

The Loudon-clear guide to... **Neste Rally Finland**

Time flies, especially when you're in Finland.

Welcome to the second half of the season. And what a second half we're in for – it's going to be an absolute epic: can Thierry Neuville hold on to the top spot or will we witness a sixth straight Sébastien Ogier World Rally Championship?

Yes, you're right, with six rounds and 180 points still to play for, numerically, everybody stays in the game. But it's difficult to imagine this year's title going to anybody other than Thierry or Séb – third-placed man Ott Tänak is 72 points off the front at the turnaround.

That's not to say the Estonian won't challenge for victory in Jyväskylä next week and on the following five rallies. He probably will. Toyota has the potential to be the dominant force in Finland, with some even predicting a podium lock out for the Yaris WRC. Well... there are a lot of corners, almost as many jumps and a 1000-odd lakes to be rounded before they get there.

Neste Rally Finland in detail

FIA World Rally Championship round 8/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3 - JWRC

Date: Thursday July 26 – Sunday July 29

Based: Jyväskylä

Service: Jyväskylä

Stages: 23

Competitive distance: 317.26km (197.14 miles)

Liaison distance: 1109.58km (689.49 miles)

Total distance: 1426.84km (886.63 miles)

Shortest stage: SS1/11 Harju 2.31km (1.43 miles)

Longest stage: SS12/18 Päijälä 23.92km (14.86 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: GMT +3

Sunrise: 0427

Sunset: 2219

Shakedown:

The 4.26km (2.64 miles) shakedown stage is located in Versala, 21.49km (13.35 miles) from the service park in Jyväskylä. The stage runs from 0800-1330 on Thursday July 26.

Neste Rally Finland itinerary

Thursday July 26

SS1 Harju 1 2.31km (1.43 miles) 1900

Friday July 27

SS2 Moksi 1 20.04km (12.45 miles) 0818
SS3 Urria 1 12.28km (7.63 miles) 0921
SS4 Ässämäki 1 12.33km (7.66 miles) 1013
SS5 Äänekoski 1 7.71km (4.79 miles) 1136
Service Jyväskylä 1231
SS6 Oittila 19.34km (12.01 miles) 1424
SS7 Moksi 2 20.04km (12.45 miles) 1527
SS8 Urria 2 12.28km (7.63 miles) 1630
SS9 Ässämäki 2 12.33km (7.66 miles) 1722
SS10 Äänekoski 2 7.71km (4.79 miles) 1845
SS11 Harju 2 2.31km (1.43 miles) 2000
Service Jyväskylä 2020
Parc Fermé 2115

Saturday July 28

SS12 Päijälä 1 23.92km (14.86 miles) 0813
SS13 Pihlajakoski 1 14.90km (9.25 miles) 0929
SS14 Kakaristo 1 23.66km (14.70 miles) 1038
SS15 Tuohikotanen 1 8.95km (5.56 miles) 1213
Service Jyväskylä 1311
SS16 Tuohikotanen 2 8.95km (5.56 miles) 1455
SS17 Kakaristo 2 23.66km (14.70 miles) 1608
SS18 Päijälä 2 23.92km (14.86 miles) 1736
SS19 Pihlajakoski 2 14.90km (9.25 miles) 1854
Service Jyväskylä 2045
Parc Fermé 2140

Sunday July 29

SS20 Laukaa 1 11.74km (7.29 miles) 0838
SS21 Ruuhimäki 1 11.12km (6.90 miles) 0938
SS22 Laukaa 2 11.74km (7.29 miles) 1101
SS23 Ruuhimäki 2 11.12km (6.90 miles) 1318
Finish Jyväskylä 1418

2017 Neste Rally Finland result:

WRC: 1 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC) 2h29m26.9s; 2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC) +36.0s; 3 Juho Hänninen/Kaj Lindström (Toyota Yaris WRC) +36.3s **WRC2:** Jari Huttunen/Antii Linnaketo (Škoda Fabia R5). **JWRC/WRC3** Nicolas Ciamin/Thibault de la Haye (Ford Fiesta R2T)

