

PRE-EVENT PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT

2013 FIA European Rally Championship: round five of 12
Giru di Corsica-Tour de Corse pre-event press conference, 18:00hrs, 16 May

Attendees:

Robert Consani (Team Renault Sport Technologies)
Jan Kopecký (ŠKODA Motorsport)
Robert Kubica (PH Sport)
Jean-Mathieu Leandri (Saintéloc Racing)
Kris Meeke (Peugeot Sport)
Stéphane Sarrazin (First Motorsport)

Question to Robert Consani

It's your first time competing here in Corsica – how was the recce?

RC: "It's my first time here for me and that also means the first time for me here with my Mégane. But the recce went well so now we will see what will happen in the race, which can be very difficult."

Question to Jan Kopecký

You've been on quite a winning streak in the ERC so far this year. Does that mean you'll settle for a podium or will you push for the win?

JK: "Of course I try to push to get a great result. Everyone wants to win every rally and that's why we are here to try to push for a win. But if we finish on the podium we will also be happy. I've won three out of four rallies so it's a good start."

Question to Robert Kubica

Based on your knowledge from the recce, how much of a challenge will this event be for you?

RK: "It will be a very challenging weekend. The stages are very difficult, very tricky and very twisty. They are what drivers like but when you are doing it for the first time it will not be an easy task. On the other hand there are some bumpy sections, some dirty sections with some sand. The variation between the stages is very big. Hopefully we can go through the stages without any problems and enjoy the weekend."

Question to Jean-Mathieu Leandri

As the leading Corsican on the entry how much of a help will your local knowledge be?

J-ML: "The main objective is to be the first Corsican driver home. While I will be able to benefit from having some local knowledge, it's a very strong field and it will be a big challenge for me to try to beat them."

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Question to Kris Meeke

It's a bit of a strange question but what brings you to Corsica?

KM: "I was asked a few weeks ago by Bruno Famin, the boss of Peugeot Sport, to see if I would drive the zero car and I thought 'why not'! It's one of the most famous Tarmac rallies in the world and to get the opportunity... okay I'm not competing but I haven't done many rallies over the last 18 months so it's a nice way for me to start back again on these stages, 30 kilometres long, means you'll get a bit of a sweat up again. It's something different and a nice way to start back."

Question to Stéphane Sarrazin

It's been quite a busy few weeks for you. Can you explain how the deal came about for you to do this event and how you've managed to fit all your testing in?

SS: "It all happened very quickly. I was driving for Toyota in the Spa Six Hours when I got a telephone call from Willy Colignon from First Motorsport to see if I was available. I had to check with my bosses at Toyota but I was able to rearrange my testing and do the rally. Of course it's a big task ahead with the strength of the field around me."

Question to Robert Consani

The weather looks to be uncertain for the next couple of days: how will that affect the approach that you take to the rally?

RC: "The weather conditions look uncertain so it's a little bit of a lottery, I hope I draw the winning lottery numbers. Obviously it's easier if the weather is full wet or full dry and it's a lot harder if the conditions are mixed. I will just be applying myself the best I can and hope that I can make the best of the wet conditions. It's very easy to make a mistake when the stages are dry but obviously even easier when the grip is inconsistent."

Question to Jan Kopecký

There are new tyre regulations from this event with a restriction on the number of compounds that can be used. What difference will this make to the outcome of the rally?

JK: "We have two compounds from Michelin, we have tested them both and they are both working very well. If it is raining then we will use the soft compound. But the question is if it's going to rain a lot I don't know if we can cut the tyres or not. I have not driven these tyres in these conditions but I have heard there is no grip at all and all the time you are aquaplaning. For the hard compound we will only use these if the stages are dry."

Question to Robert Kubica:

Looking at your rally career so far, are you surprised by how quick and competitive you have been?

