



2019 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP RALLY ARGENTINA

Meet the Crew - Press Conference - Friday 26th, April

Present:

Andrea Adamo - Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT
Pierre Budar - Citroën Total WRT
Tommi Mäkinen - Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT
Richard Millener - M-Sport Ford World Rally Team

We welcome the Team Managers to the End of Day 1 Press Conference.

Q:

Andrea, is Thierry Neuville who leads at the end of a very exciting opening day, proper here at Rally Argentina. He was first on the road this morning as championship leader. Did you imagine to come to the end of the day and that he would be leading?

AA:

I had to take a bus from Buenos Aires to Córdoba to arrive here so I wasn't really thinking about Thierry's performance. When I saw the pictures of the roads, it was clear that being first on the road wouldn't be so bad as would have been if everything was dry. I didn't think we would be leading.

Q:

It's going to be a tough rally and there is a long way to go yet, Andrea, but we have seen so much confidence level from Thierry. He seems happy with himself, happy with the car. What about the rest of the team, though? Talk me about Dani Sordo and Andreas Mikkelsen tonight. Are you a happy man with their performances?

AA:

I am not. Dani had a spin, he crashed a bit the car, he lost time, so it should have been better. And Andreas did basically what he asked him to do, as he started at the back of the field he found the most damaged roads, we ask him to manage to survive the day and he did well and that's the most important thing.

Q:

Andrea, thank you very much. Let's turn to Pierre Budar now. Pierre before we talk about Sébastien Ogier and his performance today, let's talk about Esapekka Lappi because we saw on the final stage tonight an accident from Esapekka. What more do we know about what happened and are the crew okay?

PB:

The crew is okay. Janne had a trip back by helicopter to have a check up here and the results is okay so they are fine.

Q:

Do we know why did they roll? Do we know what happened?

PB:

They rolled but I don't have any more details about it, I don't know what happened.

Q:

Let's talk about Sébastien Ogier's performance out there. He is in the second position right now, Pierre, and he seems to have had a strong day although he feels there could be more performance to be gained.

PB:

We are quite happy with this second place compared with the results of this morning, so that's so good. Finally, being in the second place is not so bad tonight and, of course, it's very close but it's not finished and we are still in the fight.

Q:

Pierre, thank you very much. Let's turn to Tommi Mäkinen now. You are still a legend here. This was a strong morning for Toyota but in the afternoon things have changed around. Why? What happened?

TM:

This is rally, I don't know exactly what it is. It was first stage in the afternoon when Jari-Matt and Chris had some little off when they damage the right gear and somehow after that I don't know what happened exactly. Ott was performing very well until the last stage where he had a broken driveshaft and obviously he lost a lot of time but of course, we will fix the car.

Q:

Tommi, obviously you know you've got a great reception here in Argentina, it's a special place for you, I know. It must be good to come back and still have the recognition.

TM:

Argentina is the rally where I have the best memories. My first time here was in 1996 and I won it immediately, and then after years and years and years it was always a very good rally to me, and always a massive number of fans.

Q:

Thank you Tommi. Now is the turn of Richard Millener. Rich talk to us about your day, because I think there is a bit of expectation placed now on Elfyn strong performance in Corsega and what he's done here in previous years. What are your thoughts about Evan's performance today? Do you feel he has got more to give out there?

RM:

Yes, your applause was the best part of my day. I think we had a tough day, maybe it is not where we wanted to be at the end of the stage. It's been quite a challenging day, we hope we would be able to do a little bit better but the last stage that is where we were faster and that was good. We jumped a couple of places and I think the guys are looking now to see what we can do to maybe try to make it better tomorrow. We need to bridge that gap a little bit and improve the speed.

Q:

We saw some misfires from the car today when it was going through the water splashes, any major concerns on that or not?

RM:

No, we were discussing it before. It is probably because it was more water than we've ever put the car through. Some water splashes have been quite deep I think. It seems we've been lucky enough since there is no real damage to the car so hopefully if weather is going to keep dry, many water splashes may lower a little bit and hopefully we won't see those problems again but there is nothing to worry about really.

Present:

Thierry Neuville - Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT

Sébastien Ogier - Citroën Total WRT

Ott Tänak - Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT

Q:

What a tough day you had out there today, going into the unknown, Thierry, not knowing what the conditions would be like. You went in first as the Championship leader and you came out first at the end of the day! Are you surprised to be leading?

