



FIA World Rally Championship Rally Argentina, 28-30 March 2008 Event Preview

High hopes for Munchi's home soil showdown

Round four of the 2008 FIA World Rally Championship kicks off next week on home soil for the Munchi's Ford World Rally Team. This will be the team's second of 10 events for the season and sees the return of co-owner Luis Pèrez Companc, and co-driver Josè Maria Volta, in the driver's seat for Rally Argentina.

Federico Villagra/Jorge Pèrez Companc will be looking to add to their brilliant start to the year after a well earned seventh overall in Mexico. Not only is this Villagra's home nation event, but it is also based in his place of residence, Villa Carlos Paz, making it an even greater occasion for the Argentine.

With Companc out of a rally car since Wales Rally GB last December he recently undertook a one and a half day test in the Greystoke forest near M-Sport's base in Cumbria, England. It was the first time he sampled the latest evolution of the Ford Focus RS WRC07 and fortunately dry conditions gave him a closer gauge to his home surface.

Along with his steady seventh in Mexico Villagra also won the opening round of the Argentine Rally Championship which he is defending the title of this year after two consecutive crowns in 2006 and 2007. The result on the opening round was a significant one with stages located in and around Córdoba; the base for this year's Rally Argentina.

This year Rally Argentina moves to a warmer part of the year in March and will offer competitors 352 kilometres of competitive stage distance through some of the most spectacular, lunar like landscape in the World Championship. Day three exhibits the most representative features of the event through the Traslasierra region.

Like Mexico the event runs high above sea level with altitudes over 2000 metres at the highest point of competition. Road position too will play a big factor this year especially if the predicted dry conditions for next week transpire.

This year's ceremonial start has been moved to the centre of Córdoba for the benefit of spectators who flock to this event. A new 3.5 kilometre super special has also been designed around the famous Córdoba stadium called *Camping San Martin* and will run once over each day.

Argentina is also home to the world famous Munchi's ice cream, which will be available in and around the service park in Villa Carlos Paz. Munchi's ice cream was the brainchild of Luis and Jorge's mother who discovered a greater tasting ice cream through the use of milk from a Jersey cow.



Munchi's Ford World Rally Team Driver Luis Pèrez Companc said:

"I am very anxious about this rally because I know how important it is to represent Argentina and show ourselves driving a car of the highest level of the WRC in our home event. Last year we had such a warm reception from the fans cheering us on and it really did make a big difference for us. We had some problems on the event last year but the final day was very good and our times showed this. This will be my first event back in a car since GB last year so it will take a little bit to get used to competition again. We recently had a test at M-Sport which will help a lot as the conditions were dry and we managed to get quite a few kilometres done."

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

"Scoring drivers' points in Mexico is a huge boost for me coming into Rally Argentina which is based in my home town, Villa Carlos Paz. It is always good to have a winning car that is why we are confident of having a good rally in Argentina. The idea is to score points for the Drivers' and Manufacturers' Championships using the experience that we have on this rally, especially now we are ahead of Suzuki in the standings. This will be the first time on my home event in a world rally car and I have lots of friends and family in Villa Carlos Paz so I am very excited about starting the event."

Event Information

Date: 28-30 March 2008

Round: 4 of 16 FIA World Rally Championship

Based: Villa Carlos Paz, Argentina

Stage surface: Gravel

Total stage distance: 352.07km

Number of stages: 21

Longest stage: 24.7km (stage 19)

Highest elevation on stage: 2195 metres (stage 20)

Central Service Park: Villa Carlos Paz

Shakedown Stage: 4.59km long at Villa Garcia-Cabalango

Ceremonial start: Córdoba