

The King and I, by Petter Solberg

Mario Andretti, Colin McRae, Sir Stirling Moss, Niki Lauda, John Surtees, Richard Petty and me.

I have dreamed of winning a Gregor Grant at the AUTOSPORT Awards for such a long time and, last night, my dream came true.

To put my name with those guys is just incredible and, honestly, unbelievable. This is the perfect end to the season for me. Except it's not the end of the season – Race of Champions this weekend and, obviously, I can't wait for that one!

But, back to what happened last night.

AUTOSPORT invited me to come to London for the Awards and, like everybody in motorsport, this was a real honour in itself. We sat through the early Awards, watching the best of British and international motorsport. It was fantastic. And the best thing was that I was sitting one seat away from Richard Petty. The King. What a guy!

And then Jenson Button came on stage and a film began talking about somebody who had won two FIA world championships.

And then I saw the blue and yellow Subaru come to the screen. They were talking about me.

Unbelievable!

Watching the film of my 2003 season, winning the World Rally Championship with Phil Mills in the Impreza really was an emotional moment. And the same when this year's World RX action came on.

Getting the Award from Jenson was fantastic. We had a very quick chat about him driving for my team next season, if he doesn't get the deal he deserves from McLaren. You know, I think he could be quite quick in rallycross – his father certainly was!

I have to say a big thank you to everybody from AUTOSPORT – this was an amazing surprise for me to be recognised for what we have done this season and in 2003.

Now I want to round off what's been a fantastic season with another win at the Race of Champions. It's time for Barbados.

Editors' note.

The AUTOSPORT Awards have been running since 1982. Most of the Awards are voted for by the general public, the readers of the magazine. Gregor Grant was the founding editor of AUTOSPORT magazine and Awards in his name are given

out to drivers who have made a lifetime contribution to motorsport. Petter and NASCAR hero Richard Petty – known across motorsport as The King – were this year's recipients.

The Awards took place at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane London last night (Sunday December 7).