TN:

Surprised? Yes and no. After the first stage, I was surprised to see the guys in front were so much quicker, but analyzing, we just lost a lot of time due to the road conditions. Since then, things went much better, conditions were more equal. In some places we were gaining, in some places we lost again. But in the end consistency won, and a good push, especially this afternoon, and with a good feeling in the car, it gives you all you need to be leading.

Q:

It's still a long way to go, and even with a nice gap as you have, going into the second day, we know it can disappear. At this point in time, how confident are you feeling to be able to get to the end in this position?

TN:

We always have to stay on the ground. The rally is long and we have seen very quick drivers. There will be a good push from behind tomorrow and we have to try to resist. The only thing I can say is that I felt very good in the car today and the car was performing great and that is the key for such a difficult rally here. I have to run as good as I can and be consistent.

Q:

You just said you have to resist. Resist getting into a fight? Resist pushing too hard? Resist what?

TN:

Of course, resist the guys who are coming pushing from behind. Obviously, it is great to be in the battle. My two main contenders for the championship are just behind and it is very close. We have done a good part of the rally already, a difficult part. But tomorrow, it will be very demanding. I will do my best and if I can do a "copy and paste" from today I still would be leading tomorrow, but you never know.

Q:

Sebastien we have seen a few moments from you today, mostly this afternoon. That happens when you are trying to push as much as you can in difficult conditions. A one-wheel moment from you?

SO:

In a fast corner there were big rocks, I went on two wheels and then in one wheel and for a second I thought "This is over, I'm going to roll" but luckily I came back on the ground and kept fighting the whole afternoon. The car was not perfect for today so I'm happy to be where I am tonight. Tomorrow is different, a bit better, I think. We'll have to push hard because Ott was very fast today and Thierry was very consistent, so we have to increase a little bit our rhythm and try to fight for the victory. We are still very close, so everything is possible.

Q:

We've been trying to decide whether it was first on the road or bit a further back that was the best position today. Does it surprise you that is the 1-2-3 in the Championship, that's the 1-2-3 at the end of the day?

SO:

Well, I think the conditions were changing, there were some sections that were not so good like obviously the first one, especially, to be in front but overall in the day I think it was not bad so we can't complain about the overall position. At least it was much better than if it was dry so it's not really a surprise. There is something with the road position but also with the driving and what we have done in the car. Tomorrow is the longest day of the rally, that will be for sure a key day for the fight for the win.

Q:

Talk to me about your day because we saw the pace from last year, reminiscent of last year, especially on the middle stage, this afternoon when you were starting to blast everyone away with time and then a broken driveshaft for you. Has it been a mixed day up there?

OT:

It's been a very challenging day, I guess we all knew it beforehand, the weather we had will spice the things up quite a lot and I must say the day was very spicy. It was seriously tough for us drivers and for the cars, I felt it was really rough and tough for the machines. Obviously this morning I was maybe not performing so well, a couple of small issues and I was maybe a bit safe as well so this afternoon I had to push a bit harder and I had a good feeling, times were coming and I was enjoying so, unfortunately we had the thing on the last stage but other than that, I believe we had a good rhythm and we know our car is performing well so definitely looking forward to tomorrow.

Q:

For the action on the stage, it has been very hard out there today, we've enjoyed watching it of course but with the spectators as well, from your perspective, the amount of people that turn out every year, now you are a shy guy, you don't like the attention so much, but does it give you a little boost to see so many people here, it's not just for you, for every single driver in the championship, all these fans, braving the weather conditions out there travelling to the stages to watch you guys, what does that make you feel like?

OT:

I must say it's amazing, I guess in Europe more and more people like to follow in WRC Live, they get so much information, it's so easy to follow but here in Argentina people like to come to cheer us in the forest, to see the actual action and really support us so I must say it's incredible always being here in South America, there's so many passionate people, they come everywhere, every road section, every stage, every corner is full of people so it's something very different, it's really amazing so thank you everyone.

Thank you very much guys! Good luck for tomorrow! Ladies and Gentlemen, Thierry Neuville, Sebastián Ogier and Ott Tänak.