

AUTO+ PRIZE GIVING

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FANFARE FOR THE CHAMPIONS





THE TASTE OF VICTORY

The winners of this year's FIA Championships have been crowned in a spectacular 2018 FIA Prize Giving ceremony in Saint Petersburg



The stars of world motor sport gathered in the Grand Hall of the historic St Petersburg Philharmonia for a glittering evening celebrating a host of remarkable sporting achievements.

The highlight of the annual gala show was the presentation of the FIA Formula One World Drivers' Championship Trophy to Lewis Hamilton.

The Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 Team driver made history in 2018, becoming only the third driver in Formula One to claim five championship wins, matching the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio and closing in on seven-time title-winning great Michael Schumacher. Hamilton took a total of 11 victories during the year, finished off the podium on just three occasions and only once missed out on points in 21 races.

The Briton was pushed hard for much of the season by rival Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari, but four consecutive grand prix victories after the sport's traditional August break handed Hamilton a commanding championship lead. Fourth place at the Mexican Grand Prix was enough to seal a remarkable fifth F1 crown with two rounds in hand.

The Formula One Constructors' title, meanwhile, went to the Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 Team for the fifth consecutive time.

Commenting on the team's success, Mercedes Team Principal Toto Wolff said: "It was an unbelievable season. Did I enjoy

the battle with Ferrari? No, I didn't, it's really tough. But If I look back, I wouldn't have done it any other way. It's what Formula 1 is all about."

In rallying, Sébastien Ogier and Co-Driver Julien Ingrassia went one better than the F1 champion, with the French pairing landing their sixth consecutive FIA World Rally Championship title.

Competing once again with the Ford-backed privateer M-Sport squad, the French crew emerged triumphant after an epic battle with Hyundai's Thierry Neuville and Nicolas Gilsoul that went down to the wire in Australia.

Ogier and Ingrassia took three wins from the first four rounds, but a difficult mid-season spell allowed Neuville to gain the upper hand. Victory at Wales Rally GB and second place at the penultimate round in Spain, gave the M-Sport pair a narrow lead, and fifth place in Australia was enough to take the title.

Sébastien Ogier said: "It was an intense season. The suspense was there right to the last moment of the season and to come out as the winner again was a great feeling. I think Rally Wales GB was the turning point. There were three rallies to go and we were 23 points behind the leaders. We needed a strong result and winning Rally GB was really important, for



the points, but also mentally. I believe that from this moment on the pressure was on their shoulders."

Like Ogier's victory, Jean-Eric Vergne's Formula E triumph was another giant-killing act, the privateer TECHEETAH team driver powering to the title ahead of a host of manufacturer-backed squads.

Key to Vergne's victory was his metronomic consistency. While the Frenchman stood on the top step of the podium four times, the fact that he finished in the points in every one of the season's 12 races earned him a first Formula E crown with 54 points in hand.

Reflecting on beating Formula E's major manufacturers, Vergne said: "It gave me a huge amount of satisfaction and the team did a brilliant job. Nobody should forget that we started from scratch only a few years ago. What we have been able to achieve is absolutely outstanding."

Johan Kristoffersson this year took his second consecutive FIA World Rallycross Championship title and the Swede's 2018 title win was even more emphatic than his first. In '17 he won seven times en route to the top of the standings. This time, Kristoffersson was almost invincible, missing out on victory once in 12-rounds.

"It's been an amazing season," said the driver from the team's title-winning PSRX Volkswagen Sweden squad. "Going to every round with the target of being able to fight for the win, but to be able to pull off 11 out of 12 in a sport like Rallycross, with the competition at the level it was this year, it shouldn't be possible to do it!"

A number of special FIA awards were also handed out in Saint Petersburg.

The Rookie of the Year prize, voted for by members of the FIA Drivers' Commission, was won for the second year in a row by Charles Leclerc.

The Monegasque racer picked up the 2017 accolade for his march to last year's Formula 2 title and this time out Leclerc was handed the award for a quality transition to F1.

Competing with a Sauber team that was returning to competitiveness after a fallow period, Leclerc scooped points on 10 occasions, scoring a best result of sixth place behind the drivers of the sport's top three teams in Baku. Leclerc's outstanding 2018 season was rewarded with a step up to Ferrari in 2019.

The Personality of the Year award, voted for by permanently accredited media from the FIA's major championships, was presented to five-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton.

The Action of the Year prize, voted for by fans of motor sport via the FIA's online channels, was presented to WRC star Teemu Suninen, whose epic save from an almost certain crash in Finland was deemed the most incredible moment of the vear.

Meanwhile, Mercedes Team Principal Toto Wolff and Non-Executive Director Niki Lauda won the President's Award after a fifth consecutive Formula One Constructors' title. The achievement makes Mercedes only the second team in history to reach five titles in succession, Ferrari having recorded six-in-a-row from '99-'04. Wolff collected the award from FIA President Jean Todt, as Lauda continues his recuperation from major surgery.

In the FIA Formula 3 European Championship, Mick Schumacher, son of F1 legend Michael, was victorious. The rising star had a tricky start to 2018 but eventually unlocked new levels of pace to take eight wins on his way to the title.

FIA Karting World Champions Victor Bernier, Patrik Hájek and Lorenzo Travisanutto were also awarded their trophies.

The final applause of the year was, of course, reserved for F1 Drivers' Champion Hamilton.









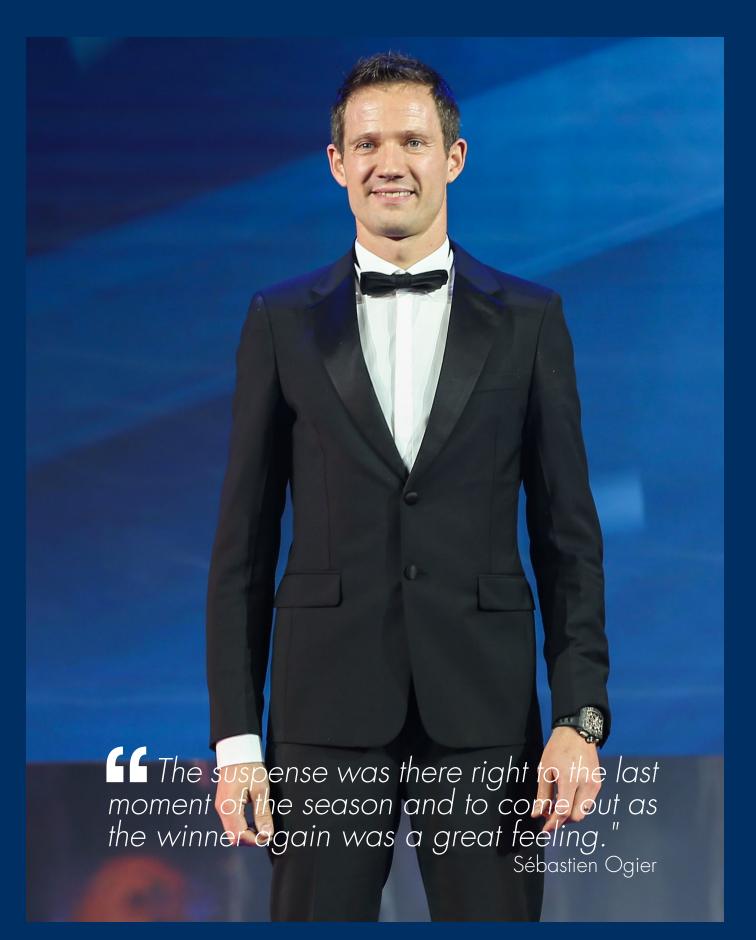




























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