

Mikko Hirvonen was awarded a 20 second penalty on Saturday night for an overtime service, however was able to beat out Xavier Pons on the final leg, taking third, and relegating Pons to fourth place.

Perth is home to the Telestra Rally Australia, where road position is a factor as the early drivers end up sweeping the gravel route for their following competitors. The trees lining the slippery roads punish any who run afoul, and the Bunnings Jumps round out these most challenging stages. This, the last rally of the year, brought us a couple of firsts. Francois Duval captured the first win of his career, while Mitsubishi's Harri Rovanpera grabbed his first podium of the year. At the start, though, it was the hometown favourite Chris Atkinson in an early lead

until a transmission problem cost him two and a half minutes. The pace was picked up, however by his Subaru teammate Petter Solberg. Markus Gronholm encountered unwanted trouble when he hit a rock on SS7, causing suspension and wheel damage, forcing him to retire. The new double champion Loeb made an uncharacteristic mistake in the forest, sliding off the road and into a tree. By the second leg, Duval had advanced past Colin McRae into second place, but was rewarded with the lead coming out of SS14, as Solberg hit a kangaroo, and retired due to heavy damage. Kangaroo? Only in the Telestra Rally. Although fans were expecting an exciting finish to Solberg and Gronholm's "71 point battle", with the two retirements, their season standings would remain unchanged.

Colin McRae lost ground to Harri Rovanpera, who took second position by the final leg, then McRae was forced out after a troublesome clutch change turned impossible. Not to miss out on the spate of retirements, Toni Gardemeister, who would have been on track for a fifth place finish, suffered water pump trouble in his Focus, and retired in the closing stages.

As the 2005 season drew to a close, the final standings would be thus:
S.Loeb 127pts, P.Solberg 71pts,
M.Gronholm 71pts, T.Gardemeister 58pts,
M.Martin 53pts, F.Duval 47pts.

Manufacturer's Title: Citroen 188pts,
Peugeot 135pts, Ford 104pts, Subaru 97pts,
Mitsubishi 76pts, Skoda 21pts.

In Memorium

Remembering a champion

2001 World Rally Champion, Richard Burns passed away on November 25, 2005. Burns was diagnosed with a brain tumour after passing out at the wheel of a car he was driving in Nov '03. He withdrew from the sport and underwent chemo and radio-therapy before submitting to surgery in April of this year. After some initial improvement his health further declined and ultimately he passed into coma from which he did not recover. Burns was 34.

Richard won the British Rally Championship in 1993 at age 22, the youngest person to ever do so. He quickly moved to the WRC and established himself as a top competitor before becoming the only English person ever to win the Drivers title in 2001. His attention to detail and dogged determination set him apart, but his good humour and passion for competition made him a Champion.

