



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2014 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
ADAC RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

Post-event Press Conference
Sunday 24 August

Present:

1st - Thierry Neuville, Hyundai Motorsport
1st - Nicolas Gilsoul, Hyundai Motorsport
2nd - Dani Sordo, Hyundai Motorsport
2nd - Marc Marti, Hyundai Motorsport
3rd - Andreas Mikkelsen, Volkswagen Motorsport II
3rd - Ola Floene, Volkswagen Motorsport II
Michel Nandan, Team Principal, Hyundai Motorsport

Q:

Thierry, congratulations on your first-ever WRC win and the first win for Hyundai! What an incredible event it has been! Last year, there was a battle between you and Dani Sordo. He took the win last year, you take it this year. How are you feeling?

TN:

It is an amazing feeling. I think it will take a little bit of time to really realise what we have done and what we have achieved. The weekend didn't start very well with the shakedown on Thursday, a very small mistake, but big consequences. We thought it would perhaps be difficult to make it to the start, but our mechanics did an unbelievable job repairing the car. I was so happy to be on the start line on Friday morning to try to do my best, to get a good result for the team, for everyone who has worked so hard on the car. To be sitting here now in first position is something I couldn't expect, even if I was really pleased with the car and the settings, but I knew it was going to be difficult because our competitors are very strong on Tarmac. It should be difficult for us to fight for the win, but we had a great weekend. Especially on Saturday, pushing hard, but without any mistakes, just keeping the car on the road on a clean line and making the best tyre choices as well because we had really good weather information, so were able to catch back Dani and to close the gap to Kris Meeke to put some pressure on him. And then this morning, everything went well for us as well. I am gutted for Kris and Jari-Matti, of course, they did the mistake, but for us it was just positive.

Q:

Can I take you back to Thursday, the roll, it was quite a big one. Six times you rolled, if not more. Everyone around the world has seen that footage. You must have thought at the time: 'This could be all over right now?'

TN:

Yes, of course. When I saw the video afterwards, I only realised how lucky we were. In the car, it felt actually quite soft. But then I saw the pictures and I said: I am lucky to be on the start line, as I said just before. Maybe, after a six times' roll, which I have never done before, perhaps everything got in the right position again in my head! We were able on Friday morning to be as competitive as we were on other rallies in the past.

Q:

The event got off to a cautious start for you - was that because of what had happened on Thursday? Maybe you had a handbrake issue as well?

TN:

It started with a small issue, it was caused by my six times' roll in the shakedown. I will not blame anybody for this, but we lost some five seconds there. Then we had another issue when we had some smoke, some dust in the car, and some small fire, so there was some more time lost, but we were able to manage that situation and keep the fight on. I am quite proud of the job we have done in the car as well. We had good management throughout the rally: pushing when it was necessary, keeping a good rhythm in difficult places where it was tricky, so all in all, a great performance.

Q:

Saturday was where we saw you charge up the leaderboard - confidence regained?

TN:

We were on it. I felt very comfortable from the morning on. My engineer did a fantastic job changing the set-up. When I went to the stage, I already felt that the traction of the car was amazing. The balance was like I wanted, so I was feeling confident and I was able to push from the first metres.

Q:

And then the crazy day of today! You took the lead after the second stage, how did it feel to know you only had to 'get through' another two stages?

TN:

When I got the message Jari-Matti was off, I couldn't believe it, because his gap was quite big. It took some time to realise. I wanted to keep the rhythm, but I did some small mistake close to the end. Then we were in second position, but very close to the first one. I said: 'Last year, I was close as well, but not able to take it.' This year, I was determined to do it. As I felt comfortable, I wanted to push on the first sector of the next stage. I was really, really fast and I guess Kris knew this and he made the little mistake that put him out of the rally.

Q:

It seemed like magical moments at the end of the stage when everybody was there: your family, the supporters. What was it like to get out of the car, knowing that you had picked up your first win and that all the people who are important to you were there?

TN:

Everybody was there. If you looked on the stages this weekend, you only saw Belgian flags and Belgian supporters everywhere. It was a great atmosphere to drive in front of such a big crowd and close to home. I was born 80 kilometres from here, it is some kind of home event for me. It is even more amazing to score my first WRC win in this rally and with all the family members there who supported me over the last six years, in the good moments, but also in the difficult moments. It is nice to see that everybody believes in our performance, so thank you to them.