RK: "It's difficult to be in this place. In the end I have been 20 years driving on the circuit and most of the people do not realise the difference between circuit and rallying. I think Stéphane can confirm it is a huge difference. Rallying is a completely different sport. Although there are some similar things there are different characteristics and you have to get experience. Without experience it's very difficult to do anything in any sport, especially rallying. We have to get through some lessons. I'm in rallying not very long, I have done some rallies in the past when I was doing F1 but I need to get the experience and do many things. The pace is okay but definitely experience



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will help and the only way to get experience is to go through the rallies. That's why this year it's very important for me to drive as many rallies as I can, especially difficult rallies like here in Corsica. Definitely after two days of competition I'm absolutely sure I will have more experience and good knowledge."

Question to Jean-Mathieu Leandri:

Where realistically would you expect to finish amongst this esteemed company?

J-ML: "It's true I am in a fantastic field and up against some very good drivers. The last two times I have finished in 10th position so this year I hope I can do a little bit better. The top eight would be fantastic and if I could be in the top six then I will be absolutely delighted. It's a very difficult event. Hopefully we can get the tyre choice right and things will go my way."

Question to Kris Meeke:

How hard will you be pushing in the zero car? What's the R2 like to drive?

KM: "Anybody who knows me from the past knows that when I get my helmet on and get behind the wheel I like to drive. But we have a job to do this weekend, a safety issue we have to look at. We'll be running the car just before car number one to warn the spectators the cars are coming. I quite enjoy this R2. I've done a four-day development test with the car here in Corsica last year. I've got some experience but it's not as powerful compared to what I am used to but the chassis is very, very nice and I'm going to enjoy it."

Question to Stéphane Sarrazin

You're driving exactly the same car that won last year with Dani Sordo. Does that increase the expectation on you?

SS: "Obviously I'm very pleased to be driving the MINI. I know it won last year but the difference is Dani is a professional driver who does rallies all the time. It is my first rally since September but nonetheless I will be hoping to make progress and get the most out of the car. I enjoy the car and I will try not to go off and get a good result in what could be tricky conditions."

Question to Robert Consani:

A number of drivers have said in the past that it's harder to drive a two-wheel drive car here than a four-wheel drive car: do you agree?

RC: "In some ways it is the same as Jan. Currently Renault Sport does not have a two-wheel-drive car and I have not driven a four-wheel drive. I am imagining it could be easier but the Renault Mégane is a good car and we come here with some new evolutions in the suspension. I am very happy with the car at the moment and it's a good weapon to have to attack."

Question to Jan Kopecký

People talk about a difference between the normally aspirated S2000 cars and the turbocharged Regional Rally Cars: is that true here?

JK: "I've never driven an RRC car so I cannot tell you. For our car it's better if the stages are more fast but if the stages are more technical it's better for the RRC car, that's the difference I think."



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Question to Robert Kubica:

You've been testing in the Formula One simulator with Mercedes, how has that gone? Is that like the best video game ever?

RK: "It's not really the right word because a simulator costs a lot of money and is being developed by some very good people. But in a way it is like playing a video game because you are on a virtual circuit with a virtual car. What is impressive is the relative similar feelings you have to being in a real car. For a driver and the engineers the most important thing is to get an impression of the changes you are doing."

Question to Jean-Mathieu Leandri

Who do you think will win on Saturday, if you had to bet?

J-ML: "There are many favourites here. Maybe Robert Kubica but we must not forget Stéphane and Jan as was well. But my team-mates – Jérémi Ancian and Craig Breen – will be very strong. I am going to go for Craig but I hope there will be more than one Peugeot on the podium."

Question to Kris Meeke:

Looking beyond this event, what are your plans for the future?

KM: "This year we're working quite a lot with Peugeot in the testing of the 208 T16. I will also be testing the DS3 R5 and also some testing with other customer cars for Peugeot and Citroën so I am quite busy. There are a lot of kilometres to get through after this rally. I would prefer to be competing but it's not an option right now and we have the development of the T16 to look at. I'm eager to be competing again and it's frustrating sitting on the sidelines. But I will take what comes when it comes our way."

Question to Stéphane Sarrazin

How about you Stéphane – will we see you on the ERC again soon?

SS: "For the time being it's just Corsica in our programme. I am also competing in sportscars so it's quite a busy programme. I would like to do more rallies, maybe in the world championship and the French championship but just for the moment it's only Corsica in the programme."

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