



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

RALLY AUSTRALIA

Post event Press Conference
18 November 2018

Present:

1st - Jari-Matti Latvala, Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT
1st - Miikka Anttila, Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT
2nd - Hayden Paddon, Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT
2nd - Sebastian Marshall, Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT
3rd - Mads Østberg, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi WRT
3rd - Torstein Eriksen, Citroën Total Abu Dhabi WRT
Tommi Mäkinen, Team Principal, Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT

Q:

Jari-Matti congratulations... you have waited a while for this since Sweden 2017. How does it feel?

J-ML:

I must say I had given up, I thought that this will be my first year when I did not win a WRC round. Even before the rally, journalists were telling me I had done a race every year [since my first win in 2008]. I said: "Yes, I know!" But okay, if I didn't win a rally, then winning the manufacturers' title is like one victory. Okay we had a good second half of the season and I'm really happy with this victory, when you work hard and don't see the results it keeps you down and doesn't motivate you. This was an important victory, but more important was the Manufacturers' Championship.

Q:

Today was a really tough challenge with the wet conditions?

J-ML:

Yeah, it was. Already on Thursday we got the weather forecast which said it would rain on Friday or Saturday, but the rain did not come on Friday and then only on the super special on Saturday. We saved our soft tyres for the final day and then the rain came. I had in my mind the only target was to get more of a gap between me and Hayden – I didn't think to win this event. But in the wet, the conditions, they were in my favour and it gave me the chance to attack. And if you do it well, you can take good time. But it can also go wrong, really wrong. I had a good attack early this morning and then I thought I would calm down a bit. Then Ott went off a little bit. Talking to Tommi at lunchtime, I said we continue with the controlled driving, no big risks – we needed to get the car to the finish. I focused on the afternoon, but making a mistake was so easy, if you don't concentrate 110 per cent. Some places were a bit more slippery than the others, they could catch you out so easily.

Q:

Did you feel the pressure upholding Toyota honours?

J-ML:

I started the [power] stage and I know I am coming out of the stage hero or zero and I don't want be zero. Last year I broke the suspension, okay it didn't affect the championship, but this time we have the chance to get the title. I knew we couldn't afford to lose this year. I didn't want a sad Christmas, I wanted a happy one!

Q:

Does it make up for last year?

J-ML:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Q:

Miikka, this really was an important win wasn't it?

MA:

For sure it was important for us. I said all weekend the only target was for the manufacturers' title – how it came I didn't care. But, I have to say I don't mind this way!

Q:

This has been an incredible team effort from Toyota...

MA:

Yeah, this year the first half was not so strong for Jari-Matti and myself. But after we have seen strong results for all of us. We have seen Ott and Martin and Esapekka and Janne, we have all been there on almost all of the rallies with three cars in the top six. You need to do this to get the manufacturers', the competition has been so tight. Today the race was so tight. Esapekka needed to come to the finish, which gave us a nice motivation for the last stage.

Q:

Hayden you made the podium by not putting a foot wrong in some very tricky conditions. That must be satisfying?

HP:

I am very happy with how the weekend panned out. It's the first time in a long time we've had a proper podium rather than picking up the places. I was a bit nervous of today, I haven't always been so strong when the conditions got really slippery. I had to focus on making no mistakes. It worked. Since we changed the car to my liking before Finland, I've really been at one with it – even when it was really slippery, it was no problem at all.

Q:

It's not been easy to jump in and out of the car?

HP:

Ah look, at the end of the day it's like riding a bike. You get the helmet on and get in the zone. You find the right rhythm and find the right speed and we know what the car's capable of. There's no excuses, we've been doing this for a lot of years and I enjoy every opportunity I have to get in the car.

Q:

There were a lot of distractions today, did they bring pressure?

HP:

I tried to forget about everything, I just wanted to keep things simple. We wanted to help Hyundai with the manufacturers. I don't know what the future holds, I wanted to get back to my old self and bring the thing back to pick up some points. This was a good step in the right direction.

Q:

What's the situation for you now. Are you talking to other teams or just Hyundai?

HP:

I want to stay at Hyundai, but I don't know if this is our last rally or not. Let's see what happens and what comes out of the woodwork in the next two weeks.

Q:

Seb, those conditions were so tricky today. How was it for you?

SM:

Certainly we were a bit more on edge. Last year on the Sunday here the weather played a big part, so it was not like we were completely going into the unexpected. We knew certain corners would be slippery, and we thought we might know which ones – but when we were sliding

towards the trees, you realised that we didn't know which were the worst corners. We needed to be focused, but we did that, we did a good job.

