

SUMMARY OF THE WORLD DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP 2019



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Todd McCarthy
AUSTRALIA



Doug McNair
CANADA



Mika Forss
FINLAND



Franck Nivard
FRANCE



Michael Nimczyk
GERMANY



James MacDonald
ITA/ WORLD CHAMPION



Rodney Gatt
MALTA



Rick Ebbinge
NETHERLANDS



Matthew Williamson
NEW ZEALAND



Eirik Høitomt
NORWAY



Ulf Ohlsson
SWEDEN



Yannick Gingras
USA

The World Driving Championship was settled in Sweden between the 24 of May until 31 of May 2019. Swedish Trotting Association has written a short summary, day by day from the championship.

Day 1 – Solvalla, Friday 24 of May 2019

The first day of the World Driving Championship at Solvalla has ended, with three different winners in each of the races and Swedish driver Ulf Ohlsson in the lead.



Ulf Ohlsson, Sweden

Ulf Ohlsson finished first in his third race of the day with Italian Venerdi, a victory which pushed him to first place in the entire championship. In Ohlsson's first race with Landing Gear, he finished in a shared fourth place and in his second race he placed sixth with Enjoy's X. Drive. Ohlsson and Venerdi, who is trained by Pietro Gubellini, got a perfect trip to the finish line where they finished ahead of Matthew Williamson of New Zealand.

– It is an honor to be representing Sweden, and it's all about enjoying the week. I had been told that Venerdi did not like to trot in the lead, and it was just the ideal race for us. It feels great to be winning races for Sweden, Ulf Ohlsson said following his victory.

Finnish driver Mika Forss is in second place following today's races. Forss placed first in his first race with Hersey Boko. Hersey Boko, trained by Lisa Maria Orefors, immediately took the lead and stayed there to the finish line. Forss' day continued with him placing in fourth with B.W.T. Danger and finally in ninth with Bishop.

The reigning champion, Canadian driver James McDonald, had also started the day off great. After a perfect trip he's made a big upset in the second WDC-race. Despite not being as successful in the other races today, McDonald is currently in third place on the leaderboard.

Top 3 after Day 1:

1. Ulf Ohlsson (Sweden) - 33,5 points
2. Mika Forss (Finland) - 31
3. James McDonald (ITA) - 28

Day 2 – Solvalla, Saturday 25 of May 2019

When the fourth of 24 races in the World Driving Championship were decided at Solvalla on Saturday, Dutch top driver Rick Ebbinge swept to victory with Svante Båths Deep Pockets.



Rick Ebbinge, Netherland's

Today's WDC race was very undramatic as Rick Ebbinge sent Deep Pockets straight to the lead, and after that there was never any doubt about how it would end. After keeping a good pace in the lead, he was the undeniable victor as he pulled over the homestretch.

At the top of the World Driving Championship we got a new leader today, when Mika Forss took over the lead after placing third with Mellby Fantom with a strong finish. Ulf Ohlsson, who was in the front in WDC following Fridays races, had a rough race and finished seventh with Zaragoza.

The top three are the same as after the first day, as James MacDonald finished fourth with Quite Special. Today's winner Rick Ebbinge is just outside the top three with 36 points.

Top 3 after day 2:

1. Mika Forss (Finland) - 42 points
2. Ulf Ohlsson (Sweden) - 39.5
3. James MacDonald (ITA) - 37

Day 3 – Lindesberg, Monday 27 of May 2019

When the third day of the World Driving Championship was decided at Fornaboda, the Swedish star driver Ulf Ohlsson took over the overall lead. This despite Ohlssons tough day, as he placed at best in third during today's five races.



Cold-blooded race at Lindesberg

Canadian Doug McNair became Driver of the day after taking two victories. This was McNair's first time driving a cold-blood, but he proved to have good driving hands. After a tough neck-and-neck finish, he brought Klocksve Sprinten up ahead of Franck Nivard at the stretch. This was the first of the four cold-blood races included in this year's WDC program.

– I think the trick is to hold the cold-blood a little more relaxed. I probably didn't breathe for the last 30 seconds, but I could feel it on the stretch that I would win if I held him in trot, Doug McNair said in the victory interview.

Doug McNair's second win in the evening came with You To Net, who he pulled behind the leader despite post eight in the start. On the stretch, he saw an opportunity to take the win at the right time and took it. McNair had same amount of points today as Norwegian Eirik Höitomt, who won with Timo Nurmos Deede Star, and did not place lower than sixth in the other races of today. His performance pushed him up to second place in the World Driving Championship.

The third race proved to be the toughest battle of today, when Matthew Williamson (Ior Tooma) and Yannick Gingras (Saphir d'Inverne) were still neck-and-neck as they crossed the finish line and they ended up sharing the victory.

– I am glad that I can drive so much here in Sweden, I see this as training because I really want to come back and win the Elitloppet. It's one of my big goals, Yannick Gingras said.

Maltese Rodney Gatt also won a race during the day when he picked up the lead early in the race with Anne and still held it over the stretch.

Finnish driver Mika Forss, who was in the lead after the first four races of the WDC at Solvalla, was not as fortunate today. Forss is currently in fifth place in the overall summary. Nine out of the competitions 24 races have now been decided, and the next five races will take place tomorrow at Sundbyholm racetrack in Eskilstuna.

Top 3 after day 3:

1. Ulf Ohlsson (Sweden) – 76.5 points
2. Eirik Höitomt (Norway) – 74
3. Matthew Williamson (New Zealand) – 72.5

Day 4 – Sundbyholm (Eskilstuna), Tuesday 28 of May 2019

After a bad start during the first two days at Solvalla, Doug McNair has started to come around and followed up yesterday's two victories on the WDC-tour with another two at Sundbyholm and for the second day in a row became Driver of the Day.



