

ONCE he faced Kankkunen's Toyota on level terms, Mäkinen brushed all opposition aside. Photos: LAT

Unstoppable Mäkinen triumphs as Kankkunen passes 1,000-point mark

It could have been an awkward rally for Tommi Mäkinen. On the one hand, he needed to protect his World Championship lead; on the other, Finnish pride dictated that he had to win at all costs.

Juha Kankkunen created exactly that dilemma with a sensational opening burst, but it didn't last. Mäkinen and Seppo Harjanne simply brushed all opposition aside to complete their 1000 Lakes hat-trick and lay one hand on the world title with a third of the championship to run. Beyond question, Tommi has had his cake and eaten it.

Leg 1

The first stage was cancelled after the fatal accident (see *Rally Round-Up*) and the rally effectively commenced on Saturday morning with the true 1000 Lakes stages – the wide, hard-surfaced roads to the south-west.

Before the start, Nicky Grist had confided that running so far back on the road might be worth as much as half a minute. As a rule, it is best to be first on the road in Finland, but an unusually sustained burst of summer had dried out the forest tracks to leave a fine coating of gravel, as slippery as Sanremo or the Acropolis. Mäkinen expected it to cost him some time, but Kankkunen's pace came as a nasty shock nevertheless. Juha wasn't beaten until SS9; he was seven seconds ahead after SS2 (in effect, the first stage), 21 after SS3 and 50 after SS6. With Marcus Grönholm second in his Celica, the usual

tooth-and-nail battle was in danger of turning into a Toyota whitewash.

As Kankkunen acknowledged, his seeding had a good deal to do with it, although he was quick to point out that he was losing time on the softer, narrower stretches, which cut up quickly. He could hardly deny it when Grönholm and Thomas Rådström were also making their presence felt near the front in wide-track, "superstrut" Celicas, the former holding a sensational second for most of the morning, in spite of a sill-crunching excursion on SS6. However, the narrow track and conventional struts had transformed the GT-Four.

"The car feels good now on the narrow road, but now it's a bit nervous on the big one – but still I prefer this one!" Kankkunen said. He clearly wasn't suffering any ill-effects from the three-month gap since he last contested a major rally.

"If you do a lot of something, sometimes it's good to have a break," he explained affably.

Mäkinen would have been gloomier still if he had heard Kankkunen telling his engineer, "Pepper", that the handling wasn't perfect and would need fine-tuning if he was to unleash a real attack.

After six stages, Tommi was in third place, three seconds behind Grönholm, and fed up. In World Championship terms, things were going well: Carlos Sainz, Kenneth Eriksson and Colin McRae had all hit trouble of one sort or another, but no Finn willingly accepts a thrashing in Finland and the Mitsubishi man was plainly losing trac-

tion as he swept the gravel. He had convinced himself that Michelin FBs would somehow ease the problem and was irritated to learn that only the new Zs were available. Hand-cutting Zs for stages five and six only destabilised the tread and the driver's customary good humour.

It had been a strange morning at Ford, in which the works cars were conspicuously unreliable and the

"Tommi was fast, but the rest were far behind"

Juha Kankkunen

private, Malcolm Wilson entries gleefully exploited the chance to embarrass the Boreham drivers. Jarmo Kytölehto set an excellent time on SS2, despite stalling under braking, then proceeded to set tongues wagging by holding a confident fourth. Harri Rovander had less testing under his belt and took longer to settle in, occupying the lower reaches of the top 10.

What had become of the last word in Escorts, with thousands of pounds worth of active transmission and the latest tyres and suspension? Sainz had dropped 90s on SS2 when the boost pressure sensor malfunctioned halfway through the stage, halving the available revs,



RELAXED, good-humoured and unbeatable: MÄKINEN (right) and Seppo Harjanne were the toast of Finland.

while Bruno Thiry lost four minutes after the front propshaft sheared two stages later. It was some consolation that Sainz was generally quicker than Mäkinen and the Wilson twins for the rest of the morning, whereas Thiry experimented with different tyres and admitted that he wasn't quite at ease with the handling.

The private Escort men possessed certain advantages. They were free to run non-FIA fuel, which is generally reckoned to be worth 20-30 bhp, and they could also carry two spare tyres, which meant that they could fit new front tyres during batches of stages. Wilson maintained that there was no power advantage and the benefit was confined to torque and response.

