

The Loudon-clear guide to... **Rally Italia Sardegna**

The World Rally Championship moves past the halfway point with its annual summer trip to Sardinia next week. And rarely has the series been as finely poised as it is right now.

Hyundai star Thierry Neuville is on top coming into round seven, but he'll have M-Sport Ford's reigning world champion Sébastien Ogier hard on his heels as the Frenchman aims to take a fourth win of the season so far.

Courtesy of a road surface which will clean and get faster and faster, the more likely winners are probably found further down the order on Friday. Six, seven and eight on the road are: Elfyn Evans, Jari-Matti Latvala and Craig Breen – those three are in a strong position to make the most of the grip on offer on Friday. And each of those three would dearly love to end Sunday on the top step.

It is, however, impossible to ignore the form man of the moment: Ott Tänak starts third on the road, determined to make up for his disappointment at an early bath in Portugal.

Rally Italia Sardegna in detail

FIA World Rally Championship round 7/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3

Date: Thursday June 7 – Sunday June 10

Based: Alghero

Service: Alghero

Stages: 20

Competitive distance: 313.46 (194.78 miles)

Liaison distance: 1072.92km (666.71 miles)

Total distance: 1386.38km (861.49 miles)

Shortest stage: SS13 Citta di Ittiri-Coros 1.40km (0.86 miles)

Longest stage: SS12/16 Monte Lerno 29.11km (18.08 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: UTC+2

Sunrise: 0551

Sunset: 2054

Shakedown:

The 3.34km (2.07 miles) shakedown stage is located at Olmedo, 15.95km (9.91 miles) from the service park in Alghero. The stage runs from 0800-1100 on Thursday June 7.

Rally Italia Sardegna itinerary

Thursday June 7

SS1 Ittiri Arena Show 2.00km (1.24 miles) 1800

Friday June 8

SS2 Tula 1 21.99km (13.66 miles) 0833
SS3 Castelsardo 1 14.52km (9.02 miles) 0948
SS4 Tergu-Osilo 1 14.14km (8.78 miles) 1037
SS5 Monte Baranta 1 10.78km (6.69 miles) 1148
Service Alghero 1224
SS6 Tula 2 21.99km (13.66 miles) 1502
SS7 Castelsardo 2 14.52km (9.02 miles) 1617
SS8 Tergu-Osilo 2 14.14km (8.78 miles) 1706
SS9 Monte Baranta 2 10.78km (6.69 miles) 1824
Service Alghero 1900

Saturday June 9

SS10 Coiluna-Loelle 1 14.95km (9.28 miles) 0838
SS11 Monti di Ala 1 28.52km (17.72 miles) 0933
SS12 Monte Lerno 1 29.11km (18.08 miles) 1011
Service Alghero 1243
SS13 Citta di Ittiri-Coros 1.40km (0.86 miles) 1411
SS14 Coiluna-Loelle 2 14.95km (9.28 miles) 1608
SS15 Monti di Ala 2 28.52km (17.72 miles) 1703
SS16 Monte Lerno 2 29.11km (18.08 miles) 1741
Service Alghero 2015

Sunday June 10

SS17 Cala Flumini 1 14.06km (8.73 miles) 0845
SS18 Sassari-Argentiera 1 6.96km (4.32 miles) 0938
Regroup Portotorres 1025
SS19 Cala Flumini 2 14.06km (8.73 miles) 1112
SS20 Sassari-Argentiera 2 6.96km (4.32 miles) 1218
Finish Alghero 1415

2017 Rally Italia Sardegna result:

WRC: 1 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC) 3h25m15.0s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttilla (Toyota Yaris WRC) +12.3s; 3 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +1m07.7s **WRC2:** Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5). **WRC3** Nil Solans/Miquel Ibáñez (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)
3 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Ford Fiesta WRC)
12 Mads Østberg/Torstein Eriksen (Citroën C3 WRC)
6 Hayden Paddon/Seb Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)

Leading WRC championship positions:

1 Neuville 119pts; 2 Ogier 100; 3 Tänak 72; 4 Dani Sordo 60; 5 Lappi 55; 6 Mikkelsen 54; 7 Evans 45; 8 Kris Meeke 43; 9 Latvala 31; 10 Breen 26, etc

Leading WRC2 runners:

31 Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5)
32 Takamoto Katsuta/Marko Salminen (Ford Fiesta R5)
33 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Škoda Fabia R5)
34 Fabio Andolfi/Simone Scattolin (Škoda Fabia R5)
35 Lukasz Pieniazek/Przemyslaw Mazur (Škoda Fabia R5)
36 Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais (Hyundai i20 R5)
37 Hiroki Arai/TBA (Ford Fiesta R5)
38 Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroën C3 R5)

