

NEW PIRELLI SOTTOZERO ICE J1B DELIVERS ULTIMATE GRIP IN SWEDEN'S FROZEN NORTH

Upgraded studded tyre makes its debut on the World Rally Championship's only pure winter rally

Event moves north to Umea this year, searching for more snow and colder temperatures

Junior WRC season starts in new four-wheel drive Rally3 cars, as Pirelli continues to support young talent

Milan, February 21, 2022 – Pirelli will introduce the latest version of its Sottozero Ice studded tyre on round two of the FIA World Rally Championship, Rally Sweden. The Sottozero Ice J1B has been designed to handle the increased demands of the new generation hybrid-powered Rally1 cars, which made an exciting debut on Rallye Monte-Carlo last month.

Enter the next generation

The Junior WRC season also begins in Sweden with the first of five rounds. For the first time the series will be run using four-wheel drive Rally3 cars, as opposed to the two-wheel drive Rally4 cars used before, with the aim of providing an affordable step further up the rallying pyramid for young drivers. Eight drivers will compete in Sweden in identical Ford Fiesta Rally3 cars run by M-Sport Poland and fitted with Pirelli tyres: Sami Pajari, Lauri Joonas, Jon Armstrong, Robert Virves, William Creighton, Jean-Baptiste Franceschi, McRae Kimathi and Roustemis Panagiotis.

Why tyres matter in Sweden

Rally Sweden is the only pure winter round of the season run on ice and snow, with temperatures between minus five and minus 10 degrees centigrade in the week leading up to the rally. This means that there will be full ice on the stages but in some places there could also be patches of gravel. The specific tyres for Sweden are crucial in winter conditions, thanks to the special studded design that bite into the slippery surface to provide drivers with remarkable levels of grip.

The Pirelli tyres in Sweden

Sottozero Ice J1B: The regulations allow the use of a single type of studded

tyre in each class on Rally Sweden. The Sottozero Ice J1B will be used by Rally1 cars and Rally2 cars and is an evolution of last year's J1A tyre. It features a total of 384 tungsten-tipped studs, each one protruding seven millimetres out from the tread blocks. The rest of the stud is locked into place using Pirelli's patented vulcanisation process rather than being inserted afterwards.

Sottozero Ice WJA: The less-powerful Rally3 cars in Junior WRC will use the Sottozero Ice WJA tyre, featuring many of the same characteristics of the J1B, including seven-millimetre studs and Pirelli's unique vulcanisation technology.

Pirelli quote

Terenzio Testoni, rally activity manager: "The increased power and weight of the new Rally1 cars has required us to optimise our entire range of WRC tyres and on Rally Sweden we will see the debut for our new Sottozero Ice tyre, the J1B. Like its predecessors, this tyre will provide the drivers with an incredible amount of grip. The new location for the rally should ensure a more consistent ice base for the studs to bite into, although our special vulcanisation process has always helped to keep the studs in place even when temperatures are milder and more gravel is exposed. That might be the case this year, testing the stud retention capabilities, but we will have to see when we get there. We are also excited for the Junior WRC season to begin in Sweden with four-wheel drive cars for the first time. It's a great step to help young drivers reach the top in rallying, which is something that Pirelli has a proud record of supporting, also thanks to programmes such as FIA Rally Star. We are delighted to take the next step here in Sweden."

Pirelli in numbers

Pirelli will bring around **1400** tyres to Sweden, of which **1200** will be Sottozero Ice J1B tyres for the top class of Rally1 cars and the secondary Rally2 cars, which include those registered for WRC2 honours.

Each of the Rally1 drivers can use up to **26** tyres during the rally, while Rally2 drivers can use up to **24** tyres. Drivers in both classes have a separate allocation for use in shakedown.

Pirelli will also provide **176** Sottozero Ice WJA tyres for the Junior WRC drivers, who can use up to **22** tyres across the event, including shakedown.

The big number: 400. This year Rally Sweden moves north from its traditional home in the Värmland region to a new base in Umeå. Considered the capital of northern Sweden, Umeå is only around 400 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle, and a 600-kilometre journey north from the capital city Stockholm. The move should in theory provide a greater guarantee of the winter conditions that make the rally so popular. Some of the stages in the area have been used in the Swedish Rally Championship previously but will all be new to the top drivers.

What to look out for

The battle between WRC greats Sébastien Loeb and Sébastien Ogier for victory on Rallye Monte-Carlo provided a thrilling start to the season, but Sweden is not part of either driver's part-time programme for 2022.

Finland's Esapekka Lappi returns to take Ogier's place at Toyota, while there will be the usual three-car entry for M-Sport. Flying the flag for the host nation is Hyundai's Oliver Solberg, the youngest of the Rally1 drivers at 20 years old. While his father Petter Solberg, the 2003 World Rally Champion, represented Norway his mother Pernilla – also a successful rally driver – is Swedish.