



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## 2018 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

### ADAC RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

Pre-event Press Conference  
Thursday 16 August

**Present:**

Sébastien Ogier, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team  
Ott Tänak, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT  
Mads Østberg, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team  
Dani Sordo, Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team

**Q:**

Sébastien, Finland was frustrating for you, we all saw that. But crucially you scored more points than your championship rival, Thierry Neuville, which was the objective. However, we could all see that frustration. Tell me about what happened after that? The analysis when you looked at the performance, was there anything that came out of chats with the team? What went wrong?

**SO:**

We would love to exactly know. We have some idea, but we haven't really worked on it yet. We discussed it of course, but we haven't had the chance to test it again. We have some idea. Maybe we went in a direction that was wrong somehow. That was clearly the worst performance of the season, for us and the whole team. There was a lot of talk around my error, but that was not the reason. All the cars were not on the same pace as me, more or less, after day one and after the cleaning effects. It's been a hard weekend, but now we focus on the next one. At least the only positive we could kind of celebrate, but not really a celebration, but to score more points than Thierry. That's the most important and that's what we need to achieve at every event.

**Q:**

I have never seen you analyse data so much, even in media zones, as you did in Finland. Did you find that unusual?

**SO:**

I have always been someone who likes to win, that you know. And when it's not going as you want, as planned, I think it's normal to do everything you can to turn it around. In Finland we tried everything we could and the feeling did improve during the weekend. In fact a bit better. Even on the last stage, the power stage, I was trying hard to get points. I was still finishing P6. So it was not fantastic. Now we are back on tarmac, like I said, and that's behind us. I am convinced that we can do better this weekend.

**Q:**

How was the feeling with the car at the shakedown? Because the shakedown is part of a stage we have used before so quite representative.

**SO:**

It's an interesting shakedown. It's part of the power stage from last year. I think it's really good to check the car is fine and you are ready for the rally. Our feeling was good. But okay, it was clearly dry weather today, it's not completely clear for tomorrow. That's typical difficult Rally Germany conditions. But we are ready for it. The test went very well. This morning the feeling and times were okay. We just need to start.

**Q:**

It is a really fierce fight between you and Thierry, and Ott is mathematically possible of taking the title. There is still three of you within that fight. There is also a lot of focus from the journalists that so many of you are out of contract. It would be so much easier to just tell what is going on next year?

**SO:**

I think most of us would love to but we don't have the answer. Like you mentioned there is still a place in every team. So still some questions going on. I don't have any answer right now.

**Q:**

The one man who does have an answer on what is going on next year, he's only one of two drivers who have contracts next year, is Ott Tänak. We saw you win brilliantly in Finland a few weeks ago. Confidence is high after that. You won here last year as well. Is the confidence level at the maximum right now?

**OT:**

My feeling is good. As you just said we had a good rally in Finland and I have always had a good feeling in Germany. Let's see from rally to rally what's coming. For sure we will do our best. We know we've been able to perform well on every surface this year. Obviously, that's positive. We also need to have a very consistent weekend. The aim is to fight for the win and to push to the maximum. That's our target for the moment, just take it event by event and try to take the best out of all of them let's say.

**Q:**

We see some beautiful stages here but which are the toughest; is it the vineyards with the constant twists and turns and the possibility of getting lost, or is it the roughness and the Hinkelstein risks of Baumholder?

**OT:**

I would say they are all different but the focus or the concentration you need in the military area, you need in the vineyards sections is more or less the same because in the vineyards we have so many junctions, as you just said, but the rhythm is still very high. In the second loop we have a lot of dirt on the road, which needs another good amount of focus. It's tough. The military area is the same. It's quite high speed, it's busy with all the junctions. Many of them are different. All the constant surface changes and so on. We can't underestimate any of them. We really need to focus on every stage the same amount.

**Q:**

How would you say the form of the Yaris compares on tarmac. We have seen great results at the last event in Finland but how good is it on tarmac?

**OT:**

We will see soon. Every rally this year is new for me. I don't have any experience from last year. Every rally is kind of unknown. Before we start the rally I have no feeling, I have absolutely no experience. We need to work on the data we have from the last event and go from there. It's always a bit of a challenge. So far we have seen we are able to perform on every surface. Hopefully we will be also competitive this weekend. The feeling is nice, the guys have been doing a good job.

