



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Release

2010 PIRELLI STAR DRIVER RALLY FINLAND

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Competing in the hottest conditions in Finland for more than 80 years, the Pirelli Star Drivers played their part in some of the hottest competition in this event's 60-year history. There was much to celebrate in Jyväskylä on this week's latest round of the FIA World Rally Championship, not least all five of the young drivers finishing in the Production Car World Rally Championship points.

Neste Oil Rally Finland is always a special event, but this year's 60th anniversary was even more special – and more demanding as the three-day schedule was packed into an arduous two-day flat-out race through the fastest forests in Finland. And, at the end, Pirelli Star Driver Ott Tänak finished first in the PWRC after a faultless, sure-footed drive.

Pirelli Star Driver report

Ott Tänak was under tremendous pressure when he arrived at the start of Rally Finland on Thursday evening. For the two previous events in the Pirelli Star Driver programme, the 22-year-old Estonian had held a commanding position, only to let it slip on the final day, crashing heavily in Turkey and Portugal. This time around, he started the event with advice ringing in his ears. There were concerned looks when Tänak talked about having to modify his pace on the first morning for fear of crashing, but in the end he turned in a perfect performance. He was still in the fight for first place in PWRC when rapid local driver Juha Salo bounced his Mitsubishi off a bank and broke the suspension. When the Finn faltered, Tänak moved in and led from SS7 until the end of the event.

For a while on Saturday lunchtime, it looked as though the Pirelli Star Driver programme could supply a one-two, with New Zealander Hayden Paddon turning in an exceptional rookie performance to take third position in PWRC. He moved up to second on stage 14, but a puncture slowed him in SS15 and left him on the bottom step of the podium at the end of the second day. Paddon admitted he had struggled to find his rhythm on the opening day, not helped by a vibration from the wheels and difficulties in getting the set-up of the Mitsubishi to his liking. He was much happier on Saturday and pleased with his second podium finish in as many PWRC outings – following his Rally New Zealand victory.

Alex Raschi was 12th in PWRC after the first stage, but made up six places to end the event fifth on Saturday. The San Marino driver had underestimated the task ahead of him on this event, but an early morning run through the rollercoaster Urria test soon got him on message, the message being that Finland is to be survived first time around and enjoyed on the second occasion. Raschi's car, like the rest of the Ralliart Italia-tuned Lancers, ran without any problems during the 19-stage Rally Finland. Kenyan driver Peter Horsey and Lebanon's Nick Georgiou engaged in their own private battle for the final points-paying positions. Georgiou was the quicker of the pair for the first day, but Horsey bounced back and passed his teammate on Saturday afternoon. Both drivers were delighted with their first visit to the event they'd been most looking forward to from the start of the programme. Horsey also had the honour of leading the entire field – a field including four-time world champion Juha Kankkunen who was contesting his 22nd Rally Finland – away from the start. Horsey was first on the road due to the reversed running order for Thursday night's televised opening stage.

The drivers

Car 36: Nick Georgiou/Joseph Matar

Nick Georgiou said: "I have to say, this experience has been much better than I expected. Competing in Rally Finland is certainly unique from a driving perspective. The one thing which

is obvious from the start is that the pace notes have to be absolutely perfect and, from that side, our notes have been good; they've been a little pessimistic in places, but we weren't about to start speeding the notes up because you can always guarantee there will be one corner waiting where you weren't pessimistic during the recce! It has been an incredible rally, though. When you are flying through the air, you just can't believe the speeds you're achieving and how far you are going. The car has run well and we haven't had any problems which is always a good start for a great rally. It's been very useful having Robert [Reid] and the guys from ESP here as well for more training. I have certainly learned more here than on any other event I have competed on before. I just can't imagine how incredible it would feel to jump into a World Rally Car and drive even faster down these roads; that must be just amazing. I have felt more and more comfortable with the car and the roads as the event has progressed."

