



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2013 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
ADAC RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

Pre-event Press Conference
Wednesday 21 August

Present:

Sébastien Ogier, Volkswagen Motorsport
Thierry Neuville, Qatar World Rally Team
Dani Sordo, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Malcolm Wilson, Qatar M-Sport World Rally Team

Q:

Sébastien, this is the first event where you could seal the Drivers' Championship. How much is that on your mind ahead of the event?

SO:

It is not really on my mind. Mathematically, it can happen, but normally, it shouldn't happen this weekend already. I don't wish Thierry [Neuville] and Jari-Matti [Latvala] any troubles, although of course I would like to win. My main goal is to do well here, and also for my team as it is their home event.

Q:

You have won this event in the past, what is the secret to doing well here in Germany?

SO:

There is no real secret. Like in every rally, you have to do a good job from the very beginning. The battle will be interesting. There is no real secret.

Q:

This is the home event for the team, what does it mean to you to compete for Volkswagen on home soil and do you think about that at all?

SO:

I normally don't think about it too much. I just do my job as always. Before the rally, I had some more requests for interviews and questions to answer, but once the rally starts, it will be the same as always.

Q:

In shakedown, you only ended up fourth. Was there anything wrong?

SO:

I didn't do the best shakedown I could, but the actual start is tomorrow. We tried a few things and on our last run, we had a small technical problem, but nothing that can't be solved. I am confident for the rally.

Q:

Is it your aim to win here?

SO:

Yes, that is really my target. Of course, winning the Championship is still in my mind and the most important goal, but first of all, I want to win.

Q:

Thierry, you are currently on joint second-position points in the Championship with Jari-Matti Latvala. Your performance on gravel has been hugely impressive but now the switch to tarmac, a surface you feel more comfortable on. Will you be pushing for a win here?

TN:

I don't know yet. I am still discovering the car on tarmac. Of course, I have a lot of experience on tarmac, but I am getting more and more comfortable on gravel, too. But now, we are on tarmac and I have to see how it goes.

Q:

Can you tell us what your strategy will be?

TN:

My aim is to get on the podium. I really want to get a podium place. In the Championship, I am equal on points with Jari-Matti. If he is fighting for victory, I will try to stay close to him. There are still a few things we have to find out about set-up during the rally, but once this is done, we can set fastest times and we will be competitive.

Q:

When you joined M-Sport for this year, did you expect to be second in the Championship at this stage of the season?

TN:

No, not at all. Last year was really bad for us, but this year things are going really well. The people at M-Sport are doing a great job. I am feeling really comfortable, it really feels like being a works driver, and that is making me even more confident.

Q:

We saw a great battle in Finland. Will we see something like that here again?

TN:

It is hard to say whether we will have something like that here again, but I certainly do hope so. The battle in Finland was amazing for the show and for the sport. We have to get more battles like this. Let's fight, let's hope that nobody has any problems and that the best will win.

Q:

Dani, tarmac is your specialty but do you come to Germany with a lot of pressure on your shoulders to perform?

DS:

I feel very well. I like this surface more, the car in this condition, the roads are nice to drive. I want to do well, but above all I want to enjoy it and when I enjoy it, I can do well.

Q:

Will you be taking any risks to score a good result?

DS:

Here, everybody can win. Of course, I will try to fight for victory or the podium. It is a rally that I like and with my experience, we can do a good job.

Q:

How did shakedown go for you?

DS:

I am quite happy with the way it went. We tried two different things today, but we went back to the normal set-up in the end.

Q:

The decision that you would not compete in Australia, how did that happen and what do you feel about the decision?

DS:

Australia is too far to fly... [laughs]. Of course, I am disappointed, but I didn't have a lot of confidence on gravel. Kris [Meeke] did well in Finland and if he can help the team a little bit more, that is good. In the end, we took this decision together.

Q:

Malcolm, what are your thoughts of Thierry's performance so far? Did you expect him to do so well?

MW:

Well, of course I was hoping he would do well. Certainly the last few events were really encouraging. He and Nicolas [Gilsoul] did a great job, they are working really well with the engineers and found ways to improve the car. They are getting rewarded for their efforts.

Q:

Do you think that your faith in young drivers is now paying off?

MW:

Yes, it is really encouraging to see them do so well. We made some small improvements on the car. With Thierry, there is a great buzz with him within the team. Twelve months ago we didn't even know whether we would be in the WRC for this year, and now he is second in the standings, so that is really positive.

Q:

Will we see you back in the WRC for 2014?

MW:

Well, that is certainly the plan. I am not planning anything else. We know we have a competitive car and the freeze of the technical regulations for next year means we will remain competitive for 2014 as well, which is great for the drivers to know too. When you see what has happened in Finland, it is what the sport has been missing for many years.

Q:

Volkswagen aside, the drivers market is wide open. Do you hope to keep your current drivers on board?

MW:

When you look at the progress Thierry and Mads [Østberg] have made, why would we want to change? But for me, the most important thing is to make sure we can stay in the WRC with a competitive team and then I can keep these drivers on board.

Q:

When is your deadline to decide about your WRC involvement?

MW:

Historically, in the past few years, it always was the closing date for registration with the FIA. I hope it can be a little bit sooner this year. We are discussing at the moment, but I can't say anything yet.

Q:

Thierry has already scored a great amount of podiums this year. Do you think he is also capable of a win this year?

