

News release
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Petter back to the World Rally Championship with Volkswagen

- World Rally Champion to drive Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 in Spain
- Petter delighted to be back in the series where he won his first world title
- Salou-based event will be the debut rally for Volkswagen's all-new Polo GTI R5

Petter Solberg will return to the World Rally Championship to drive Volkswagen Motorsport's Polo GTI R5 at Rally de España next month.

The Norwegian, who won the WRC title in 2003, will join the factory Volkswagen Motorsport team alongside Eric Camilli (FRA) for its one-off outing at the Salou-based event from October 25-28.

Petter, who first tested the Polo GTI R5 in Sweden at the start of the season, will test the car ahead of his rally return.

Since departing the World Rally Championship, Petter has focused his efforts on the World Rallycross Championship, where he won two more FIA world titles (2014/15). For the last two years, Petter's own team – PSRX Volkswagen Sweden – has worked closely with Volkswagen Motorsport; the squad's Polo R Supercars are prepared ahead of each World RX round in Hannover.

Petter said: "I think everybody knows about my passion for rallying and when Sven [Smeets, Volkswagen Motorsport director] asked me if I would like to do Spain in the Polo, I jumped at the chance.

"When I drove the car in January, I didn't want to stop. Everything about the Polo GTI R5 worked from the very beginning. To be in the car for the very first time is a real privilege for me – I'm very happy that Volkswagen trusted this job to me and to Eric [Camilli]."

Norway's Veronica Engan will co-drive Petter, having worked alongside him at his January test of the Polo GTI R5. Veronica is well acquainted with the Solberg family –she's normally found co-driving Petter's son Oliver.

Petter's illustrious WRC career spanned 14 years and 188 starts. He won 13 of those events, scored 54 podiums and collected 457 stage wins and 852 points.

Beyond the numbers, Petter remains one of the sport's most popular drivers and going back to Salou is bound to bring a range of emotions.

"This is the place where I did my last event before I decided to switch to rallycross," said Solberg. "It will be fantastic to be back, especially with this car and team. The chance to drive Volkswagen's Polo GTI R5 on gravel and asphalt in the WRC's only mixed-surface event is a challenge I can't wait to start. I have seen what Volkswagen Motorsport does from the inside in World RX and it's going to be a real pleasure to work with them in rallying.

"As well as that, it will be great to see some old friends and fans again. Spain was always one of the events I really loved, the passion and atmosphere there is just fantastic."

Being a natural competitor, Petter will have an eye on the times at an event where he finished second overall in 2010.

"I know how good the Polo GTI R5 is," said Petter, "and I think people know I'm not just going there to drive around. It's an honour to join the team for this event and I will go there to do my best and push as hard as I can."

Volkswagen Motorsport director Sven Smeets said: "Petter is a true rally hero. We have already experienced his passion and professionalism working alongside him in World Rallycross. To give everything, always 110 per cent is Petter's trademark.

"He tested the Polo GTI R5 and, from the beginning, it was our dream to have him in the car to give this new customer rally car its debut. It's fantastic that he joins us in Spain to drive the Polo R5; I'm sure everybody is looking forward to seeing him back again – and our new car.

"For sure, everybody in Volkswagen Motorsport is excited to be working on a rally and on this special event with Petter and our second driver Eric Camilli."

Rally de España starts with a spectacular opening stage in Barcelona before moving into day one's dirt stages in the Tarragona hills. For the weekend, it's all about the racetrack-smooth roads inland from the service park at Salou's popular holiday park PortAventura.

Petter will face 18 stages on a 1,496 kilometres (929 miles), of which 331km (205 miles) are competitive.

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