

## The Loudon-clear guide to... **RallyRACC Rally de España Catalunya-Costa Daurada**

So, to business. And the business end of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship. Who's your money on? For much of the summer, it looked like Thierry Neuville was writing his name on this year's silverware, but the autumn's brought a revival in Sébastien Ogier's fortunes; a Dayinsure Wales Rally GB victory has rocketed the Frenchman back into contention for a sixth straight title.

Ott Tänak? He's gone in the opposite direction. Where Neuville and Ogier stumbled and left the door open for him to win in Turkey, so the Estonian slipped up last time out. Just when he looked to have Wales won and one hand on the top of the table, his Toyota Yaris WRC smashed into mother earth, damaged and drained the radiator and left him lying at the side of the road genuinely questioning the sweetness of Sweet Lamb.

Nothing short of victory and a peach of a Power Stage will be enough for Ott in Salou this week.

We couldn't ask for a better end to the season. It's going to be an absolute thriller. With just seven points between leader Thierry and second-placed Sébastien (Ott's 21 points off the lead), there's no hope of anybody throttling back and playing a percentage game. If they want this title, they're going to have to fight to the very end for it.

On a personal level, I'm delighted to be back working with the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team this week. I've competed on Rally of Spain three times and finished on the WRC2 podium twice. It's a great event. Unfortunately, I won't be reading pacenotes this week, but it's always a real honour and privilege to work among the world champions from Cumbria.

### **RallyRACC Rally de España Catalunya-Costa Daurada in detail**

FIA World Rally Championship round 12/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3

Date: Thursday October 25 – Sunday October 28

Based: PortAventura

Service: PortAventura

Stages: 18

Competitive distance: 331.58km (206.04 miles)

Liaison distance: 1164.15km (723.40 miles)

Total distance: 1495.73km (929.44 miles)

Shortest stage: SS14 Salou 2.24km (1.39 miles)

Longest stage: SS4/7 La Fatarella-Vilalba 1 38.85km (24.14 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: BST+1

Sunrise: 0818

Sunset: 1900

### **Shakedown:**

The 2.00km (1.24 miles) shakedown stage is located in Salou, 3.02km (1.87 miles) from the service park in Deeside. The stage runs from 0800-1330 on Thursday October 25.

### **RallyRACC Rally de España Catalunya-Costa Daurada itinerary**

Thursday October 25

SS1 Barcelona 3.20km (1.98 miles) 1808

Parc ferme PortAventura 2008

Friday October 26

SS2 Gandesa 1 7.00km (4.34 miles) 0933

SS3 Pesells 1 26.59km (16.52 miles) 1006  
SS4 La Faterella-Vilalba 1 38.85km (24.14 miles) 1120  
Service PortAventura 1335  
SS5 Gandesa 2 7.00km (4.34 miles) 1523  
SS6 Pesells 2 26.59km (16.52 miles) 1556  
SS7 La Faterella-Vilalba 2 38.85km (24.14 miles) 1710  
Service PortAventura 1910  
Parc ferme 1920

Saturday October 27

SS8 Savallà 1 14.12km (8.77 miles) 0823  
SS9 Querol 1 21.26km (13.21 miles) 0908  
SS10 El Montmell 1 24.40km (15.16 miles) 1008  
Service PortAventura 1133  
SS11 Savallà 2 14.12km (8.77 miles) 1326  
SS12 Querol 2 21.26km (13.21 miles) 1410  
SS13 El Montmell 2 24.40km (15.16 miles) 1508  
SS14 Salou 2.24km (1.39 miles) 1700  
Service PortAventura 1720  
Parc ferme 1815

Sunday October 28

SS15 Riudecanyes 1 16.35km (10.15 miles) 0735  
SS16 Santa Marina 1 14.50km (9.01 miles) 0838  
Service PortAventura 0945  
SS17 Riudecanyes 2 16.35km (10.15 miles) 1050  
SS18 Santa Marina 2 14.50km (9.01 miles) 1218  
Finish PortAventura 1341

### **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)  
7 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC)  
4 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)  
6 Dani Sordo/Carlos del Barrio (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)  
11 Craig Breen/Scott Martin (Citroën C3 WRC)  
3 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Ford Fiesta WRC)  
2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC)  
10 Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C3 WRC)

### **Leading WRC championship positions:**

1 Neuville 189pts; 2 Ogier 182; 3 Tänak 168; 4 Lappi 104; 5 Latvala 98; 6 Mikkelsen 83; 7 Dani Sordo 60; 8 Breen 59; 9 Paddon 55; 10 Suninen 54, etc

### **WRC manufacturer championship positions:**

1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 317; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 297pts; 3 M-Sport Ford WRT 273; 4 Citroën Total Abu Dhabi WRT 187.

