



FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

2004 RALLY OF TURKEY

FIA Pre-event Press Conference

24.06.2004

Attended by:

15:30

Marcus GRONHOLM (Peugeot)

Markko MARTIN (Ford)

15:50

Sebastien LOEB (Citroën)

Petter SOLBERG (Subaru)

Question:

It hasn't been the easiest season so far, you had problems. A couple of your mistakes as well? Has that been because you have been under more pressure this year or has there been any other reasons behind that?

Answer: Gronholm

No, at the beginning of the season we have a completely new car, it is always difficult. OK, we were expecting a little bit better but... Anyway we finished all the rallies except last one in Greece, I made a mistake and lost a wheel, not lost a wheel but I touched quite hard and it was all about I was trying a little bit too much after Cyprus. Cyprus was good rally for me, we won, but in the end no points so it is a little bit disappointing.

Question:

Is your approach to this rally going to be a little bit different, you said in Greece you were trying a little bit too much after Cyprus. Does this mean that here you'll take cover or not?

Answer: Gronholm

Yes maybe, maybe it is little difficult when we start the rally I always try my best but driving for the second position I think we have to do it sometimes when you look at the points standings now. One moment ago we were leading for one week with one point and we are 19 points behind so it is quite terrible now.

Question:

Good news for you Marcus is that your car seems fast and reliable now. Is it yet at the limit of its potential or is there still more important things to come?

Answer: Gronholm

No, it is not at the limit and still I am not so confident as I was in 206 at the best times when we were going really really well, but I hope we will soon have this same feeling with the new car and I am quite sure that we will come. Now after this rally we have two weeks testing in Finland and we have new parts and new gearbox, I am confident that it will be good.

Question:

Marcus, you had the experience of driving under the SuperRally system as well, in Greece. Was getting a motivation to go a problem for you?

Answer: Gronholm

OK, everybody is telling that it is good to test something and the roads are closed but not in the fighting mood when you are testing something new and you are not going that fast and looking at the



times in the stage you lose 20 seconds, you think OK the car is not good, but we are testing and you can not trust it, for me it is completely zero to do without point scoring

Question:

What do you think you can do to change your luck and how do you rate your possibilities in the championship, when you are 19 points behind?

Answer: Gronholm

It will take a long time if the others are getting points I can't catch a lot but one bad rally for somebody in the top then I will close it again so it is not over again, so hopefully it is still possible. It shows that I told you before that two rallies ago I was leading, now I am 19 points behind so anything is possible.

Question:

In recent European elections, many parties have presented famous sportmen. In Finland there is Ari Vatanen, Juha Kankunen. What about becoming a politician in the future?

Answer: Gronholm

No, no, I will not do that. Maybe somebody wants to do it but you need experience from that area also and Kankunen had zero and he had a name but not me.

Question Markko Martin:

Same question for you Markko. Have you been asked in Estonia to run for some party? Would you like to do it?

Answer: Martin

Don't know, don't care about politics.

Answer: Gronholm

You can make new rules, quickly.

Question:

You have been very active in expressing drivers views; would you fancy working for the FIA in the future?

Answer: Martin

If I had the same power Max (Mosley) has then I could do just whatever I want. It would be a very good position to be in.

Question:

You made a rare mistake in Greece as well, sliding off the road but the new superally system meant that you were able to come back for 2nd and 3rd legs, I remember you weren't very happy about that but would you be more interested if you were scoring points?

Answer: Martin

Yes, I mean in that case there is at least some point coming back and fighting for something otherwise you just try for nothing and it is quite difficult I think. People don't realize that I think they all come to rally to build up for the event and want to fight and win and everything, when you fail to do that everything in your system just drops and you are not in the same mood any more, try to do your job but I think the excitement is gone, you just do a Sunday driving and for me it is quite dangerous as well because it is easy to make mistakes.

Question:

Markko, can you talk a little bit about the high temperatures on this rally it seems that it is going to be the hottest one of the year, how much does it affect you in the car as driver?



Answer: Martin

No, of course it is warmer than it is outside but it is OK, same for everybody and we just have to cope with it there is nothing we can do. I just have to make sure it doesn't affect too much.

Question:

Can we talk a little about future, you are free agent at the end of this year. Have you had many offers or do you have no plans for what you want to do?

Answer: Martin

You have to ask my manager I don't know.

Question: David Williams, DW Agency

Which engine are you using tonight and why?

Answer: Martin

Not the one I used yesterday but I don't know why it was taken out. It wasn't ready I think.

