



END OF DAY “MEET THE CREWS” SESSION DAY 1 – 22.08.2014

Present:

Jost Capito, Volkswagen Motorsport
Marek Nawarecki, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Michel Nandan, Hyundai Shell World Rally Team
Malcolm Wilson, M-Sport World Rally Team
Jari-Matti Latvala, Volkswagen Motorsport
Kris Meeke, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Dani Sordo, Hyundai Shell World Rally Team

Q:

Jost, Rallye Deutschland, a hugely important event and the home event for Volkswagen Motorsport. We have seen a really interesting day with a huge battle between our World Champion Sébastien Ogier and Jari-Matti Latvala, but all the drama has come on the final stage of the day. Tell us what happened to Sébastien Ogier.

JC:

We have seen a really great fight between Sébastien and Jari-Matti all day and we leave them fighting. We don't apply any team orders. We were aware that something can happen and one of them can make a mistake. Unfortunately, Sébastien made a small mistake and he went off the road, down through the vineyards and had to jump over a wall, so he couldn't make it back onto the stage. He got back to the service park. The car is not very much damaged, so he can start under Rally 2 rules tomorrow with a ten minutes' penalty, but his chance to win the Rallye Deutschland is gone.

Q:

It is hugely disappointing for Sébastien Ogier, but for Latvala, it is a golden opportunity, for the rally win, but also to help him in the championship.

JC:

I think that Jari-Matti has a good lead, but nothing is done. This was only one day of three long days and he is in the lead, but mentally, it is very difficult for him to keep the lead and to continue and then fight for the victory, but if he wins, he makes a good step towards the lead of the championship. He will not make it into the lead, Sébastien will still lead after this rally, but it will become very close and I think Jari-Matti sees his chances now and I am sure he will be very strong tomorrow and on Sunday.

Q:

Marek, second position for Kris Meeke at the end of the day, a strong day out there for Kris. What have you thought of his performance?

MN:

Yes, it was a really strong, but also a difficult day for Kris. We knew that it would be difficult from the beginning. On the first stage, he stalled and on the second stage, he struggled a little bit because of his position on the road, but his speed became quicker and quicker, he put a little bit of pressure on the leaders and finally it was a good day for him with second position. Of course, 37 seconds from Jari-Matti, it will be difficult, but it was definitely a good day for him.



Q:

And the pressure from behind from Dani Sordo as well...

MN:

Yes, there is the pressure from behind with Dani Sordo, but Mikkelsen is also there and the other competitors are very close, so there is no other option than to continue to push tomorrow.

Q:

And what are your thoughts on Mads Østberg's performance today?

MN:

Mads started today with a good performance on the first stage, but then he also struggled with the mud on the road. He needed to adapt his driving style. He is still close to the others and he can move up some places tomorrow when he has a good day.

Q:

Let's turn to Michel Nandan now. You had big dramas yesterday with Thierry Neuville's roll. Can we talk about that first, because I know the team have put in a huge effort to get the car ready for today, working through the night.

MN:

Yes, they did a fantastic job, working through the night till six o'clock in the morning. The car was not in good condition. There was a lot of bodywork to replace, but this morning, it was possible to start, and that was already a very good job for the weekend.

Q:

And at the end of the day today, you find yourself in third position with Dani Sordo. Of course, he has won this event last year, he knows what it takes to do well on these stages. What are your hopes now for Dani Sordo after his performance today?

MN:

Dani did really, really well. With his road position, it was not easy at this type of roads and he didn't make any mistakes. When it was possible to push, he was pushing and on the last stage, his time was fantastic. Well, it is good for the team, because it is the first time after leg one that we are on the podium. Of course, tomorrow will be a hard day, because the drivers are quite close and everything can happen in this rally, as you know.

Q:

Michel, is he allowed to go out there and do what he wants tomorrow, or is there a little bit of team orders creeping in? What is the plan?

MN:

No, there will be no team orders. We are here to learn and to try to bring the car to the finish. This is a really good opportunity. He has to go as fast as he can and I think he will do his best.

Q:

Let's talk to Malcolm finally then. Mikko Hirvonen and Elfyn Evans are mixing it in for the battle within the top ten. What are your thoughts on their performance?

MW:

It is good to see Mikko with a smile on his face. It has been very frustrating when he has been in this battle and loses out by three or four tenths of a second, but at least the fighting spirit is there. Elfyn, for me, has done his best ever day. He has done some very good split sectors, he has had a couple of third-fastest in splits, so certainly a most promising day for Elfyn in a World Rally Car.