### **Leading WRC2 runners:**

31 Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5)  
32 Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (Škoda Fabia R5)

33 Lukasz Pieniazek/Przemyslaw Mazur (Škoda Fabia R5)  
34 Fabio Andolfi/Simone Scattolin (Škoda Fabia R5)  
35 Jari Pekka Huttunen/Antti Juhani Limaketo (Hyundai i20 R5)  
36 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Citroën C3 R5)  
37 Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroën C3 R5)  
38 Pierre-Louis Loubet/ Vincent Landais (Hyundai i20 R5)  
39 Takamoto Katsuta/Marko Saminen (Ford Fiesta R5)  
40 Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (Ford Fiesta R5)  
47 Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5)  
49 Petter Solberg/Veronica Engan (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5)

**Leading WRC2 championship positions:**

1 Kopecky 125pts; 2 Pontus Tidemand 111; 3 Gus Greensmith 70; 4 Rovanner 65; 5 Pieniazek 56; 6 Andolfi 50, etc

**WRC3 entry:**

61 Taisko Lario/Tatu Hatamalainen (Peugeot 208 R2)  
62 Enrico Brazzoli/Luca Beltrame (Peugeot 208 R2)  
63 Louise Cook/Stefan Davis (Ford Fiesta R2)  
64 Amaury Molle/Renaud Herman (Peugeot 208 R2)

**Leading WRC3 championship positions:**

1 Jean-Baptiste Franceschi 79pts; 2 Lario 68; 3 Dennis Rådström 62; 4 Emil Bergkvist 61; 5 Brazzoli 55; 6 Ken Torn 33, etc

**Stuart Loudon's key stage:** SS4 La Faterella-Vilalba 1 38.85km (24.14 miles)

We might be in Spain a little bit later in the year, but there's still the potential for some reasonably high temperatures, with 25 degrees forecast for Friday. If that happens then tyre management on the event's longest stage could be key.

The Tarmac sections in this Friday late morning test will work the tyres hard. When you come into the twistier places, especially the downhill stuff, even from the co-driver's seat, you can feel the tyres moving on the blocks – it's a really strange sensation. It almost feels like the car's floating from corner to corner. The car is more progressive and slides quite nicely, but there's none of the precision you'd want when you're turning the car in.

Friday's gravel stages are all quite strange because of the frequency of asphalt sections. You go from the noise and drama of competing on the dirt to the relative peace and quiet – apart from the tyres complaining – on the Tarmac. It's weird.

After the second run through this stage in the afternoon, we get one of the most entertaining services of the season, as the teams change the cars from gravel to asphalt specification. They will complete this job in one hour and 15 minutes – the sort of work that would normally take an awful lot longer. I love this service, it's exciting to watch, especially if one of the teams has got a bit of a rush on because a car's been in a ditch or taken on some damage on board in the afternoon.

**Stuart will be watching...** #10 Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C3 WRC)

When we've got such an amazing championship fight going as this one, it takes a special crew to deflect attention away from the likes of Neuville, Ogier and Tänak. Eight time Rally of Spain winners Sébastien Loeb and Daniel Elena are that crew.

Like the rest of the watching world, I can't wait to see what the nine-time world champions can achieve on their third and final WRC outing of the season. Can they win? Of course they can. If the weather's warm and dry, they'll be in a near-perfect place on Friday's gravel roads; starting further down the order, they'll be on roads swept clean of loose gravel revealing a faster racing line beneath.

And when the weekend comes, well, we can be confident of their pace on fast, flowing lanes through the Tarragona hills. And the C3 WRC doesn't have a bad record in this part of the world... Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle dominated this event in one of the Versailles-built Citroëns last year.

### **Weather with you:**

Generally sunny with temperatures tumbling from 25 to around 17 as the event moves through the week.

### **Most successful driver on RallyRACC Rally de España Catalunya-Costa Daurada:**

Sébastien Loeb (8 wins)

### **2018 World Rally Championship stats...**

Stages planned: 209

Stages run: 209

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 Turkey 312.44km (194.15 miles)

### **WRC fastest times in 2018:**

1 Tänak 58; 2 Neuville 36; 3 Ogier 34; 4 Latvala 16; 5 Lappi 15; 6 Mikkelsen 12; 7 Sordo 9; 8 Kris Meeke 8; 9 Breen 7; 10 Sébastien Loeb 6, etc

WRC stages led in 2018:

1 Tänak 74; 2 Ogier 63; 3 Neuville 35; 4 Mikkelsen 11; 5 Sordo 9; 6 Østberg 4; 7 Meeke/Loeb 3; 9 Paddon/Breen/Latvala 2, etc.

### **WRC2 fastest times in 2018:**

1 Rovannerä 49; 2 Tidemand 47; 3 Kopecky 32; 4 Veiby 17; 5 Takamoto 10; 6 Stéphane Lefebvre/Kajetanowicz 9, etc

WRC2 stages led in 2018:

1 Kopecky 56; 2 Rovannerä 50; 3 Tidemand 42; 4 Takamoto 17; 5 Lefebvre 14; 6 Camilli 8, etc.

### **WRC3 fastest times in 2018:**

1 Franceschi 42; 2 Williams 41; 3 Bergkvist/Lario 30; 5 Torn 23; 6 Rådström 14, etc

WRC3 stages led in 2018:

1 Williams 43; 2 Franceschi 32; 3 Rådström 28; 4 Lario 24; 5 Bergkvist 22; 6 Torn 21, etc.

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**Stuart Loudon** is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 103 rallies, 21 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](http://ewrc-results.com)*