



FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

2019 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

RALLY CHILE

Pre-event Press Conference
9 May 2019

FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Sébastien Ogier (FRA), Citroën Total World Rally Team
Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR), Hyundai Shell Mobis World Rally Team
Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN), Toyota Gazoo Rally Team
Teemu Suninen (FIN), M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

Q:

Sébastien Ogier, a brand new event and a brand new country to discover here in Chile. What have been your first impressions?

SO:

The first impression is that we are not disappointed. We were told there were beautiful roads and a nice rally from the recce. It is like this. We have smooth roads as well as nice flowing and fast sections. We should not compare with other rallies, because each one has its own DNA and characteristics. I am looking forward to drive.

Q:

This event has been compared to many gravel events but what elements would you say are unique to Chile?

SO:

It has been completely challenging: two days of recce with the weather and the fog made it harder at some points. I like this kind of challenge. We did our best in two days. We will see if we have done a good job. The profile is nice and I am looking forward to the weekend.

Q:

In Argentina, you struggled with traction and feeling, yet put some good points on the board. How did the car feel at Shakedown this morning and do you feel it could be a different weekend "performance-wise"?

SO:

In Argentina, we made the best of it with the speed we had. To score 20 points, it was a good weekend in the end. We have made big changes on the car. We have a different car set-up to the previous rally and my first impression is good. I had a good feeling on Shakedown. I

hope to keep this on the weekend and fight at the top. Basically, the chassis and suspension set-up has changed. It was quite different to drive the car this morning. I was happy to see that the time was good as well.

Q:

Andreas Mikkelsen, back on the podium for you in Argentina after delivering a fine performance. Can we see the same level of pace and consistency here on Rally Chile?

AM:

I hope I can bring the momentum from Argentina to here. Coming here to drive these roads was really nice. Friday is going to be important but the feeling on Shakedown was good. The first run was tricky and then we did some changes. We were on the pace, we were faster and faster and it dried up in the end. We should be ready. Friday's first pass will be tough, with the crests and the notes have to be very precise because it was foggy when we made them. You do not want a bad Friday because then Saturday is screwed.

Q:

How tough was the recce making brand new pace-notes, sometimes in low cloud? Did you make the coffee for Anders?

AM:

Anders doesn't like coffee. The stages are also quite shaky when you are driving a lot so the co-drivers have a lot of work to do.

Q:

Jari-Matti Latvala, you are the driver with the most FIA WRC events (201 including Rally Chile) under your belt and the best descriptive commentator out of all our drivers. How would describe the event here?

JML:

Friday, the first stage reminds me of Rally Portugal, then in the second stage, you are in New Zealand, and the third stage is a mixture of New Zealand and Wales. Saturday looks like Rally GB in dry conditions with open stages from Australia and a little bit of Kielder forest. And then on Sunday, we have Finland and Wales. All in all, a lot of different countries... and the nature is beautiful here! I think everyone will like the roads. They are not rough and have a good base, so we can focus on the driving and not on the car and impacts. Here it is pure rallying! There are also some blind crests - especially on Sunday, there are some nasty ones. You come up, you see nothing, then the road appears and it is hard to find the braking points. I have put a 'danger' warning in my pace-notes, There are two of those!

Q:

We've seen pace from you but we haven't seen you on the podium this year. How would you assess the season so far?

JML:

Basically, the car's performance and the speed is there. When you've been in the championship for a long time, if you have a bad start in a couple of rallies, the hopes are high and you know you are facing a difficult season when the first two do not go according to plan. The motivation drops. I felt bad on Rally Corsica and Mexico. Something needed to be done, a bit more thinking... I came back in Argentina and i am happy for that. It's in your head. When you are young and have two bad rallies early on, it is no problem. But when you drive a lot over many seasons, a couple of bad rallies and you know it is going to be a problem for the championship. The target is to win the championship and, when the hopes go away, it is difficult to motivate yourself. I keep going now.

Q:

Teemu Suninen, another South American experience but this one is brand new - you stayed out between events, how was your trip to Chile?

TS:

Hopefully we'll have a good pace. The profile is different from Rally Argentina and I really enjoy these technical and fast stages. These roads suits me better.

Q:

Hard work putting the pace notes together for a brand new event. Did the recce go well?

TS:

I felt it went well. The fog was not easy. You only see 20 metres into the corners. In the rally, we will see if the pace-notes were okay or not. We try to do our best. I stayed in South America after Rally Argentina. It was a first holiday for me for a long time. I had a nice time and still have my focus rather than travel five days back and forth to Finland.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Criistobel Dbello, Rally Inside (CHL)

Q:

What are all the drivers' expectations for this first FIA WRC rally in Chile?

SO:

That is a very open question. Pretty simple: to win the event. I will go for it. That is the plan. I expect a rally with a lot of people coming to support us. In South America, there is a lot of passion.

AM

I expect it to be a good rally. Coming from Argentina, I want to fight for another podium. We have to take it in baby steps. The feeling is good. We will build on that.

JML

The same as the other guys. To get to the top and have a good fight for the victory. That is the call. What I have seen so far is that many people are excited. It looks very nice and very positive. It should be a good rally.

TS

I expect it to be a great show for spectators. Friday, all drivers want to push and take some risks to get a good starting position... or the next days with a lot of loose gravel.

Ignacio Psijas, S Motors (CHL)

Q:

What are the drivers' thoughts on hybrid technology in the future in WRC?

SO

Hybrid is important but I will not be here...

AM

I hope I will be there. It is important to get new technical development and new manufacturers in to make it interesting. Our motor sport is the most spectacular of them all and the man test for manufacturers on the ultimate terrain, on snow and ice. We need new technology sooner rather than later.

JML

Not sure myself whether I will be there because of my age. Maybe one year with a hybrid car would be nice to see. We see that the world is going green and we need to see how it makes the transition. It will not be easy in rally sport. We cannot go full electric. Our sport is about sound. A hybrid system would be a good solution.

TS

I hope to be there when electric cars come. I wonder though how it comes. There are long road sections in rallying and the second thing is the safety.

FIA WRC 2 PRO CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Mads Østberg (NOR), Citroën Total

Marco Bulacia (BOL), Škoda Rally Team

Q:

Mads Østberg, a great result for you in Argentina and now we come to a new event here in Chile which is unknown by everyone. First impressions?

MO:

The stages are very nice, to be honest, and a positive surprise to see. On the recce, it was difficult to discover the roads in the fog. It was easier watching the videos. There are amazing surfaces. I am sure it is going to be a nice, enjoyable weekend with big smiles and everyone having a crack.

Q:

How challenging are the stages? Fast? Flowing? Do any stand out as being particularly tough?

MO:

I think today showed that it felt like on the Wales Rally GB. We also see a lot of Rally Australia and a little bit of Finland and Sardinia. Generally, we can call it Chile made up of the whole of Europe... From the pace-note side, compared to other European events, it is like the Algarve Rally in Portugal. The rally is the same here - up and down – and you never really know where you are. There are some flat, blind crests and not too many trees to follow for reference. It is like driving blind on pace notes and, if there's fog, that is extra interesting!

Q:

How much of a challenge is it to come to a brand new event and make new pace-notes etc.?

MO:

Yes, it is definitely challenging! I think it is going to be a very enjoyable weekend. I think also local Chilean drivers have quite a lot of knowledge and we will have local drivers doing well and fighting at the top. This will be great to see. In Argentina, we saw some Chile drivers doing well. It will be a huge fight and local smiles.

Q:

Marco Bulacia Wilkinson, firstly, you had a big accident in Argentina two weeks ago. How are you feeling after that? No knock to your confidence?

MB:

I have much confidence for this rally. We think we can do the same pace as Argentina. It was not exactly my mistake for the crash, so we are easy and trying to know this new rally and take some good results.

Q:

Can you compare the stages here to anything you have rallied on? How big a challenge will it be this weekend?

MB:

There are slow parts, fast parts and jumps... It is very tricky in parts. Keeping the pace of Argentina is my goal. We have a new car after Argentina as the other one was destroyed. The Puma special stage is the longest one but all the stages are very similar in difficulty.

FIA WRC 2 CHAMPIONSHIP

Present:

Jorge Martínez (CHL)

Q:

Jorge Martínez, it's your home event also and we see you compete in a Škoda R5. What does it mean to you to have the FIA World Rally Championship come here to Chile?

JM:

I am really happy. It is a special event. I am from here in Concepción and I am happy and excited to be here for my first event in the FIA WRC. I will drive as fast as I can. Local knowledge is a factor. We know about the roads. They are tricky and technical and we have a little advantage there.

Q:

The FIA WRC 2 field is strong, made up of very competitive drivers. What can you achieve this weekend? What are the toughest stages?

JM:

I don't know, as it is my first event in the FIA WRC. There are many experienced rally drivers and this is a big challenge for us. We will go as fast as we can. The toughest stages? Good question. Puma is a long stage with a lot of up and down and very technical. Saturday, Maria Las Cruces is a fast and tough stage. Sunday, there are a lot of fast stages.