



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Release

2010 PIRELLI STAR DRIVER RALLY OF TURKEY

09.04.2010

Next week's Rally of Turkey marks the first event in the second season of the Pirelli Star Driver programme. There will be a universal feeling of the first day in school as the five drivers and co-drivers pull on their Pirelli overalls for the first time at Thursday's pre-event shakedown test. Shakedown is a vital opportunity for the crews to acquaint themselves with the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs they will drive on a further five rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship. Some of the drivers have competed or tested their own cars ahead of the Istanbul-based event, but this is the rally which they have all been focused on since they were selected for the programme by their FIA Regional Rally Championships last season.

The rally ahead - Rally of Turkey (15-18 April)

The Rally of Turkey is an entirely different event from the one which last featured in the World Rally Championship, in 2008. The rally has moved 700 kilometres north from the Mediterranean coastal resort of Kemer at the south of the country right up to Istanbul – Turkey's largest city, though not its capital. The five drivers and co-drivers from the Pirelli Star Driver scheme will get to rub shoulders with the 12.8 million other people who live in what's reckoned to be the world's fifth largest populated city. Istanbul has many claims to fame, including being this year's European Capital of Culture, but its biggest has to be that it's the world's only city which straddles two continents: Europe and Asia. The division between the two is the Bosphorus Strait, a stretch of water with the Black Sea to the north and the Sea of Marmara to the south, keeping the two land masses apart. The ceremonial start to the event takes place on Thursday (15 April) in the Sultanahmet Square, between the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia. From then on, it's out of Europe and into Asia for the stages. The first competitive roads the Pirelli Star Drivers will see this year are reasonably fast and wide, not quite as tight and technical as the stages in the south. The one thing which is likely to remain entirely Turkish, despite the shift to a new location, will be the weather – which will be hot.

Event data

Ceremonial start: Thursday 15 April 15, 17:30 hrs
Finish: Sunday 18 April, 16:30 hrs
Stages: Gravel
Number of stages: 23
Day 1: 9 stages, 431.81 km (98.42 competitive kilometres)
Day 2: 8 stages, 389.72 km (145.82 competitive kilometres)
Day 3: 6 stages, 282.62 km (114.60 competitive kilometres)
Longest stage: SS13/17 Riva (27.17 km)
Shortest stage: SS9 Super special stage Istanbul (2.20km)

The drivers

Car #36 Nick Georgiou/Joseph Matar

Nick Georgiou said: "As a test for this event, Joseph [Matar, co-driver] and I did Jordan Rally, which was a very good way to get used to our own Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X. The good thing was that, because I have done the rally in Jordan quite a few times before, I knew the roads and what to expect from the rally, which allowed me to focus on learning the car. All of us Pirelli Star Drivers are in the same boat arriving in Turkey, none of us really know what to expect from the country or the rally. I have been to Turkey before, but I was really young and I

can't remember anything. It's certainly a place I'm interested in visiting, but there's not going to be any time for sightseeing when we're on the event. That said, it'll still be nice to go somewhere new, meet new people and eat some different food – I guess there's going to be quite a lot of that this year. The time between the first time all of the drivers met in Edinburgh and the start of Turkey has flown by. We all got on very well during the training and testing, even though we were doing some pretty long days and we were all quite tired. It's going to be a great year and Turkey is a fantastic place to start. Right now I can't wait to get back into the Mitsubishi and make the most of this opportunity the FIA and Pirelli have made available to me this season."

Car #37 Peter Horsey/Moses Matovu

Peter Horsey said: "My plan for this event is to get to the end without having to use SupeRally, that's definitely the first priority. I don't really know too much – if anything – about this event. I've been reading up about Turkey before coming to the event and it's a really interesting country. Providing everything is going well for us on the event and I'm feeling confident in the car after the first day, towards the end of Saturday and on Sunday I'd be looking to push on and go a bit quicker, but certainly there is no plan to be flat-out on this rally; this one is all about learning and extending what we did in Italy last month. I have managed to get a little bit more driving in since the Pirelli Star Driver test: I did the opening round of the British Rally Championship in my own Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X, which helped me get more used to the car. I'm hoping to do the second BRC round (Pirelli International Rally, April 23/24) to get more seat time. Coming from Africa, I guess the formative Rally of Turkey – with its rougher roads – might have been better for me, but, in all honesty, I'm fed-up with driving on the rough stuff! If there's the chance to get down some fast and smooth gravel roads then I'm all up for that!"

