



Team principals' press conference

Michel Nandan

Malcolm Wilson

Tommi Makinen

Yves Matton

Michel it's been quite a day with some tricky conditions, but Thierry has mastered them. What did you think of his performance?

MN: We are really happy. Thierry did a fantastic day with all the tricky conditions and different amounts of grip. It was not easy to keep the speed and avoid mistakes. He did a very good job. So far, hopefully, everything is working fine, but the rally is still long. We have seen everything can happen and everybody needs to be concentrating.

He had a problem this afternoon, was that a concern?

MN: No it was not a concern. In fact, he stalled after hairpin, he was pulling the handbrake and he was too low in the RPM. When you re-start [the engine] you have to respect to do it in a certain way. When he realised this, he put it back, but there are no concerns.

Dani seems to be struggling for confidence?

MN: In tricky conditions it's a bit difficult. With these conditions the drivers need to be confident. Dani lost his confidence a bit and for sure it makes him very careful and then the speed is down. We have tried to motivate him a bit, the engineers changed the settings to make it a bit easier, he has to concentrate – the most important to bring the car to the end.

Malcolm, a shaky start this morning with a rare mistake from the world champion...

MW: I must admit we got quite a shock when we saw the first split and he had slid off the road. To be honest, he was really quite lucky to get back out – he looked well off the road. He had nothing like the amount of testing we would have liked, but for the rest of day he's been fantastic in the way he has acquitted himself. We have made quite few changes to the car and you can see he's got a fair bit more confidence in the car.

Will you let him and Ott fight for position?

MW: Absolutely, that's why we're here and that's why the fans are here fight – we want to see them both out there fighting on the limit. There's a long way to go in some very tricky conditions, but yes they are both free to battle it out.

Can Seb still win?

MW: We've been here so many times, anything can happen. I remember one year when we went into the final stage on Turini in fifth place and ended up second. We've already seen what can happen and it will be equally tricky tomorrow.

Yves, things didn't go Kris' way today?

YM: For sure it was not like we expected. Already yesterday night, we lost Stephane with a small mistake that meant he stayed in the stage. Today Kris started reasonably. The idea was to keep contact, but he made a mistake in his estimation: he thought it was snow, but it was ice and he tried to pass in sixth gear, which was one or two too much. He slid out of the road.



Stephane has come back strong today...

YM: Yes, he's coming step-by-step. It's been quite difficult for him, he was not able to test in these conditions – he has big lack of experience in these conditions.

And what about Craig?

It seems that Craig and the DS 3 is still a good mix for Monte Carlo for sure! He's doing a good job. He's free to do what he wants and drive with his own feelings and he's doing a very nice rally.

Tommi, we saw some great times from Juho earlier today?

Juho said his confidence was high last night and today he said there were no limits, but he went off in a low-speed corner and damaged the left-front. We can fix the car for tomorrow, he will continue tomorrow and get more experience. This was his first time in this area and it's been many years since he drove Monte Carlo – it was not easy for him. He has surprised us.

And the car – are you surprised at the pace?

Of course. Very much. We didn't know where we were standing. We started from scratch and we put maximum effort to test programme. We are absolutely happy with where we are. From now it's very nice to continue to the next rallies. I believe we can learn a lot from here. Now it's time analyse things and I'm sure we will make it stronger for the future.

Drivers' press conference

Thierry Neuville

Sebastien Ogier

Ott Tanak

Thierry great start...

TN: I have to say it's a pretty good feeling – we weren't expecting that. Everything is new with a lot of changes with the drivers and the teams. We expected it to be interesting but *that* interesting, we couldn't imagine. I felt comfortable with the car straight away even in the tricky conditions. Our route note crew did a really good job and we were able to build the lead. Seb made a mistake as well, but it's been very, very tricky and easy to make a mistake.

Confident you can keep the lead?

TN: I would not say I am confident, but a bit more comfortable. I feel well in the car to drive and we have had good feedback and everything has worked well so far. I have a 45s lead, which is much, but also not much on this rally especially when tomorrow can be a different tyre choice – that can make a difference tomorrow. It will be a tough fight tomorrow, but let's see who has upper hand in the evening.



Seb how tough was this morning?

SO: I feel well to be there on the podium at the moment. It's been a tough day and the conditions were quite horrible, it was very, very slippery and hard to judge the grip for the whole day. I was not comfortable in the car and I made a silly mistake to lose 40s in the ditch. The day started to have a different feeling, I was not having a good balance, so we decided to wait for the service park. We made some changes, but I cannot say I am fully happy. It's way too early to feel perfect in the car. I feel better and the time was following and I can trust more the car more as well.

How are you getting on with the team?

SO: Very well. Like I said before, it's a great pleasure to join the team – they have all made me feel very welcome. I want to deliver now and make our part of the job. The guys have worked incredibly hard to finish everything on time for Monte Carlo. I'm happy that we are both on the podium, with Ott. We need to keep going like this.

How determined are you to hunt Thierry down?

SO: So far it's been more of an elimination race than pure performance race. Thierry has been driving very well with no mistakes on the high speed. For sure the gap of 45 seconds – even if its Monte Carlo – it's better to have this than be behind. But nothing is impossible especially with the tyre choice. I will focus on myself and try to drive well, get comfortable in the car. At the end of the day I would be happy to be in Monte Carlo with the podium and I don't want risk it all for victory. Monte is special and especially for all the guys here I want to give my best.

Are you pleased with the day Ott?

OT: It's been a really tricky Monte, as everybody has said. I was not expecting to be so high level in the rally. My plan was to have a good rhythm and safe speed, but so far I have been quite comfortable in the car. The handling is quite close to where I like, it's been nice to far.

What's the plan tomorrow – will you fight with Seb?

Obviously I imagine he's close to home, so maybe he knows some tricks here. The plan is still not to go in the fight. I want to carry on with the speed we have. Seb is really fast this afternoon and I was nowhere close to him – let these two guys fight and let's see how it goes.