

September 27, 2013

Pre-event Media Conference

APRC

**PRESENT:**

Toshihiro ARAI	(SUBARU TEAM ARAI)
Esapekka LAPPI	(TEAM MRF)
Michael YOUNG	(CUSCO RACING)

**QUESTION:** First of all, on behalf of people in Tokachi region and all the rally fans in Japan, please let me say “welcome to Rally Hokkaido 2013”. This year the APRC championship has been very interesting, with top three driver in just 3.5 points difference. Mr. Lappi is in the second but only with half-point gap, and won 2 rallies out of 2 he brought the car to finish. Now rally fans in Asia Pacific know why he is called as "being faster than God". Mr.Lappi, I believe you are determined to win the championship - and it may require you to push to the limit, but at the same time you may need to avoid taking a risk of retiring. What is your strategy?

LAPPI: That's a good question. I don't know it even myself. So, I think I have to start not slowly but smartly and then we will see what my team mate will do. Of course I am also competing against Mr.Takle but I am just now counting my team mate. I have to see what he will do and then during the rally I will decide what I will do; do I have to push more? We will see but definitely I have to finish; that's now the target, but also for Skoda.

**QUESTION:** And, this is your first year in APRC, rallying in the countries where you have never been to, but showing first-class performance. What is your secret to achieve it?

LAPPI: I think the most important thing in this kind of things is the pace notes. That you can do it immediately not correct but I would say very good. Because, yeah, we don't have any experience even from Japan. So you just have to make the preparation as good as you can, such as watch some YouTube videos for example, and stuff like that but the biggest thing is the pace notes, definitely, because you know how to drive a car, sure. Yeah, I would say that.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much. Mr. Young, earlier this year you made a successful launch of Toyota Vitz to the international rally scene in your home country, and you also achieved its first win in Malaysia, which must have been very tough rally for everyone. Based on that result, can I say Rikubetsu cannot stop you anymore?

**YOUNG:** It's certainly, Rikubetsu is deep in my mind when I come across it this year but definitely the key is to finish that stage. There's also a lot more water this year, plus it's quite rough, so... We got a little bit of confidence from Malaysia; obviously it went well for us. I'm happy to be in Japan with Toyota. It's a Japanese car with Dunlop tires so it should be good.

**QUESTION:** And, after the maiden victory, you brought the car to its home country, and you are gathering a lot more attention this year. Is this fact giving you a pressure?

**YOUNG:** A little bit but it's nice to drive a car from a big manufacturer like Toyota. It was a big news. I'm happy to be in the car. It's a really fast car for to help development. It just came out of the container and straight to the service park and it was fast at least. I'm pretty happy to be here in the car and we'll see how it goes.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much. Mr. Arai, you introduced a brand-new 4 door Impreza but had difficulty in driving as there was not enough time to test and finalize the settings of the car - but won the rally, despite the the small incident in Rikubetsu SS. How is the car preparation this year?

**ARAI:** Setting was good last year but I just lost control and hit. This year I had not driven this car, since the time I ran at Rikubetsu last year. We had to replace the roll bar according to the regulation, so I had not run at all. I ran at Shakedown today and confirmed the feel of the car was about the same (as the car before the rollcage replacement), so I will do my best.

**QUESTION:** Fans in Japan are focusing on the battle between you and Fabia drivers, especially "being faster than God". Can you assure them for your third victory in row?

**ARAI :** Let's see, I know how fast "God" is when we ran APRC. I usually have the gap with him in about 2 seconds per kilometer at start. But I know the roads in Japan better, so I hope it will work and narrow the gap down to below a second per kilometer. It is the best if I can do a seesaw battle with him, but it is not easy because of the difference of our cars (classification).