SECOND PART OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE

Question:

Petter if we start off with you, Subaru is the only team which said it is not looking for the manufacturers' title this year, just the drivers' title. Does that take away some pressure from you or put more on?

Answer Solberg:

Maybe a little more on, but all the time the team or the driver we always drive to win and hopefully at the end we can win the championship, so I think I put more pressure on myself than the team so I must say no problem at all but it would be a good fun to win the manufacturers' also.

Question:

Seb, are you surprised to be where you are at this point in the season or was it a part of your plan from the beginning of the year now that we are nearly half way through the year and you are leading both (championships)?

Answer Loeb:

It is difficult to make a plan at the beginning of the year for the championship. I am happy to be leading now it is very close and I think it is too early to know what will happen at the end of the championship. We have Marcus, Petter, Marrko pushing very hard and I think it is not very easy to keep this position so I am happy for the moment. Citroen is leading the manufacturers' championship which is very good too. I hope this will continue.

Question:

It is the last of the three rough rallies and in Cyprus you said that when you started off you had to look after the car a bit and you got more confidence that went on. Here, will you be able to push from the beginning or you need to modulate your pace?

Answer Loeb:

No, I think it wasn't so rough here as it was in Cyprus but the problem is that at the beginning there is a lot of gravel on the road and there is a lot of gravel here. Organization made a very good job to have clean stages but it is a lot of loose surface and I hope we will not lose so much time the first day.

Question:

It was pouring down rain yesterday what effect is that going have on the stages tomorrow?



Answer Solberg:

Like Sebastian said, it is going to be very difficult to be first on the road but if it rains it will be a good advantage for us anyway, we won't lose so much time.

Question:

We can talk a little about the tyres Petter? So you are on Pirelli tyres, you are the only team to be on Pirelli tyres, do you think this will help you here?

Answer Solberg:

We will see on Sunday but it has been working very well on the last few rallies so still they are working very hard to develop new things for the next few rallies, we are still pushing very hard so everything will be better.

Question:

Seb, Michelin also had sent new tyres in Greece, will you be using the same ones here, what do you think?

Answer Loeb:

Yes we had new tyres in Greece. We saw that we can be a little better in some places. Now we tested same tyre but a new evolution and I think it will be better so we will see here.

Question:

Can you explain Seb to everyone who is not a driver, how you work out what the right place is, how you make the compromise between going fast but not damaging the car?

Answer Loeb :

(Petter; good question!) I always try to stay on the road but it is not easy. At the beginning you can make a plan, but after you see Petter, Marcus, Marrko pushing and going very fast so I have to push very hard too and after that it is difficult to make compromise especially without a gravel crew in this kind of rally . Big stones falling on the road and you can not know what it is. It can be just end of corner it might be impossible to go around so, you have to be a bit lucky sometime.

Question:

Do you feel that you lead the championship now does that put any extra pressure on you, do you feel that you are now the team leader?

Answer Loeb:

No there is no extra pressure at this point in the season, it is too early. I know that I am leading for the moment and I prefer to be leading than to be behind. Everything is possible for the moment and the championship is very long so I try to do my best and not to think too much that I am leading this championship

Question:

Petter, Seb said that he prefers to be leading than to be behind. Do you prefer to be leading or chasing?

Answer Solberg:

I must say I like chasing. Much more fun and more action. It is worse to be leading a rally and I prefer to fight to the end of the stage have fun myself, I think that is giving me the kick is the fight.

Question:

Petter you are very much involved in promotion of the team . Is there something you really enjoy or do you feel this is just necessary thing for the future of the sport?



Answer Solberg:

Of course if things are very good organized it is always fun to do things; people appreciate that you come and do things it is good fun but obviously I am away at the moment for one month now, 5 days off and over one month away again. Of course it can be quite tough sometimes at the same time to be fit and training everyday, it is a little bit hard work but.. As long as you have fun and joy and a good team behind you supporting you on very different type of things it is ok. You have to give and take something. The team gives me a good winning car and I can always work very hard again no problem.

Question:

Seb what is going to be your plan for this event? We have seen in the past you start off, you build up the speed, on the second and third days you have very quick times which gives you the top position do you think it will be the same here or are you just go flat out?

Answer Loeb:

I hope not, I hope we can start fast but in Cyprus I think I have a good driving style in the first stages but it was too much rough and we would have to stand up for that but here it will depend on the condition, but now we will try not to lose too much time at the beginning.

Question:

Do you feel that now Xsara is up to its full potential on rough gravel surfaces?

