



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Release

2010 PIRELLI STAR DRIVER

19.03.2010

The five drivers and co-drivers forming the 2010 Pirelli Star Driver programme met for the first time in Scotland earlier this week. After introductions on Sunday afternoon (14 March), the 10 men began a training and education course in Edinburgh before leaving for Pisa, Italy on Wednesday afternoon (17 March), where they would test the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X they will drive on six rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship.

The five crews involved in this year's scheme are: Nick Georgiou and Joseph Matar from the FIA Middle East Rally Championship; Peter Horsey and Moses Matovu from the FIA African Rally Championship; Hayden Paddon and John Kennard from the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship; Alex Raschi and Rudy Pollet and Ott Tänak and Kuldar Sikk – all from the FIA European Rally Championship.

The training

The crews were thrown straight into the training process for this year's Pirelli Star Driver scheme, with the first team-building activity beginning as soon as they arrived in Edinburgh. The teams were given a variety of materials and had to construct a reduced scale super special stage – including a bridge over a one-meter gap between two tables – before racing each other with radio-controlled cars. Once again, ESP ran the training session to the timetable of a round of the FIA World Rally Championship, with Sunday evening simulating the ceremonial start or super special stage of an event. Two long days followed, before a further early start and finish just after lunch on Wednesday. In that time, the crews were working on a wide variety of aspects of preparation for the WRC, including: sponsorship and the business of rallying; pace notes; performance profiling; physiology and conditioning; fitness and injury prevention; career management; aerobic training and flexibility; media and presentation skills; nutrition; safety and incident response; heat chamber work; hydration strategy; goal-setting and anti-doping regulations in motorsport. As well as a theoretical approach, ESP also took a practical look at all of the above. For example, to underline the importance of nutrition, the crews were given £15 and told to go to the local supermarket to buy their lunch, which was evaluated for nutritional value.

The test

The crews arrived at the test site, close to Pisa, late on Wednesday afternoon, where they were met by the Ralliart Italia team. After introductions to the team of engineers and technicians who will run their Mitsubishi rally cars this season, the crews saw their cars for the first time. While there was an emphasis on the driving, Ralliart Italia had also prepared demonstrations and workshops on how to work on all areas of the car, to ensure all drivers and co-drivers had a solid understanding of the mechanics of the Lancer as well as how to get the best out of the set-up for the car. Thursday was the day when the drivers and co-drivers got their hands dirty. They were busy changing wheels, altering the set-up of the Mitsubishi and generally familiarising themselves with the cars. The team had supplied three of last year's Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs. Following a strip down, re-jig and rebuild the cars were like brand new. Two cars were running in gravel trim, with the third in asphalt specification.

Friday was spent with the five drivers getting accustomed to the latest-specification rally cars, with a gravel and an asphalt car being used on the test. All five of the drivers were in the car for the same amount of time during the test. Following this, the drivers all returned home and will not meet again before the opening round of this year's Pirelli Star Driver programme – next month's Rally of Turkey.

The year ahead

The first of the six rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship the Pirelli Star Drivers contest will be the Rally of Turkey (15-18 April). In addition to the Istanbul-based event, the five drivers and co-drivers will also compete on Rally de Portugal (27-30 May); Rally Finland (29-31 July); ADAC Rally Deutschland (19-22 August); Rallye de France (1-3 October) and the Rally of Great Britain (11-14 November). The Rally of Turkey will provide a tough opening encounter for the crews, who will all be competing in identical Ralliart Italia-built Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs. The Turkish round of the FIA World Rally Championship makes history this season, becoming the first event ever to straddle two continents: the service park is based in Europe, while the stages take place on the other side of the Bosphorus River in Asia. In addition to the actual competition, the Pirelli Star Drivers will also undergo a continual training and development process with ESP. Its staff will travel to Portugal, Finland and France to fine-tune the work they began with five drivers and co-drivers in Edinburgh earlier this week.

Quotes

Morrie Chandler, President of the World Rally Championship Commission

"We learned a great deal from the first year of the Pirelli Star Driver programme last season and we have used that knowledge to improve the 2010 scheme. One of the areas where the drivers and co-drivers have been doing more work in this week of training is, for example, on the set-up and mechanics of the car. The crews all arrived in Edinburgh with different levels of fitness and subsequently in Italy with different levels of mechanical aptitude, and our job is to try and get them to the same standard. I'm sure this is going to be a very exciting year for all of the guys involved in the programme."

Paul Hembery, Pirelli Motorsport Director

"It's very exciting to see the five drivers and co-drivers embarking on what will be a fantastic season of learning for them. From what I've seen, this year's crews are a great bunch of guys and they will all have taken a lot from the training and the testing they have done this week. Now, though, they'll all be looking forward to getting in the car for the first competition. Pirelli is very proud to be working with the FIA and moving into the second year of the Star Driver scheme."

