



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

Post event Press Conference

19 August 2018

Present:

1st - Ott Tänak, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT

1st - Martin Järveoja, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT

2nd - Thierry Neuville, Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team

2nd - Nicolas Gilsoul, Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team

3rd - Esapekka Lappi, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT

3rd - Janne Ferm, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT

Tommi Mäkinen, Team Principal, Toyota GAZOO Racing WRT

Q:

Ott, back-to-back wins for you now. We saw you win in Finland and now on tarmac in Germany. How challenging was this win for you?

OT:

It was obviously a tough, tough weekend. From the first stage we had a massive battle with Seb [Ogier]. He was pushing so hard. I felt very comfortable on the first day in the vineyards. I struggled a bit on Saturday morning, I was not as comfortable any more. I am sure Seb saw that and was pushing me hard. That was tough. I had to pull myself together and push and keep my pace up. We came back to the service and the guys managed to improve the car. I had a better pass in the afternoon and felt really confident in the car. Then Seb made a small mistake and got the puncture, which meant that we had a big gap already.

Q:

Was there a feeling of relief when you saw that Seb was not on your tail anymore?

OT:

Yes, definitely. He may be the best driver, but he's not the best guy to be hunting you down and pushing you. I was actually enjoying the fight. The times were very close on every stage. I had confidence in the car and was managing it okay. We all know that anything can happen. This time it went in our favour. I am very happy for the team and for ourselves as we had a strong week.

Q:

Your target for the rest of the season is now to be the best and to take a win at every rally. You started that here. Tell us about today: you had a 40-second advantage, which is a good thing for you, but you went into the Power Stage saying that your position on the road meant that you did not have the option of pushing for points. However, that was clearly not the case and you did score good points. So, were you pushing?

OT:

I tried to do my best, but I was still hesitating in many fast sections, I was not fully committed. In this position it is very difficult to push fully. I pushed hard and had a

good feeling, and did three good stages today. I did not overshoot, like Thierry possibly did. I guess that was the key. It is not nice to miss out on points by just 0.1 seconds. Maybe Seb got lucky this time.

Q:

You are still in the battle for the championship and have edged closer to Seb. Does the result here change your thinking, or are you just focussing on each event as they come?

OT:

It is definitely nice to see that we are moving in the right direction, but we are still a long way off. My target remains the same: to do it event by event. I will now be focussing on the next event in Turkey. We will have a good long test before the rally and will try to be very well prepared. It is an event we know almost nothing about, so there will be a lot of unknowns. We will do our best and be as well prepared as possible.

Q:

Martin, congratulations on another win. It has been a great birthday weekend. You walk away now with great points in the bag and another win on the board. You can finally celebrate tonight. Are you a happy man?

MJ:

Yes. This is our second win in a row. This guy [Tänak] has given me a nice birthday present. It is a good win, also for the points in the Manufacturers' Championship. The rally was a little bit earlier this year than last year, so it was perhaps a little bit easier. On the other hand, Germany is never easy. There was so much dirt on the roads, basically in every corner. In the end, however, it was a good weekend.

Q:

What about pressure? Ott mentioned that he was feeling the pressure from Ogier behind. How tense was it, did you feel the pressure?

MJ:

No, I didn't feel any pressure. I was relaxed.

Q:

Thierry, talk to me about your weekend; second position is great, you finished ahead of Ogier in the points and you extended your advantage in the championship. When you look at it from the outside it's been a good weekend. What have you got to tell me, though?

TN:

The final result is satisfying of course but we expected it to be difficult here. We knew that we had a good margin in the championship and we have to be clever until the end of the year. So far, we have finished every race, and this is the key thing for the end of the year as well. Coming here on Friday morning I could tell straight away that the speed was there, but suddenly I got a gearbox issue and I had to change to another setting, which makes things much more complicated for us to push hard and I struggled from then on with the pace. On Saturday it was a little bit better compared to the first day and it worked a little bit better with the changes, so today I felt a bit more comfortable. But we were never really on the pace to match the speed Ott was going, and even Seb. I knew that I was last in the battle for the championship in this race but consistency paid off. Seb made a bit of a mistake. Ott was constantly strong and feeling comfortable so we tried to finish the race, but at the end of the Power Stage I made a mistake and lost important points.

Q:

Talking about that differential change: obviously you had a problem on Friday and you changed the diff, but what wasn't working?

TN:

I had to use my Corsica diff, which is much more open and I was locking my wheels all the time. I lost efficiency on the workings. Dani [Sordo] was going really fast and I was not able to match his times. But today we worked on the settings and I felt a lot more comfortable, so I could have made some good points on the Power Stage, but I was a little bit too optimistic.