If the Boreham men were depressed, they could always console themselves with the thought that life at Subaru was even worse. The team had started the rally in an unusually weak position, without an

acknowledged 1000 Lakes expert. While Eriksson shared third place after the first stage, he had fallen to fifth after SS6, with Rådström breathing down his neck. Catching Thiry's dust hadn't helped.

McRae had resolved to take

things steadily, in view of his interrupted race and limited knowledge of the terrain. "Lost it all in the first half of it," he explained after SS2. "It was fast and wide, and you can't go fast over it until you've done it quickly a couple of times. I

TOP 20 ENTRIES

7 Tommi Mäkinen/Seppo Harjanne	Gp A Mitsubishi Lancer E3
4 Carlos Sainz/Luis Moya	Gp A Ford Escort RS Cosworth
1 Colin McRae/Derek Ringer	Gp A Subaru Impreza 555
5 Bruno Thiry/Stéphane Prevot	Gp A Ford Escort RS Cosworth
2 Kenneth Eriksson/Staffan Parmander	Gp A Subaru Impreza 555
8 Lasse Lampi/Jyrki Stenroos	Gp A Mitsubishi Lancer E3
3 Piero Liatti/Fabrizia Pons	Gp A Subaru Impreza 555
9 Jouko Puhakka/Keijo Eerola	Gp N Mitsubishi Lancer E3
10 Jorge Recalde/Martin Christie	Gp N Mitsubishi Lancer E3
11 Juha Kankkunen/Nicky Grist	Gp A Toyota Celica GT-Four
12 Thomas Rådström/Lars Bäckman	Gp A Toyota Celica GT-Four
14 Rui Madeira/Nuno Silva	Gp A Toyota Celica GT-Four
15 Sebastian Lindholm/Timo Hantunen	Gp A Ford Escort RS Cosworth
16 Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautainen	Gp A Toyota Celica GT-Four
17 Jarmo Kytölehto/Arto Kapanen	Gp A Ford Escort RS Cosworth
18 Harri Rovander/Juha Repo	Gp A Ford Escort RS Cosworth
19 Andrea Dallavilla/Danilo Fappani	Gp A Toyota Celica GT-Four
20 Uwe Nittel/Tina Thörner	Gp N Mitsubishi Lancer E3
21 Ivar Raidam/Margus Karjane	Gp N Mitsubishi Lancer E3
22 Gustavo Trelles/Jorge Del Buono	Gp N Mitsubishi Lancer E3

was backing off on all the crests and it was sitting fine. Nine times out of 10 you'd get away with it, but it's not worth the risk. You'd have to do this rally a couple of times before you can hope to win it."

He was 18s behind Eriksson when disaster struck on SS6, Siitama. He ran a fraction wide landing after a fifth-gear yump and, in an instant, the Impreza lurched into a ditch and rolled. To the astonishment of other drivers, it still ran and McRae continued, followed closely by the rear suspension. The engine finally gave up the ghost between the flying finish and the stop control.

"It was a typical 1000 Lakes accident," reflected Derek Ringer wearily.

"It's been a bad week. It couldn't get much worse," McRae observed.

It was a dreadful error and David Richards didn't mince his words, but McRae had ample justification for using the word "week". His preparations for the rally had been badly compromised.

Sebastian Lindholm's evil 1000 Lakes luck wasted little time in landing the first blow, breaking a front driveshaft and scuppering the brakes on SS3. Naturally, he had to complete the next stage as well before getting service, losing almost three minutes.

Ouninpohja, SS8 this year, is one of the most famous and difficult stages in Finland. It didn't exactly turn the tables, but it certainly stopped the rot from Mitsubishi's point of view. Mäkinen was only third fastest, beaten by Rovannerä as well as Kankkunen, but the difference was a mere 11s in 20 miles and, although the narrow stretch at the end was horribly loose and slippery, Tommi had noticed something.

"I am looking forward tomorrow morning," he announced. "The big road was unbelievable grip. You



FORD'S lamentable reliability has all but wrecked Carlos Sainz's title hopes.

tight corners."