Robert Reid, ESP co-founder

"In 2007, Marcus Grönholm won Rally New Zealand by three tenths of a second. Richard [Burns] and I won or lost nine rallies by less than 10 seconds. What we have been doing in Edinburgh is showing the drivers and co-drivers that they can get that time in lots of different ways: it's not all about what happens on the stages, a lot of the time won and lost comes from the preparation ahead of rallies. This group has been very engaged in the process. They all want to learn and understand more about the opportunity they have got. The crews all took a great deal from all of the activities we did, but the heat chamber is always one of the most interesting aspects. We take the crews into 40 degrees; we then get them to exercise to 85 per cent of their heart rate capacity for 15 minutes to simulate a special stage. We then give them five minutes to tick-over, before another 10 minutes on the [exercise] bike to take them back up to 85 per cent; five minutes on tick-over and finally another 10 minutes of exercise. When they come out of the chamber, we ask them to do the same concentration test they did before they went in; the results always surprise them. We know that a two per cent drop in hydration can mean a 10 per cent drop in concentration. It then becomes very apparent to them why drivers will drink around 12 litres of water on the hot rallies. Practical experience is what the training is about and it's worked really well this year."

Nick Georgiou (Lebanon)

"The training was really relevant and that's something which you can't overstate the importance of. It was all directed at what we're going to be doing through this season. In the past, my co-driver and I have tried to do some work in that area on our own, but we haven't had anything like the success that we had in Edinburgh this week. It was great to have exactly the right people to talk to – I had a feeling it would be good, but I was really impressed. Edinburgh was also the first time we met the rest of the Pirelli Star Driver team and we got on really well. It's interesting to hear that we all had similar experiences and we're all thinking along the same lines about the year ahead. Coming from a Mitsubishi, I had an idea of what to expect with the car – but it was still fantastic to get in it and start driving."

Peter Horsey (Kenya)

“What a fantastic way to start the season with the training. It was so worthwhile; it was the sort of thing I would have loved to have done earlier in my career. It’s great to be able to do it now, though and I’m sure the results and the data we have gathered here will really help me in the future. The facility in Edinburgh was great; to have classrooms to do all the written work right next door to something like the heat chamber was just great. I had a bit of first-hand experience of the way the heat can affect competition; on one event last year, I really struggled in the car – it was so hot and I was exhausted. I pulled through in the end and finished the rally, but the work we did with ESP made it quite plain to me what I have to do in those circumstances. After all that practical work and being in the classroom for a while, it was good to get out to Italy and to drive the cars. They were really good – and the team is very professional. I can’t wait to get started now!”

Hayden Paddon (New Zealand)

“The training we did in Edinburgh was fantastic. One of the great things about it was that it was so focused on rally drivers and co-drivers; it was exactly what we needed. We have a similar style of course in New Zealand, but that’s for race and rally drivers, so it wasn’t quite so focused on the stresses we go through on event. One of the really key things for me was the work we did in the heat chamber, which ideally replicated the hot conditions we can get in the car. It was interesting to see the way those conditions impacted on my body and what I could do to control that. On the driving side, I’ve spent a bit of time in a Lancer Evolution IX, which will help me a little, but the Evolution X does feel like a bit of a new car completely. It’s quite a lot bigger and it feels like that from the inside. It was fantastic to see the cars, though, and to meet the team.”

Alex Raschi (San Marino)

“The training has been beautiful! The WRC is very hard work and so we need to know what is coming to us and how to prepare for this. I enjoyed the gym; it was hard work – especially the running. As well as that, the school time was also good. I feel ready for the year now. There is some work for me to do, but it is coming – I also know I have to do more work with my English. When we get to test in Italy, this is also very useful for me to work with the team. I don’t have so much experience on this kind of car, so doing the technical work on Thursday (18 April) was good. I need to learn how to work on the car as well as how to drive it. I feel very ready for the first rally now. ”

Ott Tänak (Estonia)

“Very useful, they teach us so many things I didn’t know. It’s better than I had hoped for; I have never done anything like this at all. The best thing is the people who are teaching us these things have all been in our position and done what we are all trying to do, they know what we’re going through. It’s great to have people like Robert [Reid] to talk about his experience and to tell us how is the best way. It’s good for our future. Of course, it was really good to get to drive the car as well. I have driven Group N before, but the Subaru, not the Mitsubishi – so it was good to see how it compares. It’s a really nice car, the Lancer.”

Media links:

Click on the links below to download images of the Pirelli Star Drivers in training :

Nick Georgiou	image 1 image 2
Peter Horsey	image 1 image 2
Hayden Paddon	image 1 image 2
Alex Raschi	image 1 image 2
Ott Tänak	image 1 image 2
Pirelli Star Drivers	image 1
Pirelli Star Drivers & Co-Drivers	image 1
Pirelli Star Driver Training	image 1