

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

Six rallies, six different winners. Will we have a seventh this week? Can Jari-Matti Latvala score his first Rally Finland hat-trick? Can World Rally Champion Sébastien Ogier win for the first time since February? What will Ouninpohja be like in that direction? Jost Capito's rarely wrong – he says Kris Meeke's going to win. What do you think?

Tell you what... tell you Sunday.

I love Finland. Everybody loves Finland at this time of the year. For us, this time of the year is Finland; the time of the year when everybody talks about a rally and 1000 lakes.

There really are so many questions to be answered this week. There's all of the above for starters and that's before we even get to an intriguing WRC2 battle, where the stars of tomorrow lock horns or the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy, where the stars of the day after tomorrow do just the same.

I've done this great event twice, the first time with John MacCrone in a Ford Fiesta R2 in 2012 and the year after in a Fiesta R5 with Robert Barrable. I had a good run and made the finish both times, but one thing you don't forget from Finland is the sheer speed of the place. Honestly, even in the R2 car, you still have to push the reset button in your brain a little bit; you have to remind yourself that cars can fly.

While I won't be in Finland calling notes to anybody – seats in the world championship are few and far between at the moment – I will be doing the second best job. Actually, make that the third, driving's probably the second best job, but the third is joining WRC Live as a stage-end reporter.

Don't forget to tune in for some Scottish chatter and the odd bit of Teacake talk.

The rally ahead...

FIA World Rally Championship round 8/14

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3 – Junior WRC - DDFT

Date: Thursday July 28 – Sunday July 31

Based: Jyväskylä

Service: Jyväskylä Paviljonki

Stages: 24

Competitive distance: 333.99km (207.54 miles)

Liaison distance: 1036.67km (644.18 miles)

Total distance: 1370.66km (851.72 miles)

Longest stage: Ouninpohja SS13/17 33.0km (20.50 miles)

Shortest stage: Harju (SS1/12) 2.27km (1.41 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: GMT +3

Language: Finnish
Finnish population: 5.48m
Capital: Helsinki
Sunrise: 0430
Sunset: 2210

Shakedown:

The 4.30km (2.67 miles) shakedown stage is located at Ruuhimäki, 30.30km (18.82 miles) from the service park. The stage runs from 0800-1330.

Itinerary

Thursday July 28

Start Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1842

SS1 Harju 1 2.27km (1.41 miles) 1900

Friday July 29

SS2 Mökkiperä 1 13.84km (8.60 miles) 0713

SS3 Halinen 6.75km (4.19 miles) 0746

SS4 Jukojärvi 1 21.25km (13.20 miles) 0902

SS5 Surkee 1 14.95km (9.28 miles) 1039

SS6 Horkka 1 15.10km (9.38 miles) 1132

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1234

SS7 Äänekoski-Valtra 7.40km (4.59 miles) 1410

SS8 Mökkiperä 2 13.84km (8.60 miles) 1508

SS9 Jukojärvi 2 21.25km (13.20 miles) 1638

SS10 Surkee 2 14.95km (9.28 miles) 1815

SS11 Horkka 2 15.10km (9.38 miles) 1908

SS12 Harju 2 2.27km (1.41 miles) 2030

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 2050

Saturday July 30

SS13 Ouninpohja 1 33.0km (20.50 miles) 0808

SS14 Päijälä 1 23.50km (14.60 miles) 0911

SS15 Pihlajakoski 1 14.51km (9.01 miles) 1034

SS16 Saalahti 1 4.40km (2.73 miles) 1152

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1242

SS17 Ouninpohja 2 33.0km (20.50 miles) 1448

SS18 Päijälä 2 23.50km (14.60 miles) 1551

SS19 Pihlajakoski 2 14.51km (9.01 miles) 1714

SS20 Saalahti 2 4.40km (2.73 miles) 1832

Service Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1922

Sunday July 31

SS21 Lempää 1 6.90km (4.28 miles) 0828

SS22 Oittila 1 10.20km (6.33 miles) 0921

SS23 Lempää 2 6.90km (4.28 miles) 1115

SS24 Oittila 2 10.20km (6.33 miles) 1308

Finish Jyväskylä Paviljonki 1413

Last year...

Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila clinched their first Rally Finland double (third win including their 2010 success) to set up a potential hat-trick this week. Latvala's victory 12 months ago was one of his best drives ever – when the rain came on the second day, it was him not team-mate Sebastien Ogier who took the time. On this occasion, the Frenchman had no answer to Latvala's speed through his home forests. After a miserable start to the season, Jari-Matti's win even tempted him into a Sunday night pint. Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle were the non-VW heroes of the event, running third in their DS 3 until they were caught out by a horribly wet corner in Jukojarvi. The gentlest of nudges damaged their suspension and allowed team-mate Mads Østberg through to the final podium step.

Result: 1 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 2h33m03.8s; 2 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +13.7s; 3 Mads Østberg/Jonas Andersson (DS 3 WRC) +1:36.8s.

Top 10 running order

- 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 9 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 4 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 5 Mads Østberg/Ola Fløene (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 3 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 12 Ott Tanak/Raigo Molder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 7 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (DS 3 WRC)
- 6 Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 16 Henning Solberg/Ilka Minor (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)

Leading WRC2 runners:

- 31 Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 32 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 33 Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 34 Marius Aasen/Veronica Engan (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 35 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 36 Quentin Gilbert/Renaud Jamoul (DS 3 R5)
- 38 Yoann Bonato/Denis Giraudet (DS 3 R5)
- 39 Karl Kruuda/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 40 Quentin Giordano/Thierry Salva (Peugeot 208T16)
- 41 Scott Pedder/Dale Moscatt (Škoda Fabia R5)

Leading WRC3 runners:

- 61 Fabio Andolfi/Manuel Fenoli (Peugeot 208R2)
- 62 Damiano de Tommaso/Paolo Rocca (Peugeot 208R2)
- 63 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjærmoen (DS 3 R3T)
- 64 Martin Koci/Lukas Kostka (DS 3 R3T)
- 65 Simone Tempestini/Giovanni Bernacchini (DS 3 R3T)
- 66 Vincent Dubert/Alexandre Coria (DS 3 R3T)

67 Terry Folb/Franck Lefloch (DS R3T)
68 Michael Burri/Anderson Levratti (Renault Clio RSR3T)
69 Juuso Nordgren/Mikael Korhonen (DS 3 R3T)
70 Romain Martel/Vanessa Lemoine (DS 3 R3T)

Leading Junior DDFT runners:

101 Bernardo Sousa/Hugo Magalhães (Ford Fiesta R2T)
102 Max Vatanen/Maxime Vilmot (Ford Fiesta R2T)
103 Osian Pryce/Dale Furniss (Ford Fiesta R2T)
104 Gus Greensmith/Alex Gelsomino (Ford Fiesta R2T)
106 Jon Armstrong/Noel O'Sullivan (Ford Fiesta R2T)

Stuart Loudon's key stage:

SS14/18 Päijälä 1 23.50km (14.60 miles)

It goes without saying, we'll all be watching Ouninpohja – especially running in the opposite direction – but there's a feeling this new stage could be an interesting one as well. Päijälä has been used in competition and testing a long time ago, but it's a new set of notes for everybody this week. From what I've seen, Päijälä is fairly standard Finnish fare: fast and in full-flight, but coming to the start of this one off the back of Ouninpohja (there's just a handful of road miles between them) will be interesting. When you've emerged from a legend like Ouninpohja, it's not unknown for a driver to drop tempo or concentration. Let's see...

Stuart will be watching... Kevin Abbring (and Seb Marshall) Hyundai i20 WRC #20

A couple of weeks ago, these boys had a weekend off. Now they're off the bench and in for Dani Sordo on the fastest and most exhilarating rally of them all. It's been a while since Kevin was out in these woods (2009) and Hyundai's i20 will be a wee bit quicker than the Renault Clio he used last time. As for Seb, this will be his fifth start in Finland and, no disrespect to Molly [Taylor] or Harry [Hunt], but this will be the fastest he's ever been between the trees. Can't wait to see the boys fly. #airmiles #milesintheair

Weather with you:

Starts warm, gets cooler. Starts dry, gets wetter. Temperatures between 17-24 degrees. Levels of rain between drizzle and flat-out pouring down.

