



Hello. Fancy some copyright-free words from FIA World Rallycross Champion Petter Solberg? See below. Want more? No problem. Just tell us what you need.

Petter sets the scene...

So, the waiting is finally over. FIA World Rallycross 2015 is about to begin. The defence of my title starts right here in Portugal. And what a fantastic place to start from.

I have such incredible memories of this place from last year. Winning the first ever World RX round was a real honour and the start of an unbelievable season for me and the PSRX team.

Standing on the roof of my car at this very track 12 months ago, I was so happy. It had been a while – too long – since I won a round of the World Rally Championship and to cross the line and know that I had done it: I'd won again, was a special one for me.

But winning in rallycross is about more than just being the first driver over the line, it needs a perfect team backing that driver up – and I certainly have that. Come over and say hello this weekend, come and see the PSRX boys and girls working to give us the best possible chance of back-to-back wins at this beautiful circuit.

It's fantastic to be racing again – it's been too long since the last round – and I wish you all a happy and safe weekend of sport. And the same for the season to come.

Now, for that title defence...

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Petter Solberg Q&A

Have you been busy since the last World RX round of 2014?

Very! There were lots and lots of ceremonies to go to, the first being the FIA awards, where I picked up my second world title. Then there were other events like the AUTOSPORT Awards, where I was honoured to accept a Gregor Grant – a lifetime achievement award. I also had quite a lot of media appearances to make to talk about last year.

Did you have much time to prepare for this season?

I must admit, it has been tough. We really have been so busy with our commitments after winning the championship, but at the same time the PSRX team simply hasn't stopped.

What sort of things have you been doing?

Well, for me there's a continued programme of training and nutrition which I have to stick to. Outside of the gym, we've been working on partner agreements for 2015 and beyond and basically working on various ways to further develop the PSRX brand.

And you starred alongside David Coulthard at AUTOSPORT International...

I have to say, that was so much fun. I was there with the guys from Autosport for four or five days and making a really big show.

What was the best bit?

All sorts of things, doing so many donuts and meeting so many lovely people. Probably the most interesting thing I did was standing on the side of a car being driven on two wheels by Terry Grant. That whole thing was pretty unbelievable!

And you were quicker than David Coulthard?

Yes I was! Quicker at changing a wheel than him, that is!

More seriously, how do you feel about the year ahead?

Really excited. So excited! Last year we started the first ever FIA World Rallycross Championship and we knew the team had a lot of potential, but still we were chasing our first win. That win came on the opening round, here in Montalegre and it really lifted so much of the pressure from all of our shoulders. It let us all breathe as a team and gave us a lot of confidence going forward. This year we come with the title behind us, but really we know that this is where the really tough job starts.

So this year will be tougher than last?

Defending a championship is usually harder than winning it in the first place. The expectation is so much higher and, don't forget, our opposition is really strong with a lot of manufacturer support – which we don't have.

Have you done much work on the car?

The team has been working on the car throughout the winter. We started working and introducing some evolutions for the last couple of rounds of last year and immediately we saw a good step with the pace. We know we have found more speed from the car again. But, like I said, everybody else has been doing the same and I'm sure everybody else's car will be faster than it was a year ago.

And what about Portugal and Montalegre, do you like this place?

I love Portugal and I love this track. I competed in Portugal in the World Rally Championship a few times – both in the north and south of the country – and it was always one of the highlights of the season. The fans here are so passionate and enthusiastic. I love that about Portugal. I can't wait to get back to the track and get started again.

So, you know Portugal... can you tell us one famous Portuguese footballer?

Of course! [Cristiano] Ronaldo!

And what's your favourite Portuguese food?

Well, you know that I love Japanese food... well, Tempura originally came from Portugal. Another reason to love Portugal.

A few words in Portuguese maybe?

Really? Hmm... try: *Até logo!* This is what I'm hoping to say to the other five drivers in the final on Sunday. [*Até logo means see you!*]

Oh and boa sorte (good luck) to the organisers.

And finally, who's going to win on Sunday?

I don't know – but I hope it's the same guy who did it last time around!

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Petter's Montalegre track guide

The first start of the season is on the asphalt and we get quite a long run down to the first right-hand corner.

Straight away, you can decide to take the joker lap or not – but it's crucial to make up your mind early whether or not you will do this, you have to make sure you are on the right line.

If you don't take the joker then you have a big drift around a long, long hairpin right. This is where we are using the full power of the Supercars and it's a great feeling to keep the car sliding, drifting. It's vital here that you have the car balanced and set up to give you confidence and traction.

After that it's into a long gravel section, which is twisty and tricky, with high kerbs on both sides. It's vital you get this series of corners right in order to carry speed through them. If you get them out of sync then you're sliding too much, losing time and possibly hitting a kerb pretty hard.

The last corner on gravel is long and opens and tightens – it's difficult to keep the speed and momentum through this corner. And then there's a S-section with a short straight in the middle taking you from gravel back to asphalt and back onto the start-finish straight. Again, timing is everything in this place and getting that right means you hit the long straight with good speed.

This is a really nice circuit, which is well-suited to my driving style.

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