



"Henry Ford said that the only history that is important is the history we made today. Well, today we are proud to add the latest chapter in Ford's great Motorsport story."

John Fleming, President and CEO Ford of Europe

FORD WINS FIA 2006 WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP MANUFACTURERS' TITLE

New Zealand, November 19, 2006 - The Ford Focus RS World Rally Car 06, which made its Championship debut just over a year ago in Australia, has continued its successful first year in competition by securing the FIA WRC Manufacturers' Championship 2006 for Ford.

With a 25-point lead Ford has secured the Manufacturers' title even though there is still one final WRC round in this year's competition – Rally GB, 30 November – 3 December.

This is the first time that Ford has won the Manufacturers' Championship in 27 years and represents the pinnacle of achievement since Ford of Europe initiated its partnership with Malcolm Wilson and M-Sport in 1997.

The Focus RS WRC 06 was developed from concept to reality in record time by M-Sport and specialist engineers in Ford TeamRS, the company's in-house performance car and motorsport division. The entire project was overseen by Christian Loriaux, M-Sport's Technical Director.

“This Championship victory is the result of a tremendous team effort, and everyone at Ford is proud of what the car and the team have achieved this year,” said John Fleming, President and CEO of Ford of Europe. “To secure the manufacturers' title in our first year of running with an all-new WRC car is more than we had dared hope for, and I would like to pay tribute to everyone involved with the BP-Ford World Rally team.”



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“Over the years, I believe the team has developed into one of the best squads in the Motorsport business,” said Jost Capito, Director of Ford TeamRS. “This victory means a great deal to the team, but it is also a huge reward to all of the Ford employees, Ford Motorsport fans and Ford performance vehicle enthusiasts worldwide who have given us amazing support at every event.

“The title would not have been won without the most significant members of the team delivering superb results over and over,” Capito said. “The BP-Ford World Rally Team pairings of Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen plus Mikko Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen have driven with determination, perseverance and world class ability. We are very proud of them.”

BP-Ford World Rally Team Director Malcolm Wilson commented: “I’m over the moon with this result. As one of the world's leading drivers, Marcus Grönholm was expected to lead Ford's title challenge, and he has done so brilliantly. But few commentators at the start of the season would have expected to see Mikko Hirvonen develop as quickly as he has into one of the WRC’s leading drivers.”



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John Fleming, President and CEO, Ford of Europe: “This is a great achievement. We were counting on a robust performance in 2006 to put us in the position where we could mount a serious challenge for the title next year, so to win it this season with a completely new car is particularly pleasing. I'd like to thank Malcolm Wilson and Christian Loriaux, our drivers and co-drivers, and indeed everyone in the team for a fantastic effort throughout the year.”

Ian Slater, Vice President Public Affairs: “The team has a huge following around the world, including our employees and dealers, many of our customers, and a great number of our suppliers and business partners. All of them will take great pleasure in this championship victory. It's been a long time - too long - since we last won it, but Ford has been involved consistently in Motorsport for over a century, and that's why this will mean so much to Ford people everywhere.”

Jost Capito, Director of Ford TeamRS: “It's thrilling and rewarding to see Ford as world champions again, especially in the first year of competition for the new Ford Focus RS World Rally Car. This is only possible because the Ford Focus is a superb basis from which to develop performance cars like the highly successful Focus ST road car and competition vehicles like the Focus RS World Rally Car.

“When we won the first two rallies of the season in Monte Carlo and Sweden, we knew then that we had an outside chance. We knew also that we would encounter some technical problems, which would be almost inevitable after such a compressed product development schedule on an all-new vehicle. We were right - we did get some setbacks! But the team was undaunted, just kept at it, confident of their ability to win, especially with such great drivers. As it has turned out, we have been able to win enough points at the end of this event to secure the championship.”

Malcolm Wilson, Director of BP-Ford World Rally Team: “This title gives me great personal satisfaction. I've spent my rally career with Ford, and the company has been so close to winning the manufacturers' title on many occasions but it has always eluded us. I'm proud to be able to deliver it now, and it has been a huge effort by everyone, not only all the employees at M-Sport, but also our partners at B F Goodrich and all the other partners and suppliers who have contributed to and supported the team. It is the culmination of many years of building a world class team, with an infrastructure and resource capable of becoming the world's best.”

Marcus Grönholm, Driver: “We've done it! It's a marvellous feeling to win a world title in my first season with BP-Ford. From the moment I climbed into the car on my first test at the end of 2005, I knew the new Focus RS WRC was capable of being a great winning car. After victory on the first two events, we had a few small issues in the first half of the season but since then the car has been remarkably reliable and very fast. We will take time to enjoy this success and then concentrate on taking things even further in 2007.”



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Mikko Hirvonen, Driver: "This has been a brilliant season for both the BP-Ford team and me personally. It is my first world title and Australia brought my first WRC victory last month. I am looking forward to more next year!"

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Voor meer informatie:

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