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## RALLY ITALIA SARDEGNA KICKS OFF TODAY

**The competition starts this morning with the Shakedown and Qualifying Stage in Telti whilst the event will officially begin this afternoon at 15:00 in front of Olbia's Town Hall.**

Olbia, 18 October 2012 – After long months of preparations and after the last frantic touches put in place by the staff, Rally Italia Sardegna will kick off this morning with the Qualifying Stage which will dictate the starting order for the event. At 15:00 the drivers will head to the first section of the competition – for a total of 175.58km and 56.28km of Special Stages. The action will begin with two runs of the 28.14km Terranova stage, a very demanding stage which will define the first classification of the rally.

**LOEB:** “I’m not here to relax or to rest, as always I will do my best and my aim is to win here in Sardinia. Of course if at some point I’ll have to take too many risks, given that both Championships are already closed, I’ll be able to decide what to do as I have no pressure on my shoulders. The rally includes two new stages this year – Castelsardo is narrow and tricky, whilst Tergu is wide and very fast but both stages are very treacherous. This is a very technical event which I’ve always liked because here the driver can really make the difference. Rally Italia Sardegna is a classic of the WRC now and it really deserves a place in the calendar. I think there will be four drivers battling for the victory here: myself, my team mate Mikko Hirvonen, Jari Matti Latvala and Petter Solberg.”

**HIRVONEN:** “I like Rally Italia Sardegna very much, I’ve come second here for last five years running so this year I really would like to win. There are two new stages this year which are very different one from another but both are quite tricky and demanding. I would love to finally win here in Sardinia to continue the good results Finnish drivers have always achieved here.”



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**LATVALA:** "Rally Italia Sardegna is one of my favourite rallies, the roads here are amazing. I would like very much to win here, it would be nice for the team as well. I have started my career at Ford and I would love to win one last rally with them. I've signed a contract with Volkswagen, the news is official since yesterday so I can now talk about it. It wasn't an easy decision though. This year there will be two new treacherous stages, but the rally will be difficult as always as this is a very technical event. I have a lot of fans in Italy and Sardinia, I'll do everything not to let them down.

**SOLBERG:** "I love this rally, I have a lot of friends here in Sardinia and I've won here in 2004. This is a very tricky and demanding rally, I think the victory will be decided on the last stage and I hope to be one of the contenders."



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