

World RX, Hockenheim rights-free words from PSRX

Welcome from Petter Solberg

Hello and welcome to Germany! We're in Hockenheim – how cool is that. This is a great circuit and a great place for us to come for the first time. We saw some incredible action from Daniel Ricciardo and Fernando Alonso in Formula 1 cars here last year – but that's nothing compared to what you're going to see at World RX of Hockenheim.

The stadium section here will give a great atmosphere during the racing and, trust me, we're going to enjoy it as much as you all do. If this is your first World RX round, brace yourself for almost 4000 horsepower being unleashed and aimed at the first corner when the lights go green.

I love the way the organisers are working to fit World RX in with this DTM race, but as much as anything I love the history of this area. You know how much I love cars and this place really means something for the car industry. It's around here that Karl Benz made his first car in 1886 – but it was his wife Bertha Benz who helped him make history. Bertha was the first person to take a car on a really long trip, driving the car 100 kilometres to see her mother!

Karl and I have something in common there: both of our wives are keen to drive our cars!

Anyway, back to the first World RX action at Hockenheim. Enjoy it and give us a cheer.

Petter Solberg Q&A

Tricky one this, we're talking before the first round of the championship in Portugal. How do you feel about the season ahead?

I'm really looking forward to it now. You know I drove in the World Rally Championship for so many years, when the season started on the second week in January – before that really, because we tested for Monte Carlo and Sweden all over Christmas and the holidays. So, in the WRC, the season never really stops.

So, you've enjoyed a long holiday since Argentina at the end of November?
Are you crazy! No, we've been really busy with the car. We started working on developments for the last couple of races last season and we've continued that through the winter. Pernilla, Oliver and I did take a really short vacation in America, but apart from that we've been flat out on making the car go faster.

Has it worked?

You'll have to see, won't you. But we don't think it's going to be any slower – it better not be anyway!

Have you ever competed at Hockenheim before?

I haven't. I must be honest and admit that it's not a circuit that I know too much about. I believe the organisers have made our track within the stadium

section. That's good; that will make for a good atmosphere, with lots of people in the grandstands around us.

Michael Schumacher won the German Grand Prix four times at Hockenheim. You've been fortunate enough to give the seven-time world champion a ride...
That's right. I was testing for the 2004 Swedish Rally and Michael was in the area. He wanted to come and have a look, so the Subaru team sorted it out and he came for a run in the car.

Did he enjoy his ride?

He was asking a lot of questions about how we set the car up and, basically, how we do what we do: carrying so much speed through corners on the ice and snow, that kind of thing. I think he enjoyed the experience – I know I did. It was a real privilege to have somebody like him in the car. Coming to a place where Michael had so much success makes me think about him again. Keep fighting Michael!

Has Germany been a good place for you to compete?

That kind of depends which car! Obviously we won the RX round in Germany last year, taking our third win in succession and fourth win of the season – so I have good memories of driving our Supercar in this country. But when I was competing in the World Rally Championship, I had one of the biggest crashes of my career on Rallye Deutschland in 2004. In some of the stages, they have these big concrete blocks (hinkelsteins) designed to keep tanks on the road – they're that tough! I crashed and landed, roof-first, on top of one. It was a big crash.

So, mixed feelings about Germany?

No! Not at all. It wasn't Germany's fault that I crashed! I have to be honest and say that I was never at my strongest on Germany's round of the world championship, but last year's win in Buxtehude was fantastic.

Moving on... how about your favourite German food?

I'm not so keen on sauerkraut, but they do know how to make a good sausage around here.

So, you know Germany... can you tell us one famous German footballer?

How about Lothar Matthaus. Didn't he play in a lot of world cups?

Who's going to win in Germany?

Let's hope there's no change from last year's rallycross round in this country!

Finally, you know what you have in common with Michael Jackson and Robbie Williams?

Err... that's an interesting one! I don't know. Let me think; did I dance to their songs? I don't know. What's the answer?

Soon, you will all have performed at Hockenheim.

Seriously. That's cool. Let me entertain them... I'm bad!

Petter Solberg's Hockenheim track guide

The track is still being made right now, so not many people really know what it's going to be like. I really hope we get a circuit like the ones we had in Portugal and Argentina – they were the ones which suited me and my car the best, I think. And they were the ones which I really enjoyed driving; they give the best chance to put on the big show.

Basically, we need a great gravel section with high-speed corners, a spectacular jump and a lot of enthusiastic spectators. If Hockenheim is like that, we'll have a great weekend!