



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2010 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP RALLY NEW ZEALAND

Post event Press Conference Sunday 9 May

Present:

1st - Jari-Matti Latvala, BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
1st - Miiikka Anttila, BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
2nd - Sébastien Ogier, Citroen Junior Team
2nd - Julien Ingrassia, Citroen Junior Team
3rd - Sébastien Loeb, Citroen Total World Rally Team
3rd - Daniel Elena, Citroën Total World Rally Team
Malcolm Wilson, Team Principal, BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team

Q:

Jari-Matti, after what has been a thrilling Rally New Zealand it is you that takes victory after what has been the third closest event in WRC history; it's been an awesome weekend!

J-ML:

It's been a very interesting weekend. For me it's been, I would say, a little bit of a strange rally, because I have not won a single stage in this rally but in the end I'm the winner. So it seems that the consistency matters. So I was a little bit lucky that these guys beside me made mistakes. But anyway you need to finish the last stage and our time comes, so in a way a great weekend.

Q:

How did you feel going into that final stage – because it was such a battle for the finish between so many drivers, how did you balance wanting to push and wanting to hold the points that you already had?

J-ML:

When I started this morning I thought okay the main thing is to keep the third place. But things obviously changed and going in to the last stage I just thought that if I drive fast it's good, as I have been driving so far – if I don't start doing a massive push, because I know what happens then when Mr Latvala starts to push too hard! It's happened so many times, but it worked this time and I am very happy about it.

Q:

Obviously Sébastien Ogier had his problems on the final stage in the final section, so I guess you had no idea what was going on until you crossed the finish line?

J-ML:

I got some splits and we were five seconds ahead of him and then suddenly we were two seconds ahead of him and I noticed he was going very quick. At that moment I tried to push a bit harder, but then I made a mistake, went too much wide and hit a bank and nearly went off the road. Then I started to realise it's maybe lost, then the third last corner there was a bumper on the road and then I realised something has happened. I came to the finish and I didn't know exactly how the times were. I walked to the board, I had the time that Miiikka had taken with his stopwatch and I looked at the times of these guys and I was surprised our time looked quite good. When Miiikka got the time on the time card we really knew that we had won the rally.

Q:

A win in 2008, a win in 2009, a win in 2010 – how does this rank against the others?

J-ML:

It would be nice to win more rallies during the year than just one that I have done so far. This is the best victory – because we did 400 kilometres of competition and at the end it was only two seconds. Obviously for me I wasn't maybe the fastest, like I said, but at least now I have the consistency and that is why I was very happy about it.

Q:

Miiikka, Jari-Matti says he thinks this is the best victory – do you think that as well?

MA:

At the moment it really feels an incredible thing to win this rally. Let's say that the first rally win was also nice, but for sure it was very very nice to win it, but still if we think another way it was so close, I mean 2.4 seconds we were ahead of Sébastien (Ogier) and Julien. So it's such a small time it could have been the other way round as well – so this time we were the lucky ones.

Q:

Does this mask what happened in 2008 now – does this make you forget about Rally New Zealand 2008?

MA:

Actually in the morning we spoke with our team co-ordinator, and I said to him many things in Whaanga Coast could happen. But then someone said to me that unfortunately Ford was never the winner of those. But this time we made it back.

Q:

Sébastien, I think everyone in this room and around the world feels for you right now. It all disappeared from you on the final stage. You were on the brink of your first WRC victory – it's been an incredible performance from you this weekend. What happened on stage 21?

SO:

It just happened, one last mistake before the end – for sure it was a big shame to make this mistake at this moment of the race, but it's the race – it's never finished until the finish line. So I'm still very happy with my weekend, I think I did a good job with Julien this weekend. And first I want to thank all the team because it wasn't planned for us to come here at the start of the season. But finally Citroen find the budget to come here and it's a good result for everybody and for me it was a pleasure to drive here this weekend. For sure it was a big disappointment to lose my first victory like this, but it doesn't really matter if I continue in this way I will have a victory soon, so it's a good result.

Q:

It didn't look like your first time competing here in New Zealand, it looked like you had years of experience on those stages, why do you think you adapted so well?

SO:

I don't know, it is difficult to explain that. From the second stage I find a good rhythm and I was very confident with my car and have a good feeling. I think with Julien we make a good job during the recce because we have very good pace notes. Until yesterday night I had no moments and pushed quite hard, but today I pushed quite hard and made two mistakes. But today I think I pushed like never, it was a big attack from the first stage this morning until the end. Unfortunately I had no split time from Jari-Matti in the last one, so I pushed a little bit too much at the end and I lost the victory.

Q:

The confidence you must have got from this result... surely a win is on the cards at some stage this year?

SO:

Yes, that is most important for me, I am closer and closer to the best driver this weekend. I was faster just after Seb (Loeb). Seb was the best, but for me it was good news to be closer and closer to him and I was faster than everybody else except for him. So it was good news for me, but it's still a long way to go to be fast and clean so we have to continue to learn rally after rally. But I think I'm confident for the rest of the season.

Q:

Julien, congratulations on second position, what was it like pressure-wise in the car this weekend.

