



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**2016 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
RALLYE MONTE-CARLO**

Post event Press Conference
24 January 2016

Present:

1st - Sébastien Ogier, Volkswagen Motorsport
1st - Julien Ingrassia, Volkswagen Motorsport
2nd - Andreas Mikkelsen, Volkswagen Motorsport II
2nd - Anders Jaeger Synneväg, Volkswagen Motorsport II
3rd - Thierry Neuville, Hyundai Motorsport
3rd - Nicolas Gilsoul, Hyundai Motorsport
Jost Capito, Volkswagen Motorsport

Q:

Three wins in a row Sébastien, congratulations and how good was your weekend?

SO:

I am definitely really happy. You mention it's the most difficult challenge, it's so difficult to judge this point. There are a lot of challenges and definitely one of the biggest has been the conditions this year. Let's say somehow the weather was predictable, but not the road conditions or the grip level. There was huge work from the gravel crew, but we have to trust our feeling and face the difficult grip and conditions – that's why I enjoy being the winner again here. Everybody in this room knows how important this is, if I choose one win then it's this one. So, to have this one already is great – but I hope it's not the only one this year! I am really happy with that.

Q:

We saw a great battle between you and Kris Meeke here...

SO:

It was very exciting. Just before coming here, I answered a question from a journalist who was asking if it was easier this year or the year before. I said it is never easy in Monte Carlo, but the fight this year was definitely not easier than with [Sébastien] Loeb. Kris was doing a great job with really strong pace. Every time I relax, not relax, took it a little bit more careful on one tricky section in a stage, he immediately took some time back again. It was exciting and it was a shame the fight did not carry on, it was purely bad luck for him. In the other hand, I could then control the race and take things a little bit more easily. I cannot complain at the start of the season.

Q:

Yesterday we saw you claw your way into a 30-second lead. Did you ever feel safe?

SO:

It's the Monte, so no! On a normal rally, a normal Tarmac rally, you do start to think this at 30 seconds. It's hard to catch that gap on a normal rally and you think seriously about the win, but here it only takes the wrong tyres or just your rival taking more risk on the icy section and then this 30 seconds is away. This is the rally where

you need the big gap to relax. Yesterday, 30 seconds was OK, this was a good position – definitely it was better to be where I was than where he [Meeke] was. But still I knew I had to drive good.

Q:

You are a triple world champion with a lot of confidence, but does this boost your confidence again?

SO:

Yeah, this is the best way to start the season. I cannot say I was not thinking a little bit to Spain when I started the Power Stage... But the conditions were completely different. In Spain I relaxed a little, I didn't really need it, this one I really wanted. It was very important for the team, especially with only one car at the finish for the main team. I was much more concentrated; like I always say, when the feeling is good I will grab everything. At the end of the year, you have to grab everything – the championship could be played with one point.

Q:

Are you happy Julien?

JI:

We can start Sweden tomorrow! Of course I am happy. I was speaking to some journalists in Monte Carlo about the job for the co-driver. This is a difficult one, we can't really breathe for the week – between the stages we have the gravel crew giving us a new set of pace notes and then during the stages you question whether you will be able to say everything! Sometimes there is so much, you can forget if it's left or right... Maybe I can have a special mention for the gravel crew...

SO:

That's true for me as well, you say so much, sometimes I wonder: "How can I get all of that in my mind?"

Q:

Is this the most stressful event for the co-driver?

JI:

Yes. I'm always happy to have the Monte Carlo first, then I don't have to think about it for too long in the season. It's done!

Q:

Are you excited about the season ahead?

JI:

Yeah, I am particularly looking forward to China. Before that we have a long way, with again the classic events. We see the rallies are all there and we will have some good fights, especially next in Sweden. I am excited with this season coming and, of course, we develop the 2017 car, it will be a good transition to next year.

Q:

Andreas, you have a new co-driver and you're second on Rallye Monte-Carlo. Happy?

AM:

Yeah, it's really, really good. Coming into the event, I knew it would be difficult. With a new co-driver, you have to get used to each other and doing this one - a tricky rally - especially for the co-driver, it's tough. We definitely did not pick the easiest one to start with, but it's gone really perfectly. Anders has done an incredible job; the amount of detail he gets in is amazing. For co-drivers it's about how they say it and the timing as well. I take my hat off. This is the best start we could have had.

