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Rain in Spain makes life hard for Castrol-Ford

Torrential rain during the Spanish leg of the World Rally Championship in makes life hard for Marcus Grönholm, Mikko Hirvonen and the Castrol-Ford team

/24-7PressRelease/ - WILTSHIRE, UK, October 12, 2007 - Torrential rain before the start threw Marcus Grönholm and Mikko Hirvonen's plans into disarray and robbed them of the chance to challenge for victory in Spain. Nevertheless the Castrol-Ford duo maintained the team's title hopes with solid drives in difficult conditions.

Torrential rain forced the cancellation of the Thursday night opening ceremony and played its part in Gronholm's performance over the opening stages once the rally began on Friday. Expecting the roads to still be wet he erred on the side of caution with his tyre choice and paid a heavy penalty. "The compound was correct but I asked for too many cuts," he admitted. He won the opening stage but thereafter found the roads drying quickly, ending the leg almost a minute off the lead - just as the rain fell again!

[Castrol-Ford](#) team mate Hirvonen was more confident in the dry but was having to fight hard to keep ahead of privateer Francois Duval. "It's vital for Castrol-Ford's and Marcus' championship hopes that I keep him behind," he said.

With dry weather on Saturday the Fords were the pace setters with Grönholm winning four of the day's eight stages. "I've been evenly matched with the guys ahead today," he said, "which is frustrating because the rain clearly destroyed my rally yesterday. It could have been a close battle again."

Hirvonen strengthened his advantage over Duval during the day but could do nothing about catching those ahead so eased off for the final day's four stages to be sure of adding to Castrol-Ford's points haul. "I drove at maximum throughout this rally and showed I have the speed to match the championship leaders in the dry but I need to work on my confidence in the wet," he admitted.

With gaps of between 30 seconds and a minute separating most of the cars in the top 10 the final day was one of consolidation - a far cry from the tense finale at the previous round in New Zealand. No one was taking risks that could cost them hard-earned points and the Castrol-Ford drivers held station over the 85kms of stages as the leaderboard remained unchanged for the second day running. "I lost 34 seconds on SS6 by being too careful," reflected Gronholm. "If I'd been that bit braver I could have had second place and maybe pushed for the victory. My times showed later in the event I definitely had the speed."

Castrol-Ford team manager Malcolm Wilson said: "We knew that some of our tyre choices for the opening day were a gamble but felt it was worth the risk. Marcus and Mikko drove well on Saturday in conditions they like and were able to keep the pressure on our rivals. We'll see what happens this coming weekend in Corsica and try to take the fight to our rivals once again."

About Castrol-Ford:

Castrol's world class expertise and [engine oil](#) technology means it is recommended by the worlds leading car manufacturers, commended by experts and trusted by over 100 million customers. Built on a history of technical innovation over the past 100 years, Castrol motor oil drivers and cars have been at the forefront of motor sport, especially the [World Rally](#) and record-breaking competition for more than 75 years.

Castrol is part of BP and is the market and technical leader for specialised industrial and [car oil](#) lubricants for the retail consumer. Castrol is the market leader in marine lubricants and a key player in the aviation and commercial vehicles market. It is also the third largest marketer of [lubricants](#) worldwide.

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