



HANNINEN TAKES DOMINANT RALLY ARGENTINA WIN

Third consecutive podium for IRC leader - Skoda secures one-two-three finish

Juho Hanninen and Skoda have made it three different winners from three rounds of this year's Intercontinental Rally Challenge following a dominant victory on Rally Argentina, which finished with a spectacular superspecial stage through the streets of host town Carlos Paz earlier today (Sunday).

The Finn, who drives for the factory Skoda Motorsport team, builds his overall title lead to five points after claiming his first win of the season. Proof of the 28-year-old's impressive performance on the challenging gravel event was underlined by the fact he won 11 of the 15 special stages, despite having to run first on the road on the final day of the rally.

Hanninen's win also marked Skoda's maiden victory of the 2010 IRC and has given the Czech firm a 22-point lead in the IRC manufacturers' standings after three rounds.

Briton Guy Wilks finished runner-up after a strong drive, which helped him to cement his second place in the drivers' table. Wilks started Sunday's final leg intent on closing on overnight leader Hanninen but a minor brake problem on his Fabia S2000 cost him valuable time and meant he had to settle for second.

Kris Meeke, in a Peugeot 207, was also hamstrung by mechanical problems, an electronic issue contributing to an intermittent throttle glitch, which led to a fraught midday service while his Peugeot UK mechanics worked to rectify the problem. He looked set to hold on to third place until disaster struck on the penultimate stage of the event when a steering bolt broke and forced him to retire. Meeke's misfortune let in Jan Kopecky for third place to complete a one-two-three for Skoda.

Gabriel Pozzo finished as the top Argentine driver in fourth overall after edging ahead of countryman Federico Villagra on Sunday's fourth stage to secure the first IRC manufacturer championship points for Subaru. Pozzo's performance meant he also secured his second win in a row in the Argentinean championship, which ran alongside the main IRC event.

The Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Rally of Scotland

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Villagra reported that his M-Sport Ford Fiesta S2000, which he was using in competition for the first time, lacked outright pace on the sandy stages although he conceded he was still getting to grips with his car.

Bruno Magalhaes scored points for the third time this season in his Peugeot Portugal 207. He reported his car had struggled for power on the higher altitude stages but said he was satisfied at the progression he had made throughout the weekend.

Argentine Nicolas Madero held onto his overnight seventh place at the wheel of his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X. Paraguay's Diego Dominguez claimed the final point in eighth place in a similar Lancer with Alejandro Cancio and Juan Marchetto rounding out the top 10 in ninth and 10th respectively.

Claudio Menzi started the final day in ninth but incurred a 50-second penalty for leaving first service late after he missed his alarm call and failed to wake up in time. A front-right puncture, caused by hitting a rock on stage 11, added to his woes and dropped him to 11th.

Nasser Al-Attiyah's IRC debut ended in retirement when his Skoda Fabia ingested too much water going over a river crossing and triggered a misfire. Daniel Oliveira retired his Peugeot 207 with suspension damage after going off on stage 11.

Brazilian Rafael Tulio took the IRC 2WD Cup laurels in his Peugeot 206. He had trailed Argentine Pablo Pelaez initially but moved in front on stage five on Saturday when Pelaez damaged the front of his Honda Civic going through a water splash, which caused the engine to overheat.

Juho Hanninen was fastest on 11 of the 15 stages in Argentina

IRC STANDINGS

Drivers after round three of 12

- 1 Juho Hanninen (Finland) 24pts*
- 2 Guy Wilks (United Kingdom) 19pts*
- 3 Jan Kopecky (Czech Republic) 15pts*

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4 Kris Meeke (United Kingdom) 10pts
= Mikko Hirvonen (Finland) 10pts
6 Bruno Magalhaes (Portugal) 9pts
7 Nicolas Vouilloz (France) 6pts
8 Gabriel Pozzo (Argentina) 5pts
= Stephane Sarrazin (France) 5pts
10 Federico Villagra (Argentina) 4pts etc

Manufacturers after round three of 12

1 Skoda 46pts
2 Peugeot 24pts
3 M-Sport 14pts
4 Ralliart 6pts
5 Subaru 5pts

IRC 2WD Drivers after round three of 12

1 Kris Princen 10pts
= Marcos Tokarski 10pts
= Rafael Tulio 10pts
4 Pierre Campana 8pts
= Luis Gius 8pts
= Pablo Pelaez 8pts
= Luis Tedesco 8pts
8 Thomas Barral 6pts
= Ulysses Bertholdo 6pts
= Alicia Reina 6pts etc

IRC 2WD Manufacturers after round three of 12

1 Peugeot 36pts
2 M-Sport 22pts
3 Abarth 19pts
4 Honda 8pts
5 Skoda 5pts

NEXT ROUND: Rally Islas Canarias 'Trofeo El Corte Ingles', 29-April-1 May

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