MW:

I don't see why not. For his career, it would be best to be in a position to fight for victories, and then he can win like anyone else.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Robert Barrable
Sepp Wiegand

Q:

Robert, in Finland, it was the first time competing in the R5 for you. What did you think of the car?

RB:

It is a totally different car compared to the S2000, and let's not forget it is the very first R5 car. It will set the benchmark for all other manufacturers. We don't know what it is like on asphalt. Some stages here have to be treated with respect, especially in the vineyards.

Q:

Given that you have more experience on tarmac do you feel that you could challenge for the win here?

RB:

The vineyards require nice and tidy driving, while the Panzerplatte is similar to Irish roads. Perhaps each day is a different rally in itself. The first one and a half day are smooth, the second part requires a more aggressive style.

Q:

What is your goal for this rally?

RB:

There are only 13-14 WRC 2 drivers here, there will probably not be huge time differences. We are now coming to tarmac, which is our favourite surface. It is a long rally, we have to play our cards right.

Q:

Sepp, you started the season in style with a win in Monte Carlo, now we see you compete at home. Who are your main rivals on the tarmac of Germany?

SW:

The Monte was unbelievable for us. Sweden was my first-ever rally on ice and snow. In Portugal we had some problems and lost a lot of time, but we were still on the podium. In Sardinia we had to retire on the first day. Now Germany. The Barum rally last year was my last time on tarmac, but we did the Rallye Wartburg as a test rally prior to this one.

Q:

Is a win possible here?

SW:

Winning is really difficult. There are many good drivers here and we have this new R5 category. I don't really know how fast this car is. In the hairpins you need a lot of torque. We don't have a turbo engine, so that will not be easy. We will try our best.

Q:

Do you feel more pressure competing here in Germany?

SW:

Yes, for sure, there is more pressure than normally. It is special for us and for the team, especially a World Championship Rally in Germany. I have a lot of fans and I will enjoy it a lot, but it is a lot more pressure as well.

FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Christian Riedemann
Federico Della Casa

Q:

Christian, do you feel more pressure to aim for a good result because you are at home?

CR:

Of course, I feel some pressure. Finland was not so good for us, the engine blew. We need some points to be back in the fight for the title. Here, I already know some of the stages. That might help.

Q:

Is a win possible here?

CR:

In shakedown we saw four or five drivers all within three seconds. It is very tight. I hope we can drive in front of all the others. It is a long rally and especially Baumholder has a lot of tricky sections and corners. Panzerplatte is one of the special things. The two new stages in the Eifel I like very much. We have to start with a good speed already tomorrow morning.

Q:

Federico, after three events on gravel it is now time to switch to tarmac, how confident are you on a sealed surface?

FDC:

This will be my first rally in WRC on tarmac. I made a lot of mistakes in the other rallies. Finishing is my goal, and to do so, it is important to find a good rhythm.

Q:

Are you happy with the set-up?

FDC:

Yes, it is quite good, the feeling with the car is very good. I hope to make it to the finish.

Q:

You said you made a lot of mistakes in earlier rallies. What can you do to get better results in the upcoming rallies?

FDC:

I hope to score points, but my main objective for this year is to gain experience.

FIA JUNIOR WRC CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Jose Suarez
Murat Bostanci

Q:

Jose, you are second in the Junior WRC Championship. We have already seen you win this year on the gravel of Greece - tarmac though is where you have the most experience. How confident are you for the win this weekend?

JS:

I am happy to drive on tarmac again. The feeling is different. We have to keep calm and think about the Championship.

Q:

What did you do to prepare for this event?

JS:

I competed in the Spanish Tarmac Championship, I did five events on tarmac.

Q:

What will be the biggest challenge in this rally?

JS:

The drive between here and Cologne! No, seriously, Panzerplatte will be a challenge, but there are plenty of stages before Panzerplatte, too. We have only 16 tyres; that will be hard.

Q:

With the results you have picked up so far this season you have a real shot at the Championship title. How much is that on your mind when you compete?

JS:

It is my third year, I have never been in this situation before. Of course, I will try.

Q:

We have seen you compete within the WRC Academy and now the Juniors for three years - what will be next?

JS:

I really can't say. It is still early, we will see after the season.

Q:

Murat, what is your experience on tarmac?

MB:

I am from Turkey. The tarmac there is not comparable to what we have here. Competing in the 2012 Eastern Rally Cup with a Fiesta was good preparation for this. The rally here is not like anything I have done before. There are complicated stages and junctions, it will be a big challenge for us.

Q:

We already saw you setting a fastest stage time in Finland, what do you hope to achieve here?

MB:

Setting the fastest time on SS1 in Finland was a good memory but we had a big accident after that. We saw that we were competitive. The first half of the season was not good for us: we had three rallies with no finishes. From now on, we have three tarmac rallies and I want to finish them all. I am not looking for any stage wins.

Q:

What did you do in preparation for this rally?

MB:

This year, I am doing the Turkish Championship with a Fiesta S2000 and the Junior WRC. We had three tarmac rallies in the first half of the Turkish season. Then, one day of testing with the Fiesta R2 in preparation for Rallye Deutschland was all I did.

Q:

You also went to the Nürburgring last week...

MB:

Yes, last week I watched the DTM race at the Nürburgring as a guest of Hankooks. I met some of the drivers and it was a different experience, but I really prefer rally.