

News release
April 6, 2016
World RX 2016 preview

Déjà vu for Solberg as title defence take two gets going

- **Solberg: "My toughest season ahead..."**
- **Exciting PSRX developments coming**
- **New shoes, new suit, new car, new season. Hello 2016**

Petter Solberg is in for a big year in 2016. He has ruled FIA World Rallycross for the last two seasons, but his crown is more in demand than ever now. Next week the world of rallycross descends on Portugal for another page, another story. After a winter that's gone on far too long, the bell's ringing. It's round one.

The defending FIA World Rallycross champion said: "I have been ready for this moment for a very long time. We've been working hard over the winter and the whole team is really pleased with what we've got from the car.

"We have done a lot of development in all areas of the car and pre-season testing has been very, very positive; we've seen a great progression with the car and the team.

"There's been a lot of talk about the new drivers coming to the championship and this is good for [World] RX, it's good for the sport and for the profile. I'm pleased with the way IMG is working to develop the television coverage, it's good to see it in so many countries and without the fans having to pay for it.

"We're at a key time with PSRX right now. As everybody knows, we're a privately funded team, we're not a manufacturer, but every year we are holding our own against these factory cars. We're already looking beyond this season and there are some exciting developments coming for PSRX in 2017 and into the future.

"But for now, the focus is keeping the number one on our doors for another year. We had a fantastic start to 2015, we need the same again; getting points in the bag allows you to work on the strategy in the second half of the season. It brings a lot more pressure if you are chasing wins all the way to the last round. We don't want to be doing that.

"We've got some new colours for the new season, some new shoes and a new suit. It's time to go now."

The rivals

"This year will be tough. It's always tough, but this year will be tougher than any other.

“There are more drivers out for us to fight with than in the last two years and those drivers are in some really, really good cars. You’ve got the guys new to the championship, just look at the names: [Sébastien] Loeb, [Ken] Block, [Niklas] Grönholm. And then it’s drivers like Timmy Hansen, Reinis Nitišs, Mattias Ekström – these guys have all shown how good they are. And don’t forget Andreas Bakkerud, Davy Jeanney and Tanner Foust.

“OK, it sounds like I talked about the whole field for this year! But that’s how strong the competition is going to be. We know all of the drivers competing are serious, they can win races and challenge for the championship. They have been getting more experience and more wise about how to win races and challenge across the season.

“And when you look at the Peugeot, Block’s Ford and the Audi, these are serious cars – factory cars with more budget behind them. We have to work like hell to keep up with these guys.”

The calendar

“There have been three main changes to this year’s calendar, with Turkey and Italy going out and Latvia coming in. I was on the podium for the last two years in Italy, but Turkey was never so good for me. Latvia’s a good choice: there’s a lot of support for rallycross and rallying in this country – and not just for Reinis Nitišs!

“The calendar is good for World RX, we have a really nice spread of events across Europe and the flyaway rounds in Canada and Argentina, both of which are special and help spread the PSRX name globally.

“If I had to choose my favourite round, and I’m not sure I could, it would be Sweden; the fans and the atmosphere in the middle of summer is incredible. But then again, there’s nothing like your home round, so Norway’s special too. For the absolute number of spectators, France is quite amazing and Lydden [Hill, World RX of Britain] is a pretty good circuit...

“I can’t pick my favourite track, there are too many!”

About last year...

Petter’s FIA World Rallycross Championship title defence got off to a flying start: he didn’t finish lower than second until round six in July, winning twice and finishing runner-up three times at the first five events. After a mid-season wobble, victory on the series’ first visit to Barcelona in September steadied the ship and allowed Solberg to secure a second consecutive title with a brace of third places in Italy and Argentina.

Petter’s record on this year’s tracks

Petter has won a race at every one of the 11 circuits used previously in World RX. In fact, he’s won 46 times in two years on the tracks used this season.

It's only in Belgium, Norway and Sweden where almost-perfect Petter hasn't won a final.

Pre-season data

Development tests: 3 (France, Germany, Portugal)

Kilometres completed: 289

Shakedown test: Lousada (Portugal) April 11/12

The team has retained its Citroën chassis, but the engine, transmission and dampers have undergone significant work in the closed season. The Torsby-based PSRX squad has worked solidly since capturing that second FIA World Rallycross Championship title in Argentina five months ago and fruits of the collected labour will be seen in public for the first time at World RX of Portugal practice next week.

FIA World Rallycross 2016 calendar

World RX of Portugal (April 16/17)

World RX of Hockenheim (May 7/8)

World RX of Belgium (May 14/15)

World RX of Britain (May 28/29)

World RX of Norway (June 11/12)

World RX of Sweden (July 2/3)

World RX of Canada (August 6/7)

World RX of France (September 3/4)

World RX of Barcelona (September 17/18)

World RX of Latvia (October 1/2)

World RX of Germany (October 15/16)

World RX of Argentina (November 26/27)

A word on every round

Word association. Which word does Petter think about when he hears the following?

Portugal **First win.** *Petter, it's one word. Ah, OK...*

Hockenheim **Great track!** *Er... one word? Oh, yeah. Sorry. Got it now.*

Belgium **Chips.** *Brilliant!*

Britain **London.** *Nice, you're into this now.*

Norway **Home.**

Sweden **Pernilla's home.** *Er... ****! OK.*

Canada **Night.**

France **Loeb.**

Barcelona **Barcelona!** *Think Freddy Mercury and Montserrat Caballé.*

Latvia **Nitišs.**

Germany **Schumacher.**

World RX of Argentina **Champion!** *Or maybe I could say toilet, that's where I was when I found out I was champion last year.*

I think we're done with the word association... have a good season.

Editors' note

The body copy of Petter's press releases are written in first person and can be quoted directly from the three-time FIA World Champion himself.

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