

PRE-EVENT PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT

2014 FIA European Rally Championship: final round (round 11 of 11)
Giru di Corsica-Tour de Corse, 14:45hrs, Thursday 6 November, Cinémathèque, Porto-Vecchio

Attendees:

Bryan Bouffier
Romain Dumas
Esapekka Lappi, ŠKODA Motorsport
Stéphane Lefebvre, Peugeot Rally Academy

Question to Bryan Bouffier

Welcome back to the ERC and welcome back to Tour de Corse, an event you won last year of course! We've not seen you in the ERC since the Acropolis Rally so what have you been up to since then?

BB: "It's a great pleasure for me to come back to Corsica. For sure it's a beautiful event and one of the rallies I cannot miss. It's a big motivation to be back here. It's a long time since I have done an ERC event – the last one was the Acropolis so it's a long time. The championship has a lot of very good drivers and a huge competition but I had the opportunity to do other races, especially with Hyundai. I haven't done many kilometres but I have driven some interesting cars so it was nice."

Question to Bryan Bouffier

Another rally and another new car for you – what experience do you have of the Ford Fiesta RRC and what is it like to drive?

BB: "For sure it's a fantastic car and let's see tomorrow and the next day if I have a good feeling with the car. I drove the car on Monte-Carlo, okay it was the WRC [specification] but it has more or less the same handling. I did 30 kilometres of test last week, the car is amazing but in this championship we have to push from the first kilometres because it's a huge level. But for sure I have a very good car and I think everything to do a good result with a good team. I think we just need a good driver now!"

Question to Bryan Bouffier

How have you prepared for this rally and what's your target?

BB: "I did 30 kilometres of test last week and my target is to do the best result as possible. To win last year was a fantastic feeling but if you look on the entry list it can be really tough. If I could be on the podium then it will be a great result."

Question to Romain Dumas

From Shanghai on Sunday to Corsica on Monday – how are you feeling? Ready for the rally or for your bed?

RD: "So far I would like to be a bit more in my bed. But it's okay. I flew back from Shanghai on Sunday evening and actually I already tested my Porsche for here on Monday. I was in the south of France on Monday, I made some kilometres in the rain actually and then I flew back here on Monday evening. It was a little bit tight with the schedule but it's part of the game. On Tuesday I fly to Bahrain for the next race so it's a little bit complicated."

Question to Romain Dumas

A Porsche 997 on the tight and twisty Corsican roads. That sounds like a very exciting prospect but what will it be like from inside the car?

RD: “I hope it will be good inside the car! So far I drove two years ago when the IRC was here on the Tour de Corse a one-day event. I was competing with the same Porsche actually and I was quite competitive. It was in the north of Corsica so when I came here to see the road it’s completely different first of all. I think the first stage tomorrow will be nice for my car. Unfortunately we have a very small restrictor on the car. It will be tricky but unfortunately [François] Delecour is not here, which is why I entered because normally we are two Porsche, so I am a little bit alone and we will look for the two-wheel-drive classification. I will do my best and we will see.”

Question to Romain Dumas

The FIA has announced an RGT Cup for next year, which will include some ERC events. Do you have any plans to take part?

RD: “I think it was very good that finally after a lot of years we arrived to entry the GT in FIA event including WRC and ERC. I remember I spoke with Jean-Pierre Nicolas [ERC Sporting Manager] to come here before but it was not possible so I think for the future for all the championship it’s very nice. For sure it will be more for the gentlemen drivers than the young stars like here. But I am convinced for the show it’s very important. The championship needs a Porsche – it can be a BMW or a Ferrari or whatever – but they need noise, cars that are sliding and I think for the rally when you are a fan like me and not a future professional in the rally it’s very important to be in this kind of car. It’s the best kind of car for the show.”

Question to Esapekka Lappi

You were almost European champion after Valais but with your team-mate Sepp Wiegand not starting here you can’t be caught in the ERC. What does that mean to you?

EL: “First of all it was not so nice moment when I saw the car on Monday on fire. It was not a nice sight but it’s part of the game. I was not expecting that they would not restart at all but these things happen. I am happy we win the title but it didn’t come in the proper way and this is not so nice way to do it. But this is motorsport. Things can happen in the races or the tests and this thing happened in the test.”

Question to Esapekka Lappi

What were you best and worst moments of this season?

EL: “The worst was from Barum Rally, the home event of ŠKODA. I was also looking forward to the event because last year I retired because of a crash and this year I did the same on the same stage. Again we retired, the mistake was not so big but it was enough to break the wishbone and stuff like that. The best was Ireland. Nobody expected us to be so fast on these roads. Without any experience our set-up from the Czech roads was very good for these bumpy Irish roads. In a way it was easy to drive fast but I did not expect I could drive that fast.”

Question to Esapekka Lappi

The pressure is completely off now – what’s your strategy going to be on this rally?

EL: “To be honest I don’t know. I think I will try to do my own drive, try to go not 100 per cent immediately, maybe a bit less and then we will see if it’s enough to fight at the top or the fifth place. If it’s not enough I can try to push. But if I don’t feel well I won’t. We will see during the race.”

Question to Esapekka Lappi

So what’s next EP – will you defend your European championship title in 2015?

EL: “No idea. We have discussions after this rally about next year so don’t ask me about these kind of things because I don’t have any idea!”

Question to Stéphane Lefebvre

From one ERC champion to one ERC champion elect – with one round remaining you lead the ERC Junior standings by nine points ahead of Andrea Crugnola. How confident are you that you can win the title?

SL: “I hope to win this week the title of the ERC Junior. This is my target and I hope I can do well.”

Question to Stéphane Lefebvre

What would winning the ERC Junior title mean to you?

SL: “For me it’s a dream to win again a second title this year after the title in the WRC. To win the European championship is a good opportunity for me and my career.”

Question to Stéphane Lefebvre

And looking ahead to 2015, what are your plans for next year?

SL: “For the next year I hope to drive with the R5 car on WRC events and on ERC events as well.”

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Press enquiries: Richard Rodgers, media@fiaerc.com, +44 7833 470541,
on-event: +33 621981993

Rights-free images: Register at the media lounge section of Fiaerc.com

Television: Antonios Argyropoulos, fia_erc_accreditations@eurosport.com

Drivers and teams: Jean-Baptiste Ley, jbley@eurosport.com

*THE ERC IS PROMOTED BY EUROSPOORT EVENTS LTD CRAVEN HOUSE, 121 KINGSWAY, LONDON WC2B 6PA UK. TEL:
+44 2036813000, F +44 2036813250. REGISTERED IN ENGLAND & WALES UNDER NO. 4361881 VAT NO. GB 792 1320 40*