**Q:**

Mads, another driver who comes here with confidence after a great result in Finland. A really strong, consistent performance from you there. Is it going to translate onto tarmac this weekend? Can we see you fight at the top again?

**MO:**

I would be surprised in a way if that happens. I mean anything is possible at this rally. But to be honest, I think to the tarmac in the last three years, and in Spain, and that's about it. It's two years since I was here. I will just have to build some confidence during the weekend. Try to learn the car. It's the first tarmac event with the C3. The car feels really amazing. It's just difficult for me to get around and to understand how to drive the car at the moment. But I manage to improve just during shakedown today. To get a little bit better feeling and to increase the speed. It will be a learning weekend for sure. The team is putting the energy on Craig [Breen] for this event. I think that's fair. He has more experience than me. I think that's fair. I'll let him push at the front. I'll be a bit further back trying to improve during the weekend. For sure that will be very important.

**Q:**

Can you explain in a little bit more detail what areas you are struggling with at the moment on tarmac. Or is it just simply 'the feeling'?

**MO:**

Of course it's a lot about the feeling. Gravel is completely different and I am really confident there. On tarmac I always enjoyed it. Staying out so long from tarmac it's hard to get back on the pace of these guys. When you see the times they set this morning, it's quite good. I am just getting past the shock now and trying to focus on the stages to come. Just trying to learn the car. The car is very specific. For this event there are a few things you need to think about when you're driving. It's not straight forward to drive the Citroen on tarmac. You need to have some special techniques in some situations. I need to get used to that.

**Q:**

I asked Seb the question and I'll ask you as well. What about your future? What can you tell us at this point?

**MO:**

I mean I just signed a contract for the rest of the year. My season starts now, or it started in Finland. I need at least a couple of months before I sign another one. It looks much better for the future after Finland. I think we have had some strong performances already this year, before that as well with the Citroen. We will see what happens. Obviously, there are some other drivers probably deciding before me. But, the last rally was a good help for the future.

**Q:**

Dani, welcome back to the championship. We missed you in Finland and haven't seen you compete for quite a while now. You were in Sardinia, but not competing there.

**DS:**

It was nice over there. It was nice to see the fight between Sébastien [Ogier] and Thierry [Neuville]. It was a good one.

**Q:**

Now you are back in the car on a surface we love to see you on, and in a rally which you have special memories of – a great win here for you and also consistent pace every time we see you in Germany. Have you got high hopes for this weekend?

**DS:**

Yes, obviously it is a rally I like. I hope the weather will be a little bit like this. Tomorrow may be a little difficult. But it is a rally I enjoy. I enjoy the stages. I hope this year will be the same.

**Q:**

In terms of preparation, what have you been doing to get yourself ready, with testing and everything?

**DS:**

Nothing special. Testing for this rally and we've also done some testing with the R5, because after this rally we will do the Barum Rally and the cars are completely different. You could see in the first parts of the shakedown, you could feel that the rhythm was really fast and the people in front of you were really ready. They were pushing really hard from the first kilometre. So, it will not be easy this weekend.

**Q:**

So, you need to build up a little bit, yes?

**DS:**

I need to wake up really early.

**Q:**

We know you have the capability to win here. We've seen it in the past. There are no excuses why you cannot go and do that this weekend.

**DS:**

Yes of course. But you can see that there are now a lot of drivers who are fast on tarmac. It is not like before when there were maybe less. Now everybody is really fast. You can see everybody is really close. It is nice to see this. With these cars we are really, really fast in some places.

**Q:**

We've seen you this year with a shared season alongside Hayden Paddon, so you've been doing different events. What about next year. Would you, as a driver, be happy to have similar season, or would you prefer a full season? This season has been the best start to the season for a long time for you. Would you prefer to have a partial season or is it full for you next season?

**DS:**

I don't know. I'm just enjoying doing the rallies this year. I am enjoying being in the car. The car is working very well, which of course is nice. So, we'll see for next year.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

Marcin Rybak  
Pure WRC, Italy

**Q:**

We were talking about reducing the average speeds in Finland. Now, in Germany, we have some straw bales at the roadside to prevent cutting corners. What do you think about this?