Q:

You took a bold tyre choice on Saturday morning – the only one to take four studs... was the descent of SS10 a bit scary?

AM:

No, actually we thought we were very safe. We were different in the choice and we were very worried when we saw all the studs were out of the tyres on the first one – we expected that when we lost that amount of time. We lost more than I could imagine, but on the next one it was quite scary on the downhill, but it was a successful one we managed and it helped me to put the pressure back on Jari-Matti [Latvala]. It was very sad what happened to him, it would have been a nice fight to the end.

Q:

You are happy with what you delivered?

AM:

You can always drive faster, but it's always tricky when you want to go flat everywhere. The risk is really high and the safety margin is small so you cannot push all the time. We were not slow, but there are places we found where we can push more in the future – where it was safe we gave it a small push.

Q:

You talk about fighting for the title, to do that you need a result in Sweden next time?

AM:

Definitely, that's the aim in Sweden. We were really close last year and the year before I took my first podium. I really feel we have the necessary experience to fight at the front. We should be able to fight for the win.

Q:

Anders, congratulations on your first event in one of the biggest challenges in the championship...

AJ:

I am quite relieved! It was mid-December last year when things happened very fast and we started preparing for Monte Carlo in a different car. There was a lot of excitement before this rally, but Andreas and I did some testing and we knew we could work. There was some question about when it would work and when it would be optimal, but obviously it's worked quite well in the start. This week it has been a pleasure to be on his right side. There's a lot to take in, Julien described it as a difficult rally, but it's the new year and Monte Carlo has started the season.

Q:

Were you nervous? Was there pressure?

AJ:

Yeah sure, there was quite a lot before the first stage on Thursday – this was a difficult stage in the dark. I would lie if I said my pulse was quite low!

Q:

Thierry third position on the debut for the new car, you must be happy?

TN:

The end of last year was more up than down, so this was quite a good weekend for us. I can't be happy with the start of the weekend. I was not very comfortable in the car, the settings were not right on the bumpy sections. I couldn't drive comfortably, but it got better as we worked on the car. At the end, it was quite regular and this brings us to a podium position.

Q:

There was a big contrast from Thursday and Friday to yesterday and today...

TN:

The tyre choice made some difference as well as the set-up. We feel this ourselves, we made improvements. We wanted to be on this pace from the start, but the two guys at the front – when Kris was running – I did not feel we could take this risk to go at this speed. I am quite optimistic about the future events, it is looking positive. I'm really happy the new season has started and the new car is here.

Q:

You had a few worries today?

TN:

I went out of service this morning and less than 100 metres out I heard quite a big noise. It was strange, but we went to the highway and then I stopped and checked. Yes, the transmission was touching something. We had to replace something and work on the car between the stages. Then on Turini, the transmission broke and we had only front-wheel drive. From then on, it was no point to keep up the pressure on Andreas, we had to secure the third place.

Q:

It was an important result for the team?

TN:

It was important for everybody, I spent a lot of time after last season with the team, working hard with the boys in the factory. They all deserve this result, these people are working flat-out to get ready on time and I think we are getting more and more a proper WRC team. Finally I feel pretty comfortable in the team, now I am really happy!

Q:

Nicolas how much of a confidence boost is this podium?

NG:

I am very happy to be on the podium on this famous event after quite a difficult season last year. This is a new car, it's much more efficient and the gap is smaller with the big guys. We are back and looking forward to Rally Sweden.

Q:

How was the atmosphere in your car?

NG:

We did quite a lot of mechanic work today, but yesterday we chatted about tyre choices. It's very special on this event. Usually it's better to have the safe choice and push hard than to try to be optimistic, when you are sliding a lot after a few corners, you are not fast enough – the best choice is the safe choice and then drive quite quick.

Q:

Just how does it feel to have continued success here?

JC:

It's really fantastic starting the season with Monte Carlo and a one-two on such a famous event. Over the winter nobody knows how much work or development the other teams have been doing. We worked hard on the reliability to make the car even tougher, no technical problems at all here makes us quite confident for the season, even if Monte Carlo is not representative.

