

## **World RX, Belgium rights-free words from PSRX**

### **Welcome from Petter Solberg**

Hello to Belgium from the Norwegian in Sweden.

Last year I competed in Belgium for the first time and I absolutely loved it. The fans were so enthusiastic and the atmosphere was unbelievable. But now I have to finish the job I started last year.

Circuit Jules Tacheny was one of my favourites last year, it's a place where you can really attack. *Maybe* I attacked a little bit hard over the jump in the final... I was leading and pushing like hell to build an even bigger gap when a heavy landing broke the rear suspension on my car.

For a while, it felt like it had broken my back as well! I drove my heart out at this track last time and was rewarded with third place (after Kristoffersson was disqualified – but, more importantly, I took back the lead of the FIA World Rallycross Championship. So I left Belgium a happy man.

This time, I want to leave an even happier man.

I wish you all a fantastic weekend of racing – the competition is going to be incredibly close as usual. If you can drag yourself away from the side of the track, come and say hello, we'll give you a world champion welcome!

But, right now, it's time for me to get back to finishing off the preparation of my car while mentally making a trip around Circuit Jules Tacheny, this time with a little less throttle on take-off...

### **Petter Solberg Q&A**

What do you know about Belgian drivers?

*I know a lot about Francois Duval. I competed against him many times in the World Rally Championship and I tell you: that guy can drive! I don't know if there's any chance for him to compete in this round of World RX again, but it would be good to see Francois back at Circuit Jules Tacheny this year again. I don't think we saw the best of what he can really do in a car. Apart from Francois, it's the other guys like Bruno Thiry and Freddy [Loix] – both of them rally drivers and really nice guys. Bruno finished driving a little bit before me, but, like Francois, I was competing against Loix for a lot of the time in the WRC.*

*But now I guess it's all about Thierry Neuville. I was with him at the AUTOSPORT Awards last year – we sat on the same table, so I was able to give him some advice for this season!*

What do you think of Neuville's speed?

*It's fantastic. At the moment, he looks like the only guy who can give [Sebastien] Ogier a run. What he did finishing second in Sweden and then really fighting in Mexico was great for him, Hyundai and Belgian motorsport.*

Does Neuville have what it takes to be world champion?

*For sure he does. He has the speed, we can see that, but what he's also got now is the consistency – he is able to make good times all the way through the rallies. He's a driver who works really hard at everything. He reminds me a little bit of me in that he's so hungry for winning all of the time, nothing*

*else matters. To be a world champion, you need that kind of fight and commitment and he's got that.*

Tell me something about Belgium not many people know...

*The highest hill or mountain in Belgium is lower than the tallest building in the world. It's a good place to live if you are not good with heights!*

Outside of motorsport, who's the most famous Belgian you know?

*That's easy – Eddy Merckx.*

OK, how many times did Merckx win the Tour de France?

*... six? [Five]*

What's your favourite Belgian food?

*Moules-frites. Always. And maybe chocolate – actually, leave that bit out. I don't want my trainer to know I said that. [Oops].*

### **Petter's track guide**

Every start to a race is really important, but this one is really, really important as the track narrows down to a right right-hander where everybody is going for the apex. We start, of course, on asphalt, but the exit of the first corner is straight to gravel, so you need to try to be neat and straight to get away quickly.

After faster right we're back onto Tarmac before a quick chicane on the loose takes you to decision time: joker lap. If you're taking the joker, you go straight and around a longer triangle, while the regular lap is a shorter left-left and back onto the straight.

At the end of the straight you make a left onto gravel and quite a small drop-off jump.

Circuit Jules Tacheny has a few of these jumps and crests where you have to be right on top of the car. I like the corners on crests, though, the car goes light and you have the chance to be quite spectacular in practice and maybe if you have a lead in the heats. Once we're into the race, however, it's as neat and quick as we can.