

Perfect Petter bowled over and out in South American semi fracas

After four of the most challenging and weather-hit qualifying rounds of the season, FIA World Rallycross Champion Petter Solberg was on dominant form at World RX of Argentina this weekend. Started four, won four. Then came the semi-final and another likely victory. Likely victory that was until Timur Timerzyanov lunged across the track, pinballing Petter down the order and breaking his PSRX Supercar's left-front steering arm.

Petter's perfect weekend was finished. His chance to end the season as he'd started it... with victory, ruined.

"I felt very confident coming into this weekend," said Solberg. "Our car was working so well and I was really up for this one. I really wanted to sign the season off with a win. When the rain came, the organisers had no choice: they had to postpone most of the qualifying until Sunday.

"There was so much mud around after the rain, but then the conditions started to dry and the track got quicker. I was really pleased that, through these dramatically changing conditions, we were fastest. I had real confidence that we could pull off the perfect weekend here, I honestly thought we were on to win the semi and the final.

"In the semi, we were alongside [Mattias] Ekström, but he already had a jump-start, so I knew we didn't need to worry about him, he would have to take two joker laps as a penalty. My start wasn't so aggressive, knowing I could follow him (Ekström) and I did that. I turned into the right-hander right behind him. I saw [Janis] Baumanis coming around the outside what I thought was quite a brave move.

"When I turned in for the left-hander, Baumanis was on my inside and there was some contact. It was OK. But then... bang! Out of nowhere, Timerzyanov flew into Baumanis and he came into me. He hit the front left of my car and immediately I could feel the steering was broken.

"I did a couple of laps with the steering just about working and then I had four laps with the front wheels pointing in different directions. On the penultimate lap the steering arm broke off completely and I barely made it to the line. It was almost impossible to drive the car like this, but I had to finish. It took some effort, but I made it across the line. It's enough to say this was not the way I wanted to finish the season."

The PSRX race weekend

Q1 – 1st (position in the standings after qualifying races)

With the gravel only partly damp, Petter found grip after a fabulous start. He was immediately into a class of his own against the Latvian duo Nitiss and Baumanis.

Q2 – 1st

Conditions radically different from Q1 to the postponed Q2 following Saturday's rainstorm. Petter controlled an exceptionally muddy race from pole, taking a lights-to-flag win from Bakkerud.

Q3 – 1st

Track conditions began to dry, but the gravel sections were still muddy. Petter scrapped with Loeb, but still controlled proceedings with another win.

Q4 – 1st

Finally running a dry track, Petter wheeled out some experimental settings for the PSRX supercar and they worked a treat. Once again he headed Loeb home with only the second ever four from four qualification wins in FIA World RX history.

Semi-final – 5th

Petter elected not to challenge Ekström into the first corner, knowing his rival had to make two joker laps following a jump-start. Petter followed Ekström into the first right-left sequence, only to be knocked off the track. Despite broken steering, Petter still finished the race fifth.

Want to know more about your FIA World Rallycross Champion?

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