

News release
January 16, 2020

Solberg scores sensational Arctic debut in Hyundai

- 19-year-old Oliver Solberg lands superb podium on his maiden Hyundai i20 R5 outing
- Stunning Saturday form – including a fastest time overall – rockets Oliver to within a second of a class win
- Attention turns to next week's Rallye Monte-Carlo, where Oliver drives for Hyundai Motorsport for the first time

Despite never having competed at the Arctic Lapland Rally – or in a Hyundai i20 R5 – Oliver Solberg scored a sensational podium place on the Rovaniemi-based event which finished on Saturday afternoon.

Driving an i20 R5 run by his family team, Oliver's pace through the second day's four stages was quite extraordinary given his lack of seat time in the Alzenau-built car.

Saturday's second stage, the 25-kilometre run through Heinunkierto was the highlight for Oliver and co-driver Aaron Johnston. They were faster than everybody, including Toyota's official test driver, Finn Juho Hänninen in a Yaris WRC.

"Already, I am loving the Hyundai i20 R5!" beamed the Monster Energy driver at the finish of what had been a beautiful, winter rally.

"Yesterday, I was learning the car still and finding my way a little bit. It wasn't so easy to find a rhythm from the roads. But today I was comfortable and able to push a bit harder. I've got to be honest, I was a bit surprised at the fastest time; OK it was a good stage for me, nice and tidy, but there was a lot of snow on the line and I thought it was cleaning and getting faster for the guys behind.

"Overall, I have to say I am really, really happy. The conditions to drive in were so nice, it's a lot of fun to drive on roads like this with very good grip from the Pirelli tyres. For my first time with the Hyundai, it's a fantastic result. And for the team as well.

"To compete on this rally was a last-minute bonus, but to get everything ready coming straight from the holidays to the test was an incredible job from the team. I want to say a massive thanks to everybody in Hyundai Motorsport, the wolfpack and Pirelli Motorsport.

"This result is fantastic, so fantastic! But, of course, it's a little bit of a shame to come so close to winning the Rally2 class – we were less than one second

away – but third place behind Juho [Hänninen] in the Yaris WRC and one other Rally2 car is good. I'm happy and it's a nice way to look forward to next week and another challenge..."

Rallye Monte-Carlo preview

Next week's opening round of the World Rally Championship marks Oliver's first outing with Hyundai Motorsport.

The 19-year-old, making just his second start on the Gap-based event, is understandably excited about driving an i20 R5 in official colours.

"This is a moment I have really been dreaming about for a long time," said Oliver. "Since I was young and watching my papa driving in the championship, I have been thinking and working hard to follow in his footsteps. I know I still have a lot of work to do, but I definitely feel this is the start of a new chapter. It's cool.

"But also, nothing is done yet. OK, I got here, I got to this place, but now I have to use it. I have to make the most from it."

That said, the decision has been taken for Oliver not to register for WRC 2 points next week.

"Monte Carlo is really a specific event," added Oliver. "It's a rally where you need so much experience. In most other rallies, the conditions, the grip, the weather, they don't change so much from one year to the next one. But here, everything can change from one corner to the next.

"Because I only did this event one time before, we decided it's better for me to take more experience rather than use it as a WRC 2 counting round to try to chase some points.

"From the weather forecast we've seen, it looks like it can be quite a complicated event with a lot of snow and ice in places. If you had to choose, maybe you would prefer some drier roads and more consistent grip – but when you have the crazy weather it's much more of a challenge and definitely it's a way to learn more about Rallye Monte-Carlo.

"And learning is what next week is all about."

Thursday January 21

SS1 St Disdier – Corps 20.58 kilometres (12.78 miles) 1408

SS2 St Maurice – St Bonnet 20.78 kilometres (12.94 miles) 1506

Service Gap 1601

Friday January 22

SS3 Aspremont – La Bâtie-des-Fonts 1 19.61 kilometres (12.18 miles) 0610

SS4 Chalancon – Gumiane 1 21.62 kilometres (13.43 miles) 0728

SS5 Montauban-sur-l'Ouvèze – Villebois-les-Pins 1 22.24 kilometres (13.81 miles) 0901
Service Gap 1036
SS6 Aspremont – La Bâtie-des-Fonts 2 19.61 kilometres (12.18 miles) 1217
SS7 Chalancon – Gumiane 2 21.62 kilometres (13.43 miles) 1338
Service Gap 1608

Saturday January 23

SS9 La Bréole – Selonnet 1 18.31 kilometres (11.37 miles) 0630
SS10 St Clément - Freissinières 20.48 kilometres (12.72 miles) 0818
Service Gap 1008
SS11 La Bréole – Selonnet 18.31 kilometres (11.37 miles) 1208
Parc Fermé Monaco 1608

Sunday January 24

SS12 Puget Théniers – La Penne 1 12.93 kilometres (8.03 miles) 0830
SS13 Briançonnet – Entrevaux 1 14.31 kilometres (8.89 miles) 1008
SS14 Puget Théniers – La Penne 2 12.93 kilometres (8.03 miles) 1045
Regroup Briançonnet 1125
SS15 Briançonnet – Entrevaux 2 14.31 kilometres (8.89 miles) 1218
Finish Monaco 1418

Oliver Solberg in numbers:

Rallies started: 38
Rallies won: 9
ERC rounds started: 6
ERC rounds won: 2
ERC podiums: 3
WRC rounds started: 7
WRC debut: Wales Rally GB (2019)
Number of titles won: 9