Q:

Let's turn to Nicolas. Congratulations on win number one. How are you feeling?

NG:

Great. It was completely unexpected. After the shakedown, it was quite scary, but now it is great, wonderful!

Q:

How tricky was it out there this morning, because that is where we saw lots of drama. Was it very difficult, very damp?

NG:

It was completely crazy. It was like in a rally we have in Belgium in November where it always raining and full of mud, and now we had the same conditions on the road,

so it was quite usual for us when we drive in Belgium. Thierry is very fast in this kind of conditions. We were able to do it and we did it.

Q:

It is a great result for the team with a win and second position as well. It must have been a great feeling this evening to bring the car in and celebrate?

NG:

Yes, of course, we are really proud. This was an endurance event and we were able to do it thanks to the job of the guys, the mechanics, the person who does the weather forecast, the gravel crew... It was a proper team result, not only the crew. We are very proud of that.

Q:

Now I heard a story about the roll on Thursday. When you rolled, you lost your mobile phone and you went back in the dark to try and find it by seeing the light.

TN:

At a quarter past eleven...!

NG:

We found it. In the darkness, it was easy to make a call. The phone was ringing and making some light, so it was easy to see.

Q:

Dani, it was the win here last year - this time second place. How are you feeling about it?

DS:

To be honest, I feel good for the team and for Thierry because he did very well yesterday, he drove very fast in difficult conditions. To finish second, well... Of course, I prefer to win, especially after last year. But still, it is okay, it is very good for the team, for the confidence, so it is good for everybody.

Q:

On the opening day you struggled with road position but you were setting some remarkable times!

DS:

Maybe only one stage was a little bit more difficult, the others had a little bit more gravel, but they were quite okay. One stage was a little more slippery. Today and yesterday I was in a better position and still lost time.

Q:

Thierry was, as we have mentioned, very much on pace yesterday and caught up with you. Could there have been more speed from you yesterday or didn't you want to risk too much?

DS:

Of course, I tried to be faster, but it is always in the same places that he is faster. He was really strong. Then I made a small mistake, I lost some more time. Today, we looked out a little bit more for Andreas, who was really fast, and we tried to defend our position.

Q:

A great result for the team and a great result for you personally. When are we going to see you back in the car again?

DS:

I think I will be back in France. So, Thierry, in France, it is my turn...!

Q:

Marc, let's turn to you now. It has been a challenging weekend.

MM:

In Germany, it is a big challenging for drivers. There are many fast corners and it is easy to make a mistake in the vineyards. We know that about this rally. It was our aim to do a good job like Dani has done here in the past. We are proud for the team as well. When you start a project with a lot of people working from all over the world, you need to be passionate and you need to improve a lot of things on the car. We did very well, we are on the pace and very happy for the team.

Q:

How did you find the atmosphere when you came back earlier on?

MM:

Of course, it was a surprise to everybody. We didn't expect a result like this, but it is the result for working in the correct way. When you have passion, you work a lot of hours, like they worked for 19 hours repairing Thierry's car, of course, this is a big trophy for then.

Q:

Andreas, the only Volkswagen driver to complete the rally. A tough morning, a tough weekend for Jari-Matti and Sébastien, but a good result for you.

AM:

Yes, I have to say I am really pleased to be third. Coming into this event, I knew it was going to be tough. I didn't do the event last year, because my co-driver was hurt in the back, and on the test I only ran for half a day with full wets [tyres], so I knew it was going to be difficult. Luckily, I found a good rhythm on the shakedown already. We kept the pace all weekend. I had a small mistake this morning where Jari-Matti went off, a very tricky place, but I got out of here with only a spin, I was lucky. Then we had pressure from Evans the last couple of stages. I followed his splits and I was comfortable. It has been a tough weekend. A lot of tricky conditions, changeable weather, but we drove a clever rally and third place is more than I could ever dream of coming into this event, my first proper Tarmac event in the car.

Q:

How do you evaluate your pace? Was there a little bit more you could have given, or did you not want to risk that much?

AM:

We knew this was going to be tough. I didn't feel comfortable coming into this event on Tarmac, so I decided to consider this event as a small test, get through it, get the mileage on Tarmac. Last time I did that was in Spain, where I did 2.5 stages and I went off. I needed the mileage and we did well this weekend, so hopefully this gives me a good feeling for the next Tarmac event.