Q:

Too optimistic?

TN:

Yes, all weekend I was not really taking big risks but just trying to find a good speed and I said before, okay let's try to get some points. But I had a feeling – so far, I have been really strong on all the Power Stages. You can't do all the power stages perfectly for the whole season, so maybe I was supposed to do a poor Power Stage here and then be strong again at the next event.

Q:

We head into the unknown next, a brand-new event with Rally Turkey. You just said you need to be sensible now for the rest of the season. How do you go about preparing yourself for an event you don't really know anything about?

TN:

Again, it will be all about the conditions in Turkey. We will first do the recce and see if there is any chance of us being out in front, or not. It should be very hot but at the same time I am in the same position as my main contenders, Sebastien and Ott. It is going to be a tough challenge for us, but we need to keep that advantage until the end of the year.

Q:

Nicolas, as Thierry said, it was really difficult again. Did you imagine at the end of Friday or Saturday that you would be in second position and on the podium?

NG:

No, to be honest, I was a bit disappointed yesterday during the day. I was overthinking myself trying to understand what we can improve to find a better pace. Luckily yesterday evening we were able to work a little bit with our engineer and understand some details and we were able to improve today morning. I'm quite happy.

Q:

We are coming to the tail end of the championship. You have the advantage, which is a good thing. Are you feeling more and more pressure as the events go on?

NG:

No, to be honest I feel comfortable sitting next to Thierry. We are working very well together. I have the feeling that we are well prepared. And our shoulders are strong enough to cope with the pressure until the end of the championship.

Q:

Esapekka, on the podium on a tarmac event. We've seen a dramatic morning. When you went to bed last night did you conceive that you would be on the podium?

EL:

No. I was thinking that I could try to fight with Thierry but that was impossible. I did a clean stage in the morning but Thierry was much faster. The fight was over. A lot of drama on the opening one, which really helped us.

Q:

You seemed to have a bit of caution, hesitancy, in your driving this weekend. You described the gravel and the dirt as your poison. You didn't want to go on it, you didn't want to do any mistakes. You were not pushing as hard as we would normally see you. By the end of the weekend do you feel that you improved?

EL:

I think we made some progress yesterday. Okay, it was not the vineyards yesterday actually, we were driving between the fields. There was dirt as well, but I think we improved a little bit. Also, the stages were a little bit more simple, which helped us as well. But still I think I need a little bit more mileage to understand what are the limits of the vineyards. There is no space for mistakes. That's what I've faced many times in previous years and I didn't want to face it now.

Q:

Talk to me about Rally Turkey, a brand new event on the championship calendar and a level playing field.

EL:

It's nice to have a new rally. It is new for everyone. At least we are equal with our experience with everyone else over there. That should help us to be on their pace.

Q:

Janne, are you a happy man getting onto the podium? A great result on tarmac for you both.

JF:

I am very happy.

Q:

Talk to me about the way you felt in the car this weekend, because we're used to Esapekka pushing hard. He was cautious because he didn't want to make mistakes out there. What was your advice for him in the car?

JF:

Good question. I like his approach to this rally because it's tough and it has been tough for us so many years. This weekend was a super job and we did an unexpected result. This is good and good for the team.

Q:

What do you do to prepare for a brand-new event like Turkey? Give us a little bit of an insight into the next couple of weeks from your perspective. What are you doing to get ready?

JF:

We are eating kebabs constantly, I don't know about anything else in Turkey.

Q:

Tommi, it is a double podium for you. It's not a one-two, but two Toyotas on the podium. Another great win from Ott, and a great boost in the Manufacturers' Championship as well. So, you must be a happy team principal, and proud again of Ott.

TM:

Yes, it is absolutely a great moment and a great weekend and I now hope it continues. We smile today and try to celebrate at least. Tomorrow we are already thinking about Turkey.

Q:

Talk to me about Jari-Matti Latvala, because at the start of the day it was Sordo in second, Latvala in third, eight tenths of a second between them. We were waiting for a huge battle and unfortunately both of them had problems. Dani Sordo went off the road, but for Jari-Matti it was a technical issue. Can you talk us through what the team now knows?

TM:

It was disappointing. We were very confident after yesterday that he could perform well on today's stages. Some hydraulic failure destroyed his rally. It was some electricals failure that stopped the oil pressure. He had to go to the manual system,

which then finally had some technical problem with transmission and that was the reason he stopped. We feel very, very sorry for him. This kind of thing has happened to him so often. We just wonder when it is going to stop and when he is going to be champion. We try to support him as much as we can.

Q:

And on a positive note, it is two Toyotas on the podium. Ott we know about and his performance and how great he's been. A few words on Esapekka Lappi's performance this weekend?

