



Sunday wrap: Loeb lands ninth title with victory

Sebastien Loeb secured his ninth FIA World Rally Championship crown - and Citroen's eighth manufacturers' title success - with WRC career victory number 75 on Rallye de France Alsace today

In emotional scenes at the finish of the final stage in his hometown of Haguenau, Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena celebrated victory by 15.5s ahead of factory Ford driver Jari-Matti Latvala.

“It’s incredible,” said Loeb, whose title was the 20th drivers’ crown scored by tyre firm Michelin. “We were dreaming about this moment at the start of the rally having lived this two years ago. Now we are here again with the victory and the championship in front of all these wonderful people. It’s not possible to get better than this, it was a dream all weekend in front of all these fans. We couldn’t believe the atmosphere two years ago, it was amazing then and it’s amazing now.”

With rain affecting the morning loop of three stages, and mud and damp sections a constant menace in the afternoon, Loeb, Latvala and Mikko Hirvonen - in the second factory Citroen and the only driver capable of denying Loeb the title - drove with caution throughout the day to finish in that order, a result that thrilled Latvala.

“To be honest it is my best Tarmac result,” said the Finn. “I have never ever been so close to Sebastien Loeb on a Tarmac rally if you think about the overall gap so I need to be happy.”

Citroen Junior driver Thierry Neuville was less circumspect than the leading trio, claiming a total of five stage wins as he climbed from sixth to fourth in impressive fashion, demoting Mads Ostberg and Dani Sordo in the process.

Adapta Fiesta pilot Ostberg took fifth - his best result on asphalt - but Sordo dropped out after a heavy impact on the sump guard of his MINI John Cooper Works WRC on stage 18 bent the engine mounting and moved the power steering pump, resulting in a loss of power steering fluid and failure on the Haguenau street stage.

Ott Tanak won the Power Stage in a strong sixth overall. M-Sport Fiesta team-mate Evgeny Novikov lost almost three minutes on stage 18 when he rolled into a field and suffered considerable delay trying to regain the road. Miraculously, Novikov’s car suffered cosmetic damage only and he was able to finish seventh.

Chris Atkinson finished eighth for WRC Team MINI Portugal with Martin Prokop ninth and Sebastien Chardonnet an impressive 10th on his first run in a DS3 WRC in the world championship.

Sebastien Ogier completes the top 10 in his Volkswagen Motorsport Super 2000-specification Skoda Fabia as a right-rear puncture slowed team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen on day one’s final stage and



dropped him behind Nasser Al-Attiyah. Sepp Wiegand, in a third Volkswagen-run Skoda, is 14th and the top German driver Sebastien Ogier beat team-mate and fellow Skoda Fabia Super 2000 driver Andreas Mikkelsen to 11th overall in the battle to be top Volkswagen Motorsport driver. Multiple World Touring Car champion Yvan Muller was 14th after going fourth quickest on stage 18. Former Le Mans 24 Hours winner Romain Dumas finished 16th in a similar MINI.

Brazil World Rally Team's Daniel Oliveira went off the road on stage 18, while countryman Paulo Nobre failed to complete stage 21. Petter Solberg restarted under Rally 2 rules following his crash on day two but finished outside of the top 20 in his works Ford. However, there was no restart for Qatar World Rally Team's Nasser Al-Attiyah after he also went off the road on Saturday.