Q:

Satisfying to come out of such a big battle with the result?

SM:

Yeah absolutely. We were on the podium in Turkey, but that was a hard rally and not so enjoyable as this one. Yesterday's stages were absolutely fantastic and one of the highlights of the season to get to the end of those is real satisfaction.

Q:

Mads, you've been part of that great battle – please with the podium?

MO:

Yes. The weekend has been really up and down. It started well on Friday, but I was surprised that we could be competitive straight away, we never really came to one with the car, I was fighting a bit, but we did it. Then on Saturday it was more tricky even though these are some of the favourite stages of the rally. I couldn't feel the balance of the car and it was a tricky day. We made some wrong tyre choices, it was not perfect – that was a tricky one. Then we wake up today to tricky conditions, but I knew this was a day of opportunities. I was happy to see tricky conditions. I did not do so well on the first stage – Jari-Matti did what I wanted. I need to talk to him, to find out what he did when he got out of bed. But then we got into the rhythm. Esapekka was pushing hard and I needed to keep him behind. I managed to do that, even with going off the road.

Q:

It looked like you were driving on ice at times...

MO:

It felt like ice, actually it felt like snow. Ice is quite good, but snow is more difficult. It reminded me a bit of winter conditions at home, if you are not able to keep wheels spinning, you are not able to find traction. But these conditions suited the Scandinavian drivers quite well... and the Kiwis as well, obviously!

Q:

What can you tell us about next year?

MO:

Not a lot. I don't know. We just have to see what the next few weeks brings. A good rally here was important, but the decision is not really in my hands. We will sit back and relax, we have done well and if we get an opportunity then we will definitely deliver the result for a team.

Q:

Torstein on such an up and down rally, how did you stay so positive?

TE:

We were just thinking of the next stage. We have worked hard to never to give up today. I'm really proud of what we have been doing here. The last stage we did was the Great Orme in Wales and then we come to Australia two months later and we go straight into the lead. This proves what we can do in the championship.

Q:

Friday must have been very satisfying?

TE:

Yes.

Q:

It's fingers crossed we see you guys back – you have such passion for the sport...

TE:

Yes absolutely. I decided I was going to enjoy this one before the start. I told Mads with the maximum effort we could get to the podium.

MO:

Even before the start, he was pushing me to get to the podium and he is talking a lot to keep the smiles on our face – he keeps the mind positive.

Q:

Tommi, what an incredible event, Jari-Matti wins and Toyota seals the manufacturers' title*, you must be so proud?

TM:

Sure. It's less than three and a half years since we start this project and we are now here. Our strategy was faster than we thought. In 2016 and 2017 we were learning and analysing different items and then we really started developing the car in 2018 and somewhere in the second half of the season, we found many areas where we can improve. This has been absolutely brilliant for us. This is the highest prize for the whole team because of how much effort they put in.

Q:

It really is a team effort isn't it?

TM:

Yeah. We have around 150 people and every one of them is such an important position. We try to keep it there. Where we are, this is the way to keep us all motivated to continue and I'm sure this was the prize which makes people motivated to continue again next year.

Q:

What did you think when you saw Ott off?

TM:

I know this can happen, I have seen it myself – it's a big disappointment for sure. It could be an even bigger disaster if he was fighting for the title, but it was already looking like Sebastien would be world champion. But it was a big disappointment, but today's conditions made the whole weekend absolutely so exciting. I know these conditions when you are between the trees and it is so slippery – you never know what kind of corner you have in front of you. It was one of the most difficult rallies.

Q:

Next year, we see Kris Meeke joining the team. What will the dynamic be like?

TM:

I have seen very good teamwork with the whole team, with the drivers working well together and I hope this will continue. I know Kris, he is a very good team player and a friendly guy. Of course we are sad to see Esapekka leaving, he was also a good team player and driver, but that's rallying: people are moving and drivers go to the different teams. We will see. We feel pretty confident for next year as well.

2018 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONS*

1st - Sebastien Ogier, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

1st - Julien Ingrassia, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

Q:

Sebastien, three of you came here with the chance of taking the title, but it's yours – title number six. How does it feel?