Arctic Agent and Doug McNair, Canada

Yesterday it was close between the drivers at the top, but at Sundbyholm Doug McNair was the shining star of the evening when he, in addition to the two wins with Arbiggan and Arctic Agent, also placed second with New Song.

– She felt better than what she looked like and did exactly what she was supposed to do when going over the stretch, Doug McNair said in the winning circle after the victory with Arbiggan from the front.

Rick Ebbinge beat the Canadian for his second place, when Ebbinge led the whole race with Fabulous Journey and crossed the finish line on his own. Aside from a gallop the Dutchman did not have any trouble in the other races, which brought him up to third place in the WDC standings.

– It went pretty slowly and the horse went well over the stretch, said Rick Ebbinge in the winning circle of Fabulous Journey.

Yesterday's leader Ulf Ohlsson also had a pretty good Tuesday night with a victory, but it was not enough to keep the lead in the WDC. He dropped the lead to Doug McNair, but Ohlsson is still in second place.

– It was important for the WDC to win this race because I think I haven't had any good chances today, said Ulf Ohlsson following the victory with Pelle Roc.

The last winner of the day was Eirik Höitomt, who won with My Dream Art after pushing to the lead early in the race. The victory was crucial for the Norwegian, who had a bad night in Eskilstuna. Höitomt is currently right outside the leader board as we head on to the last two days of the WDC. The next five races will take place in Rättvik tomorrow.

Top 3 after day 4:

1. Doug McNair (Canada) – 123.5 points
2. Ulf Ohlsson (Sweden) – 118.5
3. Rick Ebbinge (Netherlands) – 115.5

Day 5 – Rättvik, Wednesday 29 of May 2019

At the end of the second-to-last day of the World Driving Championship, two drivers are clashing for first place. The stand-off is between Swedish driver Ulf Ohlsson and Canadian driver Doug McNair. However, with five races left to be decided on Friday, the other drivers still have a shot at joining them in the lead.



Spickleback Face and Ulf Ohlsson, Sweden

Ulf Ohlsson started the day by placing second and finished it as the victory with Spickleback Face, making him Driver of The Day and allowing him to take the lead from former overall leader of the championship, Doug McNair.

Norwegian Eirik Høitomt was just one point short of Ulf Ohlsson in today's points following a triumphant victory with Fagur.

– The competition has had its ups and downs. This was my third victory after all, but there has been bad payoff on the other horses, Eirik Høitomt said when he visited Rättvik for the first time and as a result of the victory took fourth place in the overall standing.

The Nordic drivers appear to have an advantage due to the competition taking place in Sweden, as evidenced by Mika Forss also fighting for first place of the overall standing. He and Faks Nils placed first in today's cold-blood race.

If there was a prize for Trainer of the Day, Jan Ove Olsen would probably receive it. In addition to training Faks Nils, he also trained Livi Mistress, who Yannick Gingras won with in today's first WDC race. Yannick Gingras was also the winner of a race outside of the World Driving Championship, meaning that he was a double winner by the end of the evening.

German driver Michael Nimczyk has had a tough week, but he took his first victory tonight when he placed first with Fast Food Hanover.

– Trainer Jörgen Westholm had told me before the race that the horse was really tough in the last 300 meters and that was true, said Michael Nimczyk.

There are only two points difference between Ulf Ohlsson and Doug McNair in the lead, as they enjoy their free day tomorrow before the WDC is finally settled in Gävle on Friday at lunchtime.

Top 3 after day 5:

1. Ulf Ohlsson (Sweden) – 166.5 points
2. Doug McNair (Canada) – 164.5
3. Mika Forss (Finland) – 154

Day 6 – Gävle, Friday 31 of May 2019

The last day of the World Driving Championship was intense as the drivers at the top gave it their all, but in the end Dutch representative Rick Ebbinge had a phenomenal last day in Gävle and received the title of the world's best driver.



The World Champion Rick Ebbinge and all the WDC drivers

Rick Ebbinge was in sixth place following Wednesday's races, a total of 20 points behind then leader Ulf Ohlsson. Despite his placement Ebbinge still had his eyes on the gold today and started the day with a victory from the front with Jackpot Band, then followed it up with another victory with the cold-blood Pyrho, who was the strongest on the outside of the leader.

The two victories took Ebbinge up to first place, where he stayed for the rest of the day, as Ulf Ohlsson and Doug McNair would not make the most of their shots in the last three races.

– I got a good start of the day and then I just tried to stay away and it went all the way. Just being here participating with these top drivers means a lot, and it is even more fun to win, said Rick Ebbinge at the victory ceremony.

Ulf Ohlsson and Doug McNair battle for second place came to an end, when Yannick Gingras won the 24th and final race of the World Driving Championship with Vine Vision. The horse finished strong, and the American pushed Ulf Ohlsson to the bronze medal and Canadian Doug McNair to just off the podium only two points after Ohlsson.

Today's other two races were won by new Zealander Matthew Williamson who took his second win in the competition with the cold-blood Edbest, and the previous world champion James MacDonald who won with Desideria de Soze.

The World Driving Championship has been running since 1970 when the Canadian Herve Filion won, and this was the first time that the title has gone to a Dutch driver. Rick Ebbinge won by six points and also became Driver of the Day with 53 points.

FINAL SCORE IN THE WORLD DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP



The drivers before the first race at Solvalla Friday 24 of May 2019

For more information:

- www.wtc2019.se
- Youtube – SvenskTravsport

Swedish Trotting Association
www.travsport.se