



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2015 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

ADAC RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

Pre-event Press Conference
Thursday 20 August

Present:

Sebastien Ogier, Volkswagen Motorsport
Thierry Neuville, Hyundai Motorsport
Mads Ostberg, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Elfyn Evans, M-Sport World Rally Team

Q:

Seb, this is the first event where mathematically you could seal the driver's title, but it's a long shot. Is that in your mind at all?

SO:

No, not at all. It is nice to be in this position if you think about it. Somewhere, it is in my mind, because winning the title is target number one for the season, but it is only a mathematical chance. A lot of things need to happen and I don't have all the parameters in my hand. I prefer to focus on this rally, which is difficult enough. We had some trouble here over the past years, but I want to correct the mistakes from the past years. And then the championship hopefully will follow in one of the next events.

Q:

It is safe to say that this event has not been kind to you or the Volkswagen team over the past two years. Have you done anything differently with regard to preparations?

SO:

The only thing to change is easy: just stay on the road. I think I was a little more concentrated during the recce. Trying to correct the mistakes is an extra motivation. Of course, I want to do it for me, but even more for my team, because we really deserve better luck here. We have managed to win every single rally of the championship except for this one, which is a shame for Volkswagen, so Andreas, Jari-Matti and me, we want to correct this. If you want to see me happy, it is only when we have managed to correct it. If I can't do it, I hope that they can do it for the team.

Q:

You know how to win here, because you have done it before. What is your opinion about this event?

SO:

I have to say that in the past I often had a little bit of fear coming to this rally, because it is really difficult, especially when the weather is changing. But now I am really confident, the weather is nice and I have had some good results over the past events, so I have a much better feeling coming here. I feel that I am going forward here, not backwards, like in the past years. Something is different: I have a good feeling. The test was really good, I like the car, better than last year, so all these things together are making me positive.

Q:

Thierry, such great memories from last year's event where you took your first win - how does it feel to come back?

TN:

It is quite thrilling, because I do have nice memories indeed. The two last years I was fighting for victory here. In 2013, I wasn't able to take the win, but last year we managed to win. Jari-Matti was very fast and led, but he went off, and then it was the fight between me and Kris Meeke, and finally we won. I always feel good at this rally, so let's see what we can do this year.

Q:

What do you feel can realistically be achieved here this time around?

TN:

It will be difficult for me to be better than last year! We know we can't fight for victory on our own pace, but I want to make it onto the podium. I want to try to do a good rally, because the past few events have been difficult for me. Now, I am happy to be back on tarmac. It would be nice for the team to have a good rally here, with four cars here. It's a huge management job to handle for everyone in the team, but we aim at a good result for our team.

Q:

You mentioned a few difficulties you had in recent events. We have seen a few accidents. Is there anything else you can put your finger on that wasn't quite right?

TN:

I had some difficult times in the last couple of months. We expected to be closer than we are at the moment, but I have to accept it and try to forget it, which is not so easy, and I try to get back to my usual pace and be competitive again.

Q:

Michelin introduce their new tarmac tyre here in Germany, what are your thoughts after testing it?

TN:

I don't know about the others, but we were quite limited on tyres in testing, but at least were able to test the tyre. Of course, Michelin has made an improvement again. We should see even faster stage times here, but at Panzerplatte, tyre management will be as important as ever.

Q:

How is the development of the 2016 Hyundai i20 going? Will it be able to compete at the front of the field in your opinion?

TN:

I hope so, for sure! The target is to bring it to Monte Carlo, which is a lot later than expected, but that's life. We are working hard on it. Testing will start soon and it is another improvement. I am quite optimistic that it is going to be fast, but we still have some work to do to get it ready for Monte Carlo.

Q:

Mads, you are in a great position in the championship, having scored many points. You have had some great results, it has been a good season for you. Can we now expect some better results for the second half of the season?

MO:

That is difficult to say. Like you said, we have been consistent. Some good results: some second and third places. We have done pretty much what I wanted to do. I wanted to be very consistent in the first half of the year; that was very important for me. Now, we want to carry over that momentum to the second half of the season and especially onto the tarmac events, which can be a bit challenging. Hopefully, we can continue to achieve our goals.

Q:

You did 400 kilometres of testing last week - successful?

MO:

Yes, it was a good day of testing. I tried mainly to focus on myself. I did 400 kilometres, so it was quite a big day, but I enjoyed it. I tried to improve my driving on tarmac and I tried to be prepared for this event, which is quite a challenging rally. I had a good feeling in the shakedown as well, especially the first run was very nice, so I hope to continue in that way.

Q:

In terms of fighting at the front of the field and trying to win, is that something we can expect from you in the second half of the season?

MO:

Yes, I think so, but it will not be on this rally. It will perhaps come later in the season, and it will probably have to be gravel rally, so Australia will be the next option. Then there are Spain and Wales which have suited me very well in the past as well.

Q:

Previously, we had separate days with their own type of stages here. It is all mixed this year, is that more of a challenge?

MO:

Yes, definitely, because you change from stage to stage, whereas normally you go to service and have time to change the car and to prepare it for the stages. This time, you have to change between the stages, the set-up and the driving style, especially coming to Baumholder and Panzerplatte. You have to think differently.

