



CITROËN TOTAL WORLD RALLY TEAM

2009 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

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Rally Argentina (April 23-26, 2009) – Preview

Citroën looking forward to Argentine fervour

The Citroën Total World Rally Team makes the journey out to the Rally Argentina with unfeigned enthusiasm. The cocktail of quality stages, stunning landscapes, omnipresent spectators and its recent record of top results in South America makes this a rally apart for the team. After claiming the first four rounds of 2009, Sébastien Loeb and Daniel Elena will be looking to extend their current unbeaten run, while Dani Sordo and Marc Marti will be ready to pounce on the slightest opportunity and will no doubt enjoy special support from the local fans.

Not only is Rally Argentina a legendary round of the World Championship, but it has also tended to be happy hunting ground for Citroën. The Satory-based squad has won every edition since 2004, with Sébastien Loeb and Daniel Elena following up the success of Carlos Sainz and Marc Marti with a score of four consecutive victories.

The Franco-Monegasque pair has also notched up a run of four straight wins since the start of the 2009 WRC campaign. "It's the best start we've ever had to any season," notes Sébastien. "In South America, we don't really have any other choice than to go for victory. Rally Argentina holds so many special memories for us, and that's not just because we have won the past four events. I really enjoy the stages and the spectators make the atmosphere unique. We know we can count on the same sort of welcome that we were given two weeks ago in Portugal, and it's always nice to see the passion of the people of the different countries we visit. There are spectators everywhere: at service, on the road sections and on the stages. You practically don't need a roadbook because the route is picked out for you by the crowds!"

Sébastien and Daniel finished on top after last year's particularly wet event: "That wasn't an easy win. Our hard compound gravel tyres weren't really suited to the conditions on certain stages and we nearly didn't make it to the finish. This year, we will have a soft version of the Pirelli Scorpion and that's a good thing. It will no doubt be more versatile, although it could wear very quickly if the weather turns out to be very hot. But Pirelli have done a first class job. They faced a big challenge and have come up with a range of tyres that are both competitive and strong. For example, there was concern when run-flat mousse was dropped, but that's no longer an issue."

The 2009-specification C4 WRC made its debut in Portugal where it kicked off its career with a win which, according to Sébastien, is a promising omen for the rest of the season: "The Rally de Portugal was fairly typical of the terrain we find in the WRC. Every event is different, but a car which goes well in the Algarve is also likely to be quick in Argentina, Sardinia, Greece and Poland. The Argentine stages feature a fairly sandy surface, which makes them very slippery. Technically, I believe the 2009-specification C4 WRC marks a step forward on the suspension front in certain conditions, and the engine is more drivable, too."



Dani Sordo and Marc Marti finished on the podium last year in Argentina and will be out to repeat that performance this time round. "Like Portugal, it's a rally where we tend to feel pretty much at home," says the Spaniard. "I found the 2008 event to be very difficult. I hope the current fine weather in Villa Carlos Paz continues. Our objective will be the same as it has been on recent events, and that will be to score as many Manufacturers' points as we can for Citroën."

Three questions to Dani Sordo

With Cyprus and Portugal now behind you, how do you judge your performance on the loose so far this year?

"I wasn't totally happy in Cyprus. There were too many slow portions and very little grip, which wasn't really to my liking. I didn't feel totally comfortable. I had a very good feeling with my Citroën C4 WRC in Portugal, though. It was very easy to drive and I especially enjoyed the stages which featured faster portions. The recently-homologated new version of the car is an improvement. You can feel the difference regarding both the rear suspension and the engine."

The next round takes you to Argentina where you have many fans. What sort of result will you be targeting?

"Rally Argentina is a great event. The stages are really interesting, both for the crews and the spectators, with great roads and some breathtaking landscapes. The stages are very varied, too. There are portions which are fast and wide, while others are much narrower. I sincerely believe that this is one of the finest rallies of the year. The atmosphere and fervour are unique. I would like to finish on the podium again and I intend to take the fight to Mikko Hirvonen."

You have been very consistent this year, scoring 23 points in four events. What is your objective in the championship?

"My job is to score points for the team. Citroën is 24 points clear at the top of the Manufacturers' standings at the moment. That's good, but there's still a long way to go and we must continue to try to build up a lead. Sébastien already enjoys a big cushion in the Drivers' points table, and I'm not far behind Mikko Hirvonen. He is driving very consistently, but I intend to try to close the gap with him."

Event information:

- **Rally Argentina** (April 23-26), round 5 of 12
- **Surface:** gravel
- **Host town:** Villa Carlos Paz
- **Practical information:** Rally HQ and the Media Centre are based in the Hotel Portal del Lago in Villa Carlos Paz. The service park is located on Avenida Pte. Arturo U. Illia y Gobernador Alvarez. There is a five-hour time difference between Argentina (GMT-3) and Continental Europe (GMT+2). When it is midday in Argentina, it is 5pm in France. Sunrise on Day 1 of the rally (Friday April 24) is 7.42am. Sunset is 6.47pm. The local currency is the Argentine Peso (€1 = 4.5 Pesos).
- **Technical matters:** The Citroën C4 WRCs will have the engines which were used in Portugal and which will go on to contest the Italian round. One spare gearbox, one spare set of differentials and one spare turbo are

permitted for Portugal and Argentina. Steering racks and subframes were sealed before the start of the Rally de Portugal.

