

News release
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PSRX Volkswagen Sweden looks to build on early form in Portugal

- PSRX Volkswagen Sweden looks to build on winning start to season
- Pernilla: the work never stops in Torsby and Hannover
- Johan back to where the World RX winning began in 2015
- Petter wants to finish a job he started a fortnight ago in Catalunya
- Petter wants to finish a job he started a year ago in Portugal

What's coming?

World RX of Portugal. It's a place and a race which has suited the PSRX Volkswagen Sweden boys well in the past; Petter Solberg and Johan Kristoffersson have only lost one final in four years at the Montalegre track.

Located in Portugal's far north, Montalegre nestles in rolling hills and mountains overlooking the Spanish border. But, with an altitude of close to 1000 metres, the weather can vary from warm spring sunshine to heavy rain and near freezing conditions.

There's barely been time to catch our breath since the World Rallycross Championship season-opener in Barcelona (April 14/15), but Volkswagen Motorsport has been busy crunching the numbers and analysing the data generated by the victorious Polo R Supercars at Circuit de Catalunya.

Round one was certainly eventful, but it concluded with a win for Johan, the lead in both drivers' and teams' championships and a very successful start to the defence of both titles.

Crucially, Barcelona showed the work Volkswagen and PSRX had put in through the closed season had been in the right direction. The car had wintered well. And Petter and Johan? Well, they seemed to have come out even faster.

Tell us more Pernilla...

PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team principal Pernilla Solberg

"It is always nice to start a race weekend with your drivers and team at the top of the championship standing. The trick is to be in the same position when you are leaving the circuit on Sunday night!

"Like always, we have a really big focus on the strategy for the boys this weekend. We know the weather can change really quickly in Montalegre, so we put a lot of time into planning for all eventualities and working out what's the best tyre plan if the rain comes or if it turns out to be warmer than expected.

"The team is really flying high after the start we made in Barcelona. It's always the same when you come from the winter and you've made some tests, nobody really knows where they are in terms of the competition – but round one showed that we are in quite a good place. What I've been impressed with since then is the way that everybody – even in the really short time between round one and Portugal – has looked for improvements in every area; it's the same with the Volkswagen Motorsport guys in Hannover and the PSRX family in Torsby.

"Our rivals are so close, the competition is so tight, we have to keep working and looking to find an extra tenth [of a second] or hundredth [of a second]. At the end of the season, these will add up and make the difference."

Petter, you like this place, don't you?

Petter Solberg, PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team owner/driver and triple FIA world champion

"I love this track. I won here twice and I was close last year before I got the puncture. This year I would really love to go back there and finish that job.

"This is a real rallycross track with some really nice corners and grip changes. Barcelona was an enjoyable circuit, but it's fantastic to bring these cars to a place like Montalegre where we have the elevation changes as well. It's somewhere that you can really lean on the car and have a good go. Fantastic.

"What happened in Barcelona wasn't so nice [the first corner incident for which Mattias Ekström was excluded], but that's history now. We forget about that and move on to this race. And these are exciting times for the PSRX Volkswagen Sweden team, we have some small upgrades coming for the car – nothing major, but they all count. It's fine-tuning.

"I wouldn't say this year's Polo R Supercar is necessarily any faster than last year, but what we have from Volkswagen Motorsport is a car which has a wider window of performance; you don't have to have the absolutely perfect set-up to get confidence, feeling and grip from the car this season. To know you'll be able to react to weather or condition changes quickly really helps so much."

One in, one win Johan...

Johan Kristoffersson, defending FIA World Rallycross Champion

"The memories of this race are a little bit mixed: it's the place where I scored my first ever World Rallycross Championship win [in 2015 for Volkswagen Sweden], so it's a special one for me.

"But then last year Petter and I were pretty strong in the heats, but that didn't transfer to Sunday afternoon. I scored my first podium with PSRX Volkswagen Sweden with third place, but there was a bit of frustration when we left. It'll be good to get back to this track and make more progress from last season. I think we have good potential in Portugal.

“Barcelona was a good weekend that turned great for me. I have to admit, the first heats were not so strong, I was struggling to get comfortable with the car in the really wet conditions. We had made some changes to the Polo R Supercar and trying to find the feeling when there is virtually no grip and certainly no consistent grip is so difficult. I worked with the team and the engineers and by Saturday afternoon things were looking good – even better when the sun came out on Sunday!”

Driver data

Petter Solberg (NOR)

World RX starts: 50

World RX wins: 10

World RX titles: 2

Johan Kristoffersson (SWE)

World RX starts: 41

World RX wins: 10

World RX titles: 1

World RX of Portugal data

Last year’s winner: Mattias Ekström (SWE)

Fastest lap: Johan Kristoffersson (SWE) 37.802s

Circuit length: 0.95km

Asphalt/gravel: 60% – 40%

Contact:

Sandra Evans PR manager

sandra@pettersolberg.no

+44 7887 693993

+46 76 110 7 110

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