



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**2012 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
RALLY ITALIA SARDEGNA**

Post event FIA Press Conference
Sunday 21 October

Present:

1st - Mikko Hirvonen, Citroën Total World Rally Team
1st - Jarmo Lehtinen, Citroën Total World Rally Team
2nd - Evgeny Novikov, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
2nd - Ilka Minor, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
3rd - Ott Tänak, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
3rd - Kuldar Sikk, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
Yves Matton, Team Principal, Citroën Total World Rally Team

Q:

Mikko, congratulations on your first win for Citroën this year!

MH:

I'm really happy, in a way it feels like I've won my first ever rally. Funnily enough I was a bit nervous after getting to the finish of the Power Stage. It's my first win for Citroën and I've been five times second here, so it's good to finally win the rally.

Q:

You were five times runner-up here in Sardinia and finally you've done it!

MH:

Yes, finally! We were speaking with the team before the rally that this was going to be my rally and we won it so everything worked exactly how he hoped it would. I'm really, really happy with the result.

Q:

Why on the second day do you think we saw so many retirements from top drivers?

MH:

I don't know, of course it's a very difficult rally and it's so easy to make a mistake here. Even a small mistake – you can very easily hit a rock and damage the car. Maybe it was because all the titles were decided and everybody just wanted to fight for the win. There was some extra push on Thursday evening and Friday morning just to go for the win and maybe that has something to do with it. Luckily it worked for me and - when everybody made a mistake - it was a little bit easier for me and I was able to build a good lead on Evgeny that I didn't have to take any risks. Anyway, it was a long weekend.

Q:

Were you pushing as well or was your strategy a little different?

MH:

No, for sure I went flat-out as well but maybe I was just the lucky one and everybody went off before me so that I could take it a little bit more easily.

Q:

Do you now feel you could win in Spain too?

MH:

It's possible but even so it's going to be tough. We made good progress on Tarmac and hopefully we can improve even more before Spain and be really competitive there. For sure it's not going to be easy but that's the target. We'll see what's going to happen.

Q:

Jarmo, how does it feel to finally sit in the middle [press conference] chair here in Italy?

JL:

We were talking in the car driving up here, how was it possible that we were still smiling after one hour of finishing the last stage, and this smile would not disappear! We decided after the last rally [Rallye de France] that for the next two the only aim would have been the victory and raise the level for next year.

Q:

There might have been only 16 kilometres but Gallura is a tough stage? Were you feeling nervous at all?

JL:

Yes, you can't believe how long eight kilometres can be – it's a really long way to go.

Q:

Spain is the next event, are you feeling confident?

JL:

Yes, I'm quite confident. The first day on gravel is really nice and I like the stages in Spain a lot, for me the stages on Tarmac are the best of the season. I'm really looking forward to it – it's a proper Tarmac rally, no cutting corners and clean Tarmac everywhere.

Q:

Evgeny, congratulations on second position overall here in Italy. This is your second podium of the year. A good feeling?

EN:

It was a great weekend for us. I turned 22 years old last month and now I can celebrate it as I scored two podiums in second place so it's perfect!

Q:

You've had a very consistent season this year; did you ever imagine to get second on such a tough event?

EN:

It's rallying, it can be anything! During the rally I wasn't thinking about that a lot. It's very good we could get this good result here.

Q:

Did you ever think you could fight with Mikko for the victory?

EN:

To be honest I never had that thought. If you see how many podiums Mikko has and how many we have... We decided it was better to keep the position and finish in second rather than take risks, because it was very easy to go off the road. So the plan was just to keep the position.

Q:

I think last year your answer would have been different, you're a changed man Evgeny...

EN:

Could be! [Mikko Hirvonen: he's a year older!]. Of course I'm one year older!

Q:

This is your first podium with Ilka Minor alongside you, the relationship is obviously working!

EN:

It's going very well, I'm very happy. Everything is just perfect to be honest, it's really good. I want to thank Ilka again - she trusted me and she is not scared to be with me in the car. Also I'd like to thank Michal, the guy without whom we won't be sitting here today.

Q:

Ilka, congratulations. How did you find it out there this weekend?

IM:

It wasn't an easy weekend, it was very tough and a lot of drivers went off the road. It wasn't easy especially because our relationship is only three rallies old, but we could find a good rhythm together and it was really good.

Q:

How tough is this event from a co-driver's perspective.

IM:

Maybe not as tough as for drivers, but still you have to concentrate quite hard. It's really hot in the car and it's very bumpy so you have to hold the notes quite carefully.

Q:

You have a big responsibility on your shoulders as Denis Giraudet – who has huge experience - was sitting with Evgeny previously. How did you feel when Evgeny asked you to sit with him?

IM:

Sitting with Evgeny after Denis wasn't so easy as he's really experienced, but even with my little experience it has been working very well.

Q:

Ott, congratulations on third position overall and your first podium. Is it a good feeling?

OT:

It is something different for sure. Before the last stage I couldn't imagine what kind of feeling it could be, but a few corners before the end I started to realise that it was something incredible.

Q:

How long were Saturday and then this morning, trying to hold on to third position?

