

The Loudon-clear guide to... Vodafone Rally of Portugal

This week's Vodafone Rally of Portugal has everything: a South American-conquering Kiwi king coming to Europe to face some French resistance and Finnish *sisu*; Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle back in their Abu Dhabi Total World Rally Team DS 3 WRC and a massive WRC2 entry.

Oh, and the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy and Junior WRC series get underway this week as well.

Enough? Thought so.

But the icing on the cake comes on Sunday: Fafe. That stage, that jump.

I haven't competed on the stages in the north of Portugal before, which is why I'm travelling out to the event. I want to have a look around, familiarise myself with the environment, the road surface, the stages, the weather, everything. So much of our sport's about experience and that's what I'm after this week.

That and the opportunity to attend what's certain to be another blockbusting round of the World Rally Championship!

My focus remains firmly on becoming a professional co-driver and finishing second on the Pirelli Carlisle Rally (British Rally Championship, round three) with Matthew Wilson only served to strengthen my determination to get there. Working with Matthew and M-Sport was unbelievable. That's what I want.

The rally ahead...

FIA World Rally Championship round 5/14

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3 – Junior WRC - DDFT

Date: May 19-22

Based: Matosinhos

Service: Exponor Exhibition Centre, Matosinhos

Stages: 19

Competitive distance: 368.00km (228.67 miles)

Liaison distance: 1315.90km (817.70 miles)

Total distance: 1683.90km (1046.37 miles)

Longest stage: Amarante SS12/15 37.67km (23.40 miles)

Shortest stage: Porto Street Stage SS8/9 1.85km (1.14 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: GMT +1

Language: Portuguese

Portugal population: 10.4m

Capital: Lisbon

Sunrise: 0609

Sunset: 2052

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Shakedown:

Shakedown is at Baltar, Paredes, 43.94km (27.30 miles) from service. The stage is 4.61km (2.86 miles) long and runs from 0730 on Thursday May 19.

Itinerary

Thursday May 19

Start Guimarães		1810
SS1 Lousada	3.36km (2.08 miles)	1901

Friday May 20

SS2 Ponte de Lima 1	27.44km (17.05 miles)	0930
SS3 Caminha 1	18.03km (11.20 miles)	1014
SS4 Viana do Castelo 1	18.70km (11.62 miles)	1103
Service Exponor		1330
SS5 Ponte de Lima 2	27.44km (17.05 miles)	1539
SS6 Caminha 2	18.03km (11.20 miles)	1623
SS7 Viana do Castelo 2	18.70km (11.62 miles)	1712
SS8 Porto Street Stage 1	1.85km (1.14 miles)	1903
SS9 Porto Street Stage 2	1.85km (1.14 miles)	1918
Service Exponor		1950

Saturday May 21

SS10 Baião 1	18.66km (11.59 miles)	0942
SS11 Marão 1	26.31km (16.34 miles)	1024
SS12 Amarante 1	37.67km (23.40 miles)	1152
Service Exponor		1325
SS13 Baião 2	18.66km (11.59 miles)	1532
SS14 Marão 2	26.31km (16.34 miles)	1614
SS15 Amarante 2	37.67km (23.40 miles)	1742
Service Exponor		1915

Sunday May 22

SS16 Vieira do Minho 1	22.47km (13.96 miles)	0704
SS17 Fafe 1	11.19km (6.95 miles)	0908
SS18 Vieira do Minho 2	22.47km (13.96 miles)	1004
SS19 Fafe 2	11.19km (6.95 miles)	1208
Finish Matosinhos		1410

Last year...

Jari-Matti Latvala and Miikka Anttila took the lead on the fourth stage and stayed there until the finish. The Finns put up a tremendous defence against their Volkswagen team-mates Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia, who went into the final day just 9.5 seconds down having swept the road at the front of the field for the first two days. Andreas Mikkelsen and Ola Fløene secured a podium lock-out for the German firm, with DS 3 WRC pair Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle fourth. Nasser Al-Attiyah won WRC2, while Quentin Gilbert took

the first Junior WRC counter of the season. Max Vatanen enjoyed similar success on round one of the Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy.

Result: 1 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 3h30m35.3s; 2 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +8.2s; 3 Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Fløene (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +28.6s.

Top 10 running order

- 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 2 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 5 Mads Østberg/Ola Fløene (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 9 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 4 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 12 Ott Tanak/Raigo Molderr (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 20 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 8 Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (DS 3 WRC)
- 16 Henning Solberg/Ilka Minor (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)

Leading WRC2 runners:

- 31 Elfyn Evans/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 32 Hubert Ptaszek/Maciek Szczepaniak (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 42 Nicolas Fuchs/Fernando Mussano (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 33 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 34 Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 35 Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari/Killian Duffy (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 40 Quentin Gilbert/Renaud Jamoul (DS 3 R5)
- 36 Yoann Bonato/Denis Giraudet (DS 3 R5)
- 39 Marius Aasen/Veronica Engan (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 41 Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5)

Leading Junior WRC/WRC3 runners:

- 61 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjærmoen (DS 3 R3-Max)
- 64 Vincent Dubert/Alexandre Coria (DS 3 R3-Max)
- 68 Mohamed Al Mutawaa/Stephen McAuley (DS 3 R3-Max)
- 76 Simone Tempestini/TBA (DS 3 R3-Max)
- 77 Terry Folb/Franck Lefloch (DS R3-Max)