Q:

Many people will be following what is happening with Robert Kubica. There was a little bit of an issue this morning, but a strong afternoon for him. What happened this morning?

MW:

I think he got caught out in a situation with a tight hairpin and another 45 degrees corner, he got sideways at the hairpin and couldn't get back round. He basically just went off the road, but unfortunately, he needed the spectators to get back on and damaged the clutch, so we had to replace that mid-day, but this afternoon, he did fine.

Q:

Jari-Matti, what a day it has been out there. We have seen you battle with your team-mate Sébastien Ogier and then huge dramas on the final stage now finds you in the lead of a Tarmac event here at Rallye Deutschland. How are you feeling about today?

J-ML:

I am happy with the performance today. On stage four, I lost 3.8 seconds to Sébastien Ogier. I was just not confident enough in the cuts and I wasn't taking the lead and straight away I lost quite a lot. I was a little bit worried that Séb would be running away, but on stage five, I was 0.1 quicker, and on stage six, he went off the road. Fact is that he was driving very, very well and it was very difficult to battle with him, but these things happen. It is difficult to make 13 rounds perfect in the championship, nobody can do that. Now, I am in a very good position, I have all the cards in my hands, but I have to be really clever now.

Q:

You mentioned a little bit of a lack of confidence there, you have 37 seconds over Kris. What about tomorrow's stages, difficult stages, possibly a weather change, but we have seen you so strong in the past events dealing with anything that's thrown at you. Surely you can handle it...

J-ML:

Yes, I want to handle it, there is no doubt about that. But like everybody can remember: last year I was leading, Dani was behind me, he was giving me pressure, Neuville was giving me pressure, and I couldn't keep it last year. But, okay, I was one year younger and now I am one year older, so it makes a bit of a difference. Still, Panzerplatte, a long, long stage. Anybody knows that things can still happen, so it is so important to focus on the driving all the time. You never know when these boys really start to push and try to attack me, so I need to be prepared for everything.

Q:

Well, let's find out. Kris Meeke, it has been a great day out there for you, second position at the end of it and some strong times for you. Are you going to start putting some pressure on Jari-Matti?

KM:

I don't know. We have been quite far away from Jari in terms of pace today, but it has been good enough. Our road position wasn't great, there was quite a bit of mud, dried out on the second stage especially, but I was happy with my rhythm. It was a long time since I have done a Tarmac rally, so getting into that rhythm was quite good. I made a mistake going into the first stage this morning, I had a spin and lost ten seconds. Not a big issue, but I inherited second place on the last stage when Séb got off the road. We will see what happens tomorrow, with the weather and everything. It is Germany. Tyre choice is going to be critical tomorrow, so we are going to have to be clever with the choice we are making tomorrow.

Q:

We have seen you battle with Dani Sordo in Rallye Deutschland when you were team-mates in the Juniors. How is your feeling about the pressure from Señor Sordo?



KM:

I have been in that situation many times. He came very strong on the last stage. I was second on the start line and I got the information through to the car that Séb had gone off, so I knew there was a possibility to be second, so I did take it quite cautiously on the gravel parts, and like Jari said, if you just hesitate that little bit in the dirty places, the time disappears immediately, so I was a little bit cautious and Dani had a blinder in the last stage, so he took a bit of time. Mikkelsen is not too far behind either, so it is going to be an interesting day tomorrow.

Q:

Let's turn to Dani Sordo. Third position at the end of the day, it's been a great run from you today.

DS:

Yes, to be honest, after so many days not driving a rally car, it was very good and I feel very confident with the car. Today, the last stage went really, really well and I enjoyed it a lot and I came to third place. Let's see tomorrow.

Q:

You are not too far behind Kris Meeke and obviously that confidence is starting to come back to you. You won here last year, Dani, you know what it takes to do well on these stages. How are your confidence levels right now?

DS:

Confidence is really good. We were a little bit in the same situation last year. Sébastien went off last year, Jari-Matti as well, so we will see what happens tomorrow. I am happy for these two guys. Jari-Matti is working really hard for this and also for Kris, I am happy to see him in second place, but tomorrow, of course, we try to put some pressure on Kris, because I think Jari-Matti is a little bit far away, but we need to look also to the rear, because there are some drivers pushing also hard.

Q:

So there is no option other than flat-out tomorrow?

DS:

It is like today. When you are flat-out, it is more fun!