JL:

We didn't feel like that except for we knew we had some hard work to maintain the gap. I would say we took it easy, we tried to do our best and we are pretty happy with the times we did in the stages where we have to clean. We knew that the rally would be long and the final issue would be on Whaanga Coast – the 21 kilometre stage. So it's a very good experience for us to take the lead like that in such a rally.

Q:

Séb, an incredible event, lots of action, lots of drama though. We saw drama from you on Friday, and yesterday at the start of the day you were 1 minute 20 seconds down on the lead and at the end of the day just five seconds off the lead. More dramas today though, what happened?

SL:

I don't know, it was a strange rally for me. When you are first on the road, like the first day, there is lots of gravel on the road and it's very slippery. So I had to really push very hard to not lose too much time and one time it was a bit too hard and so we lost a lot. A lot of people thought it was over, we knew that we would have a good road position the second day. We knew that sometimes it happens in some rallies that when we are first on the road we can be faster one day than the other, so okay we tried for sure. I had a great second day – no mistakes and pushing on the limit all the time. Very good feeling with the car – everything was going perfectly and we finished only five seconds from the lead; that was a perfect situation for the last day but on the last day I went off again two times. One time off the road, one time a spin – maybe trying a bit too hard?

Q:

It must be disappointing for you, because everyone was saying you really deserved to win the rally after the performance you put in yesterday – to now finish in third, how do you feel?

SL:

I was very fast for sure – maybe the fastest of the rally, but Jari-Matti is now an example of consistency. So I made a mistake in the morning; that was the big mistake of the day. A bit too fast – a bit surprised with a lot of grip changing, gravel, no-gravel, gravel and I just lost the car in a narrow right-hander, hit a tree and was stuck there for 30 seconds. Then in the two last stages I went flat-out – taking a lot of risks, just trying. Then I had a spin. Finally I am happy to finish third. I didn't lose so many points in the Championship – it's not so bad. After a rally like this one – it's not so bad!

Q:

Daniel, what was it like in the car with Sébastien yesterday, when those stage times were so amazing –everybody was astonished by the times that were being set.

DE:

For me it's more impressive when Sébastien was driving first on the road (Friday). Yesterday was more easy for us because the road cleaning with Ogier. Okay he was pushing very hard – but for me it's more impressive on the first day. But it's impossible to take more time off Sébastien than just lose two seconds, one second and that is more impressive, because of big slides and pushing very hard. Yesterday it was normal driving – okay flat-out. Yesterday it was a perfect day for us, but today – no.

Q:

Malcolm, it's a win for Jari-Matti, but Ford also becomes the most successful manufacturer in rallying history with this win, going ahead of Lancia.

MW:

It's been a fantastic weekend, especially for Jari-Matti – as he says, no fastest times, which was out of character, as we know with Jari-Matti. But he's had a great start this season, so to get this victory... the timing is crucial. It's really important to us. As you could imagine, that, coupled with breaking the record number of World Championship victories - now 75, it's a really special moment. Of course with first, second and third in the Super 2000 WRC as well, with the Fiesta.

Q:

Mikko Hirvonen has taken fourth position away and good points, but we haven't seen the usual pace from Mikko – he hasn't been fighting up the top end. He had fastest stage times today – what has been wrong with Mikko this weekend?

MW:

I don't know, he's never been 100% happy with his set-up for this event. When he was in a good position to challenge yesterday he got caught out, obviously got wide and spun so lost quite a bit of time, so probably lost a bit of confidence there with that. But knowing Mikko like I do there is no question he will come back, for sure.

Q:

Just talking about Jari-Matti a bit more; last year we saw inconsistency and crashes. This year it has been about consistency and now a win on the board. What on earth did you say to him at the start of the year?

MW:

It was before the end of last year! And then we followed it up with a chat at the start of this year as well...

Q:

His performance here has been something special?

MW:

I think the good thing is he is now appreciating the benefits of putting the consistency in it. There has been no better case for him to look – he can see you can actually win a world rally without setting a fastest time. So I know there is going to be many more victories in the future, that is for sure.

Q:

Jari-Matti, finally, you have a win under your belt in 2010. You still have to be consistent for the team, but obviously you are going to want to get more wins under that belt. Are we going to see the Jari-Matti of old creep back in?

JML:

If you think about when we started this season, as the second driver, our strategy, as Malcolm made it, it's been working very well. So I think there is no point in changing that and we keep going as we have agreed. Maybe Mikko isn't having the best weekend, he didn't find the best confidence and he will be back for sure. If there is maybe another possibility like this, in the next coming rallies – where we are in a close fight and there is a possibility of victory - then of course I would like to win again, for sure. But like Malcolm said, the consistency is very important and without it you can't win the rally. Winning the next rally won't maybe happen like this, being consistent, you also need to also have the speed – so we have work to do. We need to work – this car has been so quick during the weekend but you need to have your speed level and the consistency that on the level that if you are not far away from these guys then you need to find a little bit more extra on top of that and then you can win again.

FIA SUPER 2000 WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

1st - Jari Ketomaa
1st - Mika Stenberg

Q:

Jari, congratulations on your first SWRC win! You led from the very first stage of the event and made it look easy, you must be delighted.

