



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

**2010 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
RALLY JAPAN**

Post event Press Conference
Sunday 12 September

Present:

1st - Sébastien Ogier, Citroën Total World Rally Team
1st - Julien Ingrassia, Citroën Total World Rally Team
2nd - Petter Solberg, Petter Solberg World Rally Team
2nd - Chris Patterson, Petter Solberg World Rally Team
3rd - Jari-Matti Latvala, BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
3rd - Miikka Anttila, BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team
Sven Smeets, Team Manager, Citroën Total World Rally Team

Q:

Sébastien, congratulations on your second win of the 2010 season and on your first time competing in Japan! How do you feel?

SO:

Very good. It's a perfect weekend for me. To take my second victory and first with the official team, it's a good feeling. It was difficult, especially today. When you have a fight against Petter, it's never easy.

Q:

How many risks did you take in that fight with Petter?

SO:

This morning we had to take big risks. It's stupid to go out and not score any points for the Championship, but as I said, when you want to beat Petter and Mikko – although he had a problem – you have to push very hard. I did it on the first one and then we took a little bit more seconds and then it was a little bit more comfortable.

Q:

Given that this was your first time here, were you surprised at your speed?

SO:

Maybe I am, but I am happy to be surprised. When I came, I said it was not the kind of road I prefer and I expected the difficult weekend. But we learn quite quickly and we started the rally with the safety. On the second day we look at the split times and today, now we had a good road position so we push very hard. At the end it's a very good weekend.

Q:

Two wins this season, second in the Championship, it's been an incredible season for you hasn't it?

SO:

Until now it's almost perfect, almost better than I expected at the start of the season. It's good to have progression, but we have to work on all surfaces, tarmac maybe. I hope we

can be closer to Seb [Loeb] on tarmac, he's grand on tarmac. This is especially important on a new rally [France].

Q:

Julien, congratulations – how does the second win compare to the first?

JL:

Win number one is special, we can't compare, but it's good to win here and take some points. This is the second victory and, as Seb said, we didn't aim for it. We wanted the podium, but the race was very enjoyable for us. Yes, the second victory.

Q:

What was it like to see so many people on the roads?

JL:

You see some amazing fans on the road. It's very different from the European lifestyle, it's new and the people were very proud to have Citroën flags around. We liked it quite a lot because it's so different.

Q:

Petter, an incredible fight this weekend, a battle which, for the majority, you led. Problems before the start and on the final day hampered your cause; when did you discover problems with the car?

PS:

The fighting with illness was maybe the hardest part. It was very tough the day before shakedown and then at shakedown. I thought I would struggle to drive, but the Citroën doctor helped me and got some stuff for me which helped. It helped, but it was very, very difficult on the first day. After lunch yesterday, I could focus more, but Friday, after the long stages, I was absolutely finished. It was a good battle, I had really good fun and it's been quite difficult to drive on the stages. I've been first on the road, but I had no problem with that – I enjoyed it. I was thinking to lose a bit of time, but I was full of confidence to beat him [Ogier], but on the second stage after six or seven kilometres, I touched something and a joint on the TCA fell off. The wheel got completely free and loose. After that, I tried really hard to keep my position. I was sure the car would break down as there was nothing holding it. We are lucky to be here. I am a little bit disappointed not to fight to the finish and do it properly. Next time.

Q:

Were there concerns at any point that you may not make it to the finish?

PS:

It was so bad. Ask Chris. It was quite exciting, even on the road section. That's part of the game. I had some luck also. I appreciate second and got a little bit more points than Latvala, so we can have a fight for third (in the Championship).

Q:

There was no mid-day service today. If there had been, would that have made a difference?

PS:

That's what the rally is missing. We have to come back to service and take care of the fans. It's terrible, you should have the chance to do something to the car, it's a little bit too long to be away from service and the fans should have more of the show.

Q:

Next we head to France and a rally in Sébastien Loeb's backyard, then Spain where Loeb and Sordo have dominated. We saw your pace on asphalt in Germany, can you contest for wins there also?

PS:

The only thing I can say is that I'm feeling very confident and positive with every surface. I can be competitive with every surface. We see that on the last rallies. I'm very happy with everything. I hope Loeb doesn't know the rally so well. Then we can be there.