Leading Junior DDFT runners:

- 101 Bernardo Sousa/Hugo Magalhães (Ford Fiesta R2T)
- 102 Max Vatanen/Jacques Julien Renucci (Ford Fiesta R2T)
- 103 Osian Pryce/Dale Furniss (Ford Fiesta R2T)
- 104 Gus Greensmith/Alex Gelsomino (Ford Fiesta R2T)
- 105 Jon Armstrong/Noel O'Sullivan (Ford Fiesta R2T)

Stuart Loudon's key stage:

SS2 Ponte de Lima 27.44km (17.05 miles)

There's really not a lot of science, rhyme or reason to this one. I remember a fair bit of action in here (including a zero car catching fire!) last year and I'm

sure there will be a few drivers looking to prove an early point after Rally Argentina. The first stage is always the one to try to put the marker down.

Stuart will be watching... Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau #8 DS 3 WRC
Where do we start? With 26 WRC2 crews, Juniors and DDFT as well as the main field, picking one driver was almost impossible! But Stéphane's the one for me. Fifth on the Monte was a good start to the year, but it's going to be fascinating to see what he can do with a great car and a very good position on the road. There's a big carrot dangling at the end of a great drive for this guy.

Weather with you:

Warm and sunny until Friday afternoon when cloud cover is expected. Temperatures ranging from 15-22 degrees during the day.

The media week:

Wednesday May 18

0800-2000 accreditation open, Exponor

0800-2000 media centre open, Exponor

1430 photo/video shoot with all team members, service park

1800 Volkswagen meet the team, service park

1830-1915 M-Sport meet the team, service park

1900-1945 Hyundai media lounge, service park

Thursday May 19

0800-2000 accreditation open, Exponor

0800-2200 media centre open, Exponor

1230 FIA pre-event press conference, media centre

Friday May 20

0800-1300 accreditation open, Exponor

0730-2300 media centre open, Exponor

2100 (approx) meet the top-three crews, service park

Saturday May 21

0730-2200 media centre open, Exponor

1930 (approx) meet the top-three crews, service park

Sunday May 22

0630-2200 media centre open, Exponor

1410 podium finish, Matosinhos

1630 post-event FIA press conference, media centre

Stuart's restaurant recommendation:

Restaurante O Paporico, Rua de Costa Cabral 2343, 4200 Porto (+351 22 540 0548). That place is great, but if you're not in the middle of Porto and closer to Matosinhos, just stand with your back to the sea and walk into town. Follow your nose, quite literally, to some of the best fish restaurants around –

all cooked on a grill outside.

Recent winners:

2006: Armindo Araújo/Miguel Ramalho (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IV)
2007: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2008: Luca Rosetti/Matteo Chiarcossi (Peugeot 207 S2000)
2009: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2010: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Citroën C4 WRC)
2011: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Citroën C4 WRC)
2012: Mads Østberg/Jonas Andersson (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
2013: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2014: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2015: Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

Most successful driver on Portugal's round of the WRC:

Markku Alén (5 wins), Sébastien Ogier (4 wins)

World Rally Championship stat centre:

Rounds run: 4

Rallye Monte-Carlo (January 21-24), winners: Ogier/ Ingrassia; Rally Sweden (February 4-7), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia; Rally Mexico (March 3-6), winners: Latvala/Anttila; Rally Argentina (April 21-24) winners: Hayden Paddon/John Kennard.

Stages completed: 67

Cancelled stages: 9

Accumulated winning time: 13h56m30.81

Accumulated competitive distance: 1369.88km (851.24 miles)

Accumulated liaison distance: 3556.71km (2210.13 miles)

Accumulated total distance: 5286.59km (3285.08 miles)

Longest stage of the season so far: Guanajuato (Rally Mexico) 80.00km (49.71 miles)

Shortest stage of the season so far: Street Stage Guanajuato (Rally Mexico) 1.09km (0.67 miles)

Most WRC fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Ogier 24
- 2 Latvala 20
- 3 Paddon 7

Most WRC stages led in 2016

- 1 Ogier 28
- = Latvala 28
- 3 Paddon 5

Most WRC2 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Evans 18
- 2 Suninen 13
- = Fuchs 13

Most WRC2 stages led in 2016

- 1 Evans 22
- 2 Suninen 17
- 3 Fuchs 11

Most WRC3 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Fabre 41
- 2 Ole Christian Veiby 8
- 3 Fabio Andolfi 7

Most WRC3 stages led in 2016

- 1 Fabre 41
- 2 Veiby 14
- 3 Andolfi 2

Six drivers have led WRC; eight have led WRC2 and three have led WRC3 so far this season.

WRC standings

- 1 Ogier 96pts
- 2 Paddon 57pts
- 3 Østberg 52pts

WRC2 standings

- 1 Evans 62pts
- 2 Ptaszek 42pts
- 3 Fuchs 37pts

WRC3 standings

- 1 Fabre 79pts
- 2 Veiby 25pts
- 3 Berfa 18pts

Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 52 rallies, 18 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.

Pictures courtesy of Red Bull Media House/Volkswagen Motorsport