Once he'd persuaded himself that there was nothing wrong with Zs, Mäkinen was quickest on the last three stages of the leg. He was aided somewhat by dust and low sun, which cost Kankkunen several seconds on Vaheri, the penultimate stage of the day, which he finished just 50s behind Jorge Recalde's Gp

Mäkinen had soon dealt with Grönholm, who had the wind taken out of his sails after he yumped too quickly on Ouninpohja, jolting Timo Rautiainen's back and bending the front suspension. The unfortunate co-driver was in such pain that Marcus had to drive blind for half a mile before pace note service was resumed.

"It's been a bad week. It couldn't get much worse"

Colin McRae



A STIRRING drive from Juha Kankkunen proved the Celica has untapped potential.



MARCUS GRONHOLM helped Toyota clinch the team prize.

day for Toyota nonetheless, Grönholm and Rådström sandwiching the impressive Kytölehto. Rådström had speeded up noticeably in the afternoon, once he'd swapped to softer front springs to cure a bad dose of understeer.

"Now the car is unbelievable. I had to work like an idiot in the morning, using the handbrake and

declared.

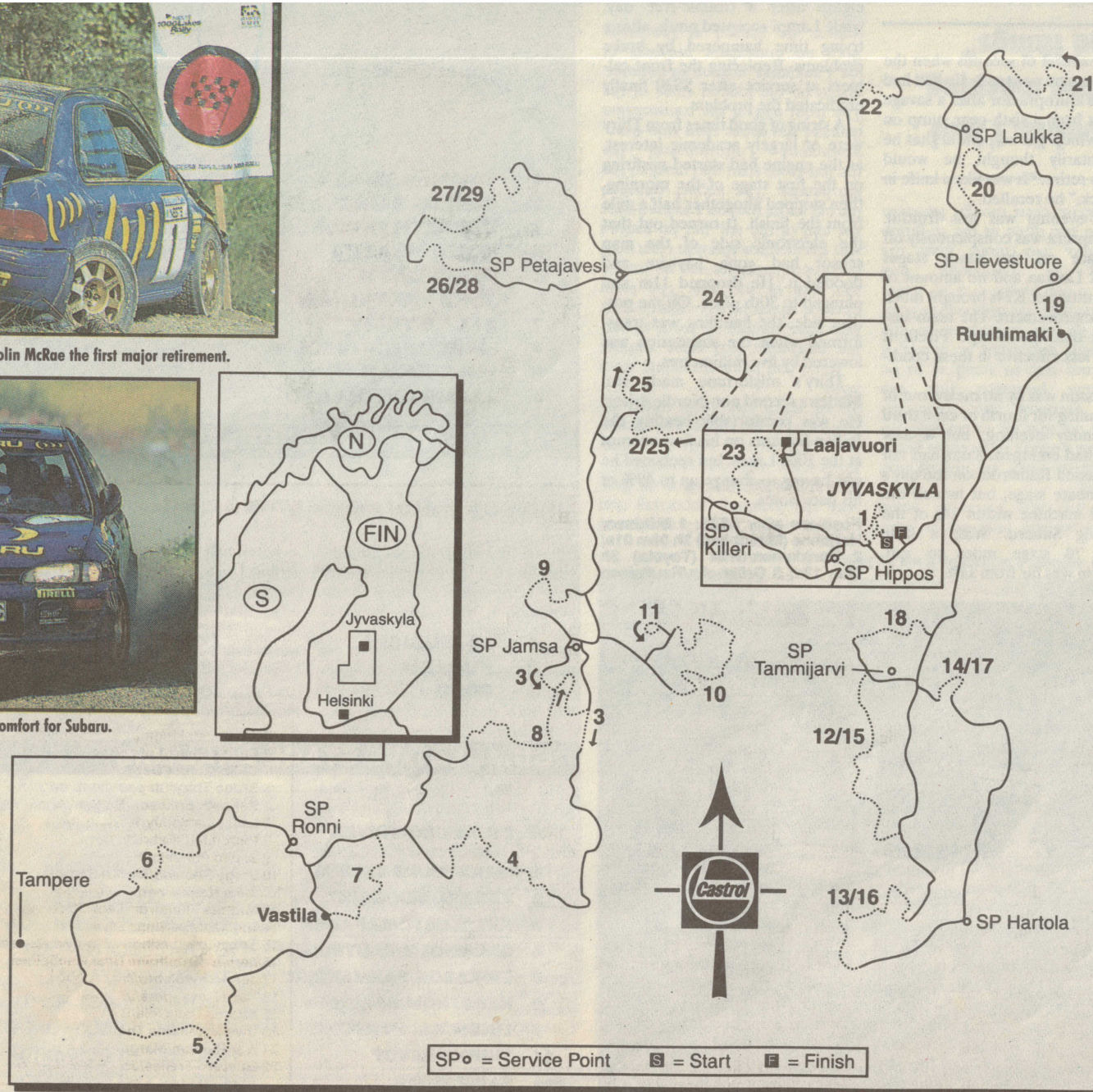
Rådström apart, it was a dissatisfying afternoon for non-Finns. Neither Eriksson nor Thiry was best pleased with their handling, the Swede reckoning that his Subaru was oversteering too much on the twistier sections and gradually falling behind Rådström. Thiry also experimented with tyres,