Answer Loeb:

It is never perfect you always have to work, if you don't improve between two rallies you see other cars going faster than you so it is always important to continue to develop the car. But now it seems that the car is very good, we have some new evolution coming in few rallies but at the moment it is good.

Question:

For both of you, the last time you were here in Turkey was February. How different was the rally then to how it is now Petter?

Answer Solberg:

I must say that they did an incredible job, very good and it is much better than we all expected I think. And they may have taken away a little of the loose gravel, but I am very impressed, it is much wider, not so rough and it is quite smooth so very good.

Question:

Seb do you think this rally now here in June will be more or less challenging than it was in February, which do you prefer?

Answer Loeb:

For me yes, it was not a very good rally for us, now in this season it can be more difficult for the crew especailly, it can very hot at the moment we don't know because it is raining but it will be different rally from last year I am sure, the roads are different, faster, wider so it is completely different we'll see.



FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

2004 RALLY OF TURKEY

FIA Post-event Press Conference

27.06.2004

Sebastien Loeb, Daniel Elena, Marcus Gronholm, Timo Rautiainen, Petter Solberg, Phil Mills, Guy Frequelin

Q Sebastien. Congratulations on your victory on Rally of Turkey. You took the lead on the first day and seemed to keep everything under control and then you had a small problem. What happened?

SL:I had a small problem at the start and I lost some time. After that Marcus was leading the race, then two stages after he had a problem. It was very close. I had to push very hard to keep the lead of the race. Yes, today in the last stage I had a problem with the bearing, and the car was braking alone. Then I had no brakes and then, on the road section, the tyre began to burn. We had to stop the fire, and so after that we put the wheel away to come here. But it's all okay now.

Q Did that give you a few anxious moments? Or were you confident you could still win?

SL:Yes we were very happy to win after the last stage. Everybody said congratulations but I wasn't sure I could finish. It was a big pressure, but when we came to service, then we really knew we won our first gravel rally.

Q Daniel You had a time penalty of 10 seconds, then it was taken away. What happened?

DE:The penalty yesterday for the moment was difficult. It was jump start, but not a jump start. On the start line we stalled and dropped five seconds. Five seconds plus ten seconds meant 15 seconds. It was very difficult, but after the stewards and the director of the race sees the video and sees it's not a jump start. We wake up minus 10s for us and plus four for Marcus is better for us.

Q Marcus You weren't feeling well today. How did that affect your driving?

MG:Yes, finally, yes I have not been very well during the rally, my stomach and really tired. Then we had some problem with the gearbox on the final two stages we were really lucky to come here. We have to finish the rally.

Q Timo How is your backside today?

TR:Thank you its very well. I can handle it, but it's not good to be famous with your ass. Now we can laugh, but actually it was a very, very serious situation. At the moment I did not know what had happened. First I thought it was something which had come from the car, but later we found out it was something on the road. Of course this needs to get the attention of the organisers and the ones who make the roads and the stages. They absolutely must make sure there are no obstacles on the road. We were not in the ditch, it was a normal driving situation on the straight part of the road. Marcus did not understand what had happened, we were not jumping or landing, there was something on the road. It was very hard, I suppose it was some kind of steel pin or bar. It came into the car, it punctured the protection under the floor, the carbonite, through the floor, the seat and into my bottom. I almost lost my conscious, it was a big pain. I screamed straight away. He had to stop. He almost stalled the car. He had to ask me to continue, he didn't know if it was my back or something. Finally when I could say something I said continue, but I had to loosen my belts. The thing which had come in was still in the seat. I could not put my ass back, so I had to loosen my belts, finally after one kilometre it went and I could sit normally in the seat.

What we can learn from this, is something we found out last year. The organisers love to put steel pins on the road to put some plastic tapes or plastic fences to the road. This is never seen anywhere else in the world. I strictly recommend that the organisers never ever do this again.



Q Petter You had a problem on the first day – what happened. Did it cost you the chance of victory?

PS: I won't say that. I tried to drive quick all rally, but everyone has to have problems. I wouldn't say that. That watersplash made a lot of problems for everyone. I had a spin, then I lost 40s when I went through the watersplash the second time, it could have been worse – look what happened to Markko Martin. Generally the rally has gone well. I had no problems after that. Tyre choice is always difficult. If it had been one more stage, maybe I could have won. It was very exciting with Sebastien and Marcus. In the last stage I had the splits and I was 24s up on Marcus at one point. I must say I got a little bit excited to get up to second time, but he took some time back at the end of the stage. On the last stage it was a little bit too much to get it back in five kilometres. But I am happy. I have finished six rallies in the row.

