

News release
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The son is rising in the Solberg household

Triple world champion Petter Solberg will go head-to-head in competition with his 16-year-old son Oliver for the first time this week.

And almost certainly lose.

Father and son will compete in the Norges Råeste Bakkeløp – one of Norway's biggest hillclimb events in the season. The action starts today (July 18) and concludes with the final run up the hill on Saturday (July 21).

Oliver will drive a Citroën Xsara WRC offering 360bhp and total traction via World Rally Championship-honed transmission technology. Petter's in his Ford Escort RS1800, which is 40 years old and only two-wheel drive.

Predictably, the weekend can't come soon enough for Oliver.

"From the first time I tested the Xsara, I have been counting the minutes until the start of the event," said Solberg Jr. "The car is just a little bit crazy, actually it's mental... and I love it."

On the question of taking his father on for the first time, Oliver said: "I really should win this one with him driving in the Escort. It's quite strange to be competing against him – but we're both really looking forward to it."

Will Oliver slow down to give Petter a chance?

"No! I want to make the most of this chance," grinned Oliver. "Driving a car like this, with the power and the paddles, it's a real dream and I want to make the most of it."

The hillclimb includes three runs at the three-kilometre course – quite a change from Oliver's outing at Rally Estonia last weekend.

"I will make the most of every corner this weekend," said Oliver. "It's not like a rally, I don't have Veronica [Egan, co-driver] telling me what's ahead, so I have to memorise everything."

Oliver starts his first event in the Xsara on the back of a strong second in class at Rally Estonia.

"Estonia was really good," he said. "It was a very tricky event, maybe the most difficult I have competed on. The roads were always changing from fast and wide to narrow and technical. I struggled to find a good feeling on the first day, but it worked really well on Sunday. I was quickest [in class] on the first stage and I was very happy from then on.

"I was competing against drivers who have a lot more experience than I do in Estonia, so to get the result I did, I have to say I was a little bit shocked and very happy.

"But now I'm focused on the Xsara..."

And Petter's focused on his rear-view mirror.

"I think he's going to be quick," said PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team owner/driver. "I've seen him in testing and he was going well. He's asked me for some secrets on the set-up and I've told him some of them – but I haven't given them all away; I've got to try to give myself a bit of a chance.

"For me I'm going out to enjoy the event. It's always such a pleasure to drive the Escort – it's impossible not to have a big smile on your face when you are behind the wheel. We've had a great summer break so far and to go to this event with Oliver and I both competing is a real pleasure for Pernilla [Solberg, Petter's wife and Oliver's mum] and I."

The big question – the only question is to ask Pernilla who she'll be cheering for?

"Oliver, of course," she said with a smile. "And Petter! It's fantastic to see both the boys out there competing. We have enough pressure and competition in the year, this week is to have some fun and enjoy ourselves."

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