SO:

Yeah, I think you guess that I'm super-happy and satisfied with the championship. It's been such an intense season. It was almost the last stage of the rally when we won so, of course, the pressure was high. But the moment it happened was a bit strange; when Ott stopped we were in the road section – it was killing a little bit the moment. But then it's relief. We made it after definitely the toughest fight we had to do. But this is a great feeling.

Q:

You kept your cool – that was key this weekend?

SO:

I think this was what we did the whole weekend. We made no mistakes and there were quite a few mistakes from the others which cost some to retire and that's the way we won the championship this weekend. The season was up and down and we also had some downs. In the middle of the season, somehow we missed our luck and made some small mistakes and it was not looking great. But we never gave up the fight back. In GB it was a very important win that brought us some big points. We finished well on the last rallies of the season and what we have done makes me so happy for my whole team and especially for Malcolm [Wilson]. To offer them another title they so very well deserved, they worked really hard to achieve that and I rarely see such commitment in my career. I have to say, it's very hard to say I am leaving, but it's like... leaving a girl you love; why are we doing that? Why now when we achieve everything in the last two years. But now we have an exciting adventure waiting for us and I am also looking forward to this one now. At least we say goodbye in the best way.

Q:

You've formed a real bond with Malcolm...

SO:

Of course I have mentioned a couple of times this great human adventure that we had together. Of course it's with Malcolm, but it's more than him – it's with the whole team. We will keep this forever and look back on it and it will always be something special in our eyes... and a good opportunity to drink a good bottle of wine!

Q:

Julien congratulations on the sixth co-drivers' title – how do you rate this one?

JL:

It's difficult to choose, it's like with your favourite children – you cannot pick up on one. We had a beautiful journey in two years, it was a human adventure. We did this together and we can enjoy this one tonight. This rally has been like the whole season: up and down, one hour it was up and then down. We had two promises when we arrived at this rally – Seb said to Malcolm we will win and we will leave the team with some happiness... and we will bring the number one to the reds at Citroen.

Q:

There was lots of pressure, it must have been exhausting reading the notes today?

JL:

I still have a bit of strength for tonight to celebrate, but I'm not sure about another day. But everybody who could have the chance to go and sit alongside Seb knows what I speak about. It's a strange job to be a co-driver, you know you have a lot of tasks to accomplish and you pay the price if you make the smallest mistake. You have no steering wheel but you have the adrenalin and you want to give him the information – especially when you have 160kph between the trees and then you have the slow corner. This is something special and if you have one ride then you try to understand it.

Q:

You have got on with everybody in the team – we've even seen you in the kitchen!

JL:

Don't forget we are French, the food is very important to us!

SO:

This is another reason he wants to go back to a French team!

JL:

It's like you guys out there, we know people and we are not so numerous in coming on the rallies. It's great to share a bit of time, but very difficult to take some time. But we have made some good memories.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Alberto Heller, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

1st - Jose Diaz, M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

Q:

Alberto, congratulations on your first WRC 2 win. How does it feel?

AH:

I'm very happy for this weekend. The idea is to make experience, this is only my second round in WRC and I'm very happy.

Q:

It was a very big challenge for you?

AH:

The first two days were nice with wide open roads, but today was really tricky and slippery. I tried to settle the car and only make the kilometres.

Q:

Had you seen anything like those conditions before?

AH:

No I don't think so.

Q:

Any moments today?

AH:

Yes, in the first stage this morning we had a big moment, but we are here.

Q:

Nice to round off the year with a good result...

AH:

Yes, it's nice to have this good result and we want to make a good plan for the next year and maybe some more rounds in WRC 2.

Q:

Your brother Pedro was in our pre-event press conference talking about you – it's been a good rivalry between you?

AH:

Pedro is a really good driver and this weekend he didn't have good luck. He is in first place in the Chilean Championship and next week it's the final round and we can have another fight there and we try to have good fight.

Q:

Is the plan to come back to WRC 2?

AH:

Yes, the idea is to make a few more rounds.

Q:

Jose congratulations. This was a really tough challenge?

JD:

It was very difficult. The first two days were very good, we set a really good pace and today was just to go through the stages and finish the rally. We had to keep the car safe and that's it.

Q:

Was today the biggest challenge?

JD:

Yes when we were at the beginning, when we did the recce these stages looked really tough. But then with the mud, all the corners are changing and they were so slippery. Today was really difficult.

Q:

Jose you have co-driven for a lot of drivers, what do you think of Alberto's potential?

JD:

He has the potential to be a really good driver. We need to keep working and then let's see.

* Subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA