



FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2020 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

RALLY MEXICO

Post-event Press Conference
14 March 2020

FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Sébastien Ogier (FRA), Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team
1st - Julien Ingrassia (FRA), Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team
2nd - Ott Tänak (EST), Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
2nd - Martin Järveoja (EST), Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
3rd – Teemu Suninen (FIN), M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
3rd – Jarmo Lehtinen (FIN), M-Sport Ford World Rally Team
Kai Lindström, Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team

Q:

Sébastien, a win here but a win under very different circumstances. It's been a challenge out there this weekend. I know how you have certain emotions about competing here. How are you feeling?

SO:

For sure, we would have preferred to celebrate our first win with Toyota in a different context and actually really celebrate it because today is definitely a strange victory. I didn't want to race basically. I have been convinced to do it and I have done my job but, for me, protecting human life should go first. I hope we didn't bring any harm here to our friends in México. We had a lot of support, like always here. But with all the fans here, to not give them autographs, not give them pictures, they didn't really understand... I was trying to do my best to respect what everyone in the world is trying to do at the moment. That's the way it is but still I think we have done a good rally, two good days without any mistakes. México is a big challenge every time and we have some good points for the championship today.

Q:

Six victories with four different manufacturers. How did you get your mind into it? We have seen some great pace from you this weekend.

SO:

Honestly, I think some people have seen that, on Thursday, I was not feeling really good. Every day the situation in the world is changing. I had some news on Wednesday night and I didn't sleep and then, on Thursday, I was really fighting myself to be there. I was not really doing the job I should do. Then I told myself, okay we do the rally and we really do it, or not. I shouldn't stay in this between because that won't bring anything. So I am glad. I felt much better on Friday and the car was perfect all weekend. We did not have any problems and we took the victory. One more time, Julien and myself felt good here in México. We definitely have a special connection with this place.

Q:

Julien, it is a special connection. We have to look back to the Junior years here where it all began for you guys. Tell us about your feelings on the result here?

JL:

Seb said most of it. I just want to congratulate first the team because we have seen that none of our car had any issue and also good performance. Congratulations to Kai and the team. That is three good performances produced with Toyota. That is a really good start to the season for the team.

Q:

This rally always poses a challenge. Every single year, there is drama along the way. How enjoyable is it?

JL:

Of course, 12 years ago it was our first event outside of France. I remember that many things happened. I remember we had a fuel sample in the Service Park and on this fuel sample, the dates written were wrong. And just there, I had a fuel sample and the date was wrong. You see, some strange things are always happening here in México and you have to be focused. Now the days are quite long. Now we have to work a lot from seven to 11. It is always really great for the atmosphere.

Q:

Ott, second position and we have seen a great battle between you and Teemu Suninen. You made a brilliant start on Friday but it looked on the second stage as though any podium chance was out of the window. What was your feeling when that time was lost?

OT:

I believe everything started from the moment I made the mistake. We lost more or less the rear corner and the suspension was quite damaged. It was a difficult situation but somehow I continued and it was still driveable. It was a challenging morning. We tried to fix and we tried to carry through the loop. We lost quite a lot of time but a bit less than we expected.

Q:

You had a great fight today but, on one stage, you said the feeling was horrible out there. That didn't translate into the stage time?

OT:

It has been a very demanding weekend. I would say I haven't felt completely confident to push in the stages. I have been trying to approach in a way to stay out of trouble. Friday morning proved already that there is no way we were going to make it through by pushing. The car is definitely fast. It has a lot of potential but there are many things which I need to learn and some things quite specific. I am sure we have a lot of work to do and, finally, we have some experience on gravel.

Q:

Martin you have been on the podium twice with the new team. How has the experience been for you?

MJ:

New rally again with a new team. Overall, it was a very challenging weekend. I think we made it ourselves more difficult. Friday looked very bad but in the end, second place is not so bad, considering what happened then. With that perspective, I think we should be happy.

Q:

What were your impressions of Rally México? Obviously this year is slightly different with everything that is going on.

MJ:

Of course, so far for me México events have been very long and difficult days, starting from the recce and also on Thursday. We were quite busy. We had no real time between Shakedown and going to the podium. Long days but that is special in México.

Q:

Teemu Suninen, first podium of the season and an epic battle today. Talk to us about your experience. Are you happy to be on the podium?

TS:

I am really happy for the results. The whole rally was demanding and challenging for us. I was never in a comfortable zone because I saw a lot of technical issues with other cars. That was challenging to manage the car, the brakes and the tyres. In the end, we did it quite well.

Q:

Looking at the first stage after service this afternoon, you did a fantastic job to fend him off?

TS:

Yes, it was dry and I went flat out. Ott took only less than one second even though I stalled the car. In the end, he was fast but I can be happy.

Q:

All week, you said you wanted a good result here. Were you feeling pressure after Monte and Sweden? Did what happened to Esapekka put more pressure on you to get a finish for the team?

TS:

Of course, when the team is asking me for some proper results. Yes, that's true.

Q:

Did what happened to Esapekka put more pressure on you to get a finish for the team?

TS:

Yes, that's true.

Q:

Jarmo, you have been sitting with Teemu since Sardinia last year when you were on the podium. Back on the podium again. Tell us about the progress you have seen with him.