Car #38 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard

Hayden Paddon said: "I'm glad to get back into Europe – and Asia – for this opening round of the Pirelli Star Driver programme, it's been a really busy time for me at home. After I finished the training in Edinburgh and the testing in Italy, I went straight back down to New Zealand and had to work hard to get my own Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX ready for Rally New Zealand. I did a day of testing, which was good seat time before Turkey, but it also got our car perfect for my home round of the WRC. But being back with the Pirelli Star Driver team is great. I'm really excited about Turkey. It's not somewhere that I know a lot about, but I've been doing some research and I hear the roads are quite smooth and fast, which is good. I also heard the organisers have been building the roads up quite a lot. This is great because it does make them smooth, but at the same time, if it rains quite hard then a lot of that gravel can easily get pulled out to leave the roads pretty rutted. We'll just have to wait and see, I guess a lot depends on what the weather's going to do around that time. In the test we did in Italy last month, I could feel straight away that the car was quicker than the one we have at home. Turkey is going to be a big learning curve for us all, but the good thing for me is that it's not a round of the Production Car World Rally Championship, which we're contesting this year, so that means we can settle into the car a little bit on this first event without worrying about taking points."

Car #39 Alex Raschi/Rudy Pollet

Alex Raschi said: "I have never even set foot in Turkey before so I don't know what to expect but I've been watching videos on YouTube. I love gravel rallies so I know I'm going to enjoy it, but it's going to be difficult to know how hard you can push if it's rough. It's going to be a rally that is tough for everyone, particularly because I saw in Edinburgh [at Pirelli Star Driver training] I'm going to be up against some very strong rivals, along with people who have plenty of World Rally Championship experience as well. I have to play myself into the car and the event and see where we are. But later in the rally I want to push a bit more and see if we can set some [good] times. The main objective obviously is to get to the end of the rally. It's hard for now to predict a strategy without knowing more about the event. After the recce we'll make a plan. I've still got a lot to learn. I've only ever done two small events in a four-wheel drive car before. I've always been used to two-wheel drive cars and obviously the technique is totally different. The Mitsubishi is a very impressive machine, but I'm sure I can get a lot more out of it with time. I feel happy enough with the car on gravel from what I can feel so far, but we still have some way to go on asphalt. Like I said, I don't know much about Turkey or the stages, but it's gravel and I love gravel – all kinds of gravel. I don't mind if it's rough, smooth, quick or slow. I've got a lot more experience of gravel than I have of asphalt and I'm looking forward to using it."

Car #40 Ott Tänak/Kuldar Sikk

Ott Tänak said: "It's quite good that nobody has been to this event before. Okay, some people doing the IRC series might have done the rally, but the World Rally Championship has not been on this road in Turkey – that's good, it makes it the same for everybody. And it also makes it very important to get the pace notes absolutely right. It's difficult to say much about the event before we have done the recce, but it would be nice if we could be setting the pace. I have heard that the roads are quite fast and wide in this part of Turkey, which can be quite nice for me; at home [in Estonia] we have many roads which are quite fast. Another good thing is that the stages in Turkey are supposed to be quite smooth, which is good for the Group N car. In the gravel test we did in Italy, I made some changes to the Lancer, I was making the car softer and softer and it felt very good. The engine feels powerful and in 30 kilometres I was able to feel quite at home in the car straight away. I have never been to Turkey before, so I don't know anything about the country, but after the training we did last month, I know that all of the drivers are really excited about getting to this first event. I know am!

Q&A with Phil Short, Pirelli Star Driver Supervisor

Q: What do you expect from the Pirelli Star Drivers on their first outing?

A: I've already suggested to them that they treat the Rally of Turkey as an extended test session, to get more distance and time in the car under their belts – and to think about bringing the cars to the finish with a solid result. You don't learn too much when your car is on a trailer.

Q: This is, essentially, a new event, how much do you know about it?

A: Our information suggests that the stages are faster and more flowing than the old Rally of Turkey, which was much further south in the country. But I expect that being closer to such a densely populated city as Istanbul there will be more local interest in the event, which should be good.

Q: What style of stages do you expect?

A: Hopefully not quite as tough as the old event, but still with quite a challenge. I'm guessing that at this time of year, there's always the possibility of wet weather intervention.

Q: What will be the big challenges facing the drivers this time?

A: Learning the car and its ways will be the first hurdle. Working with their new team will also be something new for them all. Settling into a good rhythm on this first event is a good objective for them.

Q: How much has everyone learned from last year that you can put into practice this season?

A: We learned a great deal from last year's inaugural Pirelli Star Driver programme, and have initiated improvements on the crews' training, testing and approach to events for 2010. The Ralliart Italia team have put a lot of effort over the winter into improving the strength and reliability of the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs we'll be using. We have also registered all five crews for the Production Car World Rally Championship, which should raise the profile of Pirelli Star Driver within the FIA WRC itself. This should increase the awareness of what we are trying to do here, so that the scheme can develop further in the future.

For further information on the FIA, please consult our Internet site:
www.fia.com

For Media Information Purposes - No Regulatory Value