The media week:

Wednesday July 27

0700-2100 accreditation open (Rally HQ, Jyväskylä Paviljonki)
0900-2200 media centre open (Rally HQ, Jyväskylä Paviljonki)

Thursday July 28

0700-2230 accreditation open
0700-2430 media centre open
1130-1200 M-Sport meet the team, service park
1200 meet the crews (top three from shakedown), service park

1300 FIA pre-event press conference, media centre
1400-1445 Hyundai media lounge, service park

Friday July 29

0600-2400 media centre open

2115 (approx) meet the top-three crews, service park

Saturday July 30

0630-2400 media centre open

1930 (approx) meet the top-three crews, service park

Sunday July 31

0700-2200 media centre open

1500 podium finish, service park

1545 post-event FIA press conference, media centre

Stuart's restaurant recommendation:

Two choices: Figaro (info@figaro-restaurant.com +358 20 766 9810) or Sokos Hotel Alexandra (over the railway line from service). Figaro is gorgeous Italian food, but it's pretty pricey and you'll need to book. The Sokos is a great fish, chips and pint of London Pride option which is slightly cheaper. Or should that be slightly less expensive...

Recent winners:

2006: Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautiainen (Ford Focus RS WRC 06)

2007: Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautiainen (Ford Focus RS WRC 07)

2008: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citröen C4 WRC)

2009: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Focus RS WRC 09)

2010: Jari-Matti Latvala/Miika Anttila (Ford Focus RS WRC 09)

2011: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (DS3 WRC)

2012: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (DS3 WRC)

2013: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

2014: Jari-Matti Latvala/Miika Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

2015: Jari-Matti Latvala/Miika Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

Most successful driver on Finland's round of the WRC:

Marcus Grönholm (7 wins)

World Rally Championship stat centre:

Rounds run: 7

Rallye Monte-Carlo (January 21-24), winners: Ogier/ Ingrassia; Rally Sweden

(February 4-7), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia; Rally Mexico (March 3-6), winners:

Latvala/Anttila; Rally Argentina (April 21-24), winners: Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle

(DS3 WRC); Rally of Portugal (May 19-22), winners: Paddon/Kennard; Rally

Italy (June 9-12), winners: Neuville/Gilsoul; Rally Poland (June 30-July 03),

Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger.

Stages completed: 126

Cancelled stages: 9

Accumulated winning time: 24h08m31.6s
Accumulated competitive distance: 2364.58 (1471.82 miles)
Accumulated liaison distance: 6785.75 (4219.16 miles)
Accumulated total distance: 9514.33 (5912.19 miles)
Longest stage of the season so far: Guanajuato (Rally Mexico) 80.00km
(49.71 miles)
Shortest stage of the season so far: Street Stage Guanajuato (Rally Mexico)
1.09km (0.67 miles)

Most WRC fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Ogier 34
- 2 Latvala 26
- 3 Neuville 16

Most WRC stages led in 2016

- 1 Ogier 31
- = Latvala 31
- 3 Meeke 22

Most WRC2 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Suninen 29
- 2 Evans 24
- 3 Tidemand 16

Most WRC2 stages led in 2016

- 1 Suninen 38
- 2 Tidemand 24
- 3 Evans 22

Most WRC3 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Fabre 41
- 2 Andolfi 23
- 3 Tempestini 22

Most WRC3 stages led in 2016

- 1 Fabre 41
- 2 Tempestini 27
- 3 Andolfi 20

Eight drivers have led WRC rounds; 12 have led WRC2 and seven have led WRC3.

WRC standings

- 1 Ogier 143pts
- 2 Mikkelsen 92pts
- 3 Paddon 72pts

WRC2 standings

- 1 Evans 80pts
- 2 Suninen 75pts
- 3 Fuchs 59pts

WRC3 standings

- 1 Fabre 79pts
- 2 Andolfi 52pts
- 3 Tempestini 50pts

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 84 rallies, 18 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.

Pictures courtesy of Red Bull Media House/Volkswagen Motorsport

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.