



***FIA World Rally Championship  
Corona Rally Mexico, 28 Feb-2 March 2008  
Event Preview***

**Munchi's kick off campaign Mexican style**

The Munchi's Ford World Rally Team kick start their 2008 FIA World Rally Championship campaign next week on the third round at Corona Rally Mexico. As in 2008, the team will again be contesting ten championship rounds under manufacturer team status.

Federico Villagra/Jorge Pèrez Companc are back again for this year's challenge but will be partnered by Henning Solberg/Cato Menkerud in Mexico with Munchi's co-owner Luis Pèrez Companc only taking on three rounds in 2008 due to business and other motorsport commitments.

This will be the Argentine's first attempt at Rally Mexico on a surface much similar to South American soil where his driving aptitude was formed. Jorge Pèrez Companc will again partner Villagra as the Munchi's co-owner looks to further his ability on the pacenotes.

Last year was a super year for Villagra who was picked up by the Munchi's squad after an outstanding display on Rally Argentina where he finished ninth overall winning the GpN class. 'Coyote', as he is also known by, won the Argentine Rally Championship in 2006 and 2007 and will again throw down a contest alongside his WRC campaign in search of the hat-trick.

With a place open to score for the Munchi's Ford WRT Solberg has taken on the roll and will be the first non-Argentine driver in history to score points for the team. This will be the Norwegian's third attempt at an event where he has had mixed fortunes but on both occasions finished inside the top-ten standings.

Yet to score a drivers' point this year, Solberg will be hungry in Mexico after running third in the Swedish Rally earlier this month before a big 'off' ended his snowy challenge. It will be a warm affair in Mexico with temperatures expected to climb over the 30 centigrade mark – something Solberg is aware of as he has upped his pre-event training regimen.

This hard-packed gravel event is made trickier by the extreme high altitudes at which stages are run above sea-level. This causes world rally cars to lose anywhere up to 100bhp with the thinner air compromising the effectiveness of the start-of-the-art air cooling systems. With this in mind it becomes a real battle of technical driving ability made tougher by the high temperatures which can reach well over 40 centigrade inside the cockpit.

Competitors will again head to the UNESCO world heritage listed town of Guanajuato for the ceremonial start which saw tens of thousands of people flock to last year. The course this year will offer 354 kilometres of competitive distance almost identical to last year's compact route with just two stages on day 1 slightly modified.



This will be the first event for Villagra on a Pirelli tyre and one without mouse inserts. Keeping it neat and tidy will be the key here for the Argentine as rocks and boulders come into play as they line sections of the loose gravel stages.

**Munchi's Ford World Rally Team Driver Federico Villagra said:**

"I know this is a difficult rally which can be very hard on the drivers and maybe even harder for me being my first time here. It will be great to have Henning in the team, he has experience of this event and has done well in the past so I will take all the information I can from him. This will also be my first time behind the wheel of a Focus WRC07 and I am really looking towards driving it. It has had a lot of success over the last year and I think it will be a great experience having the opportunity to drive it. I did a lot of rallies last year in both the WRC and at home in Argentina so I think this will help with my challenge this year and with the feeling in the car."

**Munchi's Ford World Rally Team Driver Henning Solberg said:**

"I'm looking forward to this rally and getting back onto gravel. I have a very good feeling now after Sweden because we were very quick there. I think I can do quite well here in Mexico and I will be aiming for the top-three because I have a very good road position on Friday and if it doesn't rain it will help me a lot. I have been doing some more training for this event because it can be very demanding on the body especially with the thin air. I struggled a bit last year with feeling because of the engine power loss with the altitude but this year we have an 07 Focus so we will see what this does. I am going to try my best here and hopefully we can finish in the points which will help both myself and the Munchi's team."

**Event information**

Date: 28 Feb - 2 March 2008

Round: 3 of 16 FIA World Rally Championship

Based: Leon, Mexico

Surface: Gravel

Total distance: 830.83km (competitive 353.75km, liaison 477.08km)

Number of stages: 20

Longest stage: 29.9km (stages 9, 12)

Highest elevation on stage: 2737 metres (stages 2, 5)

Permanent Service Park: Poliforum, Leon

Ceremonial start: Thursday 27 February, 20:00 at Teatro Juarez, Guanajuato

Event Finish: Sunday 2 March, 13:00, Poliforum, Leon