Q:

Chris, what was Petter alluding to with all the excitement in the car?

PS:

It was just all a bit exciting. Well, we say exciting, but it was more of an anxious thing, we were anxious it would stop. We were so hungry for the win and then so hungry to get to the finish. We kept stopping and checking to make sure it would make it back, then stopping and doing a bit more work and a bit more work. We got to the super special and checked it all again, then we were worried we would drop more time. Jari-Matti was only 13 or 14 seconds behind. After the first one, we checked again and then it was okay when we got back to service – there was a big sigh of relief.

Q:

Chris, another WRC podium, it may not be the top step but second position is a great result nonetheless!

CP:

We're disappointed not to win, but not disappointed with second place. To finish this rally is a big job, but we've been competitive from the start. We put a lot of effort in beforehand, this time it hasn't paid off but we'll never give up and on the France rally we'll be there again and we won't give up again.

Q:

Jari-Matti, it's been a battle right to the end in Japan, it looked like a podium place was maybe out of reach after yesterday's driveshaft problem but you came through today to claim third!

J-ML:

Honestly, after that problem came I got a little bit frustrated and did a mistake in the super special stage: I spun. I knew I should have calmed down and accepted the situation. I was trying too much and making things worse. After that, we dropped 10 more seconds with the spin. I thought I would be too far from the podium. I didn't think it was possible.

Q:

It was on the second running of stage 23 where you came through to take third position, was there a lot of risk to take that time?

J-ML:

Sometimes when all the things click, then it goes and you can take the risk. I had that feeling in the long stage. Then today I stalled the engine first time through and second time it went really well. I couldn't match the speed of Petter and Ogier in the short stages. I didn't even think about them, I knew I had no chance for that. I was happy to push in the long stage and overtake [Dani] Sordo. I was a little bit lucky when Mikko had a problem.

Q:

It's been a tough rally, though...

J-ML:

It's really quick in the forest. You get big ruts and on one of the stages you have the bank and you go up the bank at 45 degrees like on a moto-cross bike. It was incredible, it was one stage like that. For the privateers, it's a very demanding rally. For the World Rally Cars, it's hard. I like the character, it's nice, but the forest was a little too soft in some places – that's too hard for the cars.

Q:

France is next up; you said after Germany your confidence on tarmac had increased, how are you feeling about France?

J-ML:

Yes. I want to improve on asphalt, it's been difficult for me. Now Germany gives me more confidence, but I need to be realistic – I can't expect too much. The top five would be very good. Petter is quite close and he wants to catch me. I was thinking about catching Ogier, but now he's gone and won the rally and now it's not looking so good – so I maybe have to concentrate on beating Petter.

Q:

That battle will go to the end of the season...

MA:

Yes, of course. The tarmac rallies will be a challenge for us to beat Petter. GB is one of the favourite rallies of Jari-Matti and he can go well there – although Petter might have the same feeling that he could go well.

Q:

Would you like to see Japan back?

MA:

Yes for sure I would like to have the rally here. In the future, if I think of all rallies, the culture, it's not so special place as this place is. It's so big change from Europe. Also, if possible, I would like to see these people who are watching on the streets watching the car, they should go to the forest, that would be even more nice.

Q:

Sven, a Citroën victory with Sébastien Ogier here in Japan on only his first time at this event. Has his performance surprised you this weekend or did you expect to see him fighting at the top end?

SS:

Yes I think so. We talked before the rally, we were not thinking – especially on the first day – to have him up the front fighting, but he did it straight away and then we talked about going to the end to fight. He has been very impressive.

Q:

Sébastien Loeb finished in fifth position and it was highly unusual not to see him fighting at the top end this weekend, why was that?

SS:

We all know that this is not Sebastien's favourite rally, like some other drivers. On Friday we lost too much time to fight for the lead. On Saturday he matched the pace of the others and made some time back, but then we said: "Okay, let's secure some points" and this gives him the chance to do the job in France.

Q:

With the two Sébastiens at the pace they're at, it could be quite a year next year...

SS:

It could be. But this year proved we have these three guys here, plus Dani [Sordo] who did an incredible job, then take Mikko and Seb [Loeb] and we have six drivers as worthy as each other to fight for victory – it could be a nice Championship from the start.

