS World Rally Car, their second straight win and third of the season. Team-mates Mikko Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen finished fourth in another Focus RS.

The Acropolis is the toughest round of the 16-event championship and this was the sixth victory in eight years here for the Focus RS. It was Grönholm's 28th WRC victory and as the series heads into a summer break after eight rounds, the 39-year-old Finn has increased his lead in the drivers' series to nine points. Reigning world champion BP-Ford World Rally Team now heads the manufacturers' standings by 28 points.

Rocky tracks and intense heat are the trademarks of the Acropolis and success here demanded strength and reliability from the Focus RS and BFGoodrich's tyres, as well as outright speed. Grönholm's car displayed all three as he took the lead during Friday's opening leg and was never again headed. He stamped his authority on the event by winning both passes through the marathon 48.88km Agii Theodori speed test yesterday, the longest and most difficult of the season to date.

Having built a 43.3sec lead by last night, Grönholm paced himself through today's final five special stages covering 78.94km to win by 38.6sec after 334.44km of competition. "I had a good rally with no problems and it's a huge confidence boost to take two wins before the summer break," he said. "The rough roads and high temperatures ensured it was a hard rally for cars and tyres but both were perfect all rally. Today I was able to match my speed to Loeb's split times and I felt comfortable throughout.

"It's fantastic to go into summer with a nine-point lead in the drivers' championship and a big lead for the team. I can enjoy the holiday now! We're able to fight with Loeb, and maybe he's not so comfortable any more, but I know that the second half of the year won't be easy with four events on asphalt – his favourite surface," added Grönholm.

BP-Ford team-mate Hirvonen was in the midst of a fierce six-car battle throughout the opening leg, which ended with all six being covered by less than 11sec. Despite going off the road and later puncturing, Hirvonen maintained his position throughout the second and third legs and was able to drive cautiously through the final day.

"Today was easy because I just paced myself to the finish," said the 26-year-old Finn. "I had a good position on Friday and felt able to fight for a win but on Saturday morning I went off the road. A podium was gone but we still took good points. That crash was the worst moment of my year so far but I recovered and I'm pleased to finish. It was a tough event, but that's what is expected of the Acropolis Rally. That's why it is one of the season's classics."



BP-Ford team director Malcolm Wilson celebrated the team's second win in three weekends and said: "The two passes over the long stage yesterday were the key to this event. Marcus didn't attack but his strategy was to avoid trouble on both occasions and his success at doing that while others hit problems was what won this rally. Two wins in two rallies take us into the summer break in the lead of both championships and I'm confident we can consolidate that in the second half," he said.

Jost Capito, director of Ford TeamRS, said: "The Greek Gods looked after us again this weekend! We've reached the halfway point in the season in a strong position in both the manufacturers' and drivers' championships. We debut the 2007-specification Focus RS WRC on the next round in Finland in August and I'm confident this will take us another step forward."

Final positions

1. M Grönholm/T Rautiainen	FIN	Ford Focus RS	3hr 49min 22.6sec
2. S Loeb/D Elena	F	Citroen C4	3hr 50min 01.2sec
3. P Solberg/P Mills	N	Subaru Impreza	3hr 50min 56.7sec
4. M Hirvonen/J Lehtinen	FIN	Ford Focus RS	3hr52min 03.9sec
5. H Solberg/C Menkerud	N	Ford Focus RS	3hr54min 15.3sec
6. C Atkinson/ S Prévot	AUS	Subaru Impreza	3hr 55min 54.3sec
7. J Kopecky/F Schovanek	CZ	Skoda Fabia	3hr 57min 38.4sec
8. M Stohl/I Minor	A	Citroen Xsara	3hr 58min 18.8sec
9. G Wilks/P Pugh	GB	Ford Focus RS	3hr59min 15.8sec
10 M Wilson/M Orr	GB	Ford Focus RS	4hr00min 02.2sec

Drivers

1. M Grönholm	65pts
2. S Loeb	56pts
3. M Hirvonen	49pts
4. D Sordo	28pts
5. P Solberg	26pts
6. H Solberg	24pts

Manufacturers

1. BP-Ford	114pts
2. Citroen Total	86pts
3. Subaru	43pts
4.Stobart VK M-Sport Ford	41pts
5. OMV Kronos Citroen	27pts
6. Munchi's Ford	1pt

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| PRESS INFORMATION

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