Car 37: Peter Horsey/Calvin Cooleage

Peter Horsey said: "Being the first car over the ramp at the start of the event was an amazing feeling for me. This is such a big rally. When we won our place in the Pirelli Star Driver scheme last year, this was the event I was looking forward to the most, so to lead the field away – and on the 60th anniversary of one of the world's biggest events – was actually quite emotional. Going into the rally, things didn't start too well: we went into a ditch on the first corner on Friday. We had a noisy rear differential towards the end of the first day, there was a lot of rattling coming from it near the end of the final stage – but it didn't cost us any time. We also had the co-driver's window break on Myhinpaa, it wouldn't go up after Calvin had finished at the control. That was a bit of a shame as it brought a fair bit of dust into the car, but in fairness it wasn't going to spoil my enjoyment of the stage. I have to say, Myhinpaa has been the best road we have been on during the event. It was just incredible, the perfect stage. There weren't so many junctions to slow the rhythm or anything like that, it just flowed so well – it was a real drivers' stage. It's helped having Calvin here; he's worked on this event so many times before that he has a really good insight into what's coming. I feel like everything has come together for me on the rally: I've been happy with the notes, we've committed to the notes and the speed hasn't been a problem to do that. Rally Finland has been everything I hoped it would be; such a big challenge but incredibly rewarding at the same time."

Car 38: Hayden Paddon/John Kennard

Hayden Paddon said: "I was a little bit demoralised towards the end of the first day. I couldn't really find the rhythm I wanted and was finding the car quite hard to get turned into the corners. In my car at home, you really drive the car through the corners with the front wheels, but on Friday I felt I had to really force the car to get it tucked in. On top of that, we'd had some problems with broken wheels on the first loop; those vibrations made it quite difficult to stay on it with the car. I just wasn't happy with my speed – I knew very well that I could drive faster than I was driving. Overnight, the team softened the car a little bit and I was much happier on Saturday. My aim for this event was a podium. I'm pretty chuffed that we ran second [in the Production Car World Rally Championship standings] for so long on my first attempt at this rally, but the local guys are so quick here. My chances of staying second in Production were spoiled when I had a puncture on the penultimate loop of stages. I have to take my hat off Ott [Tänak] here, he was very quick. The suspension changes the team did to the car overnight really gave me more confidence to push harder. It might have been possible to fight a little bit for second place [in PWRC], but that's not what this event was about for me: it was about getting some very good points for the Championship and trying to contain the time the local drivers would be able to find on these roads. Now I've done Finland once, I want to be back and do it again and again, I've definitely caught the bug – it's an amazing rally."

Car 39: Alex Raschi/Rudy Pollet

Alex Raschi said: "I am very happy with the way this event has gone. This was always going to be a really tricky event, it is so far from what I know at my home. There is nothing like this in Italy, these roads are just beautiful. But, like I say, the feeling was hard for me to find from the car. On the second lap of stages, I was generally happier after I had been able to check the notes. Making the pace notes was one of the big things for me on this event and I can't believe the difference in speed between the recce and the rally itself. I think, for the first time at the rally, it can be a little bit dangerous to try and make the speed on your first run in the rally. It wasn't so much the corners and how tight the corners were, it was the distances between the corners - in the recce I had made them too big, so when we are coming at full speed in the race then it's tough to make the corners. Also, in some of the stages on Friday, there was sometimes some big rocks, some very big rocks which we had to drive around and try to avoid – this is not always so nice when you are enjoying driving and the stage is flowing for you. I have to say, we had no punctures, which is really incredible when you see the size of some of the rocks we have been driving straight over. But, on the whole, the rally has been positive – a fantastic place and a car which is working really well."

Car 40: Ott Tänak/Kuldar Sikk

Ott Tänak said: "Coming here was really not easy. I knew that I had to get to the finish, but staying out of trouble and trying to set competitive times was a difficult match to make. I tried to push a little bit early on, but I realised that my speed was maybe a little bit too high in the first morning. I was worried that I would crash, so I took down some of the speed, which was a little bit easier when [Juha] Salo went out. After that, the job was just as tough; trying to make sure I kept the car on the road and out of trouble and to keep the concentration right up. I was trying to stay on the pace of the other local fast guys just behind."