**SO:**

I think I'm fine with it, because it makes it as consistent as possible for everyone. Without it there would be huge cuts everywhere and it would be a big advantage to start at the front. I would just like there to be something around them that holds them in place better. Now, if you touch it, it breaks and goes all over the road, making quite a mess. That's the only thing I don't like about straw bales.

## **FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Present:**

Pierre-Louis Loubet, BRC Racing  
Jan Kopecký, Škoda Motorsport II

**Q:**

Pierre-Louis, talk to us about your season, because we've seen some brilliant performances from you with really good pace. Have you been happy with what you've achieved in 2018?

**PL:**

Yes. Honestly, we've had a good pace at every rally this year. But, like you said, my pace was good but we've had a lot of – well, not a lot, but small problems in every rally with the stability of the car. Like in Sardinia and Finland, I lost the possibility of being on the podium because of that. Okay, it was my mistake in Corsica, when I was third, but in the race we had a lot of problems with the car and lost a lot of points in the championship. But it's like that. I have to stay focussed and I'm sure that everything is behind me now.

**Q:**

We always like to see you perform on tarmac, but here it is very different tarmac to what we see in Corsica, Monte Carlo or Spain. It changes almost every day. What do you think of Rally Deutschland and is it a good event for you?

**PL:**

For sure it is a competitive round, from what I know. But last year I had a good feeling here. I did some good times. A lot of driving mistakes, but I was still younger than now. Now I have better experience so I think I will know how to manage it. But yes, it is a very special one.

**Q:**

Can you push for the win here?

**PL:**

I don't know if you have to push hard, because in general if you push too much, if you make a little mistake it can be all over. You have no second chance. We will see how we feel and I hope I can be in a position to push.

**Q:**

Jan, it's been a great season for you so far in WRC 2 and it's fantastic to know that you will be able to keep challenging for that championship title. Talk to me in specific detail though about this event, because we talk about vineyard stages, country roads, Panzerplatte. What's the most challenging aspect? Is it the vineyards and their twists and turns, or is it the roughness and Hinkelsteins of Panzerplatte?

**JK:**

It's quite difficult this rally. As you say, the rally has lots of corners, it's really long with many hairpins where you can stall the engine and lose five seconds, then you are not winning the stage. Everything is blind, so you have to trust your notes. Otherwise, the tarmac is quite smooth. However, there can also be a lot of mud from the cars [in front]. If it starts to rain, this can be quite a big problem. If you don't expect loose mud or gravel then you can be out in a flash. Panzerplatte and Baumholder are quite specific. If it's dry, you have to be quite careful with the tyres, because you can ruin them quite easily. For sure, you have to avoid this to have a chance.

**Q:**

Every time we hear your name Jan, it is always with 'Jan Kopecký, tarmac specialist'. You must be feeling the most confident person here right now.

**JK:**

Yes, that is right, but maybe the reason for that is that in the Czech Republic we don't have any gravel rallies.

**Q:**

You have had great performances across the board on tarmac outside of the Czech Republic. You do need confidence to come here but, as you mentioned, it is the conditions: We will see rain tomorrow, that can make things very tricky.

**JK:**

Yes, it will be very tricky, no doubt. Especially if you don't know when it is going to start to rain. It is also important to have the right tyres.

**Q:**

Do you feel pressure on your shoulders for the championship now?

**JK:**

No.

**Q:**

No? Cool and calm.

**JK:**

I'm enjoying every single metre in this car. No pressure.

**Q:**

We always wonder what events you're going to be doing next. We know that you are doing a similar amount now to Pontus Tidemand, to have a good shot at that championship title, but what about next year Jan, what can you tell me?

**JK:**

I don't know. I don't have any contract for next year. It's too far away from now. Let's sort Germany.

**Q:**

What would you like to be doing next year?

**JK:**

That is quite a specific question, but I think that everyone wants to sit in the big car, don't they? The same goes for me.

## **FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Present:**

Enrico Brazzoli

Taisko Lario

**Q:**

Enrico, what have you been doing to get prepared for this event?

**EB:**

First of all I would like to say a few words about the disaster that happened in Genoa three days ago. My thoughts are with the people who died in Genoa because of the collapse of the bridge.

My preparations for this event was testing on Monday. I tried to find a better set-up for the car, because it is the first rally with Pirelli tyres. I also worked very hard to find a better set-up in the Shakedown this morning.