TM:

Very consistent driver, very consistent weekend with Esapekka. He's a professional and you know that these conditions are very, very challenging so it's easy to make a small mistake, which can cost you a lot of time. But there were no mistakes whatsoever, it was absolutely brilliant, we are proud.

Q:

Now you can try to win both championships; is it a dream, or do you think it's possible?

TM:

Well, I know from experience that luck is coming, as much as we put effort in to do our work as carefully as we can, and I'm pretty sure that everybody out there is very motivated to give their maximum effort to reach their target. And, as I mentioned, tomorrow we start thinking already about Turkey and we have done some preparations for the hot conditions. As you will have noticed, we had some issues in Mexico. I hope these will be sorted out for the Rally Turkey. This will be good for our confidence.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Jan Kopecký, Škoda Motorsport II

1st - Pavel Dresler, Škoda Motorsport II

Q:

Jan, what a dramatic weekend you have had in the FIA WRC 2 Championship. Problems yesterday, dropping down the leaderboard, then all the way back up to take the win. Coming into the lead on the penultimate stage of the rally, it really has been an incredible climb up the leaderboard. How do you feel at the end of the weekend?

JK:

It was not easy for us. We were very happy with what we were doing on Friday. We tried to build up the gap step by step. Then suddenly we had a puncture on Panzerplatte. Then we just looked for the results and we said, let's try what we can do. We showed good pace.

Q:

You did have really good pace throughout the weekend. We know how confident you are on tarmac. Were you happy with the pace you were running at?

JK:

Yes, we were very happy. Especially on Panzerplatte. That was the most important thing, because this was a very big stage for us. We won by several seconds over Kalle [Rovanperä].

Q:

In the WRC 2 championship standings you now have 100 points, Pontus Tidemand is on 93. It is very close...

JK:

Yes, it is very close. I know we will meet in Turkey, so I'm looking forward to that.

Q:

It will be such an important battle and it's a brand-new event. How do you get yourself ready for it?

JK:

It is really good for Pavel and I that the roads are new. It is a new challenge for everyone. We try to do our best. Hopefully, we can win the rally or at least be second.

Q:

You seem to be the kind of driver that doesn't feel too much pressure. You are cool and calm, is that the case?

JK:

No, I love to do this job. But I'm looking forward to a rest and a shower!

Q

Pavel, when that puncture happened, did you think "that's our chance for the victory gone"?

PD:

At the first moment, it was full of emotions. We were thinking about what happened and where. But then we kept our mind and said: Okay, flat-out! We fight back to the podium and we will see where we can end up. From that emotion to the opposite side of the emotion was just a day. At the end of the day we were back on third. The gap was only 5.7 seconds. So, do-able for today, it was again flat-out and try to be first and we ended up first.

Q

The boys around weren't letting you get away easily. Rovannerä, Andolfi, they had great performances.

PD:

Yeah, great respect to them. They did a very good job. Their speed was quite nice. They are on the podium, but we are the first, so we are the happiest.

FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Taiko Lario

1st - Tatu Hamalainen

Q:

Taiko, we met you here on Thursday at the pre-event press conference and you said how much you would love to win WRC 3. You sounded very confident, and it has been an extremely confident performance from you this weekend on tarmac. Are you a happy Finn?

TL:

It is an incredible feeling to win in the WRC 3 class for the first time. I think we deserved to come out on top. We managed to open up a big gap behind us on Friday. After that, we just managed the race and it went well. We are now second in the championship and really in the fight for the title.

Q:

Were you giving it 100% on Friday when you opened up that big lead?

TL:

Yes, I was really trying hard. When the gap got bigger I had to back down a little bit, because I had a few moments out there, particularly in the rain shower.

Q:

Did that make it exceptionally tricky?

TL:

Yes, it was so slippery out there. I am obviously confident on tarmac, but when it is raining like that you have to back down a bit.

Q:

If you start to back down and are not in a battle, it can be easy to lose focus. Did you experience that?

TL:

Yes. It is very difficult to slow down and manage the lead, because if you are not pushing and on the limit then you can lose your focus a little bit and it is easier to make small mistakes.

Q:

Where will we see you next?

TL:

It will be Wales Rally GB and after that Spain, hopefully.

Q:

As someone born and bred in Finland, is it special to win on tarmac?

TL:

Yes, it is special for me. I have had podium finishes before in WRC 3, but this is my first victory on tarmac. It shows that we are making good progress.

Q:

Tatu, congratulations on a first WRC 3 victory. Hopefully there'll be some more for you this year. Are you happy at the end of the event?

TH:

Yes, I am very happy.