



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Release

2010 PIRELLI STAR DRIVER RALLYE DEUTSCHLAND

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Rallye Deutschland will be the five Pirelli Star Drivers first time on asphalt this season. And, according to seven-time winner of this event Sébastien Loeb, there couldn't be a tougher asphalt rally for the graduates to show their skills. The Trier-based event is undoubtedly one of the most complex and technically challenging rallies in the Championship, but it is also one of the most popular. Sitting in the middle of Europe, Rallye Deutschland attracts more than 200,000 rally fans from across the continent. The challenge of this rally comes in the fact that it provides three significantly different styles of roads in as many days, including those quick stages through the Mosel vineyards, the country lanes through Saarland, and the demanding tests in the Baumholder military testing area. All of this is tough enough, but, on more than one occasion, the weather has been known to throw in an additional challenge, just to keep the drivers on their toes. Double FIA World Rally Champion Marcus Grönholm knows more than most about how the weather can change on this event, after he was caught out by rain and slid off the road on the first stage in 2004.

The rally ahead – ADAC Rallye Deutschland (19-22 August)

Sébastien Loeb knows all about Rallye Deutschland, he has won it every time it has been included in the FIA World Rally Championship: seven times. But, despite the six-time World Champion's extraordinary experience of the event, he remains wary of it – and particularly the stages in the Baumholder military testing area. And particularly the Arena Panzerplatte test. "Baumholder," said Loeb, "is so different, so unlike any other asphalt stages we know. There are sections of rough, clean, wide and fast. Nowhere is it harder for the driver to find the right mix. Everybody can floor the throttle, but if you want to win in Germany, you have to be successful in this stage."

And, the good news for the Pirelli Star Drivers is that the organisers of this year's event have decided to make Panzerplatte even tougher – by increasing its length from 30 to an astonishing 48 kilometres. And, having got through the stage once on Saturday morning, the crews will then have to do it again later in the afternoon. By the time the five drivers emerge from Saturday's 185 kilometres of competition they will have a good idea why Rallye Deutschland, and Baumholder in particular, has such a fierce reputation.

With Baumholder providing the toughest of the tough tests, the vineyards alongside the River Mosel provide the speed. Loeb added: "I never cease to wonder how fast we drive on these narrow roads. They require 100 per cent concentration: 99 per cent is simply not enough. The satisfaction after these stages is immense, but hardly anywhere else do you feel the speed like you do in the vineyards."

And, after the speed, comes the glory. In front of more than 15,000 fans packed in and around the city of Trier's famous Roman gate, Porta Nigra, the Pirelli Star Drivers will get to celebrate the end of their German adventure with a four-kilometre stage around the town.

Formerly a round of the German and European Rally Championships, this event has been won by some of the sport's biggest names, including current President of the FIA Women and Motor Sport Commission Michèle Mouton, who guided a fearsome Peugeot 205 T16 to victory in 1986.

Event data

Ceremonial start: Thursday 19 August, 20:00 hrs

Finish: Sunday 22 August, 15:45 hrs
Stages: Asphalt
Number of stages: 19
Day 1: 6 stages, 385.82 km (134.04 km competitive)
Day 2: 8 stages, 575.28 km (185.94 km competitive)
Day 3: 5 stages, 234.97 km (85.69 km competitive)
Longest stage: SS10/14 Arena Panzerplatte (48.00 km)
Shortest stage: SS19 SSS Circus Maximus Trier (4.37km)

The drivers

Car #36 Nick Georgiou/Joseph Matar

Nick Georgiou said: "The national championship in Lebanon is run on asphalt, so I have some experience of driving on this surface, which is going to be a help for me. Equally, from what I've heard, Rallye Deutschland is quite a different asphalt rally to any other: three rallies in one is what they say. At home there's quite often some dirt or gravel lying on top of the asphalt road, which means you have to take a gravel technique for the stages – I imagine sections of Germany will be similar. We did a test at the start of the season, in Italy, and I remember from that how good the car felt on Tarmac. There was lots of grip and some good speed. I think the transition to asphalt rallying in Germany should be okay, providing I trust the level of grip coming. It'll be nice to get back to Germany as well. I have some friends in Heidelberg [east of Trier] who I have visited; it's a really nice country to see."

Car #37 Peter Horsey/ Calvin Cooledge

Peter Horsey said: "Our Kenyan Rally Championship doesn't have any asphalt at all, so my first opportunity to drive on this surface was in Italy at the Pirelli Star Driver pre-season test. That was a unique experience for me. Since Finland, I have been in the UK and done some more testing on asphalt. There's much more grip than gravel so speeds are generally higher. There is also a much bigger difference in grip level between the clean line and surrounding road on asphalt than on gravel, and so you have to be vigilant as there is less room for error. Your driving must be much smoother to ensure you carry the speed through the corners. The grip change is compounded even further by the front runners taking big cuts and dragging gravel and mud onto the road, thus forcing you to take the same cuts and potential risks. With this being my first asphalt event, my overwhelming priority is to cover the full distance to get valuable experience on this surface. I expect to build speed as the weekend progresses, and use this experience to good effect in Rallye de France. Germany will be the first rally where we can make tyre choices which will make the event even more interesting."

Car #38 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard

Hayden Paddon said: "What I know about Rallye Deutschland is probably one thing: hinkelsteins! Those are the big rocks at the side of the road which are used to keep the tanks on the road in the military testing area. Beyond that, I don't know much – I haven't visited the country before. I've heard a lot about the changes of surface and things like that, but my expectation for that rally is not going to be very high. I haven't done an awful lot of asphalt rallying at all, so this is going to be a big learning experience for me. The only Tarmac event I've done was a Targa event back home in New Zealand last year. That was a blind rally, so I didn't get much of a feel with notes or anything like that. What that rally did show me, though, was the big difference in the style of driving between gravel and asphalt. On asphalt you've got to be really smooth, almost looking to go slowly to go quickly; you brake much earlier and then take it steady through the corner and get on the power. When I first arrived at that event, I was toasting tyres from braking late and driving the car like it's on gravel, so I take that experience already. At the same time, Germany, from what I'm told, is different styles of roads – some of which are quite loose. Another unknown will be how much gravel is going to be pulled out of the corners from the guys running ahead. We'll get there and see a clean stretch of asphalt on the recce, then we get there on the rally and it could end up looking quite different. Obviously, this is another Production round and, while I've never done this event before, we have to be looking to take points. I'm really looking forward to Germany; any day behind the wheel of a rally car is a great day!"

Car #39 Alex Raschi/Silvio Stefanelli

Alex Raschi said: "I have some experience of the way to drive on asphalt. At home I have done quite a lot of driving on this surface and I like it. But, from what I have heard, the stages

roads over there were beautiful, really good fun to drive on, but I really didn't have much feeling for the road at all. I am looking forward to the first asphalt rally of our programme; I think the car will work very well on this surface. And I'm looking forward to seeing Germany, it's a rally which we hear very much about and I think it will be a big challenge for me and for us all. I also have a new co-driver for this event after Rudy [Pollet], my regular co-driver broke his ankle. I'm sure Silvio [Stefanelli] will do a good job in Germany."

Car #40 Ott Tänak/Kuldar Sikk

Ott Tänak said: "I have to say I know nothing about this event. Kuldar has done it a few times and we have already watched some of the on-board camera footage from when he did it – and then Markko [Märtin, mentor] has talked about it and given me an idea of what the rally will be like, but, really, I don't know so much. This will be a very challenging rally for me: I have never competed on asphalt before, so I don't know what to expect from the event. Okay, I did some driving on asphalt at the [Pirelli Star Driver] shoot-out last year and then some driving at the test earlier this year, but that's about all. I don't know what to expect at all. We don't have anything like these roads in Estonia, so I will go to Germany to find some more experience. When you don't know what is coming from the roads, it's not easy to try and be on the pace. We will do the test for the event on the Monday before, which is going to be really interesting. While I might not have done any driving on asphalt, I have done quite a lot of driving recently. Obviously, we were competing in Finland, which went well for me, but before that I did Rally Estonia and then after Finland I did the Helsinki Motorsport weekend and then a small ralliesprint in Estonia, where I was driving a Group N Subaru. For time in the [rally] car, this has been very good for me."

Q&A with Phil Short, Pirelli Star Driver Supervisor

Q: What's the approach going to be from the five drivers in Germany?

A: We felt, for the sake of the programme, it was worth adding in more asphalt experience this year, which is why this event was included. Nick and Alex have done some asphalt driving, but we're going there really as novices, pretty much as we were last time out in Finland. The drivers will get some feeling from the test on the Monday before the event, but that's only going to give them a feeling for the vineyard roads. It's going to be quite a steep learning curve for the guys.

Q: What are the roads like and which will be the toughest to learn?

A: Probably the most demanding roads for the drivers to learn will be the vineyard stages – which is good because that's where our test will be. The vineyards are, of the three types of stages on offer during this event, the most unusual. The country roads in Saarland are similar to country roads anywhere in the world. Baumholder does also provide some odd stages with plenty to look out for. There's a lot of new stuff, but the objective is to teach the guys about aspects of rallying.

Q: After all of the drivers finished in the points on Rally Finland, is it possible we could be looking for a similar result in Germany?

A: No, I don't think so. I think there will be a lot of asphalt specialist drivers out there which will make a repeat of that result really difficult.

Q: Rally Finland was an exceptionally specialised event – and a very difficult one to go to for the first time. How will Rallye Deutschland compare in terms of a learning experience?

A: I would say Finland is tougher than Germany, but, having said that, Germany will undoubtedly throw up some difficult situations. The weather usually plays a part in the event and, for the first time this season, there will be a tyre choice; we will have a limited number of soft compound tyres for if, or when, the rain comes. As part of our briefing we have already gone through the tyre situation and the circumstances under which they would chose one particular tyre over another – so the theory is there. In practice, the likelihood is, due to the mixed conditions, the drivers will be out there on the wrong tyres at some point during the event. The drivers will have to factor in taking a dry tyre for a loop of three stages, knowing that one stage in that loop will be wet, that's part of the challenge of this event and competing on asphalt.

The season so far

Rally of Turkey (round 1 of 6)

For the first time, none of the Pirelli Star Driver crews completed the whole route of the event. Tänak had set the pace, holding eighth overall until he crashed heavily on the final morning. Paddon was the first home, but his event was spoiled when he beached his Mitsubishi on the opening stage and was forced to retire from day one. Raschi also went off the road on day one, his Lancer was out of contention on SS2. Horsey's car joined Raschi's in retirement, but

the Kenyan's Mitsubishi caught fire and was burned out. Georgiou failed to reach the first stage; a power steering fault halted him in his tracks. He, Paddon and Raschi made it through the next two days to the finish. 26th Hayden Paddon, (7th in Group N); 27th Alex Raschi, (8th in Group N); 29th Nick Georgiou, (10th in Group N); Ott Tänak, accident SS20, retired; Peter Horsey, accident/fire SS2, retired.

Rally of Portugal (round 2 of 6)

For the second rally in succession, Tänak set the pace among the Pirelli Star Drivers but then went off the road on the final morning. His crash was less spectacular than in Turkey, but the resulting retirement was the same. He had been leading Group N at the time. Also like round one in Turkey, Paddon was first Pirelli Star Driver home, despite retiring from the opening afternoon with broken steering. Alex Raschi took a more considered approach to the Portuguese stages and, despite his co-driver struggling with illness, brought his Lancer home second. Like Paddon, Raschi also hit steering trouble, the San Marino driver retiring from Saturday afternoon after his collision with a rock. A measured approach from Nick Georgiou and Peter Horsey brought them to a largely trouble-free finish on the Algarve. 20th Hayden Paddon (9th in Group N); 30th Alex Raschi (16th in Group N); 33rd Nick Georgiou (17th in Group N); 35th Peter Horsey (19th in Group N); Ott Tänak Accident SS15, retired.

Rally Finland (round 3 of 6)

The most successful Pirelli Star Driver outing in the history of the young driver scheme, as all five drivers collect FIA Production Car World Rally Championship points and two of the five finished on the podium. Ott Tänak was in contention for PWRC victory throughout the event and, when he moved to the front of the field on the opening afternoon, he remained there for the rest of the event in what was a fast and consistent drive to take his first ever Group N victory at the highest level – having threatened it for the previous two rallies. Hayden Paddon's performance was almost as merit-worthy; taking third on his first attempt at Rally Finland was a major achievement for the New Zealander. Alex Raschi admitted he was struggling to find a rhythm on the fast and flowing Finnish roads, while Peter Horsey and Nick Georgiou rounded out the PWRC points after further consistent drives in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Xs. 18th Ott Tänak (1st in PWRC); 21st Hayden Paddon (3rd in PWRC); 28th Alex Raschi (5th in PWRC); 40th Peter Horsey (9th in PWRC); 41st Nick Georgiou (10th in PWRC).

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