Leading WRC2 championship positions:

1 Tidemand 93pts; 2 Kopecky 50; 3 Greensmith 40; 4 Heller 31; 5 Pieniazek 30; 6 Katsuta 29; 7 Veiby 27; 8 Solans 24; 9 Loubet 20; 10 Arai/Eddie Sciorsere/Yoann Bonato 18, etc

WRC3 entry:

61 Jean-Baptiste Franceschi/Romain Courbon (Ford Fiesta R2)
62 Enrico Brazzoli/Luca Beltrame (Peugeot 208 R2)
63 Taisko Lario/Tatu Hamalainen (Peugeot 208 R2)
64 Louise Cook/Stefan Davis (Ford Fiesta R2)

Leading WRC3 championship positions:

1 Denis Rådström 62pts; 2 Emil Bergkvist 43; 3 Franceschi 39; 4 Terry Folb 28; 5 Brazzoli 25; 6 Taisko Lario 19, etc

Leading JWRC championship positions:

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

Stuart Loudon's key stage: SS12/16 Monte Lerno 1 29.11km (18.08 miles)

In isolation, the Monte Lerno stage is a big, big deal. But when you remember the crews will come into this one literally minutes after they're out of Monti di Ala – the flying finish is just 620 metres before the start of Monte Lerno – then it makes for a seriously tough test. There will barely be time for the tyres and brakes to cool down before they're put to the sword again.

Depending on the weather, the temperatures and cloud cover – and on where drivers are running on the road and how much gravel is sitting on the surface – it's not unheard of for the soft tyre to be thrown into the mix for the morning. Unless there's heavy rain (it was wall-to-wall rain on the island just over a month ago), the choice will, most likely, be more straightforward for the afternoon: five or six hard compounds.

Stuart will be watching... 8 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

When Ott and Martin jumped in the harbour 12 months ago they had plenty to celebrate – they had won a round of the World Rally Championship for the first time. Sardinia's always been a special place for Tänak after he scored his first ever WRC podium here six years ago.

This year he comes with a new car and a new team, but he's on red-hot form. His speed to win Argentina was exceptional. He missed out last time in Portugal after the Toyota Yaris WRC bounced off some rocks and damaged the cooling package – but that's only going to make him all the more determined to take back-to-back wins on the Italian island.

Weather with you:

Indications are that it's not going to be a 30-plus scorcher this time around; more likely mid-20s, lots of sunshine and the chance of the odd shower just ahead of the weekend.

Most successful driver on Rally Italia Sardegna:

Sébastien Loeb (4 wins)

2018 World Rally Championship stats...

Stages planned: 108

Stages run: 108

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 29; 2 Neuville 20; 3 Ogier 15; 4 Meeke/Lappi 8; 6 Sordo/Loeb 6; 8 Breen/Evans/Mikkelsen/Latvala 4, etc

WRC stages led in 2018:

1 Ogier 39; 2 Neuville 33; 3 Tänak 17; 4 Sordo 9; 5 Meeke/Loeb 3; 7

Paddon/Mikkelsen 2.

WRC2 fastest times in 2018:

1 Tidemand 43; 2 Rovannerä 16; 3 Kopecky 12; 4 Katsuta 10; 5 Gus Greensmith/Suninen/Veiby 6; 8 Lefebvre 4; 9 Kevin Abbring 3; 10 Eric Camilli/Jari Huttunen/Arai/Juuso Nordgren 2, etc

WRC2 stages led in 2018:

1 Tidemand 42; 2 Kopecky 26; 3 Katsuta 17; 4 Lefebvre 8; 5 Rovannerä 7; 6 Greensmith 5; 7 Camilli 3; 8 Nordgren 1.

JWRC fastest times in 2018:

1 Bergkvist 18; 2 Rådström 14; 3 Ken 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 Tom Williams 23; 2 Franceschi 18; 3 Bergkvist 17; 4 Rådström 11; 5 Torn 10; 6 Taisko, etc

WRC3 stages led in 2018:

1 Rådström 17; 2 Williams 21; 3 Franceschi 16; 4 Bergkvist 12; 5 Brazzoli 7; 6 Folb 5.

Rally Italia Sardegna media contact:

Marco Giordo
m.giordo@rallyitaliasardegna.com

Stuart Loudon media contact:

Sandra Evans
Sandra@wordspr.com
+ 44 7887 693993

Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 101 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