Q:

Before that next Tarmac event, we have Australia first. What do you expect there?

AM:

I am really looking forward to Australia. Now, we have quite a good gap to fourth place in the championship. I think I can go to Australia without pressure on my shoulders. I can drive the way I really want to.

Q:

We have seen you competitive on gravel this year. Can we see you pushing a little more when we get there?

AM:

For sure, the aim in Australia is a podium finish. That should be possible and if we can fight for more, it would be perfect. Australia will be tough, for sure, but I feel more comfortable on gravel than on Tarmac, so why not.

Q:

We saw you congratulating Thierry at the end of the stage. We saw you competing together in IRC days. What was like to see him win his first WRC event?

AM:

Actually, it was a special moment for me as well. I know Thierry very well, we had big fights in IRC and now in WRC as well. To see him succeed is the second best to me succeeding. It is an amazing feeling to see him celebrate with his family and I can't imagine a better place for his first win, so many congratulations.

Q:

Ola, let's turn to you. How much of a challenge has it been for you this weekend?

OF:

The biggest challenge is to be at the right place at the right time, get the right weather report, get the information down there and make the right tyre choice. For me it was a hard rally, a lot of telephoning, organising, a big challenge.

Q:

It is a complex event for co-drivers, especially up in the vineyards.

OF:

Yes, especially when the weather changes, like yesterday. You have sunshine in the service area, you have heavy rain on the road section and when people tell you it is nice weather in the stage, it is hard to believe it. That made the tyre choice very difficult. We even considered switching to the emergency tyre, because we heard there was rain coming up, but luckily the team stopped us.

Q:

Michel Nandan, congratulations. Your first year in the championship, the first win under your belt and it is a 1-2 for Hyundai. Can you wake up yet? Is it possible to believe, or do you think you are dreaming?

MN:

This morning, I thought that it was a dream, but now it is reality. We have to be realistic. The conditions were really difficult. We have good drivers who are really skilled in these circumstances. The team did a fantastic job, too. In the end we have the result. It's good. Our first win, especially considering that exactly one year ago we were maybe in our fourth or fifth test. Our first Tarmac test was in the middle of August. It is very good for Hyundai Motorsport and also for HMC. But we have to stay with our feet on the ground and to keep working, because the way is still long. Don't give up and be competitive.

Q:

We have seen good pace from the car in the hands of Thierry and Dani this weekend. The car has developed a great deal since last year. Are you pleased with the performance level on Tarmac?

MN:

We have improved the performance since the beginning of the year. In every test we try to find new things and improve it. There is still a lot to do. We have to concentrate on our work. Everyone has to work into the same direction and work ahead. This would be our learning year. We were hoping for some podiums when it became apparent that the car is not so bad. The fact that we have a 1-2 is fantastic! We are able to grow up quickly and let's hope that next year we can achieve some more.

Q:

Talking about next year, can you already say something about your drivers?

MN:

Thierry will drive, for sure, but the rest will remain a secret. I expect to be able to make an announcement in October.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Pontus Tidemand

1st - Emil Axelsson

Q:

Your first win in WRC 2, congratulations! It's been a challenging event for every driver, but you managed to take the win on the final stage of the day after battling back after a puncture. What are your feelings and what was that final stage like?

PT:

The feeling is fantastic! I have been pushing from the very first stage. On the last stage, we were six seconds behind Ott Tänak in the battle for the win. I did absolutely what I could. We had a couple of moments, but it went really well. Emil did a fantastic job coaching me through this rally in a proper and good way so that we managed to finish in a good speed. We had a puncture at Panzerplatte and we lost 1'40", so after that we were more thinking about a second or third place, but then we managed to catch up this morning and then we started to look for a victory, so we decided to push.

Q:

What was the feeling like when you were sitting on the start line for that final stage? Did you think: 'Right, I am going to give it everything, or I am out of it'. Six seconds is hardly anything between you and Ott Tänak, but it must have been the drive of your life?

PT:

Yes, absolutely. I looked at Ott Tänak before the stage and he was really focused, but so was I. I found myself in a good focus before the stage, so we opened the stage really well and perfect in the driving, I would say, but then in the middle of the stage, there was some more action. I was so focused on the start of the stage...