The other quotes

Phil Short, Pirelli Star Driver Supervisor

"To bring all five cars home in the Production Car World Rally Championship points is a very good result from Rally Finland – particularly when four of the five drivers were competing here for the first time. When we saw the entry list with 49 Group N cars, we knew we were in for a tough event, but the guys have stuck with it and come through. Obviously, the plaudits have to go to Ott. He has driven very well, demonstrating both the pace and consistency we were hoping for. We had worked quite hard with Ott to get his consistency improved after he retired from Turkey and Portugal and I think he has made very good progress. Okay, he had been here before, but he still did a very good job to keep such a big lead at the front of the PWRC. Hayden, too, has been running well. He knew it would be tough to keep Jukka Ketomaki behind him through today's stages, but it all became rather academic when Hayden suffered a puncture on the first stage out of service. With only one spare tyre, Hayden elected to play it safe to bring the car home. At the end of the day, Hayden came here for experience of this rally and he goes away with plenty of that. The same goes for Alex Raschi. Alex picked up his pace as he was going along, but at the same time he didn't take any risks and drove sensibly on an event which was quite alien to him."

The other two drivers, Peter Horsey and Nick Georgiou were engaged in their own private battle down at the back for much of the event. Those guys have driven very responsibly. The cars have needed nothing more than routine maintenance which is very good news on an event where there was plenty of competition."

Robert Reid, ESP Director

"Rally Finland was an ongoing part of the training programme we are working on with the drivers. The process is about learning and reviewing their performance and then making changes to the strategy to improve that performance. Here we looked at everything about a new event, we talked about their expectations from this event on all levels: what they expected from the car, from themselves, their personal preparation strategies and everything like that. We will then take the crews through a workshop tomorrow [Sunday] when we can talk about how those goals were achieved and capture all the data from the rally. Obviously we also look at the differences between the expectation and realisation and the reasons for that. We will then look at ways to put that into a useful structure to take it forward for the rest of the season and for the guys' futures."

Mario Isola, Pirelli Motorsport Manager

"Ott Tänak has driven as we hoped here on Rally Finland. He has been here before, so he has some experience of the roads and he has driven really well. He has done a good job, especially as he came here with some pressure after making mistakes on the first two rallies. The other drivers came looking to make some experience and they have done that well. Hayden Paddon drove well and showed some more good speed, he was in the top three or four stage times for the duration, which is good for his first time here. The other three showed consistency. Alex Raschi I think now appreciates just how tough it is to come and do an event like this – it was something quite different for him."

"I'm very pleased with the way the cars have run on this event. We have had no problems at all – which is great news on an event which is traditionally very demanding on the cars, with big jumps and heavy landings."

The next event

Just 18 days after the world's fastest gravel rally finishes, the crews head south to the centre of Europe for ADAC Rallye Deutschland (19-22 August). Following on from the fast, sweeping Finnish roads, Germany couldn't be more different. It's on asphalt, but it's not like any other asphalt rally. In fact, no two days in Germany are similar as the event moves from the tank testing tracks of the Baumholder military ground to the quicker, but more technical roads among the vineyards, before finally including a day in the general country roads around the

Mosel region. Based in the central German city of Trier, Rallye Deutschland is one of the most popular rallies of the season, attracting spectators from across central Europe. The weather is, however, an interesting feature of the World Rally Championship's second asphalt event of the season – with dry conditions rarely lasting for three full days of sport.

The results

18th Ott Tänak (EST)/Kuldar Sikk (EST) 2 hr 46 min 50.5sec (1st in PWRC)
21st Hayden Paddon (NZ)/John Kennard (NZ) 2 hr 49 min 56.5sec (3rd in PWRC)
28th Alex Raschi (RSM)/Rudy Pollet (I) 2 hr 57 min 03.6sec (5th in PWRC)
40th Peter Horsey (KEN)/Calvin Coolidge (GBR) 3 hr 05 min 15.6sec (9th in PWRC)
41st Nick Georgiou (LBN)/Joseph Matar (LBN) 3 hr 05 min 58.2sec (10th in PWRC)

Media links:

Click below to download images of the five Pirelli Star Drivers on Rally Finland.

- Nick Georgiou – click [here](#)
- Peter Horsey - click [here](#)
- Hayden Paddon - click [here](#)
- Alex Raschi - click [here](#)
- Ott Tänak - click [here](#)
- Ott Tänak - podium - click [here](#)

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