

JULIEN SAUNIER WINS THE INAUGURAL ALPINE ELF RALLY TROPHY

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ALPINE ELF RALLY TROPHY Rallye du Var — Review

- Julien Saunier, who clinched the top spot for the third time this season, is the inaugural winner of the Alpine Elf Rally Trophy launched this year.
- The Sébastien Loeb Racing driver won all 16 stages of the Rallye du Var to take a convincing victory over Michel Bonfils and Jean-Luc Roché.
- The Alpine A110 Rallies once again battled at the sharp end of the order, with Cédric Robert, Julien Saunier and François Delecour keeping up with the Rally2 cars of the French Championship leaders.



Julien Saunier – Trophée Alpine Elf Rally



Jean-Luc Roché – Trophée Alpine Elf Rally



Podium – Trophée Alpine Elf Rally

The first edition of the Alpine Elf Rally Trophy concluded on the traditional season-finale of the FFSA French Tarmac Rally Championship on the Rallye du Var.

Alpine Elf Rally Trophy leader Julien Saunier was guaranteed to claim the crown before the start in the absence of Nicolas Hernandez, the only competitor in a position to catch him.

Determined to end his campaign on a high, the Sébastien Loeb Racing driver set the pace from the outset, winning all Friday stages to take a lead of more than four minutes.

Although the rain came through on Saturday, Julien Saunier kept up the momentum going with three more fastest times despite an issue with his windscreen wipers on SS6. On increasingly muddy roads, the leader extended his winning streak in the afternoon and at night. Behind, the battle for second place was raging between Priscille Delecour, who took the advantage before an off in the morning loop benefitted Michel Bonfils and Jean-Luc Roché.

On Sunday, Julien Saunier concluded his perfect run, winning the last four timed sectors of the rally, despite having opted for the Michelin rain tyres on roads that were eventually dry. His third win of the season, following those at the Mont-Blanc Morzine Rally and the Cœur de France Rally, allowed him to seal the title in style with a dominating performance ahead of Michel Bonfils and Jean-Luc Roché. Third this weekend, the latter was crowned in the Gentlemen category for just one point.

Julien Saunier, who was firmly in the lead of the trophy, was also up against the top drivers of the French Championship and the other Alpine A110 Rallies entered. Once again, the cars developed jointly by Alpine and Signatech proved their potential, with Cédric Robert and Julien Saunier regularly finishing in the top five overall on day one. Both men were at it again on Saturday, emulated the next day by Grégory Fontalba and François Delecour, who run as high as fourth overall. Four Alpines made it into the top five overall on the short SS8 of the Circuit du Var. Back into the top five on Saturday evening, Cédric Robert finished fourth to make it an all-Alpine podium in the two-wheel-drive category ahead of Julien Saunier and François Delecour.

The leading contenders in the Alpine Elf Rally Trophy will be honoured at Alpine's prize-giving ceremony on Friday 10 December while the 2022 calendar will be unveiled in the upcoming weeks.

Julien Saunier: "That's it. We did it! I felt right at home with the Alpine A110 Rally on this Rallye du Var. Despite some poor tyre choices, we managed to run strong in dreadful conditions. We found the right setup that we had been looking for since the beginning of the season. We owe this success to the huge work of Frédéric by my side, but also to our team of enthusiasts, whether they are mechanics, drivers or family members. I want to thank the car owner. We had a lot of fun with it and the Alpine proved to be a formidable competitor against the Rally2s. I also want to thank all the trophy participants and some of the other teams kind enough to guide us when we needed it. I would also like to thank the Centre Alpine Villefranche as well as the Soverp company and its directors for their support."

Philippe Sinault: "Following the debut of the Alpine A110 Rally in 2020, the inaugural Alpine Elf Rally Trophy season was the real founding year of Alpine's return to rallying in France. It was incredible to see the enthusiasm of the fans when the Alpines passed by. There is a unique feeling at each event, and this was again the case with the huge crowd at the Circuit du Luc special stage. We want to thank the ten crews that put their trust in us and the other competitors who made the Alpine colours shine. Congratulations to Julien and Frédéric for this title, which rewards their consistency and their rise to prominence over the year as they competed with great drivers such as Cédric Robert and François Delecour at the end of the season. Congratulations also to Jean-Luc Roché, who won the maiden title in the Gentlemen category. After this strong first year with three different winners from five rallies, we will now assess all the areas of our trophy to make it even better next year."

Classification

1. Julien Saunier-Frédéric Vaclare 2h17:06.2s
2. Michel Bonfils-René Belleville +15:045s
3. Jean-Luc Roché-Alexandra Robin-Roché +21:13.1s
ret. Priscille Delecour-Sandra de Castelli

General classification

1. Julien Saunier – 75 points
2. Nicolas Hernandez – 50 points
3. Jean-Luc Roché – 46 points
4. Michel Bonfils – 45 points
5. Raphaël Astier – 20 points
6. Loïc Panagiotis – 15 points
7. Sérgio Pinto – 12 points
8. Raphaël Marry & Stefaan Prinzie – 10 points
- NC. Priscille Delecour

For more information: signatech@signature-team.com

About Alpine

Founded in 1955 by Jean Rédélé, the brand has set itself apart with its French-style sports cars. In 2018, the brand presents the new A110, a sports car faithful to Alpine's timeless principles of compactness, lightness, agility and driving pleasure. In 2021, the Alpine Business Unit is created. It thus becomes the brand dedicated to innovative, authentic, exclusive sportscars of Renault Group, benefiting from the heritage and craftsmanship of its historic plant in Dieppe, as well as the engineering mastery from Alpine Racing and Alpine Cars teams

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