Running order:

5 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC)
8 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

9 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC)
4 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC)
7 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC)
11 Craig Breen/Scott Martin (Citroën C3 WRC)
12 Mads Østberg/Torstein Eriksen (Citroën C3 WRC)
3 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Ford Fiesta WRC)
6 Hayden Paddon/Seb Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)

Leading WRC championship positions:

1 Neuville 149pts; 2 Ogier 122; 3 Tänak 77; 4 Lappi 70; 5 Dani Sordo 60; 6 Mikkelsen 56; 7 Evans 46; 8 Kris Meeke 43; 9 Latvala 37; 10 Breen 34, etc

WRC manufacturer championship positions:

1 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 212pts; 2 M-Sport Ford WRT 184; 3 Toyota Gazoo Racing 161; 4 Citroën Total Abu Dhabi WRT 129

Leading WRC2 runners:

31 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Škoda Fabia R5)
32 Gus Greensmith/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)
33 Takamoto Katsuta/Marko Salminen (Ford Fiesta R5)
34 Fabio Andolfi/Simone Scattolin (Škoda Fabia R5)
35 Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais (Hyundai i20 R5)
36 Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroën C3 R5)
37 Hiroki Arai/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Fiesta R5)
38 Jari Huttunen/Antti Linnaketo (Hyundai i20 R5)
39 Nicolas Ciamin/Thibault De La Haye (Hyundai i20 R5)
40 Benito Guerra/Borja Rozada (Škoda Fabia R5)
41 Kalle Rovnaperä/Jonne Halttunen (Škoda Fabia R5)

Leading WRC2 championship positions:

1 Tidemand 93pts; 2 Kopecky 75; 3 Veiby 45; 4 Greensmith/Pieniazek 40; 6 Heller 31, etc

JWRC/WRC3 entry:

61 Dennis Rådström/Johan Johansson (Ford Fiesta R2)
63 Emil Bergkvist/Joakim Sjöberg (Ford Fiesta R2)
63 Jean-Baptiste Franceschi/Romain Courbon (Ford Fiesta R2)
64 Terry Folb/Kevin Bronner (Ford Fiesta R2)
65 Luca Bottarelli/Manuel Fenoli (Ford Fiesta R2)
66 Julius Tannert/Jürgen Heigl (Ford Fiesta R2)
67 Enrico Oldrati/Danilo Fappani (Ford Fiesta R2)
68 Callum Devine/Brian Hoy (Ford Fiesta R2)
69 David Holder/Jason Farmer (Ford Fiesta R2)
70 Bugra Banaz/Burak Erdener (Ford Fiesta R2)

- 71 Ken Torn/Kuldar Sikk (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 72 Emilio Fernández/Joaquinn Riquelme (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 73 Tom Williams/Phil Hall (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 74 Umberto Accornero/Maurizio Barone (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 75 Henri Hokkala/Kimmo Pahkala (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 76 Taisko Lario/Tatu Hamalainen (Peugeot 208 R2)
- 77 Louise Cook/Stefan Davis (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 78 Sanjay Takale/Darren Garrod (Ford Fiesta R2)

Leading WRC3 championship positions:

1 Franceschi 64pts; 2 Rådström 62; 3 Bergkvist 43; 4 Brazzoli/Lario 37; 6 Folb 28, etc

Leading JWRC championship positions:

1 Rådström 74pts; 2 Bergkvist 57; 3 Franceschi 47; 4 Folb 30; 5 Luca Bottarelli 20; 6 Tannert 19, etc

Stuart Loudon's key stage: SS23 Ruuhimäki 2 11.12km (6.90 miles)

I remember the first time I competed at Rally Finland in a four-wheel drive car. I was with Rob Barrable in a Ford Fiesta R5 in 2013. That year Ruuhimäki was the shakedown stage. We got to the end of it and Rob and I looked at each other – we'd just had our first real insight into what rallying in Finland was really all about: this is one very special and very serious stage.