JK:

Actually it wasn't that easy. Driving-wise it was okay the whole weekend and I was reasonably happy with the set-up of the car. We had quite a close moment on Friday. We found the problem at the remote service with the engine computer centre. The car stopped completely.

Q:

Does this now make up for the disappointing start in Jordan, where you didn't even make it out to the stages?

JK:

Yes, of course. It was very, very important for everyone in our team and for myself. I am quite confident in myself that I can do well. It has been a great week for us.

Q:

In terms of the Championship for you in SWRC, we've seen the points on the board now here in New Zealand. What about the rest of the rounds you're going to be competing in this year. You've obviously shown what you can do out there – you must be confident?

JK:

Of course, you have to be confident but not too confident. You have to keep pushing to make the car go faster and get myself more confident with the car still. It is a fact I have only done one rally completely with the S2000 car and it's a great thing we are here in this position, but still I think there are so many good drivers in this Championship, I just can't rely on that – and I need to concentrate on each rally and each stage. It will come, so I won't take any stress from it so far.

Q:

It's a one-two-three for the Fiestas in the SWRC. What have you thought of the S2000 Fiesta?

JK:

It's a great machine to drive – it's a really, really awesome car – especially on these kind of roads. I have been here once in the Group N car, but with the Group N car you can't push so much in to the camber because the suspension travel isn't as long, so you very easily lose the traction after the camber cornering. So it's not what I'm used to – I like to drive Group N but this is really much more fun to drive – especially the Fiesta.

FIA PRODUCTION WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

1st - Hayden Paddon
1st - John Kennard

Q:

Congratulations, Hayden. Your first PWRC win on home soil, it must have been a very special moment.

HP:

It definitely doesn't get much better. We came into this event and we had big expectations of ourselves to try and win and we knew it was going to be hard with the likes of Toshi (Arai) and Richard (Mason), and yeah it just sort of played out into our hands and we never set out to be the fastest in every stage. It was more a case of just being consistent and making no mistakes and once Richard and Toshi were out half-way through day one, you know, it left us in a position of having to pace ourselves for two and a half days with a minute and a half lead.

Q:

You had a good lead from halfway through day one on the classic Northland rally stages. Are they enjoyable to drive on? And what do you think of the remote servicing format?

HP:

Oh definitely, those roads up north I reckon they're some of the best in the world. You know, I love driving up there every time, the camber and the way you jump over the cambers into corners is, you know, a special sensation in the car. The remote servicing is hard but I think you can get away with it on an event like New Zealand because it is smooth and you're not breaking suspension or anything like that, and it takes out all of the touring halfway through the day as well. There's nothing worse than spending two hours to tour back to a central service park and four hours after you last did a stage in the morning you get back into it again.

Q:

I guess it makes your rally very different when your main opposition drops out halfway through the first day. Does that make it more difficult?

HP:

It does a little bit. It's difficult - I'd like to be competing with someone right to the finish line. That's much more enjoyable. Obviously we're doing rallying, I love driving. But also the other part of it's the competition and once that competition is pretty much gone by halfway through day one, you know, it was almost a case of counting down the stages until the finish because it was ours to lose and I'd much prefer to be pushing and competing with someone.

Q:

John, is winning PWRC on your home soil special?

JK:

Yes it is. To win somewhere else in the world is great because it's a great experience to get a result, but to win on home soil is really, really special because of all the fans, supporters, people that are here. There were busloads of people out supporting us this weekend and that's fantastic when you can have it like that.

Q:

You seem to have had a trouble-free rally with no major problems. Was that really the case?

JK:

We had a little bit of a problem that we were carrying through today, the clutch on the car. The pedal had started to go very, very low. So the last couple of stages we were not using the clutch at all, but with the dog box that's not too much of a problem.

Q:

Hayden, we're going to see you in the PWRC this year, and also part of the Pirelli Star Driver programme. You've had a bit of training with the guys in the Pirelli programme, not just physical training but mental training as well. How has that helped you so far with your rally campaign?

HP:

Obviously we're still in the very early stages in the programme but, you know, just the people around us and that sort of experience, that's something that you can't normally get. So no doubt I'm going to learn a lot more throughout the year and I guess the biggest thing I've learnt from Turkey and the pre-season training, besides from the stuff outside the car, is learning how to pace yourself throughout a three-day event. It's completely different to a national championship event and I think we've done that well this weekend, of just finding my pace and sticking to it. The only problem now is that we've set the bar high after winning the first one, there's no pressure on the next five now...!

Q:

The next one is indeed Finland, a big event, a big event for you.

HP:

Yes it will be. Obviously, we've got Portugal first which is a non-scoring round for us so that will give us a chance to get some more time in the car. But for the other four events with the Pirelli team it's a matter of just concentrating on scoring solid points. I think it's unrealistic for us to go up to Finland and win on our first event. The Finnish drivers are very fast on their home turf, so we're just going to score solid points and then we've got one more round in our own car, in Japan, which we'll try and win again, but our target is a podium in the Championship this year which is what we're gunning for.