



PRESS INFORMATION



HIRVONEN POWERS TO WRC CENTURY IN TURKEY

KEMER, 15 June 2008 - Ford today claimed a record-breaking 100th consecutive points finish in the FIA World Rally Championship with the Focus RS World Rally Car. It became the first manufacturer since the launch of the championship in 1973 to reach a century of successive scores (see below) on the Rally of Turkey thanks to Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen claiming their second win of the FIA World Rally Championship season in a Ford Focus RS World Rally Car, and team-mates Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila just 7,9 sec behind in another Focus RS as Ford extended its lead in the manufacturers' series to nine points.

After dominating Friday's opening leg to hold first and second, Hirvonen and Latvala deliberately eased their pace in the final few metres to drop down the leaderboard to gain better road conditions yesterday. A lower start position meant they avoided the huge disadvantage of being first and second on roads covered by slippery loose gravel. Instead, they benefited from the cleaning process of the cars ahead, who swept stones from the surface to leave a cleaner and faster line on which to attack.

Ford's Finns rocketed back to first and second yesterday morning and attacked hard to build as big a lead as possible over championship rival Sébastien Loeb, who swept the roads, in third. Hirvonen and Latvala had the unwanted 'cleaning' role today, but the buffer was big enough to hold off a determined charge from Loeb during the final 31, 03 km speed test to claim the team's second 1-2 of the season.

This eighth round of the season was based in Kemer, a bustling holiday resort on Turkey's southern coast. Drivers tackled 19 special stages covering 360,12 km in the Anatolian mountains which tower above the town. Air temperatures topped 34 °C while the thermometer reached 48 °C on the rocky gravel roads, which combined to provide a tough test for cars and Pirelli's Scorpion tyres.

A delighted Hirvonen described the weekend as 'amazing'. "I promised Malcolm Wilson I would lead the championship going into my home rally in Finland next month and I am. It was an incredibly hard weekend for drivers, cars and tyres and a great battle with Jari-Matti, which I'm so happy to win. It was the right moment for a win because we struggled on the last round in Greece and this is perfect timing. It feels very special to beat a four-time world champion in a straight fight," he said.

"Our tactics worked so well and I didn't panic this morning when I was first on the road and had to sweep the stages. This is my best result because it was such a big team effort. I was so nervous and drove so carefully in the final stage to preserve my tyres. It looks like it will be an exciting championship battle in the second half of the season. Now I just want to go home and see my sons," said 27-year-old Hirvonen, who felt ill throughout the rally and has been unable to eat.

Latvala was happy with second after losing almost a minute with two opening day punctures. "I came here wanting a top three finish so I'm pleased I was able to fight for victory. I lacked experience of these roads but that wasn't as big a disadvantage as I thought. We played good tactics and it was a big risk, but a good decision. I've learned to keep my driving tidy. I was kind on my tyres for the first half of the final stage and that paid off. This has given a major boost to my confidence," he said.

BP Ford Abu Dhabi team director Malcolm Wilson collected the Abu Dhabi Spirit of the Rally Award on behalf of the team and presented it to Ford of Europe chairman Lewis Booth, a keen spectator here during the weekend. "Tactics won in the end and what our two young drivers did this weekend was nothing short of special. It was a brave decision to drop time on Friday but it proved the right one. I'm proud of the drivers and the team and it's a great way to end the first half of the season. It was the drive of Mikko's life and it's fantastic to lead both series going into the mid-season break. Days don't get much better than this," said Wilson.

Ford of Europe's motorsport director Mark Deans added: "The consistency required in achieving 100 consecutive points finishes is remarkable as the WRC is the toughest competition in motorsport for production-based cars. It demanded an outstanding blend of speed, strength and reliability from the Focus RS World Rally Car as well as some sterling

performances from the drivers behind the wheel. It was a perfect weekend for the team and a great weekend for Ford, with six Focus cars in the top 10."

Final positions

1. M Hirvonen/J Lehtinen	FIN	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 42 min 07,1 sec
2. J-M Latvala/M Anttila	FIN	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 42 min 15,0 sec
3. S Loeb/D Elena	FRA	Citroen C4	4 hr 42 min 32,8 sec
4. D Sordo/M Marti	ESP	Citroen C4	4 hr 44 min 32,7 sec
5. H Solberg/C Menkerud	NOR	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 44 min 40,8 sec
6. P Solberg/P Mills	NOR	Subaru Impreza	4 hr 44 min 55,3 sec
7. M Wilson/S Martin	GBR	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 46 min 31,3 sec
8. C Rautenbach/D Senior	ZIM	Citroen C4	4 hr 49 min 53,8 sec
9. F Villagra/J Perez Companc	ARG	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 51 min 41,2 sec
10 B Clark/P Nagle	GB	Ford Focus RS	4 hr 56 min 55,9 sec

Drivers

1. M Hirvonen	59pts
2. S Loeb	56pts
3. J-M Latvala	34pts
4. C Atkinson	31pts
5. D Sordo	30pts
6. P Solberg	20pts

Manufacturers

1. BP Ford Abu Dhabi	99pts
2. Citroen Total	90pts
3. Subaru	53pts
4. Stobart VK M-Sport	41pts
5. Munchi's Ford	19pts
6. Suzuki	10pts

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FORD FOCUS POWERS TO WRC CENTURY IN TURKEY

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The remarkable scoring run began in January 2002 and the Focus RS WRC has since claimed points on surfaces as diverse as the smooth asphalt roads of Spain, treacherously slippery snow and ice in Sweden and rock-strewn gravel tracks in the mountains of Greece.

Ford of Europe motorsport director Mark Deans said: "The consistency required in achieving this record is remarkable given that the WRC is the toughest competition in motorsport for production-based cars. It has demanded an outstanding blend of speed, strength and reliability from the Focus RS World Rally Car as well as some sterling performances from the drivers behind the wheel.

"It's also a tribute to Malcolm Wilson and his team at M-Sport that has prepared and run the Focus RS WRC for all 100 rallies. I look forward to starting the second century in Finland in August," added Deans.

- Eleven drivers contributed to the scoring run (number in brackets indicates number of scoring finishes): Mikko Hirvonen (43), Marcus Grönholm (29), Markko Märtin (28), François Duval (19), Toni Gardemeister (13), Roman Kresta (10), Colin McRae (9), Carlos Sainz (9), Jari-Matti Latvala (7), Janne Tuohino (2), Henning Solberg (1).
- Thirteen crew combinations contributed to the record: Carlos Sainz / Luis Moya, Colin McRae / Nicky Grist, Markko Märtin / Michael Park, François Duval / Jaen-Marc Fortin, François Duval / Stéphane Prévot, Mikko Hirvonen / Jarmo Lehtinen, Janne Tuohino / Jukka Aho, Toni Gardemeister / Jakke Honkanen, Roman Kresta / Jan Tománek, Henning Solberg / Cato Menkerud, Roman Kresta / Jan Možný, Marcus Grönholm / Timo Rautiainen and Jari-Matti Latvala/ Mikka Anttila.
- Seven different driver nationalities contributed to the record: Finland, Estonia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Spain and Norway.

- Ford has won 27 and gained 85 podium places during the 100 rallies.
- The run began on the 2002 Rallye Monte Carlo when Carlos Sainz finished third and Colin McRae claimed fourth.
- Ford reached its half-century on the Cyprus Rally in 2005.

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