TYPICAL 1000 Lakes accident" made Colin McRae the first major retirement.



KENNETH ERIKSSON salvaged a crumb of comfort for Subaru.



...and caused another frustrating setback when a pipe came off the left-front damper near the start of Ouninpohja and then the wipers and washers began to work of their own accord for the last nine miles.

Lasse Lampi tried 16-inch Michelins for two stages and promptly reverted to 15s, then had a lucky escape when drive to the front disappeared; fortunately, he had barely a mile of stage to do before coaxing the car to service.

ART nearly lost both its Gp A Imprezas on the spectator stage at Himos, of all places. Andrea Navarra and Angelo Medeghini started side-by-side and finished practically joined together, after Medeghini slid wide on the final left-hander and clobbered his team-mate's door!

Positions after SS11: 1 Kankkunen/Grist (Toyota) 1h 39m 19s; 2 Mäkinen/Harjanne (Mitsubishi) 1h 40m 00s; 3 Grönholm/Rautiainen (Toyota) 1h 40m 37s; 4 Kytölehto/Kapanen (Ford) 1h 40m 54s; 5 Rådström/Backman (Toyota) 1h 41m 06s.

Leg 2

Mäkinen had been looking forward to the boot being on the other foot, and with good reason. Sainz managed to equal him twice, but the World Championship leader was quickest on every other stage and Kankkunen was powerless to stem the tide.

Juha had suffered from an upset stomach during the night, but he was in no doubt that running first on the road had made all the difference. Power-sapping gravel cost chunks of time and, even on the three repeated stages, he could do no more than halve the speed of Mäkinen's advance. It had taken Tommi just two tests to slice 19s from the Toyota's advantage, and Prodrive's speed gun revealed that he was quickest under all conditions - apart from the time he missed a gear off the startline.

Switching to marginally softer suspension in the afternoon made



PASI HAGSTROM put Mitsubishi's nose out of joint by snatching a brilliant Gp N win for Toyota.

no difference and Kankkunen couldn't even exploit home soil around Laukaa. It wasn't a matter of whether the lead would change hands, but when. It duly did so on SS19.

"It was not too bad. Tommi was fast, but the rest were far behind," said Juha, struggling to look on the bright side. "I have never been driving such a difficult day in 1000 Lakes," he added. He conceded that the broad, long-nosed Celica was a bit of a handful on the narrower roads to the south-east of Jyväskylä, despite narrow-track suspension.

fore began the final leg in good shape and very much on home territory.

Prodrive had re-programmed Eriksson's centre differential at the end of the first leg to cut the low-speed oversteer and, while the engineers promised that the difference was so small as to be practically impossible to detect, it made all the difference to the Appelbo man. He disposed of Rådström in two stages and set about reeling in Grönholm and Kytölehto. No more than 21s covered the three at the re-group after SS18, even though Kenneth

Sainz hadn't been best pleased with the handling, reporting that the car was too nervous on the first, three-stage loop that morning, but he patiently wittled away Rovannerä's advantage and slipped ahead when the Finn rolled on SS17.

Harri had been struggling from the morning's first stage without fifth gear, finding all kinds of corners for which he was either a gear too high or too low. The team reckoned that there was no reason why the gearbox shouldn't last until the end of the leg, but he parked the car on its roof on a second-gear left-hander. The impact smashed the left-front strut and cracked the windscreen. Unfortunately, the damage was more than skin-deep. The front half of the transmission seized on the longest stage of the leg, Lankamaa, costing six minutes. With no immediate prospect of service, he retired at the stage finish.