For the most part it's quick and wide and really cool, but the final part is what Ruuhimäki's best known for – those rolling jumps into the finish. It's tricky enough to get one jump right, but when you have as many of them as you do here, it's incredibly tough.

Winning any round of the World Rally Championship is a very special achievement, but winning Finland is that bit more special – and the same goes for the Power Stage. Everybody will be chasing a five-pointer in Ruuhimäki.

Stuart will be watching... 9 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC)

These boys haven't had the start to the season they would have been after. They've shown great speed in places, but it just hasn't quite come together. But I think that's going to change when they go home next week.

They took a sensational win last year and they'll be keen to show they're far, far more than just a one-hit wonder; and this is their moment. They've got the pace and so has their Toyota Yaris WRC.

I like Lappi, he's a good guy with plenty of character about him, just the sort of guy we need in the WRC – and the same goes for Janne, what a lovely bloke and superb co-driver. Together, they make a great team and they make watching the WRC an

absolute pleasure; when everything's working they're not shy of showing that in the car and I really like that. These guys have the best jobs in the world, who can blame them for enjoying it?

Weather with you:

We're right on the cusp of the weather changing in Finland. The temperatures should hold around the mid-20s, but there's likely to be the odd shower and thunderstorm kicking about.

Most successful drivers on Neste Rally Finland:

Hannu Mikkola/Marcus Grönholm (7 wins)

2018 World Rally Championship stats...

Stages planned: 128

Stages run: 128

Longest stage of the season: Vero – Sarrola-Carcopino 55.17km (34.28 miles) Tour de Corse

Shortest stage of the season: Street Stage Leon 1.11km (0.68 miles) Rally Mexico

Longest competitive route of the season: Rallye Monte-Carlo 388.59km (241.46 miles)

Shortest competitive route of the season: Rally Italia Sardegna 313.46km (194.78 miles)

WRC fastest times in 2018:

1 Tänak 31; 2 Neuville 29; 3 Ogier 19; 4 Lappi 9; 5 Meeke 8; 6

Sordo/Loeb/Mikkelsen 6; 9 Latvala 5; 10 Breen/Evans 4, etc

WRC stages led in 2018:

1 Ogier 54; 2 Neuville 34; 3 Tänak 17; 4 Sordo 9; 5 Mikkelsen 6; 6 Meeke/Loeb 3; 8 Paddon 2

WRC2 fastest times in 2018:

1 Tidemand 43; 2 Veiby 17; 3 Rovannerä 16; 4 Kopecky 15; 5 Katsuta 10; 6

Lefebvre 8; 7 Suninen/Greensmith 6; 9 Arai/Kevin Abbring 3, etc

WRC2 stages led in 2018:

1 Tidemand 42; 2 Kopecky 36; 3 Katsuta 17; 4 Lefebvre 14; 5 Rovannerä 7; 6 Greensmith 5; 7 Camilli/Veiby 3; 9 Nordgren/Arai 1.

JWRC fastest times in 2018:

1 Bergkvist 18; 2 Rådström 14; 3 Torn 10; 4 Franceschi 9; 5 Bottarelli 4; 6 Folb 3, etc

JWRC stages led in 2018:

1 Rådström 28; 2 Bergkvist 12; 3 Franceschi 6; 4 Folb 5.

WRC3 fastest times in 2018:

1 Franceschi 34; 2 Williams 23; 3 Bergkvist 17; 4 Lario 12; 5 Rådstrom 11; 6 Torn 10, etc

WRC3 stages led in 2018:

1 Franceschi 31; 2 Rådström 28; 3 Williams 21; 4 Bergkvist 12; 5 Brazzoli 7; 6 Folb/Lario 5.

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 102 rallies, 20 of which are rounds of the World Rally Championship and one of which was with an Ashes-winning English cricketer. He makes biscuits in the family business when he's not working towards his dream of becoming a factory co-driver in the WRC.

Stuart Loudon and Words PR work their socks off to make sure every last dot and detail of the document is 100 per cent accurate – but we can't be responsible for any changes to the itinerary or stage distances.

Stats courtesy of ewrc-results.com