- **Tyres:** each crew will have 36 Pirelli Scorpion tyres for the event. Competitors may carry two spares, but the 're-cutting' of tread patterns is not authorised.
- **Recce:** Tuesday April 21 (7.30am to 7.00pm) and Wednesday April 22 (7.30am to 7.00pm). The maximum authorised speed on the stages is 90kph (or lower, depending on local restrictions).
- **Shakedown:** Thursday April 23 (8.00am to 12 noon) near Carlos Paz-Cabalango. The 6.23km stage is 11.08km from the service park.
- **Press conference:** Thursday April 23 (1.30pm), Media Centre.
- **Start ceremony:** Thursday April 23 (from 7.05pm), at the start of SS1 at Cordoba Stadium.
- **Route length:** 1,533.65km, including 331.80km divided into 23 stages (13 different).

- **Day 1 (Thursday April 23 and Friday April 24):** 668.38km, including 142.16km divided into 9 stages (5 different). **Thursday April 23:** SS1 (Estadio Cordoba 1, 2.40km). Parc Ferme (19.05). **Friday April 24:** Service A (06.07, 15 minutes). SS2 (La Cumbre-Agua de Oro 1, 14.94km), SS3 (Ascochinga-La Cumbre 1, 22.38km), SS4 (Capilla del Monte-San Marcos 1, 22.95km) and SS5 (San Marcos-Charbonier 1, 9.61km). Regroup (12.02, 15 minutes). Service B (12.17, 30 minutes). SS6 (Ascochinga-La Cumbre 2, 22.38km), SS7 (Capilla del Monte-San Marcos 2, 22.95km), SS8 (San Marcos-Charbonier 2, 9.61km) and SS9 (La Cumbre-Agua de Oro 2, 14.94km). Service C (19.04, 45 minutes). Last car due into parc ferme at midnight.

Day 2 (Saturday April 25): 656.37km, including 141.64km divided into 9 stages (5 different). Service D (07.00, 15 minutes). SS10 (El Mirador-San Lorenzo 1, 20.81km), SS11 (Mina Clavero-Giulio Cesare 1, 22.79km), SS12 (En Condor-Copina 1, 16.29km) and SS13 (Icho Cruz-Carlos Paz 1, 9.73km). Regroup (12.15, 15 minutes). Service E (12.30, 30 minutes). SS14 (El Mirador-San Lorenzo 2, 20.81km), SS15 (Mina Clavero-Giulio Cesare 2, 22.79km), SS16 (El Condor-Copina 2, 16.29km), SS17 (Icho Cruz-Carlos Paz 2, 9.73km) and SS18 (Estadio Cordoba 2, 2.40km). Service F (19.45, 45 minutes). Last car due into parc ferme at midnight.

Day 3 (Sunday April 26): 208.90km, including 48.00km divided into 5 stages (all different). Service G (07.30, 15 minutes). SS19 (Villa Giardino-La Falda, 15.78km), SS20 (Valle Hermoso-Casa Grande, 10.95km), SS21 (Cosquin-Tanti, 11.27km), SS22 (Tanti Nuevo-Villa Garcia, 7.60km) and SS23 (Estadio Cordoba 2, 2.40km). Service H (13.03, 10 minutes). Rally ends at 13.30.

- **Podium:** Sunday April 26 (from 1.00pm), Avenida Presidente Arturo U. Illia.
- **Post-rally press conference:** Sunday April 26 (1.30pm), Media Centre.
- **New:** Icho Cruz-Carlos Paz (SS13/17) is a new stage. Tanti Nuevo-Villa Garcia (SS11/15) uses the shakedown and a non-timed portion of the 2008 event. The Estadio Cordoba super-special uses a new layout. The stages of Day 3 are identical to those used in 2007.
- **The crews' WRC statistics before this rally:**

Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena: WRC debut: Catalunya 1999 (Saxo Kit-Car, retired). **WRC starts:** 117. **First WRC win:** Germany 2002 (Xsara WRC). **WRC wins:** 51. **WRC titles:** 5 (2004 to 2008).

Dani Sordo: WRC debut: Catalunya 2003 (18th). **WRC starts:** 63. **Junior title:** 2005 (C2 S1600).

Marc Martí: WRC debut: Catalunya 1992 (21st). **WRC starts:** 129. **Junior title:** 2005 (C2 S1600).

- **The crews' Rally Argentina statistics before this rally:**

Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena: seventh participation: 2003 (Xsara, retired), 2004 (Xsara, 2nd), 2005 (Xsara, 1st), 2006 (Xsara, 1st), 2007 (C4, 1st) and 2008 (C4, 1st).

Dani Sordo: fifth participation: 2004 (Mitsubishi, retired), 2006 (Xsara, 5th), 2007 (C4, 6th) and 2008 (C4, 3rd).

Marc Martí: eighth participation: 1997 (Seat, 9th), 1998 (Seat, 10th), 2003 (Xsara, 2nd), 2004 (Xsara, 1st), 2006 (Xsara, 5th), 2007 (C4, 6th) and 2008 (C4, 3rd).

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