Q Phil The weather during the recce and on the first couple of stages was wet and damp: how difficult was it to cope?

PM: It's always good to see the recce when it's wet, it's better that way around than the other way round. But then you end up with lots of slippies and mud markings on your pace notes which are no good on the event. But it is better that way around than the other now we've got no gravel crews. It was a very interesting rally with the rain coming on one day of the event. It just goes to show how this place can change from plus 40 to really, really slippery conditions.

Q Sebastien Your championship lead is stretched a bit now. Are you feeling comfortable?

SL: Like Petter said there are nine more to go. Sure I have a good lead, nine points is interesting, but nine points is one victory for Petter and one retirement for me and it is finished. It's big and it's nothing. We have to keep concentrated and see after this.

Q Guy What about Citroen's lead in the manufacturers' championship?

GF: Yes it suits, but it's not finished. We've only done seven rallies. It's nine more. There's a long way and it's very difficult to say the aim of the championship. We need to wait a little bit more to think about the championship. I would like to congratulate Sebastien, Daniel, Carlos, Marc, all of the team and Michelin because everything was good in this rally. The combination of Sebastien and Daniel, the Xsara and the Michelin tyre was very good on this rally. It's very important that we can show the car is very fast on this surface. Sebastien and Daniel showed that they are able to win on the gravel it's their second but really their first win. They won on the tarmac, the snow and now the gravel. I hope that it's good for the future.

Q Daniel How hot was it inside the car? Was it difficult to concentrate?

DE: Yes because I don't like the hot. I prefer in Sweden, when it's cold. When it's hot in the car I get a lot of perspiration on the notes. You get no air in the car and it's 50 or 60 degrees in the car and for the conditions, look at Carlos yesterday – it's difficult.

Q Marcus We move to Argentina, which was the last rally you officially won one year ago. Will we see more improvements on the 307? How good are your chances of repeating that victory?

MG: Yes there could be. We are testing in Finland next week. We should have something new for the transmission, maybe not the gearbox. I'm really looking forward to the perfect rally. I'm looking forward to the win.

Q Timo This year's Rally of Turkey was a very different rally to last year. How did the two compare in terms of organisation and quality of stages.

TR: The stages were fantastic compared to last year. The roads were faster as we wished. The surface was good, they were re-graded after the strong winter. The time controls were a little bit confusing, they didn't really know exactly what to do. The flexi-service and early check in after the leg were okay, but from the scale from zero to ten I would give nine or nine and a half. Only the paperwork before the rally I would give six and a half.

Q Petter You have always been close to the leaders, but never close enough. What was missing? Was it the engine, the set-up or the tyres?



PS:It was the co-drivers' fault. It's always something and I know what it is. I don't want to talk about it. It will not happen next rally.

Q Phil do you agree with Petter's analysis that it's your fault?

PM:We've got a lot of answers for our performance on this rally. It's something that will be sorted out. To sum our event up, it was one watersplash too much. To lose all that horsepower for 33km, there was no chance we would recover from that. It will be sorted out.

MG and SL: Good, in Argentina plenty of watersplash!!

Q Guy Does this victory mean that Sebastien is now the complete driver?

GF:I think we know before that he can win in every surface, but we know that it is a difficult championship. Every competitor and manufacturer is on a good level. We need to be careful and to work very hard, to continue to push to try to win for the future.

Q Daniel What do you think?

DE:It's the perfect driver with the perfect co-driver – and the perfect car.

JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Per-Gunnar Andersson

Q PG an incredibly close battle today. It was 0.9s going into the final two. How confident were you?

PGA:Not confident at all, but I thought if I could make the long stage the second time without any punctures, I thought I could make the win. Then in the long stage the gearbox broke and I lost third gear. I thought that's it, I'm out, but we managed to fix the gearbox and come through the last stage. It was good to finish without third gear. I was really, really happy to come back to the service.

Q Jonas You had a plan for the rally?

JA:It was something we decided before the rally. We did some good stages times before the rally, but we'd had some bad luck and we'd crashed out of some rallies. We thought we would take it easy on the first day and see how the others were going. That was the plan.

Q PG the next event is Finland. Very good for Scandinavians, what are your thoughts?

PGA :I think we'll go at full speed from the first stage to the last one and hopefully we will be in first place. Kosti will still be looking for the victory.

Q Jonas What did you say to each other before the last stages? Were you nervous?

JA :We didn't say so much really. We were just saying good luck and lets get to the finish.

Q:PG Could you have driven quicker?

PGA :I could have driven faster, but I don't know for how long. It could have been like Greece.