



# Revved up

The World Rally Championship (WRC) is one of the most unique sporting competitions, integrating nature and machine in one huge, adrenaline-filled harmony

The 2023 World Rally Championship (WRC) has revved its engines, and delivered another exhilarating season of high-speed, off-road racing that has left fans on the edge of their seats. This year the WRC is set to build on its rich legacy with a slew of changes and exciting developments that promise to make 2023 one of the most memorable seasons to date.

Among the fascinating developments in the 2023 WRC championship is the continued use of hybrid technology. In a bid to make the sport more environmentally conscious and reaching carbon zero by 2030, all WRC cars now feature hybrid powertrains. While this integration aligns with the global shift towards sustainability, it also adds an extra layer of complexity to the sport.

Drivers are still mastering the nuances of managing both electric and traditional combustion engines. Even though the integration of hybrid is still challenging driver's skills and decision making regarding when to use the 'boost', it has helped 2023 WRC teams to reduce work time. This shift towards greener technology is also a testament to the WRC's commitment to staying relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Another key aspect of the 2023 WRC championship is the renewed emphasis on safety. The WRC has always been a thrilling but inherently dangerous sport, and organizers are leaving no stone unturned to ensure the well-being of both drivers and spectators. Enhanced safety measures, from improved crash

protection systems to stricter safety regulations for race venues, are now a standard part of the championship. This commitment to safety not only underscores the sport's evolution but also ensures its longevity.

With that said, the 2023 season has been nothing short of sidwinding and dirt flicking turns, slides, crashes and super quick runtimes. With new drivers entering the fray and the merry-go-round as drivers change teams, such as Ott Tanak leaving Hyundai and returning to M-Sport. ►

**Above: Finnish driver Esapekka Lappi, formerly of team M-Sport Ford WRT, in Shakedown during the FIA World Rally Championship Mexico in León, Guanajuato in 2020**

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The 2023 WRC calendar is also a highlight, featuring a diverse range of challenging terrains and iconic locations. From the snow-covered forests of Sweden to the rugged gravel roads of Finland, and the twisty tarmac of Monte Carlo, this year's championship offers a unique test of skill, adaptability, and endurance for drivers and their teams on three new tracks: Chile, Japan, and Central Europe. These new tracks may be the determining factors in the championship title or which may allow drivers such as Takamoto Katsuta to help Toyota to take the Teams title to defend their title in 2023. Toyota has run away with a commanding lead on 430 points leading Hyundai Motorsport on 339 points and M-Sport on 200 points. With each location bringing its own set of challenges, the championship becomes a true test of versatility.

As the 2023 WRC Championship progresses, fierce competition among legendary drivers, Ott Tänak and Kalle Rovanperä and their teams continue the line of legendary Finnish drivers like Sebastian Loeb. The battle for the coveted championship title will intensify,



despite Rovanperä's 33 point lead over British driver, Elfyn Evans. The battle for the 2023 season is down to the top six drivers separated by a handful of points.

Leading the pack on 200 points, Kalle Rovanperä, separates first and sixth place and fellow Finn, Esapekka Lappi, by 98 points. Defending champion Rovanperä



**Above: Finnish driver Kalle Rovanperä eyeing the 2023 title in the GR Yaris Rally1, racing for Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT**

**Below: Estonians Ott Tänak Estonia Martin Järveoja Left: Rovanperä and Finnish co-driver Jonne Halttunen won a third 2023 race at the 70th anniversary Acropolis Rally Greece, with British teammates Elfyn Evans and Scott Martin finishing second, and Spaniards Dani Sordo and Cándido Carrera taking third**

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will be determined to add to last year's title to make it back-to-back WRC titles. The 2023 WRC Championship is shaping up to be a heart-thumping finish. With a focus on sustainability, safety, and a challenging calendar of races, it continues to evolve while retaining the heart-pounding excitement that has made it a fan favorite for decades. As the season draws to an end with the final races: Chile, Central Europe, and Japan, fans around the world will be treated to awe-inspiring displays of driving skill and determination. As Kalle Rovanperä puts one hand on the trophy, Elfyn will be looking to grab it with both.

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