OT:

The first half of the day yesterday was quite okay, the roads were okay and it wasn't too rough. The second time through was rougher and I already started to think about things. It wasn't very nice to drive but we managed quite okay and we didn't have any problems, so I'm very happy.

Q:

It has been a difficult season for you; does this result make up for some of the disappointments along the way?

OT:

For sure it's really important. It's our first season with a WRC car and it hasn't been easy for sure. I was probably hoping for too much at the beginning of the year and in some places pushing too hard but then I saw the feeling was coming and I was improving all the time.

Q:

How much do you think this result will help in securing you a drive for next year?

OT:

We'll see! It's quite a difficult situation on the market at the moment but we'll see what's going to happen. There's still one event to do and we're going to try our best there. For sure it has given a big push also because in the last few events we had clean runs and we didn't make any mistakes.

Q:

You become the first Estonian in seven years to be on the podium after Markko Martin; did he say anything to you?

OT:

If you know him, he doesn't talk too much. He only talks if I do something wrong but if you do something good he just says: "it's okay, well done". For sure he was happy as well and I'm very happy for him as well as he's done a lot of work with me in very hard situations.

Q:

Are all Estonians so cool and calm like you and Markko?

OT:

Well there are different people as well...!

Q:

Kuldar, well done. Was there a good reaction in the car?

KS:

The reaction was in line with how we're like. There wasn't very big shouting in the car, just a 'well done and thanks' and that was it. However, the feeling inside was amazing. It has been a tough season for us and to come to the podium is very good.

Q:

Jarmo [Lehtinen] said it was quite tough to go through the last stage. How was the feeling for you?

KS:

We had a similar time to them so it was equally long. It's a very tough stage, long and narrow and with a lot of stones that looked like [the size of] TVs! It was very difficult but we managed and it was okay.

Q:

Is it a good feeling to go back home after a podium with so much support you have back in Estonia?

KS:

I hope that everybody at home is happy, I think so judging by the SMS and calls we received. For sure it's much better to go home with a podium result than like it has been in the rest of the season.

Q:

Yves, it's a Citroën on the top step of the podium but this time it is Mikko Hirvonen. What have you thought of Mikko's performance this weekend?

YM:

It's a great performance by Mikko to take his first victory with us. He fought hard with everybody – including Séb [Loeb] - but they all made mistakes and he took the win. It's very important for him and for us as well.

Q:

With Sébastien Loeb only participating in a partial season next year who are you looking to fill the second seat and when will you announce this?

YM:

A lot of people are interested to come in an official seat with Citroën next year. I'm talking to a lot of drivers at the moment but it takes some time as we have a lot of possibilities. We need an experienced driver as the aim is to win both titles next year, but again it will take some time for us to decide.

Q:

If you're looking for an experienced driver, it won't be a young one?

YM:

I don't know at the moment but it's possible it won't be a young driver.

Q:

When will you make your decision?

YM:

When I will, I tell it!

Q:

Will we know before Spain?

YM:

For sure I'll wait until the end of Spain before taking a decision.

FIA PRODUCTION CAR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Nicolas Fuchs

1st - Fernando Mussano

Q:

Nicolas, congratulations on your first PWRC win of the season! It has been a tough weekend, how does it feel to take the win here on your first time at this event?

NF:

Thank you very much, I'm so happy – it was my first time here in Sardinia and it's such a tough event. It was a new rally for me, so difficult too for a Group N car. I tried to push from the start until the end of the rally.

Q:

We saw dramas for both Benito Guerra and Michal Kosciuszko on the opening day but Marcos Ligato was very close. How did you feel on the stages on Thursday and Friday when you were in a real battle?

NF:

The stages are very, very nice – very fast in some parts and I like a lot the fast stages. Some other parts were slow and in those I would drive slow to save the car.

Q:

You set great pace on the stages considering you haven't competed here before, why is that? Are these stages similar to those at home?

NF:

Maybe, there are some similar rallies I've competed in. Fernando [Mussano] did this rally last year within the WRC Academy and he told me this was going to be a good rally for me.

Q:

Were you able to relax your pace when the gap behind you increased from the first stage on Saturday morning?

NF:

I tried to push in the first stage and in the second one. It was difficult with the Group N car and some of the other PWRC drivers made mistakes or had problems.

Q:

What would you say was the most difficult part?

NF:

Definitely today, the stages were very rough and I had only a small advantage on Ligato. I only tried to save the car and finish the rally.

Q:

Nico, where will we see you next season?

NF:

Next year I would like to be back to the WRC with a Group N car. I need more years in the Championship to learn a lot and win more events.

Q:

How much does a win help you securing sponsorship for next year?

NF:

A lot, really! We had a difficult season this year; we finished second in Mexico and Argentina. We could have won in Greece but we retired and in Germany I had problems with the car at the Shakedown. Now we took a win so it's much better for me, for the sponsors and for Fernando.

Q:

Fernando, what's been the best part of it for you?

FM:

The stages are very, very nice and I liked a lot the Power Stage.

Q:

A good feeling about your first win of the season?

FM:

I'm very, very happy. For me and Nico it's the first win in PWRC so it's fantastic.