



Belgium Ypres Rally 18-20 June 2009 IRC Round: 5

IRC

Intercontinental
Rally Challenge

2009

PREVIEW

The Intercontinental Rally Challenge returns to mainland Europe for round five of this year's series, the Belgium Ypres Rally from June 18-20. The asphalt surface and the tricky conditions of Belgium make for a technically challenging event which is likely to be played out in unpredictable weather, when scorching sunshine can turn to heavy rain in the blink of an eye.

The stages on the Belgium Ypres Rally tend to be straight and narrow farm tracks, with several obstacles to catch out the unwary. The long straights tend to be followed by sharp 90-degree corners, making it extremely difficult to judge the correct braking points. There is also often a lot of loose gravel on the corners, meaning that the cars struggle to find traction. These are far from the only hazards crews will have to cope with: the rapid stages are frequently lined with deep drainage ditches – often filled with water – and there are trees, walls and telegraph poles close to the side of the road.



Participation of the seven IRC-registered manufacturers

Belgium is one of the most enthusiastic and proactive motor sport nations on earth so the event is sure to bring out enormous crowds throughout the event, many of whom will be cheering for local hero Freddy Loix and his new co-driver Frederic Miclotte. The Belgian duo currently lies second in the IRC standings, just two points off the lead. A full capacity entry is expected to start this year's event, with the IRC front-runners being joined by a host of local and regional talent.

For the first time this year, all seven IRC-registered manufacturers are expected to take the start, raising the profile of this well-known rally even higher. More than 20 Super 2000 cars will begin the event this year: another significant record for the IRC.



The Belgium Ypres Rally is one of the most historic and important events in Europe. The event is based in the historic town of Ypres, rebuilt brick-for-brick to its medieval splendour after its destruction in World War I. The magnificent town square, with the town hall and museum dominating the landscape, acts as the central service area for the rally and contains the start-finish ramp. This year will mark the 45th running of the Belgium Ypres Rally, which has been contested in the past by some of the greatest stars of the sport.

Peugeot UK enters the current championship leader Kris Meeke, the young British star who has taken back-to-back victories on gravel in Brazil and the Azores to stand two points clear of Loix in the standings. Defending champion, Frenchman Nicolas Vouilloz, lies third in the second Kronos-prepared Benelux Peugeot entry, just one point behind his teammate Loix: the winner in Ypres last year.

The IRC logo consists of the lowercase letters 'i', 'R', and 'C' in a stylized, rounded font. The 'i' is orange, the 'R' is a gradient from orange to yellow, and the 'C' is yellow. The letters are set against a white background with a curved orange border on the right side.

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A total of eight Peugeot 207 S2000s head the entry, joined by a Skoda Fabia S2000 for another great hero of Belgian rallying, Francois Duval, and a Volkswagen Polo S2000 for legendary Belgian rally ace, 51-year-old Patrick Snijers. Abarth has also been strong in Belgium in the past, and the factory Italian team is hoping for more success this year with former European Champion Giandomenico Basso and Belgian asphalt ace Bernd Casier, who has been brought in to replace Anton Alen for this event. Skoda's factory team will field Juho Hanninen and Jan Kopecky as usual.

Proton will be represented on the IRC for the first time, with an entry for rising British star Guy Wilks, while another star of the future – Thierry Neuville – has won the BFGoodrich Drivers' Team entry for Ypres. Pieter Tsjoen has also been recently confirmed for his home event in a Peugeot 207 S2000.

They are joined by a host of entrants for the 2WD class in both Super 1600 and Group R machines, and as ever huge numbers of Group N 'showroom' specification Mitsubishi Lancers, such as the car driven by Austria's Franz Wittmann, which will doubtless bring further four-wheel drive spectacle to the event.

Eurosport will broadcast four hours of live action from the stages

To mark the importance of the Belgium Ypres Rally, and to ensure that everyone in the area gets the most from the event, stage organisers Superstage have developed a new signposting system which will allow fans and casual visitors alike the chance to easily find their way to some of the most spectacular action.

At Ypres, the fans come first. Not only that, but Eurosport will broadcast four hours of live action from the stages, enabling television viewers all over the world to fully experience the unique atmosphere of the Belgium Ypres Rally.

For further information please visit: <http://www.ypresrally.com>