TN:

And Argentina?

JC:

You will see...

TN:

There were some problems last year...

JC:

He's just jealous he's not in the Polo!

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Elfyn Evans, M-Sport World Rally Team

1st - Craig Parry, M-Sport World Rally Team

Q:

Elfyn, what a fantastic win, how does this feel?

EE:

I'm feeling really happy. Obviously there's a lot of new things this weekend, a new co-driver with Craig and the new R5 Evo – that's a big step for M-Sport. I'm really, really pleased with how it has turned out. The car has been exceptional, this is more than we could have hoped for.

Q:

You lost a lot of time with punctures, but still won...

EE:

We got off to the worst possible start on Thursday night, driving 14 kilometres on a puncture wasn't the best, but we took the decision not to change and lost 1m40s. It was here or there whether we changed it and it was the same on Saturday morning. It wasn't ideal but we seemed to manage to claw our way back and end the rally with a comfortable margin.

Q:

This must be a good confidence boost for Sweden?

EE:

Yes. Sweden is our next round. There's going to be a lot of competition there, it's a really strong entry. OK, it's not a surface I'm 100 per cent comfortable with, but I've been there for the last two years and found good speed. I'm looking forward to the challenge third time.

Q:

You've got a lot of experience at WRC level, do you feel more confident in the WRC 2 title fight?

EE:

For sure, this isn't a bad step to take. The confidence will increase with more performances like this. But we can't underestimate two factory Skodas with two Scandinavian drivers in Sweden. The target doesn't change.

Q:

Craig, this was your first time together and you've won. How did you find it?

CP:

It's been amazing, the whole weekend. When I first had the call and found out the first event was going to be Monte Carlo, I did think we could have started on an easier one! This was the first time in the car for me and Elfyn and every day just got

better and better. I got used to his note system and his ways in the car. It's a good finish to a really good weekend.

Q:

The Monte's a big challenge though?

CP:

Massive! It actually worked quite well, I did gravel notes for Elfyn last year, so I kind of knew what I was in for, but it's never easy. There was lots thrown into the mix, but Elfyn dealt with everything pretty well.

Q:

Did you come here assuming you could win?

CP:

You can never assume anything. We took each day as it comes, we had two punctures and you never really expect punctures – especially on the first stage. No, you can't take anything for granted.

FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Ole Christian Veiby, Printsport

1st - Jonas Andersson, Printsport

Q:

Congratulations Ole Christian. Happy?

OCV:

Of course, we have to be. To come to Monaco with the win, it feels amazing. We have had a really nice rally. This was the first time for me to have Jonas with me in the co-driver's seat and it worked perfectly. We had one small puncture after one stage – otherwise it was really good.

Q:

How much did you push?

OCV:

You always have to drive fast, but I started to build a lead on Friday and we drive in comfortable speed with no big risks. It was important for me to finish and get experience. We are happy with our speed. It's not easy to control three minutes lead and not easy to know how fast to drive, but it's a really special feeling driving from the Power Stage into Monaco.

Q:

It must be a good feeling...

OCV:

Yes, for sure. Driving from the Power Stage was really nice. I remember finishing third in the Junior Championship and that was also the special feeling. This year was even better!

Q:

But now you will change you co-driver?

OCV:

Yes. Jonas will be with Pontus [Tidemand]. My old co-driver comes back, that's really good – that works.

Q:

Jonas what did you think of Ole Christian's performance?

JA:

I am very happy with our performance and I think he has done a very good drive. He has been very solid – it was a clever drive with good help from the ice crew, good information and the right tyre choices. He has been driving in a good pace: steady on tricky corners and it's paid off.

Q:

Easy to adapt to a new car?

JA:

That's not such a big problem, it's more about getting into the new driver's pace notes and delivering them how he wants them and discovering how he writes them. We did quite a lot of work before and it has worked well.

Q:

Special to win on the Monte?

JA:

Yeah really good fun, I'm very impressed with him and very happy.

Q:

Are you looking forward to the rest of the season with Pontus?

JA:

I'm really looking forward to it, it will be a big challenge, the field is massive in lots of the rallies, it'll be really good fun and we will try to be on the top all of the time there.