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Dramatic finish to the Central European Rally: WRC title still up for grabs

- Hyundai driver Ott Tänak and co-driver Martin Järveoja win the Central European Rally
- Title contender Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) still leads the WRC – title race intensifies
- Sebastien Ogier (Toyota) crashes out on penultimate stage whilst battling for the lead
- Positive verdict from organisers: 90,000 spectators watched the action on the stages
- Central European Rally from 16th to 19th October in 2025

Munich. Ott Tänak is the winner of the second Central European Rally, which took its competitors through Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic this weekend as round 12 of 13 in this year's FIA World Rally Championship (WRC). The Hyundai driver from Estonia and his co-driver Martin Järveoja clinched victory on an extremely exciting final stage, coming out on top against Elvyn Evans /Scott Martin (GBR, Toyota), who arrived at the finish in Passau just 7.0 seconds behind the winners. Third place went to championship leaders Thierry Neuville / Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL / Hyundai). A dramatic finale saw Sébastien Ogier (FRA, Toyota) suffer late heartbreak: the Frenchman had been embroiled in a spectacularly close battle for the win with Tänak, but slipped up on the penultimate special stage and was forced to retire, leaving him pointless. Neuville now travels to the WRC finale in Japan with a slightly reduced lead, but still in pole position to win the title. The race for the Manufacturer title is also still alive after the Central European Rally. The organisers were happy after the event: the 18 special stages, some of them extremely challenging, in the heart of Europe produced some exciting action and attracted 90,000 fans from all around the world over the course of the weekend. The organisers and those responsible at the WRC have already put plans in place for the next instalment: the third edition of the Central European Rally will once again take place in the three countries from 16th to 19th October 2025. Information, news and images of the weekend can be found on the official homepage at centraleuropeanrally.eu.

After the start in Prague, it was initially world championship leader Neuville and Toyota spearhead Sébastien Ogier who dictated proceedings in extremely difficult conditions. The narrow asphalt roads in the Czech Republic proved to be extremely slippery when slightly damp, and really put the stars of the world championship through their paces. Although the two leaders managed to master this challenge, the weekend had an emotional rollercoaster in store for them: Neuville lost half a minute after an off on Saturday afternoon and consequently dropped back to fourth place. Ogier crashed out whilst within touching distance of the overall lead on the penultimate stage, when he made a small mistake, came off the road and smashed into a telegraph pole. Up until then, he had looked like winning the event, having successfully defended the lead on Saturday afternoon, but was then denied any points at all with the finish looming. Prior to that, the competitors had gone on the attack on Sunday morning, with eventual winner Ott Tänak moving to the top of the standings on the first stage of the final day and then successfully defending his lead through to the finish. "It is a great shame for Seb that he crashed out," said the Estonian, showing respect for the eight-time world champion. "We also pushed very hard and survived a few hairy moments. It is nice that we were able to defend the



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lead and score some valuable points in the championship. Despite this, it is always tough to battle with a friend, and then something like that happens to him – it is hard to put your feelings into words sometimes.”

Damage limitation for Neuville on Sunday

Thierry Neuville benefitted from Ogier’s retirement, climbed into third place and picked up valuable points through the separate “Super Sunday” standings. He was also fourth on the closing Power Stage, which earned him a further two points. In the WRC table, his only remaining rival in the title race is Hyundai team-mate Tänak, who trails the Belgian by 25 points ahead of the finale at the WRC Rally Japan. With a maximum 30 points up for grabs on any given WRC weekend, the Belgian holds all the aces. With that in mind, he was able to look back on the rally with some positivity after his emotional rollercoaster: “The rally was really challenging. We had a good rhythm after Friday, but then made a small mistake. After that, we had to manage our rally and pick up whatever we could. The title was not to be this weekend. However, Japan is just around the corner and we are looking forward to it. I would like to say another thank you to the team for the reliable car, and to apologise for the mistake.” The battle for the title in the Manufacturer competition has intensified: the Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team still leads the way, but Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT has closed to within just 15 points.

German and Czech starters take the opportunity to showcase their talent on the WRC stage

Many drivers from the Czech Republic and Germany took advantage of the Central European Rally to make an appearance in the world championship on their own doorstep. Filip Mareš / Radovan Bucha had a very impressive weekend, finishing third in the WRC2 category in a Toyota GR Yaris. “I am really happy and would particularly like to thank my wife,” said the local favourite. “We are really pleased with the result. We did not expect that. Our season has been one of highs and lows, but this is a great gift at the end. I would like to thank my team and the Czech fans.” The best-placed German driver was Marijan Griebel, who also lined up in WRC2 with Tobias Braun in the passenger seat and finished 13th. “The weekend was more exciting than expected. We still had to be fully focussed today on day four of the CER. We took a bit of a gamble with our tyre selection, which perhaps cost us a place or two in WRC2 in the end. On the whole, however, we are happy with the performance. It was nice to contest a round of the World Rally Championship in front of so many home fans.”

Organisers looking forward to the third edition of the CER in 2025

The organisers of the Central European Rally from Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic pulled out all the stops to ensure that the second staging of the event was a top-class festival of motorsport for spectators and competitors alike. 90,000 fans from all over the world flocked to the rally region over the course of the weekend, making for a great backdrop at the 40 plus spectator points. “Thanks to the outstanding international cooperation with three strong partners, we were again able to organise a very demanding asphalt rally at a level worthy of the WRC,” says Dr. Gerd Ennser, Sport President of ADAC e.V. “The feedback from drivers and teams on the sporting aspect give us further encouragement to continue this three-country concept in the future.” The organisers received a major endorsement of their work before the rally even began, when the WRC confirmed that the CER would form part of its calendar in 2025. The third edition will take place from 16th to 19th October 2025. JUDr. Jan Šťovíček, Ph. D., President ACCR says: “As organisers, we have implemented many detailed improvements based on the experience gained last year, which have made for exciting racing and



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excellent service for the fans. We will continue to do so next year and promise to keep consistently developing the event.” With its international three-country format, the Central European Rally is one of a kind on the WRC calendar, and Prof. Dr. Harald Hertz, President AMF is keen to stress: “The Central European Rally is the embodiment of international understanding. That goes for the organisers and our guests. After all, we have been able to put on a great festival of rallying with captivating sport in the heart of the European continent for the drivers, teams, WRC organisers and, of course, the fans from all over the world. That is something, of which everyone involved can be very proud.”

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