



**FIA World Rally Championship  
Corona Rally Mexico, 2 March 2008  
Final Report**

**Magic Munchi's sweep up points in Mexico**

The Munchi's Ford World Rally Team have begun their 10 event campaign of the FIA World Rally Championship in fine form with both crew finishing inside the top-ten at this weekend's Corona Rally Mexico. The result now sees the Munchi's Ford WRT move ahead of the Suzuki works outfit to occupy fifth in the Manufacturers' Championship.

Competing with the team for the first time Henning Solberg/Cato Menkerud proved a rally isn't over until the final time-card is handed in when they came back to finish fifth overall after losing nearly two minutes on the opening day. The Norwegian pair were running fourth for most of the final day until a puncture on the penultimate stage dropped them back to fifth. They also claimed the Munchi's first stage win for 2008 when they were fastest over the 23 kilometre *Derramadero 2* test.

Federico Villagra/Jorge Perez Companc have equalled their best ever result by finishing the event in seventh position after some quick times by the Argentine pair. This is the perfect start for Villagra on just his first WRC event of the year.

With both drivers scoring points it now moves Solberg to eighth in the Drivers' Championship while Villagra jumps to 12<sup>th</sup> with two points. The fine results did not come without their share of dramas however and the first was Solberg on Friday who almost retired from the event.

On the second stage of the rally the Norwegian lost almost two minutes and slipped down to 10<sup>th</sup> after hitting a rock and breaking a suspension component. Fortunately his mechanical intuition prevailed and, with the use of two basic allen-keys, he managed to sustain the damage and set the third fastest stage time on the following test.

Villagra was the next to face issues when struggled with his power-steering on stages 10 and 11 losing almost five minutes and dropping back to ninth overall. He also received a two minute road penalty before the rally began when there was some confusion on reconnaissance of the super special and the crew did eight passes of the 2.21 kilometre stage instead of the permitted four.

To his credit though the duel Argentine National Rally Champion refocused and reeled back the positions to finish the event in the points.

Extremely calm winds on Saturday meant organisers had to extend the gap between WRC competitors on every stage to three minutes due to the danger of lingering dust. All weekend the conditions stayed perfect for crews with temperatures rising up to the 30 degree centigrade mark throughout each day.



The next event for the Munchi's Ford WRT will be their home event of Rally Argentina. Solberg returns to the Stobart VK M-Sport Ford rally team as Luis Perez Companc/Jose Maria Volta return to the squad for their first WRC event in 2008.

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

"This rally has been lots of fun and to finish with my equal best WRC result is a fantastic way to start the year. The Munchi's team is now ahead of Suzuki in the Manufacturers' Championship after just one event which is a great start. Yesterday was very difficult when I lost my power-steering and had to do two stages without it; it is very tough on the arms and shoulders. The team mechanics did a great job to replace the power-steering on the car at service and we didn't get any penalty because we lost no time. Apart from this we have had no problems all rally and the car and new Pirelli tyres have felt really good. Now I will head to Rally Argentina, which is in my home town, full of confidence and hopefully we can go even better there."

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

"I was trying my best for fourth position today but unfortunately we got a puncture on the last four kilometres of stage 19 and I had to drive on it through the super special and lost too much time. OK, fifth is a good position and it is great that Mikko was the one who went into fourth as he needs the points more than I do. We have scored some good points for the Munchi's team here and now they are ahead of the Suzuki team. We hit a rock on the second stage of the rally and broke a part of the suspension but luckily I was able to temporarily fix the problem with two allen-keys. This meant we could go flat out on the next stage and I did that and finished in third position. We also won stage 14, which was a great feeling because I was going flat out then. I am now looking forward to Argentina and to see if we can get on the podium there."

**Final leaderboard**

1. S Loeb/D Elena	F	Citroen C4	3h33m29.9s
2. C Atkinson/S Prevot	AUS	Subaru Impreza	+1m06.1s
3. J-M Latvala/M Anttila	FIN	Ford Focus RS	+1m39.7s
4. M Hirvonen/J Lehtinen	FIN	Ford Focus RS	+3m38.7s
<b>5. H Solberg/C Menkerud</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Ford Focus RS</b>	<b>+4m57.9s</b>
6. M Wilson/S Martin	GB	Ford Focus RS	+6m28.9s
<b>7. F Villagra/J P Companc</b>	<b>RA</b>	<b>Ford Focus RS</b>	<b>+19m03.0s</b>
8. R Trivino/C Salom	MEX	Peugeot 206	+21m07.9s
9. S Ogier/J Ingrassias	F	Citroen C2	+25m00.4s
10. J Molder/F Miclotte	EE	Suzuki Swift	+26m35.5s

**FIA WRC Manufacturer standings**

1. BP Ford Abu Dhabi WRT – 37 pts	2. Citroën Total WRT – 25 pts	=. Subaru WRT – 25 pts
4. Stobart VK M-Sport Ford – 19 pts	<b>5. Munchi's Ford WRT – 6pts</b>	6. Suzuki WRT – 5 pts



### FIA WRC Driver standings

1. M Hirvonen – 21 pts  
5. G Galli – 9 pts

2. S Loeb – 20 pts  
=. P Solberg – 9 pts

3. J-M Latvala – 16 pts  
7. F Duval – 5 pts

4. C Atkinson – 14 pts  
**8. H Solberg – 4 pts**