Lindholm was promoted to

(Toyota) 3h 10m 10s; 4 Kytölehto/Kapanen (Ford) 3h 10m 24s; 5 Eriksson/Parmander (Subaru) 3h 10m 40s.

Leg 3

Kankkunen had talked in terms of possibilities the night before, Mäkinen of probabilities. Ralliart's calculations proved right. It was damp first thing in the morning and there wasn't much difference between first and second on the road. More to the point, half of the second stage, Parkkola, was narrow and very rough in places, and Mäkinen's assault left the opposition not so much beaten as paralysed. The first two stages more than doubled his lead, to 25s. He continued to set fastest times to keep himself amused, but Kankkunen had immediately recognised that the battle was lost.

The other Toyota drivers fare worse still in their wide-track cars. As Rådström explained, "Impossible to drive: every corner you have maybe the inside in the rut, the outside in the wall and the back wheels in the ditch – and no traction at all."

Despite his best efforts, Grönholm was forced to concede third to Kytölehto, but Rådström moved up a place. Again, the Subaru was more competitive in the damp and Eriksson clinched fifth, despite problems with sixth gear and a wilting engine, but Sainz lost sixth halfway through the last stage when the gearbox broke. Thiry salvaged 11th, but the bald fact is that the works cars were conspicuously less reliable than Wilson's. Bearing in mind that the car's layout dates back to the Sierra of 1990, there is no excuse.

There was a fly in Mitsubishi's

ointment: Pasi Hagström. The former motocross rider single-handedly vanquished the massed ranks of the Gp N Lancers in his Shell-backed GT-Four. Jouko Puhakka retired on SS9 with brake trouble and the roughest part of Parkkola 2 not only eliminated the leader, Juha Kangas, but cost Olli Harkki and Uwe Nittel four minutes apiece with punctures. Harkki got in front with two stages to go, but Hagström coolly raised the pressure to win by five seconds.

Mäkinen reckoned that it was easily the most difficult of his 1000 Lakes victories, expressed sympathy for Sainz and relief that Kankkunen had "wide and a little bit old car – otherwise it would have been really difficult to beat him". They were generous words, but then Tommi can afford to be generous at the moment.

David Williams

FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP ©1997 **Round 06**

1000 LAKES RALLY

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1 Tommi Mäkinen/Seppo Harjanne (Mitsubishi Lancer E3) | 4h 04m 13s |
| 2 Juha Kankkunen/Nicky Grist (Toyota Celica GT-Four) | 4h 04m 59s |
| 3 Jarmo Kytölehto/Arto Kapanen (Ford Escort Cosworth) | 4h 06m 50s |
| 4 Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautiainen (Toyota Celica GT-Four) | 4h 06m 55s |
| 5 Kenneth Eriksson/Staffan Parmander Subaru Impreza 555 | 4h 07m 35s |
| 6 Thomas Rådström/Lars Bäckman (Toyota Celica GT-Four) | 4h 08m 22s |
| 7 Sebastian Lindholm/Timo Hantunen (Ford Escort Cosworth) | 4h 09m 50s |
| 8 Lasse Lampi/Jyrki Stenroos (Mitsubishi Lancer E3) | 4h 16m 14s |
| 9 Rui Madeira/Nuno da Silva (Toyota Celica GT-Four) | 4h 20m 47s |
| 10 Angelo Medeghini/Barbara Medeghini (Subaru Impreza 555) | 4h 22m 41s |

RETIREMENTS

- Colin McRae/Derek Ringer** (Subaru Impreza 555)
Carlos Sainz/Luis Moya (Ford Escort RS Cosworth)

accident, SS6
 gearbox, SS29

"Now the car is unbelievable. I had to work like an idiot in the morning, using the handbrake and things"

Thomas Rådström

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

In fact, it hadn't been altogether plain sailing, even for Mäkinen. He had yumped too quickly on the second stage of the morning and broken an intercooler bracket. The intercooler itself was replaced after SS14.

Grönholm started the day with 17s in hand over Kytölehto and finished it nursing a 14s advantage. Marcus confessed that he had been "sleeping" on the first loop but, even when he woke up, he was unable to prevent Kytölehto cutting the deficit to one second with two stages to run. Swapping from FB92s to the newer FB98s in the afternoon made quite a difference, as the newer tyre is lighter and the Petajävesi farmer dislikes heavy steering.

