

News release
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Fast learner Solberg takes more experience from Rallye Monte-Carlo

- 19-year-old Oliver Solberg impresses on his Hyundai i20 R5 WRC debut
- Fourth fastest overall on SS12 the highlight of a brilliant rally for the teenage Swede
- More fastest class times on his second Monte and only his eighth WRC start

Oliver Solberg delivered a fine World Rally Championship debut aboard a Hyundai i20 R5 at this week's Rallye Monte-Carlo.

Unfortunately, the 19-year-old was caught out on the 15th and final stage. He slipped into a ditch and was unable to get the car back on the road to deliver the 11th place overall he richly deserved.

Despite world-class competition, the teenage Hyundai Motorsport driver won stages in Rally2 on his maiden i20 outing at the sport's highest level. But the highlight was a spectacular fourth fastest overall on Sunday's opener from Puget-Théniers – La Penne.

The 19-year-old elected not to count the Gap-based rally as part of his WRC2 programme and was in the French Alps to take more experience of one of the world's most complicated rallies.

And this year's Rallye Monte-Carlo really did live up to its billing with a byzantine cocktail of dry, wet, ice, snow, slush and sunshine. Those ever-changing conditions meant the grip level varied from corner-to-corner.

At times, selecting the most suitable combination of Pirelli tyres felt something akin to rolling a dice in Monaco's world-famous casino.

"We came here to make experience," said Oliver. "Of course, like always, I wanted to push hard and set some good times and I think we have done that. I wanted to finish and it's very frustrating not to be back in Monaco this afternoon, but it was a small mistake.

"The car is fine and if we had some more people around we could have come to the finish. OK, sometimes it's like this. I won't think so much to this. Instead, I take the positives.

"The time in the first stage on Sunday was really cool, to be fourth fastest overall was something special – it's my best ever time on a WRC round. The conditions were so complicated there with a lot, a lot, a lot of black ice in places;

every time you were going to the corner, you were asking yourself: "How will it be? Will the grip be there?"

"But I was able to find a rhythm and deal with the changing grip. It was nice because we were fifth fastest overall on the last stage on Saturday as well. Trying to forget the last stage, it's been a fantastic event and *almost* the perfect way to start our time with Hyundai Motorsport in the WRC."

Oliver was quick to pay tribute to the 2C Competition team running the car, his ice note crew – Bruno Saby and Denis Giraudet – and his co-driver Aaron Johnston.

"This rally is so hard for the whole team," he said. "We've had some really early starts, but the team, everybody in Hyundai Motorsport has done a fantastic job. But Aaron has been amazing. As well as reading the notes, he was making changes all the time to take in the information from Bruno and Denis – he was working so hard all the time! I have a big thank you for everybody. This was a proper team effort.

"I feel I'm really starting to understand the car now. I knew it would be a little bit of challenge to come to this rally without so much experience. When you're learning a new car, the ideal way to do it is in conditions which are nice and consistent – this Monte couldn't have been more different. We had a bit of everything. On Friday, we had so much gravel and mud, it was even a little bit like driving in Wales!

"We had one puncture on stage 10 which cost us a minute – without that we would have been in the top three for the Rally2 cars, but it's OK. I learned so much."

Oliver Solberg in numbers:

Rallies started: 39

Rallies won: 9

ERC rounds started: 6

ERC rounds won: 2

ERC podiums: 3

WRC rounds started: 8

WRC debut: Wales Rally GB (2019)

Number of titles won: 9