PS:

I want to say for the Japanese journalists: it's important to promote this rally to get the manufacturers back in from Japan. We can see all the spectators, but we have to, at least, try hard to get more people in the sport – it's two manufacturers now, but we need some more.

J-ML:

I want to continue with that. I heard if this event comes back, it could go back to Obihiro, I hope it stays here – I think it's better to stay here.

FIA SUPER 2000 WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

1st - Jari Ketomaa

1st - Mika Stenberg

Q:

Jari, third win of the season for you in SWRC, only three competitors out there this weekend and you have led from the start!

JK:

Yeah, well it might look like that, but it's not that way. It is quite a big lead if it's 50 seconds, but it's a puncture and if we had one it's a completely different situation. All the time I didn't want to go much closer, maybe today we could back off a little bit. We had a good start and made good speed from the beginning.

Q:

You mentioned not feeling confident with the car during the first half of the weekend, did you find confidence eventually?

JK:

We had a small problem with the dampers before the mid-day service on Friday, but nothing dramatic. We changed the dampers and everything was okay, not perfect but much happier. This was good training for Rally GB, we will face more slippery conditions than what we face here.

Q:

Was this the toughest challenge of the year?

JK:

Yes, it's kind of like that this year. The stage condition is very bad on the second pass. The S2000 car is quite reliable and it's harder for the Group N car. I like Rally Japan, it's a very nice event. I think always when you need to go flat out like Finland it's more challenging for the driver, but here you have to look after the car and it's more narrow – you need a different approach.

Q:

Would you like to see Japan back in the WRC?

JK:

Of course, yes. I feel very sorry for all these people who won't see the rally, we see so many people. The rally belongs here.

Q:

How confident are you for the title?

MS:

Well, it's possible. That's the main thing, we have a good chance to win it. I'm quite confident.

Q:

How was it from the co-driver's perspective?

MS:

I was working hard. Well, not actually. We get away quite early like Patrik [Flodin] and just keeping up a good pace all of the time. Keeping the gap was the main thing.

Q:

Were there any dramas this weekend?

MS:

No nothing. It was all working perfectly.

FIA PRODUCTION CAR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

1st - Patrik Flodin

1st - Goran Bergsten

Q:

Patrik, you take the lead in the PWRC after scoring maximum points here, a successful weekend all round!

PF:

Yes thanks very much. It's very good to have a victory here because we retired in Finland and lost points there, this was very important and we won it. Now we will see what happens to Armino [Araújo] in France.

Q:

Yes, now he has two rallies and you have one remaining. You'll have to sit at home and see if he re-takes the lead after France.

PF:

No, I don't have time. I go to China for a rally from here, then to Russia for another rally and then back to China. It's very busy!

Q:

It's been a good rally, though

PF:

Everything started quite okay. The first stage was okay, our set-up was a little bit wrong from the Monday test, so we lost 11s to Toshi. On the next stage we changed some [suspension] clicks and the feeling was good. Then we came to the finish and we heard Toshi had crashed and we realised we were leading by one minute already. Then it was tricky to drive around. We had to drive safe and think. It's easier to go with the battle rather than just driving.

Q:

What was the condition of the stages?

PF:

It was very, very rough. Some stages were terrible. In the Group N cars we were quite scared whether we would survive the rally. But the road was soft and we didn't damage anything on the car. It was rough but not like Greece.

Q:

How has this event gone, Goran?

GB:

It couldn't have gone better. We won and put pressure on Armindo. It's incredible that this car survived. The team did a really good job and changed everything they could at service, we have to thank them for this.

Q:

Just one round remains for you both now in the PWRC – the final round of the season, Rally GB on which you have had success in the past – looks like the Championship will go down to final round!

GB:

Rally GB is a good rally for us. We will do everything to win there, but the rest is not in our hands – we need some results from the other cars. We try to win there and see what happens

Q:

The atmosphere in Japan must have been incredible. How did you find it?

GB:

I'm a rally fan myself when I'm not in the car, so it's really great. But I feel sorry for them [the fans] that they can't be in the stages; it must be really terrible [to watch from the public roads].