EA:

I asked before the stage: 'Do you have a good feeling?', and he answered 'Yes', and I said: 'So have I. Let's go for it.'

Q:

Well, you really did go for it! Were you happy with your pace this weekend, because we have seen you battling right at the front of the field in WRC 2 this weekend.

PT:

Really happy with the pace. It is my first Tarmac rally with a four-wheel drive car and the first with these tyre rules. We knew that we would have mixed conditions, but overall it was more than I expected, so I am really happy.

Q:

Definitely mixed conditions here, how tough were the conditions first thing this morning when there was still some dampness on the stage?

PT:

Really tough, but for sure good support from M-Sport with the set-up of the car and the tyre choice and everything. M-Sport really has done a fantastic job this week. We could just focus on the driving and try to look out for the tricky places, so quite okay. Well, really okay, actually!

Q:

We have only seen you on one event this year - what are the plans for the remainder of the rounds?

PT:

I really don't know. The next rally is maybe in France, I can't say 100 percent, and I hope I can do Spain. We'll see.

Q:

Emil, you step back into the co-driving seat this weekend to great success! What has it been like this weekend? You have a win under your belt and as you said, you have kept Pontus very honest this weekend, you have been very professional. What has it been like for you?

EA:

It's been great. We have been doing everything we could to be as well prepared as possible for this event. We did training, concentration training, a two-day test, everything has been 100 percent to make sure that we are as well prepared as possible. When you have that feeling, it is quite easy to get into these stages, knowing that you have done everything you can. Also our engineer Chris and all the mechanics at M-Sport have done a fantastic job. Pontus is a skilled driver, I knew that before. It's fantastic, definitely.

Q:

Pontus mentioned a few little moments in that final stage. What can you tell us about what it was like having the drive of your life to score that win?

EA:

He was definitely pushing to go for victory, but you have to take some risks if you want to take it by more than six seconds. We had some problems, there were some slippery patches. Some braking points were not very precise, but we managed to get away from it. We needed a little bit of luck, but luck is also something you deserve and we really deserved it this week. We did a tyre change practice in the shakedown and we managed a quick change at Panzerplatte. It is all about attention to detail.

Q:

You work together in Rallycross as well, you are pretty much the team boss there. Have you been the boss in the car this weekend?

EA:

For sure! No, it is team work.

FIA JUNIOR WRC CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Stephane Lefebvre

1st - Thomas Dubois

Q:

Stephane, you take your third victory in the Junior WRC - what has the weekend been like for you?

SL:

Of course, I am very happy. Three victories in four events is really good. This is my first event on Tarmac with the Citroën DS3 R3 and my first time driving in Germany. I am happy to win here, it gives me good chances of winning the title.

Q:

You had strong competition this weekend, Christian Riedemann and Eric Camilli were very strong!

SL:

Eric is my friend. I drive with him on the French Championship. At the Rally Limousin I had a good battle with Eric. He is a very fast driver. This wee, he made a big crash, but he is okay. Now, I think he will go on the French rally, I hope he does better there.

Q:

Were you happy with your pace this weekend?

SL:

This week has been very difficult for us. I didn't push a lot. The long stage at Panzerplatte is very long and hard for the brakes and the tyres. It is really not easy to adapt the rhythm.

Q:

This must give you a good amount of confidence heading to France?

SL:

I am very happy after this rally. I have a good chance of winning the title. France is my home country, I have driven three times. It is possible to win there, I would like to win the title in my home country.

Q:

We know that Sébastien Loeb is a big supporter of yours. He has won here a lot; it is 'his' event. Did he give any advice at all before coming here?

SL:

Of course, and Sébastien has won the JWRC championship too and I hope to do the same, and I hope that he will come to Rallye de France to coach me.

Q:

Thomas, you must be delighted with the result as well. Talk to me about the event, it is a tough event for a co-driver here in Germany.

TD:

It is a fantastic event with beautiful stages. Panzerplatte is very difficult. Despite our small mistake, it was good. The stages are very difficult and slippery and the road conditions are quite challenging.

Q:

We saw difficult conditions, especially this morning. What was it like as you had to hold on to that win? Were you nervous at all going into this morning?

TD:

No, there wasn't a lot of pressure. I took the split times on the stage and I knew that there was no need to push everything, no full attack.