The Toyota man finally got some respite when the Escort's clutch began to vibrate horribly on SS22 and Kytölehto eased off, fearing that it was about to blow to smithereens. It held - just - and he there-

lost a handful of seconds when the rear dampers went soft. He had had to see a chiropractor after a savage landing from a sixth-gear yump on SS13, which was so painful that he momentarily thought he would have to retire. "It was like a knife in the back," he recalled.

The evening was less fruitful. The Impreza was conspicuously off the pace on the sandy stages around Laukaa and no amount of hand-cutting of K24s brought much of an improvement. The team suspected that the K-type Pirelli is simply less effective in these conditions.

Eriksson was by no means out of the running for fourth or even third on Sunday evening, but a new threat had emerged. Sainz had not only passed Rådström on the day's penultimate stage, but hauled the Repsol machine within 24s of the surviving Subaru. With a little under 70 stage miles to run, Eriksson was far from safe.

Lindholm was promoted to eighth after a trouble-free day, while Lampi accepted ninth, after a trying time hampered by brake problems. Replacing the front calipers at service after SS20 finally eradicated the problem.

A string of good times from Thiry were of largely academic interest, as the engine had started misfiring on the first stage of the morning, then stopped altogether half a mile from the finish. It turned out that the electronic side of the map sensor had gone haywire and flooded it. He dropped 11m and plunged to 30th place. On the positive side, the handling was transformed when the suspension was lowered by five millimetres.

Thiry's misfortune made Rui Madeira second non-Nordic driver. He was comfortably beating the Italian Subaru on his first attempt at the 1000 Lakes, but reckoned he was having to change up to 40% of his pace notes.

Positions after SS23: 1 Mäkinen/Harjanne (Mitsubishi) 3h 08m 01s; 2 Kankkunen/Grist (Toyota) 3h 08m 13s; 3 Grönholm/Rautiainen



THE biggest round of applause at prizegiving was, deservedly, for Jarmo Kytölehto, who was a splendid third.

	SWEDEN	SAFARI	INDONESIA	ACROPOLIS	ARGENTINA	1000 LAKES	AUSTRALIA	SANREMO	CATALONIA	TOTAL POINTS
1	TOMMI MAKINEN	20	20	0	15	20	20			95
2	CARLOS SAINZ	15	0	20	12	15	0			62
3	KENNETH ERIKSSON	12	10	0	8	12	8			51
4	COLIN McRAE	12	10	0	20	0	0			42
5	PIERO LIATTI	0	8	15	10	4	-			37
5	JUHA KANKKUNEN	10	-	12	-	-	15			37
7	BRUNO THIRY	-	-	-	6	8	0			14
7	MARCUS GRONHOLM	4	-	-	-	-	10			14
9	IAN DUNCAN	-	12	-	-	-	-			12
10	JARMO KYTOLEHTO	-	-	-	-	-	12			12

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

	SWEDEN	SAFARI	INDONESIA	ACROPOLIS	ARGENTINA	1000 LAKES	AUSTRALIA	SANREMO	CATALONIA	TOTAL POINTS
1	MITSUBISHI	47	50	0	41	56	46			240
2	SUBARU	43	50	29	56	38	18			234
3	FORD	40	13	35	40	47	5			180

CUMULATIVE STAGE ANALYSIS

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	STAGE POSITIONS					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1	MAKINEN/HARJANNE	MITSUBISHI LANCER E3	17	4	1	2	1	1
2	KANKKUNEN/GRIST	TOYOTA CELICA GT-FOUR	8	7	3	2	2	3
3	KYTOLEHTO/KAPANEN	FORD ESCORT COSWORTH	1	3	4	5	4	3
4	GRONHOLM/RAUTIAINEN	TOYOTA CELICA GT-FOUR	-	2	8	5	2	4
5	ERIKSSON/PARMANDER	SUBARU IMPREZA 555	-	2	5	3	4	4
6	RADSTROM/BACKMAN	TOYOTA CELICA GT-FOUR	1	-	1	3	3	1
7	LINDHOLM/HANTUNEN	FORD ESCORT COSWORTH	1	1	3	2	3	5
11	THIRY/PREVOT	FORD ESCORT COSWORTH	2	1	5	2	-	5
Rtd	SAINZ/MOYA	FORD ESCORT COSWORTH	2	5	7	3	3	2
Rtd	McRAE/RINGER	SUBARU IMPREZA 555	-	-	-	-	-	1