



Press information
For immediate release

2008 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 1: Rallye Monte Carlo

Day: 4
Date: Sunday 27 January
Weather: Clear, sunny, -1°C (Col du Torini) climbing to 12°C (Monaco)
Stages: SS15 – La Bollene Vesubie – Moulinet, 22.68Km
 SS16 – Luceram – Loda, 15.34Km
 SS17 – La Bollene Vesubie – Moulinet, 22.68Km
 SS18 – Luceram – Loda, 6.25Km
 Service H
 SS19 – Monaco – circuit, 2.70Km
 Podium

Results:	Hirvonen	Latvala	Al Qassimi
SS15	6th	4th	13th
SS16	7th	3rd	12th
SS17	5th	6th	13th
SS18	4th	2nd	12th
SS19	5th	3rd	12th
FINAL	2nd	12th	16th

Summary

The final day of this year's Rallye Monte Carlo was a relatively static affair. With the gaps between drivers, few were pushing too hard. Mikko Hirvonen had relaxed his pace slightly to ensure that he finished second and took the points that went with it. Team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala set a string of top five times on the final day to redress the time lost through his technical issues and his accident on the third day. He climbed steadily up the leaderboard to arrive at the podium in 16th place.

Abu Dhabi driver Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi enjoyed the final day of the event, with his confidence increasing with every kilometre following his accident on the second day. He set times just outside the top ten to arrive at parc ferme in Monaco having climbed up to 16th place overall. However, more important was the amount of experience and knowledge he gained during the four days of the event, widely regarded as the most technically challenging rally of the WRC season.





Quotes

Sheikh Khalid Al Qassimi:

"This has been a very good rally – incredibly difficult and technical but very good. It is extremely testing with the variety of conditions, many of which I haven't seen before – tarmac, ice, snow, damp and dirty roads. I was very happy to be in the top ten after the first day and was very encouraged by the pace, compared with the other drivers. My mistake obviously cost us time and ultimately, some positions but the main priority remains to gain experience and after the team did such a good job of repairing the car, I was able to continue doing that.

"I was able to re-build my confidence on the final day of the event and was again encouraged by the pace. Having Michael in the car again with me has definitely worked. We have made some small changes to my pace note system which seems to have had benefits already and we know that there are other improvements we can make. I am now looking forward to Sweden in two weeks time, to continue representing Abu Dhabi in the WRC."

Ahmed Hussein, Deputy Director General, Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority:

"This is an excellent result to kick-start the 2008 season for Abu Dhabi. For Mikko to finish second on this event which many regard as Loeb's own is a fantastic achievement and it was a great moment to see him and his Abu Dhabi-branded Ford Focus RS on the podium. It is a shame that both Jari-Matti and Sheikh Khalid lost time through their problems but both showed great determination and skill in reaching the finish and this once again demonstrates exactly the reasons that Abu Dhabi has joined the WRC. I am sure that this season will prove even more successful than last year in our objective of developing awareness of Abu Dhabi as a world-class destination to the global WRC fanbase."

Next event:

Round two of the 2008 FIA World Rally Championship takes the crews to Sweden, for the Uddeholm Swedish Rally. The season's only true snow rally, the Swedish traditionally sees the cars flat out and sideways over crests, running on studded tyres on compacted snow and ice. The event runs from 7 February to 10 February and is based in the town of Karlstad.

Abu Dhabi Fact of the Day:

Arguably the most famous rally in the WRC, the Rallye Monte Carlo finished in the principality of Monaco, with a stage around the famous Grand Prix circuit. The surface area of Monaco is 195 hectares or 1.95 square kilometres. The surface area of Abu Dhabi is 67,340 square kilometres, meaning you could fit 34,533 Monacos inside Abu Dhabi.





Note to Editors:

About Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is the largest of the seven emirates which comprise the United Arab Emirates (UAE), forming 80% of the country's land-mass and is home to the capital, Abu Dhabi City. The Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) has embarked on a dynamic campaign to develop a world-class infrastructure as an up-scale sporting, cultural and leisure destination, aimed at discerning visitors. In rallying, Abu Dhabi has formed a ground-breaking partnership with the BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team in the FIA World Rally Championship, as well as becoming Official Destination Partner to the championship itself. The nation hosts a round of the FIA Historic Rally Championship and the UAE also hosts the final round of the MERC. Abu Dhabi has launched a host of global sporting initiatives, including the European Tour-backed Abu Dhabi Golf Championship and from 2009, it will host a round of the FIA Formula One World Championship. The nation has recently announced plans to welcome some of the world's most famous cultural icons, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.



FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
FIA MIDDLE EAST RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP