

Norwegian Motorsport Personality of the year

While I was signing some autographs at AUTOSPORT International last weekend, a young girl asked why I have such a big truck when I only have one car. Before I could answer, she said: "It's because you have so many trophies and cups isn't it..."

That really made me smile, because this year, it's a little bit true!

And last week, there was another award. Another really impressive award – I was Norwegian Motorsport personality of the year award for the fourth time in my career. You know, I never thought I could start the year with so much excitement, but to receive this award while attending AUTOSPORT International in Birmingham was such a privilege for me.

Fifteen years ago, I experienced one of my proudest moments when I won this award for the first time. I had just finished my debut year as a factory driver for Ford in the World Rally Championship, which was a massive deal back in my home country... I was the first Norwegian factory driver.

The Norwegian Motorsport Federation has also honoured me in 2001, 2002 and 2003. After I won the FIA World Rally Championship [in 2003] I said on stage that I would prefer young and talented drivers to receive the prize in the future. My hope was that others would work hard to beat me to it - and I succeeded! It took me 11 years to be up there again. But it was such an honour once more.

But then I went on to win the FIA World Rallycross title last year, it was really nice to a second FIA World title. We had such a great year in 2014. As a team, everybody in PSRX worked so hard to achieve our goal of winning the world championship.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be present at the prizegiving on Friday evening as I was at Autosport International in Britain. But my son Oliver, my wife Pernilla and my mom and dad were there for me and went on stage on my behalf to collect the awards.

I followed the whole event on television and was extremely proud, but also a little bit sad that I couldn't be there myself!

Norway is a small country in terms of population, but a big motorsport nation in my eyes. I see talented drivers just about everywhere I turn. It amazes me how we do it. We are to motorsport what New Zealand is to rugby!

I find it really exciting for Norwegian motorsport that several female drivers are beginning to stand out as well. I welcome every single talent we have to the stage!

Last November I was awarded the Norwegian Motorsport Federation's highest distinction; a month later I received a Gregor Grant lifetime achievement at the AUTOSPORT Awards. I could not be more happy for being back at the top of my game.

Going back to the new friend I mentioned at the beginning of this story, I hope we come back to Birmingham in an even bigger truck next year!

Achievements

1987 Youngest ever Norwegian Radio-Controlled Car Champion

1993-1996, wins seven Norwegian hillclimb titles

1997 Wins first rally, driving a Toyota Celica Turbo 4WD (Østfold Rally, Norway)

- 2002** First WRC win on Rally GB and finishes second in the WRC
- 2003** First FIA World Championship, beating Sébastien Loeb in a final-round thriller on Rally GB
- 2004** Wins five WRC rounds and finishes second in the championship
- 2005** Wins three WRC rounds and finishes second in the championship
- 2006** Scores four WRC podiums
- 2007** Scores two WRC podiums
- 2009** Wins first ever stage (SS1, Rally Norway) as a team driver and owner and scores two podiums in own Citroën Xsara
- 2010** Scores eight podiums and finishes third in the championship in a Citroën C4 WRC
- 2011** Scores two podiums in a DS3 WRC
- 2012** Returns to the Ford World Rally Team and scores five podiums in a Fiesta RS WRC
- 2014** Wins five rounds and the inaugural FIA World Rallycross title

Previous winners of the title:

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| Bjørn Skogstad (1988) | Petter Solberg (1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 og 2014) |
| Harald Huysman (1989) | Harald Sachweh (2004) |
| Liv Berstad (1990) | Anders Krohn (2005 og 2008) |
| Martin Schanche (1991 og 1995) | Frode Holte (2006) |
| Roar Vannebo (1992) | Mads Østberg (2007) |
| Ludvig Hunsbedt (1993 og 1997) | Mats Lysen (2009) |
| Tommy Rustad (1994 og 2000) | Sverre Isachsen (2010 og 2011) |
| Eivind Opland (1996 og 1998) | Andreas Bakkerud (2011) |
| Henning Solberg (1999) | Lars Øivind Enerberg (2011) |
| | Andreas Mikkelsen og Ola Fløene (2012) |
| | Emil Antonsen (2013) |