Q:

Talk about next year, how confident are that you will retain your seat and do you feel your strategy will help you seal a drive for next year?

MO:

There still a long way to go this season. If I have a bad second half of the year, it is not good, but I feel confident that we will have a good second half of the season and that we will have a drive for next year.

Q:

Elfyn, you have good track record at this event - a win whilst part of the WRC Academy and last year extremely competitive times plus the Power Stage win. What is your aim this year?

EE:

Everything has been going well in preparation, the test was good, everything else has been going well and we are looking forward to it.

Q:

This event marks the debut of the Fiesta on asphalt, how has the testing gone? Is it a marked difference from last year's car on this surface?

EE:

To drive the car is not much of a difference. Most of the gains come from the engine, but the suspension and the handling on the jumps are very similar. Some improvements were made in certain areas. We will do the best job we can and then see where we are.

Q:

You have had some tough events, you had some technical issues and you told us you hit the biggest rock in the world in Finland. How do you plan to get back into the groove?

EE:

The pace was okay in Finland but it didn't go very smoothly and we hit that rock, which was quite disappointing, especially after the results we have had in the last four rallies. But the most important thing is just to forget about it and to concentrate on the driving here.

Q:

What is your strategy for this event?

EE:

It is going to be difficult. The competition will be hard, but my goal is a podium at least, I will do as well as I can and then we will see how it comes.

Q:

And what about next year, is there some pressure for you and how do you deal with that?

EE:

There always is a certain amount of pressure and necessity to perform to keep your seat. At this level, you always have to perform to keep your seat. That is the reality; it never changes, whether it is the beginning or the end of the season. I just have to concentrate on doing a good job and see where we are.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Jan Kopecky, Skoda Motorsport

Nil Solans, ACSM Rallye Team

Q:

Jan, great to see you back as part of the WRC 2 category again this season. We know your pedigree on tarmac, we know how successful you are on this surface. How are you feeling about competing on the tarmac of Rallye Deutschland?

JK:

I have done this rally many times and it is nice to be back after eight years. I still know some of the stages. I am really looking forward to this event.

Q:

You have just finished your shakedown. How did it go?

JK:

The car was working well, but we made some changes and we came back to check it again. The second time there was a huge amount of gravel on the road, but that is also what I am expecting during the rally and the car handled well.

Q:

You have an impressive resume on tarmac - do you feel could be one of the frontrunners this weekend?

JK:

For sure I would like to win this rally, but many other drivers will be very fast. Let's wait and see how it goes after a few stages, because the rally is long, and then we can say where we are.

Q:

This rally is very long and it is a challenge. What do you find is the toughest element?

JK:

Hopefully, the weather stays like this, because if it starts to rain, it will be very difficult and slippery, especially for WRC 2 and WRC 3 drivers and the rest, and especially Baumholder can be really tricky.

Q:

We have already seen you once this year in the WRC, hopefully we will see you more. Is there the plan to do more rallies?

JK:

I don't know yet. I would like to do Corsica, but let's wait and see if we can make that happen. My first goal is to try to win the Czech championship title in the Barum Rally next week. This rally a great test for my home round next week.

Q:

Nil, we see you switch from the DDFT to rallying in the Peugeot 208 within WRC 2. Why the change?

NS:

It is a good chance for us to be in a better car. We have to learn a lot and adapt the driving style. My main goal is to learn.

Q:

How many kilometers did you do in testing?

NS:

We tested two weeks ago in Spain and did some 50 kilometres. Now, we have a better set-up, but we still have to work to make the car go faster. We used the shakedown to work on it.

Q:

What are your thoughts on Rallye Deutschland?

NS:

There is a lot of gravel, some big holes. It is difficult to make the notes. The roads are very narrow. We have to learn here. It is a very difficult rally, especially if it rains.

Q:

How many rallies will you do this year?

NS:

Four: this one, France, Spain and GB.

Q:

What about next season?

NS:

We try to get a full-time WRC drive for next year, but nothing has been decided yet. We have always said that this year is just for learning and next year to go faster.

FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Andrea Crugnola, Team Renault Sport Technologies

Q:

It is a challenging event. How much are you looking forward to it?

AC:

Yes, it is quite challenging. I am alone in the WRC 3, so there is just one goal, which is to make it to the finish. We have to look out for the weather. It will be a good test for us as we are still developing the car, but our main goal is to finish.

Q:

How did shakedown this morning go for you?

AC:

I am happy with the way things were going. The balance is great, braking points were very good. I am confident in the car. Also on gravel, it works quite well. We are taking it step by step.

Q:

As you mentioned, you are the only driver in the WRC 3 here. Is that difficult, and who will you compare yourself to?

AC:

Sometimes being alone is difficult, because there is no real focus. We can't compare our times to some direct competitors, only to some other guys with 2WD.

Q:

What do you consider as the most difficult element of this rally?

AC:

For sure the stages, because it is not easy to find a rhythm. And also Panzerplatte, with a lot of junctions. Staying focused throughout the long stages will be very tough, but we are drivers, it is part of our job.

Q:

Do you already have plans for 2016?

AC:

Not yet, but I hope to come back with Renault. We developed during this year. The championship is still open, we can be stronger next year and we can go for the win.