**Q:**

Germany is such a challenging event, we see the different types of stages – the vineyards, Baumholder, the country roads – how much of a challenge is it as a driver?

**EB:**

Germany is a very difficult rally because the roads are very dirty and there are a lot of junctions. The stage I find very difficult is Panzerplatte. But, it is very emotional to be here on that stage.

**Q:**

What do you hope to achieve this weekend, Enrico, what do you think you can do in WRC 3?

**EB:**

For us, it is important to score points for the overall standings, to stay in the championship.

**Q:**

Taisko, we've seen you compete in WRC 3 this year, with your best result coming at Rally Sardinia. Firstly, how would you assess your season so far?

**TL:**

Let's say I had high hopes for the beginning of the season. We could have won in Monte Carlo, but we made a mistake. And also we had some technical issues at Rally Finland, as well as two punctures in Sardinia. Now for the rest of the season, here we need to score maximum points to continue the season and keep our championship title hopes alive.

**Q:**

As you mentioned, it was a really strong performance in Monte before the mistake. You're a Finnish driver, we expect you to be fabulous on gravel and maybe not so good on tarmac. But you're confident on tarmac, yes?

**TL:**

Let's say I enjoy the challenge of the changing grip and also the ice and snow was quite nice for me. I did a good time on Col de Turini on the first pass, so I did enjoy it.

**Q:**

What about this weekend Taisko, what can we see you do here?

**TL:**

Well, our only goal is to win the WRC 3 class and to take maximum points. But, of course, it is a very challenging event. Last year I did Rally Germany and we finished fourth after some punctures, so we are hoping to perform well, but let's say it is a difficult event, so first we have to drive.

**Q:**

What about next year, because we're getting to that point in the season now where everyone is looking to next season and what will happen. What is the plan for you, do you have anything solid?

**TL:**

Nothing solid, but of course I'm hoping to be in WRC 2 next year, in an R5 car, because I've done a long career with an R2 car already. Let's see what happens.

## **NON-PRIORITY**

**Present:**

Marijan Griebel, Citroën DS3 WRC

**Q:**

Marijan, what an amazing opportunity you have here at your home event. We see you compete in a Citroen DS3 WRC – fantastic for you, a world rally car. It has been a long time coming, I'm sure; the dream to compete at your home rally in such a special car. How are you feeling?

**MG:**

Yes, that's completely true. I'm doing this rally for the eighth time now, starting with a very small car in the lowest class and then working my way up to the top. So, it's a dream opportunity to drive this amazing Citroën DS3 WRC car here. Four weeks ago we had our first rally in that car in Luxembourg, taking the overall win. So, yes, I am quite optimistic that we can do a good rally here. It's amazing: All these people here.

Everyone wants to talk to you and to make pictures. I'm enjoying every minute of it and I hope to do a good rally as well.

**Q:**

As you mentioned, you've already competed in it, so tell me – how did the car feel?

**MG:**

For sure it is a bit faster than an R5 car. If you have some hairpins or stuff like that, then the torque is much more so the acceleration is, for me, just amazing. But, for sure, you have to drive it as well. It is not easy, because you don't have any time to think about how you do it, you just have to do it. Otherwise it is too late. For sure, it will not be easy, this rally. I think tomorrow there will be some rain, so it could be even more difficult. We have prepared as well as possible and I cannot wait to get started.

**Q:**

I was just going to ask you about the weather, because you are truly the local man. So, isolated showers do we think? Big downpours of rain? What's the forecast?

**MG:**

I think Saturday and Sunday should be quite sunny and nice weather. But tomorrow, in the afternoon for sure, I think there will be some rain in the vineyards, so it could be difficult.

**Q:**

We've seen you have such success in the FIA European Rally Championship as the Under-28 Champion. Now we see you here in an older-spec world rally car, but still a world rally car. What's the future for you, what's next?

**MG:**

Good question. At the moment, I'm driving for Peugeot Germany in the German Championship. There are three rounds remaining and we are still in the fight for the championship. That's our first goal: to be as good as possible there and, if possible, to win the German Championship this year. For next year I'm very open. At the moment, I don't have the big budget, so we have to look which opportunities there will be. For sure, I'd love to drive international rally championships, no matter if WRC 2 or ERC. But, yes, we will see.