JL:

Well, he was making progress already when I joined him. Obviously, test after test and rally after rally, he is always taking a step forward and getting more experience. The level is getting higher and higher. Against these guys, you need to be on the edge every single corner of the rally. There are a couple of extra steps to take still. We tried for sure, maybe not in every corner (this week) but almost.

Q:

Jarmo, different circumstances here with the rally ending prematurely. What is your experience of Rally México as an event?

JL:

I have been here since 2004, first time. I've always liked it. It's really challenging. Things happen in every stage. It proved to be Rally México once again. I enjoyed it and now we are on the podium.

Q:

Kai, Seb and Julien have secured their first win with the team. What's your feeling at the end of the event?

KL:

I am very happy for Sébastien and Julien to win their first rally with us. This is the first win in México for Toyota. Since 2017, after the struggle - we are very happy.

Q:

It's a massive team effort to make it happen because the first year here for the team was not a great one?

KL:

It's down to all the work and effort and learning from all the mistakes. Last year we were close. Learning from the mistakes is the main thing.

Q:

Talk to us about Elfyn Evans. He mentioned some issues out there. Brake issues?

KL:

All the drivers say they slightly hit the bank. I think he hit it a little bit more and, after that, the car was feeling a bit nervous and not 100%...then it was just to finish the rally.

Q:

The decision was taken to end the event tonight. What was that decision process like?

KL:

First of all, it is a difficult situation when you start talking about stopping the rally one day too early. But, under these circumstances and the situation around the world with Europe closing their borders, the most important thing is to go home to our families while we still can.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Daniel Ahumada (CHL) – Mega, Chile

Q:

Ott, can you give us your thoughts on the fact that we will not have Chile or Argentina in the championship this season at this stage?

OT:

That is something that is out of our hands. These are circumstances that are happening around the world and Chile is also a special situation. But other than that, it is difficult to comment.

Carolina Figueroa (MEX) – Puesta a Punto, México

Q:

Sébastien, what are your feelings on the last minute changes to the rally?

SO:

I think I mentioned it a lot already. I am definitely concerned by the world situation at the moment. I mentioned it was difficult to get a focus when people may be in a fight for their life. There are much more important things. With the situation not improving at the moment, it was the right call to hang up the rally tonight. I think we've still had some good action across two days. I am sure the fans still enjoyed it and we took a step in the right direction.

Q:

And when do you expect the next race?

SO:

I think I need a crystal ball and I don't have it.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

1st - Pontus Tidemand (SWE), Toksport WRT
1st - Patrik Barth (SWE), Toksport WRT

Q:

Pontus, you have an impressive record here with three wins. It has been a good job from you out there with the FIA WRC2 win?

PT:

I would say it's a rally I really like. It is one of my favourite rallies. The stages and the condition of the stages and the atmosphere from the people.

Q:

It didn't seem as though you made a single mistake out there. Was that the case?

PT:

One moment we had. But we were a bit lucky and you have to be lucky in rally. It was not easy. That is how rally should be. I am very happy to be here and grateful to my team and my co-driver. Let's hope we can make some more rallies this year.

Q:

What would you say was the most challenging part of the weekend?

PT:

Everything, I would say. For sure, the second pass is never easy and the grip is changing so much.

Q:

Surely you are looking across at the other guys (FIA WRC3) and comparing against them as well, yes?

PT:

You always compare your speed with the R5 cars and the World Rally Cars. On such rough rallies, you have to be more careful.

Q:

Patrik, how has the weekend been from your perspective?

PB:

It's been a good rally. First time here for me in México and I really enjoyed the atmosphere. Me and Pontus had a really good run on every single stage actually.

Q:

It is a unique atmosphere. What surprised you the most about the event?

PB:

It's hard to say. It's a new rally and... that says it all.

FIA WRC 3 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Marco Bulacia Wilkinson (BOL)
Giovanni Bernacchini (ITA)

Q:

Marco, FIA WRC3 winner. Last year we saw a brilliant performance and this is even better. How are you feeling?

MB:

This is my first win ever so I am really happy. I enjoyed the rally a lot even if I got the pressure. I was leading all the time by minutes so it was very difficult to maintain the concentration and all these things. We really enjoyed it.

Q:

We heard you dedicating the win to your dad. How big a part has your father played in your career as a rally driver?

MB:

He is like my mentor. He is always with me and, when I started, he was always teaching me. He was doing my pace notes at the beginning. This victory, as I said, is dedicated to him.

Q:

What do you think you learned from last year that helped you this year?

MB:

I think, because it is my third time here, I have more experience. I made an intelligent rally to win my category, I didn't do any big mistakes. We have a new car and a new co-driver, so we have to get used to the things. Giovanni is a professional. I think he has been here eight times and has more experience than me, for sure. It's great to have him on my side.

Q:

What have you thought of the whole weekend and the experience in FIA WRC3?

GB

For me, it was a strange feeling to come back after two years after stopping rallying. To come back with a victory is amazing. I tried to share my experience from the beginning with Marco. I see that everything for the moment is working perfectly. I hope that we can do more rallies this season. Marco was running very good and very clever. He is talented. To come back and win is an amazing feeling.

Q:

So no co-driving for two years?

GB:

Actually, three weeks ago, I made the Rally Oman with the cousin of Nasser Al-Attiyah, who is also called Nasser Al-Attiyah. It was just one rally before México. I was trying to do a job still in motor sport but the job at the desk is not mine. The seat of the rally car